

RUSSIAN SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY AND ISKRA, 1900 - 1904

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## PREFACE

The constitutional democracy of the Western World is today ranged against the political forces of the Soviet Union. The tensions created by the resulting ideological clashes seem to be manifestly increasing rather than abating. Within this world scene each man finds it his part to make political and social judgments whether he is considering the actions of a nation or the personal conduct of one individual. As never before he is confronted with the need for maintaining a scholarly perspective as a requisite for making sound judgments. A wide range of information conditioned by depth of understanding is a necessary element with which to combat any evils of the political pressure of the moment. A study of contemporary events may result in the amassing of much essential information but a deep understanding of these events can usually only be gained by a study of historical antecedents. Irrational fears and warped judgments brought on by the blatant grinding of propaganda machines and incipient military might become less ominous and more manageable when reference is made to historical context. Of the political and ideological forces of the twentieth century, Russian Communism is unquestionably one of the most terrifying. For these reasons it is a major purpose of this thesis to provide at least a small portion of the historical background of Russian Communism.

Russian Social-Democracy and its current political form, Russian Communism, have their historic roots in the socialist theories of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. The importance of such writings as The Capital and The Communist Manifesto on later communistic theory is well known. Not so manifest, however, are the activities of a small group of Russian emigres and their organizations of the last decade of the nineteenth century and the early years

of the twentieth century. It is with this group of ardent Russian socialists that this thesis is concerned.

The problem of the thesis was of a two-fold nature. First, it was necessary to present an account of the embryonic Russian Social-Democratic Party in its critical years of 1900 to 1905. Secondly, it was necessary to evaluate the activities of the party during these years in order to determine their significance, first, in relation to each other and then, in respect to the entire movement. This thesis was developed, not around a single individual or epochal event, but rather around the joint enterprise of a Russian socialist group, a conspiratorial underground newspaper. The chief reason for adopting this approach was to counteract the effect of biased sources which advanced the importance of some individuals to the complete neglect of others.

Special difficulties in historiography were encountered from the first. The process of research had to depend as it always does on available materials which were for this problem limited and in many cases of questionable accuracy. Only a few libraries in the United States have material available for extensive research in Russian history, and even at these libraries such materials are limited. This situation is of course due in large part to the lack of free exchange of information between the Soviet Union and the United States at the present time. Only inside the Soviet Union is the supply of source material unlimited. Also much writing which would have been of great value to this thesis has been either suppressed or glossed over by Soviet censorship. Many of the items which were expurgated from various writings will probably never be recovered. Particularly was strict censorship directed at the material relevant to the period dealt with in this thesis. The reason being that at that time the present leaders of Soviet Russia had not yet gained complete ascendancy and their adversaries were more vociferous and outspoken. Much was written to refute the

tendencies which have survived but unfortunately little of it has been allowed to remain unvarnished or untouched by the censors' purging. Because, then, of the prejudiced and incomplete nature of much of the source material a cautious attitude was adopted in the writing of this thesis in an attempt to keep well within the margin of historical accuracy.

In spite of these special handicaps, which are to be encountered by any American research worker in the field of Russian history, it is hoped that the information set down in this thesis will be a useful patch in the large and complex quilt of knowledge.

The author wishes to express special thanks and gratitude to Dr. George Dent Wilcoxon, who, in supervising these efforts gave unselfishly of his time and valuable advice. Also thanks are certainly due to Miss Elizabeth H. Davis, Reference Librarian of Kansas State College, who greatly aided the author in collecting source material from libraries in many parts of the United States and to the author's wife, Janet Louise, who provided concrete assistance in the typing of the manuscript and mental inspiration which though more difficult to evaluate was of supreme importance.



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO RUSSIAN SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY

#### Russia and the Narodniki

The process of revolutionary change which was wrought in Catholic Germany in the sixteenth century, in Anglican England in the seventeenth, and in Royalist France during the eighteenth may perhaps be said to have found further abode in Russia during the nineteenth and the first two decades of the present century. During the fifty years preceding World War I Russia was the scene of a death struggle between the liberals and radicals, on the one hand, and the conservatives and reactionaries, on the other. From the feeble and ill-starred activities of the Decembrists to the successful bolshevik revolution, the Romanov Czardom and the Russian social order founded on inequality and special privilege were under almost constant attack. Of the many events which stand out in this period of Russian history by far the most important in respect to future consequences is the gradual development of the Social-Democratic Party in Russia.

In western Europe most of the Social-Democratic organizations had been founded by Karl Marx and his personal followers. The philosophy of The Capital and The Communist Manifesto had provided the cohesive element in these groups from their very beginning. However, with a contempt which grew with familiarity, many such groups began to deviate from Marxist views following Marx's death in 1883 and some even prior to that time. In Russia the situation was entirely reversed. Most of the earlier revolutionary groups were non-Marxist. It was several years after the death of Marx that some Russian revolutionary groups began to reorganize on the principles of Social-Democracy. These groups

gradually became as narrowly Marxian as their western European counterparts had become deviationists.

The first important Russian groups from which Marxian organizations later branched were the Narodniki, or Populist, organizations founded in the 1860's and the 1870's. These groups were nearly always secret because of political restrictions which were energetically enforced by the Czar's police force, particularly since the unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Alexander II in 1866. They devoted most of their energy to the spreading of propaganda among the students, the workers, and the peasants. Occasionally Narodniki groups would help in organizing strikes and demonstrations such as the one in Kazan Square at St. Petersburg in December, 1876, which was forcibly broken up by the police. The chief aim of the Narodniki was that of bringing about a peasant uprising.<sup>1</sup> It was their view that the Russian peasant could and should immediately adopt socialism in the rural districts. Of the many persons who participated in the work of the Narodniki, three were of first importance to later developments of the Russian Social-Democratic Party. These three were, George V. Plekhanov, Vera I. Zaslitch, and Paul Axelrod.

As a student in St. Petersburg, George Plekhanov became acquainted with the revolutionists of the Narodovolsty (Will of the People) Party which had been founded on Narodniki principles. He took part in the St. Petersburg demonstration of 1876 and soon became a prominent member of the Narodovolsty by writing and lecturing on party topics. Despite his support of most of the revolutionary doctrines of the Narodniki he soon severed his connections with the Narodovolsty

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<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, Collected Works (New York: International Publishers, 1929), v. IV, book 2, p. 274.

because of his opposition to the principle of terrorism. As a means to their goals the Narodniki had frequently resorted to terroristic acts against the government. In June, 1879, at the Lipitsk and Voronezh Congresses of Socialist Narodniki a declaration was made which established terror as one of the principal political weapons to be used against the Czar. Flekhanov apparently opposed the use of terror largely because of its ineffectiveness in the past rather than because of any squeamishness on his part.<sup>1</sup> Following his break with the Narodovolsty, Flekhanov, together with Vera Zasulich and Paul Axelrod established a new party called the Chorny Paredel (literally, Black Re-distribution). This group insisted upon the necessity of achieving the revolution by the mass action of the workers and the peasants. The group also disavowed terrorism as a revolutionary tactic and advocated agitation chiefly on an economic basis among the city workingmen (i. e., strikes, walk-outs, etc.).<sup>2</sup> The organization existed for only a few months but it served as a step by which a section of the Narodniki passed to Marxism and Social-Democracy.<sup>3</sup>

Vera Zasulich's first revolutionary activity consisted of study and work in local socialist groups. Early in her revolutionary career her participation in a dramatic incident brought her wide publicity among socialist groups in Europe and Russia and notoriety among government circles in Russia. In 1878, at the age of 27, she fired a shot at the St. Petersburg

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<sup>1</sup> Boris Souvarine, A Critical Survey of Bolshevism (New York: Alliance Book Corporation, 1939), p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> A. J. Sack, The Birth of Russian Democracy (New York: Russian Information Bureau, 1918), p. 217.

<sup>3</sup> Lenin, op. cit., p. 274.



Governor General, Trepov, for having ordered corporal punishment to be administered to an imprisoned revolutionary. She was arrested but freed by a jury because of popular agitation in her favor. Zaslitch remained in Russia only long enough to become associated with the Chorny Peredel.<sup>1</sup>

The early activities of Paul Axelrod followed closely those of many of the participants in the Narodniki movements. In the 1870's he was a follower of the terrorist, Bakunin and was arrested several times while engaging in illegal propaganda work. Following the split of Narodovolsty he, too, participated in Chorny Peredel.

In 1880 Plekhanov and his associates attempted to issue a paper under the title of their organization, Chorny Peredel. The first issue was seized and the secret printing plant was destroyed by the police.<sup>2</sup> Following this incident Plekhanov was forced to leave Russia. The next year, 1881, the assassination of Alexander II was brought about by order of the Narodovolsty executive committee and consequently the government vigorously crushed or scattered most of the revolutionary organizations. Zaslitch and Axelrod escaped persecution by following Plekhanov into Swiss exile where they began once more to consider revolutionary ideas and activities which had been so abruptly interrupted in Russia.

#### The Emancipation of Labor Group

The first two years in exile marked a transitional period for Plekhanov and his fellow emigres. It was during this time that they came under the influence of Marxian philosophy and devoted much of their time to a study of scientific socialism. Just as they had earlier repudiated the principles

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> Sack, op. cit., p. 219.

of Populism as represented by Narodniki, so they now began to reappraise the ideas which had provided a foundation for their short-lived Chorny Peredel. Particularly did Plekhanov, who was generally considered the theoretician of the group, begin to consider as a fallacy the negation in Chorny Peredel of the necessity of political struggle. The result of this reappraisal was that the group adopted a Marxian viewpoint without qualifications.

The first organized expression of this change of attitude came in 1883. During that year Plekhanov, Zasulich, and Axelrod, with one other former Narodniki, Leo Deutsch, met in Geneva, Switzerland to form an organization which was to be basically Marxian. The name adopted by the group for their association was, "Emancipation of Labor". The earliest aim of the group was chiefly literary. It was hoped that by publishing books and pamphlets which would be circulated in Russia that Marxian ideas could be disseminated to help create a conscious working-class movement.<sup>1</sup> During the three years following its organization the Emancipation of Labor group published jointly a series of pamphlets entitled, Library of Contemporary Socialism. The group also arranged the publication and distribution of a book by Plekhanov entitled, Socialism and the Political Struggle. A number of ideas which were expressed in these writings subsequently figured in the ideology of the Russian Social-Democratic movement. Among them were the concept of the leadership of the working class in the revolutionary movement, the emphasis on the political nature of the class struggle, and the necessity of the union of the working class with the peasantry.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>2</sup> William Henry Chamberlin, Soviet Russia, A Living Record and a History (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1933), p. 34.

At the same time that these literary activities were being carried out the Emancipation of Labor group was making contacts with European socialists and participating in the International Socialist movement. As the group became acquainted with the Marxian Social-Democratic organizations in France, Germany, Switzerland, and England, they established as a primary goal the foundation of a Social-Democratic organization in Russia which would link together all Russian socialists in one group devoted to the fighting for a Marxian revolution. With this object in view the Emancipation of Labor group began to establish contacts inside Russia. They aided by sending literature and advice to the clandestine socialist clubs in the metropolitan areas of Russia whenever it was possible. During the years 1884 to 1894 Marxian socialist clubs became more numerous and worker strikes engineered by the clubs were more frequent.<sup>1</sup> Particularly was this growth rapid following a prolonged famine in Russia during the year 1891. Working from its position in exile, the Emancipation of Labor group was able to provide some inspiration and direction to these activities in Russia but very little else. Rather than being a period of action, these ten years represented a time during which "the theory and the programme of Social-Democracy germinated and took root".<sup>2</sup> The number of adherents to the new tendency could have been counted in units and the immediate consequences of the activities of the Emancipation of Labor group were insignificant when compared with what was to follow.<sup>3</sup>

As more and more Marxist groups were formed in Russia and among the

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<sup>1</sup> Souvarine, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

Russian emigres in Switzerland and England, the Emancipation of Labor group began to recognize the need for a broader, more inclusive organization. Thus in 1895 the Union of Russian Social-Democrats was formed in Switzerland through the initiative of Plekhanov and the Emancipation of Labor group. This action was considered necessary by Plekhanov for two reasons: first, it was necessary in order to insure that the Emancipation of Labor group would maintain organizational and theoretical control over the majority of the adherents to Russian Social-Democracy; and secondly, it was necessary in order to provide an organization which would include all of the rapidly increasing Russian Social-Democratic groups. During the years which immediately followed, the achievements of the new Russian Social-Democratic organization were at least partially seen in the increase of strike activity in Russia which resulted in the adoption of certain beneficial laws regulating hours of labor. In 1897 all Social-Democratic groups in Europe sent representatives to Zurich for a Summer Conference. The Conference was preceded by the announcement of Unions or Social-Democratic groups having been established in Kiev, Ekaterinoslav, and Moscow. It was also announced at that time that the General Jewish Workers' Union in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia, had been formed. The revolutionary movement was especially pronounced in the crowded poverty-stricken Jewish Pale of Settlement in western and southwestern Russia. Therefore this last group which was subsequently known as the Bund was a prominent one in the later revolutionary movement. It provided a high percentage of the leadership and organized rank and file to Russian Social-Democracy.<sup>1</sup> Because of these encouraging achievements of Russian socialism a general spirit of optimism prevailed at the Conference. The delegates were led to

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<sup>1</sup> Chamberlin, *op. cit.*, p. 35.



consider the establishment of an official Russian Social-Democratic party. Less than a year later this was attempted at Minsk inside Russia.

#### First Party Congress at Minsk

On March 14, 1898, nine Russian socialists met together in convention at Minsk, a city located by the headwaters of the Niemen river. Their assemblage represented the First Congress of Russian Social-Democracy and their activities were the first official efforts of the party. The composition of the delegation was as follows: first, there were the adherents to Social-Democracy who by keeping their Marxist work under cover had been able to remain in Russia. These consisted of members from the Jewish Bund and delegates from the Unions which had been established in such cities as Kiev, Moscow, and St. Petersburg; the second group of delegates were of the Legal Marxist tendency;<sup>1</sup> the third were the representatives of the Emancipation of Labor group and the Union of Russian Social-Democrats.

The first business of the Congress was to adopt a party name. The name adopted was the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party which is usually abbreviated as simply the R.S.D.L.P. Next, a manifesto was composed by P. B. Struve, a Legal Marxist, which was adopted by the Congress as official. The manifesto outlined the objectives of the party which was being established at Minsk and specified primarily that the party would adhere to Marxism

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<sup>1</sup> During the eighties and nineties government censors were for the most part unfamiliar with Marxism. They did, however, understand that the Marxists were avowed enemies of the Narodniki. The censors therefore were prone to allow the Marxist propaganda to go unchallenged providing that their revolutionary sentiments were not openly expressed. The Marxists who were willing to soften the tone of their writing so that it would pass through the legal channels of censorship became known as Legal Marxists.



principles and refer to Marx's writings on all fundamental questions of policy. Ironically enough Peter Struve later performed a complete turn about in his views, and actively opposed the R.S.D.L.P. to the point of adopting monarchist sentiments.<sup>1</sup> The third item of business was the official recognition of the Bund and the Union of Russian Social-Democrats. Next came the establishment of a Central Committee which was elected by the Congress and was to have been the executive organ of the party. The last important official act of the Congress was that of adopting a Party Organ or newspaper. In 1897 a group of Social-Democrats in Kiev had printed two issues of a paper called the Rabochaya Gazeta (Workers' Newspaper). This paper was taken over as the all-Russian Central Organ of the party and the editorial staff for issue number three was appointed by the Congress. The organizational feature represented by the Central Committee and the Central Organ which was evolved at the Congress is of noteworthy importance. Despite later vicissitudes which disrupted the party this feature remained essentially unchanged.

After several days the work of the Congress was brought to a close and the delegates dispersed to their homes where, as if to provide an ironic climax to their Congress, they were promptly arrested. As frequently happened, the police had discovered the plans for the supposedly secret revolutionary Congress and had maintained surveillance over its members from the first day of meetings. Following the initial arrest of Congress delegates large numbers of party members in many parts of Russia were also arrested. The usual penalty attached to such political arrests was imprisonment or a term of exile in Siberia, or sometimes both.<sup>2</sup> Although the government did not completely

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<sup>1</sup> Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Souvarine, Loc. cit.

crush Social-Democracy in Russia by the mass arrests of 1898, the movement was for a time severely hampered. The principal efforts of the First Party Congress had been wiped out. The Central Committee ceased to exist almost before it had its chance to function and all thought of publishing a Central Organ was temporarily set aside. Then, too, many of the key members of the Russian Social-Democratic organizations had been among those arrested and the burden of organization once again shifted to the emigre circles of Europe who could not hope to accomplish much at such distance. In November, 1898, a congress of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats was held in Europe to survey the situation in Russia and to determine means by which the lost ground could be regained. It was not, however, until two years following this Congress that conditions again began to seem more favorable to large scale Social-Democratic activities in Russia. By 1900 the opportunities for redeeming the abortive organizational attempt of the First Party Congress began to appear closer to the grasp of those who would take them. In the months following the turn of the century, three young Russians, V. I. Lenin, I. O. Martov, and A. N. Potresov, returned from Siberian exile and in recognizing the opportunities and acting upon the needs of the hour became important figures in subsequent Social-Democratic activities.

#### The Young Leaders, Lenin, Martov, and Potresov

A new generation of revolutionary intellectuals in the two decades preceding the turn of the century grew up under the influence of Marxism and Social-Democracy. Among the most important of these as judged by the standard of later developments was V. I. Lenin. His real name was Vladimir Ilyich Ulianov but by his twenty-fifth year he had adopted the name Lenin for conspiratorial reasons. In his writings he adopted several different

signatures; sometimes N. Lenin,<sup>1</sup> and occasionally, "The Old Man", or simply, Petroff.

Lenin was born on April 22, 1870 in the central Russian province of Simbirsk. Both of his parents were reasonably well educated for the time and Lenin had the benefits of both a formal education and a home atmosphere which was conducive to study. By the time Lenin had finished high school he was already keenly interested in socialistic ideas. Through friends he had access to the pamphlets of the Emancipation of Labor group and at the Simbirsk library he was able to peruse the writings of some of the Legal Marxists. He also was acquainted with the Populist literature of the Narodniki through his older brother, Alexander, who was an active member of that organization. Lenin had apparently definitely determined on a career of socialism and revolution by 1887. That year he entered the Kazan University as a law student. While at the University he established contacts with socialist student groups and in December of the same year he was expelled for participation in student disturbances. After his expulsion Lenin spent several months at his grandfather's estate in Kazan province. Here for the first time he had access to Marx's Capital which he avidly studied. In the meantime his brother Alexander had been apprehended in an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Czar Alexander III. Alexander Ulianov was later hanged. These two circumstances; first, the reading of the scholarly and convincing Capital and secondly, the effect of his brother's death which made him realize the futility of individual acts of terror as advanced by the Narodniki, had, it

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<sup>1</sup> Contrary to common belief the "N." did not stand for Nicholas or Nicholas. It was common practice for Russian printers to use the Russian letter "H" (N) to indicate that a pseudonym followed. Lenin probably adopted the "N." for that reason.

may be presumed, a great deal to do with Lenin's deciding to become a Marxist.

From the year 1887 until his exile ten years later, Lenin was vigorously active in Marxist work. During this period he participated in a number of Social-Democratic study groups and conducted a wide correspondence with the Emancipation of Labor group and other Social-Democratic organizations in western Europe. In 1891 Lenin was allowed to take the University law examinations as an external student of the St. Petersburg University. He passed these and was admitted to the bar in September, 1893. In 1894 Lenin joined a Social-Democratic circle in St. Petersburg of which he soon became one of the leaders. During this same year he published illegally his first literary work. It was a polemic directed against the Narodniki and was entitled, Who the 'Friends of the People' are and How They Fight Against the Social-Democrats. In 1895 Lenin travelled abroad for four months. In western Europe he became personally acquainted with Plekhanov, Zasulich, and Axelrod of the Emancipation of Labor group and through them made arrangements for the transporting of illegal literature to Russia. Upon returning to St. Petersburg he helped organize the "Union of Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class", a local Social-Democratic organization. As has been mentioned, similar Unions sprang up in Kiev, Moscow, and elsewhere. During the fall of 1895 the Union began to agitate and propagandize among the workers of St. Petersburg. To facilitate these functions preparations were made for the publication of an illegal newspaper to be called, Rabochaya Delo (The Workers' Cause). Unfortunately for the members of the Union their efforts were discovered by the police and on December 9, 1895 Lenin and other Unionists were arrested and imprisoned.



For Lenin the arrest was not without its advantages. It gave him undisturbed periods of time which he could devote to study and writings. As frequently happened, however, the period in prison was soon followed by a three year exile to eastern Siberia. The exile prolonged the period during which Lenin was out of the main stream of revolutionary activity and severely hampered his ambitions. Despite the limitations on travel and communications, Lenin's exile was not very oppressive. He was able to maintain secret contact with some Russian Social-Democrats and particularly the Emancipation of Labor group which to him was very important. He was allowed such freedom that he received most of the books and newspapers which he requested and occasionally was permitted to contribute articles to the Russian Legal Marxist journals.<sup>1</sup>

While in exile he was able to write a number of pamphlets which were mainly directed against the ideology of the Narodniki and also to complete his first book entitled, The Development of Capitalism in Russia. The book was a scholarly account of economic developments in Russia. It followed strictly the Marxist dialectical pattern and so was very well received among Russian Social-Democrats. During his exile Lenin also translated Sidney and Beatrice Webb's, Theory and Practice of Trade Unionism. This he did with the help of Natasha K. Krupskaya, who as an arrested member of the St. Petersburg "Union" was sent into exile a few months after Lenin had been, and who while in Siberia was married to Lenin in a civil ceremony. As the end of Lenin's period of exile grew nearer Social-Democratic organizational ideas

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Hill and Doris Muidie, The Letters of Lenin (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1937), p. 71.



and plans absorbed his time more and more. He began to define his own part in these plans and by correspondence discussed them with two Social-Democratic friends, I. O. Martov and A. N. Potresov who were also in exile.

Martov was three years younger and Potresov was a year older than Lenin. As was Lenin, both Martov and Potresov were a part of the younger Russian intellectuals who felt an affinity to Social-Democratic ideas and looked to western Europe and the Emancipation of Labor group for inspiration and guidance in theoretical matters. Martov, whose real name was Y. O. Tserberbaum, had become interested in socialism after observing the effects of the famine of 1891. In 1895 he participated in the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle as a member and became a close friend of Lenin's. Following the debacle of the "Union" Martov was also exiled although to a different part of Siberia from Lenin. Lenin and Martov retained their close friendship through a correspondence which was carried on during their years in exile.

Like Martov, A. N. Potresov (not a pseudonym) began his revolutionary work during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Although he too participated in the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle he managed to avoid arrest until 1898. At that time he was banished to northern Russia for two years. There he too carried on a correspondence with Social-Democratic friends in exile.

In the early months of the same year, 1900, these three were given their freedom and they soon gravitated toward each other. During their years in arrest their common purposes and future ambitions had become clear to each. A glorious future for Russian Social-Democracy was their goal and each had agreed to devote his major efforts to the attainment of that goal. Through correspondence and discussions they had determined that the first action which

should be taken by them upon release from exile would be the establishment of a Russian Social-Democratic newspaper. Such a newspaper they felt would provide an organ around which a successful Russian Marxist party could be built. The establishment of such a newspaper comprises the text of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER II

THE FOUNDING OF ISKRA

## Objectives and Tasks of the Party Organ

The time spent in exile by the young Social-Democrats, Lenin, Potresov, and Martov were years during which they found it impossible to work actively in the Social-Democratic movement. They were forbidden by the terms of their exile to participate in group meetings or travel from one town to another without permission from the Russian government. All the details of their lives were under the surveillance of the district police and all their correspondence was censored. Their contacts with socialist activities were secret ones and usually maintained only through the expedient of letters to relatives. These letters would contain messages written in code or in chemicals which rendered the message invisible. The secret portion of the letter would be forwarded by the relative to its intended destination. Naturally enough this method of entering into Social-Democratic activity was both time-consuming and risky and so was resorted to very irregularly. The many limitations imposed on the exiled tended to direct them away from practical action to the studies which involved the theoretical or philosophical problems of Social-Democracy. In spite of this academic tendency, however, it may be assumed from later events that Lenin, Potresov, and Martov never entirely ceased to consider the possibilities for future practical activity. Their desire to found a Russian Social-Democratic newspaper is an important evidence of this interest in practical problems and practical solutions. It may easily be imagined that most of their reasons for wanting such a newspaper had been at least mentally decided upon in the months preceding their release from

exile early in 1900.<sup>1</sup> It was not, however, until September of that year that in a formal declaration<sup>2</sup> those reasons were set down in printed form. The author of the declaration was Lenin but it was written with the apparent approval and consent of all who were directly concerned with the project. Copies of the declaration were circulated among the socialists in western Europe and Russia. As outlined in the declaration, the two major objectives which (it was hoped) would gradually be fulfilled by the newspaper were to strengthen and stratify the ideological foundation of the movement and to consolidate all local Russian Social-Democratic groups into one effective organization. Neither objective could be easily met. The disruptive influence of police arrests and the lack of consistent leadership in the decade following 1890 had so disorganized the party that in 1900 Lenin was forced to make the following statement in his declaration:

The principal feature of our movement, and one which has become particularly marked in recent times is its state of disunity and its primitive character. . . . Local circles spring up and function independently of one another . . . even circles which have functioned and now function simultaneously in the same district. Traditions are not established and continuity is not maintained. . . .<sup>3</sup>

What unity there was in the movement was provided by the acceptance of common ideals but even here the picture was not a bright one. Prior to 1900 a number of different tendencies had developed within Social-Democracy which were for the most part non-Marxian and anti-revolutionary. Their adoption by some groups and rejection by others simply added to the confusion already

<sup>1</sup> N. K. Krupskaya; Memories of Lenin (1893-1917) (London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd., 1942), p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> This declaration in its complete form is included in the Appendix.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix.

created by arrests and exiles. A debating society atmosphere developed and the practical activities of the party were neglected or forgotten altogether.

In the following excerpt from the same declaration Lenin surveyed the plight of the Russian Social-Democratic party and outlined the two objectives already mentioned:

In the first place, it is necessary to bring about unity of ideas which will remove the differences of opinion and confusion that--we will be frank--reign among Russian Social-Democrats at the present time. This unity of ideas must be fortified by a unified party programme. Secondly, an organization must be set up especially for the purpose of maintaining contact among all the centres of the movement, for supplying complete and timely information about the movement, and for regularly distributing the periodical press to all parts of Russia. To this task . . . (of) creating a common literature, consistent in principle and capable of ideologically uniting revolutionary Social-Democracy, we intend to devote our efforts. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The newspaper was expected to have certain characteristics and functions which would best suit it to meet the two main objectives set as a goal. First, it was considered necessary to open the newspaper to all polemical discussions from contributors. In regard to this Lenin stated:

We desire our publications to become organs for the discussion of all questions by all Russian Social-Democrats of the most diverse shades of opinion. . . . Open polemics conducted in the sight and hearing of all Russian Social-Democrats and class conscious workers, are necessary and desirable in order to explain the profoundness of the differences that exist. . . . We think it necessary to try to make our publications organs of general democracy. . . .<sup>2</sup>

It must not be assumed, however, that this "democracy" was without its restrictions. Actually while all points of view were to be invited, the editors were to reserve their right to publish what they considered to be most desirable from their own special viewpoint. Lenin expressed this when he said that the "organ (should have) a definite tendency . . . rather than being a

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, op. cit., book 1, p. 20.



jumble of various views".<sup>1</sup> The democracy planned for the newspaper, then, was not all it would seem to be at first glance.

Secondly, it was desired that the newspaper be devoted to literature common to the whole party rather than to items of only local interest. Thirdly, the newspaper was to act as a rallying point for establishing and maintaining contacts among all the local groups of the movement. And lastly, it was to be a propaganda instrument devoted to attracting the masses of workers and intellectuals to the movement and to bind the existing Social-Democratic groups under one set of ideas.

#### Iskra and Zarya

The first concrete steps toward realizing these objectives centered around a party organ were taken soon after Lenin, Martov, and Potresov were released from exile. Lenin was the first to be given his freedom. On January 30, 1900 Lenin was allowed to leave the village of his exile, Shushenskoye, Siberia. The police had forbidden him to live in St. Petersburg and Moscow, or any of the industrial centers in Russia so he decided upon Pskov, a city south-west of St. Petersburg, for his temporary headquarters.<sup>2</sup> On his way to Pskov, Lenin stopped for a few days each in Ufa and Moscow where he made contacts with members of the active Social-Democratic groups in these areas. On February 26 Lenin arrived at Pskov. He immediately began to establish connections and start negotiations with various Social-Democratic groups and individual Social-Democrats in Pskov and elsewhere, to secure support for the projected newspaper. In early March, Lenin left Pskov to take

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, V. I. Lenin, A Brief Sketch of His Life and Activities (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1942), p. 56.

part in a meeting with Vera Zasulich of the Emancipation of Labor group. Zasulich had entered Russia illegally in 1899 and was living in disguise in St. Petersburg. At this meeting she assured Lenin of the full support of her group in the newspaper venture.

While Lenin was in Northern Russia Martov had traveled from exile to the city of Poltava to make contacts in the South. By the middle of March, Lenin had returned to Pskov from St. Petersburg and Martov and Potresov had joined him.<sup>1</sup> During the two months that followed Pskov became the center of activity directed toward the establishment of the newspaper. The first official action toward the realization of that goal was taken in the last of March at what was called the "Pskov Conference".

Present at the Conference in addition to Lenin, Martov, and Potresov were representatives of Legal Marxism, Peter Struve, the author of the Manifesto of the First Congress, and B. Turgan-Baranovsky. Although both Struve and Turgan-Baranovsky had in practice already definitely broken away from Marxism, they expressed their sympathy for the suggestion of founding a Social-Democratic newspaper of organizational-wide scope.<sup>2</sup> During the first few days of the Conference it was thought that the Rabochaya Gazeta, which had been adopted as the Central Organ by the First Congress of the party, might be revived. After conversations with representatives of the Jewish Bund of Kiev who had been the original publishers of the Gazeta it was decided in order to escape any previous policy commitments that the projected paper would be entirely new and original. An editorial statement which had been drafted by

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<sup>1</sup> Bertram D. Wolfe, Three Who Made a Revolution (New York: Dial Press, 1948), p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, op. cit., p. 75.

Lenin, on the program of the future newspaper was discussed and later adopted. It later reached printed form as the Declaration which has already discussed. After a discussion of the aims and objectives, it was decided that the newspaper should be established abroad so as to escape destruction by the Russian police. The final activity of the Conference was to invite the participation of the Emancipation of Labor group, since Lenin from his conversations with Vera Zasulich knew that that group desired to participate in the founding and operation of the newspaper.<sup>1</sup>

Immediately following the Conference Potresov left Pskov for Germany to get into touch with Plekhanov and the Emancipation of Labor group. Potresov not only was to contact that group in regard to their support but also to find out from the German Social-Democrats, Adolf Braun and Clara Zetkin whether it would be possible secretly to print the newspaper in Germany.<sup>2</sup> Lenin and Martov, bolstered by the actions of the Conference, spent another month in Russia visiting party workers in such cities as Riga, Podolsk, Nizhni-Novgorod, Ufa, Kazan, and Samara.<sup>3</sup> The contacts which were made later proved invaluable when the paper was actually put into operation. On May 5, Lenin finally received his passport to go abroad but he rather foolishly decided to remain in Russia another month. On May 20 in a reckless visit to St. Petersburg, a city forbidden to both, Martov and Lenin were arrested. Lenin had on his person two thousand rubles which he had collected from supporters of the newspaper project, a list of addresses, and other incriminating evidence pointing to the illegal enterprise. By rare good fortune

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<sup>1</sup> Log. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Hill and Hudie, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, op. cit., p. 52.

he was not searched and they were only detained for ten days.<sup>1</sup> After their release from prison Martov returned to southern Russia and Lenin went to Podolsk, near Moscow, ostensibly to visit his mother, but primarily to continue negotiations there with a number of Social-Democrats regarding more financial support for the future newspaper.

On July 16, Lenin left Russia. He first traveled through Germany, stopping only long enough to establish acquaintances among important German Social-Democrats there. Upon reaching Zurich, Switzerland around the middle of August Lenin contacted Axelrod of the Emancipation of Labor group and a little later found living quarters with Potresov in the village of Vezenas, near Geneva. From the 11th to the 15th of August an important conference took place at Corsier (near Geneva) between Lenin, Potresov, Plekhanov, Axelrod, and Zaslitch during which plans for publishing the future newspaper were discussed.<sup>2</sup> Following the conference Lenin, Potresov, and Zaslitch left for Germany. By the 24th of August technical preparations for printing the paper were almost complete and the editorial board had been established at Munich where the paper was to be published. On December 11 the first issue of the newspaper which had gradually assumed form over a three year period was published.

Although the editorial staff was in Munich the first issues of the newspaper were printed in Leipzig. The reasons for this obviously inconvenient separation were probably conspiratorial. Even in Germany away from the Russian police, such precautions to insure the secrecy of the effort were con-

<sup>1</sup> Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Ernfried Eduard Kluge, Die russische revolutionäre Presse in der zweiten Hälfte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, 1855-1905 (Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1948), p. 150.



sidered necessary. The name adopted for the newspaper upon Lenin's suggestion was Iskra (The Spark)<sup>1</sup>. The title was taken from a poem by Prince Odoevsky who as a member of the Decembrist movement of the early nineteenth century was in exile in Siberia. One of Russia's greatest poets, Alexander S. Pushkin had written a poem to commemorate the hardships sustained by the exiled Decembrists. In the poem which Prince Odoevsky wrote in reply to Pushkin was the line, "The spark shall burst in burning flame".<sup>2</sup> By adopting "Iskra" as the name for their newspaper, the editors meant to take advantage of the emotional value of the word which to many implied an optimistic future.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Iskra: Tsentralnyi Organ Rossiiskai Sotsial-demokraticheskai Rabochei Partii. (The Spark: Central Organ of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party).

<sup>2</sup> The two poems follow, taken from: Julius F. Hecker, Moscow Dialogues, Discussions on Red Philosophy (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd., 1933), pp. 48-9.

Message to Siberia, by Alexander Pushkin

"Deep in the Siberian mine,  
Keep your patience proud,  
The bitter toil shall not be lost,  
The Rebel thought unbowed.

"The heavy-hanging chains will fall,  
The walls will crumble at the word,  
And Freedom greet you with the light,  
And brothers give you back the sword."

A Reply to Pushkin, by Prince Odoevsky

"Our bitter toil shall not be lost,  
The spark shall burst in burning flame;  
Our loyal godly Russian host,  
Shall gather round our banners name.  
Our chains we shall forge into eorde;  
Again to blaze with them the Tear's cohorts,  
With joy the people shall respire."

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Lewis Schuman, Soviet Politics at Home and Abroad (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), p. 36.



The first copies of Iskra printed at Leipzig were secretly produced on small secret presses owned by H. W. Dietz. Dietz was a German Social-Democrat and as owner of a large printing plant, he published Social-Democratic literature of all types including the most important works of the Marxist writers in Russia. Although the main printing establishment owned by Dietz was located at Stuttgart it was at first considered too risky to attempt the printing of Iskra there. However, secret facilities were soon set up in Stuttgart and the printing operation was transferred from Leipzig to Dietz' main plant where it remained until the middle of 1902.

The editorial board of Iskra consisted of Lenin, Martov, who arrived from Russia late in 1900, Potresov, Zasulich, Plekhanov, and Axelrod.<sup>1</sup> As has already been mentioned, the first four took up residence at Munich following the April conference near Geneva. Plekhanov remained at his home in Switzerland and Axelrod remained in Zurich. The latter two maintained contact with the Munich editors by correspondence and by an occasional trip to Germany. The composition of the editorial board remained the same until the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Party in 1903. However, their place of residence changed, first, in early 1903 when the editorial board moved to London, and later that same year when it was transferred to Geneva.

Soon after the first copies of Iskra had been printed, the same editorial board established a second publication called the Zarya (Dawn). As was the Iskra, Zarya was printed in Stuttgart on the equipment owned by H. W. Dietz. The first issue appeared on March 10, 1901. The Zarya differed from

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfe, op. cit., p. 150.

the Iskra in the purpose for which it had been published. Whereas the Iskra was essentially a newspaper devoted to agitation and popular issues, the Zarya was intended to be a propaganda journal. Its pages were devoted to discussions of theoretical subjects and articles which dealt with science and politics; particularly Marxian science. The subject concerning the number of issues of Iskra and Zarya which were published will be taken up in the next chapter, but it may be noted that many more issues of Iskra were published than of Zarya.<sup>1</sup>

The mere founding of Iskra and Zarya represented the removal of a major obstacle to the aspirations of the group of editors. Without publications for propaganda and agitation, they could hardly hope to exert much influence. But to found a newspaper was one thing, and to keep its parts smoothly coordinated was another. Dissension among the editors, some of which became apparent even before the first issue of Iskra had come from the press, threatened with some frequency to wreck the whole venture.

#### Early Conflicts Among the Editors of Iskra and Zarya

In the ranks of the editors of Iskra there were three types of conflicts: those which were essentially irrational and created through personality differences; those which centered around the internal problems of managing Iskra; and lastly those which arose through disagreements on the attitudes which Iskra should adopt toward other newspapers and other political groups. It is difficult to isolate completely the first type of conflict from the other two because of its irrational basis. How often stands were taken as they were or issues decided one way or another owing to conflicting personalities

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, op. cit., p. 322.

it would be impossible to say. In an analysis of the conflicts among the Iskra editors this factor must remain the unknown quantity which can be hinted and guessed at but cannot be proved.

Internal conflicts commenced on almost the first day that Lenin arrived at Geneva in August of 1900.<sup>1</sup> The only published account of these events is Lenin's, written the month after the August meetings under the title, How The Spark Was Nearly Extinguished. Although, quite naturally, the account given is biased it appears to be exhaustive and hence may be assumed to be fairly complete even though probably not quite accurate.

The first disagreement at the Geneva Conference concerned the policy to be adopted in the future Iskra toward polemics and the participation of other socialist and liberal tendencies. It will be remembered that Lenin was nourishing the idea that the Iskra could be everybody's paper, could have working allies, and still maintain a definite "tendency" or editorial consistency.<sup>2</sup> George Flekhanov, during the early sessions of the Conference took issue with this viewpoint which had been written in Lenin's Draft Declaration of Iskra and Zarva. It was his contention that polemics from opposing tendencies should not be printed by Iskra. Flekhanov's attitude toward this point and also the general tone of his conduct is brought out in the following excerpt from Lenin's account of the Conference:

A heated discussion arose over the question . . . (of) polemics. G. V. (Flekhanov) opposed (them) . . . and absolutely refused to listen to our arguments. He displayed a hatred toward "allies" that bordered on the indecent (suspecting them of espionage, accusing them of being Geschäftmacher (swindlers) and rogues, and asserting that he

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1 Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, op. cit., p. 56.

2 Wolfe, op. cit., p. 149.

would not hesitate to "shoot" such "traitors," etc. . . .<sup>1</sup>

After taking issue with this part of the content of Lenin's draft Plekhanov, who incidently was a skilled and clever writer, began to criticize the style in which the declaration was written. He felt that it lacked depth and had a pedestrian tone. He expressed the desire to alter the style and give it a higher tone. Such a suggestion would not be calculated to create any great amount of good feeling between the two future editors.

As the days passed, the rift between Lenin and Potresov on the one hand, and the Emancipation of Labor group headed by Plekhanov on the other, became wider. Toward the end of the Conference quarrels developed over very minor points which normally would be expected to have no significance in the face of the outstanding goal which was being considered. This pettiness is well illustrated by Lenin's adamant opposition to the commissioning of one author to write one article to appear in Iskra. Of this incident Lenin said:

G. V. proposed that a certain person (who had not yet contributed anything to literature but in whom G. V. pretends to see philosophical talent; I have never seen this person--but she is known for her blind worship of G. V.), be commissioned to write an article on a philosophical subject. . . .<sup>2</sup>

As the relations among the members of the group steadily worsened Plekhanov brought matters to an abrupt climax by announcing that he would serve as merely a contributor rather than as an editor. He stated that "it was evident that our views differed . . . (and) otherwise there would be continual friction."<sup>3</sup> Despite Lenin and Potresov's disagreements with

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Loc. cit.



Flekhánov they were not prepared for this surprising change. Flekhánov was older and at that time much more experienced in Social-Democratic matters than either Lenin or Potresov. They were unwilling to risk their talents on a newspaper venture without the active support and advice of one with Flekhánov's experience. They began to argue against the suggestion. Apparently, Flekhánov had understood before he made the suggestion what the consequences would be. At any rate, he took strategic advantage of the position in which he found himself, and agreed to be an editor of the future publication only if he be allowed two votes (the other five, Lenin, Martov, Potresov, Axelrod, and Zaslitch were to be given one vote apiece). In the face of the threat of losing Flekhánov altogether Lenin and Potresov quickly agreed to this. However, they soon regretted their action as Lenin indicated in the following:

On that (after being given two votes) G. V. took the reins of management in his hands and in a high editorial manner began to apportion tasks for the journal . . . we sat there as if we had been ducked. . . . My infatuation with Flekhánov disappeared as if by magic, and I felt offended and embittered to the highest degree.<sup>1</sup>

Following the meeting which had ended so successfully for Flekhánov, Lenin and Potresov returned to their rooms stinging from the knowledge that their position as editors of the future newspaper had been undermined by their hasty action. Flekhánov with two votes apparently planned to be dictator over the entire plan. The next morning further discussions and arguments took place and Lenin was on the verge of saying, "Good-bye, journal! We will throw up everything and return to Russia. There we will start all over again, right from the beginning. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Lenin's plan to leave for

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<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30



Russia, however, was never carried through. Later in the day the two other members of the Emancipation of Labor group, Vera Zasulich and Paul Axelrod convinced him that it would still be possible to work with Plekhanov. Later that same week, Lenin and Potresov had another interview with Plekhanov at which time "he adopted a tone as if to suggest that all that had happened was a sad misunderstanding due to irritability . . .".<sup>1</sup> Plekhanov gave way on the question of polemics and instructed Lenin to draw up a plan of the formal relations which were to exist among the editors.

This draft agreement was written soon after Lenin and the other editors left for Munich. The typewritten draft dated October 6 is in the Archives of the Lenin Institute at Moscow and is apparently, in the main, the work of Lenin.<sup>2</sup>

The quarrels which developed at the conference and which were ostensibly settled amicably presaged later personal conflicts among the editors. In the majority of the later conflicts as with those at the conference the older editors, Plekhanov, Axelrod, and Zasulich were in opposition to the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> The following which is the text of the agreement was taken from:  
Ibid., p. 317.

(1) The Compendium Zarya and the newspaper Iskra shall be published and edited by the Russian Social-Democrat group with the editorial participation of the Emancipation of Labor group.

(2) The editorial board shall submit all articles dealing with principles and which are of a particularly serious nature to all the members of the Emancipation of Labor group if editorial and technical conditions permit of that being done.

(3) The members of the Emancipation of Labor group shall vote on all editorial questions. . . .

(4) In the event of differences arising with the Emancipation of Labor group, the editors undertake to publish in their entirety the opinions of the group as a whole, or of each member individually.

(5) Only the first point of this agreement shall be made public.

younger editors. With twenty years of exile back of them the older members looked upon Iskra and Zarya as a literary undertaking above all else. Plekhanov was a revolutionary skeptic and Axelrod and Zaslitch did not consider organizational and tactical questions very important. On the other hand Lenin and the younger editors thought of Iskra and Zarya as important instruments for bringing about immediate revolutionary action.<sup>1</sup> This basic difference in viewpoint between the two groups made editorial cohesiveness difficult and represented a major source of friction. This difference in viewpoint which went unanalyzed gradually widened the chasm between the two groups and their clashes "had a sharpness out of all proportion to the issues".<sup>2</sup>

The decision to establish the editorial board at Munich in preparation for the first issue of Iskra was not made without some quarrelling. Both Plekhanov and Axelrod wanted the editorial board to be set up somewhere in Switzerland. In opposing this, Lenin considered it necessary "for Iskra to be somewhat apart from the emigrant center (which Geneva had become) and that it should be run secretly."<sup>3</sup> Actually the issue was probably based on the desire of each group to maintain as much control as possible over the policies of Iskra, the assumption being that if the editorial board were in Munich it would be difficult for Plekhanov and Axelrod, who spent most of their time in Switzerland, to be very effective. That the editorial board was moved to Munich over the disapproval of the older editors was probably because they didn't object very much. At first the whole venture wasn't

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<sup>1</sup> Leon Trotsky, The History of the Russian Revolution (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1932), p. 156.

<sup>2</sup> Wolfe, op. cit., p. 166.

<sup>3</sup> Quotation from: N. K. Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 36.

considered very important by them. N. K. Krupskaya implied this when she quoted Vera Zaslitch: "'Your Iskra is silly,' Vera Ivanovna said, jokingly at the beginning. This it is true was only said for fun, but it revealed a certain underestimation of the whole enterprise."<sup>1</sup> This attitude is also brought out by the apathy which went with the obvious political move of Lenin making his wife, N. K. Krupskaya, the secretary of Iskra early in 1901. This, of course, meant that Lenin and the younger editors would be able to exercise much control over the flow of correspondence. The Emancipation of Labor group did not put up their own candidate for the position which seems to indicate that they did not attach much importance to Iskra at the time.

As the influence of Iskra began to grow, the agitation to return to Switzerland became more frequent. The question of location once again became a major issue in the early months of 1902. At that time both the German and the Czarist police obtained clues to the whereabouts of Iskra's headquarters and it became imperative to leave Germany. Both Plekhanov and Axelrod favored moving to Switzerland but the remainder of the editors voted for London. After almost a year at London another vote was taken and just prior to the Second Congress of the Party the editorial board was moved to Geneva. The vote had been five to one with Lenin casting the only dissenting vote. Lenin was so over-wrought with the thought of losing his editorial independence from Plekhanov and Axelrod that he was reported to have developed a nervous illness called ehinglee.<sup>2</sup> Usually a minimum of ill-feeling resulted over the disagreements on locations for the editorial board of Iskra.

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<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

Such was not the case in the conflict which resulted from Lenin's sponsorship of a young Social-Democrat, Leon Trotsky.

Trotsky, whose family name was Bronstein, was the son of a wealthy Jewish landholder. At the age of twenty he had been exiled to Siberia and while in exile he heard of the activities of the Iskra organization. Early in 1902, after his release from exile he joined an Iskra group in Samara. As a tribute to some of his Siberian journalistic efforts he was nicknamed Pero (Pen). This became his official organizational name. During this time he was a fervent supporter of Iskra and "produced a very good impression on everybody"<sup>1</sup> connected with Iskra at Samara. In the Autumn of 1902 it was decided that Trotsky should be sent from Russia to London where his abilities as a journalist could be used to their best advantage. A number of exciting and amusing incidents happened to Trotsky on that trip to London. He was nearly caught at a railroad station near the Russian border, and later he was hidden in a room only to find that the occupant, who was not an Iskra sympathizer, was not out of town as he was supposed to be, but was still in the room.<sup>2</sup> At the border his arrangements for crossing temporarily backfired when his smuggler discovered that Trotsky was an Iskra adherent. It developed that the smuggler had taken offense at some of the remarks concerning terror as a revolutionary instrument in a recent issue of Iskra. Only after much supplication did the man consent to carry Trotsky across the border.<sup>3</sup> Upon arriving in London, Trotsky first visited Lenin and his wife who then found him a room with Martov and Blumenfeld, the Iskra printing press manager.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Leon Trotsky, My Life (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 144.



Trotsky soon found a place in the Iskra activities at London. He assisted in the editorial work of the paper and soon was writing articles and short polemics for Iskra, the first of such works being a short piece commemorating the two-hundred year jubilee of the Schlüsselburg fortress.<sup>1</sup> Trotsky's abilities as a writer and orator made an immediate impression on the emigre circles in Brussels, Liege, and Paris where he was sent to lecture on Social-Democracy. His eagerness as a student and as an impassioned follower of Iskra devoted him to Lenin and they soon became close friends.<sup>2</sup>

Four months after Trotsky's arrival in London Lenin wrote to Flekhanov suggesting that Trotsky be co-opted as a seventh member of the editorial board. A part of the letter is included below:

I suggest to all the members of the editorial board that they co-optate 'Pero' as a member of the board on the same basis as other members. I believe co-optation demands not merely a majority of votes, but a unanimous decision. We very much need a seventh member, both as a convenience in voting (six being an even number) and as an addition to our forces. 'Pero' has been contributing to every issue for several months now; he works in general most energetically for the Iskra; he gives lectures (in which he has been very successful). In the section of articles and notes on the events of the day, he will not only be very useful, but absolutely necessary. Unquestionably a man of rare abilities, he has conviction and energy, and he will go much farther. Furthermore, in the field of translations and of popular literature he will be able to do a great deal. . . .<sup>3</sup>

The remainder of the letter considered possible objections to Trotsky such as his youth, his excessively florid style of writing, and the possibility of his leaving for Russia shortly. In a post-script to the letter Lenin stated that he thought it extremely likely that any delay in this co-optation

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<sup>1</sup> Trotsky, Russian Revolution, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Souvarine, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> This letter quoted from: Trotsky, My Life, p. 152.



would so offend Trotsky as to lose him from the organization entirely. Trotsky in his writings denied this assumption of Lenin's as being without foundation and this denial affirms the existence of an atmosphere of intrigue among the editors at this time. Lenin's resort to such a pressure tactic as was involved in the post-cript statement is characteristic of the situation in London. Ten days later Martov wrote Axelrod seconding Lenin's proposal but this was merely a part of the lining up on sides; the older editors on one, and the younger editors on the other. Plekhanov emphatically opposed Lenin's motion. He took it as a personal affront that Lenin would propose a mere boy of twenty-three for the editorial board of Iskra. He reminded Lenin of the dual vote which had been given him at the Geneva Conference. Even though Plekhanov had never taken advantage of the dual vote, he took this opportunity to assure the other editors that he still considered himself the possessor of that voting right.<sup>1</sup> After bitter discussion Plekhanov proposed that the reorganizing of the editorial board be delayed until the Second Congress of the Party which was several months in the future. Since co-optating could only be done by unanimous agreement of the editors, Lenin's proposal was blocked. After that, even though Trotsky had not been made an editor he was brought to the editorial meetings by Lenin and Vera Zaslitch.<sup>2</sup> Although he was not given a vote, Trotsky's presence at the meetings further vexed Plekhanov.

Lenin probably had at least three reasons for proposing Trotsky's co-optation to the editorial board, even though he undoubtedly realized that his action would add to the tension already felt among the editors. The

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfe, op. cit., p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit.

first reason was probably based on a genuine regard for the abilities of Trotsky and a desire to see those abilities used to the best advantage of Iskra. Secondly, since Plekhanov had never asserted his right to a dual vote Lenin probably considered it invalid. Voting frequently ended in a tie with Plekhanov, Axelrod, and Zaslitch on the one side, and Lenin, Martov, and Potresov on the other. All of the editors found this tie possibility vexatious and Lenin saw in the co-optation of Trotsky a means of doing away with this source of trouble. The third reason stems from the second and is quite likely more important than either of the first two. During this London episode of Iskra, Lenin and Trotsky were in accord on most of the major issues. Lenin probably felt that Trotsky added to the board would provide a stable majority which on most of the critical questions would be in his favor.<sup>1</sup> It is this last point which undoubtedly determined Plekhanov's hostile attitude toward Lenin's proposal.

The internal conflicts became more pronounced as the time for the Second Congress grew near. These were very largely centered around the proposed draft declaration of the Congress and will be discussed in the next chapter. Internal conflicts, however, were by no means the only source of disagreement. External sources were also present. Although they usually formed a united front on issues involving other tendencies, groups, or publications, even here discord among the Iskra editors was not always avoided. Iskra's relations with its oppositional forces and the attitudes among the editors in respect to those forces will be the subject of the next section.

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<sup>1</sup> Trotsky, My Life, p. 155.

Iskra and Zarya versus "Economism"

Prior to the Second Congress and following the founding of Iskra there were two major tendencies within Russian Social-Democracy; "Economism" and Iskrovotzi.<sup>1</sup> "Economistic" groups were given a number of different names such as Bernsteinism, revisionism, khvostism, primitive-ism, and opportunism. Despite the different labels given to these groups all of them shared a common unity in their basic ideas and all were representative of one particular tendency in the Marxist movement. The term "revisionism" first appeared in 1899 in a book by Eduard Bernstein entitled, Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie, (English translation: Evolutionary Socialism). Bernstein was a veteran German Social-Democrat and a member of the Second International which had been founded soon after Marx's death. In his book, Bernstein claimed that the basic contentions of Marx were refuted by the actual development of capitalism and he went on to demand a revision of the revolutionary philosophical, economic, and political principles of Marx; hence, the term "revisionism". Bernstein desired to substitute in the place of these principles a theory of conciliation of class antagonisms, a denial of the Socialist revolution, and a reliance upon gradual permeation of capitalist society by socialism.

Bernstein rejected the theory of class struggle because he considered it necessary that Social-Democracy work within the framework of constitutional democracy. Class struggle appeared to him to be out of place in a strictly democratic society governed by the will of the majority. For this reason he

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<sup>1</sup> This name will be used to indicate both the Iskra and Zarya tendency or viewpoint and also to indicate the group which professed adherence to Iskra's and Zarya's principles.

proposed his theory of conciliation among the classes. The revolution for Bernstein was to be a gradual process worked out within the framework of bourgeois society. Social-Democracy should change from a party of the violent social revolution into a democratic party of social reform.<sup>1</sup> Finally, in denying the Socialist revolution and proposing gradual changes, he subordinated the dialectical process of Marxian materialism to a theory of evolutionary changes.

What Bernsteinism was in western Europe, "Economism" and a type of "Economism", khvostism was in Russia. Following the mass arrests in Russia during the 1890's many Social-Democrats began to lose confidence in the politico-revolutionary activities of their movement. Consequently, "in their efforts to win the masses (they) let their political slogans recede into the background."<sup>2</sup> Gradually, a new tendency developed which was essentially "economic" in character. These "Economists" argued that they should champion the practical needs of labor such as shorter hours, higher wages, and better working conditions. Certain "Economists" even repudiated the political leadership of the workers altogether, asserting that politics should be the business of the liberal intellectuals.<sup>3</sup> In repudiating the political struggle the Russian "Economists" picked up two new titles. The first, khvostism, meant, literally, dragging at the tail and was derisively applied to the "Economists" to indicate their inclination to follow rather than lead the revolutionary movement.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, the term, "primitiveness", was applied

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Trotsky, My Life, p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> David Shub, Lenin (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948), p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> V. I. Lenin, Selected Works (New York: International Publishers, 1929), v. 2, p. 494.



to them as indicative of their attitude toward organization. The "Economists" considered it necessary that the working class be organized on only the broadest democratic principles with the maximum application of the elective principle. They concluded that it was unnecessary to maintain a close-knit national organization to bind the local groups into one unit. Considering the non-political nature of "Economism", this principle of primitiveness in organization seems to follow logically. There would be little need for an organization equipped to exert political pressure over large areas if the only demands were "economic" ones which could and had to be met locally.

The opportunistic<sup>1</sup> views of the Revisionists in western Europe and the "Economists" in Russia were subjected to constant attack from the leftists, or revolutionary, branches of Social-Democracy. In western Europe, however, the Revisionists were able to establish themselves as a highly influential branch of the movement. This was probably due to a desire of the European Marxists to maintain unity at all costs. By 1900 the Revisionists had gained a position of leadership in the western European Socialist movement. In Russia the "Economists" did not go so nearly unchallenged. With the establishment of Iskra and Zarya, "war on ("Economism") was declared along the whole front, beginning with questions of theory and ending with questions of organization and party structure."<sup>2</sup>

In their battle with "Economism" the Iskrovotzi maintained what they considered to be an orthodox Marxist viewpoint on all issues. In 1900, Lenin wrote: "We stand for the consistent development (of ideas) in the spirit

<sup>1</sup> So-called because of the tendency to make use of present opportunities for mild reform rather than to work for revolution.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, op. cit., p. 80.

of Marx and Engels, resolutely rejecting the half-hearted and opportunistic revisions which have become so fashionable thanks to Bernstein . . .".<sup>1</sup> The Iskrovotzi continually emphasized the class-struggle and the hegemony of the proletariat; i. e., that the working class must lead the revolutionary movement. The necessity for practical political action was also stressed, as was the need for an effective organization to promote this political action. Finally, the Iskrovotzi denied the principle of spontaneity of the mass revolutionary movement which was the foundation of the "Economic" tendency.

According to the Iskrovotzi no working class was able to develop a class consciousness exclusively by its own efforts. Without leadership the most that it could hope to develop would be trade-union consciousness, or a desire to conduct an economic struggle.<sup>2</sup> For the Iskrovotzi this spontaneous trade-unionist striving which developed if "revolutionary" leadership were not available emasculated the working class by depriving them of their rightful place as political leaders. The "Economists", then, in helping the workers carry on the economic struggle were, according to the Iskrovotzi, making a serious mistake. In defense of their position the "Economist" groups usually denied that any other kind of work was feasible under existing conditions.

Unconvinced by this argument, the Iskrovotzi developed their program not only on a reassertion of Marxian revolutionary principles but beyond that to one which included definite ideas on organization and practical action. Rather than a "primitive" decentralized party such as was advocated by the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., book 2, p. 114.

"Economists", the Iskrovotsi advocated a national political organization with a strict monolithic structure and with one common and definite point of view. The need for such an organization was recognized by Lenin even while he was still in exile. In 1899, after reading Bernstein's book which he was told was very popular among some Russian Social-Democratic groups, he wrote Potresov: "Cursed Russian disorganization is entirely to blame here!".<sup>1</sup>

In the years of 1901 and 1902 the conflicting viewpoints of the two tendencies became clearly outlined. The "Economists" established their battle stations in Rabochaya Mysl, Rabochaya Delo, and in other journals and pamphlets while the Iskrovotsi gave attack through their publications, Iskra and Zarya. Even before the first issue of Iskra appeared, however, the future Iskrovotsi made a decisive break with the "Economists".

The event which brought about this split took place during the month of April, 1900. At that time a conference of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad was held at Geneva. The original founders of the Union, the Emancipation of Labor group, attended this conference as did a larger number of representatives from groups which had adopted the "Economic" tendency. Finding themselves in the minority the Emancipation of Labor group and a number of individuals who supported the group left the Union and created a separate organization which was first named the Russian Social-Democrats and still later the League of Russian Revolutionary Social-Democracy Abroad. The majority of the conference in the meantime retained the name of the Union and began to agitate for a Party Congress. Several local groups in

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<sup>1</sup> Hill and Muddie, op. cit., p. 91.

Russia supported the move but a congress was never convened from this inspiration.<sup>1</sup> The Emancipation of Labor group opposed the Union's efforts to call a congress and within a month after the split even denied that the Union still could act as sole representative of the Russian Social-Democrats outside of Russia; a thing which it had done when the Emancipation of Labor group was still within its membership.

Ostensibly, the chief reason for the split was the repudiation by the Emancipation group of the "Economic" tendencies in the Union. This point, however, was not recognized by many Social-Democrats at the time. In answer to one such person, Lenin wrote on September 5, 1900:

You write that (1) there are no differences of opinion where principles are concerned and that (2) the Union is actually ready to prove its determination to struggle against the "economic direction". We are convinced that you are mistaken on both points. Our conviction is based on (certain publications endorsed by the Union which Lenin thought indicated an "Economic" trend). . . . We intend to appear in literature with a refutation of the opinion that there is no difference of principles. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Whether the majority of the Union actually did profess basic differences of principle from the Emancipation of Labor group is not of primary importance. The significance of the conference was not in any real or imagined differences but in the actual split which occurred. After the April conference the Union group took to their journals and the Emancipation of Labor group did likewise. April, 1900 marked the date of the start of a well-organized literary battle.

One of the first journals to reveal definite "Economic" tendencies, according to the Iskrovetsi, was the Rabochaya Mysl (Workers' Thought).

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, op. cit., book 1, p. 312.

<sup>2</sup> Hill and Mudie, op. cit., p. 110.



This newspaper was founded in 1893 by a small group of Russian emigres who had established their independence from the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad but had remained sympathetic with that organization. The first important evidence of the newspapers' deviation from revolutionary Marxism was contained in the Special Supplement to the Rabochaya Mysl published in 1899. Although Lenin and other future Iskrovotzi probably knew about the Special Supplement while in exile, it was not until after the founding of Iskra that Lenin criticized it at length. In the leading article of the Special Supplement the principle of evolutionary socialism was expressed:

Socialism . . . which is the outcome of the evolution of the social methods of modern production, and which inevitably leads to the complete socialization . . . of all its means is merely the further and higher step in the development of modern society.<sup>1</sup>

Lenin found in this statement a subordination of the revolutionary element of socialism. He concluded that the goal of socialism formulated in this manner would be endorsed by all the liberals and all the bourgeoisie--whom, of course, he considered to be enemies of socialism. At another place in the Special Supplement, a criticism was made of the political activities of certain Russian Social-Democrats. This activity, it was felt, harmed the economic cause of the workers by arousing industry against all things Social-Democratic.<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to determine the validity of the charges of "Economism" made against Rabochaya Mysl. Even after the Iskrovotzi labeled the viewpoints with which they disagreed, many groups refused to admit that they were less Marxian (and therefore, according to socialist reasoning, less right)

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, Selected Works, p. 496.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, Collected Works, book 2, p. 184.

than their adversaries.

Although no substantiation is available, it is felt that the influence of Rabochaya Mysl must have not been considered very great after 1901, if it ever was. After that year mention is seldom made of the paper in Iskra or Zarya while even before then most of the polemics were directed at the single publication, the Special Supplement. Of the newspapers supporting the Union after its split with the Emancipation of Labor group, Rabochaya Delo was probably far more important than Rabochaya Mysl. Against the influence of Rabochaya Delo the Iskrovotsi directed many articles and a pamphlet of almost book length.

Rabochaya Delo (Workers' Deed) was first published in the late 1890's and after the split between the Union of Russian Social-Democrats in 1900, the paper became the Union's official organ. Because of its wide circulation among emigre circles in western Europe it was well known among Marxian socialists. Despite the paper's affiliation with the Union, the Emancipation of Labor group supported it for a few months after they had broken with the Union. In February, 1900, G. V. Plekhanov published a pamphlet entitled Vade Mecum which was meant to be a guide to the editors of Rabochaya Delo. It consisted of articles and letters written by the leaders of the "Economist" movement with editorial refutation by Plekhanov.<sup>1</sup> This attempt by Plekhanov to influence the policies of Rabochaya Delo was critically received and in the months which followed the Emancipation of Labor group turned its attention to the founding of Iskra.

By early spring of 1901 both Iskra and Zarya entered into open polemics

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<sup>1</sup> Nikolai N. Popov, Outline History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (New York: International Publishers, 1934), p. 75.

with Rabochaya Delo.<sup>1</sup> The Iskrovotsi criticized the Rabochaya Delo for their "Economic" tendencies and they were in turn criticized for their attempts to assume dictatorship over the entire Russian Social-Democratic movement. Specifically, the Iskrovotsi found fault with the slogan, "freedom of criticism", which as advocated by the Rabochaya Delo meant freedom to present all issues and to allow individuals to voice their acceptance or rejection. Only by this means could real unity among all Social-Democrats be ultimately established, they felt. To the Iskrovotsi with their desire to present a single tendency and for a monolithic Iskra-controlled Social-Democratic organization, such a slogan was declared tantamount to anarchy.

The "stage" theory expressed by Rabochaya Delo was also criticized by the Iskrovotsi. This was a variation of the Bernsteinian argument for economic demands to come first in the movement. In an article by B. Krichevsky, one of the editors of Rabochaya Delo, he stated: "According to the theories of Marx and Engels, the class interest is the decisive factor in history, and consequently, that the proletarian struggle for the defence of its economic interests must be of first importance . . . (however, these interests) can be satisfied only by a political revolution."<sup>2</sup> Even though the first "stage" should be that of satisfying the economic needs of the workers, the final revolutionary stage still was considered necessary by the Rabochaya Delo-ists. The Iskrovotsi chose to ignore this and raised the cry of "Economicism" because of the first "stage".

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, op. cit., book 2, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Quotation from: Ibid., p. 128.

The most noteworthy literary strife between Iskra and Rabochaya Delo occurred on questions of organization. The Iskrovotsi conceived of a strong, centralized, Russian Social-Democratic organization to be built around a newspaper such as the Iskra. On the other hand, the Rabochaya Delo-ists considered organization necessary only at the local level. The chief arguments used by the Iskrovotsi in support of their plan were; (1) that only such an organization would possibly be able to coordinate the revolutionary activities of the local groups effectively enough to bring about mass revolution and, (2) that only through a newspaper, devoted not to local problems but to the problems of the entire movement, would it be possible to bring about group sentiment in favor of revolution. The newspaper, then, was to be a collective organizer.<sup>1</sup> Local groups would first attain a unity of purpose through the propaganda of the newspaper and then would be directed to political activity by the newspaper's agents. These agents were to be the core of the organization and would be chosen for their willingness to devote their whole lives to the purpose of revolution. The arguments advanced against such a plan by Rabochaya Delo were; (1) that the people would fail to organize around something as ephemeral as a newspaper, and, (2) that the local organizations already in existence were effectively participating in the economic struggle, which is all that the Russian workers were yet capable of, and, (3) that any centralized organization must not be imposed from above but must rise from the masses. The local groups must band together on their own initiative.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 225.



The differences in the two positions were essentially the result of disagreements on the question of spontaneity. The assumption of the Rabochaya Delo-ists was that the political revolution would result spontaneously from the masses after the economic stage had been passed. The Iskrovotsi in turn denied the spontaneous nature of the revolutionary movement and therefore demanded an active organization dedicated to revolution.

The Iskrovotsi side of the argument over organization was not carried solely in the columns of Iskra and Zarya. During the month of December, 1901, Lenin completed a pamphlet of which he had conceived while still in exile. In the pamphlet which was entitled, What Is To Be Done?, Lenin developed fully his organizational plan and his criticism of the Rabochaya Delo. Soon after this Lenin wrote a long polemical letter to the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle which at that time supported Rabochaya Delo. The letter which came to be known as Letter To a Comrade, covered in a much shorter space the same ideas which were developed in What Is To Be Done.<sup>1</sup>

Both Iskra and Rabochaya Delo considered the political revolution to be the goal of socialism even though they conceived of the means of reaching that goal in different ways. For this reason many Russian Social-Democrats did not consider the debate carried on between the two papers as being especially important and termed it senseless quibbling. One such Social-Democrat mirrored this feeling in a letter to Iskra:

Being in opposition to other S-D organizations which differ from it in their views concerning the progress and tasks of the Russian labor movement, Iskra, in the heat of controversy sometimes forgets the truth. . . . Emphasises points of disagreement that are frequently of little material importance, and obstinately ignores numerous points of resemblance in views. We have in mind Iskra's attitude toward Rabochaya Delo.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, op. cit., p. 65.

Even among some of the editors of Iskra the question arose as to whether the conflict was worth the schism which might easily become permanent and thus destroy the chances for a revolution. During 1901 serious consideration was given to the prospect of reuniting the warring factions.

In the summer and autumn of 1901, negotiations were carried on between the Social-Democratic organizations abroad. These groups consisted of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats which represented the interests of Rabochaya Delo, the Foreign Committee of the Jewish Bund, and the Russian Social-Democrats which represented Iskra and Zarya. The first conference of these groups took place at Geneva in early June. It was called on the initiative of the Borba group, an emigre Social-Democratic organization of relatively minor importance to the movement. After a few days' discussion the conference drew up a resolution which was accepted by all those present. The resolution condemned "Economism" and Bernsteinism and was regarded as a serious step toward a rapprochement between the Rabochaya Delo-ists and the Iskrovotzi. The resolution was intended to have received formal endorsement of all the organizations involved at a "Unity" Congress to be called in October of the same year.

During the months which followed this preliminary conference both sides began to regret their concessions. When the "Unity" Congress finally met at Zurich on October 4th, Lenin had convinced his co-editors that a final break was necessary. Both Plekhanov and Martov had opposed this action and only yielded to Lenin after lengthy persuasions. The Rabochaya Delo-ists, in the meantime, had begun to suspect that the Iskrovotzi had designs on the autonomy of their paper. During the opening days, the Iskrovotzi drew up a resolution which virtually recorded the impossibility of unity by demanding that all

groups accept unconditionally the political policy of Iskra. Following the official and permanent break, the Russian Social-Democrats reorganized under the name of the League of Russian Revolutionary Social-Democrats Abroad. The League represented itself as a section of the Iskra organization abroad and its chief functions were to be to contribute to the publication and circulation of Iskra and Zarya and to assist in training militant workers as leaders for the revolutionary movement in Russia.<sup>1</sup> Following the "Unity" Congress the Iskrovotzi became more uncompromising than ever in their attitude toward "Economic" tendencies and in turn the Rabochaya Delo and other oppositional newspapers found themselves less interested in denying Iskra's charges and more interested in proving their own viewpoints to be the correct ones.

Among the Russian Marxian groups which were in conflict with the Iskrovotzi at least a part of the time during 1900 to 1903 were the Borba group, the Jewish Bund, and the Yuzhny Rabochy-ists. The Borba (Struggle) group which was founded in Paris in the beginning of 1901 was very small and consisted entirely of Russian Social-Democratic writers. At first the members of the group contributed to Iskra and Zarya. After unsuccessfully attempting to federate with the editorial board of Iskra, the Borba group came out as an independent literary association and tried to occupy an intermediate position between the Iskrovotzi and the Rabochaya Delo-ists. Subsequently the Borba group became opposed to Iskra's organizational principles, particularly the principles of centralism and conspiracy (against the Czarist government). The Borba group failed to gain much prominence and they were finally

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, Selected Works, p. 544.

disbanded at the Second Congress of The Russian Social-Democrats held in 1903.

The Bund, which was the Jewish title of the Jewish Labor League in Poland, Lithuania, and Russia was established in 1897 at a congress in Vilna. The Bund represented a large number of Jews interested in the principles of Russian Social-Democracy and Marxism in general. At its Fourth Congress in April, 1901, the Bund passed a resolution in favor of the federal system of organization which would have established the Bund as an autonomous self-controlled unit in any future nation-wide Russian Social-Democratic organization. In the principles of organization adopted by the Iskrovotsi there was no place for such an uncontrollable unit. Although the Iskrovotsi were willing to grant the Bund autonomy on purely Jewish matters no such freedom was conceivable on questions which affected the entire movement.<sup>1</sup> The Iskrovotsi devoted several articles to a discussion of the resolution and so affronted many of the Bundists that they began to support Rabochaya Delo. Thus the question of Jewish autonomy remained unsettled and was a cause of considerable debate at the Second Congress in 1903.

The Yuzhny Rabochy (Southern Worker) was a Russian Social-Democratic group formed in Ekaterinoslav in 1899. During January of the following year the group established a newspaper which was given the same name as the group itself. In the south of Russia and particularly in the Ukraine, the Yuzhny Rabochy had considerable influence among Social-Democrats.<sup>2</sup> The political views of the group were closer to the Iskrovotsi than to the "Economists". The group recognized and approved of the principle of an immediate political

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<sup>1</sup> Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, op. cit., p. 341.



revolution by the working class but differed with the Iskra chiefly on organizational matters. Before Trotsky was sent to London and Iskra he made a trip to Poltava where he negotiated with the Yuzhny Rabochy for Iskra support. While there he analyzed the Yuzhny Rabochy's reluctance to accept Iskra's organizational principles as a "desire to remain a separate group and publish their own popular organ".<sup>1</sup> Other disagreements arose over their dissatisfaction at the sharp polemics which the Iskra directed against the Liberals from time to time and also at Iskra's emphasis on the peasant movement as a revolutionary force. Despite these differences the Yuzhny Rabochy generally supported the Iskrovotsi on important issues after 1902.

In the preceding section all the groups which have been discussed had at least two things in common: they all professed a common foundation in Marxian philosophy, and the two central tendencies, represented by Iskrovotsi and "Economism" each claimed to possess the correct interpretation of that philosophy. On the fringe of Russian Social-Democracy stood Legal Marxism and altogether outside of the Marxian movement were the Socialist-Revolutionary and the Liberal groups. Iskra's relations with these groups will be the subject of the last section of this chapter.

#### Legal Marxism, Liberalism, and the Socialist-Revolutionaries

Negotiations between the editors of the future Iskra, Lenin and Martov and the chief representatives of Legal Marxism began at the conference in Pskov during April, 1900. At that time P. Struve and B. Turgan-Baranovsky, the representatives of Legal Marxism, indicated their desire to publish a

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<sup>1</sup> Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 59.

revolutionary journal abroad. Later that same year, a few weeks after the first issue of Iskra had been printed, further negotiations were commenced in Munich between Lenin, Potresov, and Vera Zasulich of Iskra, and Struve, who represented the Legal Marxists. Struve, who had considerable contact among the bourgeois intelligentsia from whom he could obtain all sorts of material against the Russian Government, demonstrated his desire to act not merely as a contributor to Iskra and Zarya but also made the proposal to publish a third organ, the Sovremennoye Obozreniye, (Contemporary Review). This journal was to carry only political articles and have no mention of Russian Social-Democracy on its cover. Of the editors of Iskra at the negotiations only Lenin objected to Struve's proposal. Apparently Lenin feared that Iskra and Zarya would become subordinated to the Sovremennoye Obozreniye and that Struve would dominate that journal with his own political views. In the following excerpt from a letter to Plekhanov, who was not at the conference, Lenin explained his objections:

We shall run messages for Judas (Struve) who by his bossing in the Sovremennoye Obozreniye will make a magnificent "Liberal" career and will attempt to put into the shade not only the weighty Zarya but also Iskra (it is obvious, that he will be the master there, and the complete master; for he has the money and 99% of the material--we will very rarely be in a position to send anything there). We will do the running about, the fussing, the proof-reading, the transporting, while His Excellency, Mr. Judas will be the editor-in-chief of the most influential journal. . . .<sup>1</sup>

In spite of Lenin's objections to the plan, all of the other editors of Iskra voted in favor of it. By March, 1901, declarations outlining the new venture were drawn up but they were never published. A letter from a friend of Struve containing money which was specified to be used only for

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<sup>1</sup> Hill and Mudie, op. cit., p. 131.

Sovremennoye Obozreniye was indignately received and the whole project was dropped. Struve and the Iskrovotai went their separate ways.<sup>1</sup> Later Struve and other Legal Marxists helped form a group called Osvolozhdeniye, (Emancipation), which had as its chief aim, constitutional reform. Still later he took part in founding the Constitutional Democratic Party which was an important Liberal party in Russia after the Revolution of 1905.

After negotiations between the Legal Marxists and Iskra had broken down, the liberal tendencies of the Legal Marxists became a target for several articles which appeared in Iskra. Liberalism in Russia was supported largely by intellectuals in the growing middle class and the enlightened land-owners. The chief demand of Liberalism at this period of Russian history was for a constitutional assembly and at least a limited suffrage. The Iskra applauded the anti-Czarist tendencies of the Russian Liberal journals but found fault with their desire for reform without revolution. Among the editors of Iskra, Lenin was the most unwavering in his criticism of the Liberal program. An article by Lenin entitled, The Persecutors of the Zemstvo and the Hannibals of Liberalism, which was directed at both Struve and the Russian Liberals, gave rise to an animated discussion among the editors of Iskra. Plekhanov, Axelrod, and Zaslitch vigorously objected to the severity of the tone toward the Liberals adopted in the article. Plekhanov wrote: "This is not at all the time to scold the Liberals. It is pedantic . . . We must treat the Liberals as a potential ally."<sup>2</sup> Lenin moderated the tone of his article slightly but insisted on retaining the sharp criticism of Struve.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Stalin, Foundations of Leninism (New York: International Publishers, 1932), p. 320.

<sup>2</sup> Quotation from: Popov, op. cit., p. 84.

This incident serves to point up once more the existence of conflicting viewpoints among the editors of Iskra. The total of Iskra's polemics against the Liberals probably served far better as propaganda among the Russian Social-Democrats than as an influence on the Liberal movement. This type of polemic emphasized the revolutionary goal of the Iskrovotsi.

As the successor of the traditions of revolutionary Narodniki and Narodovoltsi, the Socialist-Revolutionary party regarded the use of terror as an important political instrument. At non-Marxists they rejected the idea of the class struggle and of the hegemony or leadership of the proletariat in the revolutionary movement.<sup>1</sup> In the early 1900's their organization consisted mainly of separate groups working independently of one another but by 1905 they had developed a national party. In both the Iskra Zarya articles appeared which attempted to refute the Socialist-Revolutionary tendency. The editors of Iskra were in basic agreement in their attitude toward the Socialist-Revolutionary party, but, as in the polemics directed against the Liberals, Lenin was the most uncompromising and the most critical.

In all of the arguments and conflicts with other tendencies and groups the Iskrovotsi maintained the desire for a close-knit Social-Democratic organization as the essential element for achieving a revolution. The organization which the Iskrovotsi desired, depended to a large degree, they felt, on the effectiveness of their publications, Iskra and Zarya. An enterprise as concrete as a newspaper can seldom be a success on the wish alone, however. Many technical problems almost always surround such a venture. The technical

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<sup>1</sup> Popov, op. cit., p. 107.



problems encountered by the Iskrovotzi and the plans for a congress of the Russian Social-Democrats as a step toward establishing a unified organization provide the subject matter for the next chapter.

## CHAPTER III

PUBLISHING ISKRA AND ZARYA

The problems confronting the editors of Iskra and Zarya were not the ordinary ones which would be encountered in any publishing enterprise. Iskra and Zarya were not ordinary publications. They were devoted to conspiracy against a government, to revolution, and to agitation among the masses; all characteristics which would tend to make them highly unpopular with any established government and Germany was no exception. So in addition to having such worries of the printing operation as broken presses, torn matrices, and misplaced type, the publishers of Iskra and Zarya were troubled with the possibility of police raids and arrests. J. H. Dietz, the German Social Democrat and the first publisher of Iskra and Zarya was keenly aware of the illegal nature of his activities; and he worried about them. His was a well-established, respectable printing house which had built a reputation among German liberal and reformist groups by publishing legal literature of a high quality. Despite Dietz' personal adherence to Marxism, he apparently was never completely convinced that the achievements of Iskra and Zarya were worth the constant threat which they presented to his printing house by being published there. Lenin and the other editors were completely baffled by Dietz' timidity. To them, the cause represented by the two publications was worthy of any sacrifice and all reasonable risks. The differing attitudes of Dietz and Lenin are mirrored in the following letter written by Lenin to P. B. Axelrod on the 20th of March, 1901:

There is some unpleasantness over Zarya. That capricious gentleman, Dietz, has definitely rejected your editorial article, having . . . sniffed out the smell of "union" etc. (Dietz was afraid that the police might discover the links between the German Social-Democrats and the Iskro-votsi) . . . and to print instead a few words "to the readers". The

new censorship is terribly unpleasent! And the cover too has suffered: They even crossed out the words "in collaboration with a few Russian Social-Democrats". When shall we be rid of the tutelage of such rotten comrades (Dietz)?<sup>1</sup>

Despite Dietz' reluctance to handle the illegal publications, he continued to do so until the early part of 1902. At that time the German police with the help of the agents of the Russian secret police (Ochrana) raided the printing establishment at Stuttgart. All the editors, then living at Munich, were able to escape arrest. First they went to Switzerland and later, in April, transferred both the editorial board and the printing operations to London.<sup>2</sup> In London, contact was made with Harold Quelch, and other prominent English Social-Democrats who helped establish the secret presses. Later, in 1903, when the editorial board transferred to Geneva, most of the printing operation was retained in London. At the time of the Second Congress in August of 1903, the lead type was being set and the matrixes were being cast in London, while the actual printing was done in Genf, Switzerland.

Both Iskra and Zarya were printed on thin, onion-skin paper and each printed sheet contained as many as 100,000 letters of the alphabet. The reasons for this crowded printing on such light paper obviously were conspiratorial. Most of the copies of the publications were printed for Russian consumption and consequently they had to be of a size convenient for smuggling. Iskra was much like a regular newspaper in that it had no cover and appeared with a banner heading on page one. Its dimensional size was about half that of a regular daily newspaper. Usually no issue was longer than

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<sup>1</sup> Hill and Mudie, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> Kluge, loc. cit.

two printed signatures (eight pages) and more frequently, only one. Zarva was much longer and had a cardboard cover which gave it more the appearance of a magazine. Both publications were generally printed in Petit type although a few issues were printed in Borgese type.<sup>1</sup> When copies of Iekra and Zarva reached Social-Democrats in Russia they were often reprinted in a variety of forms from single mimeographed sheets to printed pamphlets.

In the three years before the Second Congress, forty-eight issues of Iskra and four issues of Zarva had been printed. Iskra appeared at intervals of approximately twenty days but with no regularity. Sometimes two months would elapse between issues and sometimes only a few days. Occasionally two issues of Iskra would be printed at the same time and would be circulated as a double number.<sup>2</sup> The first issue of Zarva was published during April, 1901. The next two issues appeared in December of the same year as a double number and the final issue was printed in August, 1902. Although the material for it was prepared, issue number five of Zarva did not appear because of differences which arose between Lenin and Plekhanov over certain articles which were to have been used in that issue. Part of the material which had been collected for issue number five of Zarva was later distributed among Russian Social-Democratic emigres in the form of

<sup>1</sup> Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> A partial list of publication dates for Iekra follows:

Issue Number 1 - Dec., 1900		Issue Number 9 - Oct., 1901
" " 2 - Feb., 1901		" " 10 - Nov., 1901
" " 3 - April, 1901	double no.	" " 11 - Nov. 20, 1901
" " 4 - May, 1901		" " 12 - Dec. 6, 1901
" " 5 - June, 1901	double no.	" " 13 - Jan. 2, 1902
" " 6 - July, 1901		" " 14 - Jan. 7, 1902
" " 7 - Aug., 1901		" " 15 - Jan. 15, 1902
" " 8 - Sept., 1901		" " 16 - Feb. 14, 1902



two brochures.<sup>1</sup>

The type of articles which appeared in Iskra and Zarya reflected the purposes of each publication. The articles in Iskra were devoted mainly to purposes of agitation and dealt less with the theoretical side of Social-Democracy than did those in Zarya which were mostly intended to serve as propaganda among the intellectuals. The variety of topics and the scope of the subject matter in both Zarya and Iskra are reflected in the titles of the articles. A partial listing of articles which appeared in Iskra included such titles as: Urgent Tasks of Our Movement; The Chinese War; Hannibals of Liberalism; The Agrarian Question and the "Critics of Marx"; A Conversation with Defenders of Economism; Another Massacre; and, The Drafting of 183 Students into the Army. In Zarya were articles entitled: Review of Internal Affairs; Socialism and the Political Struggle Once Again; and, Cont Against Kant, to include only a very few.

Most of the material for both of the publications was written by the editors. In the first forty-five numbers of Iskra, Martov wrote thirty-nine of the articles and Lenin, thirty-two; while Plekhanov wrote twenty-four, Potresov only eight, Zaslitch, six, and Axelrod, four. The remainder of the articles were written by Social-Democrats who only occasionally contributed, such as Rosa Luxemburg, L. G. Deutsch, and Leon Trotsky.<sup>2</sup> The majority of articles which appeared in Zarya were written by Plekhanov and Lenin although the other editors and a few persons outside the Iskra staff contributed also.

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<sup>1</sup> Kluge, op. cit., p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> Wolfe, op. cit., p. 251.

Since the six editors of Iskra and Zarva not only wrote most of the material for those publications but also supervised the printing and distribution, their personalities were reflected in the whole enterprise and were important factors in bringing about its success or failure. Among the older editors, G. V. Plekhanov was unquestionably the leader. Not only had he been associated with Social-Democratic activities longer than any of the rest but he also possessed an imposing intellect and was a clever writer and orator. Of the Iskrovotsi, Plekhanov alone had written whole books on pure Marxian theory. It was Plekhanov's task as a staff member of Iskra to expound the major generalizations of Marxian doctrine and to promote Iskra's cause among his many friends in the western European Social-Democratic organizations. His chief weakness was in the field of practical activity. He had so completely lost touch with Russia during his long exile that he had little appreciation for the practical, revolutionary designs of the younger editors. It was this in Plekhanov's make-up which led him into a number of heated discussions with Lenin who thought of the revolution as the most valuable objective of the Iskrovotsi. During this period, 1900-1903, Plekhanov was already entering upon a state of decline, according to Trotsky, who, it will be remembered cherished no great love for Plekhanov. In his memoirs, Trotsky wrote: "His (Plekhanov's) strength was undermined by the very thing that was giving strength to Lenin--the approach of the revolution. . . . The nearer the shadow of the revolution crept, the more evident it became that Plekhanov was losing ground. He couldn't help seeing it himself and that was the cause of his irritability toward the younger men."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Trotsky, My Life, p. 150.

P. B. Axelrod was much less in the midst of activities than was Flekhanov. He wrote far less and was neither the brilliant speaker nor the clever debater that Flekhanov was. His primary duties with the Iskra organization were to interview visitors and new emigres from Russia and to organize financial aid for the publications. As for his writings, they represented the "ideas and experience of the German Social-Democrats"<sup>1</sup> since his closest associations were with the German Marxists. He seldom contributed articles to either Iskra or Zarva but what he did write was considered sound and of a good quality by the other editors. His ability to enter into the activities of the organization was severely hampered by a condition of extreme nervousness. Of this, N. K. Krupskaya, Lenin's wife wrote:

After long years of emigration in Switzerland . . . P. B. had lost three-quarters of his working capacity; he did not sleep for nights at a stretch and wrote with extreme intensity for months on end, without being able to finish the article he had started. Sometimes it was impossible to decipher his handwriting owing to the nervous way in which it was written.

Axelrod's handwriting produced a profound impression on V. I. (Lenin) "It's simply awful," he often used to say, "If you get into such a state as Axelrod."<sup>2</sup>

Whether or not this physical handicap was the reason, Axelrod was one of the least influential of the Iskra editors.

The only woman on the editorial board was Vera Zasulich. She, too, was of the "older" group having entered Marxist activities in the Chorny Paredel group of the early 1880's. Her contribution to Iskra was found in her ability to see persons and programs in human, sentimental terms, and not as mere embodiments of political positions. As a woman she contributed

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 39.

a feminine quality of emotional expression lacking in the other editors. Like Axelrod, though, she wrote little. Lenin observed at one time that Vera Zasulich did not write but rather she put "mosaics together", placing one sentence after another and "suffering actual tortures of creation" on each.<sup>1</sup> Zasulich could usually be found on Flskschanov's side in any internecine quarrel but occasionally she would favor the "younger" editors or would act as a conciliator between the two groups.

Of the younger editors, I. O. Martov was probably the most skillful and productive writer. The other editors looked upon him as the principal stand-by and knew that he could always be depended on to produce articles on a wide range of happenings and problems. During a meeting in Geneva in 1903, Martov was observed by Shotman, a St. Petersburg Social-Democrat, who wrote the following description of him:

Martov resembled a poor Russian intellectual. His face was pale, he had sunken cheeks; his scant beard was untidy. His glasses barely remained on his nose. His suit hung on him as on a clothes hanger. . . . His outward appearance was far from attractive. But as soon as he began a fervent speech all these outer faults seemed to vanish, and what remained was his colossal knowledge, his sharp mind, and his fanatical devotion to the cause of the working class.<sup>2</sup>

Besides being the most productive editor, Martov also, with Lenin, did most of the technical work, such as proof reading, connected with editing the publications. Because of their business association he and Lenin were together much of each day during this period. Lenin characterized Martov as a "typical journalist. He is extraordinarily talented, seems to catch everything in the wind, awfully impressionable, but he is all on the surface."<sup>3</sup>

1 Quotation from: Trotsky, Russian Revolution, p. 18.

2 Quotation from: Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, op. cit., p. 58.

3 Quotation from: Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 43.



Throughout their association as editors of Iskra and Zarya, Martov usually sided with Lenin on important issues but not to the extent of losing his intellectual individuality. Occasionally he asserted himself against Lenin. Such was not the case with Potresov.

A. N. Potresov was with Lenin and Martov at the Pskov Conference in 1900 and took a leading part in forming western European contacts for publishing Iskra. He did not, however, contribute much to the organization after 1901. An illness, the nature of which is not known, forced him to stay in the background of the Iskra and Zarya activities. What few writings he did produce seemed to differ little as yet from Lenin's.

Lenin contributed to the editorial board a quality not so prominently possessed by the other editors--ingrained realism. In all of the squabbles over theory among the editors, Lenin continually referred to the practical objectives of the party. Again and again he reminded his colleagues of the need for immediate activity and a practical organization to bring about the Socialist revolution. Lenin had left Russia at the age of thirty, a mature and determined man. His qualities of leadership apparently impressed even his enemies. Axelrod, with whom Lenin disagreed many times, said of him in reference to their first meeting in 1895 that, "I felt that I had in front of me a man who would be the leader of the Russian Revolution. He was not only a cultured Marxist . . . but he knew what he intended to do and how it was to be done."<sup>1</sup> In 1903 the Russian Social-Democrat, Shotman, wrote:

I remember very vividly that after his (Lenin's) first address I was won over to his side, so simple, clear, and convincing was his manner of speaking. When Plekhanov spoke, I enjoyed the beauty of his

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<sup>1</sup> Quotation from: Valeriu Marcu, Lenin (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1928), p. 48.

speech . . . but when Lenin arose in opposition I was always on Lenin's side. Why? I cannot explain it to myself. But so it was, and not only with me, but with my comrades, also workers.<sup>1</sup>

In 1924 Joseph Stalin said, "familiarity with Comrade Lenin's revolutionary activity at the beginning of the nineties, and especially since 1901, after the appearance of Iskra, led me to the conviction that in Comrade Lenin we had an extraordinary man."<sup>2</sup> This last quotation has a humorous implication. At the "beginning of the nineties" Stalin was eleven or twelve years old and probably had few opinions one way or another about Lenin or even about Russian Social-Democracy. Even after Iskra was founded, although Stalin undoubtedly read some of the issues, he could hardly have known much about Lenin; he, a semi-illiterate worker in a south Russian province and Lenin, an emigre in western Europe who almost never signed any of his own articles which appeared in Iskra.

Despite these later bogus attempts such as Stalin's to glamorize Lenin and thus gain through association, it seems clear that Lenin in his own right must have possessed a commanding mind and a certain genius for leadership. Lenin was undoubtedly the most important driving force behind Iskra and Zarya. He corrected most of the proofs of Iskra and assiduously attended to the details which surrounded the paper's publication. Nearly all the editing was done by him and Martov and frequently several issues would be published without any consultation with the other four editors.

Not only was Lenin concerned with the publishing phase of the Iskro-  
votsi activities but he also carefully supervised the development of Iskra

<sup>1</sup> Quotation from: Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Quotation from: Leon Trotsky, Stalin, An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1941), p. 48.

groups in Russia. Almost all the correspondence from Russia to the Iskra office was eventually read by him and he frequently answered these in detail. His realistic frame of mind and his concern with all parts of the Iskrovotsi activities are illustrated in the following letter which he wrote to an Iskra group in Kharkov on January 15, 1903:

Mary thanks for the detailed letter about the position of affairs: Such letters are very rarely written to us, although we need them terribly badly and should be receiving ten times as many . . . . Is Iskra read to the workers circles? With explanations of the articles? Which articles are read most eagerly and what sort of explanations are asked for? Is there any propaganda conducted among the workers about conspiratorial methods and about taking up illegal revolutionary work on a large scale?<sup>1</sup>

Although most of Lenin's articles were unsigned, he frequently used the pronoun "I" and would refer to articles in past issues which usually were some which he had written. Trotsky, in noting this egoism in Lenin's personality, concluded that the practice gave Lenin's viewpoints a strong position among Iskra's readers.<sup>2</sup> Although few persons knew exactly Lenin's share in the newspaper, all were aware that a special set of ideas "presented in an especially stark, insistent, repetitive, unadorned, and matter-of-fact way, kept re-curring again and again."<sup>3</sup>

As with many highly practical men, Lenin possessed a certain amoral quality in his make-up. This feature of his personality caused several conflicts between him and the other editors and gradually alienated them from him. Frequently Lenin was uncompromisingly severe with special friends of the other editors but was dogmatically stubborn in his defense of his own

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<sup>1</sup> Hill and Madie, op. cit., p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> Trotsky, Russian Revolution, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Wolfe, op. cit., p. 153.

friends and agents. All of Lenin's activities were focused on the practical goal of revolution. He cared little that Plekhanov was more profound in his theoretical discussions or that Martov was a more prolific writer than he. The results were always what interested Lenin and he generally felt that his own methods were the right ones and the ones which would eventually yield the results which he desired. That history later proved him right might well serve as a testimonial to both his judgment and his abilities of leadership during this period of his life.

Others outside the editorial board but close to the center of the Iskra organization were N. K. Krupskaya, L. Trotsky, L. G. Deutsch, and a Russian named Blumenfeld.<sup>1</sup> Krupskaya acted as secretary to the organization and Trotsky was used mainly as a writer and lecturer. Deutch was nearly Plekhanov's age and was a close friend of the older editor. His job was that of administrator of Iskra and Zarya and as such he handled financial matters and advised the editors on the business phase of their publications. Blumenfeld was the type-setter for Iskra and Zarya although after 1903 he devoted much of his time to travelling secretly in Russia for the organization. All of these members of the Iskra staff functioned beyond their assigned duties. In such a small organization it was inevitable that each should be familiar with the problems and quarrels of all the rest. In case of arguments among the editors, the entire staff could usually be depended upon to take sides.

Even though the central organization which produced Iskra and Zarya numbered less than a dozen members, financial backing was still essential

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<sup>1</sup> Trotsky, Russian Revolution, p. 39.



and a highly important feature in making the venture a success. Money for the organization came from three sources: wealthy sympathizers; Iskra groups in Russia and elsewhere; and the outside earnings of the editors. The most outstanding of the wealthy sympathizers was A. M. Kalmykova. Mrs. Kalmykova was the wife of an official high in the Russian government. Her interest in socialism had led her to make the acquaintance of both Lenin and Martov while they were still in Russia. She not only supported the Iekrovotai with her own funds but also helped collect a "bucket" from her friends.<sup>1</sup> More support came from the Russian millionaire manufacturer, Morozov. One source indicated that Morozov contributed over two thousand rubles a month<sup>2</sup> but this seems very unlikely. At one time Lenin referred to the collection of 350 francs as a marvelous feat which was seldom equaled and it is doubtful if he would have done so had Iskra been the regular recipient of two thousand rubles.<sup>3</sup> Groups in Russia adhering to the Iskra tendency occasionally sent money to the headquarters but never in very large amounts. In some of the main towns of western Europe, young Russian students and revolutionary inclined emigrants formed groups to collect money and to help distribute Iskra. In the United States, the American Socialist Society whose secretary, S. Ingerman had been a member of the Liberation of Labor group, procured funds for Iskra. On April 25, 1901 Lenin mentions in a letter having received 250 francs from the United States.<sup>4</sup> Another American source was mysteriously referred to as the California Gold Mine. Nothing is known about the "Gold Mine" other than that it did contribute at least some money to the support

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfe, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Hill and Mudie, op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

of Iskra. Finally, the editors themselves made contributions by supporting themselves without resort to Iskra's funds. Plekhanov earned his poor living by copying and addressing envelopes. Axelrod made and sold kefir (yogurt) and Lenin and Martov did translations and occasionally placed short articles in non-party magazines. Seldom did they resort to taking a "wage" for their work on Iskra and then it amounted to only five or ten rubles per week (\$2 to \$5). Most of the editors gave an occasional lecture in France or in England. These lectures were paid for by contributions from the audience. The amount given in such cases was seldom more than seventy or eighty francs or shillings.<sup>1</sup>

So precarious was the cash position of the enterprise that frequently letters written by the editors contained such statements as: "Our finances are altogether bad!"<sup>2</sup> "Collect some money. At present we are almost reduced to penury and the receipt of a large sum is a matter of life or death."<sup>3</sup> Despite this strain of a low cash box which was almost always felt by the editors they continued with their work; looking toward Russia where all their most important efforts were directed. The desire to build the influence of the Iskrovotsi in Russia and to distribute Iskra and Zarya among the Russian workers made them continually force along even in the face of perplexing financial difficulties.

Within Russia the number of adherents to the principles of Iskra and Zarya steadily grew between the years 1900 and 1904. The first method by which Iskra's influence was developed was that of establishing agents in the

<sup>1</sup> Trotsky, Russian Revolution, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Hill and Migie, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

principal cities of Russia. Before Lenin and Martov left Russia in 1900 they each spent several months locating these agents from among their friends and sympathizers. The most prominent agents of the Iskra organization were Radchenko, Lengnik, Krzhizhanovsky, Lepeshinsky, Zemlyachka, Bauman, Babushkin, and Nogin; most of which later held important offices in the Communist Party. Around these agents developed supporting groups which organized for the purpose of distributing and studying Iskra. Besides these local groups which were from their inception, Iskra-inspired, many persons who were first associated with other local Social-Democratic tendencies later declared their adherence to the Iskrovotzi. During 1903 and at the beginning of that year in the following cities groups, or committees as they were called, supported Iskra: St. Petersburg, Moscow, Orekhovo-Zuevo, Tver, Saratov, Tula, Irkutsk, Ekaterinoblav, Kiev, Odesa, Poltava, and Nizhni-Novgorod. Communication was maintained with Social-Democrats in a great many other cities and three large groups of Iskra followers were represented in the Siberian League, the Northern Labor League, and the Southern Worker.<sup>1</sup> The actual number of persons represented by these organizations is not known but probably it was in the thousands. In view of the secret and illegal nature of the whole enterprise, it becomes apparent that there could have been only an extremely small percentage of the Russian population actively working in the organization. However, considering the humble beginnings of Iskra even a small percentage was probably viewed with optimism.

With the Russian Iskra groups demanding ever increasing amounts of literature the editors and their agents were confronted with critical problems

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<sup>1</sup> Popov, op. cit., p. 100.

of supply and distribution. The publications of the Iskrovotzi were emuggled across the Pruesian, Austrian and Rumanian frontiers, by sea via Marseilles, Alexandria, and the Bulgarian ports, through Archangel, through Tavriz in Persia, and even through the Kola Peninsula. The emuggling operation was itself a highly dangerous and adventurous one. Some of its difficulties and its techniques are illustrated in the following letter written by Lenin in June, 1901:

The Doctor must settle abroad, in Polangen, (Kurland Province) for instance, (in such places we have links with the non-Russian side). He must study the local conditions, (he ought to be able to speak Lettish and German, but perhaps he might manage without) and he should try to find some respectable occupation, (I am assured that a man can live there by having a private practice). He must get on good terms with the minor local officials and accustom them to his frequent crossing of the frontier. One does not need a passport to cross the frontier there, but a "Grenzkarste" (valid for 28 days). With such frequent crossings he might be able gradually to carry across a few pounds of literature at a time. (On his person or in a case, according to our method and for which he will need a small medical instrument case).<sup>1</sup>

All the details of smuggling, or transport as it was called, had to be worked out with care. One plan was to pack the literature in double-bottomed trunks or in the binding of books placed in trunks which would be shipped across the border to certain pre-arranged cities. There they would be called for by Iskra agents. Frequently the police would discover the trunk's secret and would arrest the person who claimed the shipment. This "suitcase" transport was expensive and unsure, costing as much as one hundred rubles for each trunk which so frequently was discovered and confiscated along with the arrest of Iskra personnel. Another method of transporting Iskra was through the use of the sea. The literature would be smuggled on board a ship destined

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<sup>1</sup> Hill and Mudie, op. cit., p. 145.



for a Russian seaport. The agent handling the transport would wrap the literature in waterproof parcels and drop it into the water just before the ship docked. The parcel would then be fished out by other agents who would be waiting along the coast in small rowboats.

From the printing press at Stuttgart the issues of Iskra and Zarya were shipped to Berlin and stored in the cellars of the Vorwaerts, the official organ of the German Social-Democratic party. From there the literature was sent to Russia by the various methods just mentioned. The large quantities of literature which were shipped from there was no indication of the amount which actually reached its intended destination. Much of it was seized at the border, and some was simply destroyed by professional smugglers who, having been paid for their services, had no desire to complete the contract. N. K. Krupskaya told of sending hundreds of pounds of literature to Stockholm where it was to be smuggled through Riga into St. Petersburg. When she and Lenin visited Sweden on their way to Russia in 1905 they discovered that all the literature was still in the cellar of the "People's Home" in Stockholm.<sup>1</sup> Although it is impossible to estimate accurately the amount of literature which was actually smuggled into Russia, various estimates seem to indicate that only about 1/10th of that published ever reached its intended destination. Nor is it known how many copies of Iskra and Zarya were printed. In a letter written by Lenin during 1901, he commended an agent who was able to carry ten pounds of literature a month across the border.<sup>2</sup> In another letter he referred to one-hundred sixty pounds of one

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<sup>1</sup> Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Hill and Mudie, op. cit., p. 144.

issue having been taken across.<sup>1</sup> Considering the weight of the thin paper, and then the number of copies per pound, it is probable that at least several thousand copies of Iskra were successfully smuggled across the border after each new printing and that probably each edition printed was over ten thousand copies. The whole transport process not only failed to distribute the entire edition each time but it was also slow. It frequently took over a month for copies of Iskra to reach Russia after they had left the presses.

One of the most distressing problems of transport was encountered in providing passports for the agents. Most of the passports had to be forged since the Russian Government was at that time rather reluctant to give their official passports to revolutionary conspirators. Persons skilled at forging were not easily found. N. K. Krupskaya alluded to the passport difficulty in the following excerpt from her memoirs:

Peter Hemogenovich . . . had just done a long stretch in prison . . . he considered himself a great expert at faking passports. He contended that the best method was to smear them with sweat. At one time all the tables in our "commune" were turned upside-down to serve as presses for faked passports.<sup>2</sup>

Along with faking passports the Iskra conspirators found it necessary to develop codes with which to carry on correspondence. Each significant phase of their enterprise was referred to by a code name: passports became handkerchiefs; illegal literature was warm fur or beer; and such towns as Odesa and Tver became Ossip and Terenty. The agents were each given a conspiratorial name which in later years they frequently adopted as their permanent signature.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

The literature which did reach Russia was frequently reprinted in large quantities for wider circulation. L. Kraesin and R. Claeson, Iskra agente in Russia, managed to establish a secret printing prese in Baku in 1901.<sup>1</sup> Another press was used for a few months in Northern Ruesia. This press, the Akulina Prees, was discovered by the police and destroyed.<sup>2</sup> Other smaller preesee operated intermittently during the period from 1901 to 1904 and occasionally groups were able to use duplicating machines to reproduce Iskra literature.

Once the literature was received by agents in Ruesia, whether direct from the Iskra printing press or from an intermediary seoret Russian press, the problems of distribution and diseemination arose. There were several methode of bringing Iskra's message to the workers and intellectuals who indicated an interest in revolutionary work. One method was to call seoret meetings which were conducted in small, ieolated groups. These meetings would usually take place in forreested areae away from the citiee and sentries would be stationed at intervale from the meeting place eo as to epread an alarm and thus avoid discovery by the police. The program of the meeting usually consisted of having one pereon read from Iskra or Zarya to the others and then discussions would follow. Although it was seldom possible for the same group to meet with any regularity, apparently many converts to Iskre-votsi were made in this manner.<sup>3</sup>

When agente were able to get several hundred copies of Iskra they would use the method of mase distribution which they called "sowing". Sowing

<sup>1</sup> Hill and Mudie, op. cit., p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> Shub, op. cit., p. 46.

frequently was done in factory areas or in crowded residential sections in the large cities; places where it was felt that the literature would be the most effective. Usually, the sowers worked in pairs, one distributing the literature while the other acted as a sentry. Some of the most effective sowing took place in the theatres of Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kharkov, Kiev, and Odessa. There the agents would shower their literature down upon the audience in the darkened theatre accompanying this barrage with such shouts as, "Down with autocracy!" and, "Long live political freedom!"<sup>1</sup>

The very nature of smuggling and sowing made a constant turn-over of agents and Iskra followers inevitable. The risks taken by the agents led to their arrests and even occasionally to a mental and physical collapse. Maintaining touch with, and control over the Russian Iskrovotsi was one of the major organizational problems of the editors, living as they did in western Europe far from the scene of Iskra's most important work. In August, 1902, Lenin was forced to write the following to a Russian Social-Democrat:

Now you are complaining about our "Agents" . . . "Agents" were collected far too quickly . . . I, know, I know it very well . . . but after all we are not creating human material for ourselves, but are taking, and cannot refuse, what is given to us. Without this we cannot live. A man goes to Russia—he says he wants to work for Iskra . . . Well? Of course he goes . . . (but) what means have we in checking these "agents", controlling them, allocating them to certain places? Why, we cannot even get any letters out of them—and in nine cases out of ten . . . all our suppositions here about the future activity of an agent go to the devil the day after he crosses the frontier and the agent works as the spirit moves him.<sup>2</sup>

Ideological control was also difficult. Occasionally Iskra agents would decide that they no longer agreed with Iskra principles and would neglect to

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Hill and Madie, op. cit., p. 160.



inform the editors that they no longer wanted literature to be shipped to them. Such was the case with L. I. Goldman who was a trusted Iskra agent but who the editors discovered was neglecting his Iskra work in favor of printing and distributing Vpered, the Organ of the Kiev Russian Social-Democratic group, and a newspaper ideologically close to "Economism".<sup>1</sup> Frequently agents would develop operational plans which would conflict with those of the editors. Time was consumed and ill-feeling resulted before the ensuing arguments and discussions were settled.

Not only the agents but also the local organizations managed to help create problems for the editorial board. Occasionally a local group in Russia would find itself in a position to publish a local Social-Democratic newspaper. The Iskra editors, and particularly Lenin, were critical of any attempts to do so. They deemed it essential that the only publications printed were organizational-wide ones, and naturally that meant Iskra and Zarya. One plan for a regional newspaper received from Lenin the harsh reply that "we cannot conceal the fact that we . . . cannot agree with a single part of the plan . . . it is incredible . . . I cannot imagine any more suicidal tactics for Iskra."<sup>2</sup> The editors considered that only with a centralized publication could effective ideological control be maintained over Russian Social-Democracy, hence their attitude toward local publications.

Despite the many problems which surrounded the Iskra enterprise, definite progress toward certain short-range goals could be observed within two years after the paper was founded. For one thing, the use of agents in distributing Iskra and Zarya had resulted in the gradual development of a well organ-

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

ized secret apparatus composed of a tight band of professional revolutionaries. The systematic distribution of revolutionary literature was by no means an Iskra monopoly, however; the organizational feature of a centralized leadership directing a small group of conspirators was unique among revolutionary enterprises at that time in Russia.<sup>1</sup> Although, as it has already been mentioned, certain Iskra agents would occasionally prove uncontrollable, this was apparently not the rule. More characteristic of the Iskra agent was his severance from his own family, and his own city, for the sake of revolutionary work.<sup>2</sup> The blind loyalty which many of the agents possessed toward their organization is illustrated by the extreme punishment which arrested agents would undergo and still refuse to reveal information which would incriminate others in the organization.<sup>3</sup> As a rule, such a revolutionist would simply reply to any questioning: "I have been a Social-Democrat by conviction for a long time; I repudiate and deny the accusations against me; I refuse to give testimony . . ." <sup>4</sup> Along with the revolutionaries who devoted their entire lives to revolutionary work, the Iskra drew promising young men and women into discussion groups and into agitational work among the laboring class. Many of them were green and of no use to the movement but some like Trotsky soon became a vital part of the Iskra organization. In his autobiography, Trotsky epitomized the admiration which many of these young intellectuals felt for Iskra when he said: "I actually fell in love with Iskra, and was so ashamed of my ignorance that I strained every nerve

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1 Shub, op. cit., p. 48.

2 Trotsky, Stalin, p. 39.

3 Ibid., p. 120.

4 Ibid., p. 37.

in my effort to overcome it."<sup>1</sup> On the other extreme was the woman student who belonged to an Iskra group and confronted her chairman with the question, "Can an Iskra adherent marry a navy officer?"<sup>2</sup>

Not only did the Iskrovotsi manage to develop an impressive elite corps of trained revolutionaries and a following among the intellectuals it also attracted followers and supporters from the working classes. No statistics are available which indicate the number of adherents to Iskrovotsi during this period which came from this group but impressions can be drawn from the statements of persons familiar with the organization during the early 1900's. The number of agents at any single time probably was not more than twenty or thirty but the number of workers who at least occasionally attended clandestine Iskra meetings regularly or read and agreed with Iskrovotsi literature was possibly over five thousand.<sup>3</sup> In a statement which should certainly be viewed with some scepticism, Lenin noted that in 1901 - 1903, "46 out of every 100 political offenders (those arrested by the Russian Government) already came (from the worker group) as against 37 from the intellectuals . . . and the overwhelming majority supported the Iskra."<sup>4</sup> Suffice it to say that during this period the Iskrovotsi was gaining in strength among those susceptible to revolutionary propaganda.

A third area of advancement came in the fight against the "Economistic" tendency. Iskra's crusade against "Economism" tended not only to win converts but also to emphasize and enhance the cleavage between the two tendencies

<sup>1</sup> Trotsky, My Life, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> Trotsky, Russian Revolution, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Trotsky, Stalin, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Lenin, op. cit., p. 60.

of Russian Social-Democracy. Popov, the Soviet Russian historian claimed that by 1903 the Iskrovotzi had won a complete victory over "Economism".<sup>1</sup> This statement tends to be refuted by the fact that there was by no means complete ideological unanimity at the Second Congress held late in 1903 by the Social-Democratic groups of Russia, but nevertheless, the widely read Iskra was unquestionably a principal factor in the gradual conversion of many Social-Democrats to the idea of an immediate political revolution and other features of Iskrovotzi.

Along with its battle against "Economism" the Iskrovotzi was building up interest in a congress as a possible means of uniting the entire Russian Social-Democratic party under one fighting banner. Through their agents and with their publications the Iskrovotzi promoted the idea of a congress and saw to it by various means that their particular view-points would be in the majority at such a congress. Iskra's part in the activities leading to the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic party was an important one and so the Congress itself could be considered a major achievement of the Iskra organization during the years, 1900 - 1903. This will be considered further in the next chapter which is devoted to an exposition of the events preceeding the Congress, the Congress itself, and the conclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> Popov, op. cit., p. 76.



## CHAPTER IV

## THE SECOND CONGRESS AND ITS AFTERMATH

## Pre-Congress Preparations

Although the Iskrovotsi had agitated and planned for a congress of all of the Russian Social-Democrats since early in 1901, the first attempt actually to call such a congress was not their's. In early May, 1901, the League of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad attempted to convene a congress. Too little publicity had been given to the plan and therefore the congress was unsuccessful. The second attempt to call a congress took place in Russia. In March, 1902, the League with the support of the Jewish Bund met in Bialyetok, Russia, for that purpose. The Iskra organization was highly critical of this attempt for two reasons. The first was that they felt that the educational and organizational work undertaken by them was far from complete. To call a congress at that time would have been pre-mature and would have a disruptive rather than a unifying effect on the movement. This was the reason which they publicized in their newspaper. The more important reason was undoubtedly this: In taking the initiative for calling a congress the Bund and the League would also be expected to assume the credit for any successes.<sup>1</sup> The editors of Iskra had agitated for an Iskra-controlled congress too much to let another group or groups disrupt their plans. Ostensibly, the Iskrovotsi agreed to the calling of a congress and sent their delegate, Theodor Dan. Owing to the small number of delegates at the congress, Dan was able

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, op. cit., p. 538.

to convince the groups present that the Bialystok Congress should be declared void. It was decided to label the gathering a conference which had as its sole purpose the setting up of an Organizational Committee for convening a bona-fide Second Congress. The Iskrovotsi had won a tactical victory. From that moment, the editors of Iskra devoted themselves to the task of calling a congress which could be controlled by the Iskrovotsi.

With the exception of one delegate, all members of the Organizational Committee elected at the Bialystok conference were arrested within a month after the meetings had been adjourned. These arrests gave the Iskra organization an excellent opportunity to reconstitute the Organizational Committee to suit themselves. The opportunity was not lost. In November, 1902, Iskra agents in Pskov called for an election of a new committee. This move had been carefully engineered by Lenin who during the preceding summer had written letters to Iskra agents in which he made known the wishes of the editorial board concerning a congress and also proposed directions for the agents to follow. Such a letter follows:

And so your task now is to create out of yourself a Committee for the preparation of the Congress . . . push your people on to as many Committees as possible (particularly "Economist" groups and organizations) taking the utmost care of yourself and of your people until the Congress. . . . Remember this! Be bolder in this; more ingenious and in other ways quieter and more cautious . . . Be wise as serpents and gentle as doves. . . .<sup>1</sup>

At the Pskov Conference (November, 1902) the Iskrovotsi were represented by two of the three committee members who attended. As a result of several co-optations necessitated by the arrest of committee members, the Organizational Committee underwent further changes after November. Again the Iskrovotsi

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<sup>1</sup> Hill and Mudie, op. cit., p. 156.

took advantage of the situation and through clever manipulation they continued to pack the Organizational Committee with their men. By the time of the official Congress the Committee consisted of the following: G. M. Krzhizhansky, F. V. Lengnik, P. A. Krasikov, and E. M. Alexandrova--representing the Iskra organization; V. N. Rozanov and E. Y. Levin--representing Yuzhny Rabochy which by 1902 supported Iskra on most major issues; and K. Portnoy, representing the Bund.<sup>1</sup> With the Organizational Committee so completely in their hands, the editors of Iskra began to direct the immediate work of preparing for the Second Congress. One of their chief functions was to prepare a programme and an agenda of topics which were to be taken up at the Congress. Once prepared, the programme and the agenda would receive the immediate endorsement of the Organizational Committee, but first the editors had to agree among themselves on the features to be included in each. This they found to be difficult, particularly in the case of the programme.

Late in 1901, the other editors commissioned Flekhanov to compose a programme to be submitted at the Congress. In January, 1902, Flekhanov completed his draft and it immediately became the center of a heated argument between him and Lenin. First, Lenin criticized the general tone of the programme. He felt that it was too abstract, unpractical, and pedagogic. He called it a "programme for students," and not a programme for an actual fighting party.<sup>2</sup> Flekhanov's draft first sought to teach the Russian Social-Democrats the theoretical generalizations of Marxism, and only in the tenth of the twelve sections did it deal with special Russian problems of a practical nature.<sup>3</sup> Lenin further objected to Flekhanov's exclusion of the principle of

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, op. cit., p. 540.

<sup>2</sup> Popov, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> Wolfe, op. cit., p. 244.

the dictatorship of the proletariat. Greater emphasis, he argued, should be given to the hopelessness of the position of the small independent producers and to the proletarian class character of Social-Democracy.<sup>1</sup>

After considerable debate with Plekhanov, Lenin drew up his own draft programme and submitted it to a vote among the editors. Feeling among the editors became so outraged at the debate which followed that an arbitration committee composed of Zaslitch, Martov, and Theodor Dan was set up. A vote was taken among the editors and Lenin's draft was voted down, five to one. The arbitration committee composed a compromise draft which attempted to reconcile the differences between Plekhanov and Lenin.<sup>2</sup> The new draft was essentially Plekhanov's with a few important exceptions.

One feature which Lenin was able to insert in the compromise draft was that of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Among all the existing programmes of the European Socialist parties, the Iskra programme was the only one to contain such a point. Lenin formulated it for the draft in the following words: "An essential condition for the social revolution is the dictatorship of the proletariat, i. e., the conquest by the proletariat of such political power as will permit it to suppress all attempts at resistance on the part of the exploiters."<sup>3</sup> Also Lenin submitted the portion of the programme which dealt with the agrarian question in Russia. In this section Lenin demanded the nationalization of all the estates of Russian landlords. Both Plekhanov and Axelrod at first argued that this would be impossible in a strictly bourgeois revolution. In the correspondence which followed, tempers

<sup>1</sup> Popov, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> Quotation from: Popov, op. cit., p. 104.



reached a white-hot condition. In May, 1902, Lenin wrote Plekhanov:

I have received my article (The Agrarian Programme of Russian Social-Democracy) with your remarks. You have a fine idea of tact with regard to your colleagues on the editorial board! . . . If your aim is to make mutual work impossible--then the way you have chosen will very rapidly help you to succeed. As for our personal . . . relations, you have finally spoilt them.<sup>1</sup>

Despite Lenin's objections, the problem of land reform was given only brief mention in the programme. The final draft of the programme which was published and distributed among Iskra agents was essentially an exposition of the fundamental theses of Marx and Engels on the subject of the social revolution, the transfer of power to the working class, and the "expropriation of the expropriators".<sup>2</sup> It was divided into two parts, maximum and minimum. The former demanded all-out social revolution and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat; the latter called for the end of Czarism, a democratic republic, and legislative measures on behalf of the workers and peasants. Obviously, the minimum program was directed toward at least partially appeasing the "Economists" and so was never intended to represent the major goal of the movement. Once Lenin recognized that he had lost his battle for the adoption of all his own ideas he cooled off and was quite pleased with the compromise programme.<sup>3</sup>

The agenda of topics which were to be discussed by the delegates at the Congress was formulated by Lenin with the assistance of the other editors. No major arguments developed around the discussion of the agenda but almost daily there were minor tussles among the editors for a variety of reasons. By the time the editors transferred operations from London to Geneva in 1903

<sup>1</sup> Hill and Mudie, op. cit., p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> Popov, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Wolfe, op. cit., p. 230.

cooperatives work was accomplished with difficulty. Potresov, who often sided with Lenin, reported that, "it was impossible to work with him . . . because . . . the slightest disagreement with him became a serious controversy and affected our personal relations."<sup>1</sup> The editorial board became more conclusively divided between the older and the younger members. Again Lenin brought up the proposal of Trotsky as a seventh member of the board. Again Plekhanov protested. In a rage Lenin, according to his wife, said, "A damned fine state of affairs . . . nobody has enough courage to reply to Plekhanov . . . Plekhanov trounces Trotsky and Vera (Zasulich) just says: 'Just like our George!'"<sup>2</sup>

As the date set for the Congress approached, and as delegates from Russia began to come to Geneva, the editors rose above their differences and managed to present a united front.<sup>3</sup> The last issue of Iskra preceding the Congress was on a superior intellectual level and the general view was that everything would go well during and following the Congress.<sup>4</sup> This spirit of optimism would seem to be unwarranted by the prior conditions. Nonetheless on July 30, 1903, in Brussels, Belgium, the Second Congress of Russian Social-Democrats was convened with no promise of other than outstanding achievement and success.

#### The Congress Meets

Just as with a secret newspaper, a secret Congress presented unusual difficulties. It did not prove at all easy to organize the Congress in Brussels. A friend of Plekhanov's named Koltsov was living in Brussels during

<sup>1</sup> Quotation from: Popov, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Quotation from: Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> Trotsky, Russian Revolution, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 65.

1903 and had undertaken to arrange for the Congress. The delegates were instructed to contact Kolteov when they arrived in Brussels. After about four Russians had called to see him, the landlady told the Koltsovs that she would not tolerate any more such visits. Koltsov's wife was forced to stand all the next day at the street corner, watch the delegates and send them to a socialist hotel, the Cog d'Or, where they might find more agreeable lodging.<sup>1</sup>

The first meeting of the Congress was held at the headquarters of a labor cooperative society in the Maison du Peuple, which was located in the working class districts of Brussels. The storeroom was sufficiently secluded and so it was chosen as the congressional hall. In the room there was practically no light and ventilation and only enough chairs for a few of the members; the rest were forced to sit on rough damp boards and bales of wool. As soon as the first meeting got under way the delegates began to fidget about. Within a few minutes some of the delegates sneaked out of the storeroom and when about half were gone, a motion was unanimously carried to adjourn. An invisible army of fleas had upset the first meeting of the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democrats!<sup>2</sup> Trotsky referred to these vermin in his autobiography as "Ansele's Army" (Ansele was one of the leaders of the Socialist party in Belgium.)<sup>3</sup> For reasons of physical comfort but mainly for purposes of security the sessions in Brussels moved from one site to another, making use of garages, warehouses, and the back-rooms of trade-union halls.

Even such precautions as were taken by the delegates were not enough. In less than a week the Congress was upset by the local Belgian police. The

<sup>1</sup> Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> Trotsky, My Life, p. 158.

police had been disturbed from the first by the influx of so many foreigners and had suspected that an anarchist conspiracy was in the making. From the first day, the delegates were shadowed by secret service men but it was only after their purpose was established by the head of the Russian secret service in Berlin that the Belgian police acted. The Russian secret service chief, a man named Harting, had been informed of the Congress by, interestingly enough, a trusted member of the Organizational Committee, Dr. Zhitomirsky. Besides being in the Arrangements section of the Organizational Committee, Dr. Zhitomirsky was also secretly an agent-provocateur for the Czar. As the various details for the Congress were worked out, Zhitomirsky would simply relay them to the proper police authorities.<sup>1</sup> In the realm of conspiracy and revolution even one's own friends must be suspect. Trotsky moralized on this incident by saying: "It would seem as if Czarism held all the strings. And yet even this did not save it."<sup>2</sup>

Invitations were extended by the police to the delegates to leave Belgium in twenty-four hours. Consequently, the Congress was forced to transfer to another country. England was chosen because of the many connections which the Iskra editors had there. The remaining sessions of the Congress took place in London at quarters furnished by the English Social-Democrate.

Counting both those in Brussels and in London, the Congress held thirty-seven sessions as well as innumerable supplementary meetings. In all there were forty-three delegates with voting rights at the Congress. The composition of the Congress had been determined before-hand by the Organizational

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit.



Committee. Considering this it is not at all surprising that at the first session there were thirty-one Iskrovotsi; only three Bundists; two Rabochaya Delo-ists; two Yuzhny-Rabochy-ists; and six who were labeled the "March" because they weren't committed to any specific group and tended to waver from one to another.<sup>1</sup> Nine delegates were given double votes because they represented both a Russian organization and an emigre group. Such was the case of Lenin and Martov who represented both the Iskra organization abroad and also committees in Russia. Ten other delegates were given consultative votes which gave them a voice in the proceedings but no actual voting power. In all, the Iskra organization began at the Congress with thirty-three votes from their own groups including one vote from the St. Petersburg League of Struggle. This organization was split into a worker's organization which supported the Rabochaya Delo and a political organization which supported Iskra. Each group was allowed one voting delegate which tended to nullify their efforts. Along with these there were four votes from Yuzhny Rabochy which were considered to be Iskrovotsi votes. The delegate at the Congress represented twenty-six scattered groups in all, many of which were in exile.<sup>2</sup> The delegation was composed mainly of intellectuals and professional revolutionaries. Only three workers were present; and this at a Congress directed to the cause of the Russian proletariat!

With the Congress so carefully and successfully packed in favor of the Iskrovotsi it could be assumed that most of the major issues would be settled with little debate in a rubber-stamp fashion. Such was not the case. As will

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, op. cit., p. 341.

<sup>2</sup> Schuman, op. cit., p. 40.

be seen in the next section, a split took place among the Iskrovotsi which had important consequences in both the settling of issues at the Congress and in the events which followed the Congress.

#### The Debates and Business of the Congress

The Congress opened in an atmosphere of harmony and accord among the Iskrovotsi. Preceding the first official meeting a secret and informal meeting of the Iskra organization had been held concerning mandates. At that time, although imperative mandates had been outlawed by the rules of the Congress, an "amicable" agreement was reached in which all the members of the Iskra organization agreed to vote together whenever a critical issue arose.<sup>1</sup> The decision of this secret meeting was faithfully carried out until the mid-point of the Congress. At that time events took place which made certain Iskra delegates reassess their allegiance to any mandatory voting. The result made possible the division of the history of the Congress into two parts. The early part being one of essentially mutual agreement among the Iskrovotsi and the second being one of serious disagreement.

Before the business of the Congress could actually get under way a Presidium had to be set up for controlling the meetings. Lenin, realizing the necessity of enforcing discipline from the start, pushed through a motion which set up a Presidium consisting entirely of Iskra men, with Flekhanov as Chairman and himself and Pavlovich-Krasikov as Vice-chairmen. Despite protests that the procedure was undemocratic the motion carried.<sup>2</sup> The first important items of business on the agenda which had been written by Lenin and adopted by the Organizational Committee concerned the place of the Jewish

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, op. cit., p. 543.

<sup>2</sup> Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, op. cit., p. 60.

Bund in the Party and the adoption of the programme which had been formulated by the Iskrovotzi.

The Jewish Bund had come to the Congress determined to maintain their autonomy in the handling of specifically Jewish problems and also to assert the claim to represent all the Jewish socialists in Russia. Actually, the Bund was a powerful socialist organization at that time and had done much toward unifying the Jewish peoples in Russia under a program of Jewish nationalism and socialism. While the Iskrovotzi recognized these features of the Jewish question they also realized that to grant autonomy to one minority nationality would be to give tacit assent to other such arrangements. The result would be a federated rather than a centralized Social-Democratic party.<sup>1</sup> Naturally enough, Lenin and Plekhanov were against the Jewish plan for autonomy but, more important, so were Martov, Trotsky, and Axelrod, all assimilated Jews. No immediate means of compromise were seen so it was decided to discuss the programme issue before voting on the question of the Bund.

The debate on the programme was an almost endless process. A determined minority of "Economist" delegates forced the adoption of a special programme commission and started the debate on the programme in nearly twenty full sessions of the Congress itself.<sup>2</sup> Since the Iskrovotzi had their delegates so completely in control on this issue, the "Economists'" attempt to defeat the programme was basically futile and pedantic and they knew it. The main fire of the opposition to the programme was directed at the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The programme also included as has been

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfe, op. cit., p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 235.

said, a minimum program containing demands for a constituent assembly, for universal, direct, and equal suffrage, and for freedom of speech, press, and assembly. The "Economists" were unable to reconcile these demands, of which they heartily approved, with the idea of a dictatorship. An "Economist" delegate, Akimov-Makhnovets asked, "How do you reconcile your endorsement of a dictatorship with that part of your draft which comes out for a democratic republic . . . a constituent assembly . . . universal suffrage? Shall we, representatives of those who suffer from dictatorship countenance its use ourselves?"<sup>1</sup> Flekhanov's answer to these questions illustrated the uncompromising, and strangely enough, the opportunistic nature of the Iskro-votsi principle of centralism:

The fundamental principle of democracy is this: salus populi; suprema lex (Not literally, but in the language of the revolutionist; The success of the revolution is the supreme law). If the success of the revolution should demand the temporary limitation of any one or other democratic principles it would be criminal to refrain from such limitation.<sup>2</sup>

Such statements as this one, which would be heartily endorsed by Lenin, tended to bring him and Flekhanov closer together than they had been for several months preceding the Congress. Other parts of the programme debated by the "Economists" were those concerning cooperation with the Liberals and the Socialist-Revolutionaries and also Lenin's agrarian proposals. It was decided that an attitude of cautious cooperation should be adopted toward semi-revolutionary organizations outside of Russian Social-Democracy and toward Lenin's agrarian proposals which had as their goal the eventual donation of large portions of land to the peasants; land which at that time belonged to

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<sup>1</sup> Quotation from: Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Quotation from: Popov, op. cit., p. 104.



the large landlorde of Ruesia. Despite the heated debates and lengthy sessions, the programme was finally adopted by almost unanimous consent of all who were at the particular session of the Congress at which the vote was taken.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth item on the agenda had to do with the ratification of the line of the Central Organ. Naturally enough, Iskra was unanimously recognized as the Central Organ, with the delegation which represented Rabochaya Delo abstaining from the vote. Most delegates at the Congress recognized the work which Iskra had done in building the party and organizing the Congress. In the discussion which preceded the vote on this item, one of the "Economists" brought up the question, "If we don't approve of the Iskra editorial board (i.e., of Lenin, Martov, et cetera) will it mean we only recognize a name?"<sup>2</sup> The reply which Trotsky made is significant in respect to events later in the Congress when the question of editors was broached. He answered, "We are not approving a name . . . but a standard . . . around which our Party will actually be built up."<sup>3</sup> This was at the tenth session. Until that time despite the lengthy discussions and equabbles there had been virtual agreement on fundamental principles. In the sessions which immediately followed, the debate centered on the set of party rules which, as with the agenda, were mainly the work of Lenin. During these debates the first major split in the Iskrovotzi took place and the characteristic harmony of the first part of the Congress was replaced by a growing amount of deep-rooted disagreement.

In paragraph one of the rules were to be stated the conditions for

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfe, op. cit., p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> Quotation from: Krupekaya, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> Quotation from: Loc. cit.

membership in the Russian Social-Democratic party. Lenin remained consistent in his desire for a highly centralized party organization. His formula for paragraph one was as follows:

Membership of the party must be given a narrow definition so as to distinguish those who work from those who talk, so as to get rid of chaos in the matter of organization.<sup>1</sup>

Essentially Lenin wanted a party of professional revolutionaries. Only those should be considered members of the party who paid membership dues, accepted the platform, joined a local organization of the party, took active part in its work, and subjected themselves to its direction.

Martov immediately presented a proposal counter to Lenin's. He desired that the party be open to all workers and intellectuals who believed in its programme. He considered it sufficient that a member would work under the general control of the organization but need not join a local organization or be especially active in any revolutionary work. Martov felt that Lenin's formula would close the party to a large number of intellectuals and sympathizers among the workers who would not risk joining a local underground organization. Plekhanov sided with Lenin and argued with Martov in the following words:

I fail to understand . . . why it is thought that Lenin's draft, if adopted, would close the doors of our party to a large number of workers. Workers desiring to join the party will not fear to attach themselves to an organization . . . many intellectuals, however, will be afraid, for they are thoroughly imbued with bourgeois individualism. But that is all to the good . . . (for they are usually) opportunistic.<sup>2</sup>

Such arguments failed to convince a great number of the Iskrovotsi.

Axelrod rallied to Martov's formula and joined in: "Is not Lenin dreaming

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, op. cit., p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> Quotation from: Popov, op. cit., p. 111.

of the administrative subordination of an entire party to a few guardians of doctrine?"<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this is exactly what Lenin was "dreaming" of—but characteristically he saw no harm in such dictatorial plans. Under the conditions which revolutionary work had to be carried out Lenin, however, would seem to have a valid reason for demanding limited party membership. In the following statement he emphasized this reason:

Martov's formula stretched the boundaries of the party. He argued that our party must become a party of the masses . . . In the conditions in which we have to work this is very dangerous, because it would make it very difficult to draw a line between a revolutionary and an idle talker.<sup>2</sup>

After two full sessions, many votes on procedure and two roll calls the vote on the first paragraph of the rules was officially tabulated at twenty-eight to twenty-two in favor of Martov's formula. The first major split among the Iskrovotzi had occurred. Among the editors, Lenin and Flekhanov had voted together against Martov, who was supported by Potresov, Axelrod, and Zaslitch. The Bundists and the delegation representing Rabochaya Delo had recognized the significance of the debate and sided with Martov. They considered that Martov's proposal would lead to less strict control over separate party organizations and thus they might yet gain the autonomy which they desired.

Lenin was outraged at the defeat. He believed that Martov's formula would jeopardize much of the work which had planned for the future. But more important he also realized that with the Iskrovotzi support of Martov backed by the Bund and Rabochaya Delo, he had little chance of other than defeat on any contested issues. His position of leadership at the Congress

<sup>1</sup> Quotation from: Wolfe, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, op. cit., p. 373.

had gone sour and he knew it.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately for Lenin, the remainder of the paragraphs of the rules were debated and passed without significant revision. Martov, then, did not make use of his new position of power when he might have and events soon caused the pendulum to swing once more in Lenin's favor.

The next critical issue to be decided was that of membership both of the Central Organ and of the Central Committee. In the agenda which Lenin had drawn up for the Congress he had suggested under point twenty-three that the old editorial board which had proved unworkable be dissolved. In its place was to be elected a group of three editors. The same plan was suggested for the Organizational Committee which was to be re-constituted as the Central Committee of the party with administrative duties inside Russia. Apparently this plan had brought forth no disagreement among the editors during the early sessions of the Congress. However, Martov became convinced that the plan was directed against him and that it would tend to enhance Lenin's power in the party. If point twenty-three had come to a vote immediately after Martov's victory on the issue of party membership it would undoubtedly have been decided in his favor. Unfortunately for Martov, however, this was not the case. Lenin very cleverly forced the vote on the question of the Bund and was successful in vetoing the Bundists' federative aspirations. The Bundists were incensed; they immediately left the Congress and declared their secession from the party. Thus Martov lost five allies. Next Lenin followed up this advantage with a motion calculated to drive out another group of his opponents. He moved to dissolve Rabochaya Delo and give exclusive recognition to Iskra. Martov as a loyal Iskrovotsi fell into the trap and voted in favor of the

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<sup>1</sup> Trotsky, Russian Revolution, p. 63.



motion. Thereupon the two Rabochaya Delo delegates who had supported him in his vote on paragraph one of the rules withdrew from the Congress. Lenin's minority of five or six was thus converted to a majority of two votes.<sup>1</sup> The two voting groups, Martov's and Lenin's were finally decisively split. Each group began to hold private, unofficial gatherings and even adopted separate names. Lenin's group became the Bolsheviki (Majority) and Martov's, the Mensheviki (Minority). Although these names were not always applicable after the Congress since frequently the Mensheviks were in the majority, Lenin realized the psychological advantage of the Bolshevik title and retained it for many years.<sup>2</sup>

The debate on the membership of the Central Organ and the Central Committee was a bitter one. Martov, backed by Axelrod, Zaslitch, and Potresov of the Iskra editors, protested any plan to depose any of the original six editors. It had become clear in preliminary discussions that any new combination of three would include Plekhanov, Lenin, and Martov. Axelrod and Zaslitch opposed such an arrangement because they feared the consequences of being removed from the editorial board. Iskra had been their one connection with Russia and after so many years in exile they clung to that connection almost as if life or death depended upon it.<sup>3</sup> Martov's reason for opposing such an arrangement was that he feared, and realistically enough, that he would be in the minority and be outvoted on every issue. Then, too, he had been close friends of Axelrod, Potresov, and Zaslitch and he persuaded himself that he would be letting them down if he voted in favor of the editorial

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfe, op. cit., p. 244.

<sup>2</sup> Hecker, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 38.

triumvirate. Lenin had several reasons for desiring a restricted membership of the editorial board. Lenin first claimed that the old group of six, "was so unworkable that it had not met in full once in the course of three years."<sup>1</sup> Next he asserted that only with a more restricted, workable editorial board would it be possible to bring about the political consolidation necessary for revolutionary activities in Russia.<sup>2</sup> And Trotsky gave as Lenin's reason for wanting the new arrangement the desire to get Axelrod and Zasulich off the editorial board.<sup>3</sup>

The struggle became acute during the elections. N. K. Krupskaya recorded such scenes as the following:

(In) another scene I remember Deutsch was angrily reprimanding Noskov about something. The latter raised his head, and with gleaming eyes said bitterly: "You just keep your mouth shut, you old dodderer!"<sup>4</sup>

Martov argued that the voting on the two groups of three represented "a state of siege" in the party and that Lenin was forcing "exceptional laws against individual persons and groups."<sup>5</sup> Martov also raised the point that earlier in endorsing the Iskra as the Central Organ, he had also tacitly endorsed the old editorial board. Since both he and Trotsky at that time had answered Akimov-Makhnovets's criticism with the statement that an approval of Iskra meant only an approval of the newspaper and not the staff itself, the point was lost. Lenin's forcefulness and his pressure tactics were making themselves felt. Martov interrupted the voting with a cry that it was a slur on his political reputation. Trotsky and others followed with assents. Plokhov

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, op. cit., p. 351.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 363.

<sup>3</sup> Trotsky, My Life, p. 161.

<sup>4</sup> Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 78.

<sup>5</sup> Quotation from: Lenin, op. cit., p. 264.

and Lenin protested against the interruptions and Lenin asked the secretaries to enter in the minutes that "Comrades Zaslitch, Martov, and Trotsky interrupted him and that the number of interruptions be recorded."<sup>1</sup>

When a motion to re-elect the old editorial board was defeated, the outraged minority refused thenceforward to vote on any question. Plekhanov, Lenin, and Martov were elected editors of the Central Organ. Noekov, Krzhizhanovsky, and Lengnik, all Lenin's men, were elected to the Central Committee. Each of these bodies was to name two men to a Party Council of five for which the Congress chose a chairman, Plekhanov. The voting on these memberships had been unanimous: twenty-two for, twenty refused to vote, and two deposited blank ballots.

Martov refused to accept the editorship and he and his group ceased to participate in any more of the activities of the Congress. The split had come and in the years following the Congress it was to be a serious barrier to any concerted party projects. Before the voting was complete on the question of the Central Organ and the Central Committee Lenin pushed through a proposal to subordinate the Central Committee to the Central Organ. Although he could hope to control both groups, the Organ being outside of Russia would be the easiest to control. Trotsky who had sided with the minority accosted Lenin with the statement that, "I had come (to the Congress) with the idea that the Central Organ must 'subordinate' itself to the Central Committee." "That won't do," Lenin replied, "That is contrary to the relative strength. How can they direct us from Russia? . . . We are the stable center and shall direct from here." "But that means complete dictatorship of the Central

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 365.

Organ," Trotsky answered. "What is there bad about that?" Lenin replied, "In the present situation it cannot be otherwise."<sup>1</sup> Characteristically Lenin was to change his mind on this point for he soon lost control of the Central Organ. Still later he lost control of the Central Committee and he then decided to defy both bodies and set up his own caucus committee. Consistency seemed to be one of Lenin's virtues only when it enhanced his desire for power and leadership. This desire seems to be the key to understanding Lenin's actions at the Congress.

With the abstaining of the Martovists, the remainder of the Congress was without important incidents. Debates were desultory and largely without meaning. Resolutions were adopted on such subjects as local organizations, demonstrations, anti-Jewish pogroms, and tactics.<sup>2</sup> The Martovists spent their time asking each other how Lenin was able to do what he did. Trotsky recorded Axelrod as asking, "How could he (Lenin) have the nerve to do it? Was it so long ago that he came abroad as a mere pupil and behaved as a pupil? . . . Where then did he get that supreme self confidence?"<sup>3</sup> The answer was that Lenin had the nerve. He was capable of assuming direct leadership at the expense of friends and relationships no matter how much sentiment was involved. Plekhanov had said it but salus populi: suprema lex, would seem to have been endorsed also by Lenin without reservation. On Saturday, August 23 at five o'clock in the afternoon the Congress drew to a close. In the following two hours the delegates, almost appearing to be somnambulists, passed a half dozen more resolutions and adjourned for the last time.<sup>4</sup>

1 Quotations from: Trotsky, Russian Revolution, p. 42.

2 Popov, op. cit., p. 109.

3 Quotation from: Trotsky, My Life, p. 162.

4 Wolfe, op. cit., p. 248.



The immediate significance of the Congress lay almost entirely in the fact that a split had occurred in the Russian Social-Democratic party. The measures adopted by the Congress never played an important part in the future Communist Party because they became so engulfed by the bitter struggle for power between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks which followed the Congress.

The Congress was the final act in the preparatory period of Russian Social-Democracy. It did positive work in actually creating at least several general theoretical principles which helped establish Russian Social-Democracy among the proletariat of Russia and it brought to a climax the struggle between the "hard" elements represented by Lenin and later the Bolshevik party, and the "soft" elements represented first by the "Economists" and after the Congress by the Mensheviks. The influence of Iskra as it was originally constituted in 1900 was brought to a close by the events which followed the Congress. It was finished as an expression of Lenin's views within four months after the Congress but it was not until late in 1904 that Lenin was able to re-enforce his influence with another newspaper.

During the months following the Second Congress until the Russian Revolution of 1905, the most important efforts of both the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks were directed at the struggle over the party centers (i.e., the Organ and the Committee). Lenin and Plekhanov continued to edit Iskra until November of the same year as the Congress. Plekhanov in the meantime had begun to regret his haste in dissociating himself from his friends who were now Mensheviks. This coupled with the fact that most of the financial support for Iskra had come from persons who now supported the Mensheviks forced Plekhanov to re-evaluate his position. In early November, over Lenin's protest, Plekhanov co-optated the entire pre-Congress Iskra editorial board. Lenin's hand was forced and he resigned from the editorial board. Number 52 of Iskra issued

on November 7, 1903 was edited by Plekhanov alone. Thereafter the newspaper was controlled exclusively by the Menshevik section of the Russian Social-Democratic party.<sup>1</sup>

Lenin, without an organ with which to guide his following was in a difficult position. By the spring of 1904 the Central Committee in Russia renounced the Bolshevik section of the party and began to support the Mensheviks. Lenin was without a single official instrument of power. During the summer of 1904 Lenin attempted no activities which might help him recover the ground he had lost, but by September he was encouraged by a number of new supporters. Just as he had thought of the Iskra as being absolutely essential to the unifying of the party, so he began to think of establishing another newspaper to help him regain his lost position. In Geneva, on December 23, 1904, Lenin, with the help of other Bolsheviks was able to announce:

Our newspaper Vpered (Forward) came out yesterday. All the Bolsheviks are rejoicing and are encouraged. . . . At last we have broken up the cursed dissension and are working harmoniously. . . . A good group of literary collaborators has been gotten together; there are fresh forces, little money, but soon we must receive some. The Central Committee who betrayed us has lost all credit. . . . The Bolshevik Committee are joining together, they have already chosen a Bureau and now the Organ will completely unite them. Hurrah!<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime the Mensheviks with the support of both the party centers were restating the philosophy of the revolutionary movement which they hoped to lead. What was originally nothing more than a difference among personalities at the Congress gradually deepened into a difference on principles. Essentially, they adopted the "minimum" part of the programme as their

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<sup>1</sup> Olga Hess Gankin and H. H. Fisher, The Bolsheviks and the World War (Stanford University, California: Stanford University Press, 1940), p. 756.

<sup>2</sup> Hill and Madie, op. cit., p. 224.

immediate Russian goals. Trotsky and Martov became their chief spokesmen and these two attempted in many different ways to conciliate the various other revolutionary groups in Russia. It was in conciliation rather than antagonism that they hoped to gain their objectives.<sup>1</sup> Because of this attitude, the whole complexion of Iskra after issue number 52, was radically changed. After number 52, the Iskra of uncompromising centralism, Lenin's Iskra was no more.

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<sup>1</sup> I. O. Martov, The State and the Socialist Revolution (New York: International Review, 1938), p. 9.

## SUMMARY

An attempt has been made in this thesis to evaluate the influence of a newspaper on a revolutionary movement. Since the years 1900 to 1904 were years primarily dedicated by Russian Social-Democracy to discussion and not to revolution, the end results could not be measured in governments overthrown or monarchs deposed. Iskra's significance lay in three different fields. First, it was influential in helping to develop the Russian Social-Democratic organization. Its greatest positive work was done in this field even before the Second Congress was called. Secondly, it provided a spawning ground for the growth of leaders in the movement. Lenin, Martov, Trotsky, were only a few of the future leaders of the Russian Communist state who developed their abilities through their activities on Iskra. Finally, the Iskra helped establish a Congress which, though it resulted in a schism, was absolutely essential in the chain of events which led to the Russian Revolution of 1917. The Congress brought the two basic viewpoints of Social-Democracy into the open where they might be accepted or rejected without a mincing of words. Without this development, which gave birth to Bolshevism as a recognized tendency, the Revolution of 1917 might well have taken a vastly different path.



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## APPENDIX



Declaration By The Editorial Board of Iskra<sup>1</sup>

In undertaking the publication of a political newspaper, Iskra, we consider it necessary to say a few words about our aims and what we understand our task to be.

We are passing through an extremely important period in the history of the Russian labour movement and of Russian Social-Democracy. The past few years have been marked by an astonishingly rapid spread of Social-Democratic ideas among our intelligentsia, and coming forward to meet this tendency of social ideas is the movement of the industrial proletariat, which arose independently, and which is beginning to unite and to fight against its oppressors, is beginning eagerly to strive towards socialism. Circles of workers and Social-Democratic literature is increasing and is far outstripping the supply, while the intensified persecution by the government is powerless to restrain this movement. The prisons and the places of exile are filled to overflowing. Hardly a month goes by without our hearing of Socialists being "discovered" in all parts of Russia, of the capture of literature-carriers, and the confiscation of literature and printing presses—but the movement goes on and grows, spreads to a wider area, penetrates more and more deeply into the working class, and attracts increasing public attention to itself. The entire economic development of Russia, the history of the development of social ideas in Russia and of the Russian revolutionary movement serve as a guarantee that the Russian Social-Democratic labour movement will grow and ultimately surmount all the obstacles that confront it.

On the other hand, the principal feature of our movement, and one which has become particularly marked in recent times is its state of disunity and its primitive character—if one may so express it. Local circles spring up and function independently of one another and (what is particularly important) even of circles which have functioned and now function simultaneously in the same district. Traditions are not established and continuity is not maintained; the local literature entirely reflects this disunity and lack of contact with what Russian Social-Democracy has already created.

This state of disunity runs counter to the requirements called forth by the strength and breadth of the movement, and this, in our opinion, marks a critical moment in its history. In the movement itself the need is strongly felt for consolidation and for definite form and organization; and yet many active Social-Democrats still fail to realize the need for the movement passing to a higher form. On the contrary, among wide circles an ideological wavering is observed, an absorption in the fashionable "criticism of Marxism" and "Bernsteinism," in spreading the views of the so-called "Economist" tendency and, what is inseparably connected with it, the effort to keep the movement at its lowest stage, an effort to push into the background the task of forming a revolutionary party to lead the struggle at the head of the whole people. It is a fact that such an ideological wavering is observed

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, op. cit., pp. 3-8.

among Russian Social-Democrats, that narrow practical work carried on without a theoretical conception of the movement as a whole threatens to divert the movement to a false path. No one who has direct knowledge of the state of affairs in the majority of our organizations has any doubt whatever on that score. Moreover, literary productions exist which confirm this. It is sufficient to mention the Crede which has already evoked legitimate protest, the Special Supplement to Rabochaya Mysl (September 1899), which brought out in such bold relief the tendency with which Rabochaya Mysl is thoroughly imbued, and, finally, the Manifesto of the St. Petersburg Self-Emancipation of the Working Class group, drawn up in the spirit of this very Economism. The assertions made by Rabocheye Dvelo to the effect that the Crede merely represents the opinions of individuals, that the tendency represented by Rabochaya Mysl reflects merely the confusion of mind and the tactlessness of its editors, and not a special tendency in the progress of the Russian labour movement are absolutely untrue.

Simultaneously with this, the works of authors whom the reading public has with more or less reason regarded up to now as the prominent representatives of "legal Marxism" more and more reveal a turn towards views approaching those of bourgeois apologists. As a result of all this, we have the confusion and anarchy which enabled the ex-Marxist, or to speak more correctly, the ex-Socialist, Bernstein, in recounting his successes, to declare unchallenged in the press that the majority of Social-Democrats active in Russia were his followers.

We do not desire to exaggerate the danger of the situation, but it would be immeasurably more harmful to shut our eyes to it. That is why we welcome with all our heart the decision of the Emancipation of Labour group to resume its literary activity and commence a systematic struggle against the attempts to distort and vulgarize Social-Democracy.

The practical conclusion to be drawn from all this is as follows: we Russian Social-Democrats must combine and direct all our efforts towards the formation of a strong party that will fight under the united banner of revolutionary Social-Democracy. This is precisely the task that was outlined by the Congress of 1898, at which the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party was formed, and which published its Manifesto.

We regard ourselves as members of this Party; we entirely agree with the fundamental ideas contained in the Manifesto, and attach extreme importance to it as a public declaration of its aims. Consequently, for us, as members of the Party, the question as to what our immediate and direct tasks are presents itself as follows: what plan of activity must we adopt in order to revive the Party of the firmest possible basis?

The reply usually given to this question is that it is necessary to elect a central Party institution once more and to instruct that body to resume the publication of the Party organ. But in the confused period through which we are now passing such a simple method is hardly expedient.

To establish and consolidate the Party means establishing unity among all Russian Social-Democrats, and, for the reasons indicated above, such

unity cannot be brought about by decree; it cannot be brought about by, let us say, a meeting of representatives passing a resolution. Definite work must be done to bring it about. In the first place, it is necessary to bring about unity of ideas which will remove the differences of opinion and confusion that—we will be frank—reign among Russian Social-Democrats at the present time. This unity of ideas must be fortified by a unified Party programme. Secondly, an organisation must be set up especially for the purpose of maintaining contact among all the centres of the movement, for supplying complete and timely information about the movement, and for regularly distributing the periodical press to all parts of Russia. Only when we have built such an organisation, only then will it become a real factor and, consequently, a mighty political force. To the first half of this task, i. e., creating a common literature, consistent in principle and capable of ideologically uniting revolutionary Social-Democracy, we intend to devote our efforts, for we regard this as one of the pressing tasks of the present-day movement and a necessary preliminary measure towards the resumption of Party activity.

As we have already said, the intellectual unity of Russian Social-Democrate has still to be established, and in order to achieve this it is necessary, in our opinion, to have an open and thorough discussion of the fundamental principles and tactical questions raised by the present-day Economists, Bernsteinists and "critics." Before we can unite, and in order that we may unite, we must first of all firmly and definitely draw the lines of demarcation. Otherwise, our unity will be merely a fictitious unity, which will conceal the prevailing confusion and prevent its complete elimination. Naturally, therefore, we do not intend to utilise our publication merely as a storehouse for various views. On the contrary, we shall conduct it along the lines of a strictly defined tendency. This tendency can be expressed by the word Marxism, and there is hardly need to add that we stand for the consistent development of the ideas of Marx and Engels, and utterly reject the half-way, vague and opportunistic emendations which have now become so fashionable as a result of the legerdemain of Ed. Bernstein, P. Struve and many others. But while discussing all questions from our own definite point of view, we shall not rule out of our columns polemics between comrades. Open polemics within the sight and hearing of all Russian Social-Democrate and class conscious workers are necessary and desirable, in order to explain the profound differences that exist, to obtain a comprehensive discussion of disputed questions, and to combat the extremes into which the representatives, not only of various views, but also of various localities or various "crafts" in the revolutionary movement inevitably fall. As has already been stated, we also consider one of the drawbacks of the present-day movement to be the absence of open polemics among those holding avowedly differing views, an effort to conceal the differences that exist over extremely serious questions.

We shall not enumerate in detail all the questions and themes included in the programme of our publication, for this programme automatically emerges from the general conception of what a political newspaper, published under present conditions, should be.

We shall exert every effort to persuade every Russian comrade to regard our publication as his own, as one to which every group should communicate



information concerning the movement, in which to relate its experiences, express its views, its literature requirements, its opinions on Social-Democratic publications, in fact to make it the medium through which it can share with the other groups the contribution it makes to the movement and what it receives from it. Only in this way will it be possible to establish a genuinely all-Russian organ of Social-Democracy. Only such an organ will be capable of leading the movement onto the high road of the political struggle. "Push out the framework and broaden the content of our propaganda, agitational and organisational activity"--these words uttered by P. B. Axelrod must serve as our slogan defining the activities of Russian Social-Democrats in the immediate future, and we adopt this slogan in the programme of our organ.

We appeal not only to Socialists and class conscious workers; we also call upon all those who are oppressed by the present political system. We place the columns of our publication at their disposal in order that they may expose all the abominations of the Russian autocracy.

Those who regard Social-Democracy as an organisation serving exclusively the spontaneous struggle of the proletariat may remain satisfied with merely local agitation and "pure and simple" labour literature. We do not regard Social-Democracy in this way; we regard it as a revolutionary party, inseparably linked up with the labour movement and directed against absolutism. Only when organised in such a party will the proletariat--the most revolutionary class in modern Russia be in a position to fulfill the historical task that confronts it, namely, to unite under its banner all the democratic elements in the country and to crown the stubborn fight waged by a number of generations that have perished in the past with the final triumph over the hated regime.



RUSSIAN SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY AND ISKRA, 1900 - 1904

by

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B. S., Kansas State College  
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The purposes of this thesis were three-fold. First, it was desired to bring under one cover a factual account of the Russian Social-Democratic Party over a very limited, but important period of years. This had not previously existed in English. From this primary purpose stemmed a secondary purpose; that of tracing the development of a revolutionary newspaper which was an integral part of the Social-Democratic movement itself; and finally, the thesis was devoted to an exposition of the newspaper's influence on the Russian revolutionary movement.

The chief actors in the story were persons known to all socialists and most informed readers. They were Lenin, Trotsky, I. O. Martov, and G. V. Plekhanov. During 1900, they, with the exception of Trotsky who was still in Russian exile, conceived of the idea of publishing a conspiratorial newspaper devoted to the spreading of their revolutionary Marxist ideas. In December of that same year at Stuttgart, Germany, the first issue of their newspaper named Iskra left the presses. During the next two years their enterprise suffered through internal conflicts and arguments and rejoiced at the increasing number of adherents who flocked to their banner. Two tendencies in Russian Social-Democracy had exhibited themselves during this period. One, that supported by Iskra, expressed the need for an immediate socialist revolution and a highly centralized revolutionary organization. The other, so-called "Economic" tendency, which found support among more moderate socialists, expressed the desire to bring about workers benefits (such as shorter hours and better working conditions) first, and worry about a revolution afterwards. During 1900 to 1903 the Iskra editors devoted many pages of their publication to a refutation of the "Economic" tendency. Naturally enough this type of activity was harmful to the unity of the Social-Democratic organization but Lenin and others considered it absolutely essential.

During 1903, in an attempt to unite the party under Iskra, a congress of the Russian Social-Democrats was called in Brussels and London. During the first sessions Lenin as leader of the Iskra group which predominated at the Congress carried all important issues before him. Toward the middle of the Congress, Martov, an Iskra editor, disagreed with Lenin on some important considerations and he succeeded in splitting the Congress. From this split came the two groups, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks; the first led by Lenin and the latter by Martov and Trotsky. After the Congress the Mensheviks gained control of Iskra and that newspaper as an expression of Lenin's centralist, "immediate revolutionary" views was finished.

Russian Social-Democracy during the years 1900-1904 was in a formative period. At first it amounted to little more than a relatively small group of exiled Russian intellectuals publishing a clandestine revolutionary newspaper which was hazardingly smuggled into Russia. Gradually, however, more and more workers in Russia joined Iskra's ranks and at least an embryonic revolutionary force was in the making. Iskra's importance lay, first, in the fact that it served as a proving ground for the future leaders of the Communistic State; secondly, in that it helped spread the Social-Democratic message in Russia; and, finally, in that it helped bring about a congress which clearly defined the party issues which later were to be resolved into a single set of principles.