2. THE STRUGGLE FOR THE CREATION OF A REVOLUTIONARY PROLETARIAN PARTY OF A NEW TYPE

THE TWO DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED LINES WITH REGARD TO THE BUILDING OF THE PARTY

While clearing away the ideological obstacles, Lenin did a tremendous amount of organizational work for the creation of a party of the proletariat.

The League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class was organized in the autumn of 1895 in St. Petersburg under the leadership of Lenin, and it began to unite socialism with the working-class movement in Russia. It was the rudiment of the revolutionary party of the Russian proletariat. In 1898 the Leagues of Struggle of St. Petersburg, Moscow and Kiev together with those of other areas convened the First Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. However, this congress was unable to overcome the amateurishness and clannish outlook of the Marxist circles that still prevailed and thus did not really succeed in building the party.

While in exile, Lenin gave careful consideration to the problem of creating a militant, revolutionary proletarian party of a new type and worked out a detailed plan to this end. He maintained that in order to form a united Marxist party, there had to be a thorough ideological break with the "Economists", and the building of such

a party had to be placed on the solid basis of Marxism. He said:

> Before we can unite, and in order that we may unite, we must first of all draw firm and definite lines of demarcation.[1]

Therefore the founding of the Party had to begin with the founding of a party organ that would propagate revolutionary, Marxist ideas. This organ had to establish close links with the local organizations, through a network of agents. He stated:

> Without such an organ, local work will remain narrowly "amateurish." The formation of the Party — if the correct representation of that Party in a certain newspaper is not organised — will to a considerable extent remain bare words.[2]

As a result of Lenin's painstaking work, the newspaper *Iskra* was finally published in December 1900. It conducted a sharp struggle against the enemies of Marxism; among the advanced proletarians it developed a spirit of loyalty to revolutionary theory and an uncompromising attitude to opportunism. That was why it "earned the honour of being detested by the opportunists, both Russian and West-European".[3] In addition, it succeeded in coalescing the scattered Marxist circles and prepared the way for the convening of the Second Party Congress.

---

[1] "Declaration of the Editorial Board of *Iskra*", *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 4, p. 354.

[2] "Our Immediate Task", *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 4, pp. 218-19.

[3] "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back", *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 7, pp. 413-14.

In the process of creating the Marxist party, Lenin carried on a resolute struggle against the Mensheviks (the immediate successors to the "Economists" both ideologically and organizationally) and the opportunists of the Second International.

The overwhelming majority of the Parties of the Second International were established in a period of relatively "peaceful" development of capitalism. None of the programmes of these Parties contained a clause on the dictatorship of the proletariat. Their organizational principles served the needs of "legal" activity and parliamentary struggle, and there was no strict discipline in these Parties. The parliamentary group of the Party was not bound by the decisions of the Party central committee, and the central organs of the Party were allowed to pursue a line different from that of its central committee. The Party was not regarded as the highest of all forms of organization of the proletariat. The Party organization was in fact an appendage of the parliamentary group. In the circumstances, there was an influx into the Parties of the Second International of unstable elements among the workers, of labour aristocrats, petty-bourgeois elements and bourgeois intellectuals, bringing about a growth of opportunism. Parties of this kind could not possibly lead the proletariat in revolutionary struggle for the seizing of state power and the enforcement of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

What kind of proletarian party should be built in Russia? Serious differences arose, at first between Lenin and Plekhanov on the question of the Party Programme, and later between Lenin and Martov and his followers on the question of the Party Rules.

In Plekhanov's draft of the Party Programme, no mention was made of the dictatorship of the proletariat, nor was the role of the working class clearly defined. Lenin fought these opportunist errors with great firmness. At his insistence, the most important clause — the dictatorship of the proletariat — was added to the draft Party Programme, and the leading role of the working class in the revolution was stated explicitly. He said later that the clear insertion in the programme of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat was also for the purpose of opposing Bernsteinism. In accordance with his view that a firm worker-peasant alliance had to be established, Lenin also advocated support for the peasants' demand for land. It was he who proposed all the land question clauses in the draft Party Programme.

With regard to principles of Party organization, Martov and Co. tried to copy those of the Social-Democratic Parties in the West. Lenin on the contrary maintained that the experience of the Social-Democratic Parties of Western Europe should be treated critically. He pointed out in 1899:

> The history of socialism and democracy in Western Europe, the history of the Russian revolutionary movement, the experience of our working-class movement — such is the *material* we must master to elaborate a purposeful organisation and purposeful tactics for our Party. "The analysis" of this material must, however, be done independently, since there are no ready-made models to be found anywhere.[1]

[1] "Our Immediate Task", *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 4, p. 217.

And in 1901, Lenin indicated the need to form a strong and centralized Party, "capable of leading the preparatory struggle, every unexpected outbreak, and, finally, the decisive assault".[1]

The serious differences with regard to the line for building the Party became accentuated at the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in July 1903, when the Party Rules were discussed. Lenin's formulation of the first paragraph of the Rules was:

> A member of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party is one who accepts its programme and who supports the Party both financially and by personal *participation in one of the Party organisations.*[2]

Martov's formulation, however, while admitting that acceptance of the programme and financial support of the Party were indispensable conditions of Party membership, maintained that a Party member need not necessarily participate in one of the Party organizations. Martov and his adherents also demanded "autonomism", as against centralized, unified leadership, asserting that the local Party organizations did not have to submit to the decisions of the centre. What they wanted was an amorphous, heterogeneous and loose Party. Lenin fought the Martovites. He held that to create an organized, disciplined, centralized and united Party, it was necessary to insist on the participation of Party members in one of the Party organizations and to keep firmly to the

[1] "A Talk with Defenders of Economism", *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 5, p. 318.

[2] "Account of the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.", *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 7, p. 27.

organizational principle that the local organizations should submit to the centre, the lower organizations to the higher organizations, and the minority to the majority. When the congress came to elect the central institutions of the Party, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party split into two opposing groups, the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. Lenin later wrote, "As a trend of political thought and as a political party, Bolshevism exists since 1903."[1]

Plekhanov supported Lenin's formulation in the discussion of the Party Rules. After the congress, the Mensheviks did their utmost to frustrate the decisions of the congress and carried on activities against the Bolsheviks. Plekhanov advocated reconciliation with the Mensheviks and soon became a Menshevik himself. With his help, the Mensheviks usurped the leadership of the *Iskra* editorial board and converted it into their own organ in the fight against Lenin and the Bolsheviks. In the columns of the new *Iskra,* the Mensheviks conducted unrestrained propaganda in favour of permitting "free" groups and individuals within the ranks of the Party, without any obligation to submit to the decisions of the Party organization, and that "every striker" and every intellectual who sympathized with the Party should be allowed to declare himself a Party member. They accused Lenin of "bureaucracy" and "formalism", of trying to establish "serfdom" in the Party. In defence of the organizational principles of the revolutionary party of the proletariat, Lenin wrote "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back", in which he criticized the opportunism of both the Men-

[1] "'Left-Wing' Communism, an Infantile Disorder", *Selected Works*, Moscow, Vol. II, Part 2, p. 345.

sheviks and the Second International on the question of the organizational line.

Lenin indicated that opportunism in matters of organization "seeks to lessen the responsibility of individual intellectuals to the party of the proletariat, to lessen the influence of the central institutions, to enlarge the autonomy of the least steadfast elements in the Party, to reduce organisational relations to a purely platonic and verbal acceptance of them".[1] This opportunist trend, he added, had expressed itself everywhere in the Social-Democratic Parties of the European countries and had led to the disintegration of the Party organizations. The struggle between the opportunist and the revolutionary wing of the Party represented the conflict "between the tendency to relax and the tendency to tighten organisation and discipline, between the mentality of the unstable intellectual and that of the staunch proletarian, between intellectualist individualism and proletarian solidarity".[2] Organizationally, the opportunism of the Mensheviks lay in their denial of the great role of organization in the proletariat's struggle for socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and this organizational opportunism served their opportunist political line.

In this work Lenin outlined the fundamental organizational principles indispensable for the establishment of a militant, centralized, disciplined and revolutionary party of the proletariat, and comprehensively elaborated the theory of the Party. He pointed out that the Party is the vanguard detachment of the proletariat, and to direct

[1] "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back", *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 7, p. 368.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 402.

the struggle of the working class effectively, it must be armed with Marxist theory and the knowledge of the laws of social development and the laws of class struggle. As an organized detachment, the Party is the highest of all forms of organization of the proletariat. It can and should guide all the other organizations of the working class. It must maintain close contact with the broad masses and win their confidence. Its organization must be monolithic, with unity of will, unity of action and unity of discipline, and it must be organized on the principle of centralism. With such a Party, Lenin held, the proletariat will become an invincible force, capable of engaging in struggle and achieving its aims. He wrote:

> In its struggle for power the proletariat has no other weapon but organisation. . . . the proletariat can, and inevitably will, become an invincible force only through its ideological unification on the principles of Marxism being reinforced by the material unity of organisation, which welds millions of toilers into an army of the working class. Neither the senile rule of the Russian autocracy nor the senescent rule of international capital will be able to withstand this army.[1]

The Bolshevik Party was built precisely in accordance with Lenin's theory of the Party and was fundamentally different from the reformist parties of the Second International. It was built on the solid basis of Marxism. It struggled unswervingly against all kinds of opportunism and for the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. This Party led by Lenin provided a brilliant example for all proletarian Parties of the world

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 415.

and furnished all Marxists with a strong bulwark against international opportunism.

THE GROSS INTERFERENCE OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL IS REBUFFED AND THE BOLSHEVIK PARTY MAINTAINS ITS INDEPENDENCE AND PURITY

In the midst of the fierce struggle between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, the opportunists of the Second International rushed to the support of the Mensheviks, their partners in Russia, and opposed Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

Kautsky declared his support for Martov and his opposition to Lenin in a Menshevik paper in May 1904. He distorted the facts and reprimanded Lenin for "expelling" the Mensheviks from the editorial board of *Iskra* at the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. (actually they failed to be re-elected). Almost all the papers of the Parties of the Second International sided with the Mensheviks and published distorted reports about the struggle between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. Lenin therefore regarded it as an important task to explain the real state of affairs inside the Russian Party to the international proletariat and to expose the deceptive propaganda of the opportunists. At the Amsterdam Congress of the Second International in August 1904, the Bolsheviks presented a report entitled *Material for an Understanding of the Party Crisis in the Social-Democratic Labour Party of Russia,* which Lenin helped to compile and edit. The report explained that the participation of Party members in one of the Party organizations, as stipulated in the Party Rules drafted

by Lenin, had drawn on the bitter lessons of the German Social-Democrats, for disruptors had made wide use of the absence of such a stipulation in Article One of the German Party Rules. In June 1905, Lenin wrote an open letter to the editorial board of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung,* in which he said that Kautsky's "picture of the relations that exist in the Russian Social-Democracy is a highly distorted one"[1] and that "Kautsky has no right to speak about his impartiality. He has always been partial as regards the present struggle within the Russian Social-Democracy. This is his right, of course. But one who is partial would do better not to speak too much of impartiality, if he does not want to be accused of hypocrisy."[2] Then he gave a word of warning to all the German Social-Democrats:

> Comrades! If you really consider the R.S.D.L.P. to be a fraternal party, do not believe a word of what the so-called impartial Germans tell you about our split. Insist on seeing the documents, the authentic documents.[3]

Lenin called on the Bolsheviks to conduct an extensive campaign to bring the correct stand taken by the Bolshevik Party to the attention of all workers' study circles abroad and members of foreign Social-Democratic Parties.

Apart from propaganda, the Second International took a series of organizational measures in support of the Mensheviks. The Amsterdam Congress had adopted a decision to establish united Social-Democratic Parties, but

[1] "Open Letter to the Editorial Board of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*", *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 8, p. 531.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 532.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 532-33.

had not specified on what basis this unity was to be built. After the congress, in February 1905, the Bureau of the Second International (the International Socialist Bureau) decided to set up an arbitration committee headed by Bebel to "mediate" between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks and establish "unity". To accept such "arbitration" was tantamount to recognizing that the Second International (in fact, the German Party) had the right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Russian Party. One of the conditions made by this committee was that the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks should "stop debating". This meant that the Bolsheviks should stop exposing the Mensheviks and give up their struggle against opportunism. Lenin firmly rejected this "arbitration" and proposed that the dispute between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks should be settled by a congress of the Russian Party. In June 1905 the I.S.B. again raised the question of "arbitration". Lenin replied that the "mediation" of the I.S.B. could not begin until negotiations between the two sections produced results.

Thanks to Lenin's firm, principled stand and his resistance to the gross interference of the Second International, the Bolshevik Party maintained its independence and purity and increasingly extended its influence on the international communist movement.