

Workers' fight

3p

No. 40 19th January — 25th January 1974

Strikes support jailed pickets

TUC sell-out will isolate miners STOP CRAWLING START FIGHTING!

THE MEETING of the Presidents and General Secretaries of 100 unions on January 16th was originally intended to consider a trade union response to the 2 day lockout imposed by the Tory Government. It turned out instead to be a most shameful exhibition of crawling before the enemies of the working class.

The meeting passed a resolution which came as near as makes no difference to explicitly accepting Phase 3, the Tories' current blueprint for cutting our living standards. Under the guise of 'supporting' the miners they tried to disguise their capitulation with meaningless noises that were meant to sound militant.

Inflation

Meanwhile the 3 day week continues and the capitalists are reported to be doing very well out of it: the working week is down 40%, while production is down between 15% and 20%, with the bosses' profits doing very nicely out of the difference. Raging inflation eats into our wages, and another 15% is probably going to be added to prices in the next few weeks. The Governor of the Bank of England forecasts 10 years of 'austerity for Britain' — and that means austerity for the working class, with the Government doing its damndest to make us pay for capitalism's crisis.

The balance of payments crisis will compel this government or any other government running capitalism to go to international financiers for loans. And to reassure these sharks about the prospects for profit in Britain, it will most likely attempt to declare a new wage freeze.

This is why Heath needs to gamble on winning an election — to strengthen the Government to do battle for the bosses in the period ahead.

And the leadership of the labour movement meet in solemn conference and decide not to help the miners smash through Phase 3, but ... to beg the Tories to let them

through. In return for this they promise that no other union will attempt to go through that breach!

Two years ago when the miners made mincemeat of the 7½% norm, the Government, anxious to avoid the appearance of being beaten, invented the argument that the miners were a 'special case' amidst general derision. The working class knew that the miners were special because they had fought specially hard and mobilised the support of the rest of the working class.

Now the 'special case' idea is revived — by the TUC to cover its abject capitulation.

Taken at its face value the TUC offer is a nonsense. The Government knows that a miners' victory will be a shattering blow for the bosses, not because it would provide a few good arguments for bureaucrats in their negotiations, but because it would be an inspiring example to other workers to ACT to defend their living standards.

The TUC should be concerned to fuse the miners' struggle with that of the whole working class in a general class wide offensive against Tory pay policy. Instead they offer Tory solutions to the crisis created by the Tories — and militantly 'demand' that the Tories accept their Tory solution!

It is a Tory solution because justifying special cases is exactly the sort of divisive, sectional tactics which Tory pay policy was designed to foster.

It is a certainty that if the trade union movement had really used its strength in the last two years, pitting itself decisively against the

government, then not one of the swinish measures with which the Tories have scourged the working class would have survived. The Industrial Relations Act, the Housing Finance Act, the social service cuts, the whole lot could have been scrapped, and probably the Government could have been scrapped too. Three militant workers would not now be in jail.

But our strength has not been used in any coordinated offensive. Instead, faced with outrageous class legislation, the union leaders turned their faces hopefully towards the prospect of a new Labour government which they hoped would painlessly do the job of dismantling the Tory legislation for them. Thus they avoided fighting where they had strength.

The incredible irony of the present situation is that with their two day lockout the Tories have successfully resorted to industrial action ... against the unions! And already the union leaders have run for cover.

Irony

No less ironic and incredible is that the Tories have terrified the union leaders with the 'threat' of an election. This is the most hated, anti working class government in a generation. It is a government which should tremble at the thought of submitting itself to the verdict of the electorate.

And yet the craven union leaders have been blackmailed into crawling to Downing Street, suing for 'social peace' — on Tory terms — afraid to confront the Tories either industrially or electorally!

Meanwhile, the forces of anti working class reaction are gathering and preparing for an offensive. Either we ourselves go on the offensive and refuse to see our living standards cut and refuse to bear the cost of the crisis, fighting for a different, working class system.

Or, beginning now, we allow them to make us pay for



London demonstration against the jailing of the Shrewsbury 3

AS THREE building workers are still held in Heath's jails, 8 more of the 'Shrewsbury 24' went on trial on Tuesday 15th.

Thousands of trade unionists struck and marched in several cities on Tuesday 15th in support of the SHREWSBURY THREE. In London the 3,000 strong demonstration took place under the slogans of opposition to the Three Day Week and Phase Three as well as the jailing of the Shrewsbury Three.

Mr. Norman Atkinson, Labour MP for Tottenham, addressing some of the building workers who went on to lobby parliament, said that Labour lawyers had concluded from the Shrewsbury case that anybody involved in planning picketing could be arrested for conspiracy.

IN LIVERPOOL 2,500 workers marched to Pierhead on a demonstration called by the Trades Council and building unions in support of the Shrewsbury 3. The demonstration consisted mainly of building workers. Many sites stopped work, but no other large industry came out.

Dockers at a mass meeting the previous Sunday had voted to support a shop stewards resolution not to strike.

A resolution put to the Pierhead meeting called for a national lobby of the Home Secretary and for TUC support for this action to rescind the sentences on the 3. This was passed despite protests from many workers who called for strike action.

Similar protests were made when the same resolution was put to a 'mass rally' of 200 on Wednesday night (16th January) called by the Liverpool Confederation of Shipbuilding & Engineering Unions.

Liverpool Trades Council (which held a conference on the Shrewsbury 24 last September) is sponsoring a recall delegate conference on the issue. It will be held on Saturday February 2nd at St. George's Hall, Liverpool. (Credentials available from Simon Fraser, LTC Secretary, 33 Hatton Garden, Liverpool 3. Tel: 051 236 1778) Demonstrations were also held in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Brighton, Ammanford, Shotton and Humberside. On Saturday 19th there will be a conference on the Shrewsbury 24 case in Manchester, organised by the area Liaison Committee for Defence of Trade Unions.

But widespread as the support is, the campaign needs to be massively stepped up. There need to be Defence Committees in every area and branches and contacts on every major site.

J.P.



Len Murray

their problems, and in the period ahead see our living standards cut to the bone.

We need an industrial and an electoral offensive.

The policy of the union leaders, Left and Right, is one of conciliatory idiocy. And they will not even placate the Tories. However low they crawl, it won't satisfy Heath — because they cannot guarantee that the working class will follow their example and flop down on its belly too.

The union leaders appear to calculate that with an election in the offing, industrial action will lead to a defeat for Labour at the polls. Like the Labour leaders, they think that the best way to win an election is to pretend the class struggle doesn't exist. The Labour politicians will do their level best to make the miners retreat from their

overtime ban so that they can parade around on the hustings preaching a sham 'national unity' and trying to look more Tory than the Tories.

Getting the Tories out is important. But not at the cost of damping down the struggle where our real strength lies. If the labour movement refrains now from fighting where it can fight — in industry, where the miners are now again in the vanguard — then what would happen even if these tactics help elect a Labour government? A foreseeable Labour government will try to run capitalism too, and will face the same problems as the Tories, including inflation. It

will attempt capitalist solutions, not the socialist solution. Harold Wilson's government too imposed a wage freeze at the bidding of

the international bankers (remember the 'Gnomes of Zurich?'). A new Labour government will probably, at least, attempt its own version of the Tories' incomes policy. True, a Labour government will be more vulnerable to the pressures of the working class — and therefore a less stable servant of the bosses than the Tories. The trade unions should not hesitate to make demands on a Labour government.

But any militant who shouts in an election VOTE LABOUR, without adding AND PREPARE TO FIGHT is living in dreamland. The class struggle will continue under a Labour government too. The working class will have to fight every inch of the way, though in

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OIL CUTS UPSET TRADE BALANCE

The first of two articles by BRUCE ROBINSON

THE CUTS IN OIL PRODUCTION and the general increase in its price make possible a disruption of world trade and a slump of far greater proportions than that which was in any case expected in 1974. It also marks the reversal of the previous trends in the economic relations between the great capitalist

powers, because of the unevenness with which the oil crisis has hit them.

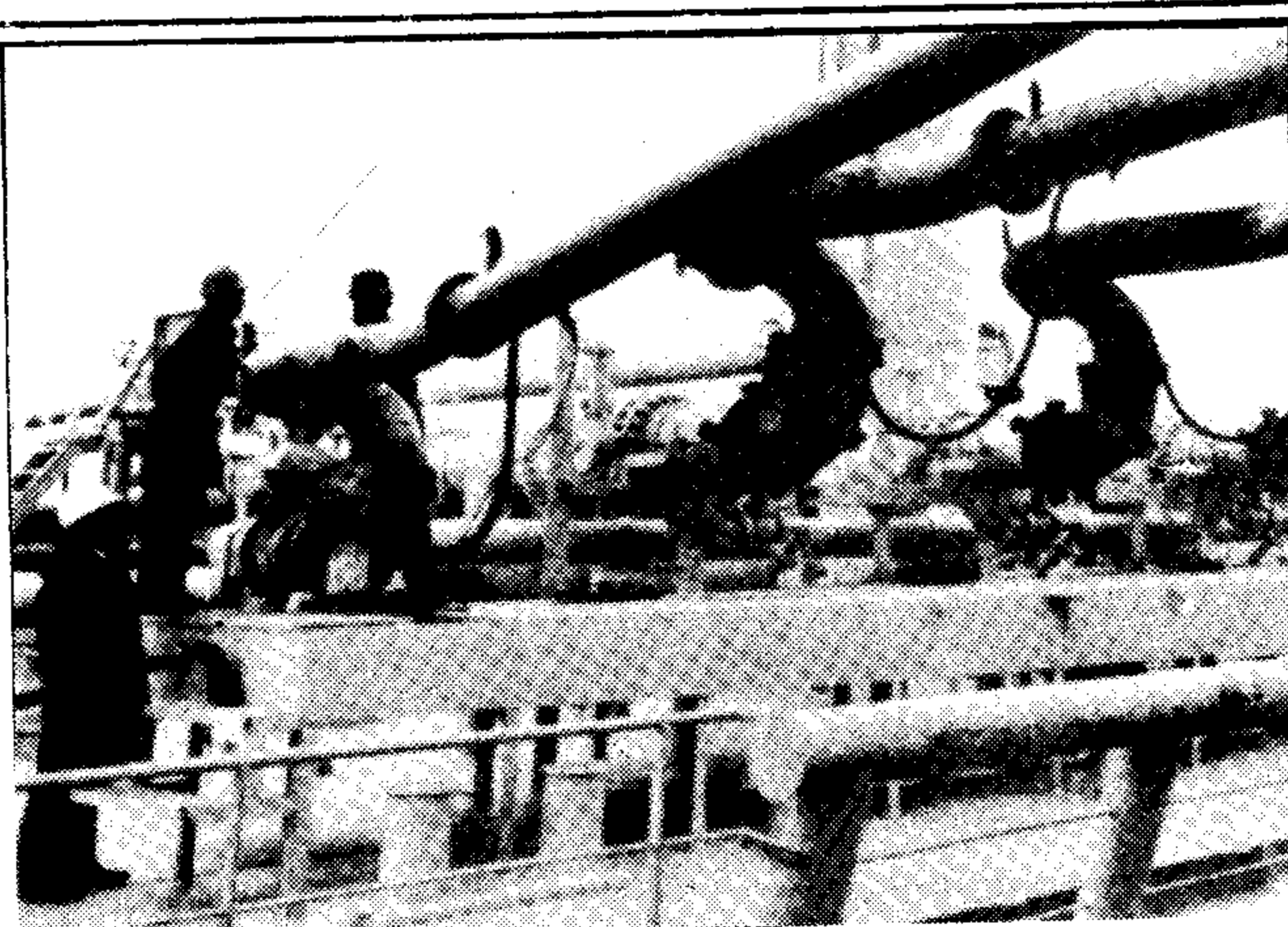
Japan, until now the strongest of the capitalist powers, will probably be the hardest hit as it is totally dependent on foreign sources of energy and the oil companies are sharing their supplies equally between all countries and not making any allowances for the different degrees of dependence of individual countries.

Already this year the revaluation of the yen has created a Japanese trade deficit, and the oil crisis will on OECD estimates cost Japan an extra \$9.1 billion in 1974 so that even with a 10% saving in fuel there would still be a balance of payments deficit of \$5.3 billion.

BLOCKED

Even if oil supplies are maintained at their previous level, only 2½% growth (minute by Japanese post war standards) will occur and forecasts based on more realistic assumptions predict a nil or negative growth rate. Overtime is already being cut in some industries and in the face of an increasingly depressed home market the only solution seen by Japanese companies is to export more and try to hold as great as possible a share of foreign markets.

The members of the EEC are also affected to different degrees by the crisis and this has caused considerable stress in the united front they wanted to present to the USA. Britain, less dependent than most EEC



countries on oil supplies, has blocked any official moves for sharing oil until its dispute with West Germany over the size of the regional fund is settled. While Germany, Italy, and Holland will feel the effects of the oil cuts most heavily, Britain and France, both friendly with the Arab states, will escape relatively lightly, possibly through negotiating bilateral agreements with the Arab states to get oil (e.g. the rumoured arms deal with Saudi Arabia).

In addition there is the question of how the vast money balances which will build up in the Arab states (in themselves a new potential source of international economic instability) and which are expected to be placed in Europe will be distributed between various countries and how competitive increases in interest rates can be avoided. So far the EEC appears hamstrung in its attempts to agree on something that can be presented as a 'European' point of view by the fact that its members are affected by the crisis to greatly varying extents and that they have differences on many other economic issues.

The position of the USA is well described by the 'Economist': "The US economy and the American dollar are both likely to emerge from the

present crisis in a more dominant world position than at any time since the 1950s. America is the one industrialised country that does not face the prospect of an almost permanent balance of payments deficit as a result of what the Arab oil states have done". The USA imports only about 5% from the Middle East and is virtually the only major capitalist nation with sizeable oil supplies. The government is trying to ensure that the effects of the loss of oil are felt by the motorist and not by industry, and has instructed refineries to produce less petrol and more of other fuels. In any case the US was gradually winning back a better trading position in 1973, with the result that the government felt able to remove certain long standing restrictions on the export of capital.

DEFICIT

The oil crisis has meant that the international monetary situation has in many ways reverted to what it was before August 1971. The countries which were refusing to pay for the US deficit by accepting US dollars are now likely to have such troubles with their own balance of payments that their bargaining positions will be considerably reduced.

Grape pickers call for boycott aid

THE struggle for union recognition of the Californian Grape pickers has been going on now for almost 10 years. Once again it has been brought to the attention of the British labour movement in an attempt to get support for their campaign of blacking and boycott of the scab grapes.

Richard Chavez, one of the leaders of the pickers' union United Farm Workers has been touring Europe to publicise their struggle.

The grape pickers of California are almost entirely Mexican Americans, or Mexicans who travel hundreds of miles to work and back every day in cramped and crowded trucks. They are very poorly paid, the work is backbreaking and hazardous to health because of the poisonous pesticide sprays and there is also a high accident rate, 300% higher than the US national average. 800,000 children under 16 work in the fields, over 400 workers die every year from pesticide poisoning, and it is said that the average life expectancy of the migrant workers is 49 years.

In the early years of the UFW, they only had the bosses and their police to fight. But in the last few years they have also had to face the onslaught of the Teamsters Union which, in collusion with the growers, has hired thugs to break up UFW picket lines. Recently these attacks have resulted in the death of two strikers.

The Teamster racketeers want the sole rights to draw up contracts with the growers. The growers prefer Teamster controlled labour, as Teamster leaders, the growers and their politicians are all linked in a complex circle of racketeering and corruption.

The attempts of the UFW to organise a genuine union to fight for the interests of the pickers are a thorn in their side. Hence this Union & boss alliance to smash the UFW.

But the UFW has a long way to go, and the concerted attacks on it have reduced its membership drastically. A consumer boycott in the USA has been quite effective; but attempts to extend it internationally have so far met with little cooperation at official level. Finally two weeks ago London dockers blacked a cargo of Californian grapes. This is a late start, but a good one: it must be extended to ensure that no more of these grapes are sold in this country to the profit of these gangster strikebreakers.

John Cunningham

'You can come and live with me - I'm dead.'

A REVIEW

Marx declared that the method of exploitation under capitalism is the way the worker is compelled to sell his labour power. Labour power is bought by capitalists, and its cost rises or falls like any other commodity on the market.

However, if the worker happens to be black and living in South Africa, he first has to get a licence for the privilege of selling his labour power.

Sizwe Bansi needs work because he has a wife and four children in Williamstown in one of the blacks-only Bantustans. He doesn't want to work in the gold mines because too many people get killed in rock falls, and there is no other way of earning a wage in the Bantustan; nor is there any work for his wife.

So he treks to Port Elizabeth, where the Ford and Feltex factories are, in search of work.

He has a passbook, and a number, and a photograph. But he does not have the right rubber stamp on it. So when the police raid the place he is staying in, he gets a stamp in his book which tells him to get back to Williamstown in three days.

But Sizwe cannot read — there is no education for blacks in the Bantustans — so he doesn't know what it says. His friend Buntu knows the system after long struggles with white

authority to get a resident's permit to stay in 'whites only' Port Elizabeth. Sizwe, he says, is in big trouble.

Sizwe protests: can't he get a job on private gardens? No; he needs a book. Well, get the proper stamp? No, not now it's endorsed. Burn it and get another? No, the details on his old book are in the central computer. His only option is to get back before he gets into more trouble.

Buntu says the only time we black men are happy is when we're dead. Or dead drunk. So they go to drink before Sizwe leaves.

Ghosts

Staggering home, they find the corpse of a man killed by muggers. "Should we tell the police?" No, we'll get the blame for killing him. "Tell his relatives, then?" Too difficult. Sizwe insists they find his name, which is easy, because he must have a passbook.

While they debate what to do, they unthinkingly get out the passbook of Robert Tswelinsima. And then Buntu sees that Robert Tswelinsima has a work seeker's permit, and has an idea: if Sizwe Bansi takes the passbook and becomes Robert Tswelinsima, then he can do Robert's job and stay in

Port Elizabeth. Sizwe objects. He doesn't want to lose his identity, his name; is he not a man? No, says Buntu, we are not men, only ghosts. Your name is worth nothing. Just learn your new number, and no white bureaucrat will ever know the difference.

Eventually Sizwe agrees. "Sizwe Bansi is dead", he writes to his wife. "All my troubles are over. I have a job and earn 13 Rand, £8.50 a week. Buntu will fix it so that you can come and live with me in Port Elizabeth." All is perfect ... unless he ever gets into trouble with the police, so they check his finger prints against the records of Robert Tswelinsima....

SIZWE BANSI IS DEAD is one of three plays by Athol Fugard, a white South African, about the experience of living in South Africa. **THE ISLAND** takes as its subject the political prison on Robben Island; the third play (the three are showing at the Royal Court theatre in London until February 9th) is called **STATEMENT AFTER AN ARREST UNDER THE IMMORALITY ACT**.

If the other two are up to the standard of **Sizwe Bansi**, they add up to a vivid indictment of the whole South African prison house.

Ed Conduit

VLADIMIR LENIN

PAUL ADAMS outlines the and work of V.I. Lenin, greatest revolutionary working class leader in his who died 50 years ago this mo

"The Russian revolutionary movement will be victorious as a movement of workers. There is and can be no alternative."

What astonishment must have registered in that vast, backward prison block of progress that was 19th century Russia, at these words of George Plekhanov spoken in 1889. For Russia in those days was a country with a tiny working class numbering about 1 million, while there were over one hundred million peasants. It was this vast peasant mass that had been looked to as the revolutionary class by the then dominant revolutionary organisation, Narodnaya Volya (Narodniks).

Lenin was then only 19. He had already read Marx's Capital and begun to ground himself seriously in its scientific method. Born in the provincial town of Simbirsk, into the family of a school administrator, Lenin was no stranger to revolutionary ideas other than Marxism. His brother Alexander had been hanged in 1887 for planning the assassination of the Tsar. He had been a member of the Narodnik organisation.

But if the execution of his brother sharpened Lenin's sense of injustice, it was not the views or the methods of the Narodniks that influenced him, but those of Marx, Engels and Plekhanov. The first things Lenin wrote were directed at countering Narodnaya Volya's faith in the peasantry with Marxism's scientific theory of the central historical role of the working class. Whereas the Narodniks saw the peasantry — "the People" — as a single mass, Lenin used detailed studies to show the differentiation within these masses, how out of 'the People' was crystallising the proletariat, the modern working class.

system

He also criticised the tactics of the Narodniks, who sent out heroic and isolated revolutionary with guns and bombs to act in the name of 'the People' and assassinate the hated representatives of Tsarist tyranny. What he had to say in the course of fighting these terrorist tactics is particularly instructive for us today. "We have never rejected terrorism on principle, nor can we do so. ... The point is however, terror is advocated (by the Narodniks) not as one of the operations the army in the field must carry out in close connection and in complete harmony with the whole system of fighting, but as an individual attack, completely separated from any army whatsoever. In view of the absence of a central revolutionary organisation, terror cannot be anything but that."

This was the period when the new Russian working class, recently driven into the factories from the countryside, revolted against their

conditions and against Tsarist tyranny, with wave upon wave of mass, illegal strikes. Even the savage Tsarist repression failed to quell the movement of the workers, which was spontaneous and lacking in any stable organisation. Trade unions were of course illegal.

There were also groups of 'intellectuals' who had imported the ideas of Marxism into Russia from Western Europe. These turned eagerly to the task of aiding the proletarian movement and to the task of fusing a revolutionary Marxist consciousness with the actual movement of the working class. In turning towards these tasks, Lenin emerged in the 1890s as one of the foremost of the younger generation of the Russian Marxists.

illegal

In 1895 Lenin travelled abroad to contact the emigre 'Emancipation of Labour Group' and learn about developments in the West European labour movement. The Emancipation of Labour Group comprised the older generation of Russian Marxists, like Plekhanov, Axelrod, Zasulich and Deutsch, and was the powerhouse of Russian Marxist analysis and propaganda.

With them, he arranged for the publication of a miscellany, 'Rabotnik' ('Worker'). Returning to Russia, he arranged its illegal distribution, and in the Autumn of 1895 set up in St. Petersburg the League for the Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class and arranged for the publication of a new illegal paper, Rabocheye Dyelo. But just as the proofs for the paper were finally being checked, Lenin and most of the other members of the League were arrested.

After a period in jail Lenin was sent into exile in Eastern Siberia. Here he was joined by his comrade Nadezhda Krupskaya. They were married in 1896.

Neither jail nor exile meant silence or inactivity. This was a period of intense political study, the monument to which is the massive work, 'The Development of Capitalism in Russia'.

Iskra

But he was cut off from the working class, and unable to carry out the urgent task of building a working class revolutionary organisation. From the time of his release in 1900 he concentrated his entire energy on this.

His first idea was to break with the isolated 'Circle work' in which scattered groups of Marxist propagandists existed more or less independently of each other throughout Russia. In order to do this a paper, all Russian paper, needed to be

LENIN

1870
1924

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founded, which would act as an organiser and centraliser for the whole Social Democratic Movement (Marxism was called Social Democracy until 1914). This centralism was to prefigure the unification and ideological independence of the working class.

Again he travelled abroad, realising that the paper would have to be produced outside Russia owing to the close police supervision there of their every move. At the end of 1900 this work bore its first fruit with the appearance of 'Iskra' (The Spark), and then in the January of the following year a journal, 'Zarya' (Dawn) was produced.

Now he set about that work that was to lead to a breakthrough in Marxist thinking and in its practical effects was to become one of his most important and most characteristic contributions to Marxism as a revolutionary force: the organisation of the Russia workers' revolutionary drive into a fighting party. Although an attempt to found a party had been made in 1898 while he was in exile, it had collapsed almost immediately when nearly all the delegates to the founding conference were arrested soon after it.

party

The period from 1894 to the first Congress of the Party in 1898 had been, in Lenin's own words, one in which Social Democracy appeared "as a social movement, as a rising of the masses of the people and as a political party". Even the Zubatov 'unions' — so called because they were 'unions' organised by the Police Chief Zubatov — 'led' strikes, even general strikes, in large cities, so great was the spontaneous will to struggle of the working class.

But if they appeared now as 'a political party', it was a political party in the old sense: in the sense of a unified group having common characteristics and acting more or less together. Lenin understood, however, that what was wanted was a 'party of a new type': something that broke out of the scattered, restricted work of the Marxist educational and leaflet distributing circles and became a factor on the national political scene, enabling the working class in turn to unite organisationally and ideologically.

This 'party of a new type' had to combine the features of an organisationally secure unit capable of escaping detection by the secret police and of a politically trained and unified group capable of directing struggles surely and singlemindedly.

The period of the rise of working class struggle in the nineties was, however, also the period of the rise of the theory of 'economism', the view that economic, trade union struggles of workers were in themselves an adequate basis



for the political struggle of the working class, leaving the sphere of the political struggle to the domination of the bourgeoisie. The inevitable separation between 'economic struggle' and 'political struggle' that this entailed made economism the at first unwitting and later conscious ally of the revisionism that had just reared its head in Germany. The revisionists wanted to transform Social Democracy from a movement to overthrow capitalism into one aiming to achieve mere reforms.

link

In the famous book What Is to Be Done, Lenin outlined the theory of the organisation and role of the party. Published in 1902, this book developed ideas already set out in 'Where to Begin' (1901) and 'Letter to a Comrade in St. Petersburg'. The book showed how a central revolutionary organisation based on a scientific programme could both link together the fragmented struggles of the working class and also link the struggles of that class on a

whole series of fronts and around a great variety of objectives. It would do this by forging out of these disparate struggles an organisational and ideological unity which would be a crystal of the true character of the proletariat.

This struggle to protect the purity of the proletarian character of the revolutionary movement was concentrated within the revolutionary party. But it had a clear relationship to the movement outside. "The stronger our Party organisations are consisting of real Social Democrats, and the less wavering and instability there is within the Party, the broader, the more varied, the richer and more fertile will be the influence of the Party on the elements of the working class masses surrounding it and guided by it." In backward, semi Asiatic Russia, however, where the peasantry, the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie of both the town and the countryside, as well as the working class, were oppressed classes, there was a great danger that the working class movement would fall under the domination of these far more numerous classes.

The struggle against false ideas, developing in and around the workers' movement, had to be coupled with an equally determined struggle against the external class influences.

theory

With the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in 1903, came an even greater sharpening of differences within the RSDLP. Ranged against Lenin were all those who understood a 'party' to be, as in the old sense of the word, simply the same side. Such a conception was entirely inadequate to the founding of a 'party' whose practice and programme was based on an underlying scientific theory, whose members would have to be steered, dedicated and politically trained. Lenin had to fight against many of his one time collaborators to establish his ideas.

He won, but his victory was shortlived: though his Bolshevik (majority) faction triumphed over the Mensheviks (minority) at the Congress, the defection of

Plekhanov soon afterwards to Menshevism put Lenin in the minority. He resigned from the Editorial Board of Iskra.

Thus began a long and bitter struggle in which he fought not only his close collaborators of the previous period such as Martov and Potresov, but also his teacher Plekhanov. He began to build up a faction that was finally to emerge in 1912 as the Bolshevik Party. The split in 1903, is referred to in vulgar Stalinist legend as already exhibiting in fully developed form all the distinguishing traits of both Bolshevism and Menshevism, traits which led the two factions to line up on different sides of the class barricades in the revolution of 1917. In reality it was no more than the prefiguration. A whole series of experiences, struggles, reunifications, new splits and the interchange of personnel was necessary before the final crystallisation of the two tendencies.

storm

Many of the active workers in Russia rallied to Lenin against the 'anarchic' behaviour of the emigre Menshevik intellectuals who had overturned the conference decisions. The debate of this period were anticipations of the burning problems of the revolution. "The approach of the great storm was felt everywhere. All classes were in a state of ferment and preparation."

After living in Munich and London Lenin was in Geneva when the revolutionary storm actually broke in Russia.

On January 22nd 1905 thousands of workers, dressed in their Sunday best and carrying religious ikons, marched to the Tsar's Winter Palace in St. Petersburg to present a petition to ask for "amnesty, civil liberties, higher wages, the gradual granting of land to the peasantry and the convocation of a Constituent Assembly." Led by the priest Gapon these "unfortunate reviled slaves" as they called themselves, proceeded peacefully towards the man they saw as their protector, the Tsar. Suddenly the Cossacks were unleashed against them. Over 1,000 were slaughtered and over 2,000 injured.

Strikes immediately spread throughout Russia, drawing in the soldiers, the sailors and the peasantry. Throughout 1905 mass revolutionary struggles engulfed Russia.

Soviet

Although the liberal bourgeoisie seemed to have gained control of the movement, strikes broke out once again towards the end of 1905, and it was this massive upheaval that created the first Soviet of Workers' Deputies.

The soviets were councils set up by the workers to draw the threads of the different struggles together and unify them, to link the factory organisations, to combine the employed and the unemployed and in short to be the 'parliament' of the working class. Not, however, one resting on a sham democracy with elections every five years, but on a real democracy knowing the right of the workers to recall the deputies to the Soviet and at will elect new ones. Quickly the Soviet in St. Petersburg became (with Leon Trotsky as its chairman) the focus of the strength and power of the working class, and an alternative authority to the Tsarist state. It was to the Soviet that the working class looked for leadership and organisation. Into it was channelled the energy and aspirations of the class.

The Russian workers had improvised the form of democratic self organisation which the working class needs as it begins to rouse itself and challenge the ruling class's power in society. Soviets

reappeared in the 1917 October Revolution. After World War I soviets sprang into existence in East Europe and Germany. In 1956 the great working class uprising in Budapest against Stalinism could find no better form of self organisation in a struggle for power than the workers' council. This universality proves that the soviet, invented in 1905, was not merely a Russian or an ephemeral form of proletarian organisation, but the necessary form for overcoming the atomisation of the proletariat and simultaneously the best organisational network for democratic working class rule in society.

In St. Petersburg the Bolsheviks did not at first know how to evaluate this new form of organisation. But Lenin, though he could not then know its full historical significance, quickly grasped the soviets' importance in the struggle of the working class and could not wait to get to St. Petersburg himself to see and direct events from close at hand. Moving first to Finland, he arrived towards the end of the year in St. Petersburg.

Once again, Lenin's unshakeable sense of the concrete led him to translate what he saw into an answer to the question 'what is to be done'. And once again the answer was in terms of party organisation.

work

Here was an opportunity "to develop our activities in the most extensive and audacious manner". But first the party had to develop many legal aspects of work while maintaining an underground apparatus. It had also to open its doors, hitherto rigorously guarded against easy entry, to the recruitment of thousands of workers and ensure that workers took leading positions on all the committees. This was no reversal of the view that consciousness and system were the fundamentals of the revolutionary party — on the contrary it was precisely because in the previous three years the Bolsheviks had achieved this that they could now recruit without any danger of dilution. "The working class is instinctively, spontaneously Social Democratic", declared Lenin in the first article he wrote on returning, adding "and more than ten years' work by Social Democracy has done much to transform this spontaneity into consciousness".

The party, Lenin realised, must not be like a priest reciting sacred and unchanging texts, it must always be the organised richness of the experience of the working class given sense and direction through the science of Marxism.

By 1906, especially after the defeat of the Moscow insurrection in December 1905, the storm was dying down. Soon Tsarism was victorious and most of the revolutionary leaders were once again forced into exile, Lenin himself going to live in Paris.

Everywhere there was "demoralisation, split, discord, renegacy" with "mysticism serving as a cloak for counter revolution". It was now, in this period of black reaction with the revolutionaries increasingly isolated, that the lessons of the 1905 Revolution were drawn and the political tendencies in the working class movement were hammered into their final shape.

And now too the Bolshevik Party, which was to lead the proletariat to victory within a decade of the decisive defeat of 1907, was forged.

**Next week:
How the
workers
took power**

