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THE PROBLEM OF SOCIAL
STABILITY IN URBAN RUSSIA,
1905-1917 (Part One)

BY LEOPOLD HAIMSON

When a student of the origins of 1917 looks back through the literature that appeared on the subject during the 1920's and early 1930's, he is likely to be struck by the degree of consensus in Soviet and Western treatments of the problem on two major assumptions. The first of these, then almost as widely entertained by Western as by Soviet historians, was that, just like other "classical" revolutions, the Revolution of 1917 had to be viewed, not as a historical accident or even as the product of immediate historical circumstances, but as the culmination of a long historical process—stretching back to the abolition of serfdom, if not to the appearance at the beginning of the nineteenth century of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia. The second, balancing, assumption, which even Soviet historians were then still usually prepared to accept, was that, notwithstanding its deep historical roots, this revolutionary process had been substantially accelerated by the additional strains imposed on the Russian body politic by the First World War.

To be sure, even the sharing of these two assumptions allowed for a range of conflicting interpretations and evaluations of the Revolution and its background. Yet it made, however tenuously, for a common universe of discourse, transcending the insuperable values that were already supposed to separate "Marxist" and "bourgeois" historians. The years of the Stalin era and the Cold War have seen the disappearance of this common universe of discourse, and the emergence in its stead—particularly in Soviet and Western representations of the decade immediately leading up to the Revolution of 1917—of two almost completely incongruent, and almost equally monolithic, points of view.

The first of these, which Soviet historians have advanced to demonstrate the *zakonomernost'*, the historical logic (and therefore the his-

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torical legitimacy) of October, distinguishes in the years immediately preceding the First World War the shape of a new, rapidly mounting "revolutionary upsurge." According to the periodization that has become established for this stereotype, the first modest signs that the period of "reaction" that had descended on Russian society with the Stolypin coup d'état had come to an end appeared as early as 1910-11. At first, the new revolutionary upsurge built up only very slowly, and it was only in April-May, 1912, in the wake of the Lena goldfields massacre, that it really began to gather momentum. From this moment on, however, the revolutionary wave is seen as mounting with such dramatic swiftness that by the summer of 1914 the country was ripe for the decisive revolutionary overturn for which the Bolsheviks had been preparing since the summer of 1913. In this scheme, obviously, the war is not viewed as contributing decisively to the unleashing of the revolutionary storm. On the contrary, it is held that by facilitating the suppression of Bolshevik Party organizations and arousing, however briefly, "chauvinistic" sentiments among the still unconscious elements in the laboring masses, its outbreak temporarily retarded the inevitable outcome. It was only in late 1915 that the revolutionary movement resumed the surge which two years later finally overwhelmed the old order.

Partly as a response to this Soviet stereotype and to the gross distortions of evidence that its presentation often involves, we have witnessed during the past quarter of a century the crystallization in many Western representations of the origins of 1917 of a diametrically different, and equally sweeping, point of view. It is that between the Revolution of 1905 and the outbreak of the First World War a process of political and social stabilization was under way in every major sphere of Russian life which, but for the extraneous stresses that the war imposed, would have saved the Russian body politic from revolution—or at least from the radical overturn that Russia eventually experienced with the Bolshevik conquest of power.

It is important to note that not all the data on which these conflicting Western and Soviet conceptions rest are as radically different as their composite effects suggest. Indeed, as far as the period stretching from the Stolypin coup d'état to 1909-10 is concerned ("the years of repression and reaction," as Soviet historians describe them), it is possible to find in Soviet and Western accounts a rough consensus *on what actually happened*, however different the explanations and evaluations that these accounts offer of the events may be.

For example, even Soviet historians are prepared to recognize the disintegration that the revolutionary movement underwent during these years: the success, even against the Bolshevik underground, of the government's repressive measures; the "desertion" of the revolutionary cause by so many of the hitherto radical members of the intelligentsia;

the sense of apathy that temporarily engulfed the masses of the working class. Soviet historians also recognize the new rationale inherent in the Regime of the Third of June—the government's attempt to widen its basis of support by winning the loyalties of the well-to-do sector of the city bourgeoisie. And they emphasize, even more than is warranted, the willingness of these elements of the “counterrevolutionary” bourgeoisie to seek, within the framework of the new institutions, an accommodation with the old regime and its gentry supporters. To be sure, Soviet historians are less prepared than their Western confrères to concede the progress that was actually achieved during the Stolypin period in the modernization of Russian life. But the basic trends that they detect during these years—in both government policy and public opinion—are not, for all that, so drastically different.

Where the minimal consensus I have just outlined completely breaks down is in the interpretation of the period stretching from 1910-11 to the outbreak of the First World War. What is basically at stake, as we have seen, is that while Soviet historiography discerns, beginning in the waning days of the Third Duma, the onset of a new, rapidly mounting, revolutionary upsurge, most Western historians are not prepared to concede the validity of any such periodization. On the contrary, with the growing impact of the Stolypin reforms in the Russian countryside and the increasing vitality displayed by the *zemstva* and other institutions of local self-government, they find the processes of modernization and westernization which they see at work in the earlier period now sweeping even more decisively into the rural and provincial corners of national life. To be sure, many Western historians do recognize the alarming note introduced on the eve of the war by the growing clash between the reactionary attitudes of government circles and the liberal expectations of society (a crisis often excessively personalized in their accounts as a consequence of Stolypin's assassination). But most of them are drawn to the conclusion that in the absence of war this crisis could and would have been resolved without deep convulsions, through the more or less peaceful realization by the liberal elements of Russian society of their long-standing demand for genuine Western parliamentary institutions.

Oddly enough, the completely different representations entertained by Western and Soviet historians of the immediate prewar years rest, in part, on inferences drawn from a phenomenon on which both schools of thought concur—the fact that beginning in 1910-11, the industrial sector of the Russian economy recovered from the doldrums into which it had fallen at the turn of the century and underwent a new major upsurge. Soviet historians are less apt to emphasize the more self-sustained and balanced character that this new industrial upsurge assumes in comparison with the great spurt of the 1890's, and they are less sanguine about its long-range prospects, but they do not deny the

fact of the spurt itself. On the contrary, they consider it the major "objective factor" underlying the revival of the Russian labor movement and the recovery of the Bolshevik Party that they distinguish during these years.

It is here that we come to the root of the disagreement between Western and Soviet historians on the dynamics of the prewar period and, more broadly, on the origins of the Russian Revolution. Even as cautious and sophisticated a historian as Alexander Gerschenkron sees in Russia's economic development on the eve of the war, in contrast to the admittedly socially onerous industrial growth of the 1890's, a factor making for social and political stabilization. And what is really the crux of the issue—if only because it involves the core of the Soviet historians' case—Gerschenkron and other Western commentators find this stabilizing effect of Russia's economic progress on the eve of the war reflected in a perceptible lessening of social and political tensions in both the countryside and the working class districts of the cities. "To be sure," he concedes, "the strike movement of the workers was again gaining momentum" since April, 1912. But the economic position of labor was clearly improving, and "in the resurgence of the strike movement, economic problems seemed to predominate." Gerschenkron recognizes that "in the specific conditions of the period any wage conflict tended to assume a political character because of the ready interventions of police and military forces on behalf of management. . . . But this did not mean that the climate of opinion and emotion within the labor movement was becoming more revolutionary. As shown by the history of European countries (such as Austria and Belgium), sharp political struggles marked the period of formation of labor movements that in actual fact, though not always in the language used, were committed to reformism. There is little doubt that the Russian labor movement of those years was slowly turning toward revision and trade unionist lines."¹

Against this alleged background of the growing moderation of the Russian labor movement, the picture that Western accounts usually draw of the fortunes of the Bolshevik Party during the immediate prewar years is a dismal one. Thus, for example, Leonard Schapiro's treatment of this period lays primary stress on the state of political paralysis to which Lenin and his followers appear to have driven themselves by July, 1914: on the isolation of the Bolshevik faction within the political spectrum of the RSDRP, as demonstrated by the line-up at the conclusion of the Brussels Conference called in July, 1914, by the International, at which the representatives of all other factions and nationality parties in the RSDRP with the single exception of the Latvians

¹ Alexander Gerschenkron, "Problems and Patterns of Russian Economic Development," in Cyril E. Black, ed., *The Transformation of Russian Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 60.

sided against the Bolsheviks; on the havoc wrought in Bolshevik Party cadres by periodic police arrests, guided by Okhrana agents successively hidden at all levels of the party apparatus; on the alleged permanent loss of popularity that the Bolsheviks suffered among the workers beginning in the fall of 1913 as a result of their schismatic activity, particularly in the Duma; on the ultimate blow to the Bolsheviks' prestige inflicted by the exposure of their most popular spokesman in Russia, Roman Malinovsky, as just another *agent provocateur*. "There was more unity now [at the close of the Brussels Conference] on the non-bolshevik side than ever before," Schapiro concludes:

With the weight of the International behind them there was more likelihood than there had been in 1910 that the menshevik leaders would find the necessary courage to break with Lenin for good if he persisted in his policy of disunity at all costs. If Lenin were isolated in his intransigence, there was every chance that many of his "conciliator" followers, who had rejoined him in 1912, would break away again. The bolshevik organization was, moreover, in a poor state in 1914, as compared with 1912. The underground committees were disrupted. There were no funds, and the circulation of *Pravda* had fallen drastically under the impact of the split in the Duma "fraction."²

In substance, like many other Western historians, Schapiro considers that by July, 1914, a death sentence had been pronounced against the Bolshevik Party, which but for the outbreak of war would shortly have been carried out.

The contrast between this picture and the accounts of Soviet historians is, of course, quite startling. It is not only that their conception of the twenty-seven months leading up to the war is dominated by the image of a majestically rising strike movement which month by month, day by day, became more political in character and revolutionary in temper. It is also that they see this movement as one dominated, in the main, by a now mature, "class conscious," hereditary proletariat, hardened by the experience of the Revolution of 1905 and the years of reaction, and directed by a revived Bolshevik Party to whose flag, at the beginning of 1914, "four-fifths of all the workers of Russia" had rallied. To be sure, the party was faced in its unswerving drive toward revolution by the opposition of various factions of Russian Social Democracy. But according to the Soviet view, these factions represented by the summer of 1914 little more than empty shells resting mainly on the support of "bourgeois opportunist" *intelligenty* in Russia and the emigration. The correctness of the party's course since the Prague Conference of January, 1912, and the Krakow and Poronin Conferences of 1913—of rejecting any compromise with these "bourgeois opportunist" elements, of combining economic and political strikes and

² Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York, 1959), pp. 139-40.

mass demonstrations in a single-minded drive toward an “all-nation political strike leading to an armed uprising”—is considered amply confirmed by the evidence that in July, 1914, such an all-nation strike was already “under way” and an armed uprising “in the offing.”³ Indeed, Soviet historians allege, the revolutionary upsurge had reached such a level by the beginning of 1914 that even the leading circles of the “counterrevolutionary” bourgeoisie had come to realize the irreparable “crash” of the Regime of the Third of June.⁴

What are the realities submerged beneath these harshly conflicting representations? Any careful examination of the evidence in contemporary primary sources suggests, it seems to me, that the vision advanced by some Western historians of the growing moderation of the Russian labor movement can be even partially upheld only for the period stretching from the Stolypin coup d'état to the spring and summer of 1912. This, almost up to its conclusion, was a period of relative labor tranquillity, as in a context of economic stagnation the masses of the Russian working class relapsed into apathy, after the defeat of their great expectations of 1905.

It was in this ultimately deceptive setting of labor peace, and of the futile and increasingly degrading spectacle of the Bolsheviks' collapsing underground struggle (this was the classic period of Bolshevik “expropriations”), that the leaders of the Menshevik faction began to articulate the philosophy and programs of an open labor party and labor movement. The current task of Social Democracy, they insisted, was not to pursue in the underground, under the leadership of a handful of intelligentsia conspirators, now clearly unattainable maximalist objectives. It was to outline for the labor movement goals, tactics, and organizational forms which, even within the narrow confines of the existing political framework, would enable the masses of the working class to struggle, day by day, for tangible improvements in their lives and to become through the experience of this struggle “conscious” and responsible actors—capable of making their own independent contribution to the vision of a free and equitable society. Not only did the Menshevik “Liquidators”⁵ articulate this vision of an open labor party

³ In the words of the standard Soviet text of this period: “The revolutionary upsurge in Russia [had] reached such a level that an armed uprising already appeared in the offing . . . the onset of the revolution was broken off by the World War in which the tsarist government, just like the imperialists of other countries, sought salvation from revolution.” *Очерки по истории СССР, 1907 - Март 1917*, ed. А. Л. Сидорова (Moscow, 1954), pp. 239-40. The new *История Коммунистической партии Советского Союза* (Moscow, 1959) uses substantially the same language. For far more cautious, and historically more faithful, earlier Soviet analyses of the St. Petersburg general strike of July, 1914, and of the sympathy strikes to which it gave rise, see *Пролетарская революция*, No. 7 (30), July, 1924; and No. 8-9 (31-32), Aug.-Sept., 1924.

⁴ *Очерки по истории СССР*, Chap. 3, *passim*.

⁵ The term of opprobrium that the Bolsheviks applied to those whom they accused of advocating the “liquidation” of the revolutionary underground.

and labor movement during these years but they appeared to be making progress in erecting the scaffolding of the institutions through which the vision was to be realized. They were seeking to organize open trade unions, cooperatives, workers' societies of self-improvement and self-education, and workers' insurance funds: organs intended not only to help the worker but also to enable him to take his life into his own hands. Even more significantly, the Menshevik "Liquidators" appeared to be succeeding during this period in developing, really for the first time in the history of the Russian labor movement, a genuine workers' intelligentsia animated by their own democratic values, which, it seems, would have been far more capable than any self-appointed intelligentsia leadership of eventually providing an effective bridge between educated society and the masses of the workers, thus fulfilling at long last Akselrod's and Martov's dream of "breaking down the walls that separate the life of the proletariat from the rest of the life of this country."

To be sure, in 1910-11, the Mensheviks' workers' intelligentsia still appeared very thin, and the number and size of their open labor unions pitifully small in comparison with the size of the labor force, or indeed with the level that the organization of the working class had reached on the eve of the Stolypin coup d'état. And even these puny shoots were being periodically cut down by the authorities, with only the feeblest echoes of protest from the still somnolent labor masses.

Thus even in this early (and in certain respects most successful) period of the Mensheviks' struggle for a Europeanized labor movement one must distinguish a considerable gap between vision and tangible achievement. The private correspondence of Menshevik leaders during 1909, 1910, and 1911 is replete with despondent statements about the "depression" and "fatigue" prevailing among the older generation of the Menshevik movement at home and in the emigration, about the failure to draw new members into the movement, about the negligible number of "praktiki" actively engaged on the new arena of the open labor movement—in substance, about the wholesale withdrawal from political and social concerns that seemed to have accompanied the radical intelligentsia's recoil from the underground struggle. Most party members, these letters suggest, had in fact withdrawn from party activities and were wholly absorbed in the prosaic if arduous struggle to resume a normal, day-to-day, existence.⁶

Beginning in the winter of 1909-10, the gloom in these letters was occasionally lifted by reports of the travails that Lenin and his followers

⁶ The most valuable source on the private reactions of Menshevik leaders to developments on the Russian scene for the period 1908-13 is the still unpublished correspondence between A. N. Potresov, who was residing in Petersburg during these years, and Iu. O. Martov, who remained in emigration until after the amnesty of 1913. This correspondence, consisting of some two hundred letters, is now in the Nicolaevsky Archives, Hoover Institution, hereafter referred to as NA.

were experiencing, now that they had split with Bogdanov and his followers. Such consoling news about the difficulties of their political opponents continued to appear in the correspondence of Menshevik leaders up to the end of 1911, but what chiefly kept up their spirits during these lean years was the expectation that things were bound to improve, once Russian society emerged, as it necessarily would, from its current state of political apathy.

After all, could not the contrast between reality and dreams be attributed not only to the immaturity of the labor movement but also to the obstacles thrown in its path by the repressive measures of the authorities? Once the expected political revival occurred, was it not to be expected that a more progressive Duma, supported by an aroused public, would legislate the necessary legal safeguards for the open labor organizations from which a massive and yet self-conscious and self-disciplined workers' movement would at long last emerge? In his correspondence with Potresov, Martov discerned the approach of such a turning point in the movement of opinion as early as November, 1909: "The signs are multiplying" that "the counterrevolution is ending," he then wrote hopefully to his somewhat more bearish colleague. "And if the course of events is not artificially forced, and if, as is almost unquestionable, two to three years of industrial upsurge lie before us, the time of the elections [to the Fourth Duma] can provide the occasion for the overturn [*perelom*]."⁷

Martov's forecast actually proved too conservative. It was not in the fall but in the spring of 1912 that the break he awaited occurred, under the immediate impact of the Lena goldfields massacre. The news of the massacre provoked a great outburst of public protest and, what was more important, a veritable explosion in the Russian working class. Between April 14 and 22, close to 100,000 workers struck in Petersburg alone, and the total number of strikers in the country as a whole probably reached about 250,000. This wave of protest strikes and demonstrations persisted almost without interruption through mid-May. May Day, 1912, saw nearly half a million workers out on the streets, the highest number since 1905, and this was a correct augury of the incidence and scope of political strikes and demonstrations during the balance of the year. Even the official statistics compiled by the Factory Inspectors of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, which undoubtedly were seriously underestimated, recorded that close to 550,000 workers had participated in political strikes during 1912, a level well below that of the revolutionary years 1905-6 but much higher than that of any other previous years in the history of the Russian labor movement.⁸

In the light of these awesome developments the labor commentator of the Kadet newspaper *Riech'* observed in his yearly review of the Russian labor scene:

⁷ Martov to Potresov, letter 133, Nov. 17, 1909 (NA).

One must recognize that the peculiarity of the movement of 1912 was the great rise in the number of political strikes. . . . The general picture of the labor movement for the past year allows one to say with assurance that if the industrial revival continues, and it would appear that it will, the year 1913 may bring such an upsurge of labor energy that it may vividly remind one of 1905. The general results of 1912 are unquestionably extremely notable, and filled with implications for the immediate future.⁹

The strike statistics for 1913 would in fact reveal a further upsurge of the labor movement, though not one of quite the dimensions envisaged by the *Riech*' commentator. The yearly compilations of the Factory Inspectors showed but a relatively modest rise in the total number of strikes and strikers, and indeed indicated a small drop in the number of those listed as political. However, the monthly breakdowns of these figures registered such a drop only in April and May, for which a much smaller number of political strikes and strikers were listed than for the corresponding months of 1912—the exceptionally agitated aftermath of the Lena goldfields massacre.¹⁰ Thus it would be questionable to infer

⁸ The compilations published by the Ministry of Trade and Industry offer the following statistical aggregates about strikes in factories covered by factory inspection for the period 1905-14:

Year	Strikes	Strikers	Number of Strikes Listed as Political	Number of Strikers Listed as Political
1905	13,995	2,863,173	6,024	1,082,576
1906	6,114	1,108,406	2,950	514,854
1907	3,573	740,074	2,558	521,573
1908	892	176,101	464	92,694
1909	340	64,166	50	8,863
1910	222	46,623	8	3,777
1911	466	105,110	24	8,380
1912	2,032	725,491	1,300	549,812
1913	2,404	887,096	1,034	502,442
1914	3,534	1,337,458	2,401	985,655

See Министерство торговли и промышленности, *Сводъ отчетовъ фабричныхъ инспекторовъ за 1913 годъ*, and *Сводъ . . . за 1914, passim* (St. Petersburg, 1914; Petrograd, 1915).

The accuracy of these and other, unofficial estimates of the strike movement, particularly for the period 1912-14, is almost as widely in dispute as is the actual significance of the labor disturbances that these estimates reflect. For example, while the Factory Inspectors' reports estimate 549,812 political strikers for 1912, the calculation of the Menshevik labor observer, A. Mikhailov, is 1,065,000, including over 950,000 in factories under Factory Inspection (See A. Михайловъ, «Къ характеристикѣ современнаго рабочаго движенія въ Россіи,» *Наша заря*, No. 12, 1912). The contemporary estimates of *Pravda* are even higher. It is probably safe to assume that while the figures listed in the contemporary Social Democratic press are undoubtedly overblown, official estimates seriously err in the opposite direction (by an order of at least 20 per cent). This at least was the view expressed by more neutral contemporary observers of the labor scene. (See, for example, the articles by A. Chuzhennikov on the labor movement in the annual reviews of *Riech*' for 1913 and 1914).

⁹ А. Чуженниковъ, «Русское рабочее движеніе,» *Речь на 1913 годъ*.

¹⁰ The Factory Inspectors' reports estimate the number of political strikers in April and May, 1912, as 231,459 and 170,897, respectively; for April and May, 1913, the figures listed are 170,897 and 116,276. This discrepancy more than accounts for the difference between the total aggregates for political strikers estimated for these two years (549,812 for 1912 and 502,442 for 1913).

that there occurred in the course of 1913 a general decline of political unrest among the Russian working class. The prevailing opinion among contemporary observers was that the year had instead been marked by a rise in the intensity of both political and economic strikes.¹¹

The correctness of this diagnosis was to be confirmed by developments in the following year. The first half of 1914 would witness an unprecedented swell of both political and economic strikes. Even the overconservative estimates of the Factory Inspectors reported for this period a total of 1,254,441 strikers. Of these, 982,810 were listed as political—a figure almost as high as that for 1905, the previous peak year, even though the calculations for 1914 covered only the first six months of the year, and excluded for the first time the highly industrialized Warsaw gubernia.¹²

What realities do these statistical aggregates actually reflect? To justify their belief in the increasingly reformist character of the Russian labor movement on the eve of the war, some Western writers have argued that the very distinction drawn in the reports of the Factory Inspectors between political and economic strikes is artificial: Economic strikes were quick to assume a political character when they ran up against brutal police interference, and were often listed as such in the reports of the Factory Inspectors. This is a correct observation, often noted in contemporary reports of the labor scene. But as Menshevik commentators continuously emphasized, the opposite was just as often the case. Strikes ostensibly economic in character often demonstrated by the unrealistic character of their objectives and the impatience and violence of the tactics with which they were conducted that they merely provided an excuse for the expression of political unrest. This appears to have been true even in 1913, the one year of the “upsurge” in which, according to official statistics, economic motifs were predominant in the strike movement. The *Russian Review* noted in its yearly review of the labor scene:

Since early spring, an irregular and chaotic strike movement has been in progress. The strikes, sometimes without any reason at all [*sic*], have rarely benefited the workers directly. Most are manifestations of extreme dissatisfaction with the conditions of public life rather than an expression of clearly formulated economic grievances. A conference of manufacturers in Moscow decided that preventive measures were impossible as the strikes were political. The Mensheviks pointed out the harmfulness of mere disorderly and inconsiderate striking, but the movement continued its plunging, incalculable way.¹³

¹¹ See, for example, А. С. Изгоевъ, «Наша общественная жизнь,» and А. Чуженниковъ, «Русское рабочее движеніе,» in *Речь на 1914*.

¹² See *Сводъ . . . за 1914, passim*.

¹³ *Russian Review*, II, No. 3 (1913), 176.

Indeed, it appears that from the Lena massacre to the outbreak of war, the progress of the strike movement was characterized by an almost continuous flow in which political and economic currents were inextricably mixed: quite often, even the ostensible objectives of individual strikes combined political and economic demands; and even more notably, the individual waves of “economic” strikes and “political” strikes and demonstrations proved mutually reinforcing, each seemingly giving the next additional impetus, additional momentum. By the beginning of the summer of 1914, contemporary descriptions of the labor scene forcibly suggest, the workers, especially in Petersburg, were displaying a growing spirit of *buntarstvo*—of violent if still diffuse opposition to all authority—and an instinctive sense of class solidarity,¹⁴ as they encountered the repressive measures of state power and what appeared to them the indifference of privileged society.

However, the most telling evidence against the thesis that beneath the surface the Russian labor movement was actually developing a reformist and trade unionist orientation, is the reception that the workers gave, as the war approached, to Bolshevik as against Menshevik appeals.

In the first months of the new upsurge, Menshevik commentators had naturally been heartened by the impressive revival of the labor movement. Writing shortly after the “grandiose political strikes” of April and May, 1912, Fedor Dan called them not only a “turning point in the Russian labor movement” but also “the beginning of the liquidation of the Regime of the Third of June.” Dan even quoted approvingly the observation of a correspondent of *Riech* (in its issue of May 11, 1912) to the effect that the workers were now opposing themselves to the rest of society and that the working class movement was generally assuming “a much more sharply defined class character” than it had had in 1905. This, Dan observed, was merely a reflection of the growing maturity and organization of the proletariat and an indication of the successful work that the Menshevik “Liquidators” had conducted during the years of reaction. Besides, *Riech* was being expediently silent about the other half of the picture. If the workers

¹⁴ This phenomenon is noted in the *publitsistika* of the day even by some of the Bolsheviks’ most severe critics. In an article published in June, 1913, for example, A. S. Izgoev emphasized the great political importance of the current “transformation of the chaotic Russian labor masses into a working class . . . under the ideological sway of Social Democracy.” The article cited the evidence of the Petersburg workers’ steadily increasing involvement in elections, political strikes, and demonstrations, the “most impressive sight” of the impact exercised by *Pravda* on the working class of the capital during its first year of publication, and especially the indications in the daily life of the Petersburg workers of their growing class solidarity: workers’ willingness to make financial sacrifices on behalf of fellow workers in other factories, the “devastating moral effect” of the boycotts enforced on strikebreakers. Clearly, Izgoev concluded, Russia’s current “social crisis” was giving way to an extremely significant process of “social crystallization.” See A. С. Изгоевъ, «Рабочій классъ и социаль-демократія», *Русская мысль*, June, 1913, *passim*.

were now opposing themselves to society, so society was now opposing itself to the workers:

To the growing class maturity of the proletariat corresponds a similar growing class maturity of the bourgeoisie. And the "support" that now surrounds the labor movement has little in common with the foggy romantic support which in 1905 impelled *Osvobozhdenie* to exclaim: "How enchanting the workers are" and Mr. Struve to declare triumphantly: "We have no enemies to the left." . . . The proletariat has ceased to be "enchanting" in the eyes of bourgeois society, and the "support" of this society is confined to those minutes in which the proletarian movement constitutes a necessary factor in its own emancipation.¹⁵

In this passage Dan was describing approvingly what would indeed become one of the major conditioning factors in the development of the labor movement during the new upsurge—the break in the fragile and tenuous psychological ties that had been so painfully built up between the workers and the opposition circles of educated society during the decade leading up to the Revolution of 1905. But if the Mensheviks were originally inclined to consider this mutual confrontation of workers and society a positive indication of the growing class maturity of both, they were soon to change their minds.

The first signs of alarm were sounded within a few months, with the returns, in the fall of 1912, of the elections to the Fourth Duma. In these elections, as Lenin and his followers untiringly emphasized thereafter, Bolshevik candidates won in six of the nine labor curiae in Russia, including all six of the labor curiae in the major industrial provinces. In their published commentaries on the election returns the Menshevik leaders pointed out (most often quite accurately) the major flaws in the Bolshevik claims to a sweeping victory,¹⁶ but in their private correspondence, they conceded more readily that, whatever the extenuating circumstances, the results of the elections in the labor curiae had been a definite setback. Martov observed in a letter to Potresov: "The failure of the Mensheviks in the labor curiae (partially

¹⁵ Ф. Данъ, «Политическое обозрѣніе: Послѣ 'Лены,'» *Наша заря*, No. 5, 1912.

¹⁶ The Bolshevik candidate in Petersburg, Badaev, had won, they argued, only thanks to the votes that he had received at the last stage of the elections from anti-Semitic Octobrist *vyborshchiki* (the Menshevik candidate in the Petersburg labor curiae had been Jewish); the Bolshevik deputies Petrovsky (in Ekaterinoslav gubernia) and Muranov (in Kharkov gubernia) had run on electoral platforms actually drawn up by the Mensheviks; and even that stormy petrel, the Moscow deputy Malinovsky, had been elected with Menshevik support.

For such Menshevik interpretations of the returns in the elections to the Fourth Duma, see Л. Мартовъ, «Выборныя заметки» and М. Оскаровъ, «Итоги выборовъ по рабочей куріи» in *Наша заря*, No. 9-10, 1912; and especially Л. Мартовъ, «Расколъ въ социаль-демократической фракціи» *Наша заря*, No. 10-11, 1913. For contrasting Bolshevik interpretations, see В. Ильинъ, «Итоги выборовъ» *Просвѣщеніе*, No. 1, Jan., 1913 (in Ленин, *Сочиненія*, 4th ed., XVIII, 462-85); and «Матеріалы къ вопросу о борьбѣ внутри С. Д. думской фракціи» *За правду*, No. 22, Oct. 29, 1913 (in Ленин, *Соч.*, XIX, 414-29).

compensated by [their] moral victory in Petersburg) shows once more that Menshevism caught on too late to the reviving danger of Leninism and overestimated the significance of its temporary wholesale disappearance."¹⁷

The developments on the labor scene in 1913, and especially during the first six months of 1914, would amply confirm Martov's estimate of the significance of these election returns. Not only were these eighteen months generally characterized by a steady rise in the spirit of *buntarstvo*, of the elemental, revolutionary explosiveness of the strike movement, particularly in the capital. Not only were they marked by a growing responsiveness on the part of the amorphous and largely anonymous committees in charge of the strikes, as well as of the workers' rank and file, to the reckless tactics of the Bolsheviks and to their "unmutilated" slogans of a "democratic republic," "eight-hour day," and "confiscation of gentry lands." They also saw the Mensheviks lose control of the open labor organizations they had struggled so hard to build. From the spring and summer of 1913, when the Bolsheviks, heeding the resolutions of the Krakow and Poronin Conferences, began to concentrate their energies on the conquest of the open labor organizations, the pages of the Mensheviks' journals and their private correspondence were filled with the melancholy news of the loss of one position after another—by the very Menshevik-oriented workers' intelligentsia in which the wave of the future had once been discerned.

To note but a few of the major landmarks:

In late August, 1913, the Mensheviks were routed by their Bolshevik opponents from the governing board of the strongest union in Petersburg, the Union of Metalworkers (*Soiuz metallistov*). In January, 1914, an even more bitter pill for the Menshevik initiators of the labor insurance movement, the Bolsheviks won, by an equally decisive vote, control of the labor representation on both the All Russian Insurance Council and the Petersburg Insurance Office (*Stolichnoe strakhovoe prisutstvie*). Even more surprising, by late April, 1914, they could claim the support of half the members of the newly re-elected governing board of that traditional citadel of Menshevism in the Petersburg labor movement, the Printers' Union (*Soiuz pechatnikov*). In July, 1914, when the Bolsheviks laid their case before the Bureau of the Socialist Internationale for being the only genuine representatives of the Russian working class, they claimed control of 14½ out of 18 of the

¹⁷ Whatever consolation was to be sought, added Martov, could be found in the election returns in the First and Second Curiae of the cities, which had revealed, as the Mensheviks had forecast (in contrast to their Bolshevik opponents), a significant shift of the liberal elements in society to the left. Indeed, this shift had been so pronounced in some of the provincial centers, Martov observed, as to hold forth the promise of the division of the Kadet Party into "bourgeois" and "raznochinets radical" factions. Martov to Potresov, letter no. 178, Nov. 11, 1912 (NA).

governing boards of the trade unions in St. Petersburg and to 10 out of the 13 in Moscow.¹⁸

To be sure, the Mensheviks' situation in the two capitals was far bleaker, and the Bolsheviks' far brighter, than anywhere else in the country. But even with this reservation, their position gave the Mensheviks little ground for comfort. As early as September, 1913, upon receiving the news of the Bolshevik victory in the elections to the Union of Metalworkers, Martov foresaw the further catastrophes that were likely to befall the Menshevik cause. "I am dejected by the story of the Unions of Metalworkers which exposes our weakness even more than we are used to," he then wrote to Potresov. "It is altogether likely that in the course of this season our positions in Petersburg will be squeezed back even further. But that is not what is awful [*skverno*]. What is worse is that from an organizational point of view, Menshevism—despite the newspaper [the Mensheviks' Petersburg organ, *Luch'*, launched in late 1912], despite everything that has been done during the past two years—remains a weak little circle [*slaben'kii kruzhok*]."¹⁹ And at a meeting of the Menshevik faction in the Duma, in late January, 1914, the Georgian deputy, Chkhenkeli, observed in an equally catastrophic vein that the Mensheviks appeared to be losing all of their influence, all of their ties, among the workers.

Bitterest and most desperate of all were the complaints of the Menshevik trade unionists, the representatives of their now defeated workers' intelligentsia. In March, 1914, Fedor Bulkin, one of the Menshevik *praktiki* driven out of the governing board of the Union of Metalworkers six months earlier, exclaimed in the pages of *Nasha zaria*:

The masses which have recently been drawn into the trade union movement are incapable of appreciating its great significance for the proletariat. Led by the Bolsheviks, they have chased the *Likvidatory*, these valuable workers, out of all leading institutions. . . . The experienced pilots of the labor movement have been replaced by ones who are inexperienced, but close in spirit to the masses . . . for the time being, the *Likvidatory* are suffering and, in all likelihood, will continue to suffer, defeat. Bolshevism—*intelligenskii*, narrowly fractional, jacobin—has found its support in the masses' state of mind.²⁰

In the concluding passage of this statement, Bulkin was reiterating

¹⁸ For detailed presentations of the Bolsheviks' claim of support by the Russian working class on the eve of the war, see «Объективные данные о силе разных течений в рабочем движении» (In Ленин, *Соч.*, 4th ed., XX, 355-60), and «Доклад ЦК РСДРП и инструктивные указания делегации ЦК на Брюссельском совещании» (*ibid.*, pp. 463-502). My own reading of the contemporary Menshevik press suggests that the specific statistical data cited in these two statements, *although by no means the conclusions drawn from them*, are not grossly exaggerated.

¹⁹ Martov to Potresov, letter no. 188, Sept. 15, 1913 (NA). This is the last letter that has been preserved of the Martov-Potresov correspondence of the prewar period (as noted earlier, Martov returned to Petersburg shortly after the amnesty).

²⁰ Ф. Булкинъ, «Расколъ фракціи и задачи рабочихъ,» *Наша заря*, No. 6, 1914.

the thesis (which he had already spelled out in an earlier article) that the Bolsheviks' victories had been largely attributable to the sway that the Social Democratic intelligentsia—with its narrow dogmatism, its intolerance, its factional spirit—still continued to hold over the workers' minds. Once the proletariat freed itself from this pernicious influence of the intelligentsia and grew to affirm its own independent spirit, its own self-consciousness, the Bolsheviks' strength would evaporate into thin air.²¹

Naturally, the editors of *Nasha zaria* could not allow this argument, so reeking of the old "economist" heresies, to appear without an answer. His old Iskraist spirit aroused, Martov, in the same issue of the journal, wrote a fulgurant reply. It was all too easy for Bulkin to assert that Bolshevism was an intelligentsia influence grafted onto the body of the hapless Russian working class. Even if it had had any merit in the past, his argument was ten years out of date. Where was the Bolshevik intelligentsia which supposedly still "stood on the shoulders of the proletariat?" It simply was no longer there. All of the major figures in the Bolshevik intelligentsia—Bogdanov, Lunacharsky, Rozhkov, Pokrovsky, Bazarov, and so many others had deserted Leninism. All that was left was "a handful of people with literally no names, or names it would be inexpedient to mention."²²

If the culprit was not the pernicious influence of the intelligentsia, to what source was the new mood of the labor movement to be traced? The Bolsheviks had a simple explanation: The workers' new mood was merely a reflection of the growth to consciousness of a now mature hereditary Russian proletariat—recovered from the defeats of 1905, hardened by the years of reaction, and rallied solidly behind the Bolshevik Party. Needless to say, Menshevik commentators found this explanation wanting. Indeed, in their writings of the period we find them groping for precisely an opposite answer: The laboring masses which had crowded into the new labor movement during the years of the new industrial upsurge—and of the new explosive strike wave—were in the main no longer the class-conscious, mature proletariat of 1905. Some of the most acute Menshevik observers (Martov, Levitsky, Gorev, Sher) pointed specifically to the social and political effects of the influx into the industrial working class of two new strata.²³

The first of these was the younger generation of the working class of the cities, the urban youths who had grown to working age since the

²¹ For Bulkin's first, and most radical, statement of this thesis, see his «Рабочая самостоятельность и рабочая демагогия», *Наша заря*, No. 3, 1914.

²² Л. М., «Отвѣтъ Булкину», *Наша заря*, No. 3, 1914.

²³ For such Menshevik analyses of the new tendencies in the labor movement during the immediate prewar period, see Г. Ракинъ [Левицкий], «Рабочая масса и рабочая интеллигенция», *Наша заря*, No. 9, 1913; Л. М., «Отвѣтъ Булкину», *op. cit.*; В. И. Горевъ, «Демагогия или марксизмъ», *Наша заря*, No. 6, 1914; and especially В. Шеръ [Шеръ], «Наше профессиональное движение за послѣдніе два года», *Ворьба*, Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4, 1914.

Revolution of 1905—without the chastening experience of the defeats of the Revolution, or the sobering influence of participating in the trade unions and other labor organizations during the years of reaction. It was these youths, “hot-headed and impulsive,” “untempered by the lessons of the class struggle,” who now constituted the intermediary link between the leading circles of the Bolshevik Party and the laboring masses. It was they who now provided, in the main, the correspondents and distributors of Bolshevik newspapers, who instigated the workers’ resolutions and petitions in support of Bolshevik stands, and who dominated the amorphous, *ad hoc* strike committees which were providing whatever leadership still characterized the elemental strike wave. More recently, in the spring and summer of 1913, it had been these green youths who had begun to flow from the strike committees into the open trade unions and had seized their leadership from the older generation of Menshevik trade unionists. “Here,” noted one observer, “the representatives of two different periods, [men] of different habits, different practical schools—two forces of workers, “young” and “old”—have encountered one another for the first time . . . [the takeover] which occurred extremely quickly, for many almost unexpectedly, took place in an atmosphere of patricidal conflict.”²⁴

Of course, the cadres of the new generation of the hereditary working class of the cities would have remained leaders without followers had it not been for the influx into the labor force of a second, much more massive, new stratum. These were the recruits, usually completely unskilled, who, from 1910 on—the year of the “take-off” of the new industrial upsurge and of the turning point in the Stolypin agrarian reforms—had begun to pour into the labor armies of the cities from the countryside. It was these many thousand of ex-peasants, as yet completely unadapted to their new factory environment, “driven by instincts and feelings rather than consciousness and calculation,” who gave the mass movement “its disorganized, primitive, elemental character,” noted Martov’s younger brother, Levitsky. Naturally, these “unconscious” masses proved most responsive to the extremist objectives and tactics advocated by the Bolsheviks: to their demands for “basic” as against “partial” reforms, to their readiness to support any strikes, regardless of their purpose and degree of organization. Above all, the Bolshevik “unmutilated” slogans of an eight-hour day, “complete democratization,” “confiscation of gentry lands”—and the basic vision underlying these slogans of a grand union of workers and peasants arrayed against all of society, “from Purishkevich to Miliukov”—were calculated to sound a deep echo among these new elements of the working class, which combined with their current resentments about factory life the still fresh grievances and aspirations that they had brought from the countryside.²⁵

²⁴ В. Ш-рь, *op. cit.*, Nos. 3 and 4, 1914.

²⁵ Ракитинъ, «Рабочая масса . . .», *op. cit.*

Indeed, by the early months of 1914, the influx of these ex-peasant masses into the cities had led not only to a striking rise in the Bolshevik fortunes but also to a still relatively modest and yet notable revival among the workers of Left Populist tendencies. Commenting on this revival of Left Populism, which now threatened to replace Menshevism as the chief opposition to the Bolsheviks, Martov emphasized in a series of articles "the swilling mixture of anarchist and syndicalist tendencies with remnants of peasant urges and utopias" which appeared to animate the Left Populists' adherents. These workers might have physically left the village, he observed, but they had by no means broken their psychological ties with it: "As they face the hardships, the darkness of city life, they hold onto their dream of returning to a patch of land with their own cow and chickens . . . and they respond to the slogans of those who promise them the fulfilment of this dream."²⁶

To what extent can one support with statistical evidence the emphasis that the more discerning Menshevik observers of the labor scene laid on the role played in the industrial unrest of the period by the younger generation of urban industrial workers and the recruits to the labor force from the countryside? We know, of course, that the increasingly explosive strike wave broadly coincided with an industrial upsurge which saw the Russian industrial labor force grow from some 1,793,000 in January, 1910, to approximately 2,400,000 in July, 1914, a rise of over 30 per cent. And obviously this sharp and sudden increase in the labor force could be achieved only if to the recruitment of a new generation of urban workers was added the massive inswell into the urban labor market of landless and land-poor peasants, freed of their ties to the land by the Stolypin legislation—particularly by the arbitrary provisions of the statutes of 1910 and 1911. The literature of this period is replete with reports of the influx of these raw recruits into the industrial army. But let us refine the analysis, and focus our attention on those sectors of the Russian labor force which appear to lead the contemporary strike movement, and especially those strikes which bear a distinctly political character. One can easily distinguish two such sectors. The first of these may be defined geographically: it is the labor force of the province and particularly the city of Petersburg and suburbs, which in the first six months of 1914 contributed close to 50 per cent of the total of 1,254,000 strikers estimated for the country as a whole, and almost two-thirds of the 982,000 strikers listed as political. Secondly, when one compares strike statistics for different industries (as against different regions) it becomes apparent that by far the heaviest incidence of strikers, particularly of political strikers—in Petersburg just as in the country as a whole—is to be found among the workers in the metalworking industry.

²⁶ Л.М., «Народники и петербургское рабочее движение», *Сверная рабочая газета*, Nos. 21, 24, 28, Mar., 1914; and «Такъ и есть», *ibid.*, Apr. 12, 1914.

It is notable, and undoubtedly significant, that these two sectors of the labor force—which we have singled out because of their exceptional revolutionary explosiveness—underwent during the years of the new industrial upsurge an expansion well above that of the Russian labor force as a whole: they grew by an average of roughly 50 per cent as against the national average of less than 30 per cent. If we consider the necessity of allowing for replacement as well as increases in the labor force, we may assume that by 1914 well over half of the workers in Petersburg, as well as in the metalworking industry in the country as a whole, were persons who at best had undergone a very brief industrial experience. It has already been noted that while some of these recruits were urban youths who reached working age during these years, most had to be drawn from outside the cities. In this connection, one further observation appears relevant: It is that since the beginning of the century a marked shift in the pattern of labor recruitment from the countryside into the Petersburg labor force had been taking place. As the labor supply available in Petersburg province and in other provinces with relatively developed manufacturing or handicraft industries declined, a growing percentage of the recruits into the Petersburg labor force had to be drawn from the almost purely agricultural, overpopulated, central provinces of European Russia²⁷—the very provinces in which the dissolution of repartitional tenure, achieved as often as not under irresistible administrative and economic pressure, was making itself most heavily and painfully felt.²⁸

A vast mass of workers who combined with their resentments about the painful and disorienting conditions of their new industrial experience a still fresh sense of grievance about the circumstances under which they had been compelled to leave the village. A new generation of young workers of urban origin to lead them—impatient, romantic, singularly responsive to maximalist appeals. Our puzzle would appear to be resolved if it were not for a disconcerting fact. The conditions I have so far described, except perhaps for the presence of a somewhat lower percentage of young workers of urban origin, also largely obtained in other areas and sectors of the Russian labor force, which remained, however, less animated than the ones we have singled out by the spirit of *buntarstvo* of which we have been seeking the roots. These conditions probably obtained, for example, almost as much in the Donbas as in Petersburg; and for workers in chemicals as much as for those in the metalworking industry. This is why we necessarily have to

²⁷ See A. Г. Рашин, *Формирование рабочего класса России* (Moscow, 1958), pp. 438-39.

²⁸ As Geroid Robinson notes, the Stolypin legislation effectively enabled individual householders in the repartitional communes to obtain under certain conditions "a permanent and more or less unified holding against the unanimous opposition of the communal assembly." Similar conditions obtained for those repartitional communes which were converted to hereditary tenure under the Arbitrary Dissolution Law of 1910. See G. T. Robinson, *Rural Russia under the Old Regime* (New York, 1932), p. 219; also note 28 on p. 305.

add one further element which, for obvious reasons, was generally absent in most contemporary Menshevik analyses: the role exercised by Bolshevik party cadres—workers and *intelligently* alike. If the Petersburg workers displayed greater revolutionary explosiveness, and especially greater responsiveness to Bolshevik appeals, than the workers of the Donbas, it was undoubtedly in part because of the Petersburg workers' greater exposure to Bolshevik propaganda and agitation. Similarly, if the workers in the metalworking industry were so much more agitated politically than the workers in other industries, it was partly because the labor force in the metalworking industry consisted of a peculiar combination of skilled and unskilled, experienced and inexperienced, workers—the older and more skilled workers contributing in their contacts with the young and unskilled a long-standing exposure to revolutionary, and specifically Bolshevik, indoctrination. It is not accidental that so many of the major figures in the Bolshevik Party cadres of the period—Voroshilov, Kalinin, Kiselev, Shotman, to cite but a few—had been workers with a long *stazh* in the metalworking industry.

This is not to say that during these years the Bolshevik Party cadres in Petersburg, and especially their underground organizations, bore even a faint resemblance to the depictions of them currently offered by some Soviet historians. Penetrated from top to bottom by agents of the secret police (no less than three of the seven members of the Petersburg City Party Committee in July, 1914, were on the payroll of the Okhrana),²⁹ they were experiencing serious difficulties in replenishing their ranks, depleted periodically by arrests: between January and July, 1914, the Petersburg City Party Committee was riddled no less than five times by such arrests.

Yet even under these conditions the Bolshevik Party apparatus managed to survive, to retain some old and recruit some new members: younger workers, but also older workers, with a background of participation in the revolutionary underground, who in many cases had left the party during the years of reaction but were now returning to the fold; survivors of the older generation of the Bolshevik intelligentsia, but also fresh recruits from those elements in the intelligentsia youth who for temperamental reasons or because of adverse material circumstances were now attracted by the Bolsheviks' maximalist appeals. These recruits were, to be sure, not very numerous, nor was their mood representative of that of the intelligentsia as a whole. Indeed, many of them were animated by a new kind of anger and bitterness—as Berdiaev put it, the bitterness of a new incarnation of the Raznochintsy of the

²⁹ The Petersburg Party City Committee consisted at that time of the following members: Schmidt, Fedorov, Antipov, Shurkanov, Ignatiev, Sesitsky, and Ionov. Of these, Shurkanov, Ignatiev, and Sesitsky were agents of the Okhrana. For further details, see A. Kiselev, «В июле 1914 года,» *Пролетарская революция*, No. 7 (30), July, 1924.

1860's—whose strident quality often appeared to reflect not merely outrage about the betrayal of the revolutionary cause by the “opportunist” majority of the intelligentsia, but also a sharp sense of social antagonism: the antagonism of the young for the older and more established, of the less favored for the more fortunate members of society.³⁰

And all this anger and bitterness now struck a responsive chord in the masses of the working class. Given this correspondence of mood, given the even more precise correspondence between the image of state and society that the Bolsheviks advanced and the instinctive outlook of the laboring masses, the Bolshevik Party cadres were now able to play a significant catalytic role. They succeeded, as we have seen, in chasing the Menshevik “Liquidators” out of the existing open labor organizations. They transformed these organizations into “fronts” through which they managed to absorb, if not to control, the young workers who headed the Petersburg strike movement. Through the pages of *Pravda*, through the verbal appeals of their deputies in the Duma, by leaflet and by word of mouth, they managed to stir up and exploit the workers' embittered mood. Thus, it seems fair to say that by the outbreak of war the Bolshevik center in Petersburg, and particularly its open organizations, had developed into an organism whose arms, while still very slender and vulnerable, were beginning to extend into many corners of the life of the working class.

In January, 1914, in the reply to Bulkin from which we already quoted, the Menshevik leader Martov, dismissing the argument that all the difficulties of the “Liquidators” stemmed from the continued influence exercised by intelligentsia elements, with their accursed sectarian psychology, over the labor movement, gloomily noted the correspondence between the Bolsheviks' appeals and the workers' contemporary state of mind. The threat presented by Bolshevism, he argued, lay not in the handful of *intelligently* and *semi-intelligently* that it still managed to attract, but rather in the response that it had evoked, the roots that it had unquestionably sunk, among the masses of the workers themselves. Against whom had the workers struck in their spirit of *buntarstvo*? Martov harried his opponent. Against the “Liquidators,” against the scaffold of the open European-type party that had been erected between 1907 and 1911 by those proletarian elements that had been genuinely indoctrinated with Marxism—in substance, against their own workers' intelligentsia, Comrade Bulkin among them. And if the workers had done so under the “*lumpen* circles of the Pravdisty,” Martov concluded, it was because of all the demagogical groups in Russian society, this one, at least for the time being, was best attuned to the workers' own mood.³¹

³⁰ It is suggestive, in this connection, that so many of the student recruits into this “second generation” of the Bolshevik faction were *externy*, who were not sufficiently prepared, or well to do, to enroll as regular students in the gymnasia and higher schools.

³¹ Л.М., «Отвѣтъ Булкину,» *op. cit.*

If I might summarize my own, and to some degree, Martov's argument, it is that by 1914 a dangerous process of polarization appeared to be taking place in Russia's major urban centers between an *obshchestvo* that had now reabsorbed the vast majority of the once alienated elements of its intelligentsia (and which was even beginning to draw to itself many of the workers' own intelligentsia) and a growing discontented and disaffected mass of industrial workers, now left largely exposed to the pleas of an embittered revolutionary minority.

This is not to suggest that by the outbreak of war the Bolshevik Party had succeeded in developing a secure following among the masses of the working class. The first year of the war would show only too clearly how fragile its bonds to the supposedly conscious Russian proletariat still were. Indeed, it bears repeating that the political threat of Bolshevism in 1914 stemmed primarily not from the solidity of its organizations nor from the success of its efforts at ideological indoctrination, but from the workers' own elemental mood of revolt. That even Lenin was acutely aware of this is suggested by an Okhrana report of his instructions to the Bolshevik deputy Petrovsky in April, 1914. This report stated:

Defining the state of affairs at the present moment, Lenin expressed himself as follows:

Our victory, i.e., the victory of revolutionary Marxism, is great. The press, the insurance campaign, the trade unions, and the societies of the enlightenment, all this is ours. But this victory has its limits. . . . If we want to hold our positions and not allow the strengthening labor movement to escape the party's sway and strike out in an archaic, diffuse movement, of which there are some signs, we must strengthen, come what may, our underground organizations. [We] can give up a portion of the work in the State Duma which we have conducted so successfully to date, but it is imperative that we put to right the work outside the Duma.³²

Thus, two and a half months before the outbreak of the war, Lenin already detected the chief immediate threat to his party's fortunes not to his "right" but to his "left"—in the possibility of premature, diffuse, revolutionary outbreaks by the Russian working class.

The elements of strength and weakness in the Bolshevik leadership of the labor movement on the eve of war and the relative significance of this movement as a revolutionary force are graphically illustrated by the contrast between the general strike which broke out in the working class districts of Petersburg in the early days of July, 1914, and the nature of the mutual confrontation of the workers and educated society that had characterized the high tide of the Revolution of 1905. On the earlier historical occasion—in September and October, 1905—the workers of Petersburg and Moscow had rejoined, however briefly, the world

³² «Агентурные сведения начальника Московского охранного отделения А. Мартынова.» *Исторический архив*, No. 6, 1958, p. 11.

of Russian educated and privileged society. Flocking out of their tawdry factory districts, they had descended into the hearts of the two capitals to join in society's demonstrations, to shout its slogans, to listen in the amphitheatres of universities and institutes to the impassioned speeches of youthful intelligentsia agitators. This had been the background of the awesome spectacle of the truly general strikes which paralyzed Petersburg and other cities of European Russia during the October days, driving the frightened autocracy to its knees.

In July, 1914, in protest against the brutal suppression by police detachments of a meeting of the Putilov workers called in support of the strike in the Baku oil fields, a strike as massive and explosive as any that had erupted among the workers in 1905 swept the outlying working class districts of Petersburg. (A call for such a general strike had been issued by the Bolsheviks' Petersburg Party Committee on the evening of July 3.) On July 7, three days after the opening of the strike, Poincaré arrived in Petersburg on a state visit to dramatize the solidity of the Franco-Russian alliance against the Central Powers. By this time, according to official estimates, over 110,000 workers had joined in the strikes. Almost all the factories and commercial establishments in the working class districts of the city were now closed, and many thousands of workers were clashing in pitched battles with Cossacks and police detachments. The news of the growing international crisis and the accounts of Poincaré's visit had crowded the reports of labor unrest out of the front pages. But even during the two days of Poincaré's stay, newspaper readers were told in the inside columns that workers were demonstrating in the factory districts, throwing rocks at the police and being fired upon in return, tearing down telegraph and telephone poles, attacking street cars, stoning their passengers, ripping out their controls, and in some cases dragging them off the rails to serve as street barricades.³³

It was also during the two days of Poincaré's visit that some workers' demonstrations, brandishing red flags and singing revolutionary songs, sought to smash their way out of the factory districts into the center of the capital. But Cossacks and mounted police blocked their access to the bridges of the Neva as well as on the Petersburg side, and the heart of the capital remained largely still.

By the morning of July 9, the Bolsheviks' Petersburg Party Committee, sensing that the strike was doomed "due to inadequate party organizations" and "lack of weapons," decided to call on the Petersburg proletariat to go back to work. But it quickly discovered that it could not control the strike movement. The workers had now "gone berserk," according to police reports, and were "not even willing to listen"

³³ *Русская ведомости*, July 8, 1914, p. 3, July 9, p. 2; *Новое время*, July 8, p. 5; *Речь*, July 8, p. 3. The Petersburg newspapers did not appear between July 9 and 11, owing to a strike of the typographical workers.

to those orators who asked them to call off the strike. Whatever element of leadership the strike still maintained would now be assumed by younger and more impatient hands. On the night of July 9, at a meeting held at Nauka i Zhizn', one of the societies of cultural enlightenment of the capital, a group of rebels against the line adopted by the Petersburg Party Committee, described in police reports as "green and immature youths" (most of them were in their early twenties), issued a resolution arguing that the current street disorders showed that "the proletariat [had gone] over to an active and spontaneous struggle" and did "not contemplate to subordinate itself in the future to any directive whatsoever." "It is imperative to assist the proletariat to organize, finally and without delay," the young party workers concluded, "to issue a call to go over to an armed uprising, and for this purpose to hurry to print leaflets and appeals with a suitable content." The Bolshevik insurgents did not actually succeed in mimeographing such an incendiary manifesto until July 12, when the strike was already drawing its last gasp and conflicting leaflets calling on the strikers to return to work were being circulated by the now desperate Party Committee.³⁴ In the meantime, despite the ever more massive intervention of Cossacks and police detachments, despite the dispatch to the working class districts of the capital on July 11 of a whole cavalry brigade from

³⁴ This ungrammatically written appeal is worthy of quotation, for it vividly expressed the feelings that animated at this stage of the strike the Bolsheviks' rebellious following: "Comrades! The government headed by the capitalists has not declared merciless war on the laboring masses in jest; everywhere, in political as in economic strikes, bloodthirsty police heroes have appeared. They are committing acts of violence with impunity, carrying out mass arrests, sometimes shooting, closing trade unions as well as organizations of cultural enlightenment, but all this is of no avail to them. Every day, Russia's jails are growing like mushrooms; every day, the newspapers carry mentions of the deportations of our comrades to the most desolate places! [Yet] everywhere we see that the strikes are assuming the most colossal scope. The peasants are not paying their quit-rent, they are cutting down the woods of the crown and the gentry, burning down their manors; the soldiers are not taking the oath, they are insulting their officers, reading subversive newspapers. The government is trembling, worrying because around it the army of labor is growing not by the day but by the hour, and preparing for a decisive clash with its century-old foe. But your attempts to hold the people in chains are in vain; you are showing only for the n-th time that you are helpless, and the more you inflict violence on the people, the deeper you are digging your own pit. It is in vain, you bloodthirsty tribe, that you have taken up arms against the laboring masses. The government is fighting with bayonets, the capitalists—with money, and the clergy—with sermons; but the people have taken this into account, they no longer believe in fairy tales, and in answer to you, instigators of police repressions, the whole laboring class is declaring that your song is over. We are on the eve of great events, if not today then tomorrow your luxurious palaces will be turned into people's clubs and unions. . . . The factories and plants will work only for the laboring masses. The jails will be overflowing with the likes of you. . . . Your woods, meadows, fields, everything you have, will fall into the hands of those you humiliated. Comrades! Lend your ears and prepare yourselves for anything. To wait and endure—enough with these words! Our motto is—hail the relentless struggle against the government and the capitalists! Down with capital! Comrades, get ready! Hail socialism!" This document was originally printed in *Памятники агитационной литературы РСДРП*, VI, Part I (Petrograd and Moscow, 1923), 79. It is reprinted in *«Июльские волнения 1914 г. в Петербурге,» Пролетарская революция*, No. 8-9 (31-32), Aug.-Sept., 1924, p. 318.

Tsarkoe Selo, the strike movement lurched forward, in an atmosphere of increasingly violent conflict and despair.

In a two-page review of the strike, published on July 12, the reporters whom *Riech'* had sent out to the factory districts described some of the scenes they had witnessed during the preceding three days. The biggest clashes, they agreed, had occurred on the night of July 9 and during the succeeding day. Many thousands of workers had then clashed with the police—at times fighting them with clubs, or hailing them with rocks from behind improvised barricades. Women and children had joined in building these barricades—out of telephone and telegraph poles, overturned wagons, boxes, and armoires. No sooner was a demonstration dispersed, or a barricade destroyed, than the workers, after evacuating their wounded, would regroup, and clashes would start all over again. Whole districts were without light, their gas and kerosene lamps having been destroyed. Most commercial establishments were closed, particularly the wine shops and taverns which the workers themselves had shut to maintain and demonstrate the discipline in their ranks. By the evening of the twelfth, the peak of the violence was over, as army and police detachments, with drawn bayonets, patrolled the now largely deserted streets. One of the *Riech'* reporters recorded these sights (the likes of which he said he hadn't seen since 1905), and noted the general background of devastation: the shattered street lights, the upturned telegraph poles, the deserted barricades, the trolley cars abandoned or overturned, the closed factories and stores. "And on the Petersburg side, the usual traffic, the usual life, and the trolleys are moving about as usual."³⁵

It was not until July 15, four days before the outbreak of the war, that order in the factory districts of Petersburg was fully restored.

³⁵ Dispatch of correspondent S., *Pravda*, July 12 (25), 1914, p. 5.

The second part of this article will be published in the next issue along with comments by Arthur P. Mendel and Theodore H. Von Laue and a reply by Mr. Haimson.