

## **Workers and Intelligentsia in Late Imperial Russia: Realities, Representations, Reflections**

Edited by Reginald E. Zelnik

### **Description:**

The collapse of the Soviet Union opened previously unimagined possibilities for insight into Russian social, intellectual, and political history. This volume, a collaboration of American, Russian, and West European scholars, illuminates the creation and complex dynamics of the Russian industrial working class from its peasant origins in the mid-nineteenth century to the collapse of the imperial system in 1917. The authors focus on the shifting attitudes, cultural norms, self-representations, and increasing self-consciousness of workers as they interacted with the new social movements, student groups, the Church, and most dramatically, the political (mainly radical and liberal) intelligentsia. But the authors also examine the obverse: the contending representations of workers by the intelligentsia as they interacted with each other ever more intensely during this turbulent period leading up to the Russian Revolution. The result is a fascinating and detailed account of social and cultural transformation in a key period of Russian — and world — history.

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WORKERS AND  
INTELLIGENTSIA IN  
LATE IMPERIAL RUSSIA:

*REALITIES, REPRESENTATIONS,  
REFLECTIONS*

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*Dedicated to the memory of Allan K. Wildman,  
who taught us all so much about workers and intelligentsia*

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## FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS AND RUSSIAN TERMS

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| DP                 | Departament Politsii (Department of Police [of the MVD]).  |
| GARF               | Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (State Archive of the Russian Federation)—in Moscow.                  |
| <i>Intelligent</i> | A member of the intelligentsia (plural: <i>intelligenty</i> ).   |
| IRTO               | Imperatorskoe Russkoe Tekhnicheskoe Obshchestvo (Imperial Russian Technical Society).                              |
| <i>Kruzhok</i>     | A circle of ideologically related intelligenty and/or workers (plural: <i>kruzhki</i> ).                           |
| MVD                | Ministerstvo Vnutrennikh Del (Ministry of Internal Affairs).   |
| <i>Narod</i>       | The people, the folk.  |
| PSR                | Partiia Sotsialistov-Revoliutsionerov (Socialist Revolutionary Party). See also “SR.”                              |
| PSS                | <i>Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii</i> (Complete Collected Works).  |
| RGIA               | Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (Russian State Historical Archive)—in St. Petersburg.              |
| RGALI              | Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva—in Moscow.  |
| RSDRP              | Rossiiskaia Sotsial-Demokraticheskaia Rabochaia Partiia (Russian Social-Democratic Workers’ Party). See also “SD.” |
| SD                 | Sotsial Demokrat (Social Democrat), sometimes hyphenated, especially when used as an adjective.                    |
| SR                 | Sotsialist Revoliutsioner (Socialist Revolutionary), sometimes hyphenated, especially when used as an adjective.   |

Other abbreviations used in archival citations: f. = fond; op. = opis’; d. = delo; dd. = dela; d-vo = deloproizvodstvo; l. = list; ll. = listy; t. = tom; ch. = chast’; OO = Osobyi Otdel; ob. = oborot.

## INTRODUCTION

**Reginald E. Zelnik**

This volume is composed of a selection of papers presented at the International Colloquium on Workers and the Intelligentsia in Russia in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries. The conference, which was organized by the St. Petersburg branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Russian History in cooperation with several other institutions, including the University of California at Berkeley, was held in St. Petersburg, Russia, from 12 to 16 June 1995.<sup>1</sup> The basic assumption of the organizers was that the history of the Russian working class, far from disappearing from the radar screen as a result of the collapse of the regime that claimed to represent it, was still a very vital topic, open to creative new approaches and enrichment, thanks in part to the contacts and exchanges between Western and Russian scholars that had become so much easier to pursue. Now that a self-described but largely mythical "workers' state" no longer existed, a full-scale, open-ended effort to study real workers could finally take place, and it did.

The conference, I believe, proved its organizers right. Fresh and creative analysis and discussion of Russian labor history was carried out for almost five full days.<sup>2</sup> Happily, except for ceremonial purposes, few participants claimed to speak for Russia, America, or "the West"; instead, speakers pursued their line of analysis as individual scholars, leading at times to nicely unpredictable agreements and disagreements across and within national boundaries.

A question that came up frequently, clearly a fundamental one, was just how useful the concept "working class" is to our understanding of late imperial Russian society. The papers published in the present collection include several that shed light on that issue. They do so not in the form of abstract theoretical discussion, but by showing the varied ways in which workers interacted with other

sectors of society and the degree to which that very interaction led to a heightened sense on the workers' part that they belonged to a distinct social group, with its own unique destiny. By the same token, some of the papers show how interaction with workers produced an equally forceful sense of the workers' importance among the more educated and privileged social groups, the intelligentsia in particular. Without purporting to speak for all the authors, I would venture to say that a rough consensus formed around the following idea: Whereas the concept "working class" used as an objective description of a distinct social group with measurable characteristics, independent of its state of mind, is highly problematic (if not entirely useless), "working class" as a way of expressing, on the one hand, important aspects of workers' subjectivity—their attitudes, *mentalités*, cultural norms, and self-representations—and, on the other hand, the intelligentsia's beliefs about and representations of workers is an indispensable concept for the student of Russian society.

While workers' memoirs, where available, are certainly an important means for getting at "mentalité" (a concept that is freely deployed in the paper by Iurii Kir'ianov, perhaps Russia's leading authority on the history of the labor movement), this volume demonstrates that no serious understanding of Russian workers' state of mind in any given venue at any given time is possible without close attention to what happens to workers when their public (or even private) lives rub them up against the different social milieus with which they interacted, whether by choice or necessity. At the conference as in the volume, those milieus are best described as the educated elites of Russian society, and most notably, though not exclusively, the radical and liberal intellectuals who were most concerned with giving shape and substance to the workers' aspirations; in a word—the intelligentsia.

This is not to say that all the conference papers focused specifically on the intelligentsia-worker nexus, for despite the name of the conference, several papers, mainly by Russians, had other emphases (see the "Addendum," below). But in the interest of creating a thematically unified and focused volume, I have chosen to include two of the Russian papers (Kir'ianov and Potolov) that focus on workers' relations with the Marxist intelligentsia. Note, however, that even these papers perforce raise the important issue of workers' attitudes toward the church, the clergy, and the Tsar. Note too that in almost

every contribution to this volume, the intelligentsia's notions about and representations of workers figure as prominently as the notions of the workers themselves (in some cases, even more so).

To give the reader a better idea of the conference's range of coverage, I will list the three main sections into which it was divided and will indicate where each of the papers presented here fits in (though I have changed the order for the particular purposes of this volume).

I. Workers of Russia in the Second Half of the Nineteenth and Beginning of the Twentieth Centuries: Ideals, Self-Identification, Cast of Mind (*oblik*), Mentalité. (Eight presenters, including Haimson, Kir'ianov, Steinberg, and Swift.)

II. Workers in the Russian Social Movement. (Nine presenters, including Neuberger, Pearl, Hildermeier, and Rosenberg.)

III. Workers and the Intelligentsia. (Seven presenters, including Zelnik, Surh, Potolov, Scherrer, and Smith.) Note that although Section III carries the name of the entire conference, the "intelligentsia" theme ran through every session, though to varying degrees.

Chronologically, the story presented in this volume begins with the workers' interaction with the Populist intelligentsia of the 1870s (Zelnik) and 1880s (Pearl). It then takes us through the efforts of the Marxist or Social Democratic (SD) intelligentsia to overcome what it perceived as the workers' "backwardness," attributed to their peasant roots, and worker resistance to or acceptance of those efforts (sometimes simultaneous resistance *and* acceptance). The papers on workers and the SDs embrace the years from the 1890s to 1917, with much attention focused on the formative years on the eve of the Revolution of 1905 (Kir'ianov, Potolov, Surh) and somewhat less attention devoted to the period from 1905 to 1917 (Haimson, Scherrer, Smith.) Separate papers deal with the workers' interaction with the Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs)—that is, with members of the quasi-Marxist Socialist Revolutionary Party, or PSR (1901–17, Hildermaier) and with political liberals such as the Kadets (1905–17, Rosenberg). Still others take up more specialized themes: the "workers' theater" movement of 1905–17 (Swift), workers' attitudes toward the judicial system (Neuberger), workers' concepts of the "self" or "individual"

(Steinberg), and the attitudes of workers and other lower-class Russians to World War I (Jahn). Characteristic of all these papers, though “materialist” explanations are not entirely absent, is the unusual amount of attention the authors devote to questions of values and moral sensibilities.

Our book, like the conference itself, is meant to be an exploratory step in new directions. It is meant to encourage scholars to investigate the many areas of interplay between industrial workers and the rest of society, especially educated society, including anyone who dealt with workers in either an official or unofficial capacity. The interaction between workers and educated elites cannot be fully grasped unless we study the preconceptions and intentions with which *intelligently* approached the workers whom they hoped to influence and, in turn, how their contacts with workers altered those conceptions in the course of time. Workers and intellectuals were in a constant dialogue from the reign of Alexander II (1855-81) to the fall of the imperial system in 1917, and here the papers endeavor to probe the dimensions and parameters of that dialogue and the changes it produced among a wide variety of workers and an equally wide selection of intelligentsia. The collection is also meant to encourage the notion, already suggested (if not fully developed) in some of the more daring Soviet works of the 1960s and 1970s by the concept of *oblik*,<sup>3</sup> that the mental and moral world of workers was as rich, varied, complex, and worthy of study as the world of the educated public with which they interacted—in short, that Russian workers have and deserve their own cultural and intellectual histories, which cannot be confined to the traditional, simplistic binary models that were themselves part of the high-temperature discourse of Russia’s turn-of-the-century politics: “backwards” versus “advanced,” “dark” versus “enlightened,” “conscious” versus “unconscious.” Since the same is true of the industrial workers of other countries, it is also our hope that these papers will provide a useful framework for comparative study.

\*       \*       \*

The stories told in the chapters that follow may be said to have begun with the history of the Russian intelligentsia itself. The people who came to be known collectively as “intelligentsia”—that most

elusive and yet indispensable of Russian terms, Latin in origin, not actually used in Russian until the 1860s, but today almost universally known—had their origins in the intellectual circles of the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>4</sup> The central debate that began in those circles was between “Westerners” (or “Westernizers”) and “Slavophiles,” well-educated, highly sophisticated, morally engaged Russian thinkers who, while sharing a deep, often agonizing commitment to the fate of the Russian nation and the Russian people (*narod*, a word that denoted both nation *and* people), disagreed sharply as to whether or not the problems of the country should be solved by following a West European path, either liberal or socialist but generally secular, on the one hand, or a traditional Russian path, based on rural collectivist customs and the Orthodox Christian faith, on the other. Both sides devoted enormous attention to the peasantry, but while Slavophiles imagined the peasant as the embodiment of Russian virtue, at least in potentio, Westerners imagined the peasant as a personality distorted by ignorance and the burdens of serfdom and therefore badly in need of radical transformation.<sup>5</sup>

Populism, Alexander Herzen’s special Russian version of European socialism, emerged as an original synthesis of aspects of Westerner and Slavophile thought.<sup>6</sup> Populists reimagined the Russian peasant in a positive light, though this time not as the Slavophiles’ idealized embodiment of religious and national virtue, but as the fountainhead of as yet unrealized socialist values, rooted in the (equally idealized) collectivism of the village commune (*mir*, *obshchina*). In varying, often contradictory forms, this representation of the peasant remained a vital part of left intelligentsia thinking from the mid-nineteenth century to the end of the old regime, a representation that rivaled the neo-Slavophile, Tolstoyan, and conservative images of the peasant that were projected by those intelligentsy who, while eschewing socialism and revolution, continued to believe in the simple peasant’s essential goodness.<sup>7</sup>

Among some segments of the revolutionary intelligentsia, however, disillusionment with the peasant began to set in as early as the 1870s. Peasants’ unexpectedly weak response to the 1874 “movement to the people,” an attempt by (overly) confident student radicals to fan the flames of unrest by traveling to various corners of rural Russia to agitate among villagers, launched a seemingly interminable debate among radical intelligentsy over the reasons for their

failure and, as a corollary, over the validity of their previous understanding of peasant character.

Beginning in the 1870s, and developing with greater intensity from the 1890s, these debates were further complicated by the entry into the intelligentsia's field of vision of a new member of Russia's social and political *dramatis personae*, the one that occupies the center stage of our compendium: the industrial worker.<sup>8</sup> The worker was a real puzzle to peasant-oriented Populists. On the one hand, in the 1870s, when radical students were making their first large-scale efforts to reach out to the *narod*, and indeed right up to the end of the tsarist regime and beyond, the vast majority of the industrial workers were actually peasants. That is, they were peasants at least in a legal sense—registered members of the peasant estate (*soslovie*)—but many were peasants economically and socially as well, spending part of their lives engaged in agricultural labor, either as children, before becoming factory workers, or seasonally, as adults. Most of them also paid taxes and other dues (including, for decades after the abolition of serfdom in 1861, redemption payments) through their home villages, received their internal passports (required of those who left the village) at the same rural location, and contributed part of their urban industrial wage to the parents, spouses, and children whom they left behind. Ironically, the most rapid periods of Russia's industrialization, the 1890s and 1910–14, were also the times when the village made its greatest numerical contribution to the industrial workforce, for the existing population of urban workers was unable to keep pace with the demand for industrial labor by reproducing itself biologically. What this meant for Populists (and for the PSR, their early twentieth-century ideological successors) was that notwithstanding the rapid growth of factories and mines, shipyards and railroads, it was possible to maintain the view that worker and peasant were different versions of a single sociocultural collectivity, sharing a single identity, that of the *narod*. If no longer *undifferentiated*, this was still a very *weakly* differentiated "people," and as such was worthy of preservation for the new socialist order that was very much on the Populist and SR agenda.

For those who shared these beliefs, the problem of reaching out to and communicating with industrial workers began as little more than a special case of the problem of connecting with the peasantry. In fact, at first it seemed to be the easier version of that problem, for

at least two reasons: 1) Proximity: industrial workers were heavily concentrated in or near large urban centers, especially St. Petersburg and Moscow, the same university cities where the most politically active subset of the intelligentsia, radical student youth, were or had recently been studying.<sup>9</sup> 2) Affinity: industrial workers, or, more accurately, a small but influential subset of those workers, by virtue of their exposure to big-city life, urban culture, and, in many cases, the reading and writing skills required or encouraged by their work, were more capable than ordinary peasants of speaking the language and sharing the values of their young intelligentsia contemporaries.

Over the years, this combination of proximity and affinity created countless opportunities for students, the intelligentsia youth (which renewed and replenished itself with each new class of university-level freshmen), to interact with workers, and to the extent that the students continued to be steeped in Populist ideals, they could comfort themselves with the thought that they had found in the urban industrial settings of St. Petersburg, Moscow, and other towns, and in the new institutions that were generated by worker-student contacts (most notably the workers' study circle or *kruzhok*), a milieu in which to exert their influence on the narod and create cadres of urbanized but still unspoiled peasants to shine the light of the students' socialist message back on village Russia.

On the other hand, contact with urban workers could and did have a very different effect on some intelligentsia youth, virtually forcing a radical change in their conceptions and representations of the Russian worker. (Georgii Plekhanov, a typical Populist student in the 1870s and the "father" of Russian Marxism by the following decade, is the quintessential case. He is treated in complementary ways in this volume in the papers of Zelnik and Haimson.) Since by its very nature the students' contact with the more urbanized workers involved both the recognition of those workers' openness to culture and civilization and the effort by intelligentsia to enrich and expedite that process, to raise and develop the workers' "consciousness" (an expression that gained currency at the turn of the century), many radical students found themselves, almost against their wills, imagining the ideal worker (or idealizing the real worker) as someone like themselves—that is, as a new member of the political intelligentsia rather than as a politicized representative of the peasantry.

Thinking of the educated or semi-educated worker, whether actually or potentially, as a part of the intelligentsia was simultaneously attractive and repulsive to intelligenty. It was attractive because an important component of the intelligentsia ethos was the notion that the intelligentsia was and ought to be above or beyond class, or, to put it slightly differently, access to its ranks should be open to anyone who shared the intelligentsia's values and was educated to the point where he or she could read and discuss the works that nourished those values. The *intelligent* Andrei Zheliabov, for example, a leader of the People's Will and an assassin of Alexander II, was born a serf, and in any case these were years when the *raznochinets*, the *intelligent* of common, nonprivileged background, was becoming an increasingly important, almost iconic figure in the pantheon of revolutionary types.<sup>10</sup> There was no logical reason why a factory worker should not be welcomed into the ranks of the *raznochinnaiia* intelligentsia.

No reason, that is, if one thought of this worker as an individual. The actual situation, however, was more complex. It was not only that a Populist *intelligent* who identified the sympathetic worker as part of his own intelligentsia group would logically have to abandon the notion that the worker, or at least that particular worker, was basically a peasant. It was equally disconcerting that the workers whom the student intelligentsia encountered entered their world not as individuals, but as a group in its own right, as men (and, by the 1890s, some women) who were also feeling their way toward a new group identity, that of industrial workers, distinct and separate in their minds from their peasant siblings, and not just by dint of their education (important though it often was), but by dint of their experience as urban factory workers. For years, Populist intelligenty resisted the temptation to imagine their worker comrades as a distinct social formation, rooted in but separate from the village. But in the course of time, and especially beginning in the 1890s, a combination of disappointment at peasant passivity, the stormy growth of the industrial economy, and, above all, the rapidly growing popularity in the left intelligentsia of Marxism, with its privileging of the proletariat, contributed to new ways of imagining the worker by many intelligenty. The worker would now be thought of as a special class, special in the degree of its oppression and exploitation under capitalism, but special too in its capacity to become

the conscious vanguard that would lead Russia to its revolutionary future (whether spontaneously or only under intelligentsia guidance or domination is a crucial but distinct debate, internal to the Marxist camp, to be discussed below). Marxism offered a logical if not always practical solution to the left intelligentsia's dilemma of how to understand and imagine the politically educated or (by the twentieth century the term was ubiquitous) "conscious" worker: that worker was the model for what all workers would become as capitalism developed and the path to revolution widened. All workers could and would become if not *rabochie-intelligenty*, then at least *intelligentnye rabochie*—that is, they would with time rise to the cultural and political level of their intelligentsia mentors, but they would still be workers, capable of fulfilling their historical role as a *class*. Their peasant backgrounds would be shaken off or shed, but there would be no danger that the new identity they adopted would be that of the educated bourgeois. They were simply the best of the workers, the model for their less enlightened comrades, the worker "masses."

However logical this Marxist solution to the problem of worker identity may have been, it too proved to be highly unstable, even precarious, in practice. As the papers that deal with Russian social democracy will show, the sources of this instability were numerous. They included the temptation of "conscious workers" to identify so closely with their intelligentsia mentors that they left the less enlightened worker majority behind, often looking down on their erstwhile comrades; the reverse temptation to resent the arrogant and patronizing attitudes of their intelligentsia mentors to the point that they developed an independent, worker-centered (*ouvrièriste*), anti-intelligentsia view of the political world (a tendency treated here most directly in the contribution by Surh);<sup>11</sup> at the individual level, great identity anxiety and even psychological trauma among workers torn between competing identities under pressure from intelligentsia to overachieve, to function as exemplary role models (best illustrated in the contribution by Scherrer).

Put somewhat differently, this volume is as much about the workers' images of the intelligentsia as it is about the intelligentsia's image of the workers. In both cases, of course, it is about each group's notion of itself, its self-representation, inseparable in these stories from its relations with the proximate yet alien group that held the mirror into which it gazed. Each essay allots different propor-

tions to its discussion of worker perceptions and intelligentsia perceptions (with Steinberg's and Swift's contributions, which are really about the culture and sensibility of the worker intelligentsia, placing the greatest weight on the former), but if the volume is read in its entirety and absorbed as a whole, the reader should emerge with a balanced understanding of just how close was the nexus between workers and intelligentsia, two groups of people who, like it or not, for better or worse, were joined if not at the hip then at the head and at the heart.

#### ADDENDUM

In rearranging the selected papers for this volume, I chose simple chronological order as my main guiding principle, an approach I see as justified by the need to give the reader a good sense of how the worker-intelligentsia relationship developed over time. The results of my organizational scheme are not ideal, however, not only because periods covered in different papers often overlap, but also because at times chronology will have triumphed at the expense of the volume's conceptual rigor, the main example being the loss incurred by not placing Haimson's and Kir'ianov's contributions at the very beginning, since they introduce basic concepts of "representation" (Haimson) and "mentalité" (Kir'ianov) that help frame much of the volume. With that loss in mind, some readers may wish to turn to those two papers first, and then revert to a chronological reading of the rest of the essays.

Since it is my fervent hope that our collection will be read by many students and others who do not know Russian, I will conclude with a brief summary of some of the main points advanced in the Russian-language papers presented at the conference but *not* included here.<sup>12</sup> I follow the tripartite order of the conference itself:

I. We begin with E. R. Ol'khovskii's paper on "The Formation of the Worker Intelligentsia," an attempt to arrive at a workable definition of that concept (*rabochnaia intelligentsia*) and determine the time and especially the institutional setting of the worker intelligentsia's first appearance (Sunday classes and special libraries for workers, people's theaters, etc.). That paper, as well as Steinberg's and

Swift's, provoked a lively if inconclusive debate about the concept "worker intelligentsia" and its political implications. N. V. Mikhailov's paper on "The Self-Organization of Worker Collectives" engendered an animated discussion of his "neo-populist" argument that the collectivist, anti-individualist psychology of many Russian workers was neither a sign of the influence of the socialist intelligentsia nor a reflection of the experience of organized factory life, but was rooted instead in generations of peasant collectivist, communitarian tradition. P. A. Akhanchi, who gave the only paper that dealt with an ethnically diverse non-Russian border area, provided a detailed analysis of "Ethno-Religious Groups among the Oil Workers of Baku." Focusing on some 2,000 personnel files of workers, mainly Azeris and Armenians, at the Nobel refineries, she departed somewhat from the conference's main motifs but gave a persuasive analysis of the reasons behind the conflicts between workers of these two nationalities. N. S. Polishchuk, an ethnographer, one of the few nonhistorian participants, spoke on "The Customs and Manners of the Workers of Russia" and argued that the origins of many factory worker practices lay in the traditions of other social groups, most notably peasants and artisans. Her paper provoked one of the official commentators, Laura Engelstein, to ask rather provocatively whether, given the eclectic character of worker culture (brought out in other papers as well), the terms "class consciousness" and "working class" were still of any analytical use (an issue, as I indicated above, that then came up repeatedly in the course of the debates).<sup>13</sup>

II. G. I. Korolev began the second session with a controversial paper on "The Conception of Socialism among Workers and *Intelligenty*," in which he delineated important differences in the thinking about the character of the socialist future not only between these two broad groups, but also within each of them; he emphasized the presence among the common folk of spontaneously produced (meaning culturally, especially religiously generated, from beyond the influence of the intelligentsia) egalitarian notions. R. Sh. Ganelin reported on "The Labor and Socialist Movement as Conceptualized by Russia's Official Reformers." This was the only paper that focused on the views and activities of high government officials. (Although these officials were reformers, mainly of liberal persuasion, there is some question, given their official status, as to whether they should be counted as "intelligentsia.") Ganelin also addressed the question

of the radical intelligentsia's attitudes toward these officials. S. L. Firsov's paper on "Workers and the Orthodox Church" challenged the traditional Soviet view that working-class atheism was part and parcel of the growth of class consciousness. But the Orthodox Church's dependence on the Russian government, he also argued, was a major obstacle to the development of an independent Orthodox Christian approach to social problems, a situation that diminished the official church in the eyes of many workers and caused them to look elsewhere for fulfillment of their spiritual needs. Their apostasy, in turn, raised the level of the government's anxiety that the perceived irreligion of citified workers might be spread by them to the peasantry, a fear that caused some government and church officials to advocate more enlightened policies, especially after being frightened by the 1905 Revolution. S. A. Stepanov's report on "The Activity of Black-Hundred Organizations among the Workers of Russia" provided a rare account of worker interaction with the extreme right wing of the political spectrum (again a far cry from what is normally considered the intelligentsia) and demonstrated that the right made much greater efforts to influence industrial workers than is normally allowed for, and sometimes did so using subtle and flexible, if ultimately ineffectual, methods.

III. In the third section, T. M. Kitanina's paper on "The Technical Intelligentsia and the Workers" focused on the efforts of the Imperial Russian Technical Society (IRTO) to encourage the formation of a well-educated and highly skilled industrial labor force and on the Russian government's ambivalent attitude toward those quasi-liberal efforts. A. S. Kasimov broke with the general tendency of most papers to focus on St. Petersburg and Moscow by presenting a paper on "The Workers and the Democratic Intelligentsia of the Central Black-Soil Region," with special attention to intelligentsia-worker relations, sometimes troubled, sometimes amicable, in the SD organizations of Voronezh, Orel, Penza, and other industrial towns of that region.

The conference ended with a summation panel in which various speakers highlighted what they considered to be the principal themes and approaches addressed and illuminated by the conference papers and the subsequent discussions. These themes included the emphasis on the use of language as a window into the character of the complex relations between workers and intelligentsia, an ap-

proach that is illustrated by several of the papers in the present volume.

#### NOTES

1. The other institutions were Columbia University (Harriman Institute) and the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (Paris). At Berkeley assistance was forthcoming from the Department of History and the Center for Slavic and East European Studies. The major funding for the conference came from the International Research and Exchanges Commission (IREX).
2. The full proceedings of the conference have been published in Russian under the auspices of the St. Petersburg branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Russian History: S. I. Potolov et al., eds., *Rabochie i intelligentsiia Rossii v epokhu reform i revoliutsii, 1861–fevral' 1917* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Russko-Baltiiskii Informatsionnyi Tsentri BLITs, 1997). (The other members of the editorial board were Rafail Ganelin, Leopold Haimson, Iurii Kir'ianov, William Rosenberg, Nikolai Smirnov, Mark Steinberg, and myself.) See also William G. Rosenberg, Mark D. Steinberg, and Reginald E. Zelnik, "International Colloquium on Workers and the Intelligentsia in Russia in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," in the "Reports and Correspondence" section of *International Labor and Working-Class History* 49 (1996): 180–85.
3. See especially the important collection of papers published by the Institute of History of the Soviet Academy of Sciences: *Rossiiskii proletariat: Oblik, bor'ba, gegemoniia*, ed. L. M. Ivanov et al. (Moscow, 1970), including Kir'ianov's fundamental article, "Ob oblike rabochego klassa Rossii," pp. 100–40. See also the discussion of that book in my review essay, "Russian Workers and the Revolutionary Movement," *Journal of Social History* 6 (1972–73): 214–36.
4. See Martin Malia, "What Is the Intelligentsia?," in *The Russian Intelligentsia*, ed. Richard Pipes (New York, 1961), pp. 1–18; Allan P. Pollard, "The Russian Intelligentsia: The Mind of Russia," *California Slavic Studies* 3 (1964): 1–32; Vladimir C. Nahirny: "The Russian Intelligentsia: From Men of Ideas to Men of Conviction," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4 (1962): 403–35, and *The Russian Intelligentsia: From Torment to Silence* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1983); V. R. Leikina-Svirskaiia, *Intelligentsiia v Rossii v vtoroi polovine XIX veka* (Moscow, 1971).
5. Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles: A Study of Romantic Ideology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952); Abbot Gleason, *European and Muscovite: Ivan Kireevsky and the Origins of Slavophilism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972); Andrzej

- Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy: History of a Conservative Utopia in Nineteenth-Century Russian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); Peter K. Christoff, *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Russian Slavophilism: A Study in Ideas*, 4 vols. (The Hague: Mouton, 1961–91).
6. Martin Malia, *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961).
  7. For a thorough overview of these different imaginings of the Russian peasant, see Cathy A. Frierson, *Peasant Icons: Representations of Rural People in Late Nineteenth-Century Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
  8. For the earlier years, see Reginald E. Zelnik: *Labor and Society in Tsarist Russia: The Factory Workers of St. Petersburg, 1855–1870* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), and “Populists and Workers: The First Encounter between Populist Students and Industrial Workers in St. Petersburg, 1871–74,” *Soviet Studies* 24 (1972–73): 251–69; Robert E. Johnson, *Peasant and Proletarian: The Working Class of Moscow in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1979).
  9. On the political culture and “consciousness” of Russia’s university students, see Susan K. Morrissey, *Heralds of Revolution: Russian Students and the Mythologies of Radicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). See also Samuel Kassow, *Students, Professors, and the State in Tsarist Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).
  10. On the rise of the *raznochintsy* intelligentsia, see Elise Kimerling Wirtschatter, *Structures of Society: Imperial Russia’s “People of Various Ranks”* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994), esp. chs. 5 and 6.
  11. Paradoxically, the ideological justification for this worker-centered, anti-intelligentsia orientation was sometimes provided by an *intelligent*, the most obvious case in point (not discussed in the present volume) being Jan W. Machajski. See Marshall S. Shatz, *Jan Waclaw Machajski: A Radical Critic of the Russian Intelligentsia and Socialism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989); Paul Avrich, “What Is ‘Makhaevism’?,” *Soviet Studies* 17 (1965): 66–75; Anthony D’Agostino, “Intelligentsia Socialism and the ‘Workers’ Revolution’: The Views of J. W. Machajski,” *International Review of Social History* 14 (1969): 54–89.
  12. Those who read Russian may find those papers in the book edited by Potolov et al., cited in note 2 above. My summary was made easier to prepare thanks to an excellent unpublished overview of the conference by Evgenii M. Balashov, “Tretii mezhdunarodnyi nauchnyi kollokvium po istorii rabochego klassa Rossii” (St. Petersburg, August 1995). See also the slightly different summary in the report of Rosenberg et al., cited above in note 2.
  13. Official commentators or discussants (*opponenty*) played a vital role in the discussions. In addition to Engelstein, the American discussants were Ziva Galili and Louise McReynolds. Other participants in the discussions not named in the text of this introduction were: T. A. Abrosimova, B. V. Anan’ich, L. A. Bulgakova, V. Iu. Cherniaev, A. N. Dmitriev, V. N. Ginev,

Eino Ketola, B. I. Kolonitskii, A. P. Kupaigordskaia, I. P. Leiberov, B. N. Mironov, A. B. Nikolaev, A. V. Ostrovskii, O. A. Polivanov, I. S. Rozental', V. M. Shevyrin, N. N. Smirnov, F. M. Suslova, E. L. Varustina, P. V. Volobuev, and A. F. Voronchikhin.

## WORKERS AND INTELLIGENTSIA IN THE 1870s: THE POLITICS OF SOCIABILITY

Reginald E. Zelnik

In the early 1870s, Russian *intelligenty*, mainly university-level students or former students in St. Petersburg, took their first significant steps into the world of Russia's industrial workers. Although my paper focuses on the relations between workers and the city's ideologically preoccupied student youth, my main subject is not the ideology, but the personal interactions between students and workers—their sociability: how they related to each other as young people of the same age and starkly different backgrounds; where they met; how they perceived and imagined each other; and the sources of attraction, repulsion, and tension between them. We will observe the birth and earliest stages of what would become over the next few decades a persistently troubled, never satisfactorily resolved, yet often fruitful pattern of social and cultural interaction between workers and intelligentsia.

### FIRST CONTACTS: THE WEAVERS

We begin in 1872, when student members of the so-called *chikovskii* circle (*kruzhok chaikovtsev*) began to seek out Petersburg workers with the aim of enlisting their support in the preparation of what later became a “movement to the people.”<sup>1</sup> The students' conception of who the workers were—peasants who chanced to be in the city, part of a more broadly defined folk or “people” (*narod*), or members of a new social group that needed a new name (“working class”?)— was hazy, though ideology encouraged the use of broad populist terms like “narod.” In recalling an early encounter between a student and two weavers, for example, the *intelligent* Sergei Si-

negub, a friend of that student, identified the workers as Tver peasants from St. Petersburg's Maksvel' factory and, although one was reading a book, described them as "barely literate" (*malogramotnye*). After accosting the workers and denouncing the book ("nonsense"), Sinegub tells us, the student invited them to his home to explore more serious literature; the workers, in turn, were happy that God had sent them a student. When the student introduced the workers to other students (including Sinegub), the students were delighted to meet with the true "narod."<sup>2</sup> Looking back at these encounters, Sinegub represents the workers as benighted peasants, but open to light from its natural source—intelligently like himself.

A memoir dictated years later by one of the weavers, N. Shabunin, tells this story from the other side of the social divide.<sup>3</sup> Though generally confirming Sinegub's account, Shabunin has nothing to say about the book's merits. Whether it was truly "nonsense"—a version that underscores the students' civilizing role—we cannot say, but both accounts depict the weavers' receptivity: the weavers felt that the students had offered them a special gift, the gift of knowledge. Shabunin, however, does tell us something that Sinegub, perhaps to maintain the image of the weavers' peasant purity, omits: these "barely literate" peasants were not new to education; they were already pupils at a newly opened special school for workers run by the Imperial Russian Technical Society (IRTO).<sup>4</sup>

The students whom the weavers met that day were young men of their own age—their chronological peers but social superiors. They treated the weavers politely, and they gave them books, an act that soon became emblematic of a new social relationship in the Russian capital: *giving* by students, *receiving* by workers. They invited the weavers to return every evening, in effect a proposal to quit the IRTO school. Though not ready to abandon that school, the weavers accepted the books and agreed to return, prepared to take their knowledge where they found it. By the next visit, they had begun to understand that the students had a political agenda, and, though still reluctant to quit the IRTO school, they were not offended by the intrigue. Sinegub depicts them engaged in impassioned debate with students, perhaps suggesting relations of social equality. Soon new modes of sociability began to develop between the students and the workers, even the unprecedented step of workers inviting students to visit their living quarters.<sup>5</sup>

The new practice of mutual visitation intensified when the students took over part of the Baikov house in the city's Vyborg District (a.k.a. the Vyborg Side), a building where the weavers lived in a communal settlement (*artel'*). Sinegub visited the *artel'* on Sundays to read to the workers. Enthusiasm grew among the students, whose hunger for contact with "the people" was huge, and they began to organize more study groups for local workers. For workers too the example was infectious. Contacts expanded as students endeavored to turn the Baikov house into a dormitory of propaganda. To be sure, this process was disrupted when students, searching for new pupils, baffled the workers by moving to other parts of town, thereby decreasing the number of local visits; but when they learned of their pupils' disappointment, some returned, even taking up residence in the Baikov house itself.<sup>6</sup>

This was the first known instance of intelligenty and workers living under one roof. But could they live there as equals? Let us look briefly at the spatial arrangements.<sup>7</sup> The Baikov house was a big building with several apartments. The smaller wing was cut off from the rest by an entrance hall, assuring privacy. When students took charge, they gave this wing to their "women's commune" (the women were auditors at the Medical-Surgical Academy, some of whom took part in the propaganda). Male workers—there were no females in the group—were experiencing their first encounter with female students (*studentki*), women of the intelligentsia (*intelligentki*). It should go without saying that the women were segregated from all the men, both workers and students, at night.

The part of the house on the other side of the hall had two or three bedrooms, shared by five male students. But here segregation was not only by sex, but also by social status. Students slept with students, workers with workers. If the social barrier was indeed relaxed at daytime and evenings by cohabitation in one house, it still continued at night in the form of socially segregated sleeping arrangements. During early evening and on Sundays spatial segregation vanished, but even then one social division of labor remained: students, as teachers, gave, while workers, as pupils, received. Similar scenes were beginning to appear in other parts of town, as several student apartments were turned into "evening schools."<sup>8</sup>

With time these settings grew more varied, with different types of arrangements for different kinds of workers. Sometimes students

would visit a large workers' living *artel'*; at other times they targeted small groups of workers whom they identified as having special, outstanding qualities of intellect and character. These elite workers, always hand-picked by the students, were set up in special quarters, financed by students (or their unwitting parents). Here we see the first germ of a highly consequential new idea: that a worker, despite his close peasant roots, might be shaped by intelligenty into a new kind of person, resembling themselves; no longer a peasant-worker or worker from the *narod*, he would become, in effect, a worker-*intelligent*, possessed of what eventually came to be known as "consciousness." Lev Shishko, one of the most dedicated of the students, later described the goal of this activity as the "production of conscious individuals," *soznatel'nye edinitsy* ("*soznatel'nye*" was of course anachronistic), cultivated to become propagandists in their own worker milieu. Students would then form new little groups from among the more promising of these recruits.<sup>9</sup>

By fall 1873, this activity, which swept the Vyborg District, had spread to the Nevskii region (Petersburg's "Faubourg St. Antoine"), in and beyond the southeast part of the city. Far from the city center, this area had no educational institutions or student homes to supply workers with tutors; by the same token, for students to find and recruit workers took much more effort. Since an *intelligent* stood out like a sore thumb here, there was more need for secrecy, for disguise, for students dressing like workers.

Students developed three approaches for meeting the workers' demand for lessons in the Nevskii region: 1) For economy of scale, they occasionally took the serious risk of visiting large groups in an *artel'* or a factory dormitory. 2) They again created a special group of "chosen," "select" (*izbrannye*) workers, who were housed apart, segregated psychologically, and encouraged to act as the students' surrogates. This group of workers was, in a sense, "kept" by Sinegub, who paid its rent and other expenses. 3) They opened a secret, special "school" for workers in the building of the local telegraph station; in this educationally barren region there was a need for a central learning site, and for the first time the word *shkola* was actually used to refer to a central underground location for workers. To a degree, the three venues—dorms, school, and gatherings of "chosen"—comprised a single system. The large factory dorm was where chosen workers often sought new recruits; the school was where the recruits

were then taken. Since all the chosen had once lived in the dorm, the establishment of new contacts there, though hazardous, was fairly easy.<sup>10</sup>

Back in the Vyborg District, after a summer lull, intense contact between students and weavers resumed. In the fall of 1873, guided by the student Nikolai Charushin, lessons for workers drew many new pupils, even causing some logistical problems.<sup>11</sup> Since interposing a worker elite between themselves and large groups of unknown workers was the least risky way to structure their activity, students again set up a separate residence for chosen workers, including an older (age 36) married worker, Iakov Ivanov, the only weaver already “touched” by propaganda before these contacts began. More than any other weaver, Ivanov enjoyed the confidence of students and boasted of his intimacy with them. Here is our first clear case of a weaver identifying psychologically with students. A second case was his countryman or *zemliak* (someone from the same village or cluster of villages), G. Krylov, later known as a “darling” (*liubimets*) of the intelligentsia.<sup>12</sup> There would be many more such darlings.

Some students also invited their new worker acquaintances to join them at local taverns, where students and workers were able to enrich and extend their contacts, both political and social. At first just an occasional meeting place, taverns soon took on a more central role, in part because some students, most notably Charushin and Shishko (in contrast to Sinegub), enjoyed them. Frequenting taverns was an adaption by students to the workers’ ways, for there is little doubt that, left to their own devices, many of the puritanical young intelligenty would have shunned tavern life. Many never touched alcohol, preferring the safer Russian vice of tea-drinking; Lev Tikhomirov found the practice of recruiting workers in taverns repulsive, if not always avoidable.<sup>13</sup> But with the danger of police spies an increasingly pressing problem, taverns—where students, dressed like workers, confidently shrouded their dangerous words in noise and song—provided a (false) sense of security as well as a shelter from the winter cold.

If taverns were starting to sustain a new form of worker-student sociability, vodka, as some students anticipated, could also have harmful consequences. It produced a serious scandal when three of the workers, chosen ones at that, drank up money that the students had given them to pay their rent. Students were angry with the

offenders, but at a meeting with other workers they decided to maintain relations with the culprits lest they go to the police. The students even agreed to pay for their rooms.<sup>14</sup>

In the Nevskii region, worker-student contact continued to thrive until November 1873, when police raided some apartments there and found incriminating evidence. Arrests began at a time when many new workers were joining the circles. Success had produced a degree of complacency just when a few conflicts between workers and students induced acts of apostasy by some workers. Although the students took evasive steps, abandoning their homes and telling workers to stay away, some of the evidence uncovered in the Nevskii region also alerted police to activities in the Vyborg District.<sup>15</sup>

An early omen that some Vyborg District weavers might turn against their teachers appeared in the summer of 1873. As Shishko was reading aloud from an anti-tsarist tract, a worker began to object to his words, and, surprisingly, only one worker in the room rose to Shishko's defense. While blaming himself, Shishko saw the incident as a sign of some of the more backward, inexperienced workers' unreliability,<sup>16</sup> and it is true that the first weavers to turn against their teachers were fresh recruits. Shishko also blamed some worker-spies, the key figure being Tarasov, one of the trio who had drunk away the rent money. Tarasov, who was said to have liked the company of students mainly for the opportunities to visit taverns, alerted police that "internationalists" were agitating the workers. Another member of the trio, the heavy drinker P. Koriushkin, also began to inform, mainly out of fear; not wishing to "return to bondage" (*kabal'*), he told the police that "students are teaching us at night" and revealed the identities of members of his "party." Armed with this knowledge, police arrested weavers and students, even netting some members of the circles of metalworkers that were growing in tandem with the circles of weavers.<sup>17</sup>

## STUDENTS AND METALWORKERS

Meetings between metalworkers and students began in early 1872. They were held at various sites, but mainly in the Vyborg District apartment of the student I. N. Korneev, where metalworkers met

the *intelligent* who proved most capable of maintaining a prolonged association with them, the medical student Aleksandr Nizovkin.

Who were these metalworkers? Most of them worked at one of the War Ministry's newest armaments factories, the Patronnyi zavod (Cartridge Factory), on Vasil'evskii Ostrov (hereafter: V.O.), where their contact with young army officers gave them their first exposure to *intelligenty*.<sup>18</sup> The factory had branches in other parts of the city, but it was the tool-making shop of the cartridge-case or *gil'zovyi* branch (in 1873 the shop became the tool-making or *instrumental'nyi* branch) that, thanks to its advanced technology, united the largest group of skilled workers. It was there that Patronnyi zavod workers became most involved in circles.

As part of the War Ministry's Artillery Department, the Patronnyi zavod was run by army officers, with each branch headed by a specialist and his deputy. The director of the tool-making branch and his deputy, a Captain Kun, were men who were prepared to tolerate, if not encourage, political discussion among their workers, and the deputy commander of the projectile branch, Egor Emil'ianov, had a "questionable" political past.<sup>19</sup> Like other leftist and liberal officers, such men are best seen as members of the *intelligentsia* who were serving in the army and whose current duties facilitated contact with workers. This, and the fact that some revolutionary students—Sergei Kravchinskii, for example—were themselves former artillery officers, would add to the links between armaments workers and the left *intelligentsia*.

Dmitrii Miliutin's reform-oriented War Ministry expressly promoted enlightenment at the ministry's factories. At the Patronnyi zavod it provided libraries for staff and a consumers' cooperative (directed by Captain Kun) and special schools, closely tied to the IRTO, for workers.<sup>20</sup> About a dozen army officers, some from Patronnyi zavod (e.g., Kun), were also active as IRTO educators. They belonged to what one historian has called a new, "more educated officer corps" with a "critical mind-set."<sup>21</sup>

Although many weavers attended IRTO schools, Patronnyi zavod workers profited more from such classes than they did, in part because workers at military plants had a ten-hour day, whereas the weavers' norm was over twelve. Not only were armaments workers less tired, but also the 6 p.m. closing time at their plant allowed them to attend a special evening class that convened at 7. Although atten-

dance varied considerably, there was enough demand to encourage the opening of two new schools in 1873, including a special school targeting the Patronnyi workers. Housed at the factory, it was often called the Patronnyi zavod school.<sup>22</sup>

The success of that school speaks to the Patronnyi workers' appetite for education. Although the school had many problems, what counted for workers was its very existence. Such schools provided them with a new locus of sociability, both among themselves and between them and the teachers, many of whom were university-level students, young intelligentsy, who began to open their pupils' minds to science and literature. Soon munitions workers at branches of the factory in other parts of the city sought and found similar schools with similar teachers.<sup>23</sup>

Another novelty for workers at the military plants was access to libraries. The most active library, opened in 1872 and headed by Emil'ianov, was at the projectile branch (Vyborg District). It was designated for the use of officers and white-collar workers, but, predictably, Emil'ianov opened it to workers. Other users were "cadets" (*kadety*) from the nearby Mikhailovskoe Artillery School, which had its own circle of radical students, at least one of whom was briefly employed at Patronnyi zavod.<sup>24</sup> So between the library and the cadets, between Emil'ianov and the schools, a forcefield existed where young workers, officers, and students could interact.

We cannot say how many of the metalworkers who later joined a circle felt these influences directly, but we know that Dmitrii Smirnov, who later became a circle leader, attended the Patronnyi zavod school during its first year. The radical metalworker Viktor Obnorskii is said to have attended "Sunday schools," perhaps a reference to IRTO's Samsonievskii school. Emil'ianov arranged for artillery cadets—with whom Shishko and Kravchinskii often met—to hide a printing press at the home of a Patronnyi worker, and he let the circle of artillery men meet in his own quarters, with workers probably present. We also know that after quitting the Artillery School, a cadet was assigned by Emil'ianov to the projectile branch, where he provided at least one worker with money and books.<sup>25</sup>

By 1873, the Patronnyi workers' officially approved world of libraries, co-ops, and schools had a shadow counterpart among a smaller group of workers, a secret world of illegal literature collections (workers simply called them *biblioteki*), circles, and savings

funds (*kassy*). My point is not that the legal institutions directly spawned the illegal ones, but that all of them belong to a single story, first told by members of the intelligentsia. Two spheres, legal and illegal, were forming a parallel world and counterworld.

To grasp the meaning of the counterworld, we need to observe two secret venues: the setting where metalworkers and students first began to meet, that is, the student-led circle *for* workers, and the setting where the same workers later began to act more or less on their own, the circle run *by* workers. These settings correspond, respectively, to 1872, when students were dominant, and 1873-74, when workers began to take over.

#### THE KORNEEV AND NIZOVKIN CIRCLES: 1872

We begin in 1872, returning to those workers who first joined the circle at the apartment of the student Korneev, then shifted to the leadership of Nizovkin. Many of them were from the Patronnyi zavod; others were from the nearby Arsenal or the Nobel' or Nevskii plants. Most were already literate when they joined a circle. In the intelligentsia memoir literature, these metalworkers (*zavodskie*) are often contrasted rather sharply to the weavers or textile workers (*fabrichnye*). Charushin, for example, calls the former more "cultured and developed," and an even larger claim is made in an anonymous account, written just a few years after the fact, where metalworkers for the first time are called a "worker intelligentsia" (*rabochaia intelligentsiia*) and are described as resembling students more than workers.<sup>26</sup>

Let us meet some of these "more developed" workers. Stepan Mitrofanov,<sup>27</sup> the first metalworker to enjoy the confidence of students, was born a Vladimir serf in 1848. At age 14, after a village childhood, he came to St. Petersburg, where in 1863-71 he worked in various factories. He was known as a heavy reader, though his writing skills were limited. In 1869 he met Viktor Obnorskii,<sup>28</sup> 17, son of an army petty officer, with little village experience. As a boy, Obnorskii had moved to Vologda, where he attended a district school (*uezdnoe uchilishche*) and apprenticed to a locksmith. At the end of the 1860s, he moved to the Petersburg area, where he too

found work in metal factories. By the time the two youths met, Mitrofanov already had ties to students, and, with seven more years in the capital behind him, he may have provided both urban know-how and some political guidance to Obnorskii. An *intelligent* who knew Mitrofanov described him as so neatly dressed that he could pass for a student, and Georgii Plekhanov, the Populist student who later became the “father” of Russian Marxism, remembers Mitrofanov as well read, with a critical mind. Similar things were said of Obnorskii.<sup>29</sup>

As early as 1871 Mitrofanov harbored an interest in “association.” Producers’ and consumers’ associations, known from West European models, had long been admired by Russians, but until the 1870s this interest was largely confined to intelligenty. In early 1872, however, Mitrofanov put the idea to work by helping to create a cobbler shop or shoemakers’ collective, not far from the projectile factory. Students may have planted the idea, but the shop was run by a receptive Mitrofanov, who allowed them to use it as a site for tutoring workers. Students and workers gathered there in an illegal society for “self-development” (*samorazvitiie*).<sup>30</sup>

Later the lessons moved to the nearby flat of Korneev and still later to that of Nizovkin. Nizovkin had tutored workers at the cobbler shop and at Korneev’s, but one day, critical of the way Korneev ran things, he invited Mitrofanov and others to his own apartment, soon a major locus of worker-student contact. There as elsewhere, students taught workers such subjects as geography, history, and physiology (including popular experiments conducted on frogs). Math was taught by the chief draftsman at the Patronnyi zavod. Basic reading and writing (*gramota*) played a minor role, for this was really a graduate school for advanced worker-pupils.<sup>31</sup>

Among those pupils was Aleksei Peterson.<sup>32</sup> A child of the city, born in 1851 in the Petersburg suburb of Kolpino, Peterson was a machinist at the navy’s Izhorsk factory for five years and learned reading and writing at the factory school. At the beginning of the 1870s he was at Patronnyi zavod, where he met Obnorskii; later he joined the tool-making branch. Another pupil was Sergei Vinogradov,<sup>33</sup> a Iaroslavl peasant who came to Petersburg at age 19, worked at the Arsenal, joined Nizovkin’s circle, and became one of its leaders. Described as a “fully developed individual” (*lichnost’ vpolne razvitaia*) who earned the respect of his fellow workers, he won the confidence

of Nizovkin, who entrusted him and Obnorskii, now Peterson's housemate, with his personal library. Soon Peterson and Obnorskii moved to Nizovkin's flat, where Peterson stayed for about a year.<sup>34</sup>

The metalworker Aleksei Lavrov, a housemate of Obnorskii and Vinogradov, worked at factories in the Nevskii region but also had a nonfactory job in the inner city, living for a time at the Sennaia (Haymarket) Square (made famous by Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*). After meeting Mitrofanov, who described him as "quite well read," Lavrov joined Nizovkin's circle.<sup>35</sup> So did Mikhail Orlov, a Tver peasant (born 1851) who spent his teenage years in urban areas—Torzhok and Moscow—and was quite literate by 1870, when he came to Petersburg. There he had no trouble adjusting to the ways of the big city: he stopped visiting his native village, took city-type jobs (including that of waiter), and studied reading and writing. At the Nevskii factory he worked as a clerk, the post he held when he joined Nizovkin's circle. Lev Tikhomirov described him as "very bright" (*ves'ma neglupyi*), as "developed" as a student, a reader of "advanced" books. Whether or not this development took place after he joined the circle, Orlov was considered the most "student-like" of the workers.<sup>36</sup> By fall 1872 these men were in Nizovkin's circle and living in his apartment, where they adopted living arrangements not unlike the Baikov house—workers slept apart, dormitory-style, five to a room; students, still in charge, had individual rooms.<sup>37</sup>

#### THE LIBRARY: 1873–74

Sometime in the summer of 1873, Nizovkin's apartment took on a new feature, soon to be typical of metalworkers' circles. Important as were books to the weavers, they never became the major focus of their circle activities. Moreover, weavers generally relied on the students to provide the books and read to them aloud. For the metalworkers, by contrast, books assumed a special life of their own, so much so that the hallmark of their circles became the jealously guarded secret workers' library.

Although it became a workers' institution, however, we must credit Nizovkin with putting the library on the metalworkers' agenda. To be sure, libraries were "in the air." Patronnyi workers

knew of the libraries at the factory, and the *lack* of libraries at IRTO schools was a common complaint, perhaps nourishing the workers' hunger for books. Yet the cue came from the student Nizovkin, who began a society to provide workers with books "of a tendentious character."<sup>38</sup> This he did with another student, Anatolii Serdiukov, who presented the plan to Obnorskii and Vinogradov. Leaving town for the summer, Serdiukov had entrusted his worker-housemates with the care of his library, now defined as a library for workers. Nizovkin, the workers' adviser on library matters, wanted the holdings enriched, and to pay for new books he proposed that each member contribute 2 percent of his earnings, a plan that was well received by the workers. In effect, the metalworkers became full, active participants in the library, not just passive recipients. Thus was born the communal treasury (*kassa*), the first known instance of Petersburg workers systematically sharing financial assets in a common political cause. Obnorskii was made the first treasurer (*kassir*), but Nizovkin was named librarian, leaving an *intelligent* still in control of choosing the books. It was a workers' library, then, but still not quite a purely workers' organization.<sup>39</sup>

Complications began when Nizovkin's circle began to expand its ties to the chaikovtsy. The line between the circle of chaikovtsy and the metalworkers' other tutors (some were chaikovtsy themselves) was fuzzy. In 1872 Nizovkin still had ties to the chaikovtsy, and in early 1873 he even solicited their assistance. Among those who complied was Kravchinskii, whose artillery-officer past made him a likely choice for successful interaction with workers from Patronnyi zavod and the Arsenal. Nizovkin arranged for him to meet with the workers, and through him they then met other chaikovtsy: Vinogradov met Charushin and Nadezhda Kupreianova, one of the chaikovtsy women, and for a time Vinogradov and Kupreianova lived in one house; Obnorskii met Nikolai Chaikovskii, a founder of the circle; Mitrofanov and Vinogradov met the soon-to-be famous Petr Kropotkin, also a former army officer, who lived with Dmitrii Klements and Kravchinskii; some metalworkers met Dmitrii Rogachev.<sup>40</sup>

Although metalworkers thus became involved in the chaikovtsy's network, their relations were shaky. When the student Aleksandr Levashev attended a workers' meeting at Vinogradov's, for example, workers told him he was not welcome, and he was never again seen in their company. But their anger was not directed at

Levashev. Rather, it reflected the workers' willful decision to exclude from their meetings anyone, to quote Mitrofanov, "not of their milieu," anyone who did not live with them or bring them direct benefit. Though this formula did not necessarily ban all students—Nizovkin, though "not of their milieu," kept attending—it was a first sign of schism between metalworkers and intelligenty.

In explaining this schism, both contemporary accounts and memoirs have focused on the rift between Nizovkin and the chaikovtsy, with Nizovkin in the role of a pied piper who vengefully led the workers away from other students. This view, which is not without merit, gained credence from the way Nizovkin, in a "mania of betrayal," would turn against his comrades after his arrest. Later, this explanation was echoed by historians, whose analysis ingeniously combined Nizovkin's base character with the idea that the peasant or populist orientation of chaikovskii ideology was rejected by "advanced" metalworkers.<sup>41</sup>

In fact there is little reason to believe that metalworkers had developed a fundamental critique of the chaikovtsy's ideology, especially since Nizovkin's message was as "populist" as theirs. Nor is there evidence of a fundamental ideological difference between metalworkers and the supposedly less "advanced" textile workers who belonged to circles at that time. That Nizovkin was successful in fueling the tension between metalworkers and students is, however, undeniable. His popularity among workers was great, and even the students who disdained him admitted that his meetings with workers were effective.<sup>42</sup> After taking workers from Korneev, he met with them daily, set up their kassa, selected their books. At the time of their contacts with chaikovtsy, he still remained the workers' main student adviser. To goad them into pondering their relations with chaikovtsy and the problems of their "daily life" (*byt*), he got them to hold bigger meetings (*skhodki*), to which he was welcomed even though chaikovtsy were banned. And he paid personal visits to workers, sometimes escorted by Vinogradov.<sup>43</sup>

Not that Nizovkin's influence went unchallenged. The very success of the circle, its growth and division into branches, produced a loosening of his grip on the metalworkers. By the same token, the proliferation of circles allowed certain students to interact with workers beyond his field of vision.

An important new circle, begun in March 1873, was spawned by the opening on V.O. of new branches of the Patronnyi zavod. Obnorskii and other members of Nizovkin's old circle found good jobs at the new branches and, to reduce the distance between home and work, moved from the Vyborg Side to apartments on V.O. Obnorskii and others rented a flat near the tool-making branch, where they now worked, and Peterson and other Patronnyi workers moved to the same area. Whether or not Obnorskii and his friends had planned from the start to turn their V.O. apartments into a new workers' circle, separate from its parent group, that is what took place, due in large part to the arrival on the scene of a new member, the machinist Semen Volkov.

If Obnorskii was the group's most visible leader and Orlov its most educated, Volkov, whose learning and other "student" traits exceeded Obnorskii's and matched Orlov's, was the most politically experienced. Born in a Simbirsk village in 1845, Volkov, having learned to read from a village deacon, then went through a period of "self-education." While working at a Simbirsk textile mill, at age 17, so he said, he began studying the "labor question" (*rabochii vopros*), but finding work at the mill unfulfilling, he soon moved on to a foundry. In 1863 he went to Kazan, where an exiled *intelligent* recruited him and seven other workers into a "Society for the Propaganda of Collective Ideas" (*Obshchestvo propagandy kollektivnykh idei*).<sup>44</sup>

In 1870–71 Volkov went to Saratov to spread his "social[ist] ideas." Later he moved to Moscow, where he worked for the Moscow-Petersburg railroad. In 1873 he transferred to the railroad's St. Petersburg depot, and thence to a factory in the city's Petersburg District. Later still, at the Patronnyi zavod's tool-making branch, he met some "intellectual workers—the best of the Petersburg workers" (*intelligentnye rabochie—tsvet peterskikh rabochikh*).<sup>45</sup> This was of course the metalworkers' circle, where Volkov's prior exposure to radical ideas won him immediate respect and recognition. He was soon given an important role in the library kassa.

Among his new acquaintances, Volkov's closest comrade was Dmitrii Smirnov, who had come to Petersburg in 1861 at age 13. Born in a Kostroma village, Smirnov had learned to read at home. In St. Petersburg he worked in various workshops and factories, including the Vyborg Side branch of Patronnyi zavod. Later he transferred to

the tool-making branch, where he met Vinogradov, Obnorskii, and company, and, through them, some of the students. By years of residence the most "urban" worker in the group, Smirnov was hardly the most educated. He had attended no school, which may explain his desire to take classes at the Patronnyi zavod. Whatever his educational deficit, he quickly occupied a prominent place in the group. Volkov and Peterson became his housemates.<sup>46</sup>

The favorite gathering place of these workers was the Petushok tavern. Unlike the taverns where the weavers met with students, Petushok (the Cockerel) was a true "workers' club," where workers gathered in a billiard room, at times talking politics. Some weeks after Smirnov joined the circle, twenty members, including Smirnov and Volkov, gathered in a room above the tavern and, with no students present, resolved to take responsibility for the self-education of their own members and to form their own library and mutual aid fund (*kassa vzaimopomoshchi*).<sup>47</sup>

Though to some degree surely a gesture of independence from intelligentsia tutelage, this plan was not conceived as a thoroughgoing revolt against Nizovkin or a rejection of the old library. Nevertheless, it had two novel and striking aspects: an emphasis on *self*-education, suggesting a wish to reduce reliance on students; and the introduction of mutual aid, which may have been Volkov's idea but was also linked to similar efforts recently promoted by the director of the tool-making factory himself. It is revealing that, after Smirnov spoke up for the new plan, other workers argued against it on the grounds that a mutual aid fund and a library already existed at "our factory." Smirnov responded that the factory library was weak and that it was hard to borrow from the factory fund. This argument, coming just at a time when the metalworkers' urge to localize their efforts and form their own propaganda centers was growing, easily won the day. In Smirnov's words, "Life itself pushed us in that direction."<sup>48</sup>

After the new organizational scheme was accepted, Smirnov was elected treasurer and Volkov was named librarian, the first worker to hold that post. Dues were set at a ruble a month. It was all done "swiftly and smoothly," after which the elated crowd went downstairs to the tavern to "wash down" their success. Though it was never said explicitly, and students were still not formally banned, the metalworkers had just created Russia's first political organization that was not just *for* workers but *by* them.<sup>49</sup>

The Vyborg Side library remained in Nizovkin's flat (Vinogradov replaced Obnorskii as treasurer), but its importance was eclipsed by the new one on V.O. Two more library branches were opened—one in Kolpino, one in the Nevskii region. The latter reflected the birth of new metalworkers' circles at the Nevskii plant, thanks to workers who had moved there from V.O.: Ignatii Bachin, Mikhail Orlov, and the "muzhik" Grigorii Shcheglov, who, though poorly educated, enjoyed the company of students. Nizovkin's absence from the city had facilitated the founding of new branches, something he strongly opposed. Workers moved many of his books to the Nevskii region, turning the homes of local workers into book repositories. Other workers became the treasurers, but Orlov was the true leader of the Nevskii branch. Although the branch was short-lived (it fell victim to a treasurer's weakness for drink and its funds were "dissipated" [*rastracheny*, as Vinogradov put it]), while it lasted, it was a locus of intense activity.<sup>50</sup>

Among the libraries, only the one on the Vyborg Side still remained under direct control of students, mainly Nizovkin. The one in the Nevskii region occupied an intermediary position: students still played influential but nondominant roles; there were no serious conflicts there, though workers expressed discontent with some students. The V.O. branch, by contrast, was now clearly dominated by workers; some students hovered around it, but even Nizovkin was reduced to a secondary role. It was here that the sharpest conflicts between workers and students would arise.

### THE STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE OF VICTOR OBNORSKII

To the extent that the 1873 rupture between metalworkers of the V.O. circle and intelligentsy was precipitated by one event, it was Obnorskii's departure from St. Petersburg. Both the departure as such and its manner, laden with negative symbolic meaning for Obnorskii's worker-comrades, would become a metaphor for broader problems in the workers' relations with students. The trouble began sometime in August, when the student Aleksandr Lisovskii planned a trip to Moscow and Odessa to explore the recruitment of new workers, part of a broader plan by the students to spread their radi-

cal political message to provincial centers. Wishing to travel with a worker, Lisovskii invited Obnorskii, one of his first pupils and closest associates. Obnorskii readily agreed, but without telling other workers, not even his closest friends.<sup>51</sup> Nor were workers forewarned by the students of the impending removal from their midst of a much beloved comrade, the treasurer of their first library, the man who had recruited many of them to circle life.

Moreover, this incident took place at a time when Obnorskii had already shown signs of drift from his worker-comrades. Recently, he had been spending a good deal of his time in the Nevskii region, in the company of students and the most “student-like” (*studentcheskie*) workers—Orlov and Vinogradov.<sup>52</sup> Orlov himself had quit his factory job by then and, under the wing of students, was preparing himself for a new social role, that of village teacher (*sel'skii uchitel'*), normally a position for young intelligenty. In the eyes of some workers, both he and Obnorskii were now perilously close to transforming themselves into “students.” The common observation that a certain metalworker was able to pass for a student was taking on a new and more ominous meaning.

The official indictment for the famous “Trial of 193” (1877–78) cites only three workers as full members of the chaikovskii circle—Obnorskii, Orlov, and Lavrov.<sup>53</sup> Strictly speaking, even this was wrong, for while no ban on workers was ever formalized, no worker was ever granted full membership in that circle; however much it valued workers, the circle consisted of intelligentsia only and often held meetings to which only students were invited. (Obnorskii himself flatly denied that he ever belonged.)<sup>54</sup> Indeed, so wary were chaikovtsy of the notion of full worker members, that when a member did nominate a worker on one occasion, it seemed like a “revolution.” All but two of the students present rejected the proposal.<sup>55</sup>

Yet if the official indictment was wrong, the error was a fair reflection of the special status that students accorded to these three workers, the very same men who were cited by Shishko as typifying the “very developed” metalworker.<sup>56</sup> In this respect, the issue of form of “address” (*obrashchenie*) could be revealing. We have few clues as to how students, who, however radical, were part of the educated elite, and workers, who, however urbanized, were often “yesterday’s serfs,” spoke to each other. Among themselves, peasants and workers were *na ty*, the familiar form of “you,” and it is likely that stu-

dents, so intimately linked to one another by friendship, love, and experience that they resembled a religious order, spoke “na ty” as well. But what of modes of address across the social divide? Did egalitarian principles, shared beliefs, and similar age take everyone “down” to a comradely *ty* or “up” to a mutually respectful *vy*?

A rare piece of evidence comes from Mitrofanov, who attested that Orlov was “na ty” with students. This was repeated in the 1877 indictment: “Orlov’s relations with the main members of the circle of ‘chaikovtsy’ were so close that he was even ‘na ty’ with Kropotkin.”<sup>57</sup> This testimony is supplemented by Lev Tikhomirov’s recollection that workers were proud to count a prince (Kropotkin) as their comrade, while Kropotkin was gratified by his friendship with these virtuous plebians,<sup>58</sup> which suggests a close but rather awkward, nonharmonious personal relationship, one that was touched by class anxiety despite the presumed hostility on both sides to class privilege. Whatever the bonding power of egalitarian ideology, the evidence (admittedly thin) hints at a continued social distance, mixed with a forced rather than an easy intimacy. If so, Orlov’s regular use of familiar speech with the “prince” may have entailed a distancing from his more socially inhibited comrades.

Obnorskii’s disappearance was one of the forms such distancing could take if a “developed” worker clung too closely to students, or so it seemed to his comrades as time went by. For weeks they had no word from him; then came a message, a plea for money, directed not to them, however, but to intelligenty, “people of intellect” (*liudi intellekta*)—that is, the students.<sup>59</sup> Yet injured though they were, it was the workers who made a collection, sending Obnorskii an ample sum. This loyalty produced no response, however, leading his disappointed comrades to a sad conclusion: “he has left us behind” (*on ot nas otstal*).<sup>60</sup> Vinogradov’s pained explanation of Obnorskii’s strange conduct: “I guess he went away because the chaikovtsy sent him after something, since . . . before he left he had grown very close to Klements, Levashev and others.”<sup>61</sup> (Recall that Levashev is the student who was expelled from the workers’ meeting.) Vinogradov’s words suggested that workers who grew too close to students risked alienation from their comrades. As Nizovkin’s housemate, himself one of the most “student-like” of all the workers, Vinogradov must have understood this very well.

Another Petersburg *intelligent* to whom Obnorskii had “grown close,” A. Blummer, former student at the Technological Institute and former supervisor at a metal works, was one of the “people of intellect” from whom Obnorskii urgently requested money.<sup>62</sup> Although they had known each other but a few months, Blummer found much to admire in this “highly developed and intellectual” (*ochen’ razvityi i intelligentnyi*) worker. As Blummer later told police, his wife too was extremely fond of Obnorskii and wished him to be godfather to their children. Blummer’s testimony about Obnorskii’s visits to his home was somewhat enigmatic: “In my presence he was rarely at my home” (*Pri mne on byval u menia redko*), implying that the worker would visit Blummer’s home in his absence.<sup>63</sup> This is not to suggest that Obnorskii’s relations with Mme Blummer exceeded the proper bounds of a political friendship, but in the eyes of his comrades such intimacy with an intelligentsia couple on the eve of his departure could only have added to suspicions of betrayal.

After some time, Vinogradov finally heard from Obnorskii directly, while Smirnov heard from Obnorskii’s old housemate, P. Kudrov, a worker who had gone off to Kiev under conditions that resembled Obnorskii’s. Kudrov’s letter informed Smirnov that “Viktor o. [*sic*] is living in odesa [*sic*],” and that Kudrov had written to him, but to no avail.<sup>64</sup> In fact, we know that by then Obnorskii had shipped out from Odessa on a steamship as a “greaser” (*smazchik*) and sailed to Western Europe. Months later, however, his friends were still in the dark, speculating that he had either gone abroad (true) or (wishful thinking?) run afoul of the students, toward whom, a police report noted, the workers “are now unfriendly” (*nedruzhe-liubno otnosiatsia*).<sup>65</sup>

As noted, Orlov too was identifying more and more with students. Though still a worker in the eyes of his peers, by late 1873 this well-read “peasant” spoke familiarly with Kropotkin and interacted on a near equal footing—even more so than Obnorskii—with other intelligentsia. He lived with Kravchinskii and Klements and was later invited to share the flat of a former officer, Aleksandr Iartsev, a noble landowner from his home area. When he lost his factory office job, Orlov worked briefly as a foundry worker, but thereafter, except for his role as intermediary between workers and students, there was little to distinguish him from a *raznochinets-intelligent* (an *intelligent* of plebian origin). So close did he come to full immersion in the role

of *intelligent* that, as noted above, he chose his own path to the narod by becoming a village teacher. Helping him study for a teacher's license, students gave him money and took him to Finland to consult with the radical writer N. Bervi-Flerovskii.<sup>66</sup> His plan to become a village teacher, however, was aborted by his arrest.

We should not view Orlov's desire to return to the village as the repentance of an errant peasant. On the contrary, his aim, as seen in a letter he wrote his peasant brother, was to shed his peasant skin, not reclaim it. After chiding his brother for asking him for money (but enclosing 15 rubles!), Orlov wrote: "I've already told you more than once, I'm no longer a village worker, I'm no longer a peasant, and it's not because I don't love them [peasants], but because to be a peasant is no longer possible [for me]." Why no longer possible? Orlov's first explanation—high taxes, bad harvests—is presented as of relatively minor importance. The major answer to the question ("What is it that prevents me from being a peasant for a few more years?") was his "love of learning [*nauka*], which I've come to love more than anything else on earth. I curse all the days I lived in darkness, without knowledge or [fulfilling] work."<sup>67</sup>

In a sense, Orlov's words are a dialogue between two selves (or self-understandings): a former peasant still straining to justify his desertion of the village and an urban youth who has drunk deeply from the cup of knowledge.<sup>68</sup> Although he found his second self while passing through the channel of factory life, he barely mentions his factory experience. This, then, is the voice of a budding *intelligent*, as he begins his personal "movement to the people."

Aleksei Lavrov was another metalworker with special, very close ties to students. Like Orlov, he moved in and out of factories, even sampling jobs away from industrial neighborhoods. After living with Orlov in the Nevskii region, he moved to Haymarket Square and was often seen in the company of students. His arrest was apparently due to his contacts with the *intelligent* Iartsev, once a repentant nobleman, but by now a *repentant* repentant nobleman.<sup>69</sup> Lavrov's intimacy with students and the circumstance of his arrest made it plausible for workers, as they reappraised their relations with intelligenty, to link his fate with Orlov's and conflate the "loss" of both with that of Obnorskii.

Yet we must not ignore the singular aspects of each case. Whereas Orlov was about to break with his fellow workers, Lavrov

had begun to reverse himself: he was again a member of a workers' circle, now distancing himself from students. Shortly before his arrest he was named treasurer of the reorganized mutual aid fund.<sup>70</sup> Thus his path was less like Orlov's than like Vinogradov's, also a "student-like" worker, but one whose attraction to students was overshadowed by his commitment to his worker comrades.

### THE END OF THE FIRST CIRCLES

With these cases in mind, we can now pick up the trail of the V.O. metalworkers in late 1873 and observe the interplay between their quest for autonomy, their anxiety about the "loss" of their comrades, and Nizovkin's maneuvers on the eve of the arrest of most participants. We must surely reject the claim that Nizovkin's success with workers was based on his caution and moderation, a self-serving image he tried to project *after* his arrest. An account of his credo recorded *before* his arrest reveals his far from moderate goal: "to destroy everyone who lives at the expense of the people." When, after Nizovkin made a bloodcurdling call to arms, a worker asked him if he was serious about his advocacy of mass killings, he replied: "Of course, that goes without saying."<sup>71</sup> The effectiveness of his campaign to alienate workers from (other) students was based not on ideological polarities, but on his ability to capitalize on the painful dynamics of worker-student relations. He was able to exploit the conflict between the workers' quest for autonomy from the very intelligency they admired, emulated, and sometimes even wished to become and the students' reluctance to let go of the precious gems they had so painstakingly carved from the rough. The tension generated by the workers' loss of their comrades was both cause and consequence of this conflict, and Nizovkin spared no effort to heighten their sense of injury, linking each "loss" to every other and to the perils of cross-social fraternization. The timing was important. His call for a separate workers' "party," like Levashev's ejection from the meeting, came soon *after* Obnorskii's departure. And once the workers had begun to meet without the students, it was easier for Nizovkin, who was exempted from the ban, to play on and with their feelings.

The metalworkers' boldest move toward autonomy was at the large gathering (*skhodka*) of 31 December 1873, a meeting of thirty men held between Orlov's arrest and that of Lavrov. Apart from size, what made this a *skhodka*, a sort of mini-congress, was the presence of delegates from several parts of town. The meeting resolved to split the old *kassa* in two, one part designated for the library, the other for mutual aid, and to turn the mutual aid part into a "resistance fund" (*kassa protivodeistviia*) for helping families of imprisoned workers, a response to some recent arrests. Each member would donate a day's pay as initiation fee, and thereafter 1 percent of his earnings. Another novelty was a proviso that the money could be used to aid the unemployed. New elections were held, and though Nizovkin was present (apparently the only *intelligent*), all the new officers were workers. Volkov now became the library's treasurer and Smirnov became librarian. A new post, treasurer of the resistance fund, went to Lavrov, marking his return to the fold.<sup>72</sup>

Between the December meeting and the following March, there were a few more gatherings, where, after Lavrov's arrest, discussion was mainly about relations with students. Despite more calls for full independence, workers continued to allow Nizovkin to attend, thanks in part to his friendship with Vinogradov (who only later accused him of using the meetings to incite workers against students). Nizovkin himself asked workers to end their ties with (other) students, who produce "more noise than action." To underline the "harmful" consequences of closeness to students, he harped on the arrests and on Obnorskii's "estrangement" (*otchuzhdenie*). Though a few other students attended some of the meetings, Nizovkin's special status was highlighted by Vinogradov, who distinguished him from other students by calling him "one of us" (*iz nashikh*).<sup>73</sup>

The last and largest assembly was convened on 3 March 1874 in the Narvskaiia District, at an apartment located on Izmailovskii polk. It included most of the familiar metalworkers, Nizovkin, two other students, some metalworkers who had never attended before, and, for the first time, a tiny group of weavers. Notable among the weavers was the host of the gathering, Petr Alekseev.<sup>74</sup> Although "kassy" was the planned topic, Nizovkin, pressing for discussion of relations with students, opened debate with an accusatory query to metalworker Ignatii Bachin, who was still close to some *chaikovtsy*.<sup>75</sup> No blind follower of *intelligenty*, Bachin had even denounced the

students: they were fine, he once said, for getting books, but when they spoke nonsense, workers ought to hit them. Once he even rebuked Kropotkin for inflammatory language, warning his fellow workers to beware of “educated people.”<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, Nizovkin grilled Bachin on his dealings with students, specifically Klements. Bachin denied that he and Klements had any special relations or secrets but conceded that Klements had slept at his home and brought him books. Assuming the tone of a prosecutor, Nizovkin countered that Bachin’s relations with Klements could not have been so limited.

At this point another worker rose to Bachin’s defense. Pointing an accusatory finger at Nizovkin, he revealed that the worker Lavrov had placed Nizovkin on a list of bad people and had reproved him for conduct ill becoming an “advanced” (*peredovoi*) person. Workers were apparently echoing the intelligentsia’s emphasis on moral conduct as a measure of political virtue.

Nizovkin’s defensive and confused response betrayed his fear that such negative opinion of him might be widespread:

Tell me please, gentlemen, did I ever say that you [workers] aren’t in sympathy with me, that you don’t respect me? . . . I belong to you all, from which it follows directly that I (meaning my personality) stay in the background, whereas for Klements and all the chaikovtsy . . . the individual ego [*lichnoe ia*] stays in the foreground.

His words may have been effective, for when discussion resumed, a motion by Nizovkin, Vinogradov, and Peterson calling on workers to break with the chaikovtsy, the main group of students, passed unanimously.<sup>77</sup>

Two weeks later, gendarmes broke up the last of the circles. Their searches yielded political literature, letters, kassa accounts, and a coded record book. Though some arrested workers were quite cagey, with time a small number revealed quite a lot to the police. Much information came from Mitrofanov, who spoke openly about his comrades and told of students who befriended workers to turn them against the state. Soon, other workers began to crack, even Vinogradov, so police were well informed even before Nizovkin started talking.<sup>78</sup> Before long, little was left of the workers’ circles of the early 1870s.

### REVIVAL: THE NORTHERN UNION

Four years later a new organization, the Northern Union of Russian Workers (Severnyi Soiuz Russkikh Rabochikh), arose from the ashes of the old. While it resembled its forerunners, there were differences, some a direct result of the painful experience of the first circles, whose survivors still bore the scars of their vexed relations with students. Although it echoed past practices, the Union's solution to the problem of how to mix workers with students organizationally was now much neater: regroup them in an exclusive workers' brotherhood, ban *all* intelligentsia from membership, and *then* deal with students as equals, from a position of strength. Far from being self-evident, however, this solution was three years in the making (1875–78).

Obnorskii's influence on this process was great. It was as if his special situation, as a worker whose closeness to intelligenty had estranged him from his comrades, prepared him to be their leader when he returned to them from his self-imposed exile in Geneva. By the time he reached St. Petersburg in late 1875, the survivors of the early circles who had been released from jail had begun to regroup. To some extent they were again aided by students, including a new acquaintance, Georgii Plekhanov.

Plekhanov's famous memoir of the 1870s (written in 1892) betrays a near obsession with the workers who entered his life at that time, and particularly a fixation on the perceived resemblance, in both mental development and physical appearance, between workers and students (a preoccupation shared by other intelligenty as well).<sup>79</sup> The first "developed" worker he met was Mitrofanov, who in 1872, it will be recalled, together with Obnorskii and the student Lisovskii, had organized a cobbler shop where students taught workers how to think like students and workers taught students how to pass for workers. Mitrofanov, who magically turned students into workers, was also known for his ability to pass for a student himself (a skill he perfected after his early release from jail in 1874).<sup>80</sup> Not long thereafter he was again visiting secret circles, evading police, and meeting with students. These included young Plekhanov, who was then a "people-lover" (*narodoliubets*, an early synonym for *narodnik*?), hoping for yet another movement "to the people"

(though he admits in his memoir that, while loving the people, “I knew them very little, or more accurately, not at all”). Meeting Mitrofanov, a worker who was truly “of the people,” filled Plekhanov with a mixed feeling of “pity and awkwardness,” one that would not be unfamiliar to a student of race relations in America today. How to talk to him? Plekhanov feared that a student’s way of talking would be “completely incomprehensible to this ‘son of the people.’” To his relief, however, Plekhanov saw that this worker was well read, even conversant with radical thinkers—Chernyshevskii, Bakunin. The two young men had much to discuss. And if the worker’s “personality” (*lichnost’*) did not match Plekhanov’s “sentimental conception of the narod,” that just made him all the more interesting.<sup>81</sup>

Still other workers caught Plekhanov’s eye by virtue of their student-like looks and ways. Here he depicts a certain Gorodnichii, who read every night until 1 a.m. to satisfy a “craving for knowledge”: “weak-chested and pale, beardless, with a thin little mustache, he had long hair and wore dark blue spectacles”; he lived like a student (*po-studencheski*), in a tiny room, with a table “piled with books”; when on a cold day he wrapped himself up in a rug, he even looked like a student (a Raskolnikov?). So great was Gorodnichii’s love of books that Plekhanov even doubted his revolutionary fervor.<sup>82</sup>

The more contact he had with well-read, student-like workers, the more fixated Plekhanov was on their distance from the simple peasants whom he still revered and the thinness of the line between them and students like himself; he claimed to have noticed that some workers lived no worse than students, which evidently disturbed him. Among such “well-to-do” workers he named Smirnov and Volkov, whose book-filled room was “beautiful”; they dressed like “true dandies” (*franty*), better than students, who upbraided them for their “bourgeois attraction to dandyism.”<sup>83</sup> As Plekhanov knew, of course, one reason workers dressed better than students was that students, with their “democratic” dress code of studied negligence (“ascetic socialism”), deliberately dressed down to affect a plebian look. While workers projected themselves *po-studencheski*, students were no less eager to project themselves *po-demokraticheski*—that is, sloppily. Workers, by contrast, abhorring their greasy work clothes, preferred to dress up during their leisure time. Both groups used dress as a protest; neither was quite comfortable doing so.<sup>84</sup>

The core group of workers with whom Plekhanov interacted, and whose “civilized ways” (*kul'turnost'*) he eventually came to value, mainly veterans of the V.O. circle, were the future members of the Northern Union. But if Plekhanov and other members of his new populist organization, Land and Liberty (*Zemlia i volia*), prized the workers' cultivation, that esteem was in a state of tension with their desire to find in workers those traits that were believed to constitute the *narod's* special, natural virtue. In a sense, students put a double burden on these workers, praising them for their intellect and culture, yet wishing them to be true to their village roots, the intelligentsia's uncorrupted link to the *narod*. Land and Liberty wanted workers to settle among peasants without drawing the attention of the authorities. If in 1892 Plekhanov, now a Marxist looking back, demeaned Mitrofanov's devotion to the village, in 1876 it was just that devotion that he valued.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, he had hoped to woo all kinds of workers. So while favoring Mitrofanov's peasantism, Plekhanov still courted the handful of citified workers who, like Bachin, were starting to toy with the idea that their country cousins were beyond repair.<sup>86</sup>

Plekhanov's first exposure to a large gathering of workers was in his own flat. His memoir stresses the meeting's openness, with discussions merging into a “general debate.” Although students arrived first, there was equality of opportunity to speak. Plekhanov of course describes the meeting ideologically, implausibly casting most students as *buntari* (Bakuninite advocates of violent revolt), most workers (but not Mitrofanov) as *lavristy* (followers of Petr Lavrov's more gradualist, education-centered program). (Plekhanov also hints that many of the workers—though surely Russia's most well read—failed to grasp the finer points of these debates.) Among the workers who defended education, he cites Volkov, whose words suggest that sensitivity to social identity and relations with intelligenty may have underpinned the “ideological” issues:

You should really be ashamed . . . every one of you intelligenty has studied in five schools, bathed yourself seven times over [*v semi vodakh myli*], while there isn't a worker [here] who has even seen a school door open! You people don't need to study any more, you already have so much knowledge, but workers can't get by without it.<sup>87</sup>

None of this was full rejection of student help. The evening ended in compromise, leaving room for both buntari and lavristy, and agreement was followed by "light drinking" and song. Plekhanov's respect for "developed" workers, comrades who had suffered "for the cause," continued to grow; he could now speak openly with them, as if they were his "student friends."<sup>88</sup>

As worker-student contacts intensified, a version of the old Patronnyi circle was reconstituted. Plekhanov now made the workers' cause (*rabochee delo*) his own, though his goal, paradoxically, was to prepare workers to quit their factories and bring a populist world view back to their villages. Meanwhile, the number of circles grew, and though some were loosely guided by intelligence from afar, the workers had great leeway, often reacting to cues from the fiercely independent workers' circle on V.O. Students now performed mainly auxiliary tasks: locating lodgings, providing literature, giving some instruction. Because of past betrayals to the police, membership lists were now kept secret.<sup>89</sup>

Late in 1876, on the occasion of the burial of a student who had died in prison, radical students discovered a new stratagem: the open-air demonstration. Workers were completely absent (Plekhanov admits that organizers forgot about them), but some soon responded with the idea of a demonstration of their own, though with student cooperation. The result, following much negotiation with Plekhanov and other students, was the famous Kazan Square demonstration of December 1876.<sup>90</sup> Whether it should truly be called a workers' demonstration is open to debate, but some 200 workers may have taken part, and one of them, a weaver, waved a red banner above the crowd. Of the Patronnyi workers, reputedly the city's most "advanced," we know with certainty of only one who was arrested at the scene.<sup>91</sup> Students did urge workers to attend their later demonstrations, including one at the burial of the poet Nikolai Nekrasov, where a worker told the crowd: "No grass will grow on the people's path to the grave of their beloved poet."<sup>92</sup>

In 1877–78, workers who were the embryo of the Northern Union, which was still in gestation, extended their contacts to some new students, among them followers of Petr Lavrov. Some medical students with vaguely Marxist ideas also contacted some of the workers,<sup>93</sup> including the metalworker Stepan Khalturin, soon to become a leader of the Union. Though only 21, Khalturin was already known

in workers' circles and had ties with some students. Educated at a Viatka zemstvo school, in early 1875 he moved to St. Petersburg, where he found employment through a chance meeting with a former teacher, who introduced him to other intelligenty, to whom he then related socially. Since his first factory job came only in 1876, we are not amiss if we think of "worker" Khalturin as a *raznochinets-intelligent*, at least until then. Had he continued his formal education, like a close childhood friend from his village who joined him in the capital but then took the path of higher education, we would be discussing Khalturin the "student," not the "worker."<sup>94</sup> But once nudged into worker circles by intelligenty, Khalturin *became* a worker. He soon came under the spell of Obnorskii and other metalworkers who, taken by his intellect, asked him to run their library.

In 1877–78, now identifying himself as a worker, Khalturin started chiding students, whose dedication he began to doubt: "I know what your radicalism is worth," he told them:

As long as you're in school, you're all fierce revolutionaries, but as soon as you graduate and find a nice little job, why your revolutionary mood vanishes as if by magic! . . . I've seen how [students] work. . . . They sit at a lecture for a couple of hours, read a book for another hour or so, and then they're ready to go visit someone, drink tea, and talk and talk!<sup>95</sup>

Conversely, Khalturin praised workers so warmly, defending them from the taunts of students, that Kravchinskii later spoke of his "class exclusiveness."<sup>96</sup> His tender care for uneducated workers reminded Plekhanov of a "solicitous nurse" (*zabotlivaia nian'ka*).

And yet, as much as any other worker, Khalturin kept meeting with students socially, seemingly as an equal, speaking with them "na ty." He displayed a special closeness to a medical student, Nikolai Sergeevich Rusanov, advising "Sergeich" to learn from the *narod*.<sup>97</sup> As this advice suggests, such tight relations were emotionally complex, and the complexities need to be understood if we are to grasp the powerful desire for a pure workers' organization, cleansed of students, away from their earnest gaze. Note that the fascination with which Plekhanov observed Mitrofanov also focused on Khalturin. Years later, Plekhanov could still conjure up Khalturin's "well-proportioned," "very handsome" looks; to Plekhanov, he was the proletarian's proletarian. Yet Plekhanov wistfully recalls

the young man's shyness and "almost feminine softness," his smile that was not that of a worker. And in this case, a worker's appearance confuted Plekhanov's expectations not because the worker dressed like a "dandy" but because, on the contrary, his indifference to dress was "worthy of an 'intelligentsia' nihilist."<sup>98</sup>

Students, then, had conflicting, highly charged expectations of Russian workers. A worker could be valued (or devalued) for being rough, peasant-like, even primitive; he could also be refined, educated, urbane, even well-dressed, and for better or worse; or he could be city-like and educated, yet look like an unkempt nihilist. And still another (admirable?) variant now appeared: he could have the appearance of a European worker, perhaps an educated Parisian worker from Belleville, as the student Stepan Shiriaev depicted Khalturin. Or Lev Deich's depiction of Obnorskii: "nothing in his appearance distinguished him from an advanced European worker." Russian émigrés treasured Obnorskii, the first Russian worker they had seen, wrote Deich, and an unusual "specimen" (*ekzempliar*).<sup>99</sup>

Rusanov too was fascinated by Khalturin, his "expressive face," bobbed haircut, trimmed mustache, strong callused hands, and regional accent. Yet if hair, hand, and tongue revealed a peasant, Khalturin's reading habits were like a student's. Rusanov observed the worker sitting in his barren room, poring over "thick journals," over complex articles on economic themes. A role reversal occurred when Khalturin, who wished Rusanov to learn from the narod, urged the politically still untutored *intelligent* to study those articles until he had learned enough from them to write a serious paper that would win the worker's approval. Khalturin, Plekhanov recalled, read more widely than most intelligently.<sup>100</sup>

While condescension typified some students' approach to workers, humility and self-deprecation were also present. When paralyzed by depression, Rusanov saw his "worker-friends" (*priviateli-rabochie*) as models of tenacity, while branding himself a neurotic child. In this case, even city-country polarity was reversed: guilt-ridden Rusanov assumed the identity of country bumpkin, while a worker played the urban sophisticate. And Rusanov, ashamed that his studies were funded by his exploiter father, decided to quit medical school, abandon the "well-fed" (*sytye*) for the "hungry," live with workers as an equal, experience their pains and pleasures. To him this casting off of the "bondage" of privilege was

a leap of faith, replete with evangelical feeling. With false papers, student Nikolai Rusanov, son of a capitalist, became common laborer (*chernorabochii*) Ivan Bogoslavskii, son of a deacon. In this climate of fluid, crossover identities, a worker could become an *intelligent*, and it seemed that an *intelligent* could become a worker.

But it did not work. After moving in with metalworkers, Rusanov-Bogoslavskii was unhappy to find that his life was still easier than theirs. He tried to share the housework (preparing the samovar!) but soon found himself reverting to a student's tutelary role—reading to the workers, whose “rough but sincere kindness” (*grubovataia no iskrennaia laska*) warmed his heart. Eventually, fearing discovery by a gendarme who lived in their building, “our glorious fellows” made him move out.<sup>101</sup>

Khalturin's own identity remained labile, as witness his decision to withdraw his energies from the newborn Northern Union he had helped found and to join with the intelligentsy of the recently formed People's Will (*Narodnaia volia*) in their plot to kill the Tsar. In his memoir, Plekhanov strains to show that Khalturin's thinking was still consistent with the identity of worker: the worker acted on the belief that the Tsar's death would help the labor movement! What Plekhanov cannot get himself to concede is that Khalturin, like so many intelligentsy at this time, had really become a *narodovolets*, though one who refused, it is true, to jettison completely his precarious worker identity.

What was distinctive about the Northern Union, if viewed apart from its formal ideology? Its defining trait was insistence on autonomy from intelligentsy, a posture for which most members were prepared by the experience of several years. At the heart of the Union were men whose relations with students had been both close and difficult. Most were metalworkers, but besides noting the palpable presence of some textile workers, I would stress not the broad category “metalworker” as much as a narrower one: seasoned veterans of the *Patronnyi zavod* circles, those men who were dubbed “the flower” of Petersburg's politicized workers.<sup>102</sup> It was they (along with some new recruits) who infused the Union with its special character, traceable to their past ordeals.

Of course this earlier experience included not only the painful aspects of their relations with students, but also elements that they cherished and tried to preserve: the libraries and kassy; conspirato-

rial apartments, with their all-night discussions; a quest for learning, for nauka. Much of this they owed to the very students who so often gave them grief. Plekhanov recalls how the Union took pride in its library, "its most valued achievement"; if many of its books were bought by workers with their own savings, a symbol of independence, most were gifts from students, a reversion to earlier practices and an indication that separatism did not mean banishment. The gifts began to materialize even before the Union was formally founded, many of them donated under moral pressure from the workers, as Plekhanov implies when he tells us that "hardly a citizen of the 'intelligentsia' republic of Petropolis [Petersburg] was able to avoid the unexpected book tax [*knizhnyi nalog*]." Not surprisingly, the post of librarian remained crucial to the workers, and each of the Union's neighborhood branches filled the position with a trusted worker. The risks taken for books attested to the workers' continued passion for reading. Kassy were another echo of the past, though in contrast to 1872-74, when students provided some direct subsidies, kassy now relied entirely on the members. An important new feature, however, one that prefigured the future of the Petersburg labor movement, was the use of kassa funds to support strikes.<sup>103</sup>

The conspiratorial apartment, while continuing to serve the workers' practical needs, was also an institution with ritual functions, a space that separated "advanced" workers from both "backward" workers and "advanced" students. This does not mean all students were permanently excluded, but it was chosen (*self*-chosen, this time) worker-leaders who now directed their comings and goings. This was in contrast to earlier years, when, until the last weeks of the apartment's existence, students determined the terms of tenancy.

A new institution for workers was the Union's short-lived press. Earlier, a printing press was a highly prized but never fully achieved goal pursued only by the students, who did most of their printing abroad.<sup>104</sup> When in 1878 Land and Liberty acquired a secret press, the Northern Union longed to emulate it, to have a press of its own, both as a potent symbol of independence and as a useful tool. Paradoxically, however, workers again had to turn to intelligentsy to obtain an important emblem of their independence. Well before the Union had a written program, it sent Obnorskii back to Geneva for printing equipment, but also to obtain the editorial services of his

old Geneva acquaintance, Pavel Aksel'rod, an *intelligent* known to be sympathetic to workers. At least he was not a Petersburg student, many of whom, members of Land and Liberty in particular, had voiced serious doubts about some of the Union's ideas. Aksel'rod agreed to help and the workers agreed to fund his trip to Petersburg (another role reversal!). By the time he arrived, however, the Northern Union had been shattered by police, its leaders arrested.<sup>105</sup> It died as it had lived, in the midst of a difficult and unresolved relationship with intelligenty.

## CONCLUSION

The point of this inquiry has not been to call into question the ideological dimensions of worker-intelligentsia relations, but to shed light on another, neglected aspect of those relations—the personal, human, perhaps psychological side. Young workers who found themselves in the midst of the Petersburg world of radical students in the 1870s were faced with a profound challenge. Mainly peasants (by real origin and background, in most cases, and not just legal status), men who had entered the world as serfs, faced with the incredible hardship of a long, sometimes unbearably hard workday, yet tempted by the opportunity for education (from simple gramota to complex nauka), they had somehow to negotiate a relationship with young men of the same age but from a culturally privileged (if self-denying) elite social group, the “students.” Within the confines of these relationships, always in danger of arrest and imprisonment, the workers, with no prior role model to follow, had to choose, construct, or at least assume new social characters and characteristics, as reflected in dress (including social “cross-dressing”), speech, modes of sociability, and, ultimately, identity. This they did under the watchful and often critical eyes of the students, themselves uncertain of their own identities and of the identity—peasant, worker, or worker-*intelligent*—they wished upon the workers. The students were the people whom the workers most admired and often emulated, yet also resented and at times rejected. Inevitably, the character of the first workers' circles was shaped by these human experiences, both for better and for worse. The intelligenty could make the lives

of workers difficult, even miserable; at the same time they could greatly enrich them and enhance their self-respect; both processes nourished the desire for autonomy. In that sense, intelligently were right, if arrogant, to feel that they had brought the workers "light." The lives of Russian workers would never be the same.

### NOTES

1. See my "Populists and Workers: The First Encounter between Populist Students and Industrial Workers in St. Petersburg, 1871–74," *Soviet Studies* 24 (1972). My references to "students" below are to any radical youth with higher education, even if not enrolled in institutions of higher learning at the time. The "circle" in question was named for one of its members, Nikolai Chaikovskii (members were called *chaikovtsy*). Although Petersburg offers the richest, best documented, and most consequential story of worker-student relations in the 1870s, similar interaction, some of it also involving *chai kovtsy*, was taking place in Moscow, Odessa, and other towns. (See, for example, B. S. Itenberg, *Iuzhno-rossiiskii soiuz rabochikh: Vozniknovenie i deiatel'nost'* [Moscow, 1974], and, for a more general overview, B. S. Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva: Narodnicheskie kruzhki i "khozhdenie v narod" v 70-kh godakh XIX v.* [Moscow, 1965].) There were of course contacts between students and workers before the 1870s, most notably in the Sunday School movement of 1859–62, but, cut short by the police, they were discontinuous with contacts of the 1870s, the first to generate workers' circles, an institution that lasted over forty years.
2. Sergei Sinegub, "Vospominaniia chaikovtsa," *Byloe* 8 (1906): 50–53.
3. Cited in N. A. Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom* (Moscow, 1973), p. 352.
4. Based on Shabunin's recollections, in Charushin, p. 352.
5. Shabunin, in Charushin, p. 352; Sinegub, 8, p. 51.
6. Charushin, pp. 141, 352; Sinegub, 8, pp. 52–53; Archief "Narodnicheskoe dvizhenie" (hereafter cited as Archief ND), PSR collection (Amsterdam: International Institute for Social History), No. 827/3.
7. Based on Charushin, p. 141; Sinegub, 8, p. 79.
8. Lev Shishko: *Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii i Kruzhok Chaikovtsev* (St. Petersburg, 1906), pp. 22–23, and *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v shestidesiatykh i pervoi polovine semidesiatykh godov* (Moscow, 1921), pp. 83–84; Charushin, p. 142.
9. Shishko, *Kravchinskii*, pp. 71–74.

10. For more on this system, school/dorm/chosen workers (the Nevskii region "colony"), see L. Tikhomirov, *Zagovorshchiki i politsiia* (Moscow, 1930), pp. 18–19, 22, 25–26; Sinegub, "Vospominaniia," *Byloe* 9 (1906): 83–84, 109–10, 116; Charushin, pp. 191; *Protsess 193-kh* (Moscow, 1906), pp. 15–16; GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 211, ll. 2–4, 15–16, 27–32, 42–44, 49, 52–56, 72–73, 76, 81; *ibid.*, d. 207, ll. 142–43.
11. Charushin, pp. 194–95.
12. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 209, ll. 62, 64–64 ob., 152, 199, 205–05 ob., 233–34, 84–84 ob.; d. 210, ll. 20–21, 40–41; Shishko, *Kravchinskii*, pp. 27–28; Charushin, pp. 358–59; *Deiateli revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Rossii. Bio-bibliograficheskii slovar'* (hereafter *Deiateli*), vol. 2, part 2 (Moscow, 1930), cols. 492–93; Archief ND, 827/3: (2). Another elite weaver was Vil'gel'm (Willem) Preisman, leader of the 1872 Krengol'm strike; see my *Law and Disorder on the Narova River: The Kreenholm Strike of 1872* (Berkeley, 1995).
13. Tikhomirov, *Zagovorshchiki*, pp. 24, 36.
14. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 210, l. 30; d. 209, l. 234.
15. *Protsess 193-kh*, pp. 16–17; Sinegub, 9, p. 113; Tikhomirov, *Zagovorshchiki*, pp. 38–40; GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 211, ll. 2, 6, 11, 14, 33 (d. 211 has much on the arrest and interrogation of the students and workers, including the story of the "first" worker-informer).
16. Lev Shishko, "K kharakteristike dvizheniia nachala 70-kh godov (Iz lichnykh vospominanii)," *Russkoe bogatstvo* 10 (1906): 75–76; Charushin, p. 215.
17. Shishko, *Kravchinskii*, pp. 35–36; GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 209, ll. 92–92 ob., 208; d. 210, ll. 15a, 18–19, 22, 30–31, 46–47; *Rabochee dvizhenie v Rossii v XIX veke: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (hereafter *RD*), vol. 2, part 1 (Moscow, 1950), pp. 449–51, 458–63.
18. Charushin, p. 128; Petr Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (New York, 1962), p. 217.
19. M. Bortnik, "V 70-e i 80-e gody na Trubochnom zavode," *Krasnaia letopis'* 2/26 (1928): 178, 212n.
20. E. Andreev, "Vvedenie," *Otchety shkol dlia rabochikh i ikh detei...za 1873–74 uchebnyi god* (St. Petersburg, 1873), p. 3; "Deistviia," *Zapiski IRTO* 6 (1874): 26. On the co-op, see D. N. Smirnov, "Na Trubochnom zavode v proshlom," *Krasnaia letopis'* 2/26 (1928): 221.
21. V. R. Leikina-Svirskaia, *Intelligentsiia v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka* (Moscow, 1971), pp. 96–97 and (for a broad overview of links between Miliutin's reforms and the intelligentsia) pp. 91–99. For the officer-educators, see "Deistviia Obshchestva," *Zapiski IRTO* 3 (1877): 88–89; this refers to school year 1876–77, but most officers listed had been active earlier as IRTO teachers; their names are scattered in earlier volumes of *Zapiski*.
22. *Otchety za 1869–73*, pp. 28–37; *Otchety za 1873–74*, p. 28. See also "Deistviia," *Zapiski* 6 (1874): 26.

23. The next IRTO schools were opened in 1874 at the cartridge-case branch (in the city's Liteinaia District) and at the Arsenal. *Otchety za 1873–74*, pp. 5–6, 14, 36–43; *Zapiski* 6 (1874): 27.
24. Bortnik, p. 178. On the school, see P. Zaionchkovskii, *Voennye reformy 1860–1870 godov v Rossii* (Moscow, 1952), pp. 240–41.
25. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 213, l. 19 (on Smirnov); I. Miroshnikov, *Viktor Obnorskii—vydaiushchiisia rabochii-revoliutsioner* (Moscow, 1960), pp. 24–25; *Protsess 193-kh*, pp. 39–42; Bortnik, p. 178.
26. Charushin, pp. 127–28; *Archief ND*, 827/7: 3.
27. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 213, ll. 27–29, 31–32; *Deiateli*, vol. 2, part 3 (Moscow, 1931), cols. 939–40.
28. *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, 441; GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 213, l. 133; d. 215, l. 157.
29. *Ibid.*, l. 69; G. V. Plekhanov, *Russkii rabochii v revoliutsionnom dvizhenii* (hereafter *RR*) (Moscow, 1940 ed.), pp. 11–12. A worker recalled Obnorskii as an unusually well-read and well-dressed man whose looks had little in common with a worker (Smirnov, “Na Trubochnom zavode,” p. 218).
30. *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 454.
31. Bortnik, p. 181; *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 454; *Archief ND*, 827/7: 3–5; *Protsess 193-kh*, pp. 5–7; Charushin, p. 128.
32. N. S. Tiutchev, “Pamiati otshedshikh,” *Katorga i ssylka* 10 (1924): 224–28 (includes Peterson’s obituary and pension request, in effect a brief autobiography); Peterson’s testimony, GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 213, ll. 14–15; *Deiateli*, vol. 2, part 2, cols. 1166–69.
33. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 213, ll. 5–7, 36–9; *Deiateli*, vol. 2, part 1 (Moscow, 1929), cols. 195–96.
34. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 213, l. 136; *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 449, 454–55.
35. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 207, l. 55; *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 455–56; also V. L. Perovskii, *Vospominaniia o sestre (Sof’e Perovskoi)* (Moscow, 1927), p. 56.
36. L. Tikhomirov, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1927), p. 80; GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 207, ll. 29–30, 60–61; *Deiateli*, vol. 2, part 3, col. 1099; Perovskii, p. 56.
37. *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 455.
38. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 213, l. 133.
39. *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 441, 454–55, 466–67.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 455–56, 465; *Archief ND*, 827/7: 7.
41. E. A. Korol’chuk, “Severnyi Soiuz Russkikh Rabochikh” i revoliutsionnoe rabochee dvizhenie 70-kh godov XIX v. v Peterburge (Leningrad, 1946), pp. 54–56; Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution* (New York, 1960), pp. 514–15. The best case for the ideological explanation is in G. Golosov, “K biografii odnogo iz osnovatelei ‘Severo-Russkogo Rabocheho Soiuzha’ (I. A. Bachin i ego drama),” *Katorga i ssylka* 6 (1924): 49–53. The expression “mania of betrayal”

(*maniia vydach*) is used in S. F. Kovalik, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie semidesiatykh godov i protsess 193-kh* (Moscow, 1928), p. 49.

42. Archief ND, 827/7: 3–4; see also Kovalik, p. 49.
43. *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 467–68.
44. Semen Volkov, “Avtobiografiia” (dictated 1924), in *V nachale puti: Vospominaniia peterburgskikh rabochikh, 1872–1897 gg.*, comp. E. A. Korol’chuk (Leningrad, 1975), pp. 141–45; GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 215, ll. 33, 99–100. Volkov’s testimony in d. 215 clarifies the chronology in his memoir.
45. Volkov, p. 144.
46. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 213, ll. 19–20; *Deiateli*, vol. 2, part 4 (Moscow, 1932), cols. 1530–32; Smirnov, pp. 219–22 (recorded when he was ill, this memoir gives his answers to questions).
47. *Ibid.*, p. 218 (“*rabochii klub*” are Smirnov’s words); GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 213, l. 19.
48. Charushin, p. 147; Smirnov, p. 218; *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 452.
49. *Ibid.*; Smirnov, p. 218. Questioned by police, members of the circle later tried to cover themselves by calling it a self-help society with lawful goals, but its true nature was revealed by the evidence. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 213, ll. 14, 19, 21–23.
50. *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 443–44, 452–53, 456, 461, 464, 466; *Deiateli*, vol. 2, part 1, col. 92; vol. 2, part 4, cols. 1698–99, 2067–68; GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 213, ll. 77, 133–34; *Protsess 193-kh*, pp. 11–12; Shishko: *Kravchinskii*, pp. 23, 29, and “K kharakteristike,” pp. 74, 76–77; Charushin, p. 147; Sh. M. Levin, “Kruzhok chaikovtsev i propaganda sredi peterburgskikh rabochikh v nachale 1870-kh gg.,” *Katorga i ssylka* 12, 61 (1929): 20–21.
51. *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 463, 470. The argument that Obnorskii left town in fear of arrest is hard to defend, as is the claim that the trip was approved by his comrades. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 215, l. 157. On Obnorskii’s Odessa adventure, see also Itenberg, *Iuzhno-rossiiskii soiuz rabochikh*, pp. 59–62.
52. *Protsess 193-kh*, p. 11.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
54. *RD*, vol. 2, part 2 (Moscow, 1950), p. 250.
55. Tikhomirov claims he was one of the two (*Zagovorshchiki*, p. 34).
56. Shishko, “K kharakteristike,” p. 74.
57. *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 456; *Protsess 193-kh*, p. 11.
58. Tikhomirov, *Vospominaniia*, pp. 77–78.
59. *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 470.
60. Mitrofanov, in *ibid.*, pp. 463–64. In Vinogradov’s version, intelligently collected the money, though a worker posted it.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 470.

62. V. Levitskii, *Viktor Obnorskii: Osnovatel' "Severnogo Soiuzha Russkikh Rabochikh"* (Moscow, 1929), p. 52.
63. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 215, ll. 152–53, 157; by the time he recounted all this to police, Blummer's wife had died (1874).
64. *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 470; GARF, f. 112, op. 2, d. 218, ll. 3–4 (Kudrov's letter).
65. *RD*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 250–51; vol. 2, part 1, pp. 445–46.
66. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 207, l. 60.; d. 215, ll. 4, 160; d. 205, ll. 18, 21–22, 24–25; d. 207, l. 161; *Archief ND*, 827/5, (1–2); *Protsess 193-kh*, p. 11; Shishko, "K kharakteristike," pp. 76–77. Later, Orlov told police that he chose to be a village teacher to gain exemption from military conscription (GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 207, l. 125); he made the same point to his brother (*ibid.*, l. 128).
67. *Ibid.*, ll. 127, 130a (undated, but fall 1873).
68. *Ibid.*, ll. 123, 125.
69. *Ibid.*, ll. 30, 55 (Iartsev's confession and plea for mercy).
70. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 215, l. 33.
71. *Ibid.*, d. 213, ll. 152–54 (Nizovkin's credo); *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 476–77 (his later claim of moderation), 463, 472–73 (his real views), 448 (the exchange on mass killings).
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 456–57, 466–67; GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 213, l. 134; d. 215, l. 33; *Protsess 193-kh*, p. 24.
73. *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 463, 467–68. This *skhodka* agreed to aid families of *all* arrested workers, not only metalworkers.
74. My information is from a report to police by a metalworker who was there (*ibid.*, pp. 438–40). For lists of those present see *ibid.*, pp. 439, 469. Investigators credited Nizovkin with initiating the meeting (*Protsess 193-kh*, pp. 24, 38).
75. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 215, ll. 71–72; *Protsess 193-kh*, p. 11.
76. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 219, l. 18.
77. *RD*, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 439–40.
78. *Ibid.*, pp. 458–70, 472–73. According to government sources, Mitrofanov and Vinogradov were the only workers who cooperated fully with the authorities. *Stanovlenie revoliutsionnykh traditsii peterskogo proletariata: Poreformennyi period 1861–1883 gg.*, ed. A. N. Tsamutali (Leningrad, 1987), doc. 109, p. 146.
79. For example, the exile journal *Vpered!*, which took special note of the impression made by two visiting Petersburg metalworkers (veterans of the circles)—their "outward appearance" (*naruzhnyi vid*) and the "[intellectual] development they'd worked so hard to achieve" (*tiazhele dostavsheesia razvitiie*) ("Iz Tsiurikha," *Vpered!* 3 [1875]: col. 77). The *intelligent* Nikolai Morozov, entering a worker's home for the first time, was amazed to find a clean room, a library, and a worker who thirsted for knowledge and even knew

- some foreign words. Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni: Memuary*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1961), pp. 221–23.
80. GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 215, l. 69. Mitrofanov must have owed his early release to his willingness to cooperate with police.
81. RR, pp. 11–12.
82. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16. In RR, Plekhanov calls Gorodnichii “G.” Workers designated by letters in RR are identified in Bortnik, p. 191.
83. RR, pp. 16–17.
84. RR, p. 17. For the “strange feeling” (*strannoe chuvstvo*) experienced by an *intelligent* as he walked along “dressed as a worker” (*v vide rabochego*), see Morozov, p. 151.
85. RR, pp. 17, 19–20 (and, for a summary of Mitrofanov’s idealization of the peasantry, p. 12). On Land and Liberty, see P. S. Tkachenko, *Revoliutsionnaia narodniceskaia organizatsiia “Zemlia i volia” (1876–1879 gg.)* (Moscow, 1961).
86. Bachin: “I’ll never go back to the village, not for anything. . . . The peasants are sheep” ([V] derevniu ia nikogda i ni za chto ne poidu. . . . Krest’iane barany), as quoted in RR, p. 19; also see Golosov, p. 55.
87. RR, pp. 12–14; see also Bortnik, pp. 191–92.
88. RR, pp. 14–15.
89. RR, pp. 33–34.
90. RR, pp. 34–41; see also Tkachenko, pp. 151–74, and Pamela Sears McKinsey’s excellent article, “The Kazan Square Demonstration and the Conflict between Russian Workers and *Intelligenty*,” *Slavic Review* 44 (1985): 83–103. McKinsey’s interpretation is somewhat different from my own and her account is much more comprehensive.
91. RR, pp. 36, 40; S. S. Shusterman, “O sud’be rabochego-revoliutsionera Ia. S. Potapova,” *Voprosy istorii* 11 (1960); Bortnik, pp. 192–93.
92. L. Deich, “N. A. Nekrasov i semidesiatniki,” *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* 3 (1921): 27. Patronnyi zavod workers held their own demonstration in December 1877 on the occasion of the burial of workers killed in a gunpowder explosion at the factory. They received some support from Plekhanov and other intelligenty. See RR, pp. 41–46.
93. N. S. Rusanov, *Iz moikh vospominanii*, vol. 1, *Detstvo i iunost’ na rodine, 1859–1882* (Berlin, 1923), pp. 148–51.
94. Khalturin’s 1875 arrival in the capital is my best estimate, though based on inconclusive information. It is most unlikely that he got there at the start of the decade, as Plekhanov claims (RR, pp. 83–84). On the childhood friend, N. Bashkirov, see Ivan Khalturin, “Semeinye vospominaniia o Stepane Khalturine,” *Byloe* 16 (1921): 49–54.
95. Quoted in RR, pp. 85.
96. Iu. Polevoi, *Stepan Khalturin (1857–1882)* (Moscow, 1957), p. 34.

97. *RR*, p. 85; Rusanov, pp. 151, 154. Khalturin's use of familiar speech is noted in Polevoi, p. 26 (citing Kravchinskii).
98. *RR*, pp. 84, 88.
99. "Avtobiograficheskaia zapiska Stepana Shiriaeva," *Krasnyi arkhiv* 7 (1924): 89; L. Deich, "Russkie rabochie revoliutsionery. V. Obnorskii," *Rabochii mir* 10–12 (1919): 13.
100. Rusanov, pp. 151, 157–58, 161; *RR*, pp. 85–86.
101. Rusanov, pp. 130–31, 159–63, 165, 167–72.
102. *RR*, p. 73.
103. *RR*, pp. 71–72, 85.
104. Chaikovtsy acquired their own press but never put it into operation. Tikhomirov, *Vospominaniia*, pp. 120–21.
105. P. A. Aksel'rod, *Perezhitoe i peredumannoe*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1923), pp. 299–300, 305–6. Obnorskii himself was arrested in late January 1879. For evidence of tensions between the Union and Land and Liberty, see doc. 203 in *Stanovlenie revoliutsionnykh traditsii piterskogo proletariata*, pp. 262–63.

## NARODNAIA VOLIA AND THE WORKER

Deborah L. Pearl

The relationship between workers and the intelligentsia was at the core of the Russian revolutionary movement, which was, to a great extent, a revolutionary *and* a workers' movement. The character of this relationship, which had many variations, helped shape the movement and gave rise to some of its central issues. Sometimes the relationship was that of teacher and pupils, as in the workers' circles (*kruzhki*). Elsewhere, self-effacing revolutionaries from the educated classes hoped merely to facilitate the spontaneous development of the workers' own movement (as in the St. Petersburg Rabochaia Mysl' [Workers' Thought] group of the late 1890s). Frequently local organizations mirrored a division of functions: the intelligentsia performed the "intellectual" work (theoretical leadership, propaganda literature, circle guidance), while the workers carried out the "manual labor"—attracting new workers, drawing them into circles, maintaining links with factories, and similar tasks. Workers frequently raised the question: Whose movement is it? At times workers expressed irritation at revolutionaries from the intelligentsia who went off to their dachas for the summer, temporarily bringing the movement to a standstill. Recurrent "workerist" tendencies surfaced, a conviction that "we workers don't need the intelligentsia." Some workers looked forward to the replacement of radicals from the upper classes with their own "worker intelligentsia."

When we speak about the relationship between workers and the intelligentsia in the late nineteenth century, we are in fact referring to a particular segment of the working class: radical workers or worker revolutionaries. These workers bridged the gap between intelligentsia radicals and the large mass of ordinary, unpoliticized workers. Worker revolutionaries were participants in local revolutionary organizations, as well as members of workers' circles and

strike organizers. We are only beginning to develop a clear picture of the experiences of workers who became part of the revolutionary movement, especially in the period before 1905. Quoting Mikhail Brusnev, an *intelligent* who for a time headed the main network of Petersburg workers' circles in the early 1890s, Reginald Zelnik refers to such workers as "Russian Bebels": they embodied the hope of radical activists for the emergence of movement leaders from within the working class itself.<sup>1</sup>

At first glance, a paper examining the relationship between the organization or "party" known as the People's Will (*Narodnaia Volia*) and "the worker" may seem tangential to both this volume's theme, "workers and the intelligentsia," and the history of the People's Will itself. Both Western and Soviet historiography have characterized *Narodnaia Volia* in remarkably similar terms. The party is identified with its tactic of political terrorism, and the history of the party is the narrative of the successive terrorist exploits of the party's "heroic period," culminating in the assassination of Tsar Alexander II on 1 March 1881. This act, according to the standard narrative, proved to be a Pyrrhic victory, followed by the party's "crisis" and "decline." The actors in this drama are the members of the party's famed Executive Committee, for the most part members of the upper classes. Efforts at propaganda among workers are seen as a sideline to the party's central task of political terrorism, or more cynically as an attempt to accumulate "cannon fodder" for terrorist deeds. The decade of the 1880s is presented in the historiography of the revolutionary movement as an era of "small deeds," when revolutionary activity came to a virtual halt. This hiatus is supposed to have lasted until the birth of a mass social democratic labor movement in the mid-1890s.<sup>2</sup>

Viewed in this light, the appearance of a few well-known workers in the dramatic account of the People's Will—Stepan Khalturin and the explosion in the Winter Palace, Timofei Mikhailov among the five terrorists executed in connection with the Tsar's assassination—can easily be taken as anomalous and at the same time as reinforcing the identification of the People's Will with terrorism. I would argue, however, that a closer examination of the relationship between workers and *Narodnaia Volia*, one that goes beyond party polemics and program statements to actual practice, considerably changes our conception of that organization. For a picture of its

grassroots relations and activities, we must rely on several kinds of sources: the accounts of circle studies and other activities in the memoirs of worker and intelligentsia participants; tsarist police reports and other official documents; and works of propaganda literature. These sources bring out the importance of People's Will propaganda efforts in laying the foundation for the revolutionary and workers' movement at least up to the Revolution of 1905—that is, until the emergence of a legal labor movement and new opportunities for more open political activity.

From its earliest days, the People's Will Party devoted a significant amount of attention to propaganda among urban workers. In the period before 1 March 1881, the party center was based in St. Petersburg. Andrei Zheliabov and Sofiia Perovskaia, key members of the party's Executive Committee, were directly involved in the "Workers' Group," which dealt with all aspects of propaganda among workers. Members of Narodnaia Volia organizations in other cities, including Moscow, Kiev, Kharkov, and Odessa, also carried on propaganda among workers in this period. So-called "conscious" workers, those already politicized, with some understanding of the goals of socialism and revolution, played an important role in this activity, drawing less educated and less experienced workers into the circles.<sup>3</sup>

The history of the People's Will after 1 March 1881, including its links to workers, is little known outside a small group of specialists. In St. Petersburg, the party's Workers' Group survived the arrests and relocations following the Tsar's assassination and continued to conduct propaganda among workers. Successive "workers' groups" continued to function in the capital and can be traced up to at least 1887. (At times it seemed that the Petersburg Workers' Group existed even in the absence of other party organizations.) Activity among workers in the provinces, particularly in the south, proved especially fruitful in the 1880s. Key cities for this activity included Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa, and Rostov-on-Don, as well as many smaller towns. Narodnaia Volia had lost its center, but activity now took place on a broader scale, if more decentralized. Local organizations were linked with each other and had more tenuous connections with activists in St. Petersburg and Moscow, as well as with various floating underground "illegals." Here too propaganda among workers was central to the People's Will organization and to

its identity as a whole, with worker activists often playing an important role. While the history of the People's Will in this era often consisted of short-lived groups and frequent arrests, followed by periods of no activity at all, in fact workers were less likely to be arrested than radical *intelligenty* from the upper classes and were able to maintain links that often escaped the notice of police.<sup>4</sup>

In the discussion that follows, I will present some of my research findings, focusing first on propaganda in the workers' circles and then on the types of workers and intelligenty who participated in this activity. The workers' circle, already a locus of populist propaganda in the early 1870s, quickly became the People's Will's main vehicle of communication with workers.<sup>5</sup> Throughout this period, the circle had both a revolutionizing and an educational function. Propaganda activity within the circle served a mediating role in the ongoing relationship between members of the revolutionary intelligentsia and workers. Radical intelligenty were faced with the challenge of devising appropriate methods for drawing workers into the movement, making them aware of their situation in society, and instilling in them a revolutionary outlook. As intelligenty became more familiar with the mentality and political views of the workers in their circles, topics and methods of propaganda could be tailored to them.

Though distinct, the educational and revolutionary components of the workers' circles cannot be entirely separated. While the educational function of the circles was taken seriously by both intelligenty and workers, neither forgot that the circles were not only a type of "adult education," but were also illegal gatherings with revolutionary goals. The mixed nature of circle studies was also recognized by the authorities, who viewed the "worker propaganda" as "a sort of preparatory school for those beginning [revolutionary activity.]"<sup>6</sup> *Narodovol'tsy* (members of Narodnaia Volia; singular—*narodovolets*) involved in propaganda among workers developed a kind of revolutionary pedagogy, epitomized in frequently composed and revised programs of study.

Programs of study composed by Ivan Orlov and Ivan Kakovskii for use in St. Petersburg's Narodnaia Volia circles in 1880-81 are illustrative. Orlov's program recommended starting with lessons in arithmetic, geography, and other basic subjects. Kakovskii's program added that in treating history, propagandists should stress

the negative aspects of [Russia's] political system and [should] influence opinion in the direction of rejecting monarchy and favoring popular self-government. To this end, special attention was to be given to [historical] periods marked by a strong upsurge of the popular spirit: the Time of Troubles [1598-1613], the rebellions of Sten'ka Razin [1670-71] and Pugachev [1773-75], etc. Arithmetic problems should make use of such concepts as wages, profit, etc.<sup>7</sup>

Circle discussions commonly moved from discussion of the workers' impoverishment and exploitation in the workplace to more explicitly political propaganda and criticism of Russia's social and political order. Organizers of propaganda often envisioned citywide networks of circles at different levels. In practice, distinctions between levels might not be maintained, but there was often a difference between circles for poorly educated workers and those for workers already politicized. These "developed" and "conscious" workers also functioned as propagandists among other workers.<sup>8</sup>

As propagandists saw it, their task was not simply to expose workers to new ideas about revolution and socialism, but also to help them arrive at a wholly new way of looking at the world. Circle studies, in which many workers were passionately involved, often had this effect, sometimes in ways even the propagandists themselves did not fully understand. Mikhail Drei, a young law student and narodovolets in Odessa in 1880-81, was puzzled at the interest his circle of carpenters showed in discussions of science and the natural world: "[T]hey became especially animated when our conversations turned to the topics of the origin of species, the phases of the moon, eclipses of the sun, the origin of the world, etc." At first, Drei did not see any connection between this interest and political issues or socialism:

But I became convinced that this was not the case. In the peasant's mind the whole social order, with the Tsar at its summit, is so closely bound up with his superstitions that the one cannot be subjected to criticism without the other being shaken. The three whales on which the Earth rests and the Tsar, with his whole order, form a monolith, and it is impossible to destroy the political and social views of peasants and workers and leave their faith in the three whales untouched. Workers listened to my presentation

of Darwin with strained attention. It not only explained to them the riddles of the world; for them it was also politics.<sup>9</sup>

Narodnaia Volia propaganda typically called for the overthrow of Russia's autocratic government with the Tsar at its head, after which society would be recreated on a new socialist basis. As activists saw it, this message faced a serious obstacle, the deep-seated beliefs of the Russian *narod*: their faith in the Tsar as a benevolent ruler (the "Tsar-batiushka") and their religious faith as Orthodox Christians. These twin beliefs were expressed in the pairing of God and Tsar in folk sayings which illustrated the popular mentality: "Only God and the Tsar know"; "God's will, the Tsar's power."<sup>10</sup> The attitude of passivity and fatalism engendered by the belief that everything was "in God's hands," that the existing society and institutions were validated by political as well as religious authority, was seen by radical intelligentsia as a major impediment to instilling a revolutionary outlook among peasants and workers. Propagandists soon learned that beginning propaganda with direct attacks on the Tsar was likely to be met by hostility and suspicion. As one worker narodovolets noted, attacks on God, the priesthood, or the Tsar were ineffective methods of propaganda and liable to lead to the beating of the propagandist.<sup>11</sup>

Propagandists usually began their discussions with issues close to the workers' day-to-day lives: conditions at the factory, cuts in pay, fines. Once workers had been drawn into the movement, however, the propaganda became much more explicit. Destroying the myth of the Tsar was one important goal of the orally transmitted "lessons" in People's Will workers' circles, where propagandists, often lecturing on Russian history, emphasized the harsh policies of the Tsars and their responsibility for serfdom. They pointed out the Tsars' support for the landowners and the fact that ministers and bureaucrats were only carrying out the Tsars' orders. Raising the theme of popular revolts served a complementary purpose. Razin and Pugachev were invoked as heroes and the revolts they led as models of resistance to tsarist oppression. Revolutions in the West, including peasant revolts, the French Revolution of 1789, and the revolutions of the nineteenth century, showed how other rulers had been challenged and toppled, and discussions of constitutional systems, labor movements, and political parties abroad were intended

to point to the existence of alternatives to Russia's autocratic system and suggest means to achieve change.

Publication and dissemination of underground literature was another important task of propagandists. Only in illegal works could the Tsar-batiushka be directly attacked or criticized before a working-class audience. Sofiia Perovskaia, who was deeply committed to propaganda among workers, regarded destruction of popular faith in the Tsar as a key task of Narodnaia Volia's *Rabochaia Gazeta* (Workers' newspaper), which addressed this issue in articles and "agitational stories."<sup>12</sup> Other works of underground literature, including populist *skazki* (contrived folk tales) from the 1870s, also focused on the Tsar's responsibility for the plight of the common people through serfdom, taxation, and support of landowners.<sup>13</sup>

Criticism of religion was perhaps an even more complex problem for revolutionary intelligenty, who often advised avoiding the issue so as not to offend presumed popular sensibilities. Rather than denying God, circle propaganda concentrated on criticism of priests and the Orthodox Church for upholding the unjust social order. Underground literature commonly included the priest in a list of oppressors and exploiters of the common people, along with nobles, merchants, government officials, and the Tsar.<sup>14</sup> Sometimes, the true values of Christianity, those of Jesus and the early Christians, were contrasted with the hypocrisy and corruption of the contemporary church; by implication, these values did not contradict the essence of socialism. This theme of Gospel Christianity appears in one of the few radical publications written both by and for workers in this period, the journal *Rabochii*, issued by worker narodovol'tsy in Rostov-on-Don in 1883:

Christ taught everyone to live with one another like brothers, to love their neighbor as themselves. He recognized neither rich nor poor—all to him were equal. sHe rejected any authority of man over man, any use of force. The . . . Orthodox priests and monks [on the other hand] said that the people must submit to the prince; they told the people that the prince was appointed by God.<sup>15</sup>

While religion was not a formal part of the circle curriculum, propagandists found that natural science afforded them a very effective though indirect way to demystify faith, functioning as a kind of

covert attack on religion by presenting an alternative, rational view of the world. Topics ranged from the origins of the universe, astronomy, and meteorology (including explanations of such phenomena as eclipses and thunder), to geology and the age of the earth, physics and chemistry, and Darwin's theories. One worker *narodovolets*, for example, made use of newspaper articles on Darwin's death as a basis for discussions with workers in Rostov-on-Don in 1882; some workers got so interested in Darwin, he wrote, that "they read him thoroughly."<sup>16</sup> In its discussion of scientific questions, Mikhail Drei's circle of Odessa carpenters was typical. Although Drei refers to workers beginning to doubt their superstitious belief in "the three whales," rather than in specific Orthodox Christian teachings, he clearly sees an impact on the workers' outlook as a whole—a combination of religion, superstition, and faith in the Tsar which cannot be easily disentangled. The authorities grasped this point as well. The prosecutor's report on the activity of Drei and other Odessa activists took note of their lectures on natural science in workers' circles: "On the pretext of explaining natural phenomena, attacks were usually made on the religious convictions of the *narod*."<sup>17</sup>

How are we to understand the interest of workers in these topics and the effects on them of this propaganda? For the workers attracted to study circles (and it should again be emphasized that the circle was not merely a venue for education, but, as workers were well aware, an illegal association linked with the revolutionary movement), science, politics, and socialism were not compartmentalized. Knowledge was presented and received as a whole, and it underpinned a way of looking at the world. New information, scientific and other kinds, radically challenged old beliefs and led workers to a new outlook. Among workers drawn into the revolutionary movement, faith in religion waned. For many, interest in "science," in the study of the natural world, was linked to knowledge in a broader sense, to the understanding of the human world, of social and moral issues, that religion had provided in the past and that socialist and revolutionary propaganda seemed to promise for the future.<sup>18</sup>

People's Will activists followed their predecessors of the 1870s in the use of literature in their propaganda among workers, both within and outside the workers' circle. An important vehicle of contact and communication, literature was read aloud and then dis-

cussed and explained by the propagandist at circle meetings; it also circulated among workers outside the circle network. By the 1880s, a corpus of revolutionary literature had developed, including works in a variety of genres: revolutionary skazki, newspapers for workers, pamphlets on political economy, European novels in translation, and revolutionary songs and poems. Since the penalties for the mere possession of illegal literature were severe, a variety of works of legal literature were used for propaganda purposes as well, including stories of peasant life and accounts of popular rebellions, as well as articles from the “thick” journals of the intelligentsia. Although the titles of many of these works are well known to students of the revolutionary and workers’ movements, their contents, contexts, and functions deserve closer study.<sup>19</sup> The literature read and discussed in the circles often provides more accurate evidence of the ideas actually transmitted to workers by the revolutionary intelligentsia than manifestoes of revolutionary organizations or memoirs written decades later.

All of the types of literature mentioned above were used by People’s Will propagandists. At the beginning of the 1880s, the works most frequently mentioned in the sources include the following: the special newspapers for workers published by the People’s Will (*Rabochaia Gazeta*, 1880–81) and by the rival Chernyi Peredel (Black Repartition) party (*Zerno* [Grain], 1881); the “Program of the Worker-Members of the People’s Will Party”;<sup>20</sup> and two of the populist skazki of the 1870s, “The Tale of Four Brothers” and “The Tale of a Kopeck.” In the mid-1880s, as the People’s Will increasingly emphasized propaganda among urban workers, pamphlets on political economy came into their own as a distinct genre. Three in particular enjoyed great success from the 1880s right up to the revolutions of 1917: *The Clever Trick*, a product of the peasant-oriented propaganda of the 1870s; *Who Lives By What?*, a Russian translation of a work by the Polish socialist Szymon Diksztajn; and *Tsar Hunger*, by the People’s Will activist Aleksei Bakh. *Tsar Hunger* (Tsar-golod), the most comprehensive of the three, was a direct product of circle propaganda among Russia’s urban workers. Bakh was a central figure in the Kiev organization of the People’s Will in 1882–83 and devoted himself to propaganda and organizing activities. The Kiev group supervised seven or eight workers’ circles, and Bakh, in addition to conducting studies for workers, led a subgroup for propagandists.

In Kiev and later in Kazan, Rostov-on-Don, and other southern towns, Bakh gave a series of lectures on political economy for propagandists, at whose insistence the lectures were hectographed and given the title *Tsar Hunger*.

Focusing for the most part on aspects of the relation between capital and labor, *Tsar Hunger* presented political economy directly to the worker as *worker*, rather than simply as a member of the narod or lower classes; it addressed questions raised by the workers' day-to-day experiences: low wages, exploitation by the employer, unemployment. The goal of *Tsar Hunger*, as of other works of propaganda literature, was to expose the worker's desperate situation and, more broadly, the injustice of the existing political and economic order, and then to offer an alternative—a socialist organization of society. Bakh's introduction, beginning with the epigraph from Nekrasov's poem "Zheleznaia doroga" (The railroad), was meant to appeal to the typical urban worker of his day—one who had begun his life in the peasant village. Each of the nine succeeding chapters focuses on a different aspect of political economy: division of labor, exchange, commodities, labor theory of value, money, surplus value, the conflict between capital and labor, capitalism, socialism.<sup>21</sup> In simple language, Bakh provided explanations of the basic concepts central to such well-known texts of the time as John Stuart Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* and the first volume of Marx's *Capital*.

*Tsar Hunger* was well suited for use in circle studies, and its individual chapters were sometimes used as readings for successive meetings. Other distinctive features that must have contributed to its success among workers were the detailed examples to illustrate key ideas, the realistic conversations that liven up what might otherwise be dry material, and the language, which ranges from the extremely colloquial to the simple and straightforward to the emotional and personal. The oral element was always important to propaganda, and *Tsar Hunger* gave the propagandist numerous opportunities to elaborate or insert fresh examples.

Little marks *Tsar Hunger* as a work specifically tied to the notions of People's Will; in fact, it was subsequently used by the Social Democrats as well as narodovol'tsy and later by the Socialist Revolutionaries. Numerous references in the sources on the circulation of this pamphlet in manuscript and hectograph, as well as in printed form, attest to its continuous popularity into the twentieth century.

(As an illegal work, *Tsar Hunger* was frequently noted in police arrest records. Possession of a copy by an *intelligent* was almost a sure sign of his or her involvement in propaganda among workers, as it was not part of the standard reading list for the radical intelligentsia, to whom more “advanced” works on political economy were accessible.) New editions of *Tsar Hunger* appeared in 1895 (printed on the press of the Petersburg Group of Narodovol'tsy), 1902 (a revised and expanded edition by Bakh, published by the SR Party), 1905–7 (several new legal editions), and 1917.

Much work remains to be done to arrive at an accurate, textured description of the revolutionary movement at the grassroots level. Rather than focusing on the ideologies of the various revolutionary parties and factions, an approach that overemphasizes conflict among rival ideological trends, we need to overcome the problem of a frequently “depersonalized” history of the movement, an objective best achieved by taking a closer look at the lives and experiences of those who carried on its day-to-day work.<sup>22</sup> The workers’ circles were based on a partnership between members of two groups: narodovol'tsy from the intelligentsia (in this period, most often students and former students) and industrial workers. The intelligentsia propagandists appear to have had a particular orientation toward activity with workers; the workers appear to have seen the movement as a dual revolutionary and *workers’* movement. To members of both of these groups, fine points of distinction among revolutionary ideologies (People’s Will vs. Social Democracy, for example) appear to have been of secondary importance. (Clearly, the emphasis on propaganda among urban workers did not begin with the appearance of Social Democratic groups in the Russian revolutionary movement—it both predated their arrival and developed independently.)

The success of revolutionary propaganda in this period was due in great part to the dedication of young intelligenty who devoted themselves almost exclusively to activity among workers. For some, worker propaganda was identified as the very essence of the revolutionary movement, in much the same way that earlier populist youth (especially during the “movement to the people” of 1874) had identified the revolution with their work among the peasantry. Space permits only a brief mention of some of these young intelligentsia propagandists, a few of whom have been noted above.

Two such propagandists—Ivan Kakovskii and Ivan Orlov—were instrumental in setting up the original People’s Will Workers’ Group in St. Petersburg in 1880. The narodovolets Kakovskii spoke with passion of “the great role the working class could play in the Russian revolutionary movement.”<sup>23</sup> Orlov, who never actually joined a party, although he aided both People’s Will and Black Repartition in their propaganda efforts, was a firm believer in the power of education to “raise [the workers’] intellectual level” and serve as a step toward creating a mass workers’ organization.<sup>24</sup> The key members of the St. Petersburg People’s Will Workers’ Group of 1882–84, headed by Nikolai Flerov and Venedikt Bodaev, were all dedicated to worker propaganda, including Ivan Popov, a student at the Teachers’ Institute. Other narodovol’tsy in various cities who drew high praise from both workers and other intelligenty for their effectiveness and rapport with workers were Petr Tellalov in Petersburg and Moscow; Kiev University students Leonid Zalkind and Nikolai Zabello; Mikhail Drei, the Odessa law student; and Aleksei Makarevskii, a Kharkov Veterinary Institute student active in that city in the mid-1880s. The views of Aleksei Bakh were typical of a certain segment of party activists. Bakh, like certain other narodovol’tsy, opposed terror. For him, propaganda and organizing activity at all levels of society, including among workers, was of greater importance. This important although often unacknowledged strand of People’s Will strategy became more noticeable in the 1880s, as the party lost its earlier organizational and ideological coherence.<sup>25</sup>

Our picture of the intelligentsia propagandists is much clearer than our picture of the workers. This is due in part to our sources: first, police and Ministry of Justice documents (the authorities were always much more concerned with the activities of members of the upper classes); and second, memoirs, written mainly by intelligenty. To a lesser extent, however, both of these kinds of sources, as well as some types of propaganda literature, do tell us something about workers. Urban workers in the 1880s and 1890s came into contact with the revolutionary movement to varying degrees. The workers most directly involved were committed revolutionaries; then came members of workers’ circles; still others might happen to read an illegal pamphlet or engage in conversation with circle members; and many more workers, however casually, must have heard something about these ideas and the existence of the movement. When viewed

in this way, with its concentric circles of involvement, the revolutionary movement appears as a factor of some influence in the worker milieu. Along with other experiences—at the workplace, in the neighborhood, in contact with other workers, at church, and at popular educational institutions—it contributed to the mentality of the urban worker in late nineteenth-century Russia. One can speak of a worker's revolutionary subculture, of great importance to life experience and self-identity for those who became involved, and something of which other workers were at least aware.

What led workers to join the revolutionary movement—in this case, the People's Will? Worker narodovol'tsy as a group can be considered a part of the first generation of workers to make the transition from worker to revolutionary. Worker narodovol'tsy played a particularly important role in the development of the revolutionary movement in the 1880s, especially in the southern region of the Russian empire, a setting different in many respects from St. Petersburg and Moscow, where our perception of the revolutionary movement is usually focused. Based to a lesser extent on *factory* workers, the southern movement included workers at the railroad repair shops, as well as artisanal and migrant workers. "Illegals," both intelligentsia and workers, also had a greater presence; they frequently went south when faced with arrest and forced to go underground.

The most famous worker narodovolets was Stepan Khalturin, a key founder of the Petersburg labor movement in the 1870s and architect of the explosion in the Winter Palace in February 1880.<sup>26</sup> In his subsequent (and brief) career as a revolutionary, he continued to play the dual role of worker organizer and terrorist; two years later he was executed for his part in the assassination of a police official, General V. S. Strel'nikov.

To more fully capture the experiences of worker narodovol'tsy, let us look more closely at two other important activists of the 1880s, Vasilii Pankratov and Petr Antonov. Pankratov, one of the few workers of this period to have left memoirs, first became involved in the workers' movement in St. Petersburg around 1880. At the time, he was a very young but already skilled metalworker, employed first at the Baltic and later the Semiannikov plants. It is unclear which, if any, party affiliation he had at this time, People's Will or Black Repartition. Pankratov claims that workers did not pay much attention to

the theoretical differences between the two organizations.<sup>27</sup> As he recalled it, radicalized workers had a general “revolutionary” rather than a party identity, and they saw the movement as a workers’ as well as a revolutionary movement. Pankratov’s political identity appears to have become more specific, however, more closely tied to the People’s Will, from the fall of 1881, when he was forced to leave Petersburg to avoid probable arrest. He went to Moscow, already something of a professional revolutionary, with the explicit intention of trying to organize Moscow workers. After a short time he moved further south, helping to organize workers around the People’s Will banner in Rostov-on-Don, Kharkov, Elizavetgrad, and other towns.

Although Pankratov’s memoirs emphasize his peaceful activities as an organizer and propagandist among workers, we know that as a member of the party’s “fighting detachment” he also participated in robbery attempts, intended to provide funds for party activities. Police documents noted that he “put up armed resistance” upon his arrest in Kiev in 1884.<sup>28</sup> (At the time of his arrest, he was only 20 years old.) Pankratov’s memoirs present a more volatile picture of the working-class milieu than do other sources: this was a period of economic crisis and unemployment; of beatings of foremen, and of workers rioting in protest against intolerable conditions. Pankratov describes spies infiltrating factories and workers’ circles; persecution by secret police chief G. D. Sudeikin and his Petersburg collaborators, who tried to get workers to become informants; and workers with plans to assassinate hated police officials. This information serves as a kind of subtext in the memoirs, a partial explanation of a question Pankratov mentions but does not discuss in detail: why workers like himself turned to terrorism. For some workers, economic circumstances and the experience of police persecution, combined with the new ideas provided by the revolutionary movement, fed a desire to fight back. As Pankratov saw it, the People’s Will did not, as it was sometimes accused, turn workers into terrorists: “Worker-terrorists were created by the conditions themselves.”<sup>29</sup>

Pankratov crossed paths in Kharkov in 1883 with another worker narodovolets who, like him, had been forced by police surveillance and impending arrest to give up a settled existence for life as a peripatetic professional revolutionary. This was Petr Antonov, one of the most well-known worker members of the People’s Will and also a member of the fighting detachment. A skilled metal-

worker, Antonov was born in Nikolaev and spent his life before his arrest in 1885 in various southern cities and industrial centers, working in railroad repair shops and factories in Odessa and in Poltava and Kharkov Provinces. He later wrote that he first undertook socialist propaganda among workers in the late 1870s on his own, without affiliation with any revolutionary group; he started, so he said, with the Gospels, "which in my opinion comprised socialist teaching, if you left out the elements of mystification." His dreams of peaceful change, however, were shattered with the execution of two revolutionaries in Nikolaev in 1879: "From a peaceful propagandist, I became an extreme adherent of terrorist struggle, and I emphasized this point in my preaching."<sup>30</sup> In 1880 he joined the People's Will.

By 1882 Antonov was a valued member of the party and worked closely with Vera Figner, the last leading member of the Executive Committee still at large in Russia. In 1882-83 he was employed in the repair shops at the Liubotin depot of the Kharkov-Nikolaevsk railroad, where he helped organize a circle of railroad workers. Following the arrest of this circle, Antonov, by now a member of the fighting detachment, was forced to go underground. The indictment following his arrest in 1885 listed a number of illegal activities, some of them indicative of the desperate measures resorted to by certain revolutionaries in this period: membership in the People's Will, participation in several attempts to rob the post (in one of which a postal carrier was killed), assassination of a worker spy, setting up an underground press, storing explosives, and living with false documents under an assumed name. His death sentence was commuted to life in prison; he spent eighteen years in the Shlissel'burg fortress until released in 1905.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to notable individuals like Pankratov and Antonov, there were also important groups of worker narodovol'tsy which functioned with a great deal of autonomy and guided workers' movements in specific towns or industrial centers, again especially in the south. Pankratov and Antonov each worked for a time with one such group in Rostov-on-Don, in which workers from the workshops of the Vladikavkaz railroad played a key part. Members of the Rostov circle were united by a series of overlapping bonds—shared experience in the workplace, joint participation in study circles, and

personal friendship. Two members of the group, Andrei Karpenko and Vitalii Kudriashev, went on to major revolutionary roles.

While local People's Will groups composed of students and other intelligentsy were often swept away by arrests after only a brief existence, workers' groups usually enjoyed a much greater degree of continuity. The authorities found it more difficult to penetrate workers' organizations, often composed of close-knit groups of neighbors and co-workers; in addition, they continued to consider upper-class radicals more of a threat to political stability.

Groups bearing the name "Narodnaia Volia" continued to surface in Russia well into the 1890s (a period more commonly associated with the rise of social democracy) and continued to exert an attraction on numerous workers. In St. Petersburg in the 1890s the activities of the Group of Narodovol'tsy (Gruppa narodovol'tsev) centered around its printing press, which published propaganda material used by the social democratic Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class as well. A small band of workers constituted a subgroup of the Gruppa. They had a special concern for propaganda among their fellow workers, and they influenced the intelligentsia members of the larger organization to produce more appropriate, worker-oriented propaganda literature. Some of these workers were also staunch supporters of terrorism.

Analysis of the lives and careers of the worker narodovol'tsy who were active revolutionaries reveals some interesting patterns: involvement in the broader labor movement; contact with revolutionary propaganda and radical intelligentsy; direct or indirect experience of police persecution, arrest, and their consequences; in certain cases, going underground and making a commitment to the life of a professional, full-time revolutionary; and for some, the turn to terror.

The outlook of these worker narodovol'tsy was also shaped by the circumstances of their time: a labor movement still in its infancy, a small working class (even smaller if one counts only those workers who no longer identified themselves as peasants), a period of economic downturn, a repressive political system. An open, mass labor movement on the Western model, while desired by many activists, was not a realistic possibility. This little-known generation of radical workers helped shape the Russian revolutionary and workers' movements, linking the propaganda efforts of the populists of the

1870s with the Social Democratic workers' movement of the 1890s. To some extent, their participation may have kept the movement from developing an exclusively top-down attitude in relation to workers. As we attempt to define the nature of the political culture of these workers, the image of the professional revolutionary seems most appropriate. Reginald Zelnik has suggested that on this basis, worker and *intelligent* could meet as equals.<sup>32</sup> Revolutionaries from the working class, however, would always maintain a distinctive identity. The new political culture of the worker revolutionary involved a rejection of old views and the substitution of a different world outlook and set of political beliefs; it called for divorce from the old working-class milieu, an often peripatetic life, a new community, and a new role among workers. Many or most of these workers, particularly those who had "gone underground," appear to have remained unmarried. With their strong commitment to the overthrow of the government and construction of a new society, it is not surprising that they gravitated to the most radical and uncompromising strand of the revolutionary movement of their day, the one identified with active combat against the tsarist regime and its representatives.<sup>33</sup>

In many respects, propaganda efforts by *Narodnaia Volia* set the pattern for subsequent activity—circle organization, programs of study, propaganda literature—that would characterize relations between intelligentsy and workers. Propaganda in the workers' circle was a special form of education, and it often had the effect of fostering a new perspective on the world, bolstered by new knowledge: a secular viewpoint, modern concepts of political systems, a sense that traditional hardships need not be endured fatalistically. The goal was not to reach the mass of ordinary workers directly, but rather to create a small group of politically conscious workers who could then serve as a bridge to them. During the 1890s and into the early 1900s, propaganda by SDs and SRs focused on the same types of workers, often the same factories or workplaces, and the same neighborhoods in various cities. While *People's Will* propaganda often overlapped with that of other organizations of the same period (*Black Repartition* in 1879–81, neopopulist and early SD groups in the 1880s and beyond), there were some differences of emphasis. The *People's Will* was associated by workers with direct attacks on the government, whether through terrorist acts or propaganda. Some worker narodo-

vol'tsy saw value in the tactic of terror, although not necessarily for the same reasons as advocates of terror from the intelligentsia. In any case, terror was never central to the workers' activity.

Relations between workers and intelligentsy in the Narodnaia Volia movement of the 1880s were relatively harmonious and do not support the clichéd image of the People's Will as a strictly terrorist organization interested in workers only as cannon fodder. The relationship between members of these two groups marks an important stage in the development of the revolutionary and workers' movements in the Russian empire. Rather than seeing the People's Will as at best a precursor, part of the prehistory, of the Communist Party, we need to take a less teleological view. More important today is to find out how members of the revolutionary movement affected workers and the urban lower-class milieu in its own day, on their own terms. What I term a "culture of revolution" may be a fruitful concept in this regard, pointing to the need for a social history of the movement. The most pressing task, however, is to undertake a comprehensive examination of the revolutionary movement at the grass-roots level, in the many cities, provincial towns, and industrial centers where it flourished, without preconceptions about the relative importance and meaning of the People's Will or other revolutionary groups.

#### NOTES

1. See Reginald E. Zelnik, "Kanatchikov's *Story of My Life* as Document and Literature," in *A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia: The Autobiography of Semën Ivanovich Kanatchikov*, ed. R. Zelnik (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), p. xv.
2. See treatments of Narodnaia Volia in: Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth Century Russia* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1966); Philip Pomper, *The Russian Revolutionary Intelligentsia* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970); Avrahm Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution: A Century of Russian Radicalism* (New York: Collier, 1962); Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (New York: Scribners, 1974), esp. pp. 297–98, and *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1990), esp. p. 142; Harold Shukman, ed., *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the Russian Revolution*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 59; S. S. Volk,

*Narodnaia Volia 1879–1882* (Moscow-Leningrad: Nauka, 1966); M. G. Sedov, *Geroicheskii period revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva (Iz istorii politicheskoi bor'by)* (Moscow: Mysl', 1966).

3. For more information on Narodnaia Volia propaganda activity in this period, see Deborah L. Pearl: "Revolutionaries and Workers: A Study of Revolutionary Propaganda among Russian Workers, 1880–1892"; Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1983, chs. 2 and 4, and "Educating Workers for Revolution: Populist Propaganda in St. Petersburg, 1879–1882," *Russian History* 15, 2–4 (1988).
4. For an important study of the revolutionary movement that recognizes the significance of People's Will propaganda activity in this period, see Norman Naimark, *Terrorists and Social Democrats: The Russian Revolutionary Movement under Alexander III* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983); see also Derrick Offord, *The Russian Revolutionary Movement in the 1880s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). V.I. Nevskii and S. N. Valk carried out pioneering research on the topic of Narodnaia Volia and workers in the 1920s and 1930s. S. S. Volk, N. A. Troitskii, and M. G. Sedov are among more recent Russian scholars of this subject.
5. See Reginald E. Zelnik, "Populists and Workers: The First Encounter between Populist Students and Industrial Workers in St. Petersburg, 1871–74," *Soviet Studies* 24, 2 (October 1972).
6. *Obzor vazhmeishikh doznanii po delam o gosudarstvennykh prestupleniakh proizvodivshikhsia v zhandarmских upravleniakh imperii* (1 January–1 May 1882), p. 52.
7. "Iz pokazanii I. G. Orlova o propagande sredi peterburgskikh rabochikh," in *Revoliutsionnoe narodnichestvo 70-kh godov XIX veka*, ed. S. S. Volk, vol. 2, pp. 259, 261, and p. 384, note 140 (Moscow: Nauka, 1965); "Iz zakliucheniia prokurora," in *ibid.*, p. 274.
8. See, for example, Ivan Popov's description of the Workers' Group propaganda in St. Petersburg, 1882–84, in Pearl, "Revolutionaries and Workers," pp. 160–61; see also Mikhail Drei's experiences with two different groups of workers in Odessa in *ibid.*, pp. 183–86, 190–91.
9. M. I. Drei, "Zametki o rabochem dvizhenii v Odesse v 1880–1881 g.," *Katorga i ssylka* 5, 12 (1924): 76.
10. Quoted in Michael Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People: Studies in Russian Myths* (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 191.
11. V. S. Pankratov, "Iz deiatel'nosti sredi rabochikh v 1880–1884 gg.," *Byloe* 3 (1906): 255.
12. A. Kornilova-Moroz, *Sof'ia L'vovna Perovskaia: Chlen ispolnitel'nogo komiteta partii "Narodnaia volia"* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politkatorzhan, 1930), p. 36.
13. For the skazki, see, in particular, "The Tale of Four Brothers," "Out of the Frying Pan and into the Fire!" and "The Clever Trick," all reprinted in *Agitatsionnaia literatura russkikh revoliutsionnykh narodnikov; Potaennye proiz-*

*vedeniia* 1873–75 gg., intro. by V. G. Bazanov; text prepared by O. B. Alekseeva (Leningrad: Nauka, 1970).

14. See “The Tale of a Kopeck” and “On Truth and Falsehood,” reprinted in *ibid.*
15. Cited by V. Nevskii in foreword to “‘Rabochii’—Rostovskii zhurnal 1883 goda,” *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* 2 (1932): 77.
16. V. S. Pankratov, *Vospominaniia: Kak prikhodilos’ rabotat’ sredi rabochikh v 1880–1884 gg.* (Moscow: Krasnaia Nov’, 1923), p. 72.
17. TsGIA, f. 1405, op. 521, d. 410, pp. 66–67, and *Rabochee dvizhenie v Rossii v XIX veke*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 497–98. On religion and propaganda in the early to mid-1870s, see Reginald E. Zelnik, “‘To the Unaccustomed Eye’: Religion and Irreligion in the Experience of St. Petersburg Workers in the 1870s,” *Russian History* 16, 2–4 (1989), and B. S. Itenberg, “Revoliutsionnye narodniki i voprosy religii (Iz istorii ‘khozhdeniia v narod’),” *Voprosy istorii religii i ateizma: Sbornik statei* 11 (1963).
18. For a fuller treatment of this topic, see Deborah L. Pearl, “Tsar and Religion in Russian Revolutionary Propaganda,” *Russian History* 20, 1–4 (1993): 81–107.
19. Several scholars have provided fruitful analyses of specific genres of revolutionary literature; see works by V. G. Bazanov and V. F. Zakharina on propaganda literature of the 1870s, and by N. S. Travushkin on the use of works of fiction in translation.
20. For discussion of these works, see Pearl, “Revolutionaries and Workers,” chs. 1 and 3.
21. For fuller analysis, see Deborah L. Pearl, “Political Economy for Workers: A. N. Bakh’s *Tsar-Golod*,” *Slavic Review* 50, 4 (1991): 768–78.
22. See V. V. Lozhkin, “Bez liudei—net istorii,” *Voprosy istorii KPSS* 12 (December 1987): 98–110 (although Lozhkin refers exclusively to the history of the Social Democratic movement).
23. M. A. Krol, *Stranitsy moei zhizni* (New York: Souiz Russkikh Evreev v N’iu-Iorke, 1944), p. 26.
24. Testimony of Ivan Orlov in Volk, ed., vol. 2, pp. 259–61.
25. See A. N. Bakh, *Zapiski narodovol’tsa*, 2d ed. (Leningrad: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1931), pp. 176, 180–83.
26. See Reginald Zelnik’s discussion of Khalturin in this volume.
27. Pankratov: *Vospominaniia*, p. 11, and “Iz deiatel’nosti,” p. 239.
28. See S. Valk, ed., “P. L. Antonov v Petropavlovskoi kreposti,” *Krasnyi arkhiv* 31 (1928): 115, n. 5; GARF, f. DP, 7 d-vo, 1884, d. 293, l. 26 and elsewhere.
29. Pankratov, “Iz deiatel’nosti,” p. 255.
30. “Avtobiografiia P. L. Antonova,” *Golos minuvshago* 2 (1923): 85.

31. See "Antonov, Petr Leont'evich," in *Deiateli revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Rossii. Biograficheskii slovar'*, vol. 3 (Moscow, 1932), p. 95.
32. Reginald E. Zelnik, "Russian Bebels: An Introduction to the Memoirs of Semen Kanatchikov and Matvei Fisher," Part 2, *Russian Review* 36, 4 (1976): 441-43.
33. For expanded treatment of worker narodovol'tsy of the 1880s, see Deborah L. Pearl, "From Worker to Revolutionary: The Making of Worker Narodovol'tsy," *Russian History* 23, 1-4 (1996).

## THE MENTALITY OF THE WORKERS OF RUSSIA AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Iurii I. Kir'ianov

In recent years, the term "mentality" (French: *mentalité*) has become very fashionable and is frequently used in scholarly writing. Its meaning, however, has often been very vague: a frame of mind; the totality of spiritual values; a mode of thinking and acting; the ideas and behavior of specific groups in society; general characteristics and elements of continuity in the orientation and behavior of social or political groups at a specific stage of development.<sup>1</sup> My own preference is for an understanding of mentality as a frame of mind of specific strata and population groups, providing the mold for their ideas and behavior at one or another stage of socioeconomic and political development. Some other historians seem to share this understanding.<sup>2</sup>

For the period under question, the procession of thousands of Petersburg workers to the Winter Palace on 9 January 1905 in order to hand the Tsar their petition serves as a very accurate (if incomplete) reflection of the mentality of a majority of workers. It was a legal procession to a tsar from whom they sought "justice and protection." The petition pointed to the impoverishment, the oppression, and the burden of excruciating labor experienced by workers and to the despotism and arbitrariness of factory owners and managers, who were accused of "enslaving" them "under the patronage and with the aid of Your [Imperial] officials." The petition underscored the need for popular representation, while the satisfaction of this desire was linked to the Tsar's good will: "elections to a constituent assembly should be conducted under conditions of universal, secret, and equal suffrage." Under the aegis of Father Georgii Gapon, the procession included religious elements, such as icons. The petition itself had a similar cast. Participants in the procession strove to

cut themselves off and keep aloof from the influence of party agitators of the various political tendencies (SD, SR), so as not to jeopardize the realization of "their own plan."<sup>3</sup> Nor was the procession of 9 January an accidental, spontaneous, or completely unprecedented event. In March 1903, for example, something similar had occurred in the town of Zlatoust (Ufa province).

It was only after the shots of 9 January were fired at the petitioners that a sharp change took place in the consciousness and behavior of workers, resulting in an explosive reaction and mass protests across the entire country. As a consequence, the total number of strikers in a single month equaled the entire number for the previous decade. Before turning directly to our subject, however, some preliminary remarks should help illuminate the historical material we will be examining.

First of all, we must keep in mind Russia's relatively low level of economic development (production per capita and per territorial unit) at the turn of the century and the backward technological state of industry. This backwardness could not help but influence conditions of labor and the material well-being of the workers—their daily life. It should also be recalled that an autocratic monarchical system still existed in Russia at that time. The power of Tsar Nicholas II was virtually unlimited. There was no parliament in the country (the Council of State could function only as an advisory body), and there were no democratic freedoms—of speech, press, or assembly. The formation of trade unions, much less of political party organizations, was not allowed. Active participants in the mass actions of workers, even purely economic actions, were prosecuted under the law.

The number of industrial workers was relatively small. In 1900, industrial workers (mainly factory workers) numbered around 3 million people. When these are combined with nonindustrial wage earners—those employed in construction, excavation, and agriculture; those employed as unskilled casual laborers and dockers; and those working in small cottage industry and handicraft production—the total comes to perhaps 14 million in a country with a total population of 140 million.<sup>4</sup> The period of free, unimpeded development of the labor market since the fall of serfdom in 1861 had not been long; the proletariat was still young; and a large portion not only of nonindustrial workers, but even of factory workers still was tied, if not to agriculture as such, then at least to the village. In

Russia, the emergence and formation of a working class took place in one of the most petit-bourgeois of European countries.

In our (Russian) scholarly literature, until very recently, the focus has mainly been on the break that occurred over time in the connection of industrial workers to agriculture and the village. In the period under discussion, however, a large proportion of Russia's workers, if not the majority, still retained their ties with the land.<sup>5</sup> By the same token, only half the workers of the country's industrial enterprises came from working-class families; the other half came from peasant families, and they brought peasant notions and peasant psychology into the proletarian milieu.<sup>6</sup> Right up to 1917, the workers' village ties left a distinct imprint on their manner of thinking, on their ideas and behavior.

Finally, one should remember that the proletariat was not monolithic: it had an advanced stratum (*peredovoi sloi*), a middle stratum (*seredniaki*), and a lower (*nizshii*) stratum. By focusing on the characteristics of all these strata of workers, and not only of the elite, the upper stratum (as was done in the old literature), we will be able to look more realistically, more thoroughly and carefully, at both the events of 9 January and their origins, which in many ways reflected the prevalence (even in the capital) of the mentality of workers who were not of the most advanced stratum.

What kind of ideas did workers have regarding the most pressing questions of social, economic, and political life, and how did these notions affect their behavior? Let us list some typical features of the mentality of the large mass of workers at the turn of the century: a creed made up of religious, monarchical, and universal principles of reverence for God, Tsar, and Motherland; reverence for religious precepts; respect for one's employer and for the agents of state authority; a belief in the accepted principles of everyday moral behavior. Precisely during this period, however, at least a few of these deeply rooted ideas and corresponding behaviors, grounded as they were in peasant psychology, morals, and traditions, came into conflict with reality—that is, they were not in harmony with the conditions under which most workers lived and worked. Many workers began not only to feel but also to comprehend the unsatisfactory quality, both material and legal, of their lives. Their difficult economic situation and constant lack of legal rights were experienced and grasped with particular intensity. A wide range of docu-

ments contained workers' complaints about their working conditions: the long workday (according to the law of 1897, not to exceed 11½ hours); low wages; oppression by managers and foremen; unwarranted rejection of their completed work; the reduction of wages; and also the unsatisfactory nature of daily life, especially food, housing, and leisure time.

A consistent subject of workers' conversations, complaints, and petitions was the low rate of pay—an average of 203 rubles a year in factories, which for most workers was not enough to make ends meet, forcing them into the red. Regularly encountered are complaints about the excessive burden of the work—a consequence of poor technical equipment; the sorry state of living quarters; the impossibility of resting peacefully in the barrack-like living conditions. These moods of discontent were captured and reflected in the illegal press—the leaflets of the SDs, SRs, the Social Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania, and others. To a certain extent, the following excerpts from an 1898 proclamation, addressed “To All Kharkov Workers” and signed “The Workers” (*Rabochie*), are revealing:

It is very hard for us to survive on the pitiful pennies the bosses throw at us; [. . . many of us] must work overtime; . . . in addition to “legal” means of exploitation . . . , there are illegal means: fines, deductions, underpayment—that is, everyday theft. . . . [Acting in] solidarity, we demand: 1) the shortening of the workday; 2) the abolition of overtime work and fines; 3) the raising of the wage rate; 4) vacation time on Sundays and holidays; 5) humane treatment [*chelovecheskoe obrashchenie*]. Our only hope lies in a united struggle against our common enemy. We will be all for one and one for all. If we stand bravely against our foe, then victory is ours.<sup>7</sup>

Also preserved in the records is a summary description by a senior factory inspector of demands made by Kiev workers during the general strike of 21–28 July 1903. The city had 78 factories, which employed 9,217 workers. The main demands were reduction of the workday to 8-9 hours (advanced by 68 percent of the workers); increase of the daily wage rate (71 percent); polite address (66 percent); better medical aid (54 percent); better working conditions in relation to sanitation and hygiene (41 percent); financial support during illness (28 percent).<sup>8</sup>

In a document prepared by a meeting of factory inspectors from Moscow province, the demands and concerns of workers voiced during the strikes of January 1905 were grouped as follows:

I. Work time: 1. reduction of the workday. 2. abolition of optional overtime work. 3. distribution of pay during work time.

II. Wages: 1. increase in wages. 2. clarification of piece rates. 3. overtime pay. 4. pay supplements for long-term service.

III. Medical aid: 1. failure to give medical assistance at home to workers' families and refusal to provide the medicine prescribed by private doctors.

IV. Sanitary conditions and living quarters: 1. bathhouses.

V. Food: 1. food suppliers not paid on time with the money deducted from workers' wages. 2. complaints about factory food stores (prices, quality of produce).

VI. Conditions of everyday life: 1. workers with families. 2. visits by relatives. 3. situation of women undergoing childbirth. 4. day nurseries.

VII. Organization of workers: 1. worker participation in setting wages—allocation of work tasks to accompany the resolution of questions concerning the dismissal of workers, in order to obtain a full explanation of each reason for the dismissal.

VIII. Workers' legal position: 1. laying off of workers (definite and indefinite periods). 2. abolition of body searches. 3. polite address (not addressing workers with the familiar form of "you" (*ty*)). 4. an end to factory administration's persecution of workers who lodge complaints with the Factory Inspectorate. 5. delays in wage disbursements.

IX. Providing for workers if they become (among other things) disabled, infirm, or too old to work.

X. Educational institutions for workers.<sup>9</sup>

Reports of factory inspectors from other provinces and the documents of imperial and regional officials that provide summaries and analyses of workers' needs and their demands confirm that the

above-listed demands and complaints were typical.<sup>10</sup> (Further evidence may be found in the language of the petition of 9 January.)

Along with their difficult economic conditions, workers acutely felt the arbitrariness of factory administrators and local officials, especially police, who generally supported the employer, not the workers. Very revealing in this regard is the resolution passed by the Congress of District and Senior Factory Inspectors, held in St. Petersburg in the spring of 1895. It stated:

The more advanced workers fully recognize the need to create a situation whereby workers have the right to discuss their needs unhindered and to pursue legal means to improve their lives. . . . The workers' demands, with only rare exceptions, are not directed against the existing order. Their primary demands are relatively modest and of a narrowly professional character. For example, by freedom of assembly they mean the right to discuss their needs and look for ways to improve their position; by freedom of speech they have in mind the right to declare their needs through legal channels; by inviolability of domicile and person they mean freeing the worker from the constant fear of arrest and forced intrusion into his living quarters simply because he declared his needs and demanded changes in the terms of employment.<sup>11</sup>

The petition of 9 January included the following demands, aimed at rectifying the workers' lack of rights:

- the immediate release and return of all who are suffering [in prison and exile] for their political and religious convictions, for strikes and peasant disorders;
- the immediate proclamation of freedom and inviolability of person, freedom of speech, press, and assembly, freedom of conscience in religious matters;
- [government] ministers' responsibility before the people and a guarantee that the government will act according to law;
- equality before the law for all, without exception.

Thus, despite certain differences in mentality between the upper, middle, and lower strata of workers in this period, we are able

to note some common aspirations and goals: material well-being; a well-rounded, "humane" (*chelovecheskaia*) cultural life; the defense of their own dignity, their rights as human beings and workers; the right of free association.

How did workers relate to the autocracy and the Tsar? The rejection of autocracy and monarchical power claimed in the older (Soviet) literature is incorrect. To be sure, numerous documents attest to workers' negative attitudes, conscious or unconscious, toward the autocracy, by which, however, was mainly understood not the entire state structure, but the arbitrary police power of administrators—both at the factory and in the municipal and provincial governments. In the 1905 petition to the Tsar there was repeated discussion of the oppression suffered by workers at the hands of bureaucrats, of the shameless exploitation of workers by capitalists, and of "the bureaucratic administration that plunders and stifles the people." But despite all this, the monarchical structure of the state and the Tsar's personal authority were not mentioned. In the great majority of documents emanating from workers, this theme was not discussed. Instructive in this regard is a letter from a certain Emel'ian (of Odessa) to the editors of the SD newspaper *Iskra* (The Spark), relating to summer-fall of 1903, when several southern cities were engulfed by strikes. It said that among "some strata of the masses," the idea of the Tsar's role was embodied in "a rather typical slogan: 'Down with the autocracy! Long live the Tsar!'"<sup>12</sup> During the 1903 general strike in Odessa, an orator who spoke disparagingly of the Tsar at a meeting was beaten.<sup>13</sup> Until the very end of 1904, among workers in the Donbass, it was still impossible to deprecate the Tsar, even in small, intimate circles.<sup>14</sup> This also brings to mind a procession of 50,000 Moscow workers to the Kremlin on 19 February 1902 to place a silver wreath on the memorial to the Tsar-Emancipator, Alexander II.<sup>15</sup> The number of participants in this procession was larger than the number in any strike during the period under consideration (the Rostov-on-Don strike of November 1902 had 30,000; in no southern city during the summer of 1903 were there more than 50,000).

If "advanced" workers—that is, those connected to Social Democracy, to socialists—lost their faith in the Tsar, the same cannot be said of the proletarian masses. Before the events of 9 January, there were tens of thousands of advanced workers, but there were millions who still believed in the Tsar. A significant portion of workers ("the

backward strata of the proletariat," as the socialists put it) retained their "monarchist prejudices" and defended the existing governmental system even at the height of the revolutionary events of 1905.<sup>16</sup>

Many popular ideas and attitudes regarding faith, monarchy, and the fatherland, as well as popular norms of everyday social behavior, were "sanctified" by religion. As M. M. Persits, a leading researcher of the subject, remarked, "until 1905, a critical attitude toward religion on the part of the mass of workers did not go beyond—indeed could not go beyond—religious indifference."<sup>17</sup> For various reasons, this "indifference" expressed itself, for the most part, in an inconstancy in the workers' observance of routine religious ceremonies and in their church attendance. Nevertheless, most of them believed in God, attended church, and observed religious practices, rituals, and holidays. P. Smidovich, who arrived in 1898 in Ekaterinoslav, where he worked as an electrical engineer in a factory, told an underground newspaper that the workers there would ask him all kinds of questions about "European customs, about—freedom, religion, employers, police, and so on." But "in the end," he wrote, the lathe operator and the machinist from the railroad shop "refuse to break bread with me because I don't believe in God."<sup>18</sup>

Numerous documents generated by workers, especially after the promulgation of the 1897 law limiting the workday, included a demand not to have to work on religious holidays. In the historical literature and the chronological summaries of the workers' movement, there are quite a few references to disturbances and strikes that were connected with the refusal to work on holidays. The fact that all these holidays were "religious," however, was often omitted in the old (Soviet) literature, thereby distorting or transforming, as it were, the true character of the protests. Documents from the Factory Inspectorate and the police, as well as SD leaflets, show that during mass actions of the last years of the nineteenth century workers demanded that work not be required on religious holidays, or at the very least that they be paid extra for working on those holidays, and that fines not be extracted for failure to show up at work on those days. Included among the holidays named by workers during the unrest and strikes of 1898 were the twelve major festivals of the Orthodox Church, including the Feast of the Lord's Purification (eleven textile factories in St. Petersburg, on 1 February), Holy Week—27 February–1 March (Shchapov cotton-weaving factory and

Danilov sugar refinery in Moscow), Passion Week (main locomotive shops of the Aleksandrov machine works of the Nikolaev railroad, St. Petersburg, 8–11 April), Whitsunday (Gol'denstein and Oderfel'd jute products factory, Chenstokhov, in May), Transportation of the Relics of Saint Nicholas the Miracle-Worker (six Petersburg cotton mills, May), Day of the Prophet Elijah (five Petersburg textile mills, 20 July), Exaltation of the Cross (three Petersburg textile mills, September), Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin (three Petersburg textile mills and one in Odessa, 21 November), and Easter Day (Nizhnii Novgorod).<sup>19</sup> Though we should allow for the possibility that such demands were partially motivated by a desire to find an excuse to lighten their workload, the determination of the mass of workers to honor the “religious calendar” can hardly be doubted. It is noteworthy that clashes between workers and factory administrations over this issue were recorded in many different places: St. Petersburg, Moscow, Nizhnii Novgorod, Odessa, Chenstokhov. (It is significant that this mindset of the workers was also reflected in socialist leaflets.)<sup>20</sup>

Several serious incidents in factories, in workshops, began with a prayer. In both factories and workers' living quarters, there were always icons in the places of honor. (One should note, of course, that in the newer industrial regions, including the Donbass, construction of religious buildings did not keep pace with construction of production sites, which had an adverse effect on the regularity of church attendance.) Workers' religiosity manifested itself both in normal everyday life and during mass actions. Workers from a tobacco factory in Simferopol had almost never heard a revolutionary word. Yet in 1902, when they encountered a proclamation calling on workers to strike, they “swore an oath to one another on the Bible that they would hold out to the very end, until the boss gave in.”<sup>21</sup> Equally instructive is the Petersburg petition of 9 January, which was to be handed to the Tsar on that day. After listing the workers' misfortunes, the petition said: “O Sire! Is this in accord with God's laws, by the grace of which you reign?” By the same token, it should be noted, at this stage socialist parties almost never brought up antireligious themes in their agitation drives.

Everything that has been said thus far supports the notion that as a *mass* phenomenon among workers, indifference to religion should be traced not to the pre-1905 years, but to 1905–7 and beyond,

a time when the urban population, at least, gained access to movie theaters and other forms of mass entertainment. Clear confirmation of this is found in an item printed in the right-wing paper *Russkoe znamia* (The Russian banner) in 1910. Entitled “The Reign of Religious Indifference,” it described the situation in one of the southern industrial centers, Nikolaev:

Ever since 1905 the proletariat has grown indifferent to the faith of his fathers. . . . A flood of new ideas has had a negative impact on the religious psychology of the Russian people, who now run off with light hearts to watch theatrical spectacles, and find the fulfillment of their Orthodox religious duties onerous, having become completely indifferent to things that are sacred, to the temple of God.<sup>22</sup>

Back at the turn of the century, then, only the conscious workers, those tied to party organizations, were atheists, though the foundations of the worker mass’s traditional attitude toward religion and the church were starting to crack.<sup>23</sup> With respect to attitudes toward the fatherland and its defense, we must acknowledge the patriotic “mindsets” of workers not only during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5, but also during World War I, or at least its early stages (1914–15). The reigning official ideology—respect for Orthodoxy, the Tsar, and the fatherland, an old peasant tradition—helped structure this attitude. It is true that some workers, primarily in the empire’s western regions, participated in antimobilization demonstrations. But such demonstrations were few and far between. Of the 428 street demonstrations that occurred in Russia in 1901–4, only 48 (11 percent) had an antiwar (mainly antimobilization) cast. During the last five years of the nineteenth century, the corresponding indicators, in both absolute terms (67 demonstrations all together) and percentages were far lower.<sup>24</sup>

Every social stratum develops its own image of the ideal, and the workers of Russia were no exception. During the second half of the nineteenth century they derived their notions of the ideal from two sources: religion, on the one hand, and socialist literature, brought to them by the intelligentsia, on the other. What kind of notions did the workers (at least the conscious ones) have of the social ideal and how did these ideas intersect with the opinions of the socialists?

In turn-of-the-century Russia, a country where capitalism was not very highly developed and where serfdom had ended just a few decades earlier (whereas in many other countries centuries had passed), images of an ideal society, it might seem, could exist only in connection with dreams and fantasies. As it turned out, however, it was precisely the weaknesses of Russian capitalism's primary accumulation period that created a favorable soil for the socialists' propaganda, for their talk about socialism, about the struggle for a happy and just society, where there would be no conflicts of interest between different parts of the population, between employers and workers, and where there would be material abundance for all. Ideas about a just society, about socialism, had appeared in Russian literature even earlier.<sup>25</sup> From the mid-1890s they were encountered rather frequently, at least in illegal publications. But while variants of these ideas were discussed in the illegal socialist press, many socialist agitators were forced to acknowledge that most workers had either no real concept of socialism or an extremely distorted one. At the present time, wrote one author to the editors of *Iskra* in June 1901, workers "don't want to talk about the ultimate goals of the movement, and if they do, then it's in a confused, embarrassed manner." In a letter to *Iskra* from Tula, dated February 1902, it was observed that "our proletarian masses don't know what socialism is and consider it a dirty word [*rugatel'noe slovo*]." A letter from St. Petersburg to the editors of *Iskra* in the fall of 1902 spoke of "the workers' complete ignorance of the most basic issues of socialism."<sup>26</sup> Thus the majority of workers' had concepts of socialism that were either false or very vague (usually equating it with the general idea of a just society, based on equal rights).

By contrast, at least a portion of the more advanced, conscious workers already had more concrete notions of socialist ideals. For example, an extraordinary document has been preserved, a poem written by a member of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Workers' League in late 1895, in which the author expresses, however imperfectly, the league's ideological platform, its tasks, goals, and ultimate socialist ideals:

We are members of a glorious party  
 Its name is Social Democracy  
 We wish the party progress

We cause the merchants and tsars duress.  
We are enemies of a system  
Where idlers can prevail  
While workers, true producers  
Are left to die of hunger.  
The mission of our party is  
To overturn this order  
And in the place of groans and tears  
Replace it with another,  
With one in which the people will  
Own everything in common.  
All the land and capital  
Will be held in common.  
All will labor equally  
And all fruits of their labor  
Will be divided evenly  
Among the toiling people.  
And all the idle swine  
We'll send them to the devil!  
And then we'll build a kingdom  
Of peace, freedom, equal labor.<sup>27</sup>

From this it follows that the realization of the socialist ideal included the liquidation of the power not only of the Tsar, but also of merchants, of "idlers" (*bezdel'niki*) who lived off the labor of others, forcing workers to endure poverty and hunger. In the new society, land and capital would be owned by all "in common," everyone would "labor equally," labor's products would be shared "evenly," and the new society itself would become the embodiment of "the kingdom of peace." These ideas, expressed in the words of a politically committed provincial worker, adhered quite closely to the model of the existing socialist literature, one that still characterized the first few years of the twentieth century. In November 1905, Lenin wrote:

Socialism demands the destruction of the power of money and capital, the destruction of the commodity economy. Socialism demands that both land and factories be transferred to the hands of all the workers, who will organize large-scale (as opposed to scattered small-scale) production through an overarching plan.<sup>28</sup>

If politically aware workers did not always grasp the content of the concept "socialism," they were still quite familiar with the term itself. This was mainly the result of their familiarity with the illegal publications and leaflets of the left,<sup>29</sup> but was also, at times, a consequence of their reading the very legal publications that were *combating* "socialist ideas." Commenting on the publication of one such brochure by A. V. Bogdanovich, the newspaper *Moskovskie vedomosti* (The Moscow gazette) wrote in January 1903 that the emergence of that kind of writing was a sign of the success of the "learned distributors of socialist propaganda," who strove to "enlighten" Moscow workers "with the great doctrine of the vast worldwide tasks" of socialism, and who confused them with their proofs of the "need for a radical social revolution," without which Russian workers could never attain a decent life. The newspaper continued:

They imagine that the Russian worker can be lured into the socialist trap as easily as his West European comrade, after which they would cunningly take advantage of the worker's credulity and turn him into a blind tool of socialist revolution in Russia.<sup>30</sup>

It is now time for us to examine the question of Russian workers' attitudes toward private property. The majority of workers did not have a very strong or lasting attachment to property ownership. This can be explained by the poor, unsatisfactory quality of their lives, the absence in many cases of immovable property (housing), their low wages, which did not allow them to save money, and the absence of a tradition of private property. All these factors, we may assume, were linked with the workers' patently negative attitude toward other people's property. This kind of thinking was also stirred up by socialist propaganda, which constantly pointed to the unfair distribution of wealth in society and even called upon workers to demand that their employers open free gardens and parks and organize free outdoor entertainments for workers. For example, an SD leaflet issued in St. Petersburg in 1898 said that "we should enjoy these amusements not as crumbs from our bosses' tables [*khoziiskaia podachka*], but as our own possessions."<sup>31</sup>

This negative attitude toward the property of others was manifested most frequently at the factory itself. Low pay for very hard work led workers to conclude that since they were so inhumanely exploited by the enterprise, which "stole" their wages, workers were

fully within their rights to treat the enterprise in the same way. That is why at many enterprises the “theft” of manufactured goods and machine parts, which workers then sold on the open market to supplement their incomes, became an “ordinary occurrence.” P. Smidovich, while visiting the city of Ekaterinoslav in the mid-1890s, observed in a newspaper column that so-called “*nesunny*” (workers who illegally concealed and carried things off from work) were almost a normal, mass phenomenon at the city’s metal-working plants.<sup>32</sup> These thefts, as a rule, did not extend beyond the “sphere of production,” the workplace; they are reminiscent of the peasants’ practice of pilfering wood, hay, and other items from their noble landlords, which also was done “out of need.”

Workers’ awareness of their difficult material situation, of how sharply it differed from that of their employers, coupled with their sense of the unfair distribution of wealth in society, may help account for the propensity of some workers to engage in pogrom-like violence during strikes (and at other times as well). These pogrom activities by workers around the turn of the century are quite well known from the reports of factory inspectors as well as from recent scholarly literature—in particular, from Charters Wynn’s monograph.<sup>33</sup>

With time, the absence of any strong commitment to private property made it easier for workers to embrace the “socialist teaching” that the private ownership of factories, land, and other properties should be liquidated. In this connection it is tempting to quote the former minister of internal affairs, P. I. Durnovo. In his “Memorandum” (“Zapiska”) to Tsar Nicholas II of February 1914, Durnovo expressed his deep conviction that in Russia “the popular masses will undoubtedly profess the principles of unconscious [*bes-soznatel’nyi*] socialism,” and “any revolutionary movement [there] will inevitably degenerate into a socialist one” (and not into a political revolution, as in the West).<sup>34</sup>

The need to improve their working and living conditions, the quality of their lives, and the attitudes of others toward them as human beings impelled workers to seek a way out of the situation in which they labored and lived. Some of them continued to seek the solution to their problems in petitions addressed to employers, factory managers, and the local authorities (police officials, governors). In 1917 Lenin observed that until the events of 9 January 1905, be-

hind the tens of thousands of advanced workers there were still millions of "naive monarchists." On the whole, as the Gapon events make clear, such workers were capable only of requesting and imploring, rather than actively struggling.<sup>35</sup> Sometimes their requests turned into complaints against their oppressors, a muted form of conflict that was reflected in the "reports" of the Factory Inspectorate. But along with that kind of conflict, starting from the mid-1890s, the strike—i.e., the presentation of demands accompanied by a work stoppage—was already becoming a staple of factory life. Quite frequently, and often in large numbers, workers began to resort to this form of protest, thereby prompting the government, beginning in 1895, to keep statistical records of the strikes undertaken by workers in industrial enterprises, which by then employed some 3 million people.

Of course the percentage of workers participating in the strike movement in the second half of the 1890s and up through 1904 remained very small; it reached 5 percent of the overall number of industrial workers only in 1903, while in other years it was much lower. With time, to be sure, the "mass" of participants in the strike movement grew larger, but it was still proportionately small. Particular groups of workers, primarily in the two capitals (St. Petersburg and Moscow) and the industrial centers of the western and southern regions, reached the level of political protests and demonstrations, but such actions were relatively few.

Another characteristic of the workers' mentality was collectivism, which clearly had "peasant roots." At the end of the nineteenth century it found expression in the slogan, popular among workers, "One for all and all for one." At least until 1905, however, the workers' collectivism was local in scale and did not extend beyond the borders of their factory, town, or the surrounding region (among peasants the range could be several contiguous districts). Solidarity with workers from other cities was still a rare, small-scale occurrence. Even at the time of the "general strike" in the south, July–September 1903, the actions of workers in various cities did not occur simultaneously, but more or less sequentially. Workers in many instances expressed not so much solidarity as a desire to achieve what other workers had already achieved or were achieving. Nor was the general strike in the south supported by workers in other regions.

Among the acts of labor solidarity before 1905, pride of place belongs to May Day demonstrations and strikes. There were not many of these, however, and participation was low. They occurred primarily in the two capitals and in the towns of the western and southern regions. May Day demonstrations in Russia (including the Grand Duchy of Finland) ranged from 15 to 32 a year, with a total in 1901–4 of 80, or less than a fifth of all demonstrations (428).<sup>36</sup>

In this regard, 1905 should again be considered a turning point. But even in that year, until the fall, many of the workers' acts of protest were poorly coordinated. One section of workers continued to use the "old" methods, still closely tied to their earlier conceptions—for instance, flight (*begstvo*) from the job, in violation of their contracts; arson; participation in pogroms; acts of terrorism.

What did workers think about the prospect of uniting into trade- and class-based associations and participating in party organizations? Some workers—mainly in the western regions of the country—did have ideas, albeit very general, about the trade unions and parties that were active (*legally*) in Western Europe. Some workers had even become conscious of the need for trade unions if they were to realize their goals. Illegal organizations of that kind had begun to appear at the end of the nineteenth century and first years of the twentieth. And the emergence around that time of the so-called Zubatov organizations (workers' organizations that acted with the authorization of the police) in Moscow and in the western and southern regions was another expression of that process. In the first years of the century, legally authorized organizations of this kind existed in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev, Kharkov, Ekaterinoslav, Nikolaev, Perm, Minsk, Odessa, Vilnius, Grodno, and Bobruisk. Even in those organizations, however, though they were launched with the agreement of the police, membership remained relatively small—several thousand in Moscow, 1,500 in Minsk, 2,000 in Odessa.<sup>37</sup>

It was also around the turn of the century that politically conscious workers began to seek ties with the party organizations: SDs, Populists, SRs, and socialist parties of the national minorities, such as PPS (Polish Socialist Party). But these underground organizations, acting illegally, were still numerically weak. In late 1895 or early 1896, when the worker Ivan Babushkin, later a well-known SD activist, wrote a leaflet entitled "What Is a Socialist and What Is a Political

Criminal?" for the Petersburg Union for the Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, he included these words: "The majority of workers have no idea what a 'socialist' is."<sup>38</sup> With time, of course, the number of workers who knew what the word "socialist" meant increased, as workers became acquainted with revolutionary literature and with the proclamations of the different illegal parties. And yet to many workers the basic nature of the organizations with whose help they were supposed to improve (especially) their economic situation was still unclear. This confusion is illustrated by the "support" that the very same workers might give at one stage to representatives of Zubatov's authorized organizations and then at the next stage to representatives of illegal revolutionary organizations (and sometimes the sequence was even reversed). In those workers who were economically and politically oppressed, who were now beginning to open their minds to social action yet who still had trouble making sense of political trends or even grasping anything at all about political parties, such vacillation was quite characteristic. They could quickly move from sympathy for revolutionaries to eager reverence for any gendarme colonel who, as happened in Minsk in 1901, announced the creation of a (Zubatovist) workers' organization that would defend them from their employers.<sup>39</sup> By the same token, they could also move suddenly from participation in Zubatovist organizations to disillusionment with them and a quest for more "reliable" ways to better their situation, as happened during the Odessa strike of summer 1903.

Nevertheless, in this period there was very little direct participation by workers in the organizations of the SDs, SRs, or other parties. One need only look at the membership figures for the larger SD organizations on the eve of 1905: Petersburg—400, Ivanovo-Voznesensk—350, Vladimir—650, Smolensk—400, Kiev—700, Ekaterinoslav—800, Kremenchug—150, Donbass Union of Mining and Metallurgical Workers—400, Saratov—600, Ufa—200. The overall membership of the RSDRP (not including nationality-based organizations such as the Jewish Bund) was under 10,000. In the SD organizations of that time, workers constituted some 56 to 62 percent of the membership, and often less. This meant that even in this, the most influential party among proletarians, worker members numbered only around 5,000. Even if we use only the number of industrial factory workers as our base for calculation, this works out to

less than .2 percent of the workforce. In our old historical literature, the question of the strength and prospects of the party organizations in the period under discussion was for all practical purposes avoided. Evidence of low party membership had been preserved in the historical records, but because it did not harmonize with the “tune” of these old works, it was not cited. One such document was the Report of the SDs’ Petersburg Committee to the Third Congress of the RSDRP (April 1905),\* which noted that on the eve of 9 January the Bolshevik organization in the capital found itself “in a most pathetic situation”: there were no worker members on the SDs’ city-wide committee; ties with the masses had been broken or weakened; party agitators had actually been beaten by workers and their leaflets destroyed.<sup>40</sup> Evidence that in St. Petersburg in 1905 the Bolsheviks were “weak” (ca. 1,000 members) and their ties with workers “minimal” may also be found in memoirs.<sup>41</sup> To some extent these testimonies are corroborated by information in *Golos truda* (Voice of Labor), the illegal newspaper of the Moscow Bolsheviks, about the situation in the capital on the eve of Bloody Sunday. The paper reported:

[Gapon] was everywhere. He encouraged, convinced and entreated [workers] to stand firm to the end. . . . At a general meeting, SD and SR committees decided to join the already formed movement. . . . [But] even simply adhering to [Gapon’s] movement didn’t work; [party] proclamations were not readily accepted [by workers] and were replaced by messages from Gapon.<sup>42</sup>

Many workers, and especially those who were inclined to social action, valued comradeship and mutual aid and support (which of course did not preclude the participation of some of them in bootlicking, informing on others, and harboring abusive attitudes toward their comrades).<sup>43</sup>

In a multinational state like Russia, a very important aspect of workers’ mentality was the positive relationship that existed among workers of different nationalities. It should be emphasized that the industrial workforce in most regions of the empire (excluding, to a certain extent, Poland and Finland) was very diverse and mixed. Yet

\*Editor’s note: This was an exclusively Bolshevik gathering, which the Mensheviks refused to recognize as an official congress of the RSDRP.

it turns out that there are ample grounds for describing the relations among workers of different nationalities and religious persuasions, both in daily life and at work, in positive terms.

These positive relations were also noted in official documents that described the behavior of workers during the big strikes in southern Russia in the first years of the century. In this regard the words of the procurator of the Kutaisi district court regarding the Batumi strike of March 1902 are instructive. (The workers of Batumi included Georgians, Abkhazi, Russians, Kazan Tatars, and others.) The procurator took note of the "remarkably strong and steadfast solidarity among workers of various tribes, dialects and religious faiths, people who sometimes did not understand one another, yet obviously were united by common sentiments."<sup>44</sup> To an even larger degree, this was characteristic of the general strikes of the summer of 1903. Commenting on the general strike in Baku, the newspaper of the RSDRP's Caucasus Committee wrote: "For the first time, all Baku proletarians merged into one gigantic family . . . [united] around one sacred goal: the emancipation of labor. Workers—Russian and Muslim, Armenian and Pole—clasped each other's hands."<sup>45</sup> And in a letter on the July 1903 strike in Elisavetgrad (Kherson province), we read: "'Comrade, brother!'—such were the typical forms of address when a Russian worker spoke to a Jewish worker during the strike."<sup>46</sup> Similar attitudes were observed in other ethnically mixed regions. "Despite the predominance of [non-worker] elements who are sensitive to national issues," said a report from the western (Belorussian and Lithuanian) provinces, "there are almost no nationalists among the workers; Zionism . . . gets no sympathy from [Jewish] workers, the local Zionists being from the middle bourgeoisie; among workers [of different nationalities], there are no mutually hostile elements."<sup>47</sup>

There are, of course, some facts that do not quite fit these patterns. As is well known, in Warsaw during the first years of the twentieth century Polish and Jewish workers, adherents respectively of the PPS and the Bund, often held May Day demonstrations at exactly the same time, yet on different streets. In such instances, however, the division ran not so much along nationality lines as along the lines of political party (PPS versus Bund).

The real exceptions to the rule of harmony among ethnic groups in these years were the 1903 anti-Jewish pogroms in Kishinev (and

several other places) and the Armenian-Tatar carnage. (Later, in May 1915, there was also an anti-German pogrom in Moscow.) Strictly speaking, workers did participate in these violent events. Nevertheless, they were not typical of the relations among workers of different ethnic backgrounds. (These violent incidents, by the way, were condemned by the illegal party press of the different political tendencies and by conscious workers.) The basis, the underlying cause, the occasion for these admittedly mass upheavals, should be sought in the population's material hardships and inequalities of wealth, as well as in ancient attitudes connected with religious differences. Instructive in this regard is the answer of Kiev's provincial police in early 1906 to an inquiry from the Department of Police in St. Petersburg. It stated:

The [deliberate] inflaming of national hatred has not been observed here, but such animosities do exist between Jews and Russians, independent of [political] parties, as a consequence of their habitual economic conflicts.<sup>48</sup>

In some cases, a tense situation that had evolved socially would be exploited by the authorities, who "directed" the hostility of simple people into "national channels."

The attitude of most workers toward education, knowledge, and the acquisition of skills and culture was reverential. Workers displayed a hunger for "the light of culture," a striving to attain higher levels of education. To some extent these aspirations were engendered by objective conditions: conditions of city life and the increasing complexity of production. But they were also stimulated to a degree by the workers' desire, produced by those conditions, to put their lives in order, to make life better, to improve its quality in the material sense. In comparison with peasants, workers had more opportunities to fulfill these desires, as reflected in their higher literacy rates.<sup>49</sup>

At the turn of the century workers were not alone in viewing themselves as a "special class," with "their own" ideas and special code of conduct. They were also seen in that light by government officials, factory managers, and others. And, with time, their ideas and code of conduct assumed a distinct outline, distinguishing factory workers more and more from the broad mass of toiling people, severing the thread that had tied them to the peasantry.

This development too was mentioned in official documents. In his official report for 1899, the governor of Kharkov province observed that the factory worker, having become a full-time city resident,

is losing many of the worthy and distinctive traits that are characteristic of the villager, especially the latter's positive, undemanding, traditional worldview [*iskonnoe ego mirosozertsanie*], so rooted in religious teachings and in the biddings of his ancestors. In part because of purely physical conditions, such as the hard work and often unsanitary aspects of urban life, and in part due to the effects of the lures of the city, the worker loses the physical endurance and spiritual equilibrium that distinguish village people; he becomes nervous, demanding, inclined toward all kinds of fanciful dreaming. These characteristics of the factory worker provide a very convenient opening for those who wish to awaken his dissatisfaction with his own situation and with the social system, which is precisely what the enemies of the existing order have recently been attempting, unfortunately with some success. During the past year at many of the factories of Kharkov province there were attempts to organize strikes [*stachki i zabastovki*] and to present various demands for the improvement of the workers' situation. . . . And this year we already have several indications, at least in our major [urban] centers, that socialist ideas have begun to spread among workers, including the idea that there is a conflict of interests between workers and employers and that workers should join in struggle to defend their supposedly trampled interests. The means of struggle advocated are staging of strikes and demonstrations, presenting petitions, and other such tactics perfected by workers in Western Europe. . . . [On May Day in Kharkov] workers gathered in large crowds and, in the form of a procession, tried to hold a demonstration by marching through the town; some even tried to hoist red flags. . . . [They] conducted themselves very boldly and defiantly, demanding the release of their arrested comrades and insistently proclaiming their demands, including the reduction of the workday to eight hours. The disturbances continued for several days. . . . The workers were acting under the influence of proclamations that were widely distributed of late by various socialist circles, and

they followed the program recommended by those circles. . . . Yet in this case the workers by no means appear to be blind tools in the hands of malicious people. . . . Many of them have consciously thought through the goals they are pursuing, have firmly adopted a definite program of action, and have demonstrated restraint and discipline in carrying it out. This, I dare say, is a most dangerous symptom.<sup>50</sup>

And in 1902 the chief of gendarmes, Petr D. Sviatopolk-Mirskii, wrote:

During the past 3–4 years, the good-natured Russian lad has been transformed into a peculiar type of semiliterate *intelligent*, who considers it his duty to deny religion and the family, scorn the law, disobey and mock authority. Fortunately, such youths are still very few at our factories, but this tiny handful is providing leadership to the entire remaining inert mass of workers.<sup>51</sup>

These remarkable documents paint the ideas and behavior of workers (the “advanced” and some of the middle group) in very vivid colors and point to those characteristics that distinguished these workers from the mass of peasants, from villagers: undisguised dissatisfaction with their economic and legal position; an “ironic view” of reality; the weakening of religious convictions and unwillingness to observe the old norms of conduct; the special demeanor found in people “who don’t give a damn for anything and lack a moral compass”; contempt for the law and defiance of authority; aspirations to improve their lot with the help of organization, revolutionaries, and mass actions directed against employers, even, to some extent, against the authorities. And yet, despite all these important changes and advances in ideas and in modes of behavior, the mentality of most workers remained on the whole within the boundaries of earlier notions, sanctified by religion, church, and official ideology. This was true of all but a relatively small stratum of conscious, intellectually advanced, socially active workers, who had ties with socialists and had already participated in mass actions.

Perhaps what we most need to recognize is this very important aspect of the mentality of Russia’s workers at the turn of the century: it was in a transitional, formative stage, one that saw the workers breaking with many old ideas and establishing some new ones. If the

lower strata of workers still remained “in bondage” to conservative ideas, the advanced workers accepted, assimilated, and even attempted to live by the new ideas introduced to them by the socialist intelligentsia, the representatives of party organizations. The middle group often wavered, displaying instability in their views and in their conduct.

The revolutionary events of 1905–7 produced and gave shape to a basic “corrective” in the mentality of Russia’s workers, especially their middle and lower strata, while at the same time altering the proportions of the three strata in favor of the socially more active and advanced. The changes were expressed in a revision of the workers’ old ideas about how to better their position, a shift in their attitude toward the autocratic-police order, an improvement in their attitude toward the radical parties of the left, and a waxing of their desire for organization. Yet for all these changes, it was still the preceding period that constituted the natural prehistory of the shaking loose and breaking down of the conservative ideas and modes of conduct of the past.

#### NOTES

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**PETERSBURG WORKERS AND THE INTELLIGENTSIA  
ON THE EVE OF THE REVOLUTION OF 1905–7:  
THE ASSEMBLY OF RUSSIAN FACTORY AND  
MILL WORKERS OF THE CITY OF ST. PETERSBURG**

**Sergei I. Potolov**

In this essay, I will briefly examine the complex problem of “workers and intelligentsia” by focusing on the activities of the largest legal workers’ organization in St. Petersburg on the eve of the Revolution of 1905, the Assembly of Russian Factory and Mill Workers of the City of St. Petersburg, led by Father Georgii A. Gapon. An extensive research-based literature and numerous published memoirs exist on the subject, freeing me from the need to provide a detailed, factual account at this time.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the capital of the Russian empire, St. Petersburg, was also a major industrial center. During the industrial boom of the 1890s alone, the number of industrial workers in St. Petersburg almost doubled. At the turn of the century, as many as 140,000 to 150,000 workers were employed in that city at enterprises that were included in the statistics of the Factory Inspectorate; they constituted as much as 8–9 percent of the industrial proletariat in the factories of Russia. Especially noteworthy during these years was the formation in St. Petersburg of an “army” of metal workers, 70,000 strong. Concentrated, as a rule, in the largest enterprises, they represented an immense social force. Moreover, along with the workers in large industrial plants, the city had many other hired laborers, including those employed in smaller enterprises, in construction, transportation, the commercial sector, and the service sector, as well as unskilled casual laborers (*chernorabochie*) and day-workers. All told, according to the citywide census of 1900, there were 438,540 workers of all kinds. If we add their family members, the total comes to 636,055, or 44.4 percent of the

city's population. If we add to our calculations the numerous servants living in St. Petersburg (both private servants and those working in various institutions), who along with their families represented 11–14 percent of the city's population in the years 1881–1900, then by 1900 the proletarian stratum, broadly understood, already constituted 57.5 percent of the city's population.<sup>2</sup>

The majority of these workers were recent arrivals from the countryside who retained many different connections—religious, legal, economic—with their home villages. Their village ties were particularly visible in their quest for self-organization and mutual aid, so characteristic of the Russian peasant commune.<sup>3</sup> And right up to the 1905 Revolution, of course, the vast majority of these peasant-workers were hardly affected by the Petersburg labor movement, which never drew more than 20,000–40,000 participants at any given time, even during the city's great upheavals—the famous “industrial war” of 1896–97 and the strikes of May–June 1901 (the “Obukhov Defense”). During the decade preceding the 1905 Revolution (1895–1904), Petersburg workers took part in strikes that were primarily economic and spontaneous, although they were also sometimes accompanied by the raising of individual demands of a political nature.<sup>4</sup> By the same token, the vast majority of Petersburg workers had little contact with revolutionary circles, which were led primarily by the radical intelligentsia, mainly students. The activities of these circles did attract a narrow stratum of advanced workers to the revolutionary movement, but because of incessant police persecution and frequent arrests, they were unable to exert any significant influence on the remaining workers.

At the turn of the century, among the more politically conscious workers, whose ranks included people who were educated at Sunday and evening schools for workers and representatives of a rather small group of “worker-intelligentsia,” one group was particularly noteworthy. These were workers who advocated independent (meaning independent of the intelligentsia) action by workers in their struggle for their vital economic interests, and who favored the formation of legal labor organizations (unions based on craft) and mutual aid funds. This “economism” in the workers' movement was perfectly natural, reflecting the level of the workers' mass consciousness and their well-known class-based bias against the intelligentsia, often on a par with their bias against factory owners, government

officials, and factory inspectors. In St. Petersburg this tendency found its concrete expression in the activities of two groups: Workers' Thought (*Rabochaia mysl'*) and the Workers' Organization (*Rabochaia organizatsiia*).<sup>5</sup>

One paradox of Russian life at the time was the fact that the spontaneous "trade-unionism" of these workers was not adequately matched by the state in the form of appropriate labor legislation. In autocratic Russia prior to 1905, ordinary economic strikes and all genuine workers' organizations were prohibited by law and subject to criminal prosecution. The tenor of such meager labor legislation as existed was blatantly conservative and paternalistic.

At the beginning of the century, to be sure, the Finance Ministry, headed by Sergei Witte, made an unsuccessful attempt to reform Russia's labor legislation. The plan was to rescind the criminal prosecution of participants in economic strikes and, having legalized strikes, allow workers to form their own cultural-educational organizations and mutual aid societies and to hold meetings at their factories without interference. These proposals were contained in a special memorandum entitled "On the Reconsideration of the Laws Punishing Strikes and Punishing the Abrogation of Labor Contracts Prior to Their Expiration, and on the Desirability of the Establishment of Self-Help Organizations for Workers," a document that in the scholarly literature is usually called the "Witte Memorandum."<sup>6</sup> But the plan was not introduced at the time, except for one very minor section: the law on factory elders (*starosty*) of 10 June 1903, which had an essentially conservative function and which in the end turned out to be stillborn because it was boycotted by both workers and most industrialists.<sup>7</sup>

Just as unsuccessful were the attempts, sometimes labeled "police socialism," to legalize workers' organizations under the supervision of the secret police. The intent of Sergei Zubatov, the police official behind this effort, was to remove the workers from the influence of revolutionary groups and the democratic intelligentsia. But police socialism was an internally contradictory policy, one that met with the resistance of both industrialists and politically conscious workers. Most important, as the workers' general strike in the south of Russia in the summer of 1903 clearly demonstrated, the policy was unable to prevent the further growth of the labor movement.<sup>8</sup>

It was after his transfer in late 1902 to St. Petersburg, where he took charge of the *osobyi otdel* (Special Section) of the Department of Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (hereafter MVD), that Zubatov, with assistance from some Moscow workers, attempted to organize a large-scale pro-government workers' organization in the capital itself. But very little came of it. Founded in 1903, the Petersburg Mutual Aid Society of Workers in Machine Industries—an exact replica of Zubatov's Moscow society of the same name—had the reputation among Petersburg workers of an undisguised police-run organization, and it failed to acquire a mass base.

Soon, however, Zubatov took notice of a young priest, Georgii Gapon, who had an appetite for and practical experience with preaching to workers. Zubatov got to know Gapon and supplied him with literature, including even some of the illegal literature of the left. Moreover, according to the authoritative testimony of Zubatov himself, Gapon received a monthly stipend of 100 rubles from him and became "his man."<sup>9</sup> Gapon also enjoyed the protection of St. Petersburg's municipal governor, General N. V. Kleigels; the Petersburg metropolitan, Antonii; and the head of the Holy Synod, Konstantin Pobedonostsev. In 1903, with the aid of these men, Gapon finally graduated (though not without difficulty) from the Theological Academy and was given a position as priest in the church affiliated with the Petersburg transit prison.

In the fall of 1903, the proud and ambitious Gapon formed his own organization, the Assembly of Russian Factory and Mill Workers of the City of St. Petersburg. Its organizational charter was approved by the MVD on 15 February 1904. Describing in detail the structure and character of the activities of the proposed organization, Gapon, in his memorandum of 14 October 1903 to Director of the Department of Police A. A. Lopukhin, stressed the need to provide a "legal outlet" to the workers' desire to organize and act independently:

It is better for workers to satisfy *their natural* desire to organize for self-help and mutual aid and to express their reasonable wish to act independently for the good of the motherland *visibly and openly*, than for workers (as they would surely do) to organize and undertake unwise initiatives *secretly and covertly, bringing harm to themselves and possibly to the entire nation*. We emphasize this point

especially, lest the situation be exploited by others, the enemies of Russia.<sup>10</sup>

In a different section of the memorandum, the identity of these “enemies” is revealed—the “conspiratorial [*politikanstviushchaia*] intelligentsia.”<sup>11</sup>

In December 1922, the Petrograd Institute for the History of the Party organized five memorial evenings, where former participants in Gapon’s movement spoke. Professor V. V. Sviatlovskii, who had himself been closely linked with the Gapon assembly, led these discussions. On the very first evening he proposed consideration of the following:

As far as I can remember, in those days the [workers’] mood was hostile to the intelligentsia, especially the revolutionary intelligentsia. The workers, in their own way, separated themselves from it. This can be explained by the fact that the [revolutionary] parties sent young and inexperienced propagandists to them. . . . I would characterize [the workers’ mood] as follows: they wished to pursue their own program—not that of the revolutionary intelligentsia—and to form their own independent workers’ party.

Sviatlovskii’s observations were corroborated by other speakers. Vera Karelina recalled a conversation she had with Gapon, when (in her words) he told her that “we need to show the government that this is an independent movement.” Of the revolutionaries, he had said that “it was still too early to send them to the worker masses, that [worker] self-development was an essential prerequisite. He spoke out against the intelligentsia, not wanting to give them the leading role.” Yet another speaker, Nikolai M. Varnashev, emphasized the workers’ “general mood of dissatisfaction with the party-centered intelligentsia because of its lack of restraint and its indiscretion.”<sup>12</sup>

On 11 April 1904, the festive official opening ceremony of the Gapon assembly took place in St. Petersburg’s working-class district known as the Vyborg Side, in rented premises that were specially decked out as a tearoom-library. It was attended by the new municipal governor, General I. A. Fullon. After an opening prayer, participants sang the hymn “God Save the Tsar.” They concluded the ceremony by sending a “most loyal” telegram to Tsar Nicholas II, for which they were favored with word of his “imperial gratitude.”

But it was the opening of a tearoom-library or clubroom on 30 August 1903 that marked the start of the real work of Gapon's society, which at first had an exclusively cultural-educational character. Its typical activities were musical-literary evenings, concerts, lectures, and discussions. Well aware of the generally unsuccessful experience of the Zubatov movement in St. Petersburg and elsewhere, Gapon endeavored to minimize any ties with the police and other government agencies, to make his organization independent of them, at least formally. On the other hand, equally aware of the negative reaction of the Finance Ministry and of industrialists to Zubatov's social experiments, Gapon made every effort to limit the assembly's range of operations to the organization of activities such as religious-moral lectures, musical evenings, tea rooms, and mutual aid societies.

In general, in the early phases of its existence the Gapon assembly appeared to be a completely loyal and openly monarchist organization, with a distinct touch of great-power chauvinism (it was an organization of ethnically Russian workers only). Not surprisingly, it received all kinds of support, including material assistance, from the then very powerful minister of internal affairs, Viacheslav Pleve, from the Petersburg municipal authorities, and from the local branch of the political police (Okhrana). At first Gapon's movement was essentially a variation of the Zubatov scheme, so it was no accident that most Petersburg workers began by ignoring it. In early 1904, the circle of people who attended the Gapon gatherings was the same crowd that had recently comprised Zubatov's group; until March of that year, according to the worker Aleksei E. Karelin (Vera Karelina's husband), a very reliable witness, the organization "dragged out a miserable existence."<sup>13</sup>

Already fearful of the impending failure of his ambitious plans to form a mass workers' organization, toward the end of 1903 Gapon felt compelled to seek assistance from trustworthy workers, people who had close ties to and experience working in the proletarian world. Many were former participants in workers' and Social Democratic circles—for example, the Karelins, I. M. Kharitonov, V. A. Kniazev, and Dmitrii Kuzin. Their adherence to the organization marked a decisive turning point in its further evolution; they comprised from the very outset a distinct group within the assembly, one that, as many memoirists attested, was generally antagonistic to

Gapon. Karelin and his comrades gradually began to play a major role in the organization and within its influential leadership circle. They sharply criticized Gapon, demanding that the assembly begin acting more aggressively in defense of the economic and political rights of Petersburg workers and end all collaboration with the government and secret police. With his feet effectively knocked out from under him, Gapon was forced to capitulate to these demands. Blatant Zubatovites were expelled from the organization, and in March 1904, at the insistence of the worker activists, a broad, democratic program was drawn up at secret meetings. Among its demands were a radical improvement in the situation of workers and the people in general, political freedoms, and the democratic reorganization of Russian society. These demands were eventually included in the petition with which Petersburg workers marched toward the Winter Palace on 9 January 1905.<sup>14</sup>

By conviction, Karelin and his confederates were typical trade unionists, supporters of a legal trade union movement, which was the basis of their affinity with Gapon. Like most workers at the time, they were not free from tsarist illusions, in that they still had hope that the Tsar himself would bring about the desired changes. But of course this was still a great improvement over the earlier hare-brained, religious-utopian schemes of Gapon and over Zubatov's conservatism, which, as we know, did not allow for the slightest restriction of tsarist power. At the same time, by accepting the conspiratorial program of the organization's leadership group, Gapon tied his own hands; he was now compelled to follow this new course, while masking it and concealing it in every imaginable way from the authorities, from the police.

Actively engaged in the work of the assembly from the spring of 1904, Karelin and his comrades did much to expand its ranks and its sphere of activity. An especially large influx of new members occurred in the closing months of 1904. By the end of December, the overall membership had reached 10,000 persons, concentrated in eleven district "branches," and by early January, there were already tens of thousands of workers and their family members participating in the assembly's branch meetings. The bulk of participants were drawn from the "lowest," most politically backward strata of the Petersburg proletariat, people as yet unaffected by revolutionary propaganda and usually standing apart from the radical workers'

movement. They included women (work with them was headed by the textile worker Vera Karelina), attracted to the assembly not only because it gave them a chance to fill their free time with cultural pursuits and to supplement their meager knowledge, but also because it allowed them to freely discuss their most vital needs at legally sanctioned meetings. The fact that women were brought into the movement was no small achievement. By the summer of 1904, in the absence of Gapon, who had left to visit his home region, lectures had begun to be organized on economic and legal themes of special interest to workers. Aleksei Karelin and other highly developed and conscious workers, cautiously, to be sure, were conducting propaganda that was clearly opposed to the existing order.

What ultimately wielded the greatest influence on Gapon's organization were the actual conditions within the country, especially the rapid development of a sociopolitical crisis in the latter half of 1904. The tsarist government's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War and the progressive worsening of conditions among the people led to the growth of general dissatisfaction and the revival of the liberal-bourgeois oppositional movement. The autocracy was forced to change course, and a so-called "spring" began under Petr Sviatopolk-Mirskii, who took over the MVD after his predecessor, Viacheslav Pleve, was murdered by SRs on 15 July 1904. At their congresses and at public assemblies and banquets that they organized in the last months of 1904, the liberals demanded constitutional reforms. And at meetings of Gapon's district branches, assembly members increasingly turned the discussion to the burning issues of contemporary political life. As I. I. Pavlov, one of the more active participants in Gapon's organization, recalled:

The critique [of the status quo] that was made in the press, still timid and vacillating at that time, had already assumed a more determined character in our branches, where the appearance of the newspapers *Nasha zhizn'* [Our Life] and, especially, *Nashi dni* [Our Days] was warmly greeted. Every evening workers would gather there; reading these papers over a cup of tea and discussing the issues the papers addressed, they would get to the very heart of things.<sup>15</sup>

That Gapon's organization was taking a distinct leftward turn was generally unnoticed not only by the government, but even by the

not very numerous groups of Petersburg SDs and SRs, who stubbornly dismissed the assembly as a patently Zubatovist organization. This leftward turn was an irreversible process and nothing could be done to change it, by either Gapon or his like-minded associates. Indeed, in order not to lose control of the organization, they were now forced to accommodate to the change, to adapt themselves to the masses of workers, then in the process of becoming revolutionized.

At this time, the attitude of the assembly leaders toward the revolutionary intelligentsia changed quite markedly. Earlier, Gapon was able to get by with the help of only a few *intelligenty*, organizers of his musical and literary evenings and lecturers who were politically indifferent. But now, in the fall of 1904, with the rapid growth of his organization and—more important—with the heightened interest of the workers in social and political topics, he had no choice but to bring in as lecturers specialists from the very leftist party intelligentsia that he had once found so unpalatable. One such new lecturer was the barrister I. M. Finkel', who in 1897 had been exiled for participating in an SD circle but who later graduated from the Moscow University Law Faculty. P. N. Kolokol'nikov, a close associate of Finkel's and a man who shared his Menshevik proclivities, recalled his visit to one of Finkel's classes for Gapon's workers:

Finkel's lecture was on an economic topic and drew a reasonably large audience of very attentive listeners. The lecturer spoke in a clear and popular manner about capital, surplus value, and the workers' trade union struggles, softening, it is true, the sharp edges, in part due to the special circumstances, in part in accord with his own revisionist views. A discussion followed. Some workers demanded amplification, others fleshed out the lecturer's abstract theories with concrete examples from factory life.<sup>16</sup>

Worker activists, former participants in SD and SR circles who now constituted a special group of 60–70 propagandists, also began to play a major role in a newspaper discussion circle, which met with workers to discuss current events.<sup>17</sup> It was in connection with this activity that Gapon was forced to abandon the restriction on the participation of non-Russians, in particular Poles, Jews, and Finns, in the work of the assembly.<sup>18</sup>

For the first time, contacts were now established with liberals, people connected with the liberal publication *Osvobozhdenie* (Liberation). At the end of November 1904, Gapon and his closest associates—Aleksii Karelin, Nikolai Varnashev, Dmitrii Kuzin, and Ivan Vasiliev—met with Sergei Prokopovich, Ekaterina Kuskova, Vasilii Bogucharskii, and V. S. Golubev. They discussed the idea of workers joining in the liberal petition campaign, including the possibility of workers adding their own demands, something Karelin's group had already been insisting upon for quite some time. With this action, the democratic program secretly adopted in March 1904 was approved, a program, as was already noted, that had begun the transformation of the Gapon assembly into a mass workers' organization.<sup>19</sup> Immediately after this meeting with the liberals, on 28 November, there was a meeting of the assembly's branch chairmen and members of its governing board (thirty-two people), at which the idea of workers advancing their own demands found support. Gapon, however, came out against the immediate implementation of this plan, proposing instead that the presentation of a petition be made to coincide with the next anniversary of the abolition of serfdom (19 February 1905) or with a future military defeat in the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>20</sup>

In December, at the regular meetings of the branch chairmen, held in Gapon's apartment, Finkel' and some leaders of the assembly spoke against the delay. Specifically, at the meeting of 12 December, as we learn from the later testimony of a leader of the Narva District branch, Vladimir Ianov,

Finkel' pointed out that while students were backing up their demands with street demonstrations, and while zemstvo activists, lawyers, and other public figures were composing and submitting petitions setting forth their demands, the workers still remained uninvolved in this process. He proposed that they choose one or another of these methods of airing their demands, for if they did not, then others, once their own demands were satisfied, would forget about the workers, who would get nothing.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, the demands of the liberal opposition were actually ignored by the autocracy, which in an edict dated 12 December made clear its rejection of any constitutional changes. This was a real chal-

lenge to society, and it was no accident that on the very day the edict was made public, 14 December, at a liberal banquet in St. Petersburg in memory of the Decembrists, the SD worker A. Sukhov boldly declared that the proper response to the Tsar's edict was revolution. "Of course," he recalled twenty years later,

most [of those present] thought that revolution, for the moment, was just a pretty phrase, a mere rhetorical flourish. [The publicist Aleksei] Peshekhonov even approached Bokhanov [another SD worker] and me and, with obvious annoyance, asked us where exactly was this much-talked-about proletariat that still didn't wish to appear on stage.<sup>22</sup>

It took only two weeks before Petersburg workers gave the liberals a fitting answer. The spark that ignited the revolutionary fire was the dismissal of a few workers, members of Gapon's assembly, from the huge Putilov Factory. On 27 December there was a meeting of more than three hundred delegates, representing all eleven branches of the assembly; for the first time ever, representatives from the revolutionary parties—SDs and SRs—were also invited. An important decision was reached: to advance a series of economic and political demands, which, if not satisfied, would be followed by a strike. At first Gapon objected to taking immediate action. Karelin countered: "Comrades! They are calling us Zubatovites. But in Odessa the Zubatovites proved themselves through their deeds [i.e., the general strike of 1903]; we too will prove ourselves, by presenting a petition." These words may have been the straw that broke the camel's back. Gapon then said: "If you're prepared to take the risk, well, then, let's go for it!" and then he voted for the action. "This decided the matter," Karelin recalled, "since the majority voted with Gapon."<sup>23</sup>

The events that rapidly unfolded in St. Petersburg at the end of December are well known.<sup>24</sup> The solidarity strike at the Putilov Factory, which had begun on 3 December, grew into a citywide general strike. Later, on 6 January 1905, Gapon proposed the organization of a workers' procession to present a petition to the Tsar. During these January days and nights, coinciding closely with a general public discussion of the petition's text, the spiritual unity of the workers with the radical democratic intelligentsia was to a great extent restored. The result was an amazing fusion of worker/Social Demo-

cratic demands with general democratic/constitutional demands in the petition workers tried to carry to the Winter Palace on the morning of 9 January.<sup>25</sup> Completely unnerved, the tsarist government opened fire on the unarmed Petersburg workers. The blood that was spilled on that day, “Bloody Sunday,” washed away the workers’ monarchist, tsarist illusions.

So began the first Russian revolution, democratic in its goals and its potential forces. The workers of Russia constituted the most active of those forces; they took the field in alliance with the popular strata of town and country, and, of course, with the central core of the intelligentsia, in the struggle against autocracy and for the democratization of Russia’s social and political structure. In this struggle, the workers successfully articulated their own proletarian agenda: the improvement of their economic conditions, the legalization of strikes and labor organizations (trade unions and workers’ councils [*sovety*]), and proletarian representation in factory-based institutions, in a state parliament (Duma), and in local organs of government.

Bloody Sunday turned out to be the Gapon organization’s last act, as the assembly was quickly outlawed by the government and its leadership arrested. Gapon, stripped of his priestly office by the Holy Synod, managed to flee abroad, where he began working furiously.<sup>26</sup> But attempts to revive the branches of the assembly at the end of 1905 and the beginning of 1906 proved unsuccessful; they were clearly an anachronism in the context of what was now a mass revolutionary workers’ movement, including the rise and energetic action of trade unions and other workers’ organizations. And tragic was the destiny of Georgii Gapon, who, attempting to revive his organization, became entangled in a dangerous web of interrelations with the government and the political parties. His fate was to be murdered by SRs on 28 March 1906.<sup>27</sup>

## NOTES

1. S. Ainzhaft, *Zubatovshchina i Gaponovshchina* (Moscow, 1923); U. A. Shuster, *Peterburgskie rabochie v 1905–1907 gg.* (Leningrad, 1976), pp. 54–74; P. N. Zyrianov, *Pravoslavnaia tserkov’ v bor’be s revoliutsiei 1905–1907 gg.* (Leningrad, 1984), pp. 41–51; V. Kavtorin, *Pervyi shag k katastrofe* (Leningrad, 1992);

- Walter Sablinsky, *The Road to Bloody Sunday: Father Gapon and the St. Petersburg Massacre of 1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); Gerald D. Suhr, *1905 in St. Petersburg: Labor, Society, and Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989); Knish Zinovi, *Pip Gapon* (Toronto, 1977). See also Gapon's own memoirs, *Istoriia moei zhizni* (Leningrad, 1925), and those of active participants in his organization—N. M. Varnashev, "Ot nachala i do kontsa gaponovskoi organizatsii," in *Istoriko-revoliutsionnyi sbornik* (Leningrad, 1924), pp. 177–208; A. E. Karelin, "9 ianvaria i G. A. Gapon," *Krasnaia letopis'* 1 (1924): 106–16; I. Pavlov, "Iz vospominanii o 'Rabochem soiuze' i sviashchennike Gapone," *Minuushie gody*, 3–4 (1908).
2. S. I. Potolov, "Rabochie Peterburga v kontse XIX-nachale XX v. Formirovanie i sotsial'no-demograficheskaia struktura," in *V. I. Lenin i peterskie rabochie* (Leningrad, 1982), pp. 9–21.
  3. For greater detail on this point, see N. V. Mikhailov, "Samoorganizatsiia trudovykh kollektivov i psikhologii rossiskikh rabochikh v nachale XX v.," in *Rabochie i intelligentsiia Rossii v epokhu reform i revoliutsii, 1861–fevral' 1917*, ed. S. I. Potolov et al. (St. Petersburg: BLITs, 1997).
  4. *Istoriia rabochikh Leningrada* (Leningrad, 1972), ch. 5.
  5. See Iu. [J.] Sherrer, "Sotsial-demokraticheskaia intelligentsiia i rabochie," in *Reformy ili revoliutsiia? Rossiia 1861–1917. Materialy mezhdunarodnogo kollokviuma istorikov* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1992), pp. 111–14, and the chapter by Gerald Surh in the present volume.
  6. Its real author was A. S. Astaf'ev, factory inspector from the Moscow district.
  7. See S. I. Potolov, "Tsarizm, burzhuaziia i rabochii klass Rossii v nachale XX v. (politicheskii aspekt)," in *Reformy ili revoliutsiia*, pp. 79–85. See also *Krizis samoderzhavii v Rossii, 1895–1917* (Leningrad, 1984), part 1, ch. 4.
  8. See A. P. Korelin, "Russkii 'politseiskii sotsializm' (Zubatovshchina)," *Voprosy istorii* 10 (1968): 41–58.
  9. S. Zubatov, "Zubatovshchina," *Byloe* 4 (1917): 169–70.
  10. R. Kobiakov, "Gapon i Okhrannoe otdelenie do 1905 goda," *Byloe* 1 (1925): 44. Emphasis in original.
  11. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
  12. TsGAIPD SPb, f. 400, op. 6, d. 2, ll. 13–15.
  13. In April 1904 only 170 persons paid membership dues and should be considered actual members of the assembly; V. V. Sviatlovskii, *Professional'noe dvizhenie v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1907), pp. 78–79.
  14. See R. Sh. Ganelin, "K istorii teksta petitsii 9 ianvaria 1905 g.," *Vspomogatel'nye istoricheskie distsipliny*, vol. 16 (Leningrad, 1983), pp. 229–49.
  15. Pavlov, p. 47. *Nasha zhizn'* and *Nashi dni* were daily papers of a liberal, emancipatory and neopopulist slant, published in St. Petersburg from November through December 1904.

16. P. Kolokol'nikov (K. Dmitriev), "Otryvki iz vospominanii. 1905–1907 gg.," in *Materialy po istorii professional'nogo dvizheniia v Rossii*, Sb. 2 (Moscow, 1924), p. 212.
17. Sviatlovskii, pp. 81–82.
18. Gapon, p. 71.
19. Karelin, p. 110; K. F. Shatsillo, *Russkii liberalizm nakanune revoliutsii 1905–1907 gg.* (Moscow, 1985), pp. 316–17. The well-known social activist Liubov' Gurevich, immediately following 9 January 1905, prepared a questionnaire for participants in these events. In particular, she recorded this story, apparently recounted by Ekaterina Kuskova, of a November meeting with Gapon: "In the last days of November, I and four other people who were interested in the activities of Gapon and [his society] . . . were at his home, at a meeting of deputies from the . . . 'branches.' . . . Examining the society's charter, we noticed several paragraphs that were dubious in spirit. Gapon said this was only a smoke screen, that the society's real program was different, and he asked a worker to bring us the resolution revised by them, which was political in character. It was soon clear that this resolution coincided with the intelligentsia's resolutions. Gapon not only had nothing against the participation of intelligentsia in his business, he desired their help and underlined the similarity of the demands. Those in attendance said that the time was ripe for workers to step forward with their own resolution. Gapon was of a different mind. He said: It isn't time yet; I still need to broaden my activity; and besides, we need to wait for some external event. Let Port Arthur fall" (L. Ia. Gurevich, *Deiatoe ianvaria* [Kharkov, 1926], pp. 13–14).
20. Gapon, p. 73; Varnashev, pp. 200–201.
21. "Protokol doprosa V. A. Ianova 18 ianvaria 1905 g.," *Krasnaia letopis'* 1 (1922): 314.
22. As cited by E. Avenar in *Krovavoe voskresen'e (9-oe ianvaria 1905 g.)* (Kharkov, 1926), pp. 13–14.
23. Karelin, p. 11.
24. See Shuster, pp. 66–95.
25. Ganelin, pp. 229–49.
26. See D. Sverchkov, *Tri meteora. G. Gapon, G. Nosar', A. Kerenskii* (Leningrad, 1926), pp. 56–103.
27. See V. M. Shevyrin, "Sviashchennik Gapon i rabochie Peterburga v 1904–1905 gg.," in *Rabochii klass kapitalisticheskoi Rossii (Sbornik obzorov)* (Moscow, 1992), pp. 36–37; Grigorii Usyskin, "Pop Gapon," *Rodina* 12 (1993): 24–29.

## THE PETERSBURG WORKERS' ORGANIZATION AND THE POLITICS OF "ECONOMISM," 1900–1903<sup>1</sup>

Gerald D. Surh

The Workers' Organization of St. Petersburg (Rabochaia organizatsiia, or RO) was the most important Social Democratic association of workers and *intelligently* in the capital before 1905.<sup>2</sup> Although it was most active in 1900 and 1901, it survived organizationally until 1903, while the ideals and standards it embodied continued to live among Petersburg workers in 1905 and beyond. It should probably best be remembered—though it is not—for the role it played in stimulating a strike wave that gripped the capital in May and June 1901, culminating in the strike and pitched battle between police and metalworkers known as the Obukhov Defense. The 1901 strikes in St. Petersburg were not only the most important and impressive "rehearsal" for the mass strikes of 1905, but were also a dramatic confirmation of the Workers' Organization's efficacy in mobilizing and igniting masses of factory workers in struggles with the representatives of state authority.

Paradoxically, the Workers' Organization has always been condemned by Leninists as, at best, a primitive stage in the development of social democracy in Russia and, at worst, a dangerous betrayal of revolutionary socialism; its relative neglect and negative characterization (as "economism") in Soviet historiography are therefore understandable.<sup>3</sup> Western historians, for their part, have neglected not just the Workers' Organization, but "economism" in general. Those who have treated "economism" have concentrated on its intellectual and ideological aspects, almost always in the context of the history of Bolshevism. Lenin's trenchant critique of the "economists" is typically reported in these accounts, but its accuracy is rarely questioned.<sup>4</sup> Above all, the RO and "economism" have never been treated as labor history or from the viewpoint of the workers in-

volved.<sup>5</sup> In short, the topic does not have its own narrative but has been all but subsumed to that of triumphant Leninism. Even the term by which we commonly identify these groups in this period—"economism"—originates in the Iskra-ites' polemical condemnation of their SD predecessors.<sup>6</sup>

This paper seeks to reexamine these views and practices with the aid of new assumptions and open archives and to suggest an alternative view of the Workers' Organization and similar groups that resisted Iskra's attempt to unify the party and clung instead to a vision of social democracy as above all a workers' party—i.e., a party controlled by its worker membership, acting in the perceived and verifiable (rather than the ascribed or theoretical) interest of workers, and seeking to include and represent all workers, not just those deemed to be politically more conscious.

### **THE BEGINNINGS, 1900–1901**

The basic outlines of the Workers' Organization's history are fairly quickly summarized. The technique of agitation, introduced in St. Petersburg by Vladimir Lenin, Iulii Martov, and other founders of the Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class in the mid-1890s, had excited the interest of an entire generation of revolutionary youth by its association with the apparently successful St. Petersburg textile strikes of 1896–97. The proliferation of activity using this technique and the increase in the numbers of organized workers made possible the founding of the RSDRP in 1898. As the most celebrated locale of agitational activity, St. Petersburg became one of the most active and successful centers of this recruitment of workers into the ranks of social democracy.

The RO arose in mid-1900 at the initiative of workers associated with St. Petersburg's Union of Struggle. It was the successor to a series of organizing initiatives dedicated to attracting workers to revolutionary socialism by agitating among them on the basis of their everyday, on-the-job needs.<sup>7</sup> The Petersburg organizers enjoyed the additional advantage of having their own workers' newspaper, *Rabochaia mysl'* (Workers' Thought), a paper that, by its editorial policies and its detailed reports on conflicts in individual factories,

promoted a close relationship between labor and revolutionary organizing.

The RO thus sought to advance the new proletarian activism which, though rooted in older populist traditions, distinguished itself by mass participation and the successful use of the agitational technique.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the RO became the prime creator in the capital of a powerful variant of social democracy that stressed agitation and organization among the “worker masses” (not just the worker elite or those already motivated), close contacts with workers and close attention to their desires, and advancing the struggle at the pace of the workers. This “workerist” orientation tended to promote the dominance of economic demands and to encourage worker-intelligentsia antagonism and rivalry. In harboring and sponsoring the RO, the Union of Struggle both codified and sought to overcome these inherited tendencies.

The program issued by the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle in October 1900 did not list the usual slate of abstract political positions but instead announced an *organizational plan*, one that foresaw a party rooted in factory *kruzhki* (circles of workers); representatives from the circles would then be elected to district organizations, which in turn elected representatives to a committee of the Union of Struggle.<sup>9</sup> Members were asked to pay dues into a factory *kassa*, half of which was set aside as a strike fund. While it may have been a misnomer to call this organizational scheme a “program,” the detailed designation of membership, dues, responsibilities, and jurisdictions in themselves may be taken as a political statement: designing an organization that gave workers so large a degree of control meant defining the work of socialism not as building a new state or society in the future, but as organizing a democratic workers’ movement and party in the present.

In fact, a key feature of the new organization (implied but not stated in the program) was the minimizing of intelligentsia interference in the workers’ self-government. To this end, the RO barred intelligentsia participation except for the delivery of needed services, such as propaganda and literature. Intelligentsia propagandists belonged instead to their own separate organizations and sent their representatives to meet with the workers’ district representatives in the overarching Union of Struggle. As the Union itself rarely met as a body, its actual functioning was exercised by an executive group

called the Committee of the Workers' Organization (Komitet Rabochei Organizatsii, or KRO), composed of the workers' district representatives and the intelligentsia's head agitator, and charged with supervising and coordinating the RO's day-to-day work, including the issuance of all leaflets.<sup>10</sup>

The new organization therefore stressed its rootedness in the factories, its application of the electoral principle, and its self-governance by workers. This formula proved to be very popular, and the RO expanded rapidly, numbering 300-500 members by the end of 1900. This made it the largest socialist and labor organization in St. Petersburg, and it was especially well developed in the city's Vyborg and Obukhov Districts, but also present in the Narva, Nevskii, Vasil'evskii and Petersburg Districts.<sup>11</sup> The 1900 program stressed that the RO sought to develop the "self-activity of workers" by organizing them into "fighting unions." In fact, the basic units of the organization were the factory *kruzhki*, organizationally and materially tied to the factory *kassa*. The RO's factory base lent it a greater stability and continuity, as most worker members were usually untouched by the government's frequent raids and arrests. Unfortunately, the *kassy* began to fail in 1901 due to a shortage of funds, though the factory networks based on them appear to have remained in place.<sup>12</sup>

The choice of representatives by election was a valued and distinctive feature of the RO, sharply distinguishing it from Iskra-inspired organizations, which abandoned elections in favor of cooptation. Konstantin Semenov, the RO's only historian who was also a participant, later cast doubt on the effectiveness of democratic procedures within the organization, claiming that the KRO overrode elections and coopted the representatives it wanted and that the factory circles often elected their organizers to serve as their representatives.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the RO's reputation as a democratic organization was apparently undiminished in the eyes of the workers, a reputation based not on the electoral mechanism alone, but also on a broader commitment to equality and worker participation.

The culmination of the RO's impact on St. Petersburg's labor and revolutionary history came in the spring 1901 strikes, which were at once a vindication of and a stimulus to the RO's work. The strikes in the Vyborg and Obukhov Districts and at a number of large metalworks and shipyards in other districts were clearly the fruit of

RO agitation, though they were also promoted by other revolutionary groups and by the rising political activism in St. Petersburg.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the RO's organizational network helped in the staging, coordinating, and spreading of the strikes, and its own members participated in and probably led some of them.

Semenov reports that prior to these 1901 strikes the RO's intelligentsia propagandists had already felt a more restless mood among workers; dissatisfied with their own propaganda work, the intelligenty had already drawn up plans for its reform. Semenov attributes this development to the intelligentsia's intellectual stagnation, a result of their having taken too narrow a view of labor struggles; in his view, only the workers' new militancy had awakened the intelligenty from their slumber. Be that as it may, the fact is that the RO and Union of Struggle intelligenty were awakened not only by increasing worker discontent, resulting from the recent industrial crisis, but also by the upsurge of protest from other groups—student demonstrations, assassinations, and especially the big 4 March demonstration in Petersburg and its brutal suppression. The growing politicization of the RO's literature and of the labor movement in the spring of 1901 is most plausibly viewed as an interactive process, workers becoming more receptive to political agitation, RO leaders seeking to bring their propaganda and agitational work in line with a rising level and volume of protest throughout society.<sup>15</sup>

The RO's connection with the 1901 strikes is potentially its clearest and most dramatic claim to having affected the external development of the labor movement and, equally, to having effected the transition from "economic" to "political" protest. These claims have never been clearly and unambiguously documented, and although evidence presently available is not decisive, it should nevertheless be reviewed. One of the chief reasons for supposing that the RO played a significant role in the genesis of the strikes is that the districts where the strikes were concentrated, Vyborg and Obukhov, were also the districts of the RO's greatest strength.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, direct evidence of an RO role in the strikes is hard to find.<sup>17</sup> The large number of RO activists arrested on 30 January and 18 April undoubtedly removed many would-be strike leaders. Yet in characterizing the origins of the organized, militant resistance offered by the Obukhov workers on 7 May, even Soviet writers admit the existence of a great number of *kruzhki* at the factory, along with RO-sup-

plied propaganda literature. It stands to reason that many of these circles were run by the RO. Semenov also mentions a group of circle participants from earlier years at Obukhov who joined the RO, and he indicates that the RO took part in planning the "May Day" demonstration (actually held on 22 April), including a contingency plan that called for demonstrations in the districts should the single demonstration on Nevskii Prospekt fail. Significantly, he claims that the strikes in the Vyborg and Obukhov Districts in May were a fulfillment of that contingency plan.<sup>18</sup>

One may conclude, then, that there is strong circumstantial evidence of a direct role of the RO in leading the May strikes: its great popularity and influence among Petersburg workers; the location of the most intensive strike activity; the RO's emphasis on factory circles and extensive agitational and propaganda work, which included a focus that year on organizing May Day demonstrations (see below). Given the greater receptivity to political agitation among "economist"-leaning RO members in spring 1901, it certainly cannot be said that the RO's earlier caution at broaching political issues hindered it from reflecting and enlarging the growing radicalization of Petersburg workers. On the contrary, the readiness with which it played this preparatory role demonstrated its commitment to the interconnected and interactive nature of economic and political needs and demands, rather than to one side of the equation.

#### **"ECONOMISTS" AND "POLITICOS"**

The mutual agreement among workers and intelligentsia to accord the workers a large degree of initiative in governance and policymaking was the RO's most distinctive and innovative feature. It made the RO a great rarity in Social Democratic history and an even greater one in Russian history as a whole. The voluntary restraint practiced by the RO's intelligentsia members in order to allow worker initiative to develop was completely at variance with prevailing practice, both in traditional Russia and among intelligentsia reformers and most revolutionaries. In breaking with practically the entire history of Russia's paternalist and elitist past, the RO can be said to have undertaken a revolution in social relations. Although it

is impossible to determine just which aspect of RO practice made the organization as popular as it was among workers, its attempt to communicate a sense of worker proprietorship and to put the organization into the workers' hands was undoubtedly a powerful tool for recruitment and organizing and one of the RO's most effective and attractive features to workers.<sup>19</sup>

The RO's projection of equality and participation was based on the active recruitment and education of all strata of factory workers as well as on democratic bylaws and intelligentsia self-restraint. The skilled and literate have always predominated among politically organized workers, and the RO was no exception, but what distinguished it was the active extension of membership *beyond* the skilled and literate. The thrust of its organizing was to form a party of workers, to enroll, mobilize, and speak for as many workers as possible, not to favor those occupations and strata that were more likely to produce leaders and hardened revolutionaries. In its agitational work, the RO reached out to workers in all industries, not only those in which better educated, politically more conscious workers predominated. In working-class St. Petersburg, this meant principally poorly paid, overworked, weakly literate textile workers, and not only metalworkers, most of whom were much better off from the standpoint of pay, hours, and literacy, the material basis of a developed political consciousness.<sup>20</sup> The greater attention paid to textile workers was reinforced by the attention that the Petersburg textile strikes of 1896, 1897, and 1898 drew to the industry, predating as they did any significant strike in the metal industry.<sup>21</sup> But it was also due to the RO's intentionally evenhanded effort to support, recruit, and include all categories of factory workers. This policy also contrasted sharply with the later Leninist emphasis on organizing the "most advanced" elements of the working class. Because representatives of better paid and better educated workers already dominated the RO's leadership, a party devoted to the entire working class naturally felt a greater need to reach those factories, trades, and strata that were not well represented.<sup>22</sup> The politics of such an organization viewed the struggle for socialism and the formation of a party of workers as coterminous, and the commitment to mass recruitment dictated a gradualist approach to inexperienced workers.

Indeed, the struggle over whether to emphasize "economics" or "politics" in the conduct of agitation seems frequently to have

reflected a disagreement over which kind of worker to recruit—or even which type to recruit *first*—the inexperienced and those more easily frightened off or those with already developed, if not fully articulated, oppositional views. If the RO may be taken as representative of a situation that often prevailed at the local level, then the real fire that produced the heat of the “economist” controversy involved a disagreement over which mixture of economic *and* political agitation should prevail and which types of workers to approach first, rather than a dispute over the exclusion of all economic or all political demands or whether all workers deserved a place in the party’s ranks. What united the RO was the aim of building a workers’ party in which both economic and political issues would have a place.<sup>23</sup>

A further distortion has been perpetuated in the existing literature by those who have attempted to explain the stance of the RO by its social composition. The Soviet historian V. I. Nevskii argued that the organizers of both RO and *Rabochaia mysl'*—indeed, supporters of “economism” generally—were an aristocracy or *verkhushka* (top layer) of the working class—that is, better off workers who might own their own homes and even land.<sup>24</sup> Others, rejecting the presence of a labor aristocracy in Russia, have stressed the “backward,” “gray,” and “elemental” nature of the workers to whom “economism” appealed.<sup>25</sup> The evidence indicates that the RO included both more “developed” workers and less developed, but that both political and “economist” orientations could be found in each group. Semenov’s account of the RO describes the worker leadership—dominated by Nevskii’s “*verkhushka*”—as divided between “economists” and “politicos,” which made decision-making a lively and contested process rather than a foregone conclusion, even if the “economists” normally outvoted their opponents, at least during the RO’s first year. On the other hand, the representation in the literature of uneducated and inexperienced workers as characteristically fearful and distrustful of demands reaching beyond the immediate needs of the factory community should be balanced by other traits of the group. The consciousness of inexperienced and uneducated workers was also more unformed, suggestible, and labile, so that for all their normal caution and lack of political consciousness, they could also leap to the most audacious action in factory conflicts—as

the early militancy of textile workers showed and as the RO's agitational rhetoric (discussed below) reflected.

In addition to these considerations, the broad parameters set by the practical task of organizing a party of workers elicited and reinforced personal sentiments that aided activists to accomplish what the situation demanded, while at the same time greatly complicating the process. The well-known resentment of the intelligentsia by workers in Russia was more pronounced among better educated and more experienced workers, if only because all views were more pronounced among this stratum.<sup>26</sup> Such workers comprised the majority of RO worker activists, whose own authority in the organization depended on their keeping labor organizations as free as possible of dependence on and interference from intelligentsia advisers. The preexisting and unavoidable animus against the intelligentsia, combined with the self-interest of worker leaders, encouraged them to confine the activity of the labor movement to economic issues, such issues being more readily understood and dealt with by workers, whereas political issues required more explanation and intervention by intelligentsia. Many worker leaders felt better able to communicate with rank-and-file workers about economic demands—explaining and defending them and recommending action—than about political ones. What can only be called class-related cultural differences between workers and intelligentsia thus conspired with personal ambition and practical considerations to further complicate the already difficult task of organizing a labor party in conditions of illegality.

This class conflict, if we can call it that, stemmed from lines of demarcation, already existent in society, from which the socialist labor movement was not exempt. While this conflict was an embarrassment to socialists, ideologically committed as they were to a comradely equality within their movement, they did not treat the problem as insurmountable. The activists of the RO were committed to a vision of their work that merged the tasks of organizing a labor movement and organizing a revolution by assuming that to give a voice to oppressed workers and empower them to defend their own interests was itself a revolutionary act. In general, both intelligentsia and worker members accepted this vision, and together they attempted to practice an organizational discipline that was intended to create the conditions of equality, in the present and in the party, that the common vision valued and idealized. And although this

vision gave way in the end to the reassertion of party leadership by full-time, mainly intelligentsia, revolutionaries, it continued to assert itself in worker-initiated efforts and in continuing political, social, and psychological tension between worker and intelligentsia activists.

### THE VOICE OF THE WORKERS' ORGANIZATION

Although spotty or missing documentation makes it impossible to write a sequential narrative of the RO's development or to examine its social history directly and precisely, there exists a wealth of information of a particular sort that has yet to be tapped. The leaflets (*listovki*) of the RO preserve its voice and make it possible to document not only what its spokesmen said to workers, but also the tone, the feeling, and the rhetoric with which it was said. So though it is not possible to reconstruct the organization's entire history, the voices of the leaflets can replay something of the nature of its internal communication and help to recapture that aspect of its social relations.

The leaflets, Konstantin Semenov assures us, were the RO's basic information conduit to workers, its indispensable organizing tools. "A well-composed leaflet," he wrote,

would produce a sensation. . . . The leaflet was read, reread, discussed. In doing so, the conviction and inclinations of workers became clearly apparent. This was the most appropriate moment for organized workers to note to themselves [who might become] future members of the organization, and sometimes for this very reason workers insisted on the issuance of a leaflet.

The RO's leaflets were often written

at the instructions [*po ukazaniiu*] of organized workers, who either verbally communicated the situation in a given factory or presented the draft of a leaflet with a request "to add what is missing."<sup>27</sup>

The leaflets thus allow us to listen in to what workers were saying to each other and hear how they portrayed their own struggle.

A great variety of texts appeared in the guise of leaflets, which were brief (one or two pages), cheaply printed communications designed for widespread distribution and easy concealment. For instance, the RO's program (discussed above) appeared in leaflet form, as did poems, songs, and stories. Leaflets could also be directed to different audiences; besides workers, the leaflets of revolutionary groups in this period frequently addressed students and the general public. In other times and places they were directed toward soldiers and peasants as well.

Only leaflets addressed to workers and authored by the RO or the Union of Struggle will be discussed here, and these may be divided into three rough and overlapping categories: strike, agitational, and informational (or propaganda) leaflets. Strike leaflets were those issued before and during strikes; they normally spoke to specific conditions at a specific workplace and usually included a list of demands. Agitational leaflets spoke to a more general situation, a broader audience, and a wider protest, although they need not have advocated any particular action; those issued before the May Day holiday can be considered typical agitational leaflets. Informational leaflets normally called for no action at all but were aimed at imparting political information, education, and propaganda. Typical of such propaganda leaflets were several series that began to appear around 1900, usually numbered, and bearing such series titles as *Rabochii listok*, *Pis'ma pro nashi poriadki i neporiadki*, and *Voprosy russkoi zhizni*. Topics of individual leaflets in the series ranged from indirect taxation and overtime work to disquisitions on the revolutionary movement. In practice, the three categories of leaflets tended to overlap significantly. Strike leaflets were also agitational; informational leaflets had an agitational subtext, one that sometimes became explicit; and both strike and agitational leaflets sometimes used information on developments in other factories or cities to rouse their readers.

How did the intelligentsia and worker activists who wrote the leaflets address the less experienced, less politically knowledgeable workers at whom they were aimed? The typical strike or agitational leaflet for workers issued by the KRO contained a detailed description of conditions at a given factory. This was accompanied by varying amounts of moral rhetoric directed against bosses, foremen, and other local oppressors and stressing the righteousness of the work-

ers' cause. Thus a December 1900 leaflet "To the Workers at the SPA Machine-Produced Shoe Factory" focused on the low wages and high profits and argued that the workers might raise piece rates by striking. It concluded with the plea:

Just begin the fight, comrades, begin it boldly. Each of us can get through, somehow, even if only for two weeks, especially because the organized workers of other factories promise us their material support—and in two weeks victory will be ours. Let's show our bosses, comrades, that cobblers too can defend their interests. The example of other factories has shown us how we have to fight, and we will fight staunchly, boldly, all together and for the common cause—everyone in whom a conscience still lives, in whom honor is still intact.<sup>28</sup>

The mode of address here indicates that this may have been one of the first leaflets at the factory and that the shoe workers were being treated as inexperienced strikers, which may explain the leaflet's strong reliance on appeals to reason and its mild and apolitical rhetoric. The strongest judgments made in the leaflet were calling the bosses robbers and their managers "true lackeys" (*vernye khology*) and the stress placed on the tactical consideration that the owners would be particularly vulnerable at this time of year because of the many orders that had to be promptly filled.

This language may be contrasted with that used in another leaflet issued by the KRO in the same month, "To Workers of the SPB Metal Plant, formerly Rasteriaev's," a factory with a much larger number of skilled and educated workers, located in a district (Vyborg) where the RO had more developed ties with workers. Here the language is much livelier and the bitterness over the injustices described is explicit. "Comrades," it begins, "aren't we really sick of this life we lead? Is there really no better lot for us? This is not the life of a free man but the life of a slave fettered in chains." In contrast to the previously discussed leaflet, this one ends on a politically grandiose note:

Answer every pressure from the boss with a strike, for a strike in the hands of organized workers will turn into a menacing weapon against our oppressors. [We] need to obtain higher wages, a shorter workday, the abolition of fines until there exists a fines

fund [to benefit workers], then acquire control over it by worker deputies so that nothing is taken from it to compensate for injuries received at the plant. Yes, comrades, to struggle is necessary, for struggle will yield everything, through struggle we shall achieve all. We will destroy the existing order, where everything is supported by the oppression and violence of the rich [against] the weak, we shall win for ourselves a better lot and shall build ourselves a life in which there will be neither rich, nor powerful, neither weak, nor poor, in which there will be universal brotherhood, Equality and Freedom.<sup>29</sup>

The juxtaposition of such a lofty ending with a struggle to control the fines fund may ring quixotic, but it illustrates both the size of the gap to be bridged and how widely the rhetoric of the RO could vary from that used with groups like the shoe workers. This variation in the leaflets may have owed as much to personal and practical differences in the respective authors' views as to a calculated plan of agitation. In addition, the tone in the second leaflet is more relaxed and familiar, as if the writers knew their audience. The RO's strength lay not in its ideological consistency but in its skill and apparent success at communicating with workers and involving them in the organization.

The heart of the leaflet to the metalworkers, the element that both leaflets share with all RO strike leaflets, is its focus on specific grievances and issues. Like many similar grievance lists, the leaflet even names the bosses and foremen responsible:

In the 4th Machine Department a worker broke his arm during work and was out for a month. When he returned and asked foreman Madatov for a note in order to receive assistance [from the factory], he [the foreman] did not give the note to the worker, but [instead] said: there will be no assistance for you because you're a rude fellow, and if you want to receive aid then you're fired.<sup>30</sup>

Such language seemed to mesh with the shop floor discourse of workers and to make the leaflets an extension of their own conversations. This turned the leaflets into mirrors of the workers' experience, thereby building their trust in an organization that both shared their hard lot and offered a way to alleviate or escape it.

This simple two-part movement in the rhetoric of strike and agitational leaflets—revealing and describing the injustice and suffering in the factory, then holding forth the possibility of overcoming them—has probably been fundamental to political agitation among workers everywhere in the industrial era. It is certainly the most common rhetorical strategy in the RO's strike leaflets and was sometimes employed in agitational leaflets directed to broader audiences. This often resulted in what can be called a "transformational narrative," which raised the two-part movement to the level of a drama of liberation. It was composed of several elements, beginning with descriptions of the workers' suffering, sometimes so lengthy and intense that they assume the form of a self-contained lament. The point was either stated or implied that this suffering had brutalized the workers, reducing them to something subhuman. One leaflet from this period refers to workers as "voiceless sheep, shorn by the owner's scissors," and as "beasts of burden"; another almost suggests that workers are "illiterate animals" by denying that they are.<sup>31</sup> This litany of suffering and denigration is then concluded with the announcement of a solution, such as labor solidarity or rallying to the RO, a solution that conveys the meaning of not only standing up to injustice, but also reclaiming one's human dignity. The conclusion is often fittingly ornamented with extravagant and visionary claims, such as those that concluded the metalworkers' leaflet (above).

An example of such a transformational narrative can be seen in more complete form in a leaflet titled "To All Petersburg Workers," issued by the KRO on 6 April 1901 to mobilize sentiment for the approaching May Day demonstration (called for 22 April).<sup>32</sup> It first connects the workers' weakened bargaining position to the nationwide industrial crisis and to both the unemployment in the capital and the increased exploitation and ruder treatment from managers:

There is no limit to the humiliation of workers by the owners' lackeys—deceit, insult, foul language, and often beatings—the worker endures it all, bears it all, trembling for his skin. Comrades, we cannot live such an accursed life.

Although this was a relatively mild characterization of the dehumanization implied, there are pointed references to the workers' suffering throughout, expressed again in an admonition to "drive

out the base, slavish thought of submissiveness and forbearance” and to build lives that “approach something human.”

The moral narrative, having reached a low point in portraying workers as degraded victims, and after a didactic passage about the power of self-reliance, unity, and struggle, then concludes on an upward surge of hope for a utopian transformation and redemption of the worker and the working class based on militant collective action in the name of moderate demands but linked to a vision of retribution that verges on the apocalyptic:

Comrade, worker! We will not starve! Enough of management’s arbitrariness and the oppression of the lowly tsarist government! Awaken, prepare yourself for battle! The hour draws near when the workers’ organization will send a call and summon all the starving and enslaved, all together in a crowd of thousands, to boldly, peacefully demand *work and bread, life and freedom*. Then everyone whose life is hard, everyone who wants to fight for a better life—all join us, come, and demand.

Behind the Petersburg workers, the workers of all Russia will rise and ignite the struggle, a struggle of workers with their blood-suckers. Then, not mute curses and groans about protection and aid will be heard; no, then across the face of the Russian land will resound a bold tirade of workers about oppression and violence, [about] arbitrariness and despotism, and it will make our enemies tremble.

A call to revolution? Work, bread, and freedom are hardly revolutionary demands, and a “fight for a better life” would not seem to suffice to overturn autocracy, nor would a loud tirade about “oppression and violence.” Yet the transformation foretold in the leaflet clearly announces a new moral world and a new identity for workers, a utopian suspension of disbelief that every revolution produces and in the grip of which people are mobilized to accomplish deeds that otherwise seem impossible. The “impossible” in this case is the far from revolutionary commitment to join with other workers to defend their rights against employers. And yet it is precisely in this link between the modest, reasonable demands that accompanied these leaflets—generalized in this case to a call for justice and the recovery of human dignity—and the more exalted rhetoric of radical

transformation, contained in the modestly phrased but open-ended demand for "work and bread, life and freedom" and in the image of a national rising against labor's "enemies," that the RO's unique approach to workers is clearest.

Although the tenor and import of this leaflet cannot be called rigorously "political," neither can it be called exclusively "economic." It offers no program of reform, and it grounds its claims in a noticeable degradation of conditions inside factories. Yet it also links "life and freedom" with "work and bread," and it clearly asserts that changes inside the factory are dependent on worker solidarity and militant struggle outside it. Lacking party jargon and insider language, the leaflet includes political neophytes among its readers; yet building to a fighting pitch of anger and outrage, it also speaks to those already prepared to hit the streets. The leaflet can also be seen to represent a very close reading of the contradictory and nonlineal development of class consciousness among workers, able to leap from the fines fund to "universal brotherhood, equality and freedom" in a single beat. The applicability of this uneven logic was soon confirmed, less than a month after the leaflet was issued on 6 April, by the Petersburg spring strikes and the clashes with police and troops that followed.

In thus closely mirroring and anticipating the logic of labor struggles, the RO, contrary to its supposed "economism," was not only ready to lend support when workers turned from "economic" to "political" struggle, but even hastened and encouraged that turn. The RO leaders did not fear or oppose political struggle but appealed to the workers' ability to connect the injustices they suffered in the factory with state authority and repression. Some RO leaflets, like that to the shoe workers, confined demands to issues within the factory's walls, but these seem aimed at gaining an initial audience. The RO's true strategy emerged in those leaflets that, without explicit political references, left the impression that there were larger battles to be waged. We have seen the rhetorical strategies they developed to accomplish this: dwelling on the pain, degradation, and intolerable conditions workers faced, stressing the need and possibility (by joining the RO) of uniting against this, and referring to a vague but powerful retribution awaiting the workers' oppressors, as seen in the metal plant leaflet's reference to the "struggle" that will "achieve all" and a mysterious force that will "make our enemies

tremble." The "economist" label, far from being helpful or descriptive, actually conceals the preparatory role the RO (and similar organizations elsewhere in Russia) played in readying the new working class for its big political debut in 1905.

There were, of course, other modes of discourse to be found in leaflets addressed to workers. The series of informational or propaganda leaflets issued by the RO, removed as they were from the need to mobilize support for an upcoming strike or demonstration, struck a cooler, more moderate tone. A statement issued in May 1901 by the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle explained the publication of a new series, "Letters on Our Order and Disorder," by the fact that "at the present time a pressing need is being felt for a propaganda literature for wide distribution." This "literature of a new type" was aimed at "the average working masses" (*srednaia rabochaia massa*), whose reading level was supposed to lie somewhere between simple leaflets and books.<sup>33</sup>

The purpose of the new literature was to supply the *kruzhki* with material accessible to workers and to offer a civic education in leaflet form. The new leaflets were to relate "the facts of state and public life" to the "interests of the people generally and to the interests of the working proletariat and the labor movement in particular." The first six issues of the series treated topics that carried out the intention of raising civic consciousness: taxes, the state budget and public finances, tsarist wealth, contrasting the British and Russian governments, and so forth. The "new literature" and the RO's commitment to propaganda work in *kruzhki* show that the RO and Union of Struggle leaders viewed their task not only as inspiring workers to do battle with employers, but also as preparing them to discuss and make informed decisions about matters of general political import.<sup>34</sup> They viewed workers not only as a means to attain socialism or promote revolution, but as ends in themselves, worthy of becoming informed and educated. RO leaders saw themselves not only as organizers, but as educators, and RO intelligentsy, many of them university-level students, conceived of revolutionary organizing as a constructive, educational task; they shared the values of intellectual nourishment and empowerment of their pupils that are characteristic of educational relationships.<sup>35</sup> In fact, some participants remembered the *kruzhki* more for their educational work than anything else. One such person, Nikolai Tsytsarin, later a Bolshevik

leader at the Nevskii shipbuilding and machine works, later wrote this measured estimate of the circles:

From what has been said, it seems abundantly clear to me what an immense importance these circles had for us. But on the other hand it is also clear that in a party sense our kruzhki were diffuse and indefinite. In our midst . . . the most varied opinions got along together, but the problems that were discussed in the kruzhki had too academic a character. True, there is a positive side to this in that the circles were schools for the development of our views, insofar as truth is born from the clash of opinions. But this was also their weak side as a revolutionary organization.<sup>36</sup>

### THE RO IN 1902-3

After the strikes and demonstrations of 1901, the following year witnessed much less strike activity in the capital.<sup>37</sup> The RO's forward organizing momentum slowed, and the slowdown, combined with continuing police raids and the rapid rise of new sources of political opposition competing for leadership of the revolutionary movement, increased the anxiety of the Petersburg SDs about their own future, intensifying quarrels with their rivals and with each other. The RO's internal dialogue on strategy and tactics sharpened, and the Iskra organization's campaign to capture control of local SD organizations met with superficial success.

In July 1902, the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle, hitherto the willing and supportive home of the RO, united with its Iskra-ite opposition, accepting *Iskra* as its official organ and renaming the organization the Petersburg Committee (of the RSDRP). Though Soviet party historians have used this event to mark the beginning of a unified SD party under Bolshevik hegemony in Petersburg, it by no means signified the acceptance of all aims and principles of the Iskra movement or the abandonment of the RO's outlook.<sup>38</sup> At most, the unification marked one step forward in Iskra's halting takeover of Russia's principal underground committee. One month later, however, a group of Petersburg SDs opposed to the formation of a centralized party under Iskra and laying claim to the RO's heritage, broke from the Petersburg Committee and renamed their separate

organization the Union of Struggle and Committee of the Workers' Organization (KRO).<sup>39</sup>

In December 1902 a group of KRO sympathizers who had remained in the Petersburg Committee, headed by Dr. M. Ia. Lukomskii, challenged the Iskra-ites for leadership from *within* the committee. The open conflict between the two groups eventually compelled the appointment of a party arbitration board (*treteiskii sud*) to settle the dispute and to determine which faction would represent Petersburg at the RSDRP's upcoming Second Congress. As the arbitrators were Iskra-ites, it is not surprising that they ruled that the Iskra-ite faction should lead the Petersburg Committee; but in designating St. Petersburg's representation to the congress, the board awarded one delegate to the committee and a second, not to the internal opposition, but to the entirely separate Union of Struggle (or KRO). The Iskra-ite arbitrators apparently preferred to acknowledge a jurisdictional dispute within the city rather than accept an open division within a supposedly unified organization that they regarded as their own. As a result, the St. Petersburg delegation to the RSDRP's Second Congress was divided between the RO (as I will continue to call it) and the Petersburg Committee, dominated by Iskra-ites.<sup>40</sup> The committee's report to the congress was candidly entitled "The Petersburg Schism."<sup>41</sup>

The loyalty of workers to the RO leadership was a salient feature of the division in the ranks of the Petersburg SDs and the key obstacle to a complete Iskra victory. The popularity of the RO among workers in 1900–1901 apparently continued in 1902 and 1903, despite the downturn in strike activity, the intensification of organizational infighting, and challenges from new oppositional groups and approaches. By the same token, Iskra activists in the Petersburg Committee continued to complain about lack of contact with workers, even after their short-lived "unification" with the Union of Struggle.<sup>42</sup>

The Iskra-ites eventually took control of the Petersburg organization not so much by winning the workers to their side, but by winning intelligentsia allegiance, thereby depriving the RO of indispensable logistical, educational, and moral support. As noted above, the RO was heavily dependent for funds, illegal literature, and guidance in propaganda circles on members of the intelligentsia (mainly students). Iskra's strategy in taking over the underground committees was to convert intelligentsia activists to its viewpoint, the plau-

sible assumption being that the workers would have to follow.<sup>43</sup> This strategy explains Iskra's nominal success at injecting its influence into Russia's underground committees. In areas like St. Petersburg, however, where there was a conscious and articulate workers' opposition, this proved to be a slower, more gradual process, and the "victory," when it came, was Pyrrhic. Not only did the RO opposition remain unreconciled with the Iskra-ite Petersburg Committee; not only did the party as a whole later divide between "majority" and "minority" factions; but large numbers of workers appear to have left the RSDRP altogether, probably as a result of the abandonment of workers and the rejection of worker participation that the Iskra victory represented.<sup>44</sup>

The Lukomskii opposition inside the Petersburg Committee disappeared by fall 1903, probably the result of departure, compromise, and absorption into the committee. The fate of the RO itself is not as definite, although no further leaflets appeared over the KRO or Soiuz bor'by (Union of Struggle) signature after April 1903, and the arrest of KRO leader A. S. Tokarev in February 1903 was surely a heavy blow. Although some politically experienced workers joined the Iskra cause in Petersburg, many did not, and, along with the tens of thousands of less experienced, less educated workers of the capital, they remained without a home in the Social Democratic Party.<sup>45</sup> Such was the result of Iskra's "triumph" in the most important political center of the empire.

A key document from the 1902–3 factional struggle among Petersburg SDs, by showing how politicized the RO became after 1901 and revealing the nature of the compromise it offered the Iskra-ites, helps us to crystallize the issues dividing the two sides. It was the second Program of the Workers' Organization, issued in October 1902 and marking a basic change in the orientation first announced in the RO's 1900 program.<sup>46</sup> Explicitly declaring the organization to be "socialist," the new program assumed a pronouncedly political tone.<sup>47</sup> It made politics, meaning "the overthrow of autocracy," an immediate aim. It committed the RO to party unity, to secrecy and tighter discipline, and to the need for two party organs—*Rabochaia mysl'* for mass circulation, and another intended for more developed workers. This last point amounted to recognition of the need for a publication like *Iskra*, hence underscoring the group's opposition to Iskra-ite *politics* rather than to intelligentsia guidance as such. More

significantly, perhaps, the principle of a division between advanced workers and rank-and-file was codified in the following pronouncement: "The organization must be tight, encompassing only the advanced revolutionary proletariat."<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, "revolutionary" was defined very much in the tradition of the RO. Opposition to what the program called the "centralizing principle" (*tsecentralisticheskoe nachalo*), at either the local or the national level, remained paramount. This point was elaborated as follows:

Within the organization there must be unconditional equality. . . . All persons carrying out [their] separate functions are responsible before the entire organization.

And while the RO regarded party unification as "a matter of immense importance, precisely for that reason we are against any premature or paper unifications."<sup>49</sup>

Most interesting and unusual was the conception of the RO's aim, as put forth in the new program:

The real final aim of the class struggle of the proletariat is social revolution, the complete destruction of the contradictory bases of contemporary society, with its divisions into classes, its exploitation, its spiritual and economic slavery—its subordination of man to social relations that emerge uncontrollably. The social ideal of the proletariat can only be socialism. A community of equal workers, commonly owning the means of production and organizing the public economy with the purpose of satisfying all the demands of all its members—that is the economic basis of socialism. On this material basis an entirely new psychology will arise—the very same one that is already ripening in the contemporary proletariat together with its spiritual growth. In this sense the proletariat is the real creator of a new life, and not only of a new theory.<sup>50</sup>

The second program thus accommodated the RO to Iskra's criticisms wherever it could, while still preserving the integrity of the RO's original intentions. The vision expressed above represents a logical development of the first program toward one of the classic variants of socialism and not toward "trade unionism." In adjusting to Iskra's onslaught, the RO's second program put into relief those features of

its earlier history that it was still unwilling to compromise. If its explicit stress on leading the political struggle, opposing the autocracy, and forging unity among the local committees implicitly acknowledged past shortcomings, these corrections also made more emphatic the RO's continuing opposition to centralized control and insistence on local control and internal democratic procedures. The apparent concession to Iskra elitism in the call for a party of advanced workers must be qualified and offset by the program's vision of "a community of equal workers" (*ravnopravnye rabotniki*), created by a proletariat that is simultaneously changing and growing. The notion of revolution as a process of self-transformation as well as an external political struggle represented an enrichment of socialist thinking that was absent from both Iskra and the RO of 1900–1901. Few documents better clarify the practical compromise that Iskra made with the socialist utopianism inherent in its own tradition than this last surviving pronouncement of the RO.

## CONCLUSION

The Petersburg Workers' Organization represented the germ of a completely different fate and history from the one that the Russian labor movement actually followed. Although the organized expression of workers' democracy and local control was repressed within the RSDRP after about 1903, it did not die out in the labor movement. The impulse to participate and assume control of their own affairs surfaced repeatedly among Russian workers through 1921 and beyond, but especially in periods of revolutionary upheaval and most plainly of all in the soviets of workers' deputies first organized in 1905. This boundless proletarian energy was directed not only against the forces of the autocratic state, but also against the structures and policies imposed by intelligentsia-led revolutionary organizations and, after 1917, against the Bolshevik state itself. Besides the soviets, it appeared in such diverse settings as the Zubatov unions, the elections to the Shidlovskii Commission (1905), the Petersburg Council of Unemployed (1906), the legalized unions after 1906, the elections to insurance funds, and in apparently continual and endemic tensions between the worker rank-and-file and the party

leadership that continued to 1917 and beyond. Although both wings of the RSDRP were able to harness this energy and win the allegiance of many workers, they proved unable simultaneously to provide viable leadership and accommodate the demand for grassroots democracy that inhered in the labor movement as a whole. Instead, they forged two variants of a highly centralized socialism in which rank-and-file participation and democratic decision-making were conspicuous by their absence.

Yet the short-term view of the worker democrats taken by many socialists in 1900–1903 was considerably different. Iskra's campaign to win control of the party responded to and was promoted by the confluence of rising worker militancy, the competition of new parties and labor organizations for worker allegiance, and the accelerating politicization of wide portions of Russian society. A new boldness and efficiency seemed to be called for if the party was to meet these challenges and fulfill its declared aim of leading not only workers, but also the entire revolutionary movement. The pacing of SD strategy in accordance with the readiness of the worker masses for political struggle seemed to many like the indulgence of an outdated sentiment, positioning the party at the tail of the proletariat rather than at its head.

The irony of the resulting standoff within Russian social democracy was that the RO, true to its profession of worker democracy, responded to the same rising militancy and became increasingly politicized between 1901 and 1902, as was plainly visible in its second program. But in the very months when a reconciliation of views on political strategy was in train, views on party organization stabilized and hardened. Local autonomy and worker participation gave way to control by the Iskra hierarchy and de facto subordination of workers to intelligentsia. From the viewpoint of the RO's workers, the RSDRP ceased to be the unique home of their own freedom and an instrument "for the liberation of the working class." Any revision of strategy and organization that destroyed that conception of the party's aims was bound to seem alien to workers, even "bourgeois," as one extreme expression of this sentiment put it.<sup>51</sup>

Given the conjunctural circumstances in which the RO perished, but without our forgetting the continuation among Russian workers of the broader sentiment to which it gave expression, the RO might be most appropriately remembered for its special role in

the history of Russian political culture. It was and remains one of the few instances in Russian history when grassroots democracy was practiced as well as preached. The RO's egalitarianism and "participationism" gained it the favor of large numbers of workers, politically experienced or not, and the organization existed on the condition of the voluntary surrender of power by intelligenty who believed that revolution meant building a party of and by workers. This made it a nearly unique experience, for, as a viable underground organization that sought and recruited popular support, it took an important step beyond the realm of the utopian communities that were organized by and for people who *already* shared a common belief, the only other place in Russia where such an egalitarian ethic was practiced.

The attitude of the RO toward the hierarchical assumptions that were embedded in worker-intelligentsia relationships also allows us to see the Iskra-ites in a new light, as practical men who drew back from the utopian "excesses" of the worker democrats and whose methods returned to and relied on the more traditional elitism of the intelligentsia. Given the hard road subsequently traveled by the heirs of that practicality, one must wonder which side in 1903 stood for a true revolution in Russian conditions.

## NOTES

1. Research for this article was made possible by generous grants from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, North Carolina State University, and from the U.S. Department of State's discretionary grant program for Studies of Eastern Europe and the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union, based on Public Law 98-164, Title VIII, 97 Stat. 1047-50.
2. There were, of course, important SD organizations composed mainly of students and professional revolutionaries, and there were larger nonsocialist labor organizations (e.g., Gapon's assembly), but none that combined both SD intelligenty and a sizable following of factory workers surpassed the Workers' Organization.
3. E. R. Ol'khovskii, *Leninskaia "Iskra" v Peterburge* (Leningrad, 1975), and G. S. Zhuikov, L. I. Komissarova, and E. R. Ol'khovskii, *Bor'ba V.I. Lenina protiv "Economizma"* (Moscow, 1980), pp. 140-48, 175-78, are the best informed, if rigidly unimaginative, recent accounts of St. Petersburg's "Iskra" period.

Perhaps more typical of the manner in which Soviet writers have dealt with “economism” is M. S. Volin’s version, which condemns the entire phenomenon without specifying the historical circumstances in which it arose or even the names of the organizations: *Leninskaia “Iskra” (1900–1903 gody)* (Moscow, 1964), ch. 2.

4. Dietrich Geyer, *Lenin in der Russischen Sozialdemokratie. Die Arbeiterbewegung im Zarenreich als Organisationsproblem der revolutionären Intelligenz 1890–1903* (Cologne, 1962); Leopold H. Haimson, *The Russian Marxists and the Origins of Bolshevism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955); Neil Harding, *Lenin’s Political Thought*, vol. 1 (London, 1977); Robert Service, *Lenin: A Political Life*, vol. 1 (Bloomington, 1985). J. L. H. Keep devotes greater attention to the situation in the underground and emphasizes the great variety of views condemned under the rubric of “economism”; see *The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 58–66.
5. Two partial exceptions are S. I. Potolov, one of the few who puts the RO into a context that combines labor and revolutionary history (*Istoriia rabochikh Leningrada* [Leningrad, 1971], vol. 1, pp. 216–63), and Allan Wildman, who alone among Western historians examines the party’s early history from the angle of the Russian underground rather than that of exiled leaders. Wildman, who develops a uniquely critical view of the pre-1903 period, anticipates many questions raised in my article. While devoting several chapters to SD activity in Petersburg, he treats the RO only briefly, taking Ekaterinoslav and the south generally as the geographic locale for most of his account of the democratic worker opposition to Iskra. See *The Making of a Workers’ Revolution: Russian Social Democracy, 1891–1903* (Chicago, 1967), pp. 113–15 and ch. 8.
6. “Iskra” was both an organization and a publication; I italicize it only when it refers to the latter. An “Iskra-ite” is an adherent of the organization and/or its political program and priorities.
7. N. Baturin, *Ocherk istorii Sotsial-demokratii v Rossii*, 2d ed. (Moscow, 1922), p. 62, and Wildman, p. 113, where the founding of the RO is attributed to worker initiative, preempting the intelligentsia activists during their habitual summer absence.
8. See Deborah Pearl in this volume; Michael Melancon, “The Socialist Revolutionaries from 1902 to 1907: Peasant and Workers’ Party,” *Russian History* 12, 1 (Spring 1985): 2–19.
9. *Rabochaia mysl’* 11 (April 1901); reprinted in K. M. Takhtarev, *Rabochee dvizhenie v Peterburge (1893–1901 gg.)* (Leningrad, 1924), pp. 153–57. The program may be dated to October 1900 from the leaflet version of the program held in Gosudarstvennaia Obshestvenno-Politicheskaia Biblioteka, Fond Arkhivnogo Khraneniia (hereafter GOPB, FAKh; formerly Biblioteka IMLa), TsL-145/1900-X.2; confirmed in *Svodnyi katalog russkoi nelegal’noi i zapreshchennoi pechati XIX veka. Listovki*, ed. M.S. Volin (Moscow, 1977), part 2, p. 158, #1926.

10. K. Semenov, "Pervyi god peterburgskoi 'Rabochei Organizatsii,'" *Minuvshie gody* (December 1908): 266–67. Semenov had been an RO intelligentsia propagandist during the RO's first year and was arrested in a great sweep on 18 April 1901 (GARF, f. 124, op. 10-1901, d. 94, 11. 138ob.–139, 140ob.–141ob., 169ob.–171ob.). Although Semenov is highly informative and honestly attempts to recall the conditions that existed, he also reveals that by 1908 he had become highly critical of the RO's shortcomings.
11. Semenov, p. 268. For maps of the city's districts see James H. Bater, *St. Petersburg: Industrialization and Change* (London, 1976); Gerald D. Surh, *1905 in St. Petersburg: Labor, Society, and Revolution* (Stanford, 1989), p. xviii; James B. McKean, *St. Petersburg between the Revolutions* (New Haven, 1990), p. xvi.
12. Semenov, p. 271.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 272–73.
14. On the strikes see N. V. Iukhneva: "Nakanune Obukhovskoi oborony (Per-vomaiskaia stachka v Peterburge v 1901 godu)," *Vestnik Leningradskogo Uni-versiteta* 14, 2 (1961): 57–67, and "Iz istorii stachechnogo dvizheniia peter-burgskikh rabochikh posle Obukhovskoi oborony," *Uchenye zapiski LGU*, ser. istor. nauk 32 (1959): 201–16; *Obukhovskaia oborona v 1901 godu (K 25-letiiu Obukhovskoi oborony)*. *Sbornik* (Moscow, 1926); *Obukhovtsy. Maiskiia volneniia na obukhovskom zavode* (Geneva, 1901); M. Rozanov: *Obukhovtsy* (Leningrad, 1938), and "Obukhovskaia oborona (Iz istorii Obukhovskogo zavoda—1901 g.)," *Istoriia proletariata SSSR* 2 (1935): 68–112.
15. Semenov, pp. 280, 286; Wildman, pp. 114–15; Heather Hogan, *Forging Revo-lution: Metalworkers, Managers, and the State in St. Petersburg, 1890–1914* (Bloomington, 1993), pp. 59–60; Ol'khovskii, p. 119.
16. Semenov, p. 268; confirmed by Iukhneva, "Nakanune," p. 57. Obukhov was not an official city district, but the SD organizing district in the Shlissel'burg suburb where the huge Obukhov steel mill and several other large factories were located.
17. Ol'khovskii (pp. 91–139) emphasizes the role of the Iskra-ites in the strikes; he hardly mentions the RO, except as obstructionists. Even Potolov, whose account of the strikes is much less tendentious and gives far more play to worker initiative, no more than hints at an RO role in the strikes (vol. 1, pp. 235–48, esp. 241, 247).
18. Ol'khovskii, p. 130; Rozanov, "Obukhovskaia oborona," pp. 70–74; Se-menov, pp. 277, 291, 293.
19. In describing the unique authority of the head agitator, the only *intelligent* in regular contact with workers, Semenov points out that he could normally end debates on the intelligentsia side of the organization with the claim that "the workers have decided thus and so," a standard that even the "politicos" acknowledged: "For them, as for all Unionists, the opinion of workers was the highest authority" (*ibid.*, pp. 270, 281).
20. For a rough idea of the quantities involved, note that 29 (about 20 percent) of a sampling of 144 RO and Union of Struggle leaflets (examined at the

- GOPB) issued in 1900–1903 were addressed to workers at specific factories; of the 29, 9 were addressed to textile workers, 11 to metalworkers, and 9 to other trades, in which both skilled and unskilled workers participated.
21. On the 1896–97 strikes, see T. I. Sh., “K istorii stachki tekstil’shchikov v 1896 g.,” *Krasnaia letopis’* 2(41) (1931): 94–107, and V. N. Katin-Iartsev, *Istoriicheskaia stachka (K tridsatiletiiu Peterburgskoi stachki 1896 g.)* (Moscow, 1926). On the 1898 strikes at the Spassk and Petrov mills, see K. I. Kochergin, “90-e gody na fabrike ‘Rabochii’ (b. Maksvel’),” *Krasnaia letopis’* 5–6(44–45) (1931): 184–209; *Fabrika Maksvelia* (Tipografiia Rabochei mysli, 1899). The primacy of textile workers in strike action was not confined to Petersburg; see Reginald E. Zelnik, *Law and Disorder on the Narova River: The Kreenholm Strike of 1872* (Berkeley, 1995), pp. 16–17.
  22. A list of arrestees on 30 January and 18 April 1901 contains the names of forty-seven workers arrested along with RO members or having some connection with them. Of the thirty-five whose occupations are listed, twenty-six worked in skilled trades; forty-one were listed as literate or having attended a school (GARF, f. 124, op. 10-1901, dd. 93, 94).
  23. This viewpoint was expressed in Semen Kanatchikov’s account of party work in Saratov during the period under discussion: *A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia. The Autobiography of Semën Ivanovich Kanatchikov*, trans. and ed. R. E. Zelnik (Stanford, 1986), pp. 204–5.
  24. *Istoriia RKP (b). Kratkii ocherk*, 2d ed. (Leningrad, 1926), p. 93.
  25. See, for example, *Istoriia Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuzu*, vol. 1: *Sozdanie bol’shevistskoi partii 1883–1903 gg.* (Moscow, 1964), pp. 274, 275.
  26. The most important account of worker-intelligentsia relations in the period under consideration is Wildman. The Bolshevik worker Kanatchikov offers important insights into this complex relationship (*A Radical Worker*, pp. 204–7). Further nuances are added in recent studies: Theodore H. Friedgut, *Iuzovka and Revolution*, vol. 2 (Princeton, 1994), p. 59; Hogan, p. 39.
  27. Semenov, pp. 279, 278.
  28. GOPB, FAKh, TsL 1-45/1900-XII.23; also in Hoover Institution Archive, Nicolaevsky Collection (HIA-NA), 56/91/16.
  29. GOPB, FAKh, TsL 1-45/1900-XII.
  30. *Ibid.*
  31. GOPB, FAKh, TsL 1-45/1900-V, and TsL 1-45/1902-IV, respectively.
  32. GOPB, FAKh, TsL 1-45/1901-IV.6.
  33. GARF, f. 1741 (Fond Listovok), op. 1, d. 10058.
  34. The RO’s 1900 program noted that “the defense of their essential interests, however petty they might be, schools [*vospityvaet*] the working masses in socialist consciousness and prepares groups of active fighters for the workers’ cause” (Takhtarev, p. 154).

35. Semenov, who served as an RO propagandist, also described the work in educational terms, but from the viewpoint of insecure teachers coping with critical, demanding students (p. 276).
36. Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Istoriko-politicheskikh Dokumentov SPB (TsGAIPD-SPB), fond 4000, op. 5, d. 157, l. 13.
37. While 150,500 man-days were lost to strikes in Petersburg in 1901, only 1,400 were lost in 1902. See, inter alia, Iu. I. Kir'ianov, *Perekhod k massovoi politicheskoi bor'be. Rabochii klass nakanune pervoi russkoi revoliutsii* (Moscow, 1987), p. 78. Of all strikers in the Petersburg metal industry for the decade 1895–1904, the years 1902–4 account for only 9.3 percent. See Table 14 in Surh, p. 67.
38. See *Peterburgskii komitet RSDRP. Protokoly i materialy zasedanii. Iiul' 1902-fevral' 1917* (Leningrad, 1986); *Listovki peterburgskikh bol'shevikov 1902–1917*, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1939).
39. *Vtoroi s"ezd RSDRP. Iiul'-avgust 1903 goda. Protokoly* (Moscow, 1959), p. 639. This group is discussed in more detail below.
40. It is because of the continuity of political stance and of some personnel with the RO of 1900–1901 that I continue to refer to the Union of Struggle/KRO group as the "RO."
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 639–43. On events leading to the divided delegation, see B. I. Gorev (Gol'dman), *Iz partiinogo proshlogo. Vospominaniia 1895–1905* (Leningrad, 1924), pp. 67–68; N. Angarskii, ed., *Doklady sots.-demokraticheskikh komitetov vtoromu s"ezdu RSDRP* (Moscow, 1930), pp. 99–105; E. D. Stasova, "Iz vospominanii o partiinnoi rabote do revoliutsii 1917 g.," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* 12 (1927): 188–89.
42. *Perepiska VI. Lenina i redaktsii gazety "Iskra" s sotsial-demokraticheskimi organizatsiiami v Rossii 1900–1903 gg.*, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1969–70), vol. 2, pp. 308, 313 (hereafter *Perepiska Lenina 1900–1903*); *Vtoroi s"ezd*, pp. 639–40, 642; Gorev, p. 67; Angarskii, ed., pp. 100, 102.
43. The strategy is transparent in Lenin's famous tract, *What Is to Be Done?*
44. A worker exodus from the party is mentioned in the contemporary literature—e.g., Semenov, p. 294, and references supplied by Wildman, pp. 251–52. See also Surh, pp. 117–18, for a discussion of those SDs who became Gaponists. Others probably joined the SRs or simply became politically inactive.
45. GOPB, FAKh, TsL 1-45/1903-IV; Angarskii, ed., p. 105; *Perepiska Lenina 1900–1903*, vol. 3, p. 725; *Vladimir Akimov on the Dilemmas of Russian Marxism, 1895–1903*, ed. Jonathan Frankel (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 283–84.
46. The four-page typed and mimeographed "Programma Rabochei Organizatsii" may be found in GOPB, FAKh, TsL 1-45/1902-X.
47. This contrasted sharply with the first program, which confined itself to describing the structure of the RO and its operating rules (see above). The transition of the RO to the forthright political stance evident in the second

program was a gradual and uneven process. In "Pervyi god" (p. 280) Semenov states that the RO's *Rabochii listok* No. 9, issued in March 1901, "summoned the workers to socialism, referred to a struggle with the government that lay ahead, to its [RO's] strength and to the workers' strength, and called on them to prepare themselves." Although mistaken about the call to socialism, the rest of Semenov's claim is borne out by the original. In fact, both No. 9 and No. 10 of *Rabochii listok* were very similar in tone and wording to the April 1901 leaflet discussed above. What seems important is that Semenov recalled that issue No. 9 represented a significant departure in a more political direction.

48. GOPB, FAKh, TsL 1-45/1902-X, l. 4.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*, 11. 1-2.

51. A. S. Tokarev reportedly argued that *Iskra* was a "bourgeois organ" because it sought to use workers to achieve a constitution but would leave them with nothing afterward (*Perepiska Lenina 1900-1903*, vol. 2, p. 308).

# **RUSSIAN WORKERS' POLITICAL AND SOCIAL IDENTITIES: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS IN THE INTERACTION BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT AND THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC INTELLIGENTSIA**

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In recent years Western historians have turned their attention to the importance of various forms of representations in interpreting the mentalités of individuals and social groups. In addressing the formation of the political and social identities of worker members of the Russian labor movement at the turn of the twentieth century, it is useful to turn our attention to what I see as two of the more important theses presented in these recent works:

According to the first thesis, in order to analyze a social group's (or an individual's) self-representation, its social identity, as well as its image of the other groups in society with which it interacts, one must take into account not only its verbal expression, but other forms of behavior as well. The second thesis, no less important than the first, holds that one must also decipher the real meaning of the oral and written expressions of these groups (or individuals) in order to understand their images of themselves and others.

To clarify the relevance of these two theses to an examination of worker identities, let us look at some examples taken from the histories of workers who took part in the labor movement and their interaction with Social Democratic (SD) intelligentsia circles. We begin with the well-known autobiographical article, "Russian Workers in the Revolutionary Movement," written in 1892 by the Marxist leader Georgii Plekhanov.<sup>1</sup> The author directed the attention of his readers, mainly intelligentsia propagandists who were active among workers, to the attitudes of young, skilled workers in St. Petersburg (in the 1870s) to the cultural models provided by the more privileged

members of society and to the various ways in which these attitudes were expressed by the workers' behavior. Plekhanov's examples of such behavior included the style of furniture the workers bought for their rooms and communal apartments and the fashionable clothing that they wore in their nonworking hours, including clothing that they and their sweethearts wore on their Sunday strolls through the city center. Plekhanov advised his readers not to look down on the workers for harboring such attitudes toward the cultural models of genteel society, but, on the contrary, to appreciate that such behavior reflected the workers' desire for recognition as human beings and for equality with the more privileged elements of society. He stressed that the inevitable refusal of the privileged groups and official authorities to respect these aspirations was one of the reasons that young workers joined the revolutionary movement.

There are numerous other examples of workers adopting the cultural models of privileged, "census" society. If we examine the photographs of the deputies of various curiae (class-based electoral subdivisions) and political factions in the albums of deputies of Russia's First and Second State Dumas (1906–7), one curious feature stands out. Whereas deputies of the nonworker curiae are seen in clothing of the most varied styles, deputies of the workers' curiae are dressed without exception in dark suits and white shirts with ties—that is, the most proper modes of dress (though perhaps in cheaper versions) of the privileged strata of the urban population.

A keen and subtle observer of the labor movement, L. M. Kleinbort, noted the symbolic significance of clothing in his articles on the mood and behavior of participants in the workers' movement on the eve of World War I. Kleinbort provides a detailed analysis of the workers' demand to be addressed politely, as *vy* (the respectful form of "you"), by representatives of factory administrations, government officials, and members of census society. In this connection Kleinbort also offers the example of fashionably dressed young workers and the wives and sweethearts who accompanied them on Sunday strolls through St. Petersburg's city center. He emphasizes the feelings of humiliation and shame that these workers experienced when, during such strolls, they met with treatment they considered rude.<sup>2</sup>

In an earlier article on the character and dynamics of the strike movement in St. Petersburg on the eve of World War I, I attempted to explain how and why the process of political radicalization among

workers of that city took such a stark and acute form in the city's Vyborg District. I cited statistical data on the process of urbanization among Vyborg District workers during the first decade of the century, for example, their level of literacy, especially among the younger generation (including women); the size (absolute as well as relative) of the female population; and, especially interesting, the increase in the number of male workers who lived in the district with their families (in contrast to the peasant-worker newcomers [*prishlye*], who usually left their wives and children behind in the village).<sup>3</sup>

It is important to recall that the Vyborg District, where these urbanized workers lived, was located directly across from the city center, which was populated largely by members of the privileged strata; at the same time, however, the district was separated from the city center by the waters of the Neva River. In this way, the geographical location of the Vyborg District served as a basis for the crystallization of the workers' feeling of proximity to the cultural models of the privileged strata, while simultaneously helping to accentuate their sense of distance from them. By the eve of the war, these contradictory feelings found expression in the Vyborg workers' simultaneous aspirations toward equality with the privileged groups of society and toward political demarcation from them.

During the war itself, contradictory inclinations of a similar nature were reflected in the workers' interactions with representatives of the antigovernment opposition movement that developed within census society. Beginning with the congress on the high cost of living that took place in the summer of 1915, representatives of the workers' movement insisted on their right to participate in the various congresses organized by the leaders of the opposition movement and in its voluntary organizations. Their first demand upon arriving at these congresses, however, was that the organizers assign them separate rooms where they could gather to formulate their own positions on the issues under discussion, distinct from those of census society, and thereby affirm and defend the particular interests and aspirations of workers.

My last illustration of the character and symbolic meaning of the behavior of workers, which must be understood if we are to gain insight into their political and social consciousness, relates to the events of February 1917. In my earlier work I have emphasized the point that when workers of the Vyborg District, beginning on 23

February, broke through to the city center on the Neva bridges and the Neva ice and, despite the presence of gendarmes, Cossacks, and other representatives of law and order, stubbornly conducted political demonstrations on Nevskii Prospekt, they were graphically demonstrating their readiness to carry out a revolution. After returning home late that night, these workers returned to demonstrations on the next day and were joined by workers of other districts of the capital on 24, 25, and 26 February—this despite the growing opposition of the authorities. With these actions, I would argue, not just Vyborg District workers but the workers of Petrograd as a whole were demonstrating their revolutionary will to other strata of society as well as to themselves.

My insistence on that argument has been something of a surprise to some readers of my previous works, who have tended to emphasize the “spontaneous” (*stikhiinyi*), unorganized, and absolutely unexpected character of the workers’ actions during those days. And it is indeed the case that no one among the authorities (including the political police) or the leaders of the various revolutionary and oppositional parties (including the Bolsheviks) sensed the revolutionary character of the workers’ demonstrations. This was still the case on the evening of 26 February and even until the following evening, when a significant portion of the Petrograd military garrison began to support the worker-demonstrators.

My interpretation of the mood and actions of the Petrograd workers throughout these February days is based for the most part not on written sources, but on one important aspect of their behavior that was expressed in deeds rather than words. In February 1917, for the first time since the Petersburg general strike of June 1914, which was followed by the declaration of war, Vyborg workers tried—this time successfully—to hold political demonstrations outside the boundaries of their own working-class neighborhoods. Despite resistance from the authorities, they had forced their way through to the city center and held demonstrations on Nevskii Prospekt, the avenue that had served as the site of revolutionary demonstrations since the mid-1870s, the time of the revolutionary organization *Zemlia i volia* (Land and Liberty). With their persistent and decisive actions, the Petrograd workers not only expressed their will to bring about a revolution, but they also created among other strata of the capital’s population—starting with the garrison soldiers—the dis-

tinct impression that the revolution that many St. Petersburgers had awaited so long (often with mixed feelings) had truly begun.<sup>4</sup>

Here it is necessary to respond to one potential objection to such an interpretation of the mood and behavior of the Petrograd workers during these days. This objection is based on the Vyborg metalworkers' use of the slogan "Give us bread!" as they walked out of their plants and broke into the center of the city on 23 February 1917. How does one explain the fact that at this crucial moment the workers voiced this particular demand, while in demonstrations during the strike movement that began in the summer of 1915 the same workers used standard revolutionary slogans such as "Down with the autocracy!," "Down with the war!," "Long live the democratic republic!," and "Long live socialism!?" With these earlier forms of behavior in mind, we must somehow interpret the meaning and purpose of the slogan chosen by the politicized and revolutionary Vyborg District workers in February 1917.

In using the slogan "Give us bread!," the workers were attempting to convince not so much themselves as the other strata of the capital's population and, in particular, the law enforcement officials mobilized to oppose the demonstrations, of the legitimacy of their protest and resolute actions. There is a striking example of the Vyborg workers' use of this slogan for the sake of revolutionary goals in the memoirs of a metalworker from the New Lessner factory. The memoirist recalls how, on the morning of 23 February, when workers of that factory had gathered to begin their demonstration, a squadron of Cossack cavalry appeared in the factory courtyard to restore order:

On one side of the yard the workers stood silently, while on the other stood the Cossack squadrons. Petrov [a worker] and some other [workers] approached a Cossack officer, who observed them with interest. The officer asked them without malice: "Why has the factory stopped operating? Is there something you need, gentlemen?" Petrov replied: "Sir, we've come to you in order to explain everything. We work here 12 hours a day. We have no more strength, *there is no bread!* Tell us, what to do?" The officer heard him through, silently but attentively. "We want to live like human beings, officer sir!" The officer smiled unexpectedly: "Well, that's what we want for you as well. . . ." From the officer's intonation

and expression, we sensed the possibility of reaching an understanding with him.

Attempting to maintain order, the workers went out onto the street. The officer shouted a command, after which he and his squadron began to accompany the columns of workers. One worker cautiously asked, "Is singing songs allowed. . . ?" The Cossacks didn't respond. One voice, and then others, began to sing the [Russian] Marseillaise and the Warszawanka [revolutionary songs]. The Cossacks silently escorted the demonstrators to the end of the street and then dispersed. The demonstrators headed for Liteinyi Bridge along Samsonievskii Prospekt, where thousands of workers from other factories, waiting at the gates of their enterprises, joined them.<sup>5</sup>

This passage, as well as other examples of workers' use of the "bread" slogan, are not meant to suggest that the scarcity of bread (indicated by lines in front of bakeries, etc.) played no role in the revolutionary mobilization of workers during the February days. Without a doubt, the bread shortage did influence the behavior of women working in the Vyborg District textile plants, for example, who also struck on 23 February. They, along with the single women and workers' wives employed in the machine-building enterprises, shamed their worker-husbands and pushed them to take resolute action. All these factors played a role in mobilizing the will of the metalworkers who burst through to the city center to carry out revolutionary demonstrations. In this sense, the February revolution actually did begin in the conditions of a hunger rebellion, but this was just as true of the events that characterized the start of the Great French Revolution.

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The study of the representations of themselves and others created by individuals and social groups—including the representations they expressed not in words but in other forms of behavior—also provides us with valuable material for analyzing the interaction between workers and intelligentsia as the labor movement evolved from the 1890s to 1917. Let us direct our attention to the lexicon used during those years by *intelligenty* and by workers themselves to identify the work-

ing class socially and politically: *rabochie* (workers), *trudiashchiesia* (laborers), *proletariat*—and, for denoting particular strata of workers, *fabrichnye* (workers in textile plants), *zavodskie* (workers in machine-building or metalworking factories), *masterovye* (skilled workers), *chernorabochie* (simple, unskilled laborers), *serye* (lit.: “gray,” workers fresh from the countryside, as in the English “green”), *rabochaia intelligentsiia* (worker intelligentsia), and, finally, *rabochaia aristokratiia* (labor aristocracy), a term imported from the West, used by the Bolsheviks on the eve of World War I to condemn their opponents in the worker intelligentsia.

The values that the various competing factions of the revolutionary intelligentsia lent these terms changed significantly in the course of these decades, as did the interpretation and evaluation of the terms “consciousness” and “spontaneity,” used by the intelligentsia to characterize the dynamics of the labor movement. More precisely, in the process of interacting with one another, both workers and intelligentsia imbued these terms with their own aspirations, fears, and dreams about the future labor movement. Different strata of workers interpreted these meanings on the basis of their own experience, including the conditions of their everyday life and work. In turn, the workers’ behavior led to substantial changes in the interpretation and evaluation of these terms among the various factions of the revolutionary intelligentsia and, by the same token, led to changes in their representations of the labor movement.

My first example of how these interpretations evolved through the interaction between intelligentsia and workers relates to the so-called period of “propaganda” in the history of Russian social democracy and particularly to the activity of Petersburg SDs among workers in the early 1890s. In the memoir mentioned above, where Plekhanov alerted his readers to the revolutionary potential of the most literate and urbanized workers, he presented his illustrations of the mood and conduct of these workers in the context of a more general picture of the contradictions and conflicts between city and country that characterized Russia’s political, social, and cultural development. In his analysis, the village and its peasant populace are represented as exemplifying the traditions of *aziatchina*—that is, Asiatic barbarism, arbitrariness, and semifeudal, serf-like relations—in the historical evolution of Russia. The city and the urban population, by contrast, are depicted as models and representatives of a more

advanced Western civilization, with the city representing the place in Russia where the population endeavors to attain civil rights and political freedoms.

Plekhanov's unabashedly Western orientation in this memoir was typical of the ideas that the Marxist circles of the Petersburg intelligentsia attempted to disseminate in the workers' circles (*kruzhki*) and workers' Sunday schools that they organized in that city. Moreover, the very same orientation was no less characteristic of the mood and aspirations of the Petersburg workers who were drawn into the circles of the propagandists—mostly young metalworkers—and of their perception of the lessons and preachings of their intelligentsia teachers. For young, urbanized workers, the process of their development and self-definition as *conscious* workers consisted in the construction of a new, "scientific," "modern" world view, one that would replace the traditional convictions and values of peasant culture held by most of their parents. The formation of such a world view entailed not only the construction of a notion of historical progress, based on the experience of the more civilized countries of the West and the history of their labor movements; it also entailed the construction of a new, "scientific" understanding of the laws that govern society, the world of nature, and the universe as a whole.

In their propaganda work, the intelligenty of social democratic orientation also tried to transmit to the workers a feeling of solidarity with the international proletariat. This feeling was based for the most part on the image that the propagandists formed of the working class and the workers' movement in the more developed countries of the West. In part because of this, many young metalworkers found it difficult to experience a sense of solidarity with the "gray" workers of St. Petersburg's textile mills and even with those workers of their own enterprises whom they viewed as less developed.

One might even conclude that the experience of participating in propaganda circles and Sunday schools *increased* the estrangement of the young metalworkers (and printers as well) from other strata of the Petersburg working class. Social Democrats in the capital learned this harsh lesson in 1896–97 when, to their surprise, a "spontaneous" wave of economic strikes flared up and spread among the "gray" men and women of the city's textile and tobacco factories. Despite the urgent calls of leaders of the Petersburg Union of Struggle for the

Emancipation of the Working Class (Soiuz bor'by za osvobozhdenie rabocheho klassa), the young metalworkers and printers, including participants in the work of Marxist propaganda circles, displayed few significant signs of solidarity with the striking workers.

The conduct of the metalworkers and printers encouraged the leaders of the Union of Struggle, who were trying to influence the development of the Petersburg labor movement, to shift from so-called "propaganda" to the tactic of "economic agitation." This sharp change in the tactics of the Petersburg SDs was taken by many of the workers who attended the Marxist propagandist circles as a betrayal of their interests by the intelligentsia. Following the shift, many of these workers refused any further participation in the labor movement right up to the 1905 Revolution. It is noteworthy that, according to data of the Factory Inspectorate, the workers of the capital's private machine-building and metal factories played no significant part in the strike movement until the very beginning of 1905.<sup>6</sup>

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Our next relevant set of interactions between SD intelligentsy and workers concerns conflicts that took place at the beginning of the century between the editors of the old (i.e., pre-Bolshevik-Menshevik split) newspaper *Iskra* (founded 1900), on the one hand, and the so-called "economists" in Russia and the Union of Social Democrats Abroad on the other. Although much has already been written about this dispute, it is worth returning to certain aspects of the story, in part because of its influence on the further development of Russian social democracy, especially on the process of self-definition of the party's Menshevik and Bolshevik factions and their interaction with participants in the mass labor movement during World War I.

The essence of the accusations that the editorial board of *Iskra* (which included Lenin as well as future Mensheviks such as Iulii Martov) aimed at the so-called "economists"—that is, the new generation of leaders of the Petersburg Union of Struggle and their allies in the Union of Social Democrats Abroad—centered around the "economists'" interpretation of the dynamics of the labor movement's development. The "economists," *Iskra* claimed, refused to recognize that the labor movement had to move from economic to

political struggle and rejected the role that *Iskra* saw as foreordained for the SDs in this revolutionary process.

One could indeed find grounds for such accusations in the careless formulations of several articles published in *Rabochaia mysl'*, the organ of the Union of Struggle, in the late 1890s, as well as in statements made by neo-Marxist publicists. From the very beginning of the new century, however, the influence of "economists" on the workers' movement, and the very dynamic of that movement, followed a completely different course. In essence, the logic of the evolution of the economic struggle had led its leaders and other participants to a new, more radical conception of the political struggle. According to this conception, the political struggle would consist of the effort to overthrow simultaneously both autocracy and capitalism, represented respectively by the agents of the state and the factory administrators who clashed with the workers in the course of their economic strikes.<sup>7</sup>

This more radical interpretation of the character of the workers' political struggle went beyond the boundaries of the orthodox Marxist conception of a two-stage revolutionary process, premised on the need to accomplish a bourgeois revolution prior to launching the struggle for socialism. Moreover, this new interpretation of the political struggle, as presented by the "economists," conflicted with the conception of the proletariat's special historical role in the struggle for a bourgeois revolution in Russia, worked out at the turn of the century by the editors of *Iskra*. The most essential feature of the concept that had been proposed by the editors consisted in the thesis, first formulated by Pavel Aksel'rod (in two brochures, published in 1898), of the hegemonic role of the Russian proletariat in the realization of the bourgeois revolution, a consequence of the political passivity and immaturity of Russia's bourgeoisie.<sup>8</sup> The fulfillment of this mission was assigned to the proletariat by the editors of *Iskra*, who saw the leading role of workers as not only an indispensable condition for the realization of a bourgeois revolution, but also as important to the realization of the workers' own interests since it would democratize the revolutionary process, thereby accelerating the development of the workers' movement and its later struggle for socialism.

Another important position of the editors of *Iskra*—and this lay at the heart of Lenin's conflict with the "economists"—was Lenin's

thesis that without the SDs' influence on the "spontaneous" (*stikhii-noe*) workers' movement (this was the first use of that term by Russian Social Democrats), the Russian working class would not be capable of moving beyond a purely economic struggle and hence would inevitably fall under the political influence of the liberal bourgeoisie. In this connection, Lenin used the formula first proposed by the German Social Democrat Eduard Bernstein—namely, that political consciousness was passed on to workers by revolutionary intelligentsy who came from other classes of society. But unlike the program of Bernstein, who was a staunch supporter of the development of a mass workers' movement and a mass workers' party, Lenin's version of the thesis of the necessity of imparting consciousness to workers by intelligentsy was reflected in a vision of the party (described in *What Is to Be Done?*) as a highly centralized organization of professional revolutionaries, under the constant supervision of the RSDRP's Central Committee and the ideological guidance of the party's central organ.

This conception of the character and role of the RSDRP drew sharp opposition from other Social Democratic groups in Russia and abroad. Lenin's "narrow" definition of party membership, supported by the majority of delegates at the Second Party Congress (1903), drew an equally enraged reaction from members of the worker intelligentsia in Russia, many of whom withdrew from participation in the activities of party organizations until the beginning of the Revolution of 1905. But, as the memoirs of the worker Matvei (a.k.a. Andrei) Fisher show, among the more developed workers were those who were attracted by Lenin's notion of the party as an organization of professional revolutionaries and found in that conception the basis for their own identity as workers, participating in the underground party organizations on an equal footing with the revolutionary intelligentsy from other strata of society.<sup>9</sup>

Lenin's theses drew an especially sharp reaction from members of the Union of Social Democrats Abroad, who firmly denied his accusation that they had refused to participate in the political struggle of workers in Russia. In this regard, articles published by A. S. Martynov in the underground journal *Rabochee delo* in 1902 are particularly interesting, for the views expressed in them would play an important role in defining the platform of the Mensheviks and their relationship to the mass workers' movement during the 1905 Revo-

lution. In these articles, Martynov opposed Lenin's theses by offering a completely different conception of the character and dynamics of the workers' political struggle. He defined Lenin's position regarding the party's role in the dynamics of the workers' political struggle as a "tactic-*plan*"—that is, as a tactical approach to the supposedly "spontaneous" workers' movement, one that was prepared in advance by the self-appointed leaders of the party. Martynov offered a different approach, which he called a "tactic-*process*"—that is, a tactic developed by the workers themselves, in the process of their developing struggle against the administrators of their factories and their government supporters. It is no accident that Martynov became one of the more influential leaders of the Mensheviks after the Second Party Congress, for the thesis he elaborated in these articles became one of the bases of the process of self-definition of the Menshevik faction in its interaction with the mass workers' movement during and after the 1905 Revolution.<sup>10</sup>

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The enormous dimensions attained by the workers' movement after Bloody Sunday (9 January 1905) came as a psychological shock not only to the Bolshevik "committee-men" (*komitetchiki*) in Russia, but also to the leaders of the Mensheviks. As Lidiia Dan, the sister of Iulii Martov and wife of Fedor Dan, acknowledged in an interview I recorded in the mid-1960s,

For the first time in our experience we observed processes of a huge scale, compared to which we felt ourselves to be a very small party. Until 1905, we imagined ourselves as a "source" of history, all the rest [including the workers' movement] we imagined as "material." But now this "material" grew up and became an independent being.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the events of 1905 forced the Mensheviks to reexamine in depth their attitude toward the revolutionary process, and especially toward the development of the mass workers' movement. This process of reevaluation led them to a complete rejection of the ideas that had been formulated by the editors of the old *Iskra* about spontaneity, and, even more so, about the apolitical character of the spontaneous

labor movement and the need for underground organizations of professional revolutionaries to control it.

In contrast to the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks now fully recognized the "creative" (*tvorcheskii*) character of the dynamics of the workers' movement and emphasized that the revolutionary process in general was characterized by the political self-understanding and self-organization of the main forces of society—above all, the proletariat. From this new conception of the revolutionary process, the Mensheviks drew two conclusions, which became the heart of their political credo and of their strategy and tactics in the 1905 Revolution. The first of these was the conviction that the very dynamics of the revolutionary process contained the potential for the creation of new political institutions—new revolutionary institutions and forms of revolutionary power—"*iavochnym poriadkom*"—that is, brought into being on the spur of the moment, *de facto*, through the action itself, spontaneously, without legislation by the government, and, just as important, without any prior instructions from the leaders of revolutionary parties, including SDs. More specifically, these new revolutionary institutions might actually come into being through the exploitation by the proletariat and its political leaders of the political concessions of a wavering tsarist regime; they might also come into being as a result of the initiative and independent action of the workers themselves, at the height of the revolutionary process.

The Mensheviks' second new conclusion, closely linked to the first, was that the main task of SDs now consisted in the exploitation of all possibilities, including legal ones, for the creation of open workers' organizations. These organizations were assigned a key role in the further development of the independent activity of workers and in the organization of a mass labor movement and a mass workers' party.

In the course of 1905 the Bolsheviks, especially the komitetchiki who led the Bolshevik organizations in Russia, denounced the new Menshevik tactics—particularly their readiness to exploit legal possibilities for the organization of an open workers' movement—as distracting workers and SDs away from their primary task, the organization of an armed uprising for the overthrow of autocracy and establishment of a democratic republic. These conflicts between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in the course of 1905 were an accurate re-

flection of basic differences in their conceptions of the character and dynamics of the revolutionary process.

For Lenin and his supporters, the seizure of political power, with full utilization of its possibilities for forceful action, was an indispensable weapon for the destruction of the old and creation of a new political, social, and economic order. For the Mensheviks, by contrast, revolutionary politics in general and political power in particular were not only a tool, but also an expression of a deeper transformation in political, social, and economic relations and, in part, in the processes of self-definition and self-organization of workers in their struggle for domination over the other classes of society.

During the revolutionary period, and especially in 1906, the Mensheviks successfully exploited every possibility, both legal and illegal, that was presented to them by the new political order and new configuration of political forces in order to organize a mass workers' movement and a labor party of the European type. For the realization of these goals a pivotal role was assigned to the worker intelligentsia—that is, to the most “developed” and “conscious” workers, who were to lead the open organizations of the workers' movement. It must be emphasized that, thanks in part to the energies and organizational skills exhibited by this new worker intelligentsia, thanks in part to the support offered to it by the Mensheviks, an entire network of open organizations, including workers' cooperatives, enlightenment clubs, and, especially, trade unions, was indeed created. (It is noteworthy that before Stolypin's 1907 “coup,” the membership in labor unions was well over 200,000, which remained the high point until the revolution of February 1917.)\*

But the experience of the 1905 Revolution and its aftermath also showed the definite limits of the workers' positive reaction to the Menshevik tactics. The elections in early 1907 in St. Petersburg to the Second State Duma are especially revealing. Fearing an electoral victory by the “Black Hundreds”—that is, by right and far right candidates (these fears, as the results demonstrated, turned out to be exaggerated)—the Mensheviks proposed a coalition with the liberal Kadets during the last phase of the election campaign. The re-

\*Editor's note: In June 1907 Chairman of the Council of Ministers Petr Stolypin altered Russia's electoral system by imperial decree. His action, which violated Russia's fundamental law, is often characterized as a “coup.”

action of Petersburg workers to this proposal (which the Bolsheviks condemned as a betrayal of working-class interests) was extremely negative. In the Petersburg elections to the workers' curia, the Mensheviks were thoroughly defeated, receiving fewer votes than the Bolsheviks or even the SRs; the Bolshevik candidate, G. A. Aleksinskii, was elected deputy to the Duma.

In the reactions of workers to the strategies and tactics proposed to them by Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in the period of the 1905 Revolution, one can discern features that would also characterize the further development of the workers' movement and the attitude of its participants to the appeals of these two warring factions. The workers fully sympathized with Menshevik demands that all legal means for the defense of working-class interests be utilized; Bolsheviks suffered defeat every time they refused to use such legal possibilities to organize the workers. But Mensheviks just as consistently lost the workers' trust when, in the process of using these legal means, they gave workers the sense that their goals somehow coincided with the goals and interests of census society and the liberal movement. In this manner, in the further course of events, as the experience of the Workers' Group of the Central Industrial Committee would show, workers demonstrated by their behavior the same aspiration toward equality *with* but also toward separation *from* the privileged strata that we observed at the turn of century.

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My last comments about the character of the interactions between workers and the SD intelligentsia relate to the years on the eve of and during the world war. Since I have already written a good deal about this period, I will concentrate here on the major theme of this essay—namely, the development of Bolshevik and Menshevik conceptions of the workers' movement and the reactions of the workers who participated in that movement to those conceptions.

In the spring of 1912, Menshevik no less than Bolshevik leaders welcomed the mass protest strikes against the bloody suppression of the worker demonstrations in the Lena minefields, as well as the subsequent continuation of the strike wave. They even predicted that the strike wave might become a catalyst for a wider oppositional movement, including liberal sectors of the bourgeoisie, against the

arbitrary behavior of the tsarist regime. Yet as early as the summer of 1913, the Mensheviks' reaction to the character that the new wave of strikes had assumed changed sharply.

In the eyes of the Mensheviks, and especially their *praktiki* (practical workers, nontheorists, organizers of the labor movement), the strike wave had assumed an increasingly explosive character not just in the political strikes, but even in economic strikes, where workers advanced unattainable demands and displayed a complete lack of organization. It seemed to the Mensheviks that these wildly "riotous" (*buntarskie*) characteristics of the prewar strike wave bore a closer resemblance to the chaotic Time of Troubles of 1598-1613 than to a mature workers' movement of the European type, which they had been striving to organize since 1906. The Mensheviks condemned the "passion to strike" (*stachechnyi azart*) of the strike participants and condemned even more sharply the "demagogic" character of Bolshevik agitation among the workers, which they perceived as a threat to all the accomplishments of the labor movement, and especially to the existence of its above-ground, open organizations.

For their part, the Bolsheviks emphasized the "conscious" character of the new strike wave and the high level of "consciousness" manifested by its participants. Beginning in late 1912, Bolshevik agitation, aimed at the further political radicalization of the strikers, unquestionably made significant progress. Among the reasons for this success of the Bolsheviks' strategies and tactics in the prewar period were two especially important factors.

The first was their conception of the character of the revolutionary process, worked out in final form by Lenin and his supporters at a meeting of the Bolshevik Central Committee in the summer of 1913. This idea was expressed in the plan to elevate or accelerate the strike wave, turning it into a general political strike that would then take the form of an armed uprising for the overthrow of autocracy and creation of a democratic republic ("a solid democratic regime" was one of Lenin's formulations). Lenin's perspective on the development of the revolutionary situation instilled in participants in the strike movement the conviction that every strike, even if it ended in defeat, was a step toward the realization of "a glorious future." Bearing in mind the mood of the workers themselves, it is not difficult to understand why Lenin's perspective, propagandized by Bolshevik slogans, erased the effect of Menshevik warnings about "stachechnyi

azart" and its catastrophic consequences for the future development of the workers' movement.

The second, no less essential factor in the growth of Bolshevik influence among workers on the eve of the war was the priority that Lenin now assigned to the conquest by Bolsheviks of the legal organizations of the workers' movement (including trade unions, cooperatives, cultural clubs, and sickness funds) and to the maximal use of these legal opportunities for the spread of Bolshevik revolutionary propaganda and agitation. Once seized by the Bolsheviks from the Mensheviks, the legal organizations became a much more effective weapon for the spread of their influence among workers than the constantly vanishing underground party organizations.<sup>12</sup>

In connection with the new priority that Lenin now assigned to legal opportunities, he also began to pay special attention to the activities of the six Bolshevik deputies elected to the Fourth Duma in 1912 from the workers' curiae of Russia's most industrialized provinces. These deputies (who now became members of the Bolshevik Central Committee) took advantage of their deputy's immunity to conduct Bolshevik agitational and organizational work among the workers of their provinces. One cannot overestimate the political importance of the activity of some of these deputies to the mobilization and organization of the strike movement on the eve of the war.<sup>13</sup>

The Bolsheviks' campaign to take over the labor movement's legal organizations, including their conquest in summer-fall 1913 of St. Petersburg's main trade union, the Union of Metalworkers, was crowned by the removal from leadership positions in those organizations of Menshevik praktiki and other members of the labor intelligentsia. These were men who had played an essential role in the creation and functioning of such organizations since 1906. For the most part, their places were taken by representatives of a new generation of young urbanized workers who were Bolshevik in spirit.

In an earlier work, I cited a spring 1914 article by Fedor Bulkin, then an ex-secretary of the governing board of the Petersburg Union of Metalworkers, in which he expressed his anger at the radical change in leadership of that union and of other organizations of the city's legal labor movement and warned of the disastrous consequences of that change. He assigned prime responsibility for this catastrophe to the revolutionary intelligentsia, with its ruinous influence on the workers' movement. Responding to this accusation, the Menshevik

leader Martov published an article in which he asked Bulkin to explain just which intelligenty he had in mind. If Bulkin was referring to Lenin's circle—Grigorii Zinov'ev, Lev Kamenev, and others—then these people represented only a handful of "semi-intelligenty," men who had nothing in common with the intellectual and moral frame of mind and traditions of the SD intelligentsia. Martov, in turn, presented a no less interesting argument: that the reason for the "spontaneous" character of the new strike wave, as well as for the overthrow of the leadership of the open workers' movement, was that, starting with the new industrial upsurge of 1910, the ranks of the working class had been greatly expanded by the arrival of large numbers of politically immature village newcomers.<sup>14</sup>

The articles by Bulkin and Martov are also interesting as signs of the continued existence of the tension and contentiousness that we observed in the relations among some circles of intelligenty and workers beginning in the mid-1890s. In this regard, however, the two articles represented a dialogue of the deaf. From the point of view of an outside observer, the young, literate, and, especially, urbanized workers whom the new strike wave propelled into the leadership of the workers' movement and its legal organizations (and the Bolshevik worker deputies to the Fourth Duma as well) constituted the new generation of worker intelligentsia, the very worker intelligentsia that the Menshevik-oriented praktiki, now removed from the leadership of the unions and the other legal organizations, had understood themselves to be.

For their part, the Bolsheviks denounced their opponents from the older generation of worker intelligentsia and their worker supporters (especially among the printers) as a "labor aristocracy," cut off from the masses by their high salaries and their living conditions. (On this rhetorical point, it should be noted that the wages of the highly qualified metalworkers who now supported the Bolsheviks were no lower than those of Menshevik supporters among the printers.) Generally speaking, the rhetoric used by both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks and their basically sincere ideas about the workers' movement were mainly a reflection of the different reactions that their appeals encountered among the workers.

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These changes in the workers' mood and behavior, reflected in the images held by both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks of the character and dynamics of the workers' movement, recurred several times in the further interactions of workers with the two factions. The period between the declaration of war in 1914 and the outburst of political strikes in the summer of 1915 was characterized by the passivity of the workers' movement and the patriotic responses to the war declaration by a rather large number of workers. The Bolsheviks had an explanation for this unfortunate response: the recruitment into the army of the more developed workers and the massive expansion of the working class by peasant "newcomers." Lenin and his supporters used the argument to explain the support that Mensheviks received from the majority of workers in the first months of the second (February) revolution. In the summer of 1917, however, when the very same workers moved away from the Mensheviks and began to support the appeals and slogans of the Bolsheviks, ideas about the mood and behavior of the workers expressed by supporters of the two factions changed sharply once again. Now the Bolsheviks praised the workers' "revolutionary consciousness," while Menshevik "defensists" and "revolutionary defensists" began to complain about the labor movement's "spontaneous" character, depicting it as a reflection of the mood of the same mass of peasant newcomers supposedly recruited into the ranks of the wartime working class in such enormous numbers.<sup>15</sup>

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The changes in both Bolshevik and Menshevik representations of the dynamics of the workers' movement vividly demonstrate how much the character of these representations—including the use by both factions of the concepts of consciousness and spontaneity to characterize the workers' moods and actions—depended on the successes and failures of each faction at the different stages of their interactions with the workers. As already observed, the leaders of both factions explained the failures that they suffered in the struggle for leadership of the workers' movement, and for influence on the revolutionary process as a whole, by invoking the negative role played by peasant *prishlye* in the workers' midst. This notion had deep roots in the ideological traditions shared by both factions, not-

withstanding the differences in their interpretations of their common legacy.

At the core of these traditions of Russian social democracy was the notion of the conflicting political cultures and aspirations of city and village, workers and peasants, in the historical development of Russia. This was one of the main points of conflict in the argument between Marxist publicists and Populists; it showed up as well in the propaganda work of the SDs among the advanced workers whom they recruited into their circles in the 1890s. As was already noted, that Marxist themes of this kind met with such a positive response among workers was in part a result of the general influence of the process of urbanization on their mentalités and behavior. But there can be little doubt that the success that the SDs achieved in their propaganda and agitation among workers was also connected with the conclusion, drawn by workers from the teachings of the SD intelligentsia, that it was they, the workers, who constituted the "chosen few" (*izbranniki*), the ones to whom was foreordained the great and brilliant future toward which they must strive.

This conviction would play an enormous role in the further success of social democracy among workers. Its persistence helps explain why it was that, on the eve of the war, despite the failures of the revolutionary underground after Stolypin's coup, and despite the factional conflicts between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, the more active strata of workers held to the idea that the RSDRP was their own workers' party. In this regard, a vital role was played by the interaction of workers with the circles of SD intelligentsia.

The behavior of the electors from the workers' curiae during the elections to the Fourth Duma was one of the clearest indicators of the character and consequences of this political process. As a result of these elections, SD deputies (who united after the elections with the Bolshevik faction) were elected from the workers' curiae in the six most industrially developed provinces, where a place was reserved for a deputy from the workers' curiae. According to the election laws enacted after Stolypin's coup, for an SD candidate to become a deputy from a workers' curia, all electors from that curia at the province's electoral assembly had to nominate a single candidate from their own ranks. If an agreement among the electors from the workers' curia was unattainable, then their deputy would be chosen by the majority of electors from other curiae who were pre-

sent at the assembly. (These assemblies were mostly dominated by representatives of the right and moderate right.)

As it turned out, during the elections to the Fourth Duma party discipline and unity were observed by the RSDRP electors from the workers' curiae in all these provinces except St. Petersburg, where the Bolshevik minority of worker electors nominated the Bolshevik worker A. E. Badaev. (But electors from the other curiae of Petersburg's electoral assembly elected Badaev anyway, preferring him to a Menshevik candidate of Jewish origin.) The solidarity and cooperation observed by electors from the workers' curiae of the five other provinces stood in sharp contrast to the behavior of electors from the peasantry; with few exceptions, each peasant elector nominated himself as the candidate from his curia, in part because of the "big" salary allotted to Duma deputies.

The degree of party discipline observed by the delegates from the workers' curiae at these provincial assemblies was even more remarkable considering that they were able to confer together (even to meet) only after their arrival in the provincial capital, where elections to the Duma were held; in many cases they met with representatives of the local SD intelligentsia only on the evening before the meeting of the electoral assembly. Yet as archival documents reveal, despite all these difficulties, local SD intelligentsia played a significant role in the process of unifying the position of the electors from the workers' curiae, appealing to their feelings of class solidarity and their membership in a single workers' party.<sup>16</sup>

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Thus, the elections to the Fourth Duma demonstrated the close ties of the politically active strata of the working class to social democracy (almost a third of the electors from the workers' curiae participated in the electoral process). But viewed more broadly, these elections also showed a profound difference in political mentality between workers and peasants. The essence of this difference was not just the contrast between the political activism of the workers and the passivity of the peasants at the elections, especially in the central regions of European Russia. Let us recall that the same peasants had participated actively in the revolutionary processes of 1905–7—for example, they had shown great interest in the elections

to the First and Second Dumas, and peasant deputies to those Dumas had manifested a considerable degree of radicalism at the Duma sessions. However, the behavior of the peasants in 1905–7 was also characterized by political particularism, which was reflected in the peasants' psychological distance from other strata of the population and their concentration on the narrowly defined interests of the peasantry, especially on the realization of a "Black Repartition" (a seizure and redistribution of nonpeasant land). Once the peasant masses had grasped, following Stolypin's coup, that immediate expropriation of noble land was not possible, they lost interest in the political process; they continued to do so until the political earthquake of the February Revolution and especially until the "Black Repartition" of the summer of 1917. This was another way in which the behavior of politically active workers sharply differed from that of the peasants.

At the turn of the century, the SD leader Pavel Aksel'rod had concluded that awareness of their common interests with other strata of society—especially as regards the winning of political freedom—was a prerequisite to the attaining of political consciousness by the Russian working class. Only by acknowledging these shared interests, he emphasized, could Russian workers actually define the differences between their own interests and those of other classes and attain a mature, developed class consciousness. A decade later, during elections to the Fourth Duma and in the course of other political events on the eve of the war, it seemed that Russia's politicized workers had mastered Aksel'rod's political lesson, interpreting it, however, in their own way. On the one hand, they strove to participate in the political process together with the other strata of society and to use every possible legal means in defense of their political and economic interests against the arbitrary power of the tsarist regime. But on the other hand, they were equally forceful in asserting by their political behavior a definite line of demarcation between themselves and other classes, especially the classes of privileged, census society. As we already observed, this ambivalence was consistently reflected in their attitudes toward the competing factions of the RSDRP as well as in the successes and failures that Bolsheviks and Mensheviks experienced in their propaganda and agitation among workers.

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The revolutionary processes of 1917 basically confirmed—albeit in distorted form—the tendencies we have observed in the development of the workers' movement in its interaction with the SD intelligentsia from the beginning of the century. First, in partial contrast to the period of the 1905 Revolution (broadly defined), when significant support was enjoyed by the SRs even among the urbanized workers, in 1917, with rare exceptions, the political struggle for the leadership of the workers' movement took place between the competing factions of social democracy, thereby demonstrating the political monopoly that social democracy now enjoyed among politically active workers. And second, the dynamics of 1917 revealed even more vividly, though in contradictory forms, the same ambivalent attitude of politicized workers toward the privileged strata that they had expressed in the previous period in their aspirations to equality and their desire for separation from the representatives of census society. These contradictory aspirations were most clearly expressed and realized during the period of dual power. The Mensheviks' attempt to achieve a more stable and organic political rapprochement with the progressive circles of the bourgeoisie through the formation of a coalition, just as had happened periodically in the prerevolutionary years, estranged them from even the most developed of the urbanized workers and became one of the main reasons for the Bolsheviks' success in the struggle for power.

At the same time, despite their conflicting political goals, strategies, and tactics, in 1917 both Bolshevik and Menshevik factions shared the conviction that the peasantry was the most backward, politically immature stratum of Russian society, one that was consequently incapable of playing an independent, much less a leading, role in the revolutionary process. Despite their attempts to appeal to the peasants and, in part in pursuit of that goal, to form a coalition with the warring factions of the SR party, both SD factions shared this conception of the political immaturity of the peasantry. Starting with that common assumption, however, they came to completely opposite political conclusions.

The Mensheviks drew the conclusion, which most of them clung to until the Bolsheviks' October coup, that a final split with

the bourgeoisie and the coming to power of the “democracy” (meaning popular political forces to the left of the bourgeois liberals)—in the form, perhaps, of a uniformly “democratic” or socialist government—were doomed to failure because of the inevitable political isolation the proletariat would experience in the absence of a reliable partner in the peasantry. Lenin, on the other hand, on the basis of the same assumption about the political backwardness of the mass of Russia’s peasants, came to the conclusion that only the proletariat and the bourgeoisie constituted independent and decisive actors in the political processes of the revolution, which meant that the Bolsheviks had a real chance of coming to power.

In a 1923 article, Fedor Dan attempted to justify his wavering and that of other Menshevik revolutionary defensists, right up to the October coup, on the issue of final renunciation of coalition with the bourgeois parties and the creation of a uniform democratic government. Dan asserted that adopting such a fundamental solution to the political crisis that followed the Kornilov mutiny would have forced him and his supporters to govern the country with the same methods that the Bolsheviks eventually used after seizing power.<sup>17</sup> There is no doubt that the evolution of the Soviet regime, especially beginning with the period of the civil war, provided plenty of evidence for Dan’s political diagnosis. But the events also showed the tenacity of the political line that Dan and the revolutionary defensists followed in the course of the revolution, in part a result of their notion of the political backwardness and unreliability of the overwhelming majority of the Russian people, notions shared by them with Lenin and his supporters. Such were the final consequences of the ideas about the antagonism in Russia’s historical development between city and country, between workers and peasants, that the factions of the SD intelligentsia professed and which they so successfully instilled in Russia’s urbanized workers.

#### NOTES

1. Plekhanov’s long article, “Russkii rabochii v revoliutsionnom dvizhenii (po lichnym vospominaniiam),” was republished several times as a separate

brochure in the years before the October Revolution. It may also be found in his *Sochineniia*, ed. D. Riazanov, vol. 3 (Moscow, 1923), pp. 121–205. Many of the workers described by Plekhanov are discussed in Reginald Zelnik's chapter in the present volume.

2. See L. M. Kleinbort, "Ocherki o rabochei demokratii," part 1, *Sovremennyi mir* 4 (April 1913): 22–45.
3. See Leopold Haimson, with E. Brian, "Changements démographiques et grèves ouvrières (St. Pétersbourg 1905–1917)," *Annales ESC* (July–August 1985): 781–803.
4. Noteworthy in this connection is a story told by N. Sukhanov in his *Notes on the Revolution*: A gendarme was shooting at Vyborg District workers who had crossed the bridges and entered the city center. A Petrograd garrison soldier who had crossed over to the workers' side grabbed his weapon to stop him from shooting. In response, the gendarme complained in an injured tone: "No one warned me that the revolution had begun." Even if apocryphal, this story nicely illustrates the general atmosphere in the February days and supports my thesis of the important role of "representations" in the escalation of the February Revolution and the important role of the worker demonstrations of 23–26 February in creating those representations. Space does not allow us to present other interesting examples of the role of representations in bringing about the revolution and defining its character.
5. These and other workers' memoirs were written in the early 1930s as part of a project on the history of industrial enterprises directed by Maxim Gorky. See GARF, f. 7952, op. 4, d. 57, Karl Marx Plant (formerly New Lessner), manuscript by D. Shcheglov, vol. 2 (1917–1922).
6. See Heather Hogan, *Forging Revolution: Metalworkers, Managers, and the State in St. Petersburg, 1890–1914* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 51–59. In her excellent book, Hogan also discusses the very interesting cases of urbanized metalworkers who *did* engage in militant strikes in 1901, but these were mainly workers at state-owned plants such as the navy's Obukhov and Baltic factories, which were not under the jurisdiction of the Factory Inspectorate.
7. For a more detailed discussion, including reference to similar radicalization processes expressed in the leaflets of local committees of the RSDRP, see my preface to Allan Wildman, *The Making of a Workers' Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. xi–xiii. See also N. S. Angarskii, *Doklady sotsial-demokraticheskikh komitetov Vtoromu S'ezdu RSDRP* (Moscow, 1930); O. A. Ermanskii, *Iz perezhitogo (1888–1927 gg.)* (Moscow, 1927).
8. P. B. Aksel'rod, *K voprosu o sovremennykh zadachakh i taktike russkikh sotsial-demokratov* (Geneva, 1898), and *Istoricheskoe polozenie i vzaimnye otnosheniia liberal'noi i sotsialisticheskoi demokratii v Rossii* (Geneva, 1898). According to Abraham Ascher's data, Aksel'rod used the phrase "hegemony of the proletariat" only once, in a letter addressed to Petr Struve at the end of the

- 1890s. See Ascher, *Pavel Akselrod and the Development of Menshevism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 134–35.
9. See A. Fisher, *V Rossii i v Anglii. Nabludeniia i vospominaniia peterburgskogo rabochego (1890–1921 g.g.)* (Moscow, 1922); G. Fisher [the same author] *Podpol'e, ssylka, emigratsiia. Vospominaniia bol'shevika* (Moscow, 1935).
  10. On Martynov's relations with Lenin, see his autobiography in *Deiateli SSSR i revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Rossii. Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*. Granat (Moscow, 1989), pp. 528–29.
  11. For a fuller account of these interviews with Lidiia Dan, see my *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries: Voices from the Menshevik Past* (Cambridge, England, 1987), pp. 1–45.
  12. For a fuller exposition of Menshevik and Bolshevik views on the workers' movement in this period, see my "The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905–1914," part 1, *Slavic Review* 23, 4 (December 1964): 619–42. Despite their success in winning over the legal organizations of the workers' movement and using these and other legal means to carry out their propaganda and agitation, the Bolsheviks never stopped attaching huge significance to their underground organizations. As is well known, during these prewar years and during the war the Petersburg Committee and other Bolshevik underground organizations repeatedly fell apart, as their ranks were constantly infiltrated by police agents. (In July 1914, of seven members of the Petersburg Party Committee, no less than four were police agents. See A. Kiselev, "V iiule 1914 goda," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* 7[30] [July 1924].) Even though these police successes were well known to the revolutionary underground, the Bolsheviks continued to attach great symbolic meaning to the underground organizations and to signs of their activity, especially when it took the form of pamphlets with their signature and stamp. Even more interesting is the energy Bolsheviks expended in this period putting together provincial and regional conferences of these underground organizations. The reports of the Department of Police paint a pitiful picture of these meetings, usually attended by only a handful of haphazardly elected and self-appointed delegates, including agents of the Okhrana. Notwithstanding these sad facts, Lenin and his supporters attached all the more importance to the conferences and their resolutions. It was as if the very act of convening these almost illusory conferences confirmed the Bolsheviks' organizational success and future revolutionary achievements, including the overthrow of the autocracy, in their own eyes.
  13. The deputy N. R. Shagov played a particularly important role as leader of the wave of economic strikes in Kostroma province in spring–summer 1914 (a strike wave that continued until a month after the declaration of war!). In a letter to the minister of internal affairs complaining about Shagov's activities and demanding they be stopped, the provincial governor asked rhetorically: "Who is governing Kostroma province, Deputy Shagov or I?" The documents of the Department of Police clearly show that in the eyes of the workers of Kostroma's industrial towns and villages, Shagov was

their political leader and defender of their interests. See GARF, f. DP, 4 d-vo, 1914, d. 130, ch. 2, t. 1, and f. DP, OO, 1914, d. 5, ch. 35.

14. F. Bulkin, "Rabochaia samodeiatel'nost' i rabochaia demokratiia," *Nasha zaria* 3 (1914). L. M[artov], "Otvét Bulkinu," *Nasha zaria* 3 (1914).
15. These ideas about the extent of changes in the composition of the working class by virtue of the arrival of "peasant newcomers" on the eve of and during the war were clearly exaggerated, especially as regards St. Petersburg. For an analysis of existing figures on the question, see Leopold Haimson and Giulio Sapelli, eds., *Strikes, Social Conflict and the First World War: An International Perspective* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1992), pp. 432–34.
16. For a more detailed description of these processes during elections to the Fourth Duma, see RGIA, f. 1327 (MVD, Osoboe deloproizvodstvo po vyboram v Gos. Dumu), 1912, op. 1, d. 33a; op. 2, dd. 193, 196, 200, 205, 211, 236, 252. A still more glaring example of the feelings of class solidarity among politicized workers is seen in the behavior of workers of Kostroma province, among whom the wave of economic strikes became widespread during the spring of 1914 and continued until the end of August. For details see GARF, f. DP, OO, 1914, d. 5, ch. 35.
17. Fedor Dan, "K istorii poslednikh dnei Vremennogo pravitel'stva," *Letopis' revoliutsii* (Berlin) 1 (1923).

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INTELLIGENTSIA AND WORKERS: THE CASE OF THE PARTY SCHOOLS IN CAPRI AND BOLOGNA

Jutta Scherrer

When a group of Social Democratic Party literati founded the Party Schools in Capri (1909) and Bologna (1910), they were attempting to furnish workers with the knowledge that they (the party literati) deemed important and crucial. Such knowledge, they believed, would enable Russian workers to prepare the revolution and, in the event of revolutionary victory, to consolidate their achievements.

The people who invented the idea of the Russian Party School in Capri proceeded with this project mainly on the basis of their own personal view of the role and function of workers. Foremost among them was their patron, Maxim Gorky, who made both his Capri residence and a portion of his income available to the school. Their concept of the Party School was inspired only to a small degree by their own encounters with workers or by concrete questions that they posed to workers about their aspirations and needs. Living in emigration since the 1905 Revolution, these *intelligenty* had little contact with Russian reality and only rarely had ties with active representatives of the workers' movement. The Party Schools of Capri and Bologna were mainly the results of the cultural-political and cultural-philosophical reflections of their intelligentsia founders. The goal, the ideal vision of these founders, was the creation of a "new man" or "new person" (*novyi chelovek*) in a new cultural epoch, the epoch of "proletarian culture," and it is significant that they named one of the first courses at the Capri school "Proletarian Culture." The curriculum that was offered there and at other Party Schools clearly reflected the intelligentsia's notions of the workers' capabilities. In other words, the experiment undertaken by the Party Schools tells us incomparably more about the self-understanding of the intelli-

gentsia and its representations or images of the worker intelligentsia than it does about the self-understanding of workers and their relationship to the party intelligentsia or the intelligentsia in general.

In the social thought of Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Bogdanov, the main theorist of “proletarian culture,” one generally finds far fewer references to how, in his view, the workers represented and perceived themselves than to how the intelligentsia evaluated the workers and defined its relationship to them. The same can be said of the theoretical discussions of the other party intellectuals directly involved with the schools: Gorky, Anatolii Lunacharskii, V. A. Bazarov (Rudnev), Stanislav Volskii, Leonid Krasin, Ivan Skvortsov (Stepanov), Grigor Aleksinskii, Martyn Liadov, and Mikhail Pokrovskii. At the end of the active life of the Capri school in December 1909, these men joined together to form the “literary group” called *Vpered* (Forwards).

Except for the reflections of a worker called “Mikhail” (Nikifor Efremovich Vilonov), the sources on which I have based my previous studies of the Party Schools of Capri, Bologna, and Longjumeau and of the cultural-political theories of the “left Bolsheviki” have yielded almost no information about the self-understanding of the “worker pupils” who attended the schools and their attitudes toward the intelligentsia. Nor has this situation been altered by the recent opening of the Russian Party Archives, enabling access to hitherto inaccessible sources on the party intelligentsia. The “new” documents supplement the collections (*fondy*) at Columbia University’s Bakhmeteff Archive and the Archive of the Fondazione Basso in Rome, but as far as the Party Schools are concerned, they offer no new information about workers’ attitudes toward the intelligentsia. I am therefore unable to offer any fundamentally new conclusions or interpretations that go beyond my earlier statements.<sup>1</sup> Because of this, I will mainly confine myself to a summary of what the Party Schools reveal about the cultural-political tendencies of the left-Bolshevik intelligentsia. In so doing, I am also offering a critical analysis of the subject and methods of my previous studies—that is, of my own earlier approaches.

To that end, I begin with a detailed look at how the intelligentsia, who initiated the idea of creating Party Schools abroad, conceptualized its own relationship to the workers. Then I will take up the case of Nikifor Vilonov (“Mikhail”)—who promoted the practical

implementation of the plans of the Capri school by making direct contact with local organizations in Russia—in order to illustrate the relationship of a particular worker (*rabochii*), specifically a worker-intellectual (*rabochii intelligent*), to the intelligentsia.

### THE LEFT BOLSHEVIKS ON THE INTELLIGENTSIA AND WORKERS

When the RSDRP divided into Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in 1903, Bogdanov and Lunacharskii opted for Lenin's Bolshevik side, convinced that his 1902 pamphlet, *What Is to Be Done?*, provided a valid program of action for committed intelligentsia like themselves. The program for the intelligentsia was to help workers attain class consciousness, to educate them until they reached a level where they were capable of taking their affairs into their own hands (*vesti svoi dela*). In his youth in Tula in 1895-96, Bogdanov (together with Bazarov and Skvortsov) had led a workers' circle, and (with Skvortsov) he had even written a textbook for workers on Marxist political economy, *Kratkii kurs ekonomicheskoi nauki* (Moscow, 1897). Bogdanov's cultural-educational activity in workers' circles also affected his first philosophical work, *The Fundamental Elements of an Historical View of Nature* (*Osnovnye elementy istoricheskogo vzgliada na prirodu*, St. Petersburg, 1899). Since that time, Bogdanov consistently strived to orient his theoretical works to the needs of the worker intelligentsia.<sup>2</sup> The cultural-educational impulse of his early years both inspired his activity within the party and motivated him to abandon it, as he wished to contribute to the formation of proletarian consciousness wherever the chances of success seemed best.

Bogdanov, Bazarov, Lunacharskii, and the party literati of their milieu who joined Lenin's camp before the 1905 Revolution broke with him in December 1909 to form the left Bolshevik faction called Vpered. These men differed from Lenin in that they always and unambiguously referred to themselves as intelligentsia. Whereas they consistently accepted their identity and role as members of the intelligentsia, it is well known that Lenin's attitude toward the intelligentsia was almost always one of contempt, his usage of the term *intelligent* almost always negative. In contrast to Lenin, who defined his own identity as well as that of all party activists with the concept

“professional revolutionaries,” the party literati only rarely used this term to describe themselves. And they completely shied away from referring to themselves as *praktiki* (i.e., practical party workers, not theoreticians).

After the Revolution of 1905, the political and ideological development that Bogdanov underwent, taking him further and further from Lenin, led him to an increasingly sharp critique of the elite role of the party intelligentsia in Russia’s Social Democratic workers’ organizations. He and his followers in Vpered consciously set themselves the goal of combating Lenin’s personal authoritarianism (which included, in Bogdanov’s view, his philosophical defense of “absolute truth” in *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*) and his authoritarian conception of party leadership (by an elite, if not by Lenin alone).<sup>3</sup> Proceeding from “Bolshevism’s inherent premise about the cultural hegemony of the proletariat” (*obshchekul’turnaia gegemoniia proletariata*), Vpered’s spokesmen wished to help the working class develop its consciousness through the workers’ own creative potential. On the basis of the “purity of Bolshevism,” they wished, as Bogdanov put it, “right now, in the framework of the present society,” to create “a great proletarian culture, stronger and more harmonious than the culture of the weakening bourgeois classes, incomparably freer and more creative.”<sup>4</sup> The working class must be empowered to produce from within itself its own culture, linked to the labor process, in order to then attain its class hegemony. This would necessitate the didactic, pedagogical involvement of the intelligentsia, but by no means would it mean the creation of a “pedagogical dictatorship” over the workers.<sup>5</sup> Rather, the intelligentsia should serve as a kind of midwife in the development of proletarian consciousness. As his supporters put it, Bogdanov was much more convinced than Lenin of the need to “help” workers rather than to “act” in their behalf. In defining the function of party intellectuals, to whose ranks he himself belonged at the time, Bogdanov in a certain sense prefigured Antonio Gramsci’s notion of the “organic intellectuals” of the working class, who help workers find their own culture. Indeed, Bogdanov never abandoned the function of the “organic intellectual,” even after he had left the RSDRP and therefore ceased to speak in the capacity of party intellectual. This is especially true of the period after the Bolshevik Revolution, when Bogdanov

was active in political and social organizations such as Proletkul't (Proletarian Culture) but never joined the Communist Party.

It would take us too far afield to discuss in detail the meaning that Bogdanov ascribed to the technical or "organizing intelligentsia" as a progressive element in the transitional phase leading to proletarian rule. This notion, which he developed mainly in the 1920s, evolved in close connection with his experiences at the Capri and Bologna Party Schools. It was soon after his activity in these schools that he first elaborated on those experiences in general terms. He did this in 1913 in his fundamental scientific-theoretical work, *Tektologiia* (Tectology, the science of organization). But Bogdanov had indirectly addressed the role of the intelligentsia in the workers' movement even earlier, in his first great philosophical-epistemological work, *Empiriomonism* (1904–6). There, in discussing the organization of experience in the collectivist society of the future and the continuing development of technology, he claimed that the distinction between individually organized and socially organized experience would disappear, and with it also the distinction between the organizing functions of intellectuals and the practical functions of workers. Even in this early period, Bogdanov opposed the imposition of consciousness on workers from the outside by an intellectual elite. On the contrary, intellectuals should help the proletariat to attain its own cultural maturity and to reach a level of collective consciousness, sufficiently advanced for it to take power, that would differ fundamentally from the intelligentsia's individual consciousness.

The retreat of the workers' movement after the defeat of the 1905 Revolution and the flight of the intelligentsia from the RSDRP caused Bogdanov to reevaluate the role of agitation and propaganda and to rethink his ideas on the organization of the party and the role of its leaders. As a consequence, his differences with Lenin became stronger and stronger. Party Schools, as Bogdanov saw it, would serve primarily to cultivate a "worker intelligentsia" to take over the leadership of local party organizations in Russia from the "party intelligentsia," which had abandoned the party after the revolution. Then, under the impact of Bogdanov's conflict with Lenin—who expelled him from the Bolshevik faction in June 1909, two months before the Capri school began operations—this initially rather pragmatic goal (note that the school's official title was "First Higher So-

cial Democratic School of Agitation and Propaganda for Workers”) gave way to an ever harsher criticism of Lenin’s “authoritarian style of leadership” (Bogdanov) and his “intelligentsia authoritarianism” (Lunacharskii). For Bogdanov, individualistic, authoritarian behavior in party matters, personal arrogance, vain self-love that culminated in a cult of personality, and the inability to submit oneself to the criticisms of one’s comrades were all inherent features of the bourgeoisie, with their characteristic “authoritarian individualism.” The mentality of SD party leaders—besides Lenin, Bogdanov had mainly Georgii Plekhanov in mind—was entirely a characteristic of their class, the bourgeoisie. Bogdanov concluded that a criticism of leaders “from case to case” could change nothing, for their behavior was deeply anchored in the old bourgeois and petit bourgeois (*meshchanskii*) world from which the party intelligentsia was recruited. The contradictions between, on the one hand, the influence of the established bourgeois culture, clearly visible in the milieu of the party intelligentsia, and, on the other hand, the ideals of socialists could be overcome only under the following condition: that right now, *hic et nunc*, while still under the conditions of capitalism and bourgeois culture, a new proletarian culture be established in opposition to them, a culture rooted in the masses and based on the comradely (*tovarishcheskie*) collectivist and egalitarian working relations of the progressive industrial proletariat. According to Bogdanov, only a “complete [*tselostnoe*] socialist education” based on “proletarian culture” could fundamentally change and renew the organization of the party. Members of the intelligentsia (intelligenty) who were genuinely capable of making the workers’ world view their own were as rare as “white crows” (*belye vorony*), he wrote in his *Kul’turnye zadachi rabochego klassa* (Cultural Tasks of the Working Class).<sup>6</sup> That the genuine liberation of the workers must “be the task of the workers themselves” was therefore one of the first points of Vpered’s program.<sup>7</sup>

The Party Schools were intended to educate a worker intelligentsia, which in turn was supposed to replace the organizational domination of the party intelligentsia. At the same time, the schools were intended to show workers how to bring forth and develop their own culture. But the schools were not fully equal to this dual task. The Capri school in particular, during its entire existence (August–December 1909), was paralyzed and at times nearly torn apart by the

political conflict between Lenin and Bogdanov. The “worker pupils” from Russia, who were completely unprepared for this conflict situation and who already felt alienated by the exotic character of life in Capri, were for a time almost at a complete loss in this conflict. It is significant that, with the sole exception of the “worker philosopher” Vilonov, the few personal statements of pupils that we have at our disposal relate to the political context and not to their immediate relationship to the intelligentsia as such. The bitter consequences of the political conflict within the Bolshevik faction were also felt at the Bologna school (November 1910-March 1911). Here too, as far as one can gather from the few statements made by workers, what was at issue was not so much the worker intelligentsia as such as the division of the worker pupils into followers and opponents of Bogdanov and Lenin. Bogdanov’s idea that the political consciousness of the proletariat should constitute only one aspect of the far wider culture of the new class, a culture whose foundation he wished to help lay in Capri and Bologna, was confronted with a bitter reality: the struggle for dominance in his own party. What an ironic twist!

#### THE WORKER PHILOSOPHER VILONOV AND HIS ATTITUDE TO THE INTELLIGENTSIA

The starting point of Bogdanov’s theory of proletarian culture was the mode of “comradely cooperation” (*tovarishcheskoe sotrudnichestvo*) that characterized proletarians in the production process at modern, mechanized, large machine-building factories. For him, this model of the labor process and of the organizational form of human cooperation was the basis of proletarian class solidarity in the struggle for revolution. It was also to be the basis for the new forms of living and thinking of the proletariat—in other words, of its culture. A “proletarian art,” “proletarian philosophy,” “proletarian science,” and “proletarian morality” were all supposed to arise out of the workers’ comradely and collective relations. *Proletarian* culture, for Bogdanov, in contrast to traditional *workers’* culture, was supposed to be an integration of the entire life experience of the working class, its “entire praxis” and “entire thinking,” into a single system. But this could not be achieved by the “the white crows”—the

old, bourgeois intelligentsia, the “Varangians.” The inner unity of a class psychology could find expression only from the worker intelligentsia itself.<sup>8</sup>

At the end of 1908 a visitor came to Bogdanov in Geneva from the Ural region of Russia—the Bolshevik worker Nikifor Efremovich Vilonov, code name “Mikhail” or “Mikhail Zavodskii” (Michael the Metalworker). Vilonov was an autodidact who had read a few of Bogdanov’s works while in Russia and corresponded with Bogdanov about them. Excited by Bogdanov’s notion that “comradely cooperation” in the machine industry would become the basis for a new “picture of the world” (*kartina mira*), Vilonov wanted to translate Bogdanov’s ideas into a form and language comprehensible to workers, or, in his words, to popularize Bogdanov’s “philosophy of the factory, the machine, and the worker.” Not only was Bogdanov flattered by this proposal, but he also tried, in a correspondence with Vilonov that lasted over half a year, to help his “worker pupil” with various suggestions. For example, he encouraged Vilonov to write an article of his own with the title “What Do We Demand of Philosophy?” (*Chego my trebuem ot filosofii?*). Moreover, Bogdanov saw Vilonov as the right man to help solve practical problems in the organization of the first Party School. He could arrange contacts with underground organizations in Russia, and he could help bring to Capri reliable workers from Russia, men who already had experience in party work, for several months of training and further education. It was to this end that, at the beginning of 1909, he sent Vilonov to Capri, where he was warmly received at the home of Maxim Gorky, who wrote: “What a splendid fellow, this worker, and what an intelligentsia our working masses promise to bring forth, if we judge by this figure.”<sup>9</sup>

Not only Gorky, but all the literary and artistic intelligentsia who passed through his doors were enchanted by Vilonov. Years later, Lunacharskii still recalled “our craving to see genuine Russian proletarians and to work with them” (*nasha zhazhda uvidet’ podlinnykh russkikh proletariev i prorabotat’ s nimi*).<sup>10</sup> Yet Vilonov, the worker-intelligent who was trying while in Capri to develop his own “worker philosophy” on the basis of Bogdanov’s Empiriomonism, by no means perceived his encounters with the literati in Capri as idyllic. Admiration constantly alternated with deep mistrust toward a milieu with which he was unfamiliar and which for this reason alone

seemed suspect. This inner tension also characterizes the schoolboy-ishly earnest letters that Vilonov wrote to Bogdanov and the highly emotional letters he sent to his wife, Mariia Zolina, a factory worker who had stayed behind in Moscow. The tension in Mikhail's relations with members of the intelligentsia can also be detected in Gorky's letters to Bogdanov, which show that after just a few weeks Gorky was having trouble coming to terms with Mikhail's "capricious" character and was explaining the worker's emotional excesses as a sign of the advanced stage of his tuberculosis. The antagonism that Mikhail felt toward Gorky (although he admired him) and the intellectual and artistic society that surrounded him was so great that he was unable to surmount it. Even though Mikhail felt proud of being a worker-*intelligent* and was highly valued by Gorky and Bogdanov as a "worker philosopher," he still could not cope with the social, emotional, and psychological conflict triggered by his surroundings in Capri. He vacillated between the wish to be a "real [*nastoiashchii*] *intelligent*" and a profound irritation and skepticism vis-à-vis the mentality of the intelligentsia he encountered in Gorky's villa. The more he took offense at the individualism of the intelligentsia, the more he valued the collectivism of the workers, in the spirit of Bogdanov's philosophy. For Gorky himself, Vilonov's anti-intellectualism became "a very sensitive barometer, according to which I measure all of my own thoughts on this subject."<sup>11</sup>

"The proletariat as social class must have its own intelligentsia," Mikhail wrote to Trotsky, hoping that Trotsky would publish in *Pravda* a detailed report by Vilonov on the need for Party Schools. (*Pravda* had been published by Trotsky in Vienna since 1908.) Gorky and Bogdanov had commissioned Mikhail to convince local party organizations in Russia to endorse the Party Schools since Lenin and the Bolsheviks under his influence regarded the schools as the "center of a new faction" and refused to recognize them.<sup>12</sup> The idea of using Trotsky's *Pravda* as a mouthpiece for the aims of proletarian culture came from Bogdanov, who had been looking for a publication to serve as organ for his own group ever since he left the editorial board of the Leninist *Proletarii*. Trotsky, however, who had positioned himself between the various factions and was calling for party unity, hesitated to open his paper to a new faction. In an unpublished letter to the Capri school's organizers, he demanded a Party School for the entire RSDRP, and made detailed didactic and methodical

suggestions to this end. Later, he did agree to take charge of a few practical courses on agitation and propaganda in Bologna, even if in general he did not agree with the instructional program.

Mikhail's letter to Trotsky, in which he emphasized that the worker leaders (*rabotniki-vozhdy*) who were so important to the workers' movement could be formed only in a Party School, shows that he did not fail to recognize his own importance for the school. Party Schools, he explained to Trotsky, could function only if "the experiences of the theoreticians were fused with those of the practical workers [*praktiki*]." Only from the workers themselves could intelligently learn how they should go about teaching workers.

When Vilonov traveled back to Russia illegally in June 1909 in order to select "pupils" for Capri, he brought the organizational division of the Bolsheviks into Leninist and Bogdanovist factions onto Russian soil. At first he was too naive to grasp the far-reaching political consequences of this situation. He thought of Bogdanov as Bolshevism's greatest philosopher, of Lenin as its greatest organizer. Why could he, Vilonov, not bring about a reconciliation between them? The Party School seemed to him to be the best setting in which to do this, and the worker graduates who returned to Russia could then report back about this to their local party organizations.

It was only during the activity of the Party School, when Vilonov saw that the aim of Bogdanov's project was much wider than simply training workers for service in the party and that Bogdanov's notion of "worker intelligentsia" aimed less and less at the creation of "party leaders" (*partiinye rukovoditeli*), that the old "practical worker" in Vilonov gained the upper hand over the "worker philosopher." A series of intrigues within the school caused Vilonov to break with Bogdanov, who, "under the banner of the old Bolshevism, wanted to replace the Party School with a school for a [narrow] circle [*kruzhkovaia shkola*] and thereby exclude the *praktiki*." Suddenly, Lenin's rigid concept of the party seemed to Vilonov to promise much more for the workers' cause. In November 1909, Vilonov, along with five other pupils, abandoned the Capri school. They accepted an invitation from Lenin to come to Paris, where he gave them a warm reception and organized a series of lectures for them. Vilonov, the ideological Bogdanovist, now became a political Leninist. Only a few months later, in May 1910, Vilonov, 27 years of age, died of tuberculosis at the Davos sanatorium. A little earlier, with

Vilonov already fatally ill, Lenin had arranged that the party would pay for his stay there. In a memorial article on Vilonov that Gorky prepared for *Pravda* in 1927, he recalled that “for Mikhail, class hatred had been the most powerful creative force”; for him it was “truth itself.”<sup>13</sup> When he opened the first proletarian university in Russia in 1918, Bogdanov referred to the schools in Capri and Bologna as a model, but he especially emphasized the “immense services of the ‘worker-philosopher’ Vilonov on behalf of workers’ education in Russia.”<sup>14</sup>

After his first meeting with Vilonov, Lenin wrote to Gorky on 16 November 1909 that “Comrade Mikhail” was “the guarantee [*poruka*] for the success of revolutionary social democracy in Russia.”<sup>15</sup> Mikhail, he believed, was living proof of the fact that “the School has drawn truly progressive workers from the workers’ real life” (*shkola cherpнула iz nastoiashchei rabochei zhizni nastoiashchikh rabochikh peredovikov*). The quarrels among the intelligentsia in Capri, he claimed, were unimportant in comparison. Lenin used these and other conciliatory words to resume his communications with Gorky.

Vilonov’s activities in connection with the Capri Party School had the effect of a catalyst. In the end, Capri was about much more than the transformation of workers into party leaders. “Worker intelligentsia” did not turn out to be a synonym for “party intelligentsia,” as the Party School had initially planned. The school in Capri, just like that in Bologna, was centered around Bogdanov’s implementation of his cultural-political-Bolshevik program (essentially that of *Vpered*), which had to mean a direct confrontation with Lenin. Bogdanov thought of the political consciousness of the proletariat as only one aspect of a much more far-reaching culture, the culture, soon to be constructed, of a new class.

As secretary of the Capri Party School, Vilonov was one of the very few workers (most of the time the *only* worker) to take part in the debates of the party literati and intelligentsia over the internal problems of the school and the political conflicts with the Bolshevik center—that is, with Lenin. On the one hand, it was in this context that he acquired his pride, if not to say his arrogance. On the other hand, it was also in this context that he acquired his special contempt for the party intelligentsia of Capri and his growing admiration for Lenin, who, unbeknownst to him, interfered from a distance to bring “order” to the turmoil there.

We have no materials to inform us about the attitudes of the other workers. After 1917 Bogdanov encountered a number of these workers again in the course of his organization of Proletkul't. Later, two of them wrote their memoirs, but under the political pressures of the times, these memoirs focused entirely on the contributions of Lenin. For this reason, they tell us hardly anything significant about Capri.

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Bogdanov's concept of the future social order was based on the notion of an absolute, all-embracing, total, one might even say *totalizing* unity of society, in which there was no difference between individual and collective experience, between the "organizers" and the "organized," between "rulers" and "ruled." Bogdanov demanded the authentic initiative (*samodeiatel'nost'*) of workers but also insisted that workers must be educated to achieve a level of consciousness and an all-embracing world view that would enable them to produce their own culture and thereby become society's hegemonic class. According to Bogdanov, the collective will of the workers that would finally triumph and would define the world of the future was contrary to any pluralism or individualism in the realm of ideas. If one takes Bogdanov at his word, the disappearance of the "authoritarian dualism between spirit and matter" in the collectivist future would also mean the end of the intelligentsia as an independent social category.

In numerous passages of Bogdanov's works, one gets the impression that he is describing ideal types of workers, functioning in ideal situations. The question arises whether Bogdanov was really familiar with authentic workers, and to what extent he even needed them. It sometimes seems that Bogdanov needed the workers, but only so that they could take the place of the intelligentsia. Judging by the materials at our disposal, it seems that he was much less interested in who and how the workers actually were above and beyond their ideal-typical image. For Bogdanov, Vilonov was the ideal type of a worker-*intelligent*, at least at the beginning of their acquaintance. When Vilonov, however, developed in a direction that no longer corresponded to Bogdanov's ideal image, Bogdanov simply turned to another page of his book.

## NOTES

1. See Jutta Scherrer: "Les écoles du parti de Capri et de Bologne: La formation de l'intelligentsia du parti," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 19, 3 (1978): 259–84; "Bogdanov e Lenin: Il bolscevismo al bivio," in *Storia del marxismo* (Turin, 1979), vol. 2, pp. 493–546; "Culture prolétarienne et religion socialiste entre deux révolutions: Les 'Bolcheviks de gauche,'" *Europa* 2, 2 (1979): 67–90; "Proletarische Kultur': Die Entstehung des Konzepts und seine Umsetzung in der Organisation des frühen 'Proletkult,'" in *Arbeiterkulturen zwischen Alltag und Politik*, ed. Friedhelm Boll (Vienna, Munich, Zurich, 1986), pp. 101–21; "Gor'kij-Bogdanov: Aperçu sur une correspondance non publiée," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 29, 1 (1988): 41–52; "The Cultural Hegemony of the Proletariat: The Origins of Bogdanov's Vision of Proletarian Culture," *Studies in History* 5, 2 (1989): 195–210; "Bogdanov e Capri," in *L'Altra Rivoluzione*, ed. Vittorio Strada (Capri, 1994), pp. 35–55.
2. A. A. Bogdanov, "Programma kul'tury," in A. A. Bogdanov, *Voprosy sotsializma* (Moscow, 1918), p. 72.
3. After 1905, Bogdanov criticized Lenin's "struggle for a single, personal leadership" (RTsKhIDNI, f. 259, op. 1, ed. khr. 48, 1. 44 ob); quoted by Daniela Steila in her introduction to A. A. Bogdanov, *Desiatiletie otlucheniia ot marksizma* (Moscow, 1995).
4. A. A. Bogdanov, "Ne nado temnit'," in *Ko vsem tovarishcham!* (Paris, n.d. [1910]), p. 4.
5. Andrzej Walicki, "Alexander Bogdanov and the Problem of the Socialist Intelligentsia," *Russian Review* 49, 3 (1990): 304.
6. This is the original title, rejected by the censorship. The book, the product of experiences in the Capri and Bologna schools, appeared under the title *Kul'turnye zadachi nashego vremeni* (Moscow, 1911).
7. A. A. Bogdanov (Maksimov), "Proletariat v bor'be za sotsializm," *Vpered* 1 (1910).
8. Bogdanov, *Kul'turnye zadachi*, p. 69.
9. "Kakoi velikolepnyi paren' etot rabochii, kakuiu intelligentsiiu obeshchaet vydvinit' nasha rabochaia massa, esli sudit' po etoi figure!"; letter from Gorky to the publisher I. P. Ladyznikov, Capri, early January 1909, in *Arkhiv A. M. Gor'kogo* (Moscow, 1959), vol. 7, p. 186.
10. A. V. Lunacharskii, *Velikii perevorot* (St. Petersburg, 1919), p. 45.
11. All the quotes in this and other places are Gorky's. Vilonov's and Trotsky's quotes were taken from archival materials from New York, cited above.
12. See J. Scherrer, "Un 'philosophe-ouvrier' russe: N. E. Vilonov," *Le mouvement social* 111 (1980): 165–88. On Vilonov's letters from Capri to his wife in Moscow: Irina Revjakina, "Intersezione di destini: Maksim Gor'kij e Michail Vilonov," in Strada, ed., *L'Altra Rivoluzione*, pp. 111–37.

13. M. Gorky, "Mikhail Vilonov," in M. Gorky, *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsatykh tomakh* (Moscow, 1952), vol. 17, pp. 88–90.
14. A. Bogdanov, "Proletarskii Universitet," in A. Bogdanov, *O proletarskoi kul'ture* (Leningad, 1924), p. 242.
15. *V. I. Lenin i A. M. Gor'kii* (Moscow, 1969), pp. 45–49.

## **WORKERS, THE INTELLIGENTSIA, AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN ST. PETERSBURG, 1895–1917**

**S. A. Smith**

In July 1902, in response to a question from workers in Batum, the Petersburg Committee (PK) of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (RSDRP) declared that it "completely rejects any distinction among SDs between *intelligenty* and workers" and that leadership should fall to the "most conscious and developed elements, regardless of whether they come from the workers or other classes or social strata."<sup>1</sup> This article explores how far this precept was carried out in practice by analyzing the social composition of the RSDRP in St. Petersburg, with a view to assessing the extent to which workers were represented in leadership positions within the party. Second, it examines relations between intelligenty and workers within the party and suggests that, despite real comradeship between the two groups, the social and cultural differences between them led to a degree of social and psychological tension that persisted down to 1917.

### **GROWTH AND SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF ST. PETERSBURG SOCIAL DEMOCRACY**

By the time of its shift to the tactic known as "agitation" (1894–95) the Social Democratic movement in Russia already had a working-class majority of members.<sup>2</sup> In St. Petersburg, however, conflict between the Workers' Committee of the Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class and the Iskra group, and later between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, meant that the RSDRP failed to build its working-class base in the way that seemed possible in the mid-1890s. On the eve of 1905, there were perhaps 800 SDs in the

capital, of whom 550 were workers, but many of these operated independently of the PK and the Menshevik "Group" (Gruppa).<sup>3</sup> The 1905 Revolution led to modest growth on the part of both factions, though the Mensheviks recruited more members and exercised greater influence among workers than did the Bolshevik-controlled PK. By the end of the year there were about 3,000 SDs in the city, and the PK was once again recognized as representing all SDs, regardless of faction—a situation that continued nominally until mid-1907.<sup>4</sup>

It was in 1906, rather than 1905, that significant growth occurred in the RSDRP nationally. This was less impressive in St. Petersburg than elsewhere, due mainly to relentless harassment by the police. By January 1907 the Bolsheviks claimed 2,105 members in the city, as against the Mensheviks' 2,156, though these figures are contested.<sup>5</sup> Thereafter the Bolsheviks grew rather rapidly. Elections to the March 1907 city conference suggest that there were 5,100 Bolsheviks and 2,200 Mensheviks in the capital, at a time when national membership of the RSDRP stood between 150,000 and 170,000.<sup>6</sup> A sample of 4,500 members of the RSDRP during the period 1905–7 indicates that workers comprised about 60 percent of SD membership and intelligentsia 32 percent.<sup>7</sup> Among the latter, 38 percent were students, 42 percent were teachers, and 10 percent were medical workers, which suggests that whereas before the 1905 Revolution the typical *intelligent* within the party was a student, the typical *intelligent* within the party was now a teacher in a people's school (*narodnyi uchitel'*).<sup>8</sup>

The Petersburg organization of the RSDRP reached its peak size of around 8,800 members in the late spring of 1907. Thereafter membership plunged to 3,000 in 1908, 1,000 in 1909, and to a mere 600 in 1910, a loss of more than 90 percent.<sup>9</sup> The drop in intelligentsia membership was especially marked. The responsible organizer of the PK, A. M. Buiko, recalled that "all agitational, propaganda, and organizational work fell by default on the shoulders of the worker intelligentsia. There were cases when district newspapers and leaflets had not even one collaborator from the intelligentsia, being served exclusively by workers."<sup>10</sup> Constant arrests by the police meant that the PK ceased to exist and was only reestablished—and then only ephemerally—in February 1912.<sup>11</sup> It was not until the eruption of labor protest following the Lena massacre of April 1912 that RSDRP membership began to recover. By the spring

of 1914 there were probably 5,000 to 6,000 Bolsheviks in the capital, overwhelmingly workers.<sup>12</sup> This was a substantial revival, yet it is clear that police repression continued to prevent the Bolsheviks from operating on a permanent citywide basis. Such strength as they had was dispersed through factory cells, and there was little coordination of activity via the PK.<sup>13</sup>

The outbreak of war in August 1914 dealt the Bolsheviks a shattering blow. After the general strike of July 1914, the authorities put more than 1,500 militants into uniform and arrested both the Russian Bureau of the RSDRP Central Committee and the Bolshevik Duma faction. After the first mobilization into the army, membership in the city may have fallen to as low as 100. Under relentless pressure from the police and undermined by the activities of at least 25 provocateurs, the PK was forced to reconstitute itself no fewer than ten times between August 1914 and February 1917.<sup>14</sup> From summer 1915 the party began to recover, and by October membership may have reached 1,200. This advance was reversed at the beginning of 1916, however, when the PK and Russian Bureau were smashed once again, and membership fell to less than 500.<sup>15</sup> In the autumn of 1916 the party's fortunes picked up dramatically, with membership reaching between 2,000 and 3,000.<sup>16</sup> The police struck in early 1917, but membership on the eve of the February Revolution was probably still over 2,000.<sup>17</sup> The Central Initiative Group of the Mensheviks, the internationalist faction, had 400 to 500 members at the end of 1916, and the Mezhraiontsy group had over 150.<sup>18</sup>

If workers formed a majority of the RSDRP in St. Petersburg from the outset, they came to colonize leadership positions only gradually. In 1905–7 workers comprised 32 out of 99 members of the PK, but the continuing predominance of intelligenty is reflected in the fact that no fewer than 55 of the 99 had higher education, while another 35 had complete or incomplete secondary education.<sup>19</sup> It was not until the so-called Years of Reaction, beginning in mid-1907, that the proportion of workers increased: of 74 newcomers to the PK in 1908–10, 33 were workers, 32 intelligenty, and 9 of unknown social origin.<sup>20</sup> By the time the party revived after 1912, workers were a majority on the PK. Of 36 members in 1913, 24 were workers, including 19 metalworkers. Since the average age of the PK was only 28, many of these workers were very young, such as N. K. Antipov and V. F. Malakhovskii, both 19.<sup>21</sup> During the war workers increased their

preponderance still further. Reckoning that 112 people sat on the PK during this period, Robert McKean has calculated that only 18 were not proletarian.<sup>22</sup> Among 15 members of the PK at the end of 1916, there were 8 metalworkers, 1 tram worker, 2 clerks in the sickness funds, 1 doctor, 1 student, and 1 party full-timer. Two members were female. Seven were age 20 to 25; 4 were 26 to 30, and 4, 31 to 47. Although 8 members—obviously workers—had only primary education, 7 others had higher or secondary education.<sup>23</sup> This meant that notwithstanding its largely working-class composition, the educational level of the PK was higher than that of the population at large. Because of repression by the police, there was not much continuity of personnel. Of 115 Bolsheviks on the PK in 1905–7, only 45 (39 percent) were still active in the city in 1917, and only 9 seem to have been members of the PK.<sup>24</sup>

In the highest organ of the party, the Central Committee, the intelligentsia retained considerable, though not overriding, influence.<sup>25</sup> And after the February Revolution intelligentsia appear to have increased their representation somewhat in the leadership of the Petersburg organization. Among 83 members of the PK in 1917 for whom we have information, 54 were workers and 29 were intelligentsia (including 3 students).<sup>26</sup> Among the members of 13 regional committees (*raikomy*) between March and June, the proportion of workers was 74 percent.<sup>27</sup> Of 112 members and candidate members of the PK in 1917, the majority were young; 20 were 18 to 24; 24 were 25 to 29; 27 were 30 to 34; 25 were 35 to 44; only 2 were 45 or over.<sup>28</sup>

In 1917 there were only 15 women on the PK.<sup>29</sup> This imbalance between the sexes in the party may have had implications for relations between workers and intelligentsia. Evidence suggests that women comprised about 15 percent of RSDRP membership prior to 1905 and slightly less thereafter. Female SDs, unlike their male counterparts, belonged mainly to the intelligentsia.<sup>30</sup> According to V. V. Lozhkin's sample of SDs charged by police between 1883 and 1903, women comprised 23.4 percent of intelligentsia members, as compared to only 7.2 percent of worker members.<sup>31</sup> Women were slightly underrepresented in leadership positions. To judge by name, 30 members (12.8 percent) of the PK from 1902 to February 1917 were women, of whom no fewer than 26 were *intelligentki*.<sup>32</sup> The proportion of women on the PK in 1917 was slightly less than this, though their representation on the raikomy between March and June of that year was rather higher

(15.5 percent).<sup>33</sup> Given that women members were better educated than men, one might have expected them to have been overrepresented rather than underrepresented in the leadership. But women were at a disadvantage in the masculine world of the party, and gender may have served to bridge the otherwise vast gulf in education, culture, and family circumstances between female SDs from working-class and intelligentsia backgrounds.<sup>34</sup> Both groups had to fight to free themselves of family ties and expectations, and both paid a higher personal cost than men for their immersion in the struggle for justice and freedom.<sup>35</sup> There is little evidence about social relations between female SDs of different social backgrounds, but both working-class and intelligentsia SDs seem to have worked well together around the newspaper *Rabotnitsa*, which was published by the Bolsheviks for working women in 1913-14.

Still more speculatively, we may consider the implications of the ethnic composition of the Petersburg Bolshevik organization for intelligentsia-worker relations. There is evidence that where Marxist parties were ethnically homogeneous, as in the Jewish Bund or in Georgian social democracy, relations between intelligentsy and workers were relatively harmonious.<sup>36</sup> The RSDRP, however, was a multi-ethnic party, in which non-Russian minorities were overrepresented in both membership and leadership positions. On the PK in 1917 there were 58 Russians, 22 Jews, 6 Latvians, 4 Poles, 4 Ukrainians, 2 Finns, 1 Lithuanian, 1 Estonian, 1 Armenian, and 1 Georgian.<sup>37</sup> Among the members of the 13 raikomy between March and June 1917, 22.2 percent were said to belong to the "oppressed nationalities."<sup>38</sup> Although the evidence is scanty, it seems that non-Russians were more likely to come from intelligentsia than worker backgrounds. Lozhkin's sample suggests that the ethnic composition of worker SDs was broadly in line with the makeup of the empire's population as a whole, whereas non-Russian minorities were overrepresented among intelligentsy.<sup>39</sup> If this is so, and it is by no means proven, the presence of non-Slavs in leadership positions may have been a factor complicating relations between workers and intelligentsy. In St. Petersburg, for example, the proportion of Jews among factory workers was small, whereas the number of Jews in the PK was large, which (without ascribing anti-Semitism to the worker members) may have been a factor adding to the sense of social distance between workers and intelligentsy in the leading party organs.

### TENSIONS BETWEEN WORKERS AND INTELLIGENTY

The revolutionary intelligentsia always served as a role model for “conscious” workers who joined the RSDRP. Yet while admiring their education and *kul’turnost’*, “conscious” workers resented being patronized by intelligenty. Semen Kanatchikov took umbrage at the way in which revolutionary workers in St. Petersburg were “taken for display” to the homes of liberal intellectuals before 1905:

After leaving these gatherings we would breathe a sigh of relief and laugh at our hosts’ lack of understanding of our lives as workers and at their alien way of life and thinking.<sup>40</sup>

Around the turn of the century, A. Frolov, a samovar maker from Tula, was drawn to the company of local students—as much by their cleanliness as by their learning—but was ashamed at first to let the students know he was a worker and covered up his callused hands to avoid discovery.<sup>41</sup> Even after he became a full-time RSDRP organizer, he continued to feel embarrassment in the presence of intelligenty. Here he describes how he hid in the safe house of a professor in 1905:

I couldn’t use my knife and fork like him. We workers put a napkin on our knees so that we didn’t soil our trousers, but he stuck it in his collar. . . . Sitting at the table during dinner they could eat and talk about intelligent things at the same time, whereas I could not join in, so felt like some hanger-on. Everything—from the bread with which they began to the conversation with which they finished—was smooth and polished.<sup>42</sup>

From the earliest days of Russian social democracy, tension between worker and intelligentsia members was evident, especially regarding the intelligentsia’s control of leadership positions within the organization.<sup>43</sup> One of the most potent sentiments fueling “economism” was the desire to see workers control their own organizations. Economism enjoyed its heyday from 1897 to the spring of 1899, during which time its proponents, such as K. M. Takhtarev and A. A. Iakubova, successfully campaigned to open up the central group of the Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class to workers. The worker Andrei Fisher said: “In no way would

we entertain the intelligentsia ordering us to do this one minute, that another."<sup>44</sup> In October 1897 the first number of *Rabochaia Mysl'*, the standard-bearer of economism, proclaimed:

The labor movement owes its vitality to the fact that the worker himself has finally snatched his fate from the hands of his leaders and has taken it into his own hands. . . . So long as the movement was only a means to quiet the guilty conscience of the repentant intellectual, it was alien to the worker himself.<sup>45</sup>

Intelligentsy such as Stepan Radchenko and B. I. Gorev resisted calls to admit workers to leadership organs, as did Lenin, who argued that they lacked sufficient experience of conspiratorial organization.<sup>46</sup>

In *What Is to Be Done?* (1902), Lenin argued that socialist consciousness must be brought to the workers' movement by the intelligentsia. This subordination of spontaneity to consciousness undoubtedly created a potential for intelligentsia domination of the party. Yet Lenin did not "idealize" the "intellectual professionals," as Leonard Schapiro and others have suggested.<sup>47</sup> *What Is to Be Done?* is essentially a justification of the role of the professional revolutionary, whether of intelligentsia or working-class provenance. And Lenin envisaged that, as the spontaneous development of the workers' movement became broader and deeper, the workers would

promote from their ranks not only an increasing number of talented agitators but also talented organizers, propagandists and "practical activists" in the best sense of the term (of whom there are so few among our intellectuals who, for the most part, in the Russian manner, are somewhat careless and sluggish in their habits).<sup>48</sup>

These comments are suggestive, for in spite of exalting the role of the Russian intelligentsia in the abstract, Lenin was less than impressed with it in practice. In the debate on party organization at the Second Congress of the RSDRP in July 1903, he accused intelligentsy of being the source of "opportunism" within the party. And the entire argument of *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* (1904) rests upon a contrast between the "discipline" and "organization" of the proletariat and the "individualism" and "wishy-washiness" (*khliupkost'*) of the intelligentsia.<sup>49</sup>

From the first, therefore, the polemic on party organization was linked, though not reducible, to the issue of relations between workers and intelligenty within social democracy. At the end of 1903 the Menshevik leader Pavel Aksel'rod urged the RSDRP to develop the independence and political consciousness of worker members as a matter of urgency. If the intelligentsia continued to exercise domination, "we will face a revolutionary political organization of the democratic bourgeoisie which will use the Russian workers as cannon fodder."<sup>50</sup> While recognizing the desirability of promoting workers to leadership positions, most Bolsheviks did not view the matter with this degree of urgency. At the "Third" Party Congress, which opened in London on 12 April 1905, and which the Mensheviks refused to recognize, Lenin called for the promotion of workers into both local and central committees, but Anatolii Lunacharskii had doubts about the practicability of such measures:

Every member of a committee must be a universalist who, if necessary, can undertake any kind of committee work; there are workers who can carry out so-called proletarian work splendidly, but the huge majority of them are absolutely incapable, for example, of communicating with "society."<sup>51</sup>

P. A. Krasikov, a member of the PK, saw such reservations as emanating from what he called "worker-phobia" (*rabocheboiazn'*):

In our committees—and I speak of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks without distinction—they will accept a *kursistka* [female student] with ease, but will not accept a worker.<sup>52</sup>

Even at the height of the 1905 Revolution, which saw an unprecedented alliance between the liberal Liberation movement and the labor movement, tensions between intelligenty and workers within the RSDRP persisted. After the failure of May Day demonstrations, workers told the Menshevik S. I. Somov, soon to be active in the Petersburg Soviet:

We want to be the masters in our workers' party, we don't want to carry out only the technical functions in it. It's time to bring an end to playing godparent, which has become such an established practice in the party that *intelligenty* easily make a career in it. . . .

The elective principle must be made the basis of all party organization from top to bottom.<sup>53</sup>

In 1906 the failure of workers to strike in protest at the government's dissolution of the First Duma caused Mensheviks of a "liquidationist" bent (those who favored open over underground activity) to revive the demand for a workers' congress as a means of strengthening the bond between the party and the masses.<sup>54</sup> In May 1907 Aksel'rod told the Fifth Congress of the RSDRP in London:

Our party is in origin and remains a revolutionary organization not of the working class but of the petit-bourgeois intelligentsia . . . for revolutionary influence on that class. . . . The mass of proletarians who have been accepted function within the party as a kind of estate of plebs, while the intelligentsia acts the part of the aristocracy, the estate of patricians, managing the internal and external affairs of the party state, safeguarding its plebeian depths from any pernicious influences from outside.<sup>55</sup>

After 1907 the steady increase in the number of workers in leadership positions eased resentment around the issue of intelligentsia domination of the party, but tension between intelligentsia and workers did not disappear. Many workers, for example, blamed the split in the RSDRP on the intelligentsia's penchant for sectarian wrangling. In a 1912 essay, Trotsky argued that for the Russian intelligentsia "personal steadfastness could be bought only at the price of fanaticism in the realm of ideas, merciless self-restriction and self-demarkation, mistrustfulness and suspicion, and unblinking surveillance of one's own purity."<sup>56</sup> This was a view shared by many workers. Fisher believed that in their ideological squabbles intellectuals "made elephants out of gnats."<sup>57</sup> And N. N. Glebov-Putilovskii argued: "We don't need the intellectual nannies to befuddle the workers with sectarian nonsense." In 1912 an activist in the Petersburg Union of Metalworkers declared that "Lenin and Plekhanov are good so long as they confine themselves to the realm of political economy and philosophy," but workers' organizations did not need "sermons from abroad."<sup>58</sup>

There were periodic efforts by workers to organize in order to promote party unity and heal the party's factional splits. In 1905 a group of "worker social-democrats" launched the newspaper *Rabo-*

*chii golos*, whose masthead proclaimed “The emancipation of the workers is the business of the workers themselves.”<sup>59</sup> Similar groupings sprouted up later, such as the Central Group of SD Workers of 1911–12, and the Mezhraionka, formed in November 1913. A report to the Okhrana of 15 June 1914 commented:

The growth of a new conciliatory current is evident among the worker rank-and-file of social democracy, extremely dissatisfied with the political passions and factional quarrels of the Pravdists and Liquidators.<sup>60</sup>

Even in 1917, after the gulf between the two factions had become unbridgeable, calls for an end to intelligentsia factionalism surfaced periodically. On 1 August the Narva District soviet of workers’ and soldiers’ deputies declared that factionalism was

inadmissible and harmful in these times when dangers threaten the country from within and without. . . . Political groupings and multifarious shades of opinion issue from above [*sverkhi*]—shades of opinion, factions, disagreements, which the rank-and-file [*nizy*] neither understands nor sees the need for.<sup>61</sup>

Whereas for intellectuals ideological conflict was the guarantee of correct, scientific politics, for workers such conflict breached the code of solidarity and equality on which socialism was based.

Another issue that fed the tension between intelligentsia and workers concerned the kind of education appropriate for worker SDs. The Menshevik Somov observed in 1905:

For the most part the workers who end up in the [SD] circles are the youngest ones, those who hope to find in the circles knowledge and the satisfaction of their intellectual interests.<sup>62</sup>

The RDSRP offered “conscious” workers the chance to improve their education through reading groups, lectures, and party schools. I. I. Fokin, who began as an unskilled worker at the Metal Works, had by 1914 become head of the propaganda board of the PK. A comrade recalled:

Our Ignat had an all-round education. He was a widely read “intellectual proletarian.” . . . When we were young he was the only worker in the factory who could master by himself the literature

on the philosophy and economic theory of Marx, which for simple workers was very difficult.<sup>63</sup>

Not all workers had Fokin's aptitude for theory, yet they could relish the opportunity provided by the party for developing skills as public speakers, agitators, organizers, and conspirators. For Lenin, it was precisely such technical skills that were appropriate for workers to master. He was less concerned with whether they understood the intricacies of theory:

Our most pressing duty is to help train working-class revolutionaries who will be on the same level in regard to party activity as the revolutionaries from among the intellectuals (we emphasize the words "in regard to party activity," for, although necessary, it is neither so easy nor so pressingly necessary to bring the workers up to the level of intellectuals in other respects).<sup>64</sup>

Not all party intelligenty agreed with this emphasis on training over general intellectual development. Aleksandr Bogdanov and Lunacharskii believed that this attitude perpetuated intelligentsia authoritarianism; they argued for the creation of a "worker intelligentsia," as opposed to Lenin's "party intelligentsia." They wished to see workers become "conscious socialists," capable of analyzing problems for themselves and of disseminating knowledge among broader layers of their class. It was in this spirit that the Party Schools in Capri and Bologna were organized.<sup>65</sup> Their relative success suggests that "conscious" workers wanted an all-round education that would free them from intellectual dependence on the intelligentsia within the party.

Party activism demanded huge sacrifices from all members, regardless of social background, yet the costs of activism were not the same for intelligenty as for workers, yet another source of friction between them. The costs of activism for intelligenty were described by Lenin in somewhat melodramatic terms:

Even if they do not go on to a heroic death, they lead the truly heroic life of forced labor of the party "rank-and-filer," poorly paid, half-starved, permanently exhausted, harassed to the last degree.

Unlike workers, intelligenty cut themselves off from comfortable family circumstances and well-paid careers, though for Lenin there was an outstanding compensation in this: they were “spared the dung-heap, known as ‘society,’” spared having to put up with “the indifference of that audience to social and political questions.”<sup>66</sup> Yet the ease with which intelligenty could return to a normal, “bourgeois” life was brought home to workers in galling fashion each summer, when intelligenty trooped off to the Crimea on vacation, leaving them to carry on the party’s work. As Lidiia Dan observed,

It was easier for an *intelligent* to leave his customary surroundings because he usually had contacts and would not be lost. But for a worker who left the factory (and he could not remain at the factory if he was a “professional”) and knew nothing except the business of revolution, the problem of the next crust of bread, of subsistence, was much more acute.<sup>67</sup>

This is not to suggest that intelligenty lived lives of luxury—it was said that the SD leader and theoretician Georgii Plekhanov, in exile in France, could not afford the gas to cook eggs, so he ate them raw—but intelligenty could usually afford the occasional book or trip to the theater, pleasures beyond the reach of most workers.<sup>68</sup> When funds permitted, all professional activists received a salary, known as the “party diet,” which came from membership dues, donations to the party, fund-raising, and the occasional “expropriation.” After 1905 this salary was set at a low 35 rubles a month. The worker Buiko explained that worker full-timers were entirely dependent on this salary in a way that intelligenty often were not:

The fact that the worker was tied to the working class and lived very poorly created particular difficulties of an economic order. The *intelligent* often had supplementary earnings (lessons, translation, journalism).<sup>69</sup>

A final difference in the costs of political activism was that when intelligenty fell into the hands of the authorities, they could expect better treatment; they were regarded, even by police officials, as misguided idealists, whereas workers were seen as ignorant rabble-rousers and were treated accordingly.<sup>70</sup>

The impact of party activism on family life also differed for workers and intelligenty. In the early years of the socialist movement

many workers felt that their political commitment ruled out a normal family life. On coming out of prison, A. I. Shapovalov was sent with intelligentsia comrades to Siberia:

I noticed something new among my comrades: they now spent time discussing love and female beauty. . . . Up to my arrest I had seen only one side, the best side, of them. I saw them engaged in revolutionary work in the underground. This involved them totally. . . . "I have only one fiancée, one wife, one mother," they would say, "the revolution." But in prison, and especially in exile, in forced inactivity, another side to these people emerged that had formerly been hidden, stifled. Now personal life was thrust to the fore. . . . Almost all the intelligentsia comrades had fiancées who used to visit them. . . . I noticed that for the most part workers received visits only from their mothers.<sup>71</sup>

For workers who married, the consequences of political activity for their spouses and children could be nerve-racking. Wives feared that husbands would lose their jobs, be imprisoned or exiled, and that the family would lose its breadwinner. Wives would nag their husbands for always going to meetings.<sup>72</sup> After 1917 it was said that "a party husband is a bad husband."<sup>73</sup> And the acquisition of "conscientiousness" on the part of the husband increased the cultural and emotional distance between him and his spouse. "The husband would talk freely about philosophy, while his wife would not be able to read. They lived together, had children, but otherwise had nothing in common."<sup>74</sup> The family life of the intelligentsia was not affected in the same way. Frolov, observing the domestic life of an SD couple around 1900, commented:

They ate, drank and lived not like us. . . . They had no extras, but lived well. They had children, but I didn't notice any quarrels. They were comrades . . . not like a man and his wife.<sup>75</sup>

On the PK there were some prominent intelligentsia couples, including Vladimir Bonch-Bruевич and V. M. Velichkina and S. I. Gusev and F. I. Drabkina.<sup>76</sup>

It would be wrong, however, to imagine that all the cards were stacked against workers within the party. If commitment to the struggle entailed hardship and sacrifice, it could also represent a form of upward social mobility for a worker who rose to a position of lead-

ership. Becoming a party member allowed him (occasionally her) to make contacts and friends outside the normal social range and exposed him to experiences far beyond the humdrum world of work and family. Roman Malinovskii, famous for being suborned by the police, was born into a Catholic peasant family in Poland, was orphaned at an early age, and rose to become first the full-time secretary of the Petersburg Metalworkers' Union and then a Bolshevik deputy to the Duma (from October 1912). A. E. Badaev, born into a peasant family in Orlov, joined an SD circle run by Nikolai Krylenko in 1904, enrolled in evening technical courses at the Kornilov school, joined the Metalworkers' Union and the Knowledge Is Light club, and, at age 28, became a Bolshevik deputy to the Fourth Duma. But because such upward mobility was unthinkable for the mass of "gray" workers, the worker who rose through the party ranks was fated to lose touch with his native class. Frolov tells us:

I was already a party professional, and the workers regarded me as an *intelligent*. Whenever I had to call on a comrade about some party matter, he would be embarrassed about his circumstances and apologize for the fact that it was so cramped and dirty.<sup>77</sup>

It is not easy to speculate on the significance of these social and cultural differences for the psychological dynamics of worker-intelligentsia relations. In an obituary for P. A. Zlydnev, Menshevik leader of St. Petersburg's Obukhov workers and a member of the presidium of the Petersburg soviet in 1905, Trotsky wrote

Between workers and intellectuals, even those holding one and the same point of view, there will long remain a certain psychological distance, a want of ties, as a result of the difference of social origin, lodged in the unconscious.<sup>78</sup>

The precise elements that produced this psychological distance are difficult to specify. Although Western historians have not been slow to generalize about the psychological profile of the Russian intelligentsia, generalizations made about the 1860s cannot be assumed to hold fifty years later. The notion that "alienation" still holds the key to the intelligentsia's psychology by the twentieth century, for example, begs many questions.<sup>79</sup> Petr Garvi, a Menshevik activist in the trade union movement, though basically an *intelligent*, insisted that as an "intelligentsia proletarian from a destitute Jewish family"

he was not motivated by guilt, nor by a Lavrovian sense that he should repay his "debt to the people."<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, it remained true that those intellectuals who joined the socialist movement idealized the proletariat, seeing in it the means whereby their own lives could acquire wholeness and purpose. Moreover, such idealization could turn to disillusion, even positive dislike, if workers failed to live up to expectations. Mary Louise Loe has shown that in the fiction of the Sreda group of writers around Maxim Gorky there is a recurrent sense that the closer an intellectual gets to the peasants or workers, the more he fears and distrusts them.<sup>81</sup> It is unlikely that those intelligentsy who stayed in the Bolshevik party distrusted the masses in this way, though one can perhaps sense in the Leninist suspicion of "spontaneity" a certain dissatisfaction with workers as they were and a desire to remold them in a more congenial image.<sup>82</sup>

For their part, the workers who joined the party were just as prone to idealize the intelligentsia, and just as prone to disenchantment if they discovered their idols had feet of clay. For the "conscious" workers, the *intelligent* represented a world of culture and freedom to which they were eager to gain admission. For Bolshevik workers more particularly, the Marxist intelligentsia represented a realm of science, access to which was vital if revolution were to succeed. Yet, though they admired intellectual accomplishment, many workers expressed mistrust of knowledge based on books. As Lidiia Dan confessed, "we knew little about life: we had a ready-made outlook drawn from books,"<sup>83</sup> and it was this that led Fedor Kalinin, a metalworker and "proletarian philosopher" who attended the Party Schools in Capri and Bologna, to conclude that the "intellectual can still think for the young class, but cannot feel for it." For him, emotional understanding derived not from logical analysis of "external facts and phenomena" but from experience.<sup>84</sup> The exodus of intelligentsy from the revolutionary camp during the Years of Reaction left a permanent scar on the psyche of many worker-Bolsheviks. In their eyes, this desertion was more than a *trahison des clercs*: it signified abandonment by their mentor-fathers, a kind of psychic orphaning, which helps explain the fierceness of much anti-intelligentsia sentiment in this period, the tirades against their irresponsibility and untrustworthiness. Typical was the view of another "worker-philosopher," Nikifor Vilonov, who in September 1909 denounced intelligentsy as "pillagers" (*marodery*) of the party.<sup>85</sup>

From a psychological point of view, we can see that the relationship between workers and intelligenty was shot through with ambivalence, suffused with elements of fantasy and projection. It could switch rapidly from credulous idealization to bitter disillusionment. Yet the fact that the relationship was fraught with conflict, and that such conflict found expression, may have been a healthy development that helped in the longer term to create a more equal relationship between the two groups. Certainly, workers acquired a position of influence within the leading councils of the Bolshevik party, something that was not replicated by all the parties that later modeled themselves on the Bolsheviks.<sup>86</sup> Finally, although the gulf between workers and intelligenty was deep, the tensions that have been analyzed here were always counterbalanced by a strong culture of comradeship, a sense of solidarity in the common struggle against the enemy. To a considerable degree, the party created its own subculture, which inculcated members of different backgrounds with its distinctive norms and values and which served to mitigate the influence of wider social divisions. Nevertheless, in the final analysis, the Bolshevik party was not a "total institution," and historians need to be attentive to the ways in which broader social and cultural pressures shaped its inner life, however subliminally.

## NOTES

1. *Peterburgskii komitet RSDRP: Protokoly i materialy zasedanii. Iul' 1902-fevral' 1917* (Leningrad, 1986), p. 18.
2. N. D. Erofeev, "Chislennost' i sostav sotsial-demokratov, privlekavshikh k doznaniyam v 1892-1902gg.," *Voprosy Istorii KPSS* 11 (1990): 118-33.
3. T. P. Bondarevskaia, *Peterburgskii komitet RSDRP v revoliutsii 1905-07 gg.* (Leningrad, 1975), pp. 75, 202.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 202-3.
5. David Lane, *The Roots of Russian Communism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975 [orig. 1968]), p. 76; compare *Ocherki istorii leningradskoi organizatsii KPSS, 1883-1917*, (Leningrad, 1980), vol. 1, p. 152. (Hereafter *Ocherki leningradskoi organizatsii.*)

6. Bondarevskaia, p. 228.
7. M. S. Volin, "K voprosu ob izuchenii sostava bol'shevistskoi partii nakanune i v period revoliutsii," in *Revoliutsiia 1905–07 godov v Rossii i ee vseмирno-istoricheskoe znachenie* (Moscow, 1976), pp. 176–77.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 177–78; Erofeev, p. 131.
9. *Ocherki leningradskoi organizatsii*, pp. 170, 429.
10. A. M. Buiko, *Put' rabochego. Vospominaniia putilovtza* (Leningrad, 1934), p. 74.
11. Robert B. McKean, *St. Petersburg between the Revolutions: Workers and Revolutionaries, June 1907 to February 1917* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 87.
12. *Ocherki leningradskoi organizatsii*, pp. 242, 276.
13. McKean, p. 111.
14. I. P. Leiberov, *Na shturm samoderzhavii* (Moscow, 1979), p. 87.
15. *Ocherki leningradskoi organizatsii*, pp. 293, 298.
16. Leiberov, p. 73; *Ocherki leningradskoi organizatsii*, p. 303.
17. L. S. Gaponenko, *Rabochii klass Rossii v 1917 godu* (Moscow 1970), p. 251; compare Leiberov, p. 73.
18. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *The February Revolution: Petrograd, 1917* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), pp. 133–34.
19. Bondarevskaia, p. 208.
20. *Ocherki leningradskoi organizatsii*, p. 172.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 239.
22. McKean, p. 405.
23. Leiberov, pp. 84–86.
24. Bondarevskaia, pp. 208–9.
25. Among seventy-eight full and candidate members of the Central Committee between 1917 and 1922, 21 percent came from worker backgrounds and 31 percent from peasant backgrounds. The rest were presumably intelligenty (Evan Mawdsley, "Makers of the Soviet Union Revisited: The Bolshevik CC Elite in the Revolutionary Period," *Revolutionary Russia* 8, 2 [1995]: 205–6).
26. T. A. Abrosimova, "The Composition of the St. Petersburg Committee of the RSDRP(b) in 1917," *Revolutionary Russia* (1997).
27. L. V. Golovanova, "Sostav chlenov raionnykh komitetov RSDRP(b) Petrograda v marte–iiune 1917 goda," in *Iz istorii trekh russkikh revoliutsii* (Leningrad, 1976), p. 88.
28. Abrosimova.
29. *Ibid.*

30. Beate Fieseler, "The Making of Russian Female Social Democrats, 1890–1917," *International Review of Social History* 34 (1989): 195–96; Erofeev, p. 125.
31. V. V. Lozhkin, "Sostav rabochikh sotsial-demokratov i ikh rol' v sozdanii leninskoii partii," *Voprosy istorii* 7 (1983): 75.
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35. Barbara A. Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 107–8; Fieseler, pp. 222–24.
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37. G. L. Sobolev, *Proletarskii avangard v 1917 godu* (St. Petersburg, 1993), p. 219.
38. Golovanova, p. 87.
39. Lozhkin, p. 76; Erofeev, pp. 126–27.
40. Reginald E. Zelnik, trans. and ed., *A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia: The Autobiography of Semen Ivanovich Kanatchikov* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), pp. 104–5.
41. A. Frolov, *Probuzhdenie* (Kiev, 1923), p. 27.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 191–92.
43. The argument of this article is not that such tensions were abnormally acute within the RSDRP in general or the Bolshevik party in particular. The memoir sources differ in their estimation of the seriousness of these tensions. Lidiia Dan, for example, states: "I never found the workers unfavorable to the intelligentsia. Of course, there were individual cases, but I deny categorically that it was widespread" (cited in Leopold Haimson, with Ziva Galili y Garcia and Richard Wortman, eds., *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries: Voices from the Menshevik Past* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987], p. 81). See also Reginald E. Zelnik's thoughtful observations on the differences between Semen Kanatchikov and Andrei (a.k.a. Matvei) Fisher on this matter in "Russian Bebels: An Introduction to the Memoirs of Semen Kanatchikov and Matvei Fisher," part 2, *Russian Review* 35 (October 1976): 426.
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45. Jonathan Frankel, ed., *Vladimir Akimov on the Dilemmas of Russian Marxism, 1895–1903* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 27.
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59. L. Martov, P. Maslov, A. Potresov, *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v Rossii v nachale XX veka* (St. Petersburg, 1914), vol. 3, p. 5.
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61. *Raionnye sovety Petrograda v 1917 g. Protokoly* (Moscow, 1965), vol. 2, p. 46.
62. S. I. Somov, "Iz istorii sotsialdemokraticheskogo dvizheniia v Peterburge v 1905 godu (lichnye vospominaniia)," part 2, *Byloe* 5(17) (May 1907), p. 153.
63. *Ocherki leningradskoi organizatsii*, p. 241.
64. V. I. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?*, trans. Joe Fineberg and George Hanna, intr. Robert Service (London: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 192.
65. Jutta Scherrer, "Les écoles du parti de Capri et de Bologne: La formation de l'intelligentsia du parti," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 19 (July–September 1978): 259–84. See also Scherrer's contribution to the present volume.
66. Lenin, *PSS*, vol. 15 (Moscow, 1960), p. 252.
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70. Tim McDaniel, *Autocracy, Capitalism, and Revolution in Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 209.
71. A. I. Shapovalov, *Po doroge k Marksizmu. Vospominaniia rabocheho revoliutsionera* (Moscow, 1922), pp. 59–60.
72. Zelnik, *Radical Worker*, p. 102.
73. E. O. Kabo, *Ocherki rabocheho byta* (Moscow, 1928), p. 223.
74. Frolov, p. 192.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
76. Perhaps the best measure of closeness between intelligenty and workers would be the incidence of intermarriage between them. Unfortunately, we know little about this. Kanatchikov married a Menshevik *intelligentka*, yet neither Lidiia Dan nor her sister would have entertained marrying a worker. See R. E. Zelnik, "The Fate of a Russian Bebel," *Carl Beck Papers* 1105 (University of Pittsburgh, 1995), p. 4; and Haimson et al., eds., *Three Revolutionaries*, p. 96.
77. Frolov, p. 192.
78. L. Trotskii, *Sochineniia*, vol. 8 (Moscow, 1926), p. 200.
79. Haimson et al., eds., *Three Revolutionaries*, p. 44.
80. Garvi, *Zapiski*. Garvi's deliberate use of the term "intelligentsia proletarian" is a sign that a clear distinction between workers and intellectuals may have been breaking down. Workers, for instance, might succeed in transforming themselves into intelligenty. In 1929 Semen Kanatchikov gave his current social status as *intelligent* and his past social status as "worker" and "peasant" (see Zelnik, "Fate of a Russian Bebel," p. 35).
81. Mary Louise Loe, "Redefining the Intellectual's Role: Maksim Gorky and the Sreda Circle," in *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow, and James L. West (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 304.
82. Wildman, p. 252; McDaniel, pp. 118–19, 216.
83. In Haimson et al., eds., *Three Revolutionaries*, p. 34.
84. Cited by Mark D. Steinberg, "Workers on the Cross: Religious Imagination in the Writings of Russian Workers, 1910–24," *Russian Review* 53 (April 1994): 238.
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## THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARY PARTY OF RUSSIA AND THE WORKERS, 1900–1914

Manfred Hildermeier

The Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs, PSR) and Social Democrats (SDs, RSDRP) are usually seen not only as two different political movements of the radical opposition, but also as typifying different social groups. According to this conventional view, the SRs represented the effort to unleash a revolutionary upheaval of the peasantry, while the SDs stood for a revolution by the urban workers. SRs appear synonymous with the agrarian revolutionary tradition, while SDs considered themselves to be the Russian version of a proletarian, “scientific” socialism, after the Marxist model. Both movements developed different types of action, included different temperaments, and had different short-term and long-term demands.

Yet these were not really complementary but competitive movements. In terms of ideology they differed on the fateful question of Russia’s future, and in the political and tactical issues of the day they were aiming at the same group of people. The Bolshevik faction of the SDs, at least, realized no later than the *grande peur* of the fall of 1905 that the working class could not eliminate the autocracy without the support of the peasantry. And the SRs were forced to admit as early as 1905 (but still more painfully in the early summer of 1906, when the peasants failed to protest the dissolution of the First Duma) that the Russian village had its own needs, perceptions and modalities of political and social action and that it could hardly be controlled from the outside. Consequently, each of these rival parties had to take into account an alternative social stratum, one that it did not prefer but was plainly of critical numerical and political importance.

The SRs, however, had further motives for their interest in workers. On the one hand, the PSR had their organizational bases in

the cities and essentially reached the peasants only via “traveling agitators.” That was a difficult task indeed and hindered continuous ties with the peasantry, the class they were striving to engage and represent. On the other hand, the SRs did not put as much theoretical and ideological emphasis on the peasantry as the SDs put on the working class. Hence they did not have to break their own rules to do what was needed—concentrate their agitation on the cities and the urban workers.

To determine the dimensions of the SR engagement with workers, this essay will follow three main lines of inquiry: (1) examine the PSR’s theoretical and programmatic conception of revolution with respect to the working class (within the framework of its overall theory of “classes” and revolution, a theory that included the intelligentsia and the peasantry); (2) consider the concrete activities of the PSR among workers during the Revolution of 1905–7; (3) determine the quantitative and qualitative weight of the working class in the PSR’s organization and leadership.

### CLASS THEORY

In contrast to the RSDRP, the PSR did not aspire to lead only one element of Russia’s oppressed masses but to unite all the exploited and oppressed people—the working class, the peasantry, and the revolutionary intelligentsia. In the opinion of the SRs, only a united front could overthrow the common enemy—autocracy and capitalism; only an uprising of “all the people,” not just a single class, could realize the revolution. Their early, neopopulist platforms had already agreed on this fundamental point.<sup>1</sup>

Without doubt the leading role would belong to the intelligentsia. Only a conscious elite had the understanding, knowledge, and moral competence to show the way to liberation. It was therefore this autonomous mental power, according to SR theory, that defined the revolutionary intelligentsia, and not, as the SDs thought, the processes of the socioeconomic base (which, in turn, would require the capitalist industrialization of Russia).<sup>2</sup> From this it followed that the vanguard of the Russian revolution in the neopopulist conception

occupied a position above classes. It was a group based on shared values and views, not class membership; indeed, it was recruited “from different classes” and precisely for that reason could represent “the synthesis of all active forces.”<sup>3</sup> It goes without saying that this high esteem for the revolutionary intelligentsia was deeply entrenched in populist thought. Its roots go back both to Petr Lavrov’s rational optimism (with his trust in the power of cognition and knowledge as motivating forces of social evolution) and Nikolai Mikhailovskii’s pessimistic conception (which saw social progress, the division of labor, and growing differentiation leading to the destruction of the natural, naive simplicity of man).<sup>4</sup>

To identify the characteristic peculiarity of the SRs’ class theory, one must pay special attention to their attempt to show that factory workers and peasants shared a common economic situation and had common political interests. Given this community of interests, the unified front of the “working people” (*trudovoi narod*)—the populist term to encompass both working class and peasantry—should constitute the foundation of the struggle against autocracy. Viktor Chernov had already laid the theoretical basis for this idea in his booklet *Ocherednoi vopros*, which argued that for the peasants, just as for the proletarians, the only source of existence was their own labor. Surplus value was extracted from the peasant as it was from the worker, but in the “hidden, masked form” of leases, tribute, taxes, and falling prices. Alienated and exploited work therefore characterized the position of both these oppressed classes in the economic process of reproduction in society. Thus Chernov declared the presence or absence of coerced labor—in other words, the form of income—as the defining criterion of class membership. In one of his first articles about questions involving the party program, this central idea appears with absolute clarity:

From our point of view, such a criterion [for determining class membership] is, above all, the source of income. . . . The division of society in classes is directly connected with the conditions of distribution [*raspredelenie*], and therefore the definitive characteristic for membership in one or another class is primarily taken from this field.<sup>5</sup>

## THEORY OF REVOLUTION

Probably no other question in the Russian revolutionary movement evoked a more thorough discussion among the movement's adherents than the character of the overthrow they envisioned. For the SDs it had long since been self-evident that backward Russia had first to undergo a capitalist development and simultaneously to adopt the achievements of the West European bourgeois democracies (chiefly, a parliamentary-constitutional government and democratic rights for all citizens).<sup>6</sup> Only after the bourgeois-capitalist socioeconomic order had eradicated "feudalism" would the time be ripe for the actual task of the proletarian movement—advancement to the socialist revolution. However, the experience of the 1905 Revolution taught that this theory of revolution could lead to strategic errors and miscalculations, for its foundation—the Marxist historic model—was based on a pattern of capitalist development in Western Europe that did not fit Russian conditions. Although capitalism was unquestionably developing in Russia, the country still did not possess a bourgeoisie that was strong enough to carry out a bourgeois revolution against the autocracy. Instead, the SDs were confronted with the paradox that the working class and peasantry, though they had proved to be the main agents of revolutionary unrest, had appeared too early. Theoretically, Trotsky's concept of permanent revolution (which Lenin increasingly reflected and actually embraced in 1917) solved this contradiction most elegantly, affirming that the proletariat must assume the objective function of the bourgeoisie, thereby transforming the (originally) bourgeois revolution *eo ipso* into a process of continuing upheaval.<sup>7</sup> In practice, however, considerable uncertainty remained, which was particularly evident in the SD majority's position on the agrarian question. It was precisely this gap between the Marxist model of development and the backward reality in Russia that gave such explosive power to the question of the "bourgeois" versus the "socialist" character of the coming revolution.

When populist theory took up this issue, it did so primarily to challenge the Marxist conception of the future and to refute the SD vision of the Russian path to socialism. The problem was inherently nonexistent for populist theory because it did not share Marxism's

theoretical assumption that historical development proceeds as a succession of social formations. Populists were free of any such bias and could demand the direct transition of Russia to the socialist order; from their point of view, bourgeois-capitalist relations did not prevail in Russia, nor indeed could they, as V. V. Vorontsov had already tried to show. Whereas backwardness became the source of an aporetic contradiction for the SD theory of revolution, it was, by contrast, the starting point for populist theory, representing a unique historic opportunity, or, in the famous phrase of Vorontsov, “the privilege of backwardness.”<sup>8</sup>

SRs adhered to this basic assumption in its original, unadulterated form. Again and again they rejected the SD thesis that a bourgeois revolution must precede a socialist revolution, a notion they denounced as a formalism that merely served to mask the SD’s “economism” and its determinist procrastination. The Russian revolutionary movement, the SRs argued, was a “synthesis” of the European revolutions. This again reflected their general view that non-Western countries “pass through the evolution of their predecessors in an abridged and concentrated form” and must combine “several stages of development into a single period.”<sup>9</sup> Some SRs went on to advance the theory that the special character of the Russian revolution lay in its assumption of “more radical socioeconomic tasks” than those of the previous European revolutions—i.e., to end not only the misery of the agricultural sector, but also the exploitation of the urban proletariat. Because Russia’s bourgeois strata were incapable of carrying out this task, it fell instead to “the forces that will profit from the coming inevitable socioeconomic changes”—“the proletariat, the peasantry, and the revolutionary intelligentsia.”<sup>10</sup> Whatever the details, the Vorontsovian dialectic of backwardness remained a fundamental SR conviction: Russia must follow a different path from that of Western Europe, even while learning from the experience of the more advanced countries.

Without doubt, this theory had more than a superficial resemblance to Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution. Above all, both theories were called upon to perform the same function: the adaptation of inappropriate models of development to the peculiarities of Russia’s socioeconomic and political structure. While SD and SR theories of revolution might differ on specifics, in this respect they showed some striking similarities.

### PROGRAM MINIMUM AND PROGRAM MAXIMUM

Despite its theoretical principles and the concept of revolution that followed therefrom, the PSR distinguished between a minimum and a maximum program. It would not be amiss to see this distinction as a tactical measure, part of the PSR's competition with the RSDRP. In fact, it was totally alien to the PSR theoreticians to think in terms of a succession of cycles or stages. This tactical deviation from basic theory probably explains why the question of grouping demands by their urgency provoked such heated debates in discussions of the party program. To be sure, it was already a serious problem for the PSR to determine the concrete goals to put forth in the name of the working class. It is all the more noteworthy that the minimum program adopted by its First Party Congress in January 1906 included the whole PSR list of workers' demands. In this program the PSR demanded (*inter alia*):

1. Progressive taxes and abolition of "all taxes that burden the workers";
2. Creation of legislation to protect labor and to provide social insurance and unemployment compensation; the introduction of the eight-hour day, establishment of a minimum wage; and participation of trade unions "in determining the internal working conditions at factories";
3. "The development of all kinds of public services and social organizations" in communities and municipalities;
4. The development of socialized enterprises, as long as this does not increase the dependence of the proletariat on the bureaucracy.<sup>11</sup>

The overwhelming majority of delegates to the First Party Congress saw the peasants' and the workers' programs as composing a harmonic "equilibrium" since both guaranteed the "right to work"—to the peasants through the socialization of landed estates, to the workers through a minimum wage and social insurance. This very similarity, however, made clear that the equilibrium actually left much to be desired. Whereas the agrarian program guaranteed the peasants *de facto* disposal over their most important means of

production, the land, the workers obtained only a guaranteed wage. Thus, whereas exploitation would cease to exist in the agrarian sector (through the abolition of private property and the transition to a socialist order), in the industrial sector exploitation would only be curbed, its lower limit would be set, while the capitalistic mode of production would remain untouched. The end of exploitation, the abolition of the capitalist mode of industrial production—that is, the “socialization” of industry—was declared the central point of the maximum program, thereby deferring it to the distant future. From this it followed that this demand did not acquire a concrete formulation and did not appear in the official party program.<sup>12</sup>

#### AGITATION AMONG WORKERS

From the very outset, the PSR included the working class not only in its program, but also in its practical activity. In certain respects the PSR actually devoted more attention to workers in practice than it did in theory. The widely held view that the PSR was the party of the peasantry and the SDs the party of the working class thus turns out to be an unacceptable simplification. The SRs, like the SDs, began with the premise that a revolution without the participation of the urban proletariat was doomed to failure. They ascribed an indispensable function to the working class in the united front of the oppressed that was to overthrow the autocracy with the help of an armed uprising of the masses. Moreover, in terms of its social composition, the PSR represented the vanguard of a proletarian revolution more than the vanguard of an agrarian revolution, for the majority of its membership came from the urban working class, a paradox to which we will return. Hence the critical competition between SRs and SDs took place not in the village but in the city.

The year 1905 marked a turning point for the PSR, which until then had hardly existed organizationally. The new political conditions eliminated many of the SRs’ disadvantages vis-à-vis the SDs. The SRs no longer suffered from a disproportionate lack of agitators, which in good measure had been due to the fact that the Okhrana (political police) considered the SRs, as terrorists, to be more dangerous than their peaceful SD competitors. Nor was it possible any

longer to shield the SD circles systematically from the SRs.<sup>13</sup> And the term “Socialist Revolutionary,” despite its close association with the aims of a peasant revolution, was no longer an impediment for workers since the necessity of an alliance between city and country was now so clearly visible. Conversely, the growing radicalization and militancy in the cities redounded to the benefit of the PSR, whose revolutionary agitation and terrorist tactics reflected and corresponded to the dominant mood.

But these favorable changes did not lead to a decisive PSR victory over the SDs in its attempts to woo the working class. No PSR political landslide came to pass. That the RSDRP (Mensheviks) emerged at the end of 1905 as the leading actor in the Petersburg Soviet of Workers’ Deputies, while the SRs dominated the Congress of the All-Russian Union of Peasants, best reflects the true distribution of forces. Social democracy maintained its position among workers; only the “youth” and the “gray masses” were said to have gone over to the SRs. The “old, those well known in the factory, respected and influential workers whose convictions had consolidated earlier (under the monopolistic influence of the exclusive authority of the Social Democratic circles),” stayed away from the PSR. That is why SR resolutions could be passed by the workers of factories that at the same time sent SD deputies to regional committees and to workers’ soviets, where the meetings were led by SDs. In other words, the PSR achieved successes in the area of agitation but was unable to turn them into organizational gains. According to an informative analysis from circles close to the PSR Central Committee, the current situation was favorable to the PSR, but as to the future, the party might lack sufficient forces to lead the movement in the cities.<sup>14</sup>

In the event, however, the PSR paid little heed to these warnings. It profited from the mobilization and politicization of broad strata of the population in most of the larger cities. Moreover, the SRs could note with satisfaction that two trade unions of central strategic importance were under their control. One was the All-Russian Union of Railroad Workers and Employees (*Vserossiiskii soiuz zheleznno-dorozhnykh rabochikh i sluzhashchikh*), the central bureau of which (at the end of 1905) included three SRs, one Bolshevik, one Menshevik, one SD without factional membership, and one Anarchist; its chairman was a well-known SR from the PSR’s Moscow

district committee, V. N. Pereverzev. The other union was the Union of Post and Telegraph Employees (*Soiuz pochtovo-telegrafichnykh sluzhashchikh*); almost all of its local organizations tended to support the PSR.<sup>15</sup>

Only as the revolution began to ebb did the local reports of the party finally cast light on the real situation, making it clear that the PSR had missed its chance to establish a solid position in the trade union movement under way since 1905. As a result, from the beginning of 1907 the SR leaders increased their efforts to make good this loss. The PSR deviated from its “combat principle” (*printsip bor'by*) by participating in the Second Duma, and it was forced to give still more attention to “peaceful” agitation among workers after Stolypin’s “coup” of 3 June 1907. The trade unions—probably the most important achievement of the revolution after the Duma itself—acquired a key role. In July 1907, the Third Party Congress formulated one of the PSR’s first official statements on the function and aims of the unions and on the relationship between them and the political parties. Now the SRs, emulating the SDs’ notion of the proper division of functions, made it the trade unions’ primary task to fight for material improvements in the lives of the workers, whereas the task of the party was to press the political struggle. The SRs differed from their Marxist colleagues, however, in stressing that the unions should remain “above the parties,” and not get drawn into struggles between the different socialist camps. At the same time the SRs placed special emphasis on the inextricable unity of politics and economics, of political and economic ends. “Standing above the parties” (*nadpartiinosť*) did not mean ideological indifference or the prohibition of political expression, but only formal neutrality: unions should be attached to neither the RSDRP nor the PSR. Following this principle, the SR Party Council condemned every attempt to restrict the sphere of union activity to economic issues, yet also proposed that the unions concentrate on “the struggle for the material, juridical, and spiritual interests of the workers,” as well as on the struggle against the workers’ exploitation and oppression.<sup>16</sup>

Those ideas had virtually no practical consequences. Although the PSR declined the request of the Union of Railroad Workers for formal admission to the party and although in 1908 the PSR reiterated that trade unions should include “all workers irrespective of their political views,”<sup>17</sup> none of this prevented SRs from participat-

ing in the fierce battle over spheres of influence and positions of power in the unions and other proletarian organizations. Although some of their reproaches against the SDs were just, posturing as the guardian of neutrality did not serve the PSR's interests. On close examination, the demands of the SR Party Council were just an ideological weapon to veil its attack on SD hegemony in the working class.

It remains an open question whether the PSR's belated recognition of the significance of unions could, in the long term, compensate for its oversights since 1905. The PSR did not have enough time to practice its new tactics fully, as its organization had been largely destroyed and its activity paralyzed by late 1907–early 1908. It is clear, however, that the intensification of agitation among workers in 1907 did not yield any substantial results. The PSR continued to dominate the Union of Railroad Workers and the Union of Post and Telegraph Employees; in both cases it was apparently able to bolster its position. Similarly, SRs gained considerable influence in the organization of shop assistants and employees (*Soiuz prikazchikov*), though they did not really succeed in encroaching on the sphere of influence of the SDs. In the great majority of trade unions Marxists, mostly Mensheviks, dominated. Viktor Chernov's view—in a report on the labor question to the Third SR Party Council—still rang true:

The Social Democrats have managed to deal a blow to the SR cause and to strengthen their own movement by means of their widespread organizational network and their experienced revolutionaries.<sup>18</sup>

A conference of SR worker agitators (convened in August 1907 in Simferopol on the Crimean peninsula) confirmed this assessment. The delegates' reports on activity among trade unions by the PSR's "Tauride Union" provided a typical picture of the situation in a province outside of central Russia. As summarized by one delegate:

(a) SR activity in the unions is poorly organized because of the lack of agitators, the inexperience of the local organizations in this field of activity, and the general disorganization of the PSR's Tauride Union.

(b) The strong influence of the Socialist Revolutionaries can be confirmed in certain unions: the building-trades unions, the dockers' unions, and the railway unions.

(c) Every other union is firmly in the hands of the SDs.

(d) Almost all the central unions [*tsentral'nye soiuzy*] are firmly in the hands of Social Democratic organizations.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, the report by the main organizer of SR activity among trade unions on the Volga did not depict PSR agitation among the workers in a positive light. Unions, he wrote, were springing up like mushrooms after the rain; not one city had fewer than six unions. But SDs controlled them all and converted them into their own party cells, refusing to admit "non-party members, especially SRs." Moreover, as the author bitterly complained, it was the SRs who were at fault:

Unfortunately [the SRs] not only fail to struggle against this, they don't even have the slightest interest in workers' efforts to organize into unions. As a result, the workers . . . create their own organizations without us.

And reports from Ukraine struck a similar note. Here too the active SR party members were "quite indifferent" toward the unions, even rejecting their cooperation, as happened in Kharkov and Voronezh. An inspector from the PSR Central Committee reported that he had actually encountered party members who "were opposed in principle to trade union activity."<sup>20</sup>

Although PSR activities among workers were not in such bad shape everywhere, the party's internal reports nonetheless showed that on the whole they enjoyed only sporadic success. As a ranking member of the PSR Central Committee, B. N. Lebedev, observed in 1909, the PSR was unable to end the "isolation" of its agitators from "the mass of workers," especially since their contact with unions was brief and of only "episodic" character, based on the initiative of just a few individuals; the PSR always put the labor question "somewhere at the very end of the agenda."<sup>21</sup>

There were three fundamental reasons for this negative balance in PSR attempts to engage the working class:

1. Despite their recognition of the need for a united struggle of all the oppressed, in both the city and the village, the SRs clearly gave priority to agitation among peasants. For a long time they underestimated the importance of the new trade union movement.
2. The conditions for initiating SR activity among the urban workers were unfavorable, for almost everywhere the new SR party encountered well-consolidated SD circles and overwhelming SD competition.
3. Most local SRs tended to dismiss the “peaceful” path of mass mobilization and politicization as unrevolutionary, and, fascinated by open struggle, concentrated their efforts on staging a mass uprising. By the same token, they viewed agitation, based as it was on the economic needs of the workers, as a false, objectivist-economist path and showed scant inclination to engage in trade union activity.

### **THE SOCIAL PROFILE OF THE PSR**

A third way to determine the relations between the PSR and the working class is to examine the social origins of its membership. This is a difficult task, however, for the SRs themselves did not conduct a survey of their personnel. There were two important reasons for this. First, the establishment of their organization came very late and left no time for any kind of large-scale development. Second, to demonstrate its difference from the RSDRP, but also for reasons of principle that related to its self-definition, the PSR refused to fix strict conditions for membership. It wanted to be open to everyone and not to become a party of skilled functionaries. To some degree, it paid for this principled position during the time of greatest freedom (the first half of 1906) by suffering from an extraordinary instability and fluctuation of membership. Hence, all statements about total membership, their own as well as the calculations of historians, must be treated with caution as open to considerable inaccuracy. This is particularly true with respect to the calculation of numbers of simple, low-level supporters. The higher one goes in the party or-

ganization, the greater the reliability of the data. To be sure, given the acute need for conspiracy and secrecy, in the provincial organizations even the leadership figures remain obscure. Only the identities of the top party leaders, who were often writers and journalists and lived abroad, are more fully known. Finally, all the available data refer only to the years of the First Revolution (1905–7); efforts to find even imperfect usable information about later periods are to no avail.<sup>22</sup>

With these reservations in mind, the data can be summarized as follows. In October 1906, as the Second Party Congress approached, for the first and only time the PSR attempted to gain information about the number of its followers in the various regions of the empire. Its efforts yielded only modest success, as some regions (Siberia, northern Russia, Ukraine) sent no data at all, and the other local committees were satisfied with vague estimates. Still, these are the best available data.

In the ten provincial and city organizations that submitted information, the PSR had about 34,200 members. If one assumes that the party had approximately the same membership in Ukraine as in the Volga region (about 5,100 members), and if one further assumes that the two other regions without data (northern Russia and Siberia), given their character as zones with marginal SR appeal, had at best a quarter of that membership, the total membership was about 42,000. This total includes what must be described as a generous estimate for Belorussia (an imposing figure of 12,500 members—i.e., double the membership in the Volga region), which can hardly correspond to reality. Thus, when the PSR leadership in February 1907 spoke of 50,000 members (excluding Ukraine), that statement can only be seen as very optimistic.<sup>23</sup> A thorough investigation of regional archives by M. I. Leonov, however, has shown a total membership of 64,395 in 515 organizations. If the Ukrainian members are added to the above 50,000 figure (as does the historian Maureen Perrie), the result is roughly 55,000 to 60,000 members. Although in my own earlier work I estimated party strength more cautiously (42,000 to 45,000), I am happy to consider other estimates. Nonetheless, I would strongly underline Leonov's own caveat: "A rather large proportion of those who inscribed as members . . . in general never took an active part in party work"; nor did the party ever establish fixed criteria for membership.<sup>24</sup> The official estimate of an-

other 300,000 sympathizers must also be treated with skepticism: the statistics of the Second Party Congress show only 65,000 adherents. Although that figure includes only five of the PSR's thirteen provincial and city organizations, an estimate that is nearly five times higher (300,000) is certainly excessive. Moreover, local activity reports support I. A. Rubanovich's statement that "a gap" had opened up in the PSR "between the number of these people whom the provincial committees consider to be real members, and those who are regarded as the periphery, only share our program, but do not really join our organizations."<sup>25</sup>

However great this gap may have been, the PSR was in any case smaller than the RSDRP, which claimed some 81,000 members. However, given the RSDRP's split into Bolsheviks and Mensheviks (each with about 40,000 followers),<sup>26</sup> their neopopulist rivals were stronger than each of the two SD factions taken separately.

Because of their fragmentary character, the data of the Second Party Congress afford only limited insights into the regional distribution of SR membership. There is also a contradiction in the local reports, which suspiciously rank the northwest of Russia at the top of the list of strong regional confederations. Much more plausible seem to be the other numbers, which rank the Volga Region first (5,100 active party members), followed by the Central Industrial Region or CIR (5,000), St. Petersburg (3,400), the Southern Region (2,450), and Moscow (2,000). The elections to the Second Duma shed further light on the geographic distribution of active PSR members. One must bear in mind, however, that in many places the PSR could not nominate its own candidate and entered into election alliances with the Trudoviki (Labor Party), the People's Socialists, and the SDs; hence it is hard to differentiate the votes for these parties. Nor is it always possible to identify the party membership of every Duma delegate. Hence it may have been blind chance that made the PSR the strongest oppositional party to the left of the Kadets in Kursk, Erivan, and Viatka provinces. But if one takes into consideration the regions where the SRs, together with the Trudoviki, gained a majority of left-populist delegates to the Duma (Chernigov, Voronezh, Tavrida [Kherson], Saratov, Samara, Astrakhan, and Tver), as well as regions where Trudoviki alone won a considerable share of the votes (Kiev, Kharkov, and Stavropol), one can broadly outline the three major regions of SR-neopopulist activity: (1) the black-soil region

between Kharkov in the west and Samara in the east; (2) the Urals, especially the provinces of Perm and Viatka; and (3) southern Russia. In the Baltic region, Belorussia, the CIR, southern Ukraine, and the Caucasus, however, the PSR did not develop deeper roots (even if it had some important footholds in the two last-mentioned regions). In general, both indicators—the data of the Second Party Congress and the results of the Duma elections—reflected the socio-geographic physiognomy suggested by an overview of the activity of local SR organizations.<sup>27</sup>

The problem of determining the educational and social profile of the PSR is, if anything, even greater. Here it is very important to distinguish among the party's different organizational and functional levels. Little is known about the general characteristics of the mass of SRs. What we know of their social origins, however, suggests some conclusions: If workers and peasants formed the majority, one can assume that they generally had only elementary cultural qualifications. A higher "sociocultural" level is represented in the functionaries who occupied middle- and high-ranking positions, as seen in the biographies studied by Maureen Perrie as well as in my own research on the "wanted" lists of the political police stationed abroad (*Zagranichnaia Okhranka*). These studies show that the proportion of SRs with secondary schooling ("middle education" in Russian terminology) and (mostly incomplete) university-level education was steadily growing. According to the *Okhranka* lists, almost every other "local leader" had at least started university-level studies. Among the sixty-one delegates at the first "general conference" (a kind of mini-party conference) in August 1908, this was true of almost two-thirds. Even if one allows for a distortion in both sources (in favor of the more educated and prominent party members, who presumably were quite effective in public relations), these data support the view that a strong representation of students and people with university-level education (if often unfinished) was a characteristic feature of the PSR leadership. It cannot be said with certainty that the PSR differed very much in that regard from the RSDRP. David Lane's statistical calculations, though based on some extrapolations, support the view that the situations were similar. In any case, it is obvious that the leaders of every oppositional party came mainly from this stratum. Where else could the necessary rhetorical, theoretical, and organizational talent come from?<sup>28</sup>

A breakdown of PSR membership according to professional and social status can also shed some light here by helping illuminate two central questions regarding the comparative “sociology” of the revolutionary parties between 1905 and 1917: From which strata did the PSR recruit its members, and to what degree did it appeal to workers? To answer these questions, several attempts have been made to assemble the relevant data. My own research, based on the card index of the external bureau of the Okhranka in Paris, included 942 persons; they are clearly not a representative profile of the mass of PSR membership but simply a pool of activists whose identity became known to the police. Perrie found her data by examining 1,029 biographies in an encyclopedia on revolutionary history.<sup>29</sup> M. I. Leonov collected information from central and regional archives on 21,752 members of 21 provincial organizations of the PSR. Full credit must surely be given to Leonov for creating a solid foundation for statistical calculation; his analysis of the origins of the ordinary party members has the greatest plausibility. According to his data, 43.2 percent of the total membership belonged to the working class, 45.2 percent were peasants and soldiers, and 11.6 percent belonged to the intelligentsia (including a quite numerous pool of students).<sup>30</sup> At least concerning the weight of the working class, these results accord with those of Perrie, who found that the biographies included a remarkably high proportion of workers and artisans (almost 50 percent of the total). The proportion of peasants, however, was much smaller in this source.<sup>31</sup>

Because my own sources did not allow a reliable assessment of the rank-and-file party members, I focused on the elections in the St. Petersburg workers’ curiae at the time of the balloting for the Second Duma, January 1907. This election dramatically confirmed that the PSR had indeed struck deep roots in the working class; for that very reason, the results caused a great stir in the revolutionary camp. The SDs, who previously believed that the Petersburg proletariat was firmly on their side, were forced to recognize their error. Although the SDs did win 46.8 percent of the votes, for a total of 115 to 120 electors, and the SRs received only 36.1 percent, for a total of 60 to 65 electors, the PSR was the true victor. The SDs, as Lenin himself openly admitted, suffered “a real defeat.” It was not only that the workers had unexpectedly placed their trust in so many SR candidates; it was specifically that “populists” had gained a majority in

the larger factories—the “strongholds of the most revolutionary, class-conscious part of the proletariat.”<sup>32</sup> As a detailed analysis by a Menshevik author showed, the votes for the SDs came mainly from urban districts dominated by small enterprises. Out of every 100 votes for the SDs, 58 came from factories with over 1,000 workers; out of every 100 votes for the SRs, 83 were from these larger factories. A similar picture emerges if the results are examined by industrial branch. In the metalworking plants that produced “for the needs of the army and navy,” it was the PSR, and not the RSDRP, that clearly had the upper hand (51 to 26 percent), an outcome that seemed to defy all odds. On the other hand, the SDs won just as decisively in the textile factories and in the smaller industries (63.1 and 67.9 percent respectively, compared to SR votes of 28 and 14.3 percent).<sup>33</sup> The Russian Marxists were taught a similar lesson, if less dramatically, in the elections for the workers’ curiae in southern Russia, where they lost to their neopopulist rivals in the large plants of Briansk and Baku. As the Baku SRs reported:

It was characteristic of Baku and Petersburg that the “petty bourgeois” PSR was dominant among the workers of the large factories, while the Social Democrats were dominant in the small enterprises.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, even the SR electors elected SD delegates, which confirms the statements of SR agitators among the workers, cited above, that the SDs had greater experience and authority.

The crucial task, however, is to explain the broad support for the PSR in the large factories of the metalworking industry. The first attempts to explain this, dating to the 1970s, were clearly influenced by the Durkheimian theory of anomie. In an interpretation that was analogous to a central hypothesis of Leopold Haimson’s influential 1964-65 essay on social stability in urban Russia on the eve of World War I, David Lane developed the argument that in the large factories, the biggest segment of freshly recruited workers, having just come from the countryside, still felt intimately connected to their home villages. The “worker-peasant” or “peasant-worker” was thus the model PSR sympathizer. It was because of their uprooting and lack of adaptation to the new discipline of the factory and to the urban environment that such workers inclined toward radicalism and even wild rebelliousness (*buntarstvo*). Lane hypothesized that a technol-

ogy that was labor-intensive and based on unskilled workers attracted many “rural immigrants,” who—in contrast to areas with a homogeneous industrial structure—could not sufficiently assimilate. Particularly in the large factories, he argued, they created “islands of peasant norms and values.” In the end, the PSR profited from these transitory enclaves of people who were still close to the agrarian sector.<sup>35</sup> Hence this interpretation reinforced the basic notion that SR allegiance and sociocultural backwardness went hand in hand.

Recently, however, this interpretation has come under criticism. We can assume that, at the very least, this criticism reflects growing doubts about the applicability of the “hypothesis of uprooting” and the “theory of backwardness.” In that sense, the criticism was nourished by a change of paradigms and by new empirical evidence, confirming the basic conclusion that flowed from analysis of the elections to the Petersburg workers’ curiae. The PSR had such deep roots in the large factories and among established, qualified, educated, urbanized workers (not only of the capital, but also of other cities, particularly Baku) that the “uprooted peasant” thesis was no longer adequate; PSR success among such workers could no longer be seen as an exception to the rule of village-PSR affinity. Historians were obliged if not to abandon this rule, then to revise it considerably, so that the kinship between the village and the PSR would no longer serve as an axiom, but only as a supplementary explanation. Agitation and influence among workers—so ran the new thesis—were as “genuine” in the PSR as in the RSDRP. To this extent, the distinction between SRs and SDs diminished: both were led by revolutionaries from the “intelligentsia,” and both found their active supporters to a great degree in the urban working class.<sup>36</sup>

And yet, this statistical finding must come to terms with the fact that almost all contemporary observers located the typical SR outside the working class. They found him, as a rule, among lower-level medical personnel, “rural teachers,” and “students with an incomplete education” (as Spiridovich notes with a pejorative touch), or among the teachers, physicians, physicians’ aides (*fel’dshery*), agronomists, technicians, statisticians, writers, lawyers, and artists who were the hope of the venerable SR Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia.<sup>37</sup> In this respect, special weight has been given to the less qualified professions and to their representatives in the countryside. The ideal milieu for

the recruitment of SR agitators in the provinces is best summarized by the Russian term *mel'kaia intelligentsiia* (petty intelligentsia).<sup>38</sup> It is also remarkable how much sympathy SRs enjoyed among white-collar workers (*sluzhashchie*), especially in the postal and railway services, as well as among shop assistants.

To be sure, the two results—working-class and lower-intelligentsia support—are not mutually exclusive. Conclusions based on descriptive materials and those based on socio-analytical and statistical sources can be combined, especially if we take into account the scope of SR aspirations and the obstacles to their realization. The indications of SR strong points, including the metalworking plants, entail a well-documented shift in emphasis but do not constitute a completely new fact. Perrie's analysis of SR membership has already shown that workers and artisans—that is, city people—constituted the bulk of registered SRs. Similarly, I have stated clearly (though my words were still ignored by Michael Melancon)<sup>39</sup> that without any doubt “the PSR found the mass of its adherents in the working class, which filled the ranks of its organization more than any other group.” Even in Russia's less industrially developed regions, the SRs conducted most of their agitation in the cities, where they could count on the strongest support.<sup>40</sup> So what is at issue here is not really the fact of working-class support but its explanation: was it the fulfillment of the SRs' aims or was it just a step toward the fulfillment of more far-reaching ambitions? The great mass of the SRs' programmatic statements about themselves (to which a hermeneutically sensitive historical science should assign as much explanatory power as to allegedly objective sources) proves, in my judgment, that the ultimate aim of the SRs—like that of their 1870s populist predecessors—was to reach the peasants. Only an upheaval of *all* the people under the demographically dominant leadership of the village could sweep away the hated autocracy. It well may be that this long-term aim influenced the SRs' views too strongly, causing them to overlook just how large a share of their actual followers were urban workers. But it would be misleading to conclude from this that the PSR was the sociological double of the RSDRP. On close inspection, the results of elections to the Petersburg workers' curiae clearly show not only the PSR's strengths, but also the weaknesses that ensued from its broad aspirations and from the objective limits of its own activity and the realities of rural Russia. The PSR gained most of its votes

where they were least expected, but in the end, it was only the RSDRP that sent delegates to the Duma.<sup>41</sup>

### NOTES

1. See [A. A. Argunov], *Nashi zadachi. Osnovnye polozheniia programmy Soiuzna Sotsialistov-Revoliutsionerov*, 2d ed. (London 1900), pp. 42ff.; [V. M. Chernov], *Ocherednoi vopros revoliutsionnogo dela*, 2d ed. (Geneva: Agrarno-sotsialisticheskaia Liga, 1901), p. 76; *Manifest Partii Sotsialistov-Revoliutsionerov, vyrobotannyi na s"ezde predstavitelei ob"edinennykh grupp sotsialistov-revoliutsionerov* (n.p., 1900). Detailed bibliographical data can be found in the corresponding chapters of Manfred Hildermeier, *Die Sozialrevolutionäre Partei Rußlands: Agrarsozialismus und Modernisierung im Zarenreich (1900–1914)* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1978).
2. See especially L. [E.] Shishko, "K voprosu o roli intelligentsii v revoliutsionnom dvizhenii," *Vestnik russkoi revoliutsii* 2 (February 1902): 89–122.
3. I., "Rabochee dvizhenie i revoliutsionnaia intelligentsia," *Vestnik russkoi revoliutsii* 2 (February 1902): 217, 237.
4. See A. Walicki, *The Controversy over Capitalism: Studies in the Social Philosophy of the Populists* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 29ff., 46ff.
5. Chernov, *Ocherednoi vopros*, p. 9; [V. M. Chernov], "Klassovaia bor'ba v derevne," *Revoliutsionnaia Rossiia*, no. 11 (September 1902): 7.
6. *KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh s"ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1953), pp. 39ff.; Dietrich Geyer, *Lenin in der russischen Sozialdemokratie: Die Arbeiterbewegung im Zarenreich als Organisationsproblem der revolutionären Intelligenz 1890–1903* (Cologne, 1962), pp. 287ff.
7. L. D. Trotskii, *Itogi i perspektivy. Dvizhushchie sily revoliutsii* (Moscow, 1919).
8. V. V. [V. V. Vorontsov], *Sud'by kapitalizma v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1881), p. 14.
9. See "Novye sobytiia i starye voprosy," *Revoliutsionnaia Rossiia* 74 (1 September 1905): 2.
10. Evgen'ev [E. A. Stalinskii ?], "Dvizhushchie sily russkoi revoliutsii," *Sotsialist-Revoliutsioner* 4 (1912): 174ff.
11. *Protokoly pervogo s"ezda Partii Sotsialistov-Revoliutsionerov*, ed. M. Perrie (Millwood, N.Y., 1983), p. 362.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

13. See "Proshloe i nastoiashchee," *Biulletin' TsK-a Partii Sotsialistov-Revoliutsionerov*, no. 1 (March 1906): 4.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Walter Sablinsky, "The All-Russian Railroad Union and the Beginning of the General Strike in October, 1905," in *Revolution and Politics in Russia: Essays in Memory of B. I. Nicolaevsky*, ed. Alexander and Janet Rabinowitch (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972); p. 117; Henry Reichman, *Railwaymen and Revolution: Russia, 1905* (Berkeley, 1987), pp. 159ff.
16. *Pamiatnaia knizhka sotsialista-revoliutsionera*, issue 1 (Paris, 1911), pp. 33ff; [V. M. Chernov], "Nasha pozitsiia v professional'nom dvizhenii," *Znamia truda*, no. 2 (12 July 1907): 1–4.
17. *Pamiatnaia knizhka*, pp. 31ff.
18. "Materialy III-go soveta [P.S.-R.]," Archives of the PSR in the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, file no. 679.
19. *Protokoly zaniatii konferentsii rabotnikov po professional'nomu dvizheniiu Tavricheskogo Soiuzu P.S.-R. (5–7 avg. 1907)*, Archives of the PSR.
20. Petro Petrovich, "Professional'noe dvizhenie [1907]," Archives of the PSR, 596/I; Materialy III-go soveta Partii, Archives of the PSR, 679; Archives of the PSR, 758/9.
21. A. Voronov, "Rabochoia organizatsiia (Zametka propagandista)," *Znamia truda*, no. 6 (4 March 1909): 6; *Stenograficheskie otchety zasedanii V-go soveta Partii, 22-oe zasedanie*, p. 1, Archives of the PSR, 792.
22. See M. I. Leonov, "Chislennost' i sostav partii eserov v 1905–1907 gg.," in *Politicheskie partii v period revoliutsii 1905–1907 gg. Kolichestvennyi analiz* (Moscow, 1987), pp. 48–95, here p. 52.
23. *Bericht der Russischen Sozial-Revolutionären Partei an den internationalen Sozialistenkongress zu Stuttgart (August 1907)* (n.p., 1907), p. 105.
24. M. I. Leonov: "Partiia eserov v 1905–1907 gg.: Organizatsionnaia struktura, sostav, chislennost'," in *Neproletarskie partii Rossii v trekh revoliutsiiakh* (Moscow, 1989), p. 134, and "Chislennost' i sostav," p. 54 (quotation); Maureen Perrie, "The Social Composition and Structure of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party before 1917," *Soviet Studies* 24 (1972/73): 224; Hildermeier, p. 267.
25. *Protokoly Vtorogo (Ekstrennago) S"ezda Partii Sotsialistov-Revoliutsionerov*, ed. C. J. Rice (Millwood, N.Y., 1986), p. 120.
26. David Lane, *The Roots of Russian Communism: A Social and Historical Study of Russian Social Democracy, 1898–1907* (Assen, 1969), p. 13.
27. See Hildermeier, pp. 215–71.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 292ff.; Perrie, p. 245; Lane, pp. 38, 47; Christopher Rice, *Russian Workers and the Socialist-Revolutionary Party through the Revolution of 1905–1907* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 195.

29. See *Politicheskaia katorga i ssylka. Biograficheskii spravochnik chlenov Obshchestva Politkatorzhan i Ssyl'no-poselentsev* (Moscow, 1934).
30. Leonov, "Chislennost' i sostav," p. 54.
31. Perrie, p. 240.
32. V. I. Lenin, "Vybory po rabochei kurii v Peterburge (1907)," in Lenin, *PSS*, 5th ed. (Moscow, 1958–65), vol. 14, pp. 341–48.
33. A. Mikhailov, "Vybory vo vtoroiu Dumu v Peterburgskoi rabochei kurii," *Otzvuki* (St. Petersburg) (August 1907): 51, 53. For details on the elections, see Rice, pp. 96ff.
34. See "Zakavkazskaia oblast'. Iz doklada upolnomochennogo Ts.K. o rabote v Zakavkazskoi oblasti," *Partiinye izvestiia* (5 May 1907): 12; V. I. Lenin, "Nekotorye dannye o vyborakh po rabochei kurii na iuge Rossii (1907)," in Lenin, *PSS*, 5th ed., vol. 14, pp. 395–97.
35. Lane, pp. 210ff.; Hildermeier, p. 303; see also Perrie, p. 243.
36. See Rice, pp. 195ff.
37. A. I. Spiridovich, *Partiia Sotsialistov-Revoliutsionerov i eia predshestvenniki. 1886–1916* (Petrograd 1918), p. 94; E. K. Breshko-Breshkovskaia, "K sel'skoi intelligentsii," *Revoliutsionnaia Rossia*, no. 28 (15 July 1903): 6ff.
38. See S. Nechetnyi [S. N. Sletov], "K voprosu o postanovke raboty v derevne," *Russian Review* 35 (1 November 1903): 10; Rice.
39. Michael Melancon, "The Socialist Revolutionaries from 1902 to 1907: Peasant and Workers' Party," *Russian History* 12 (1985): 2–47.
40. See Hildermeier, p. 299.
41. See Rice, p. 121.

## **REPRESENTING WORKERS AND THE LIBERAL NARRATIVE OF MODERNITY<sup>1</sup>**

**William G. Rosenberg**

### **THE AMBIGUITIES OF "REPRESENTATION" AND THE LIBERAL VISION IN RUSSIA**

Although the complex role of language in structuring experience and behavior is now widely recognized as a central element of historical understanding, the multiple problems of "representation" as they relate to late imperial and early Soviet politics remain a source of confusion and controversy. In particular, the role of non-workers in organizing and leading "workers' parties" has raised appropriate doubts about the very integrity of labor politics in these years, as well as the ways both Soviet and Western historians have conceived them. Impressive new efforts have consequently been made, stimulated as well by advances in European labor history, to locate "authentic" worker voices and movements and to contrast this socially grounded authenticity either directly or by implication with the abstracted idealizations of putative worker leaderships.<sup>2</sup>

Much has obviously been made about the nature of early Bolshevism in this regard, but the problem of linking social images, authentic voices and behaviors, and political programs or parties is a much broader and more problematic aspect of late imperial and early Soviet politics. As this essay will show, making these linkages might well be considered a central dilemma of political liberalism in these years since images of workers became constituent elements of liberal thinking and debate, added meaning to notions of "progress" and "modernity," and helped set the boundaries of what liberals conceived as the politically possible. Problems of representation consequently became defining elements in efforts to construct a liberal democratic order in 1917.

“Representation” obviously has several meanings, but its very ambiguities are central to its analytical importance. Liberals created discursive representations of workers in journals, newspapers, party discussions, and, of course, parliamentary debates, thereby producing a set of images of who workers were, what characteristics they had in common, and who they might become. For many, the power of these images lay in the way they ordered individual perceptions and gave otherwise random encounters or experiences an apparent coherence. But liberals also positioned themselves to represent workers in direct ways, as their “representatives”—for example, as parliamentary delegates to the State Duma and as delegates to government bodies elsewhere. Here, representation involved assuming responsibility for defining the workers’ interests, a process that necessarily superimposed various assumptions about worker needs and outlooks onto the liberals’ preexisting images or representations of workers, assumptions that then formed the basis of specific party programs or legislative proposals. In both aspects of representation, therefore, who “workers” were gained particular meaning in terms of broader liberal conceptions of Russian social and political development. Representation in each sense both shaped and was shaped by liberal political strategies, platforms, and visions, which is to say the nature of liberalism itself in Russia. Thus, for liberals (and for other political activists as well), representing workers was an act of self-definition as much as it was a conceptualization of Russia’s industrial workforce. Understanding the dimensions of that act involves not simply an analysis of language but an exploration of the relationship between discursive forms, visions of Russia’s future development, and the ways liberals formulated their own role in that imagined future—the central and contested narrative of “modernity” that constituted the core of the Russian liberal project.

What is meant by “liberal” itself in the Russian context needs some attention, although it need not detain us very long. By “liberal,” I have in mind that diverse group of theorists and activists committed to the establishment of a rule of law, broadly based civil liberties, a representative and responsible government, and Russia’s further development as a great European power on capitalist rather than socialist socioeconomic foundations.<sup>3</sup> In intellectual terms, Russian liberalism loosely reflected a neo-Kantian positivism that moderated unreflected scientism with attention to individual subjectivities. As a

political formation, liberalism was so closely identified with the Constitutional Democratic (Kadet) Party that one can safely substitute “Kadet” for “liberal” in almost all respects after 1905, when the party was organized, until just before the world war, when the “Progressists” in particular began to offer a closely linked alternative political affiliation, especially in Moscow.

As both a political movement and an intellectual tendency, moreover, it was the individual, not the group, that constituted the defining element of both Russian liberal sociology and Russian political philosophy, and that separated liberals from every other major political formation at the end of the old regime. With the significant and contentious exception of gender, individual and not collective identities and rights centered virtually every part of the Russian liberal outlook and program. The valorization of the person, rather than the social group, and the attendant sanctity of individual liberty rather than socially constituted group rights, constituted the principal liberal challenge to Russia’s autocratic system and values. Even as liberals struggled in Russia (as elsewhere) at this time over the question of equal civil rights for women, this emphasis bridged the familiar varieties of Russian liberalism exemplified by such diverse personae as Vasilii Maklakov, Petr Struve, Pavel Miliukov, Sofiia Panina, M. L. Mandel’shtam, Maksim Vinaver, Ariadna Tyrkova, Vladimir Nabokov, and Nikolai Nekrasov, among others, whose main differences centered instead on the alternative political strategies they thought appropriate to Russia’s circumstances and therefore capable of bringing into practice a generally shared vision of Russia’s future.<sup>4</sup>

This vision was variously articulated by Russian liberals as a story of Russia’s “modernization” as a “Western nation,” a narrative that also implied Russia’s continued development as an imperial power. Its key tropes identified commercial growth and industrial development as progressively linked to the creation of civil liberties, civic spaces, and the expansion of a uniformly beneficial commerce, both within Russia proper and in the non-Russian areas linked or subordinated to St. Petersburg. “Progress” was identified in these terms as an urgent need if Russia was to overcome the depredations of its poverty and hold its place among the great (modern) powers of Western Europe, whose commercial activism, technology, military strength, and empires were themselves defining components of a

prosperous “modernity.” Individual liberty and social well-being in this modernizing vision were thus organically linked to the welfare of the Russian state. Modernity itself was nationalist in its essence, however much state institutions and forms had to be modified to accommodate individual rights and social interests and however much the existing government might itself resist the transformation.

The central concerns of Russian liberals consequently involved defining these rights and interests in ways that could assure Russia’s rapid “maturation” as a modern European power—itsself an interesting anthropomorphic metaphor—and also involved establishing the political forms that could facilitate this organic transformation, forms in which the liberals themselves could play leading roles. First among these forms was responsible, representative government, framed by constitutional limitations that both sanctified and institutionalized the rule of law. And first among the tasks leading to the creation of such a government was the mobilization of forces capable of convincing the existing state authorities of its intrinsic value and feasibility, as well as its urgency in terms of the stable social order required for Russia’s competitive (modern) development.

Liberal constitutionalism consequently had several roles within the narrative of Russian modernization. Insofar as it constructed citizenship by universalizing personal rights (with “traditional” exceptions for women, some insisted), it privileged individual over collective identities and created the necessary environment for individual human development. That men and women might develop differently and that most liberal visions of modernity preserved male hegemony in various ways was not, for many, a serious issue. What mattered was not gender equality (or social equalities in other ways) but the sanctity and inviolability of the person, a right that had to be universally protected. Constitutionalism and constitutionally protected civil liberties also defined the necessary boundaries of a modern Russian state by displacing institutions and value systems that impeded Russia’s development along the lines of other European powers. Most important were the ways in which the constitutionally protected institutions of civil society were essential mechanisms for mediating conflict and relieving the distresses engendered by modernity itself. The alternative was not so much a redirection of Russia’s telos but its modern transformation by “primitive” (violent) means.

### THE ROLE OF WORKERS IN RUSSIA'S MODERNIZATION AND THE PROBLEM OF CLASS

Russia's workers were particularly important to the liberal conceptualization not because they were more or less primitive than, say, peasants, but because the social formation they reflected was an intrinsic component of industrialization and hence an inescapable component of the linked processes of modernization and Westernization. Worker interests therefore had to be accommodated, their grievances legitimated, their conflicts, above all, mediated. Indeed, unless workers could be affiliated with Russia's constitutional possibilities and otherwise integrated into the liberal version of a strong, modern, European state, the liberal project as a whole in Russia would not succeed and could not be defended.

The dispositions, outlooks, behaviors, and even the social identities of workers were thus central to Russian liberalism in all of its forms, even if workers were not ideologically privileged as they were within social democracy. The meanings liberals inscribed onto those they labeled "workers" necessarily became a core element of their broader narratives of modernization, a way of ordering and giving meaning to Russia's future, precisely because modernization and Westernization were also stories of industrial and commercial growth and a rising standard of living. That these narratives were themselves highly contested prescriptions only intensified the importance of the meaning of "Russian worker." Definitional ambiguities or contradictions carried important strategic as well as programmatic implications.

Yet for this reason the very concept "working class" (*rabochii klass*) was itself a conceptual trap. When "rabochii klass" appeared in liberal publications, it was as the familiar designator of industrial and manufacturing workers, a social formation differentiated from others in terms of its members' relation to the processes of industrial production. Liberals simply deployed the common terminology of late nineteenth-century European sociology, in which the objectification of class on the basis of structures of production ascribed a collective social identity from which one could disassociate oneself only by altering one's work situation. As a class, workers were thus sociologically constituted by liberals in Russia exactly as they were by

Social Democrats and other socialists, as one of the objectively defined “vital social forces” that Struve, Miliukov, and others referred to when they critiqued the autocracy’s social isolation and political ineptitude.<sup>5</sup>

The difficulty with this formulation for liberals was that collective representation connoted the primacy of collective rather than individual identities, and hence of class rather than personal interests. Since class carried with it the presumption of common mentalities and dispositions, it implicitly validated social partisanship as a means of meeting collective needs. The very concept consequently undermined any effort to build a political movement that asserted first and foremost the common sanctity of individual rights and positioned its ideological foundations on nonpartisanship (*nadpartiinosť*) and above-class grounds (*nadklassnosť*). Struve was certainly right when he argued in *Vestnik Partii Narodnoi Svobody* in early 1906 that there was no programmatic barrier to workers joining the Kadet party or forming a class-based party with which the Kadets could closely ally,<sup>6</sup> but the language of class itself, by organizing Russia’s social environment into contending group formations, encouraged arguments about hegemony (*gospodstvo*) and oppression (*ugnetennnosť*). The deployment of such language thus gave significant advantages to the liberals’ political competitors on the left.

Along with others, the editors of *Vestnik Evropy*, perhaps the exemplary liberal journal in Russia at the end of the old regime, clearly recognized the problem. “Rabochii klass” was “more than a simple construction” (*bolee chem prostaia konstruktsiia*), they argued in 1906. It ordered society and, in the process, readily structured the language of collective protest. It was “completely understandable” that “working class” was deployed as a “militant slogan,” since

those engaged in physical labor really do occupy a distinctly subordinate place in contemporary society, one that joins the simple industrial laborer with the skilled worker who earns hundreds of rubles a month and which sharply separates them both, not only from the owners of factories and plants or large property holders, but also from scientists, writers, doctors, lawyers and others.

But the “political utility” of the term “working class” “as a slogan” was very different from its value as a “fundamental principle structuring social life.” Here “working class” was, “to say the least, of

doubtful value." Life was "infinitely more complicated" than it seemed to be to those who would deny "everything in the name of improving the situation of the working class."<sup>7</sup>

Yet how could liberals avoid a language of representation that obscured individual identities, sharpened social conflict, and hence itself impeded efforts at modernizing Russia?

### REPRESENTATION AND THE QUESTION OF AUDIENCE

The problem was compounded by the very different audiences this language had to address. To convince the readers of journals like the liberal *Vestnik Evropy* or the conservative *Novoe vremia* that workers were fit participants for "four tail" electoral democracy or could otherwise be incorporated into their social and political agendas, liberals had to demonstrate the fundamental reasonableness of worker outlooks. Labor protests had to be reported in ways that did not aggravate social anxieties. To appeal politically to individual workers themselves, however, whose willingness to accommodate liberal goals was also essential to these agendas, liberals had to win over an audience by showing the ways in which workers stood to gain from liberal politics—that is, by inscribing liberal values into workers' collective identity. Finally, to take into account and somehow incorporate into their own political strategies the very power of working-class activism, liberals had to develop an understanding among themselves of what properly constituted working-class interests in a manner that, again, avoided contributing to the kind of class polarization and conflict that, together with the resistance of the tsarist regime, constituted the greatest impediment in Russia to the realization of liberal goals.

With apparent self-consciousness about their audience, liberal publicists commonly took on the first of these representational tasks—that of making workers into respectable citizens—by trying to avoid the word "class" altogether. Regular columns in *Rech'*, *Russkiiia vedomosti*, and other liberal papers commonly detailed the activities of industrial labor under headings like "Among the Workforce" (*Sredi trudiashchikhsia*), in which the referents were simply "worker" or "laboring masses," the rubric around which the Union

of Liberation also organized its statement of aims. Workers' complaints were rarely presented in terms of class needs and were almost always represented as reasonable, especially given economic circumstances and the stresses after 1905 of industrial "rationalization."<sup>8</sup> Routine strikes were generally reported without tendentious interpretation.<sup>9</sup> Even after the various disasters of 1905–6, liberal press accounts remained remarkably sympathetic to workers, connecting their "mass of complaints," as even *Novoe vremia* put it in 1908, to the "mass of violations on the part of employers."<sup>10</sup>

These rhetorical devices could not, however, alter the discourse of class in any significant way for liberal readers since "laboring masses" and "workers" evoked their own homogeneities. Also, liberal reporting rarely differentiated among workers in different industries or geographical locations. Gender, potentially one of the most powerful ways to disaggregate the workforce, was almost entirely ignored. Even obvious gender and occupational differences between, say, chemical, textile, metal, or railroad workers, each of whom was clearly subjected to different kinds of pressures both within and outside the workplace, were not generally noted by liberals, not even in their detailed descriptions of strikes.<sup>11</sup> With only occasional exceptions, even when the signifier "class" was avoided, workers continued to remain a single, unified social formation in liberal discourse, a linguistic practice that implicitly compromised even for a nonworker audience the individualist core of liberal ideology.<sup>12</sup>

Another interesting element in this representation of workers had to do with segregating ordinary workers from political militants, as regards both their mentalities and their propensity for orderly politics. Indeed, liberal reporting seemed to stress the variations in outlook and mentality between "workers" in general and specific groups that were active in their midst. If strikes or protests turned violent, it was commonly the fault of "black-hundred workers" (*rabochie-chernosotentsy*) who, as one account in *Rech'* had it, "fired shots from their revolvers and stimulated strong discontent [*broshenie*]."<sup>13</sup> "Workers" were representationally distinct from "revolutionaries," "radicals," "agitators," and "orators," who pressed them into strikes against their better judgment and inclination.<sup>14</sup> In one case, "agitators" demanded a strike be called, but "workers beat them and chased them away";<sup>15</sup> in another, it was not so much "workers" who were respon-

sible for the violence, but “radicals” and “revolutionaries.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, even according to the more conservative *Novoe vremia*, many workers themselves had “little inclination to strike” once their main demands were satisfied in the fall of 1905. Just the threat of dismissal was reportedly enough to bring large numbers back to their benches. Workers left their factories “only when forced to do so,” even at the height of the Moscow upheaval of December 1905. Because of their “desperate material needs,” many workers considered themselves not supported but “defrauded” by revolutionaries.<sup>17</sup>

Whether or not these rhetorical distinctions between “workers” and “agitators” can be explained by the character of the audience to which they were addressed, what is so interesting about them is not their artificiality, but the way in which the artificiality itself defended key elements of the liberal project at a moment of great challenge. Asserting an essential rationality in worker outlooks even during the bloodiest moments of revolutionary upheaval in 1905 supported the logic of a political democracy based on reason as an innate human quality, a generalized perception of mind that, among other things, also facilitated liberal self-definition as progressive *intelligenty*. However deep their divisions on other matters, and however much such liberal figures as Maklakov, Evgenii Trubetskoi, or the later Struve also emphasized the importance of an ethical spirituality and other subjectivities in shaping perspectives, the liberal project at its core relied for success on human reason.

It was this emphasis on reason that allowed liberals to join with moderate Social Democrats in insisting on the feasibility of representative politics and democratic political institutions in Russia, despite the relative ignorance of a democratic electorate and despite the forms and frequency of violence in popular Russian life. Thus we find Aleksandr Kizevetter insisting that “the working mass knows what it wants and what it is striving for,” Fedor Kokoshkin arguing that the “feeling of democratic equality is developed to a high degree and deeply rooted among the broad masses,” and even *Russkiiia vedomosti* waxing poetic in the fall of 1905: “factory democracy has sprung fully formed from the bosom of popular life, like Minerva from the Head of Jupiter.”<sup>18</sup> *Irrational* actions came from the regime and from radical revolutionaries. The Bulygin rescript in August 1905 had “thrown workers overboard.”<sup>19</sup> The banners brought by “agitators” to worker demonstrations in Moscow and elsewhere

were like “red flags in the face of a raging bull”<sup>20</sup>—that is, irresistible bait to the government. It was not the workers themselves who were “guilty” of brutality and chaos in 1905:

Who is responsible for this strike? . . . The only possible answer is that the government is responsible, through its politics, its blind obstinacy, its failure to understand the demands of the time and the pressing needs of the people.<sup>21</sup>

### **RATIONALITY, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND THE PROBLEM OF POLITICAL MOBILIZATION**

Although representing workers to an educated audience in this way may have met certain self-definitional needs for liberals, perhaps enlarging their base of political support in the process, it did little to solve the broader problem of mobilization: that of integrating an obviously powerful worker activism into effective liberal politics. However reasonable this activism was represented to be, its violent and otherwise excessive dimensions also suggested that industrial workers were particularly susceptible to radical propaganda, precisely, in fact, because of their class identities.

Here the liberal “solution” coincided with that of moderate social democracy and, indeed, may well have been brought into liberal discourse by Struve and other former Marxists who argued it with some force. If liberals had to acknowledge “the place of Russian workers among the leading fighters of the liberation movement,” as *Osvobozhdenie* expressed it, this role was created by “conscious elements” who were struggling for their less aware (and more susceptible) comrades.<sup>22</sup> “Consciousness” among workers thus emerged in the liberal press in 1905 as the mark of an identifiable group that liberals themselves could mobilize to their cause. It was Russia’s “conscious workers” who were struggling “to disarm their black-hundred comrades,” a struggle that sometimes, as in the case of a fight at the Petersburg Arsenal in the spring of 1906, resulted in “conscious workers” being killed.<sup>23</sup>

If such a construction marked the transition Struve and others were making from Marxism to liberalism, however, it also clearly reflected broader liberal fears about Russia’s “laboring and danger-

ous classes,” to paraphrase Louis Chevalier.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, identifying “conscious elements” in the workforce only made sense in tactical terms if the liberals themselves could gain support among this stratum of workers—that is, if consciousness defined workers to whom liberals might effectively appeal. On the one hand, this required extending direct contacts with workers, as the “Liberationists” attempted through the union movement generally and as the Kadet party tried to continue through its recruitment efforts at the time of its formation in 1905. But on the other hand, and more important in terms of mass political mobilization, it meant demonstrating as effectively as possible the ways in which the new Kadet program and legislative objectives represented workers in a literal sense: as appropriate and accurate reflections of worker needs and interests.

Defining workers’ interests was thus simultaneously a process of defining what “liberal,” and especially “Kadet,” meant to workers, and in this regard one can clearly see the relational aspects of representation. Here too, however, the centrality for liberals of individual rather than collective rights and identities created particular tensions, since “citizen” had to remain a primary social (or sociopolitical) identity even when “workers’ interests” were being defined. Hence Duma legislation in support of workers could not compromise individual rights. In practical terms, this meant that workers’ interests and rights had to be balanced against those of their employers, among others, a consistent and admirable position in terms of muting social partisanship and constructing a functional democracy, but one not likely to rally large numbers of industrial workers to the cause. Thus, in terms of self-definition, giving practical content to nonpartisanship (*nadpartiinosť*) necessarily positioned liberals away from (or above, as the Russian prefix *nad* implies) familiar and accepted social boundaries. Liberals could be *for* but not *of* workers. Ideological consistency required social detachment.

For this reason, the ways in which the trope of reason again framed liberal perspectives is particularly interesting. The central premise of the Kadet program was that the very rationality of workers *qua* citizens would allow them to understand the common political and social interests they shared with others, including, in some instances, their employer antagonists within the “bourgeoisie” (just as the Kadets’ opponents on the left frequently charged).<sup>25</sup> But inso-

far as the Kadets' program and draft labor legislation attempted to balance different social interests in ways that appeared prejudicial to workers themselves, arguments about common interests between liberals and workers that were essential to the tasks of political mobilization could not be sustained.

These tensions colored much of the Kadet party's efforts to write a labor platform into its program and to draft labor legislation during the first two Dumas (1906–7). Throughout this period Kadet publicists self-consciously generalized worker interests into those of all Russians in an effort to attract "citizen-workers" to their cause:

The KD [Kadet] Party is the Party of People's *Freedom*. The political freedoms it demands are for the *entire people*, for *all citizens* whatever the social group or economic class to which they belong. . . . The interests it must protect are not those of one or another social class, but the interests of the entire people—and, first and foremost, the interests of the largest number of the urban and rural populations, who live by the labor of their own hands. . . . Citizens! There is no real popular representation without direct elections! . . . There is no well-being for the country without the well-being of those who labor!<sup>26</sup>

Yet at the same time, appeals were made specifically to workers:

To the Workers! The struggle for law, freedom, and a better human condition has been going on in Russia for a long time. For a long time, however, freedom and law have only been granted to some. . . . Only in the last few years have the people themselves entered the struggle for their rights. And the earliest and most conscious of all who began to struggle for freedom were factory, industrial, and other workers. . . . The Party of People's Freedom does not want in any way to obligate or order workers. It calls them to its midst as independent members with equal rights.<sup>27</sup>

In effect, liberals were reaching out to workers, but in an effort to "lift" them out of excessive social partisanship.

The process of reaching out took several forms. In the fall of 1905 the new Kadet party's leadership formed a Commission of Cooperation with Striking Workers to try to build contacts. One of its first acts was to funnel 3,000 rubles to support the Post and Telegraph Union. Since this group was not exclusively blue collar, the contri-

bution symbolized Kadet support for labor activism that was broadly based across occupational lines, while representing trade unionism as part of the broad professional union movement as a whole. The party also opened cafeterias for the unemployed, while party activists, especially university students in Moscow, attempted systematically to attend workers' political meetings and organized some of their own.<sup>28</sup>

In early 1906 a new commission was established under Petr Struve to organize appeals to workers to join the party or form electoral blocs and to press workers to understand "the necessity of taking part in the elections."<sup>29</sup> Other commissions were also set up by local party committees in Moscow and St. Petersburg to work through various legislative proposals on labor matters; and later in 1906, apparently at Struve's initiative, a special Workers' Commission of the Central Committee was organized with sections in both Moscow (chaired by G. B. Iollos) and St. Petersburg (under Struve) to consolidate these efforts in the specific areas of unionization, hiring contracts, mediation councils, workers' insurance, factory inspections, the eight-hour day, and general workers' rights.<sup>30</sup> Meantime, in January 1906 the second Kadet Party Congress incorporated into the party program a section specifically outlining principles of labor legislation (following foregrounded sections on "the fundamental rights of citizens," "government structures," "local self-government," and "the courts"). This section emphasized government health insurance, the eight-hour day ("to be implemented immediately where it is presently possible, and gradually in other areas of production"), and provisions concerning the right of workers to strike and organize unions.<sup>31</sup> A majority of delegates wanted to go even further, approving a resolution calling for a certain number of places in the Duma to be assigned specifically to workers.<sup>32</sup>

This, of course, brought the tension between individual and collective rights into clear focus; the Central Committee quickly amended the resolution to allow places for workers only if they supported the organization of a constitutional state on the basis of universal individual representation—that is, accepted the primacy of individual over collective rights.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the fundamental right of workers to organize themselves into trade unions was not to be construed as encouraging "any narrowly partisan or even narrowly political aims." In response to the obvious efforts of "several

parties" to direct unionization in precisely these ways, the Kadet party had to "direct the thinking of workers toward developing clear, defined formulations of their economic and social demands."<sup>34</sup>

Thus, despite specific liberal concern for workers' rights, the "workers' question" was essentially constructed in 1905–6 as a general problem of Russian social organization. As the party moved to draft legislation on the question, Kadets rejected efforts to have workers themselves participate directly in the drafting process and took demonstrative steps to be "fair" to the other social groups that might be affected. The Workers' Commission heard from the industrialists on the Council of the Congress of Representatives of Trade and Industry on the question of unionization, for example, as well as from spokesmen for the workers; and as the draft legislation emerged, unions of employers were formally empowered in the draft with the same rights and protections as workers' unions.<sup>35</sup>

Much of the discussion in the Central Committee's Workers' Commission, in fact, turned on whether syndicates, trusts, and other organizations designed to monopolize production or distribution were equally entitled to form unions. (The decision ultimately was that they were not.)<sup>36</sup> The legislative proposal itself self-consciously referenced European models and focused on the juridical capacities (and legal liabilities) of professional unions, especially with respect to property, rather than positioning them as a reflection of collective workers' rights. Although it is possible that this language was chosen in order to make the legislation more acceptable to the regime, and hence to preserve the possibility of enactment, it was also clearly an attempt by liberals to integrate workers' rights and interests within a broader framework of liberal ideology. In the process, however, Kadets were defining themselves (and drawing the boundaries of the party's political location) even further from the struggle for worker welfare. Indeed, given the differential access to resources as between workers and employers, by constructing workers' unions as the associational equivalents of employers' unions, the document's very evenhandedness could be construed as artificially disadvantageous workers, a problem that clearly worried some Kadets.<sup>37</sup>

A similar distancing occurred in connection with draft legislation on the length of the workday. Despite the Kadet program's straightforward commitment to the "immediate realization . . . wherever possible and gradually elsewhere" of an eight-hour day

and its call for a general proscription on night and overtime work,<sup>38</sup> the preliminary draft worked out by the Petersburg section of the Workers' Commission set a ten-hour limit for adult day workers in plants with two shifts, a twelve-hour limit for plants with one shift, and limited rather than proscribed work at night. An eight-hour workday was to be the norm only for workers whose shifts extended into night hours and for those engaged in continual production (*pri rabotakh nepereryvnykh*). Saturday work was set at six hours. Only after five years from the date the legislation was passed was the workday to be reduced to nine hours in plants with one shift and eight hours in those with two.<sup>39</sup>

It was obvious to members of the commission itself, however, that even "conscious workers" with the capacity to make rational judgments about these matters were not likely to see their interests adequately represented in this fashion. By the commission's own calculations, only some 200,000 industrial workers (out of 2.5 million) would be guaranteed an eight-hour workday immediately ("with 300,000 to 400,000 coming under its provisions after five years").<sup>40</sup> But neither was it likely that industrialists and employer organizations would be satisfied:

Refuting critics from both these positions will require extensive argumentation . . . which the Commission, perhaps, will attempt to provide in the explanatory material it submits with the draft.<sup>41</sup>

Even extensive argumentation, however, was hardly likely to make the liberal argument convincing, except perhaps to those, like the liberals themselves, for whom collective social identities could be subordinated to a conception of the general good.

Nor, of course, could these positions help Kadet efforts to recruit workers directly into the party's ranks, efforts that continued even after the fiasco surrounding the famous "Vyborg Manifesto" of July 1906. Some prominent liberal figures, especially in Moscow, continued to argue that "bringing workers themselves into the process of working out these questions" remained "one of the most important tasks of the party," as Nikolai Iordanskii put it.<sup>42</sup> The draft legislation on labor time and other matters was considered a matter of "pressing concern" in the Central Committee in 1907 precisely because the belief still prevailed that there was a likely "coming together of Kadets and workers in large factory centers."<sup>43</sup> Workers

were “skeptical” toward the Octobrists, disinterested in “pretty phrases,” and preferred the “left” only because it supported workers’ interests.<sup>44</sup> According to Tyrkova, “close ties with the electorate” were an essential aspect of the democratic side of liberal politics, and the principal political competition in Russia was between liberalism and social democracy for workers’ support.<sup>45</sup> In Nikolai Shchepkin’s view, “a very large number” of workers looked at issues as the liberals did, and labor reforms should consequently be given “a place of honor” in the party platform.<sup>46</sup> This was the approach Moscow Kadets took in a series of district roundtable (*kruzhkovye*) discussions with workers in March 1907, in which Moscow University students affiliated with the Kadet party took an active role.<sup>47</sup> Similar efforts took place in the provinces.<sup>48</sup>

Within the Kadet Central Committee many remained skeptical that the Kadets could “quickly break the hegemony of Social Democracy” among Russian workers, as Miliukov put it,<sup>49</sup> yet the core of the issue had less to do with electoral tactics or alliances than the logic of liberalism itself, which continued to subordinate collective rights and social identities to individual ones and the collective (and socially differentiating) identity “worker” to an individualistic (and politically egalitarian) “citizenship.” Party appeals in the Third and Fourth Duma elections continued to be addressed to “citizen electors”;<sup>50</sup> “consciousness” (rationality) among workers continued to be understood as the ability to appreciate this logic:

The Kadet Party is the party of freedom *for the people*. The political freedom it demands is for *all the people, for all citizens*, regardless of the social group or economic class to which they might belong.<sup>51</sup>

In terms of their own self-definition, this emphasis meant that whatever their programmatic commitments, liberals also continued to present themselves as less concerned with workers identified in class terms as workers than with workers outside of their industrial milieu, decontextualized, as it were, into individual citizens. Insofar as many in the industrial workforce were also deeply concerned about the civil rights of citizenship, as Steve A. Smith has suggested, liberals were presenting themselves in this way as allies and appropriate leaders.<sup>52</sup> In this, however, they were not distinguishable from Mensheviks or other moderate socialists, who embedded civil rights

in class-based programs. For liberals, the abstraction of rights away from social context could thus only weaken their self-representation as defenders of worker interests.

### SOCIAL "DECONTEXTUALIZATION," THE STATE, AND THE LENA DISASTER

It was precisely this effort to remove workers from the social context of partisan class interests, however, that "emplotted" the liberal narrative of Russian modernization in the last years of the old regime, as both the destructive potential of social violence and the government's resistance to change became increasingly evident. The 1905–7 conjuncture left the terrain of identity formation more, rather than less, contested. Theoretical issues of political representation by class or estate (*soslovie*) and subjectively charged questions of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and nationality became practical matters of political and social mobilization. In effect, privileging individual political identities over social ones defined liberal claims after 1905 about the nature of identity itself in a modern political democracy.

This position may not have aided liberals in their quest for support, but it reflected an honest and, indeed, insightful perspective on the problem of Russian political transformation. In fact, even more than earlier, after the collapse of the Second Duma, the idea of collective rights based on social location was from the liberal perspective the juridical basis of Russia's dysfunctional autocratic system, while the consolidation of primary identities around class and nationality intensified the obvious dangers of continued social disorder. In circumstances where this conflict could hardly be avoided, only a socially decontextualized "citizenship" that equalized rights for all men and constructed common identities across social and national boundaries could provide the social and civil stability necessary to absorb the strains of modern industrial, commercial, and cultural growth, with all its dislocations.

Thus, for liberals, the question of how social identities were shaped in Russia in the period from 1907 to 1914 was not simply a matter of party tactics and alliances. It concerned the very potential

for Russia to achieve its rightful place among the community of modern European nations, as Miliukov and others put it. *Nadpartii-nost'* and *nadklassnost'* were reaffirmed in this context as the central elements of Russian liberal ideology, not because Russian liberalism lacked an extensive "middle class" social base, but because partisanship, rights, and privileges based on social status precluded the development in Russia of a political and social order capable of effectively mediating social and class-based conflict—that is, precluded modernizing.

Rejecting collective rights as the basis of modern state formation did not, however, mean a lessened role for the state. Indeed, the discourse about workers after 1907 continued to be a discourse about *gosudarstvennost'*, as liberal concerns about the role of the state intensified precisely because of the destructive potential of class-based politics. However strongly liberals supported civil liberties, most rejected after 1905 a Manchesterian expansion of civil space and civil society at the expense of the state's role in leading society "forward." In fact, discussion about the government and the state from 1907 to 1914 occupied the Kadet Central Committee's attention far more than concerns about workers. And in these discussions, the familiar division over "right" or "left" electoral alliances turned essentially on the question of which constituted a greater threat to Russia's development as a modern power: a weak, inept government or tactical alliances that strengthened social identities and partisanship.

For our purposes, what is interesting about these well-known tactical divisions between right and left liberals is that, after 1907, the two tendencies were equally inclined to represent workers as both repressed by the state and disadvantaged in negotiations with management by the absence of civil rights. Following the Stolypin "coup" of 3 June 1907, debate continued within the Kadet party about the appropriate nature of "workers' legislation." There was strong concurrence about the urgency of such civil liberties as free trade unions and the right of workers to strike in order to improve their conditions,<sup>53</sup> but there was an equal conviction that the state itself now had to play a very strong role in support of workers' welfare if lasting improvements were to occur; by now these tasks were not "class" ones but obligations of the state. Nikolai Iordanskii's phrasing in *Vestnik Partii Narodnoi Svobody* is worth quoting at some length. (The emphasis is mine).

The workers' program of the KD Party does not contain a great number of demands. It does not have the kind of detail that is included, for example, in the Social Democratic program-minimum. Its essential demands consist of two fundamental propositions necessary to improve the situation of the working class: first, freedom for self-actualization (freedom to unionize, to strike, to form coalitions), and second, legislative protection of its interests (through labor legislation).

Freedom alone, however, is insufficient. Even under conditions of full freedom, unions cannot immediately develop the power to affect labor conditions. It is necessary for the state as well to support and defend the interests of working people. State intervention in the relations between labor and capital is essential.

The party recognizes not simply the right but the obligation of such intervention. From its very beginning, the KD Party has declared itself an uncompromising opponent of old Manchesterian liberalism. The guiding idea of the Party involves the recognition that *without state intervention, without the implementation of just social reforms, it will also be impossible to realize those goals that are the essence of liberalism, that only with the improvement of the economic situation of the masses will the realization of law and freedom also be possible.*

This idea is the basis of the Party's entire social program.

*But the KD Party includes the improvement of conditions of work in its program, not as a class goal, but as a goal of the state. The defense and protection of the interests of laboring people is demanded in the name of the general good.*

*The state, standing above class divisions, takes upon itself the defense of these interests out of its recognition of general needs and demands.<sup>54</sup>*

With the consolidation of Stolypin's "third of June" system, the agonizing difficulty for liberals was the regime's continued inability to perform this state task. Far from "defending and protecting" workers' interests "in the name of the general good," the government was generally represented in the liberal press after 1907 as carrying out a systematic policy of repression. Indeed, worker activism was now often reported in *Rech'* under the headline "Repression," while *Russkiiia*

*vedomosti*, *Vestnik Evropy*, and even the conservative *Novoe vremia* frequently noted that in comparison to the authorities, protesting workers were “completely calm,” “tried to avoid conflict,” and in general reflected the wish to avoid violence.<sup>55</sup> At the same time, liberal publicists continued to stress the ways in which workers’ conditions were worsening. Thus *Vestnik Evropy* in its review of labor activism for 1910 emphasized the consequences for the state as well as for workers of lowered wages, employers’ violations of laws concerning factory conditions, and the frequency of fines and even firings that occurred, not because of acts by individual workers themselves, but in reprisal for the behavior of others.<sup>56</sup>

It is largely in these terms that one reads in the liberal press about the Lena goldfield disaster, an event that brought these various aspects of liberal representation into clear focus. Without exception, liberals drew a picture of Lena workers as struggling with low wages, inadequate housing, and little if any medical attention (*Rech'*); desperate to survive harsh working conditions, which included dangerous night work in minimal light (*Vestnik Evropy*); suffering from an unfair and dishonest distribution of food and provisions, which included “not just horse meat, but spoiled horse meat” (*Rech'* again); and oppressed by rude and sometimes cruel foremen (*Russkiiia vedomosti*).<sup>57</sup> It was “unarguable” (*bezsporno*) that the workers’ strike committee had provided assurances that the strike would be peaceful and that the committee’s arrest “naturally” and “inevitably” led to “chaos.”<sup>58</sup> In fact, according to *Vestnik Evropy*, if one wanted to find an explanation for the disaster even before the investigating committee made its report, it was in the indifferent and inept state bureaucracy, which completely lacked any rational understanding of the situation and which tramped gratuitously on the early hope of the Lena workers that the state itself would ensure that their legitimate needs be met.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, in the liberal version of Lena it was the state that emerged as the villain—for its collusion with Lena officials, its ineptitude, its complete abdication of anything resembling governmental responsibility. “In Holy Russia, so different from ‘judeo-masonic England,’” we read in *Rech'*, “the slightest misunderstanding leads to blood being let”; but in the real England, rather than the “phantasmagoric version” of the Russian right, “millions of striking workers and billions in losses do not result in bloodshed.”<sup>60</sup>

In an interesting subsequent piece in *Russkaia mysl'*, moreover, which incorporated an analysis of Lena with a review of the spring and summer strikes in 1913, the prominent liberal publicist A. S. Izgoev took the issue back to the early days of the liberation movement, emphasizing the ways in which the state was again crushing the potential represented by the most conscious, rational, and “developed” strata of the workforce. The Lena massacre was “the graveyard” of efforts to pacify strikes by repressing their most prominent leaders. These leaders were extremely influential because they had the capacity to confront the common bitter experience of the workforce, which was now deeply skeptical of the state and its endless stream of idle promises and false concessions. And because these “developed” workers recognized that the “old methods of struggle” were ineffective and outdated and they had the capacity to lead the labor movement in a new, organized, and even cultured way, their energies needed to be mobilized, not suppressed. What had become clear after Lena, and even clearer with the explosion of strike activity in the spring and summer of 1913, was that the labor movement in Russia had spread widely and forcefully, taking on in the process a “completely defined class character” (*vpolne opredelennyi klassovoi kharakter*). It could not, in fact, be repressed by fines, arrests, exile, and imprisonment; it could only be accommodated with appropriate legislation based on the essential rights promised by the regime in the 1905 October Manifesto. This had to be recognized in Russia, as it had been in “all cultured states” (*kul'turnye gosudarstva*).<sup>61</sup>

#### WORKERS' ORGANIZATIONS, SELF-DEFINITION, AND RUSSIA'S “VITAL SOCIAL FORCES” AFTER LENA

After Lena, liberals thus faced once again the problem of how to relate to Russia's “vital social forces” (*zhivye sotsial'nye sily*). If workers now belonged to a “movement” that indeed had a “completely defined class character,” what were the implications for any systematic narrative of modernization that rejected the premise of collective rights?

The phrase “vital social forces” had itself been an important part of liberal discourse at least since the 1890s, when Petr Struve

used it after the 1896 Petersburg textile strikes in his well-known letter to Nicholas II, but its formulaic power in terms of political strategy for liberals emerged only as the Union of Liberation began to ride the waves of social protest in late 1904. As Miliukov expressed the liberals' hopes at the time, "*flectere si negueo superos Acheronta movebo*" (if I cannot budge the gods, I will move Acheron).<sup>62</sup> By the fall of 1905, "Acheron"—the masses—was in common use as a way of avoiding the censors, signifying the hope that liberals could, in fact, help create and join forces with a strong and progressive mass movement.<sup>63</sup>

In the disappointing and, for the Kadet leadership itself, devastating aftermath of Vyborg, and especially with the subsequent empowerment of Social Democracy in the Second Duma elections, Miliukov and others stopped talking about moving Acheron. Instead, they concentrated almost entirely on the familiar issue of tactical political alliances. The intense discussions within the Kadet Central Committee following the Vyborg debacle of 1906 contained virtually no reference at all to workers, other than an expression of surprise (from a Tula delegate) that there had been no strikes of protest.<sup>64</sup> There was also little reference to trade unions, especially after Miliukov's caustic commentary in October 1905 about the impossibility of imagining these groups functioning other than under Social Democratic control (*vladychestvo*). "Even in this area," Miliukov complained, "Social Democracy pursues its own aims, turning the nonpartisan union movement against us like a spike."<sup>65</sup> When Vladimir Nabokov raised the issue in direct terms, telling his Central Committee colleagues that the question was will our party play a leading role in this developing mass movement or stand aside?,<sup>66</sup> the answer provided by subsequent events was that as a matter of practical political mobilization, the party would indeed stand aside, and precisely because such practical efforts required a partisan defense of collective rights. For liberals, as Nabokov also put it, the issue was a national, not a partisan political one.<sup>67</sup> Between 1908 and 1912, there was virtually no discussion of the matter in the Central Committee at all, despite an occasional reminder from people like Struve that liberals "think too much about the government, too little about the country."<sup>68</sup> In Miliukov's view, the organization of social forces had simply "fallen behind."<sup>69</sup>

The rapid intensification of labor protest and the “extraordinary expansion” of the workers’ movement following Lena, as described in *Ezhegodnik gazety Rech’*, thus posed as much of a difficulty for liberals (and especially for the Kadet party) as they presented the opportunity for pressuring the regime.<sup>70</sup> The *Ezhegodnik’s* account directly connected the explosion of strikes with Russia’s industrial expansion and the repressive policies of the regime. Workers were seizing on issues like universal and equal electoral rights to focus protests that fundamentally stemmed from cruel workplace conditions, regime brutality, and the disempowerment that resulted from collusion between industrialists and the government. Strikes that began in a disciplined way were radicalized by massive arrests.<sup>71</sup> Such interest as there was in the Duma elections and other so-called legitimate forms of politics was rapidly eroded by the ways in which the workers’ own elected representatives (*upolnomochennyye*) were disdained or ignored. Social democracy was strengthening, along with social polarization and partisanship. The year 1913 was almost certain to bring “an upsurge in workers’ energy” reminiscent of 1905.<sup>72</sup>

In its liberal representation, the post-Lena upsurge was thus both a consequence of Russia’s industrialization and a threat to the country’s capacity to modernize. Yet the efforts of left liberals to rejoin with Russia’s “vital forces” by forming a new coalition with moderate social democracy were again turned aside by the Kadet Central Committee. While continuing to leave the question of tactical political alliances up to local party organizations, liberal leaders remained, if anything, even warier now of the dangers of class-based partisanship than they had been in the aftermath of 1905.<sup>73</sup> As Miliukov summarized the issue in 1912, the political task of Russian liberalism remained that of leading the struggle for universal civil liberties and representative government, of defending “the interests of the broad [*shirokii*] laboring masses” by acting through Russia’s established institutions and preventing discriminatory treatment based on collective identities.<sup>74</sup>

In all of the contentious discussion among liberals over the question of tactical alliances, however, virtually no attention was paid to the question of the workers’ movement per se as a “vital social force.” To those who, like Nikolai Nekrasov, were identified as left liberals because they strongly favored renewing Liberationist alliances with moderate socialists, this neglect simply conceded a

political monopoly to the SDs; they recognized that it was necessary now "to affirm in the basic slogans and precepts of the Party its moral, and perhaps even material support for the workers' movement."<sup>75</sup> Nekrasov himself thought it made no sense to concede a monopoly to the SDs in this area, a view shared by a number of provincial figures.<sup>76</sup> But the majority clearly agreed, if not with Miliukov, then at least with Andrei Shingarev, who insisted in rejoinder that the Kadets simply had to recognize that they had long been alienated from Russian workers and could certainly not afford the price they would have to pay if they attempted now to give workers material assistance.<sup>77</sup>

In these familiar circumstances of acrimony and political uncertainty one possible "solution" to the problem of linkage with workers, and hence with Russia's "vital social forces," appears to have gained credence precisely because of the ways in which it reflected the general liberal vision of a modern state order. This solution centered on the further organization of Russian workers into active, "nonpartisan," and empowered labor unions.

The logical connections between unionization, worker "consciousness," individual rights, a stable state order, and the liberal conception of Russian modernity had actually been drawn implicitly in liberal discourse since before the 1905 Revolution, but it took the Lena events and their aftermath for the argument to be clearly developed. As Miliukov's angry comments in 1906 suggested, what distressed the Kadet leader on the eve of the Second Duma elections was not so much social democracy's understandable influence among workers, but its use of a "social organization" as a partisan political weapon. But Lena signaled the destructive consequences of failing to allow workers full rights to organize, the earlier politicization of unions notwithstanding. Not only did the state's repression of unions deprive workers of the chance to negotiate their grievances in a systematic and orderly way, it forcefully removed the most able and "conscious" workers from labor-management conflicts, leaving the field open to radicals.

Interestingly, it was precisely the possibility of orderly social accommodation through unions that had generated the bitter struggle among Bolsheviks over the "liquidators" (*likvidatory*). Renewed Kadet interest in the issue may have been partly a reaction to this dispute. As Aleksandr Izgoev argued in *Russkaia mysl'*, it was not only the

liquidators who were struggling with radical Bolsheviks over the value of militant, disorganized worker outbursts, but also the still relatively small group of conscious workers invested in the trade unions, who were trying to regulate the flow of strike activism in order to reach orderly and mutually acceptable settlements.<sup>78</sup> Through collective bargaining, unionization reduced the disorder caused by the excesses of foremen and managers in individual plants. It substantially leveled the field of management-labor negotiations by mobilizing more nearly equivalent resources on both sides of the bargaining table. Perhaps most important, it moved the task of representing worker interests from the “political” to the “economic” sphere and vitiated the arguments in favor of collective rights and representation at the level of the state. If unions focused their power on improving the social and economic welfare of their individual members, rather than further politicizing class interests, they could play a central and progressive role in modernizing Russia.

The link in liberal discourse after Lena between unionization, modernization, and Westernization was explicit: it was precisely the absence of these orderly, evolutionary possibilities that distinguished Russian labor activism from its counterpart in Western Europe. Indeed, a special feature of labor protest in Russia in 1912 and 1913 was that trade unions were not able to play the role that, in terms of liberal development theory and “by analogy with the West,” they should have played.<sup>79</sup> “Weakness” in the consciousness of Russia’s “working masses” had to be overcome by facilitating labor “solidarity” (*splochennost’*) with unions capable of bringing organization, control, and power to the bargaining process and hence of achieving real results, in an orderly way, as measured in terms of worker welfare.<sup>80</sup>

#### **WORKERS AND THE LIBERAL VISION ON THE EVE OF WAR AND REVOLUTION**

Encapsulated here was the core of the liberal representation of workers at the end of the old regime. If liberals had earlier fought for the right of Russia’s “democratic elements” to organize in unions as the best way to “improve their well-being” (as the Kadet leader-

ship had described one of the party's principal roles from the moment of its formation),<sup>81</sup> and if freedom of association was one of the "most valued" rights of civil freedom,<sup>82</sup> then the unionization of Russia's "rough" working masses was also the likely solution now to the problem of harnessing this "vital social force" to the task of modernization. With their assistance, Russia could possibly reform itself without destructive social partisanship or polarization, without redefining civil liberties in collective terms, and—perhaps most important, for many, after the great strike surge of 1912–13—without dangerously weakening the state.

It was here, on the eve of the war, that liberals joined the metaphor of "maturation" to their narrative of modernity through Westernization, industrial growth, individual identity, and personal freedom. By 1914, Russian liberalism had found a variety of expressions in different political and social groupings, even within the Kadet Party. Progressive industrialists like Pavel Riabushinskii and Aleksandr Konovalov had emerged as important liberal figures in their own right. But fissures among the Kadets again threatened the party's tactical unity (the more cautious Duma leadership in Petrograd disagreed with activists in the provinces and with those like Nekrasov who continued to press for alliances on the left). Yet liberals retained a coherent sense of Russia's desirable future. They continued to express their vision in a clear narrative of progressive civil liberties, individual rights, and the orderly resolution of social conflict—in essence, an effective civil society.

The narrative form itself was essential to the way liberals formulated these commitments, as it was for SDs, even if its less rigidly determined character may have made the liberal story less compelling and themselves less optimistic. Liberals agreed with their rivals on the left that Russia's conflicts were not random. But rather than the result of inherent class contradictions, they had to be understood in terms of a broader European pattern of social maturation, a living story whose future chapters liberals hoped to write. Indeed, this perspective remained a defining element of Russian liberal politics on the eve of the war.

To avoid a tragic closure, Russia's "vital social forces" had to be harnessed to the reconstruction of an organic state, ruled by law. As Kadets saw it, what distinguished the "cultured states of the West" was a civil order covered with "an endless network" of unions

“of every possible sort, from the narrow to the very broad,” organically linking the state with society.<sup>83</sup> Russia had to follow this lead if it was to preserve its own organic capacity for growth, empowering unions to represent workers in the struggle against capital, and providing the mechanisms in courts and mediation boards for the reconciliation of conflict in a peaceful and orderly way. The realization of real material gains by ordinary workers could only strengthen their respect for rational, moderate, and politically conscious leaders; and if, in the process, moderate social democracy gained political strength over Bolsheviks and other radicals, so much the better for Russia’s potential to modernize along West European lines. Liberalism itself in this process would be strengthened as well, since its ideological core would find expression in the extension of civil rights and liberties on individualist, rather than collectivist, terms.

As they were for Social Democrats, “workers” were thus central to liberal visions of the present and future at the end of the old regime in Russia; their representation, in all of its ambiguities, was a key element in the prerevolutionary liberal narrative of progress and modernity. All the deeper was the liberals’ shock, and their bitter disappointment, in the chapters that followed.

## NOTES

1. I am very grateful for the thoughtful and critical comments given this essay by Laura Engelstein, Reginald Zelnik, Ziva Galili, Nikolai Smirnov, and other participants in the International Colloquium on Workers and the Intelligentsia in Russia, and to Diane Koenker and Jane Hedges for their very helpful suggestions for revision.
2. Among the most recent contributions, see especially Charters Wynn, *Workers, Strikes and Pogroms: The Donbass-Dnepr Bend in Late Imperial Russia, 1870–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Mark D. Steinberg, *Moral Communities: The Culture of Class Relations in the Russian Printing Industry, 1867–1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Robert Weinberg, *The Revolution of 1905 in Odessa: Blood on the Steps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Heather Hogan, *Forging Revolution: Metalworkers, Managers, and the State in St. Petersburg, 1890–1914* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); and Reginald E. Zelnik, *Law and Disorder on the Narova River: The Kreenholm Strike of 1872* (Berkeley: University of

- California Press, 1995). Among the more interesting recent efforts in European labor history, see especially Jacques Rancière, *The Nights of Labor: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth Century France*, trans. J. Drury (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); Donald Reid, *Paris Sewers and Sewermen: Realities and Representations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991); Laura L. Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality: Gender Division in the French and British Metalworking Industries, 1914–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); and the discussions in Lenard R. Berlanstein, ed., *Rethinking Labor History: Essays in Discourse and Class Analysis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).
3. See, e.g., Charles Timberlake, "The Concept of Liberalism in Russia," in *Essays on Russian Liberalism*, ed. C. Timberlake (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972), pp. 18–41.
  4. A "classic" identification of two principal tendencies in Russian liberal outlooks is Michael Karpovich, "Two Types of Russian Liberalism: Maklakov and Miliukov," in *Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought*, ed. Ernest J. Simmons (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), pp. 129–43. Liberal treatises illustrating these differences include, among others, N. I. Astrov, *Vospominaniia* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1941); P. D. Dolgorukov, *Velikaia razrukha* (Madrid, 1964); I. V. Gessen, *Iskaniia obshchestvennogo ideala* (Berlin: Slovo, 1922); A. S. Izgoev, *Russkoe obshchestvo i revoliutsiia* (Moscow: Mamontov, 1910); A. A. Kizevetter, *Na rubezhe dvukh stoletii* (Prague: Orbis, 1929); F. F. Kokoshkin, *Ob osnovaniakh zhelatel'noi organizatsii narodnogo predstavitel'stva v Rossii* (Moscow: Lissnera, 1906); V. A. Maklakov, *Vlast' i obshchestvennost' na zakate staroi Rossii* (Paris: Illustrirovannaia Rossiia, 1938); M. Mandel'shtam, *1905 god v politicheskikh protsessakh* (Moscow, 1931); P. N. Miliukov: *Rossiia na perelome* (Paris: Impression Voltaire, 1927), and *Vospominaniia, 1859–1917* (New York: Chekhov, 1955); V. D. Nabokov, *Rechi* (St. Petersburg, 1907); and M. M. Vinaver, *Nedavnee* (Paris: Impression Voltaire, 1926).
  5. See, e.g., Richard Pipes, *Struve: Liberal on the Left* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 155.
  6. *Vestnik Partii Narodnoi Svobody*, no. 4 (19 March 1906): 201. (Henceforth VPNS.)
  7. "Iz obshchestvennoi khroniki," *Vestnik Evropy*, no. 6 (1906): 864–65 (unsigned).
  8. See the discussion in Hogan, esp. ch. 8.
  9. In an article in October 1905 on "The Workers' Question in Baku," for example, the editors of *Novoe vremia* wondered why industrialists could meet together, organize their associations, and formulate strategies for "dealing with workers" when labor did not have the same prerogatives. If workers could elect delegates for discussions in St. Petersburg, why could they not organize locally to press their needs? See *Novoe Vremia*, 9 and 10 October 1905. Commonly in this period and later, descriptions of labor protests included some discussion of the material deprivation that underlay

the protests, a presentation that at least implicitly encouraged a sympathetic hearing for protests over wages, working conditions, and issues concerning personal dignity.

10. A long account in 1908 about meetings held by Petersburg workers on the question of commemorating Bloody Sunday, for example, detailed threats by the Society of Factory and Mill Owners to impose double fines, two-week suspensions, and other heavy sanctions. See *Novoe vremia*, 9 January 1908.
11. "Workers," for example, had wives who joined them in demonstrations or supported their strikes, but never husbands; they were frequently drunk on their days off, which "troubled the mothers of their children," but if they were sexually molested or harassed by their foremen, it did not seem to trouble their children's fathers. See, e.g., *Novoe vremia*, 7 January 1907.
12. One exception was the report of a Kadet committee studying the length of the working day in different industries, in which categorical differences were drawn. See *VPNS*, no. 13 (19 March 1907).
13. *Rech'*, 3 May 1906.
14. Thus *Novoe vremia* described agitators at the Putilov works who "forced those who did not want to participate in their meeting to quit work by firing several shots at them." In October 1905, it was the "dark forces" rather than the "workers" who were crying "down with the government"; "students and workers" clashed with "crowds"; striking railroaders who could "be fired at the whim of their supervisors" were "conducting themselves with dignity and order." See *Novoe vremia*, 24 October and 14 December 1905.
15. *Ibid.*, 14 December 1905.
16. On the railroads, "revolutionaries" were in "full control, robbing ticket sellers, interfering with goods and passengers . . . and holding court over people they [did] not like, sentencing them to death and immediately, without any hesitation, carrying out the sentence." See, e.g., *Russkiiia vedomosti*, 11 and 15 October 1905; *Novoe vremia*, 19 December 1905.
17. *Novoe vremia*, 10, 12, and 20 December 1905.
18. A. A. Kizevetter, ed., *Napadki na partiiu narodnoi svobody i vozrazheniia na nikh* (Moscow, 1906), p. 93; *Rechi F. F. Kokoshkina* (St. Petersburg, 1907), p. 39 (speech given 5 June 1906); *Russkiiia vedomosti*, 11 October 1905.
19. *Russkiiia vedomosti*, 28 October 1905.
20. *Birzhevye vedomosti*, 9 and 14 December 1905, as reprinted in Pavel Miliukov, *God bor'by* (St. Petersburg, 1907), pp. 174–76.
21. *Russkiiia vedomosti*, 19 December 1905.
22. *VPNS*, no. 2 (5 March 1906): 65.
23. *Novoe vremia*, 3 June 1906.

24. Louis Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: H. Fertig, 1973).
25. See, e.g., the attack by G. Aleksinskii, "O Konstitutsionno-demokraticheskoi partii," *Obrazovanie* 1 (1906): 69–89.
26. GARF, f. 523, op. 3, d. 15, 11. 27–28 (election appeals and other materials, 1905–7).
27. VPNS, no. 2 (5 March 1906): 1.
28. VPNS, no. 10 (11 May 1906).
29. GARF, f. 523, op. 1, d. 27, l. 52 (Kadet Central Committee Protocols).
30. VPNS no. 33–34 (26 October 1906): 1750.
31. N. I. Astrov, ed., *Zakonodatel'nye proekty i predpolozheniia P.N.S. 1905–07* (St. Petersburg, 1907), pp. xi–xix.
32. See Kizevetter, ed., *Napadki*, p. 100; Central Committee Protocol no. 15, 19/20 February 1906, in GARF, f. 523, op. 1, d. 27, l. 54.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*
35. VPNS, no. 8 (22 February 1906): 533, and no. 10 (8 March 1906): 668.
36. VPNS, no. 8 (22 February 1906): 533–34, and no. 10 (8 March 1906): 668–69, 672.
37. GARF, f. 523, op. 3, d. 14, esp. 11. 7–10 (theses and various reports). In 1917, members of the labor commission formed by the Ministry of Trade and Industry would experience a similar claim to evenhandedness when employers demanded legislation legalizing their right to strike along with that of their workers.
38. "Programma Konstitutsionno-demokraticheskoi partii," in Astrov, ed., *Zakonodatel'nye proekty*, p. xviii.
39. If the workday exceeded nine hours, a minimum "free break" of not less than one hour was also to be set, "depending on the conditions of production and general local circumstances" (*v zavisimosti ot uslovii proizvodstva i voobshche ot mestnykh uslovii*). See VPNS, no. 10 (8 March 1907): 675–76.
40. The commission also believed, however, that the generally depressed state of industrial production meant that the workday in many places would actually be much shorter even than eight hours. See VPNS, no. 13 (29 March 1907): 832–33.
41. I. T., "Po povodu proekta zakona o prodolzhitel'nosti rabochago vremeni," VPNS, no. 13 (29 March 1907): 832.
42. VPNS, no. 33–34 (26 October 1906): 1750. On the Vyborg Manifesto, see Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Authority Restored* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 202–9.
43. VPNS, no. 17 (3 May 1907): 1098.

44. *VPNS*, no. 2 (11 January 1907): 96–97.
45. *VPNS*, no. 5 (1 February 1907): 293.
46. *Protokoly Tsentral'nogo Komiteta Konstitutsionno-Demokraticheskoi Partii, 1905–1911* (Moscow, 1994), vol. 1, p. 148.
47. *VPNS*, no. 13 (29 March 1907): 848.
48. GARE, f. 523, op. 2, d. 3 (reports from provincial committees to the Central Committee). D. I. Shakhovskoi, meanwhile, wanted his colleagues to support the creation of a ministry of labor as an institutional way of assuring that workers' interests were met, rather than subsume them under the aegis of the Ministry of Trade and Industry (as, in fact, continued to be the case until 1917). See *Protokoly Tsentral'nogo Komiteta*, p. 18 (session of 29 October 1906).
49. *Ibid.*, p. 150 (session of 29 October 1906).
50. GARE, f. 523, op. 3, d. 15, l. 93 (Kadet election materials).
51. *Ibid.*, 1. 17. Emphasis in original.
52. S. A. Smith, "Workers and Civil Rights in Tsarist Russia, 1899–1917," in *Civil Rights in Imperial Russia*, ed. Olga Crisp and Linda Edmondson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 145–70.
53. See, e.g., *VPNS*, no. 33–34 (30 August 1907): 1538ff.
54. N. M. Iordanskii, "Rabochaia programma i proekty rabochago zakonodatel'stva K. D. partii," *VPNS*, no. 33–34 (30 August 1907): 1537–40.
55. For example, in January 1908, according to *Russkiiia vedomosti*, Petersburg workers demonstrated "very calmly" to mark the anniversary of Bloody Sunday in the face of provocations by the city authorities, and despite losing their wages. Workers in large factories who stayed at their benches gave a portion of their earnings to support the unemployed. Similarly, the "fifteen to twenty thousand" Moscow workers who demonstrated on 1 May 1908 were "completely calm" and tried to avoid any direct confrontations with the police. See *Russkiiia vedomosti*, 11 January 1908; *Rech'*, 3 May 1908.
56. See, e.g., A. Malin, "Khronika: Stachki i usloviia truda russkikh rabochikh v 1910 godu," *Vestnik Evropy*, no. 1 (1912): 292–98. Fines themselves, according to this author, were now averaging more than a third of a worker's wages, and workers found themselves more and more vulnerable as economic conditions made strikes an increasingly ineffective weapon.
57. See, e.g., *Rech'*, 6 and 7 April 1912; *Vestnik Evropy*, no. 9 (September 1912): 432–34; *Novoe vremia* 10 (April 1912); *Russkiiia vedomosti*, 8 and 15 April 1912.
58. *Rech'*, 7 April 1912.
59. *Vestnik Evropy*, no. 9 (September 1912): 432–34.
60. *Rech'*, 6 and 7 April 1912.
61. A. S. Izgoev, "Letniia zabastovki," *Russkaia mysl'* 8 (1913): 1–3.

62. P. Miliukov, *Political Memoirs 1905–1917*, ed. Arthur Mendel (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), p. 66.
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Protokoly Tsentral'nogo Komiteta*, pp. 92ff. (session of 2 August 1906).
65. *Ibid.*, p. 150 (session of 29 October 1906).
66. *Ibid.*, p. 120 (session of 7 September 1906).
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Ibid.*, p. 379 (session of 7 November 1909).
69. *Ibid.*, p. 381. By 1912, and probably earlier, the Kadet leader himself was no longer a partisan of universal suffrage. The focus of the Central Committee in terms of the “vital social forces” turned entirely on the value and possibility of various electoral blocs. See, for example, the discussions of 19 September 1911 et seq., *Protokoly Tsentral'nogo Komiteta*, pp. 430–75.
70. A. Chuzheninov, “Russkoe rabochee dvizhenie,” *Ezhegodnik gazety Rech' na 1913* (St. Petersburg, 1913), pp. 151–64.
71. *Ibid.*, pp. 153–57.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 163–64.
73. See esp. the discussions in the Central Committee on 11 March 1912: GARE, f. 523, op. 1, d. 30, ll. 151–57; on 17 November 1912, 24 May 1913, and esp. 9 February 1914, *ibid.*, d. 31, ll. 3–7; 59–68, 94–99.
74. “[The Duma faction] will continue to struggle energetically against all attempts to take away from the working class and from the employees in ordinary trades those rights to which they are now entitled by law. We will use all of our power to broaden these rights either by means of government legislation or by introducing legislation of our own” (*ibid.*, d. 30, ll. 168).
75. Indeed, in early 1914 Nekrasov took his colleagues in the Kadet Central Committee directly to task on this issue, arguing that even if one did not believe in the muscular fists of the proletariat (*muskulistnye kulaki proletariata*), it was impossible for Kadets to deny that Russian workers were an exceptionally active force (*ibid.*, d. 31, ll. 104–5 [Central Committee session of 17 February 1914]).
76. *Ibid.*, d. 16, ll. 9–11; d. 31, ll. 104–9.
77. *Ibid.*, d. 31, ll. 105–06.
78. Izgoev, “Letniia zabastovki,” p. 2.
79. Chuzheninov, p. 159.
80. *Ibid.*
81. E.g., GARE, f. 523, op. 3: d. 14, ll. 4–5 and d. 15, ll. 28ff. (theses, reports, and various materials relating to Duma activities).
82. Astrov, ed., *Zakonodatel'nye proekty*, p. 28.
83. *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30.

## WORKERS' THEATER AND "PROLETARIAN CULTURE" IN PREREVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA, 1905–17

E. Anthony Swift

Amateur workers' theaters were an important part of a larger movement by Russian workers to establish networks of alternative cultural and educational institutions during the years between the revolutions of 1905 and February 1917. The proletarian cultural and educational movement, or Proletkul't, has received much attention from students of the early Soviet period, but its roots in the prerevolutionary workers' movement have been largely neglected.<sup>1</sup> In explaining the origins of Proletku'lt, scholars have focused on Aleksandr Bogdanov's theory of proletarian culture, elaborated in the decade prior to 1917. Bogdanov and his followers held that social revolution was impossible without a corresponding cultural revolution. To prepare this cultural revolution, workers would have to develop their own proletarian culture to contest the hegemony of bourgeois culture. Guided by the revolutionary intelligentsia, an elite of worker-intellectuals (*rabochie-intelligenty*) would lay the foundations of a new, distinctly proletarian culture by creating their own science, philosophy, and art, based on class values.<sup>2</sup>

Bogdanov's theory attracted wide publicity and on the eve of World War I sparked heated debates among Social Democratic (SD) leaders over whether a genuinely proletarian culture could be created under the conditions of capitalism.<sup>3</sup> But what did "proletarian culture" mean in practice, to the rank-and-file workers who actually established their own cultural organizations? What would distinguish it from "bourgeois culture"? What role would the intelligentsia play in the construction of proletarian culture? Although it is always more difficult to interpret the reception of an idea than the idea itself, the history of the prerevolutionary workers' theater movement does suggest some answers. For most workers who participated in theater

groups, attended the performances of workers' theaters, or read about them in the workers' press, proletarian culture did not mean creating an entirely new culture from scratch. Instead, it meant appropriating the culture of the intelligentsia and using it for purposes that could be ideological, symbolic, or both. And in creating proletarian culture, workers would often need assistance from that intelligentsia, even as they sought to maintain their autonomy and to emphasize the proletarian character of the performances.

In ideological terms, theater offered radical workers a useful weapon in their social and political struggles. "Workers' theater," explained a contributor to a Bolshevik mass-circulation daily in 1914, "awakens [class] consciousness more easily [than do lectures] and thereby prepares new cadres of conscious members of workers' organizations."<sup>4</sup> The key issue was not so much the class origins of the plays performed as their ideological significance. After all, true art, as the workers had learned from their intelligentsia mentors, was always supposed to be critical of the established order, expose social ills, and suggest solutions to them. And in Russia there existed a considerable body of socially critical dramatic literature. Most of the classics of Russian literature and drama were interpreted as protests against social injustice, bureaucratic corruption, and the oppression of the weak by the strong; these interpretations were only reinforced by the fact that so many of the classics had at some time been prohibited by the censors. A St. Petersburg workers' drama circle (organized in 1912) whose repertoire consisted exclusively of the same classic and contemporary works that could be seen on any stage in Russia, could thus state confidently that the plays it selected were "absolutely ideological" in content.<sup>5</sup> The dearth of proletarian dramatists and the virtual absence of socialist plays—a situation exacerbated by stringent censorship restrictions on what could be performed in theaters attended by lower-class audiences—forced Russian workers' theaters to draft the existing "bourgeois" dramatic corpus into service of the proletarian cause.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from their potential for raising the "class consciousness" of their audiences, workers' theaters also had an important symbolic significance. To organize or attend a workers' theater was an assertion of *kul'turnost'*, or respectability, not unlike taking evening classes or reading "thick" journals. Such theaters were proof that working men and women not only aspired to the cultural heritage

of the intelligentsia, but were no less, or maybe even more, capable of appreciating art than were the upper classes. Reporting on a 1913 performance by a local group of amateur worker-actors, *Pravda's* Perm correspondent even claimed that far from threatening to pilage the temple of Russia's cultural heritage, the proletariat had become its guardian:

In bourgeois circles they say that if workers are admitted everywhere they will destroy all culture. No. We will prove that we are already taking under our wing all the so-called cultural acquisitions that are useful to us, since the bourgeoisie no longer has the strength to work in that area, that is, in the realm of art.<sup>7</sup>

Yet there remained a dilemma: to create their own theaters, workers often needed the assistance and technical expertise of professional actors and directors. Workers tried to solve this dilemma by emphasizing the class character of their performances, by defining a workers' theater as one where worker-actors performed a repertoire of their own choosing before worker-audiences.

### FOLK THEATER IN THE FACTORY

Although the workers' theaters showed no interest in making use of earlier forms of popular theatricality, performances of folk plays had long been a part of the orally transmitted culture of Russian factory workers. It is even possible that the folk dramas that became widespread in the nineteenth century originated among the peasant migrants who provided seasonal labor for the factories of Russia's industrial centers.<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to determine to what extent folk dramas were performed by turn-of-the-century factory workers, since ethnographers preferred to seek out "authentic" folk culture in rural areas rather than in urban factory settlements, but there is evidence to suggest that workers were often familiar with such plays. Nikolai Popov, a playwright and director who collected materials on popular theater, saw workers at the Tsindel' cotton mill perform the folk drama *Tsar' Maksimilian* in 1896.<sup>9</sup> According to Popov, the workers had already staged the play several times, at their own initiative and with no outside help. Their acting was ritu-

alistic and stylized, employing various conventional techniques which bore no trace of professional influence. The actors, apparently all male, wore their everyday clothing, with only a few costume accessories made of paper.<sup>10</sup>

Were performances of folk plays also common at other factories? Discussing popular theatrical tastes, Popov noted the enduring appeal of *Tsar' Maksimilian* for factory workers over many generations.<sup>11</sup> In her notes on her youth in the Petersburg suburb Tsarskoe Selo, Anna Akhmatova remembered seeing workers from a nearby wallpaper factory perform *Tsar' Maksimilian* at Shrovetide.<sup>12</sup> A temperance activist reported in 1916 that the play was still popular among workers at a sugar factory in Chernigov province. They staged it at Christmas from memory, and it was repeated each year, with slight changes and additions.<sup>13</sup>

These accounts of performances of *Tsar' Maksimilian* are an important reminder that at least some factory workers had a theatrical culture of their own, which existed long before liberal philanthropists and workers' theater groups set out to acquaint them with classical and contemporary drama. Those who sought to "raise" the cultural level of the working classes by exposing them to theater routinely assumed that workers had no culture, or at least none worth mentioning, yet the performers described by Popov clearly possessed the rich dramatic heritage of the Russian folk theater. If, as a survey conducted in 1900 found, almost 90 percent of the Tsindel' workers had never set foot in a Moscow theater,<sup>14</sup> they nonetheless enjoyed drama. Since peasant migrants and army recruits were the medium by which the folk plays circulated among villages, regiments, and factories, workers who had significant rural ties were probably familiar with plays like *Tsar' Maksimilian*. But skilled workers, who earned higher wages and were more prone to reject village customs and adopt a more urban lifestyle, were unlikely to display much interest in a folk theater that smacked of the very village identity they wanted to shed. For them, literary theater was a much more appropriate symbol of the culture they hoped to acquire along with their urban identity.

### THE WORKER INTELLIGENTSIA'S DESIRE FOR RESPECTABILITY

The workers' theaters and drama circles that began to appear at the turn of the century were usually composed of people whom contemporaries called *rabochie-intelligenty*: the young, skilled, better paid workers who also dominated the legal trade unions and educational societies that developed during this period (mainly after 1905). These workers often cultivated an interest in literature and art and took pride in their respectability. Would-be worker-intelligenty commonly referred to themselves as "conscious," in order to emphasize the distance that separated them from the unskilled and semi-skilled (or "gray") masses, whom they viewed as backward, uncouth, and "unconscious."

Of course, the worker-*intelligent* was to a great extent an abstraction, an ideal type constructed as much by the revolutionary intelligentsia as by the workers who embraced the ideal. There was more than a little wishful thinking and a good dash of romanticism in the conventional stereotype of the skilled worker, independent, proficient, and industrious, who spent his evenings attending lectures on political economy or reciting the verses of Nikolai Nekrasov; preferred *Kapital* to *Kopeika*; eschewed *Petrushka* for Chekhov; did not curse or drink to excess; dressed neatly; and tried to raise the consciousness of his less "advanced" workmates. And it was primarily a male identity, for the female worker was frequently regarded by the males as "a creature of a lower order."<sup>15</sup> Not every representative of the labor intelligentsia corresponded fully to the ideal, but it was nevertheless a powerful vision of an alternative culture in which skilled, educated workers could distinguish themselves from the backward mass of semi-peasant workers without renouncing their own working-class identity.

Workers who aspired to the status of intelligenty within the working-class cultural hierarchy asserted their identity through a specific behavioral style that was calculated to emphasize their respectability and set them off from other workers. As Semen Kanatchikov, a village-born worker who strove to fashion for himself a new identity as a skilled and cultivated Moscow (and then Petersburg) pattern maker, explained in his memoirs:

It usually happened that no sooner did a worker become conscious than he ceased being satisfied with his social environment, he would begin to feel burdened by it and would then try to socialize only with persons like himself and to spend his free time in more rational and cultural ways.<sup>16</sup>

For some workers, including Kanatchikov, these yearnings led to participation in Marxist study groups and contacts with radical students and members of the revolutionary underground. Worker-intellectuals also expressed their identity by taking evening courses, reading the "thick" journals, visiting museums, attending public lectures, going to the theater, or even participating in a literary-dramatic circle. All of these activities—political, educational, or cultural—brought workers into contact with representatives of the intelligentsia, with whom they had an ambivalent relationship. Even though the worker-intelligenty looked to the intelligentsia as role models and sources of knowledge and organizational skills, they often resented their subordination to their tutors.<sup>17</sup> The workers' theater movement was shaped by the aspirations and behavioral codes of those workers who wanted to forge a new working-class culture, one in which skilled, educated workers could demonstrate their cultivation, respectability, and self-initiative (*samodeiatel'nost'*). Workers' theaters became symbols of the worker-intelligenty's educational and cultural development, organizational initiative, and rejection of the paternalistic efforts of the dominant classes to bring culture to them. At the same time, the workers' theaters offered a means for spreading enlightenment to the less "conscious" masses.

In some respects, the workers' theaters shared the goals of the "people's theaters" (*narodnye teatry*), special theaters for lower-class audiences that various groups had been promoting since the 1860s for the purpose of "civilizing" the masses by inculcating in them a taste for the arts and other "rational recreations" (*razumnye razvlecheniia*), wholesome entertainments intended to raise the people's cultural and moral level.<sup>18</sup> Industrialists organized theater performances and even built factory theaters to combat holiday drinking binges by drawing workers away from the taverns. State-funded temperance societies made people's theaters a key component in their program to provide the lower classes with affordable, sober entertainments. In St. Petersburg the liberal philanthropist Countess

Sofiia Panina subsidized a theater at her Ligovskii People's House (Narodnyi dom), which offered a wide range of cultural activities in addition to affordable meals and evening courses. Like the factory owners, temperance advocates, and liberal *Kulturträger*, the advocates of workers' theater also hoped to "improve" the way workers spent their leisure time and often adopted the discourse of "rational recreation," with its emphasis on edification and respectability. There was, however, a key difference. Whereas the people's theaters were envisioned primarily as a means of handing down to the masses the cultural and moral values of educated society, the workers' theaters also aimed to promote class solidarity and to signify the proletariat's cultural independence.

#### WORKERS' THEATER BEFORE 1905

Because of the severe restrictions that the government imposed on organizational activity of any kind, only a handful of workers' drama circles existed before the 1905 Revolution. Workers at St. Petersburg's Obukhov armaments factory established two theaters at the turn of the century, headed by the lathe operators Nikolai Gromov and Ivan L'vov-Belozerskii. Both men belonged to the "aristocracy" of highly skilled, well-paid worker-intellectuals. A teenage worker active in one of the troupes later described Gromov as a fastidious dresser who "even came to work at the [factory's] mine shop in patent-leather shoes." Although the workers had no professional help, L'vov-Belozerskii had previously done some acting while working at a factory in Nizhnii-Novgorod.<sup>19</sup> The troupes "mainly staged the great classics," including Aleksandr Ostrovskii's *The Forest*, *A Lucrative Job*, and *The Heart Is Not a Stone*; Anton Chekhov's *Ivanov*; and Maxim Gorky's *Philistines* and *The Lower Depths*. Tickets cost between 10 kopecks and 1 ruble, but receipts did not always cover the cost of lighting and decorations, and the actors sometimes had to make up the difference out of their own pockets. One troupe was kicked off the factory premises after it staged *The Lower Depths*, which government censors prohibited for performance before popular audiences until 1905.<sup>20</sup>

Workers were sometimes allowed to perform in the factory theaters sponsored by paternalistic industrialists. In Moscow, workers at the Prokhorov cotton mill staged several plays during the 1890s, as did workers at the Einem candy factory in 1902–3.<sup>21</sup> At the Nevskii Society for the Organization of Popular Recreations, run by a group of Petersburg factory owners, a workers' acting troupe was formed in the mid-1890s under the guidance of Evtikhii Karpov, who had been involved in the populist movement of the 1870s and later became the director of the Imperial Alexandrine Theater.<sup>22</sup> Konstantin Stanislavskii built a theater at his family's gold-thread factory in 1902, helped a group of young workers to form their own troupe, and sent actors from the Moscow Art Theater to instruct them.<sup>23</sup> Lack of financial support and artistic guidance, together with police harassment, made it difficult for most independent workers' theatrical groups to survive for very long, however. In 1903 the members of a St. Petersburg typographers' mutual aid society formed a Music and Drama Circle, but it soon evolved into a social club due to legal restrictions and the high cost of organizing entertainments.<sup>24</sup>

#### WORKERS' THEATER AFTER 1905

Independent workers' theaters began to proliferate only in the decade following the 1905 Revolution, and their growth paralleled that of the legal trade union movement during these years.<sup>25</sup> Trade unions, together with workers' cultural-educational societies (*kul'turno-prosvetitel'nye obshchestva*), were legalized on 4 March 1906. Union membership, particularly in St. Petersburg and Moscow, was predominately drawn from the ranks of the labor intelligentsia—skilled, literate, urbanized male workers with above-average wages—and only a small percentage of the industrial working class was active in such organizations.<sup>26</sup>

Union membership declined precipitously following the Stolypin "coup d'état" of 3 June 1907, which ushered in an era of repressive policy toward the labor movement. Hundreds of unions were closed or refused registration.<sup>27</sup> In the new political climate, less vulnerable forms of organization such as clubs, consumer cooperatives, cultural-educational societies, and literary-dramatic circles

came to play a vital role in keeping the labor movement alive. As the Bolshevik trade union activist Semen Kanatchikov observed,

The difficult conditions force the trade unions to limit themselves almost exclusively to cultural-educational work, and in that sphere they have displayed great energy.<sup>28</sup>

With assistance from sympathetic intellectuals, unions organized lectures, evening courses, concerts, and excursions.<sup>29</sup>

Workers' drama circles also became a significant, if relatively small, component of the legal labor movement during the period of repression that set in after 1907. Some circles were formed as independent groups with their own charters; many were affiliated with workers' clubs. The clubs sponsored a variety of cultural and educational events but often had trouble attracting large audiences, for many workers were reluctant to spend their scarce leisure hours listening to lectures. Deploring this "indifferent attitude toward clubs," one commentator noted that workers seemed to find dances, musical evenings, and recitation and singing circles more appealing than school or lecture attendance.<sup>30</sup>

One way to boost interest was by combining enlightenment with entertainment. Where lectures often drew only thirty or forty people, theater performances usually attracted several hundred.<sup>31</sup> The members of a Petersburg drama circle explained the problem:

Our oppressed masses are so downtrodden that they find lessons too boring, and are loath to attend them. The masses must first be made interested somehow, and for this reason recreations should be organized so as to arouse their interest in knowledge.<sup>32</sup>

Clubs like Source of Light and Knowledge and Enlightenment therefore founded drama circles to complement their lecture programs.<sup>33</sup> The circles were usually made up of younger workers, and they were among the few workers' organizations where women could participate on an equal footing with men, since talented actresses were always needed. The repertoires of the circles were well within the bounds of the classical literary canon, including works by Ostrovskii, Chekhov, Pushkin, and Tolstoy, as well as foreign authors such as Schiller, Shakespeare, and Ibsen.

In preparing their performances, most circles relied on the assistance of sympathetic actors and directors from the intelligentsia.

A circle that functioned with no outside help might model its performances on productions that members had seen in professional theaters. Vladimir Voronov, a young worker who participated in the Porokhovskii Literary-Dramatic Circle in St. Petersburg, recounted in his memoirs how in 1908 the group chose to stage one of Ostrovskii's plays that was then playing at the Imperial Alexandrine Theater. Finding it difficult to decide how to perform their roles, they solved the problem by emulating professional actors:

We had no director and, to tell the truth, we didn't think one was necessary. After long agonizing, searching, and arguing, we decided to go as a group to the Alexandrine Theater. We wanted to see how famous artists played our roles, to learn from them and to memorize the stage settings so that we could repeat them at home. The visit helped us. Our rehearsals became more assured, and we all tried to help one another by remembering how the Alexandrine actors performed.<sup>34</sup>

Many of the circles were linked to a faction of the Social Democratic Party (RSDRP), and some pursued political aims. Bolsheviks in particular tended to view cultural organizations as adjuncts to the political struggle and often sought to use them for fundraising and propaganda purposes. Some drama circles donated their earnings to the revolutionary underground, while others used rehearsals as a cover for holding discussions of political and social issues.<sup>35</sup> The circles were also a place to meet other workers and socialize; Voronov attended his first illegal political gathering as a result of the contacts he had made in the Porokhovskii circle.<sup>36</sup> These activities did not go unnoticed by the police, who monitored the circles carefully and were usually present at performances.

The drama circles were a vital part of a distinctive working-class subculture that began developing in the repressive political climate that set in after 1907. Together with clubs, cultural-educational societies, and consumers' cooperatives, amateur theater groups offered workers an opportunity to show that they belonged to the labor intelligentsia and take pleasure from their collective efforts at self-improvement. And the workers' theater movement, like the broader cultural-educational movement of which it was a part, was very much about self-improvement. Yet to join a club or organize a workers' theater was not only an assertion of *kul'turnost'*,

it was also a political act. These organizations often combined cultural and political activities, a combination that could lead to clashes with the authorities.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, in forming their own cultural institutions, workers saw themselves as assuming direct responsibility for their intellectual and cultural improvement, thereby overcoming their long-standing dependence on the goodwill of intelligentsia Kulturträger.

Letters and articles in the workers' press of the period attest to a growing desire to do without the tutelage of the intelligentsia, as illustrated in the following remarks by a contributor to the Menshevik journal *Nadezhda* in 1908:

Workers have shown an aspiration for learning. They have understood that the need for education, like all the other fundamental necessities of the working class, can be fully satisfied only when the workers *themselves* take matters into their own hands and create *their own* workers' enlightenment institutions, which can provide them with unfalsified [i.e., genuine] spiritual nourishment.<sup>38</sup>

Given their reliance on the intellectuals who gave lectures, conducted excursions to museums, and provided advice on staging plays, it remained difficult for workers to "take matters into their own hands" entirely. Many clubs were forced to halt their activities during the summer months, "when the entire intelligentsia leaves for their dachas."<sup>39</sup> As Victoria Bonnell observes in her study of labor organizations in St. Petersburg and Moscow during this period,

The tension between workers' aspirations for autonomy and their continuing reliance on intellectuals created a frustrating dilemma for workers and a situation of incipient conflict with their intelligentsia mentors.<sup>40</sup>

This conflict became increasingly pronounced following the massacre in April 1912 of a peaceful assembly of miners at the Lena gold mines in Siberia, an event that provoked a massive wave of strikes and demonstrations on a scale reminiscent of the 1905 Revolution. The post-1912 upsurge in union and strike activity was accompanied by a growth of interest in workers' theaters, which attracted regular coverage in *Pravda* (the workers' newspaper with by far the largest circulation).<sup>41</sup> In June 1912 *Pravda* observed that

whereas previously "the idea of creating a workers' theater expressed itself only in the organization of sporadic workers' drama circles, which ended their existence after staging two or three plays," the effort was now proceeding on "more solid ground."<sup>42</sup> A few months later the newspaper hailed the recent creation of several workers' drama circles in St. Petersburg as a sign that "workers' aspiration to independent activity [*samodeiatel'nost'*] is growing ever wider and embracing ever newer spheres." In the city's Bol'shaia Okhta District, for example, a workers' troupe organized several performances of one-act comedies and vaudevilles in 1912 and 1913.<sup>43</sup> *Uncle Vanya* and *Philistines* were staged in 1912 by workers belonging to the Stasiulevich cultural-educational society; after the society was shut down by the authorities in October of that year, the troupe continued meeting, and in December it presented Ostrovskii's *Poverty Is No Disgrace*. A group of Petersburg cultural-educational and professional organizations created a literary-artistic center in 1912 in order to "systematically" stage performances by workers.<sup>44</sup>

The increasing interest in workers' theater was not confined to St. Petersburg. In Moscow, reported *Pravda* in 1912, "there are now several different drama circles among workers. They independently learn and stage various plays."<sup>45</sup> One such circle, formed by textile workers in Moscow's Danilov district, grew out of a literary-musical evening held by members of the workers' cooperative society Solidarity in February 1912. The workers decided to organize entertainments on a more regular basis, and in March some fifteen of the "most conscious" workers met to hear a worker report on the need for a workers' theater that could stage serious plays at affordable prices. They chose a play about working class life (Sofia Belaia's *The Unemployed*), collected money to purchase a copy of it, and assigned the roles.<sup>46</sup>

Unacquainted with stage techniques, the workers were able to get advice from a peasant cooperative theater from the village of Golitsyno (in Moscow province), which had been organized in 1908 by some local intelligenty. Another problem was the reluctance of women to take part in the circle's activities; some believed that the working men merely wanted an excuse to flirt with them, while others were forbidden to go on stage by their parents. At last a complete cast was assembled, and the troupe began holding evening

rehearsals. The first performance was held on a Sunday afternoon in late May in a rented hall on the south side of Moscow; tickets were priced at 25 kopecks and up. The Danilov workers staged the play three times, and their success attracted new members to the troupe, making a total of twenty-two men and eight women. Significantly, the workers' next step was to hire an actor from one of the imperial theaters to direct their performances. Over the next few months they staged several more plays, including Gorky's *The Lower Depths*, with the goal of acquainting audiences with life in different parts of Russian society. At each performance programs were given out describing the content of the play and evaluating it from both an artistic and an ideological point of view.<sup>47</sup>

#### DEBATES OVER WORKERS' THEATER

The proliferating workers' theaters were not without their detractors, who criticized them for their low artistic level and for distracting workers from more important tasks. A contributor to a Bolshevik paper argued in early 1914 that although it was necessary to counter the harmful influence of the cheap popular theaters, amateur workers' theaters were not the answer. Lacking acting experience and unable to afford the necessary technical equipment, the worker-actors could produce only "anti-artistic images," like all inexperienced amateurs. If some of the workers did turn out to be gifted actors, they would leave the factory and become professionals. Moreover, the amateur circles would only sap the strength of the labor movement by diverting the energies of "the most cultivated, advanced workers" from organizational work. Instead of trying to create workers' theaters "of doubtful worth," cultural-educational societies should enter into agreements with the existing "good" theaters in order to obtain a supply of discounted tickets for their members, encourage those theaters to offer special matinee performances for workers, and try to exercise an influence on the choice of repertoire.<sup>48</sup>

These same criticisms were taken up a few months later by Ivan Kubikov, writing in the Menshevik paper *Nasha rabochaia gazeta*. He supported the effort to democratize art, which he defined as "raising

the cultural level of the masses" and rejecting the "vulgar theatrical tinsel" of the theaters of the temperance societies, along with the cheap boulevard press and "heartrending novels."<sup>49</sup> But the repertoires of the workers' theaters lacked "consistency," for together with the works of Gorky and Chekhov they often staged "unartistic rubbish." Instead of performing the "best" of Ostrovskii's plays, Kubikov observed, workers' troupes invariably chose the same works that had been "worn out by all Russian amateurs"—*Poverty Is No Disgrace* and *A Much Frequented Spot*. The problem was not the censorship but a lack of "independence" in the workers' choice of repertoire. And the acting of the worker-amateurs, in Kubikov's view, showed no distinction; even after the typographical workers wrested control of their drama circle from the managers and foremen, the quality of the performances showed no improvement, nor did the selection of plays.<sup>50</sup>

Kubikov called for the establishment of a permanent workers' theater in which professional actors would perform under the direction of workers' organizations, as was the case in Western Europe. He pointed out that St. Petersburg already had a theater "which heeds the voice of the workers' press and tries to take into account all advice and instruction as to repertoire"—Pavel Gaideburov's theater at the Ligovskii People's House.<sup>51</sup> There was no point in wasting six weeks in preparing a good production of *A Much Frequented Spot* when workers could see the play at Gaideburov's theater or even at the theaters of the temperance guardianship. Instead, the workers' time would be better spent learning about science and literature.

Defenders of amateur workers' theaters countered with the claim that these theaters were embryonic manifestations of a distinctly proletarian culture. The awakening proletariat, contended Dmitrii Lentsov, required "spiritual support on the path of its class aspirations," something that could not be found in the "bourgeois" theaters, and therefore needed its own "proletarian theater." Art always reflected the class outlook of its creators, and from a Marxist point of view it was simply "unacceptable" to suggest that workers should "make use of the achievements of bourgeois art." Avoiding the question of where the workers were to find a dramatic repertoire that was not "bourgeois" in its origins, Lentsov instead expressed

the hope that “the worker-artist will appear to embody the images of the future worker-dramatist.”<sup>52</sup>

Lentsov also dismissed the argument that the amateur performances drew workers away from more urgent tasks. He pointed out that, like the bourgeoisie, “the working class is not alien to diversity in its aspirations,” and it would be useless to try and force all “conscious” workers into one mold, for that would only result in “more bad agitators, orators, and organizers.” The real problem was the censorship, which kept plays dealing with the class struggle off the stage. Although a true workers’ theater was still impossible to achieve, in the meantime it was necessary to “welcome and facilitate all of the creative initiatives of self-taught workers,” which carried the seeds of the proletarian culture of the future.<sup>53</sup>

Lentsov’s views were seconded by “A. K.,” a contributor to the Bolshevik daily *Rabochii*, who claimed that “true defenders of democracy” should not oppose the workers’ theaters; instead, they should “welcome these new aspirations of the cultivated workers’ milieu.” Like the industrialists, bureaucrats, temperance activists, and other proponents of the *narodnye teatry*, “A. K.” was confident in the power of theater to transform the so-called dark masses; the only difference was that he sought to awaken their class consciousness rather than to civilize them. By successfully staging “proletarian plays with vivid proletarian types,” workers’ theater could

draw into its milieu those who, under other circumstances, would perish in the prosaic swamp of philistinism [*meshchanstvo*] and unconsciousness. The unconscious masses don’t like to attend lectures because they find them boring and often difficult to understand, but they go with pleasure to the theater, where the performance doesn’t require any special intellectual effort on the part of the spectator. The workers’ theater is an easier way to awaken the consciousness and thus prepare new cadres of conscious members of workers’ organizations.

“A. K.” was convinced that the workers’ theaters were evidence of a nascent proletarian culture. “The working class,” he proclaimed, “is now already strong enough to oppose the philistine morality and lachrymose homilies of the bourgeois theater with its own proletarian ideals—of this there can be no doubt.”<sup>54</sup> The struggle for culture

thus came to be seen as an extension of the political and economic struggle, at least in the pages of *Pravda* and other socialist dailies.

### THE REPERTOIRE OF WORKERS' THEATERS

Despite the radical rhetoric about a new proletarian theater, the repertoires of the workers' theaters were actually quite conservative. They mainly staged classics or contemporary plays by writers with established reputations. The works by Ostrovskii, Pushkin, Tolstoy, Gogol, Chekhov, Gorky, and the German writer Gerhart Hauptmann that the workers' theaters favored were staple fare in all Russian theaters; they constituted the backbone of the conventional Russian stage repertoire. Although workers and their supporters paid lip service to the idea that a purely proletarian culture with its own dramatic literature was in the making, they appear to have been far more concerned with taking the established high culture into their own hands and making it their own.

When a Petersburg drama circle chose a repertoire for its first season in 1912, it claimed to have been guided by the principle that "plays should be completely ideological, lifelike, and close to the understanding of the workers; theater should facilitate the cultural self-determination of the working masses."<sup>55</sup> Although most of the plays selected dealt with the plight of the oppressed, the corruption of the powerful, or generational conflict, the repertoire was still quite conventional: Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, Hauptmann's *Das Friedensfest*, Viktor Ryshkov's *The First Swallow*, Gorky's *The Lower Depths* and *Philistines*, Sergei Naidenov's *Vaniushin's Children*, Gogol's *The Government Inspector*, and Ostrovskii's *Poverty Is No Disgrace*, *The Forest*, and *No Wit Is Exempt from Foolishness*. These plays were typical of the repertoires of most workers' theaters, yet they were also commonly performed in imperial and commercial theaters in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and the provinces.

In what sense, then, could such plays be considered "ideological"? Worker-actors could of course ad-lib, making slight alterations in the text in order to draw attention to elements of class conflict in a play. For example, in a 1907 performance of *Poverty Is No Disgrace* by a group of Obukhov workers, Konstantin Skorobogatov played

Liubim Tortsov, a good-hearted drunkard who saves his niece from his brother's plan to marry her to a rich suitor, freeing her to marry her true love, a poor clerk. Skorobogatov later recalled how when he spoke the lines, "I'm not a factory owner, I haven't robbed the poor," the working class audience responded noisily and someone shouted out—"That's right, beat the rascals!"<sup>56</sup> *The Forest and Poverty Is No Disgrace* were famous for their satirical portraits of wealthy people who abuse the poor; they contain rich material for interpretations emphasizing social conflict. In the 1890s, a number of workers surveyed in St. Petersburg and Riazan who had seen works by Ostrovskii at theaters sponsored by factory owners and temperance societies stated that they particularly liked the plays for similar reasons. A Riazan worker referring specifically to *The Forest and Poverty Is No Disgrace* wrote: "They vividly portray people with pure and elevated souls, who struggle with petty dirty people who are sometimes powerful but corrupt."<sup>57</sup>

*The First Swallow*, written by the prolific and now forgotten V. A. Ryshkov, whose plays on topical issues were popular in the early twentieth century, examines the pernicious effects of the penetration of capitalism into rural Russia.<sup>58</sup> *Uncle Vanya*, of course, depicts the various conflicts among members of an intelligentsia family in the 1890s; it may have been chosen for presentation as a commentary on the bleakness of the years of reaction and the helplessness of the intelligentsia. Reviewing a performance of *Uncle Vanya* by the Stasiulevich Society drama circle, a worker explained:

In this play, as in a mirror, is reflected the life of people in the 1880s and 1890s, when everything living was crushed. In the play we see not one positive character who would struggle with this spiritual stagnation.<sup>59</sup>

*The Lower Depths*, which premiered at the Moscow Art Theater, became an overnight sensation due to its somber, naturalistic depiction of life in a Moscow flophouse; it was widely regarded as both an indictment of social injustice and a paean to man's capacity for self-liberation.<sup>60</sup> The play's revolutionary cachet was enhanced by the fact that until 1905 it had been prohibited for performance before popular audiences. Gorky's *Philistines* is an outright attack on the depravity of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie is represented by the family Bessemenov (the name means "familyless" or "seedless"), to

which is contrasted the new worker-hero in the character of Nil, who is committed to the class struggle and, incidentally, is involved in staging plays for workers. *Vaniushin's Children*, by a member of Gorky's Znanie group, is a "progressive" play about decadence and generational conflict within the contemporary merchant class; it was widely performed throughout Russia in the first decade of the century. *The Government Inspector* and *No Wit Is Exempt from Foolishness* are Russia's most famous and scathing satires of official corruption and remain topical even today. True, these plays offered workers a wealth of material for attacking both the existing order and the "powers that be," yet they were also very much a part of contemporary mainstream culture.

#### WORKERS' THEATER AS AN ALTERNATIVE CULTURE

The workers' theaters were, in effect, the embodiment of the aspirations of the self-styled labor intelligentsia for an alternative culture, one that would uphold the old nineteenth-century canon of socially critical, realistic art (a canon that had been coming under attack from the modernist camp since the turn of the century). Of course, the precarious status of working-class organizations in imperial Russia and the extremely low levels of participation in them prevented the emergence of the sort of well-developed network of cultural institutions that characterized the German Social Democratic labor movement.<sup>61</sup> Yet there was clearly a strong desire within the ranks of a minority of skilled, educated, urbanized workers to create for themselves such an alternative culture, and these worker-intelligently perceived the workers' theaters as an important step toward the realization of this goal.

Discussing a St. Petersburg workers' theater's production of Aleksei Pisemskii's *A Bitter Fate*, a mid-nineteenth-century drama about serfdom, the reviewer exultantly hailed the performance as a sign that workers were beginning to achieve independence in the cultural sphere commensurate with their independence in politics and trade unions:

Soon there will be the [workers'] own theater, and many of their own worker-artists and singers, who are now successfully being

cultivated in several societies. There will be musicians, worker dramatists, worker decorators and painters. Soon there will be workers' drama, comedy, and even opera, however difficult the latter undertaking may be. Then workers will have no reason to be drawn to the bourgeois theater, where they can only very rarely find wholesome artistic pleasure, from which they might also derive a beneficial lesson.<sup>62</sup>

Workers' theater was envisioned as both an alternative to the commercial amusement parks, theaters, and cinemas that attracted the ostensibly backward masses of "unconscious" workers with their melodramas, spectaculars, operettas, and can-cans, and an alternative to the symbolist and modernist tendencies of the upscale theaters. In 1913, using language that, apart from its class terminology, strikingly resembles the fulminations of generations of intelligentsia critics of the pernicious influence of Petrushka and the fairground showbooths on the people, a worker explained the importance of an alternative workers' theater:

It is impossible to deny the serious and extremely harmful influence of the cheap theater and cinema on the proletariat's psyche. Through them, the vulgarity [*poshlost'*] that the bourgeoisie throws out to the outskirts [of the city] under the guise of "art" enters into the life of the workers.

Organized workers are faced with the question of how to oppose this vulgarity. It is clear that here we cannot limit ourselves to angry talk about the harm of bourgeois influences. As convincing as that talk may be, it is not able to quench the workers' thirst for spectacles and theater. It is necessary to satisfy that thirst for aesthetic sensations without the sort of theaters and cinemas that are now located at the [city's] outskirts; it is necessary to found our own workers' theater.<sup>63</sup>

In other words, workers' theater was to be a bulwark against the contaminating influence of the popular commercial culture that labor activists feared would undermine the morals of the working class and divert it from the path to self-improvement.<sup>64</sup>

The workers' theaters were also an alternative to the theaters and other entertainments sponsored by factory owners and temperance societies. "Just as the recreations formerly organized by the

bourgeoisie in cooperation with the bureaucracy were crude and reckoned on the bad taste and absence of aesthetics among the workers," wrote the Bolshevik worker Dmitrii Rodnov, "so now is the artistic recreation of the workers, organized by themselves, both artistic and attractive."<sup>65</sup> The St. Petersburg People's House, a state-subsidized cultural center which staged affordably priced plays, operas, and variety shows as part of its efforts to promote sober recreations among the working classes, was a favorite target for outbursts of indignation by the labor intelligentsia. In a letter to a Bolshevik daily, a young worker described one of the theaters of the People's House:

The acrobats, gymnasts, clowns, etc., give no pleasure to the worker's soul, but on the contrary, develop coarse instincts in him. The music thunders, vulgar jokes are heard, the air in the enormous hall grows stale because of insufficient ventilation—these are all the amusements available to the people. It is not surprising that the backward [*nerazvoityi*] worker hurries to the tavern to wash away his inadequacies with alcohol.<sup>66</sup>

The solution, the young worker concluded, was for workers to join unions and educational societies and to organize their own performances in order to "find rest and receive an answer to their aspirations for light."<sup>67</sup> Another worker condemned the People's House for playing "polkas, marches, and utterly worn out waltzes that can be heard on the phonograph in any tearoom or pub." The theater's atmosphere and repertoire, he protested, "not only do not ennoble audiences, they vulgarize and corrupt them."<sup>68</sup>

Reviews of the performances by workers' drama circles often drew attention to the sense of solidarity they fostered due to the bonds of class linking actors and audience. In its account of a performance of *A Bitter Fate* by Moscow workers in 1916, the journal of the Printers' Union described it as "a closed circle of workers, united by their love for art and brought together by Pisemskii's drama."<sup>69</sup> The reviewer added that it was impossible to separate the stage from the hall, for the performance was a communion of actors and spectators.

Seldom did the partisans of workers' theater attempt to argue that the performances were of high quality. Instead, they emphasized the sympathy of audiences for their fellow workers. Responding to

the suggestion that inexperienced actors would only arouse smiles at the most tragic moments, one worker countered that “a spectator who has a conscious attitude toward the performance of the worker-actor will forgive him his blunders and fill in the gaps with his personal imagination.”<sup>70</sup> But not all workers were so tolerant of poor acting, regardless of its class origins. Describing a performance of Gogol’s *Marriage* by members of the Khamovniki Consumers’ Society, a Moscow worker complained that the actors barely knew their lines, used improper diction, and displayed an indifferent attitude toward art.<sup>71</sup>

To be sure, many performances were painfully amateurish. Even sympathetic reviewers often admitted that workers had trouble portraying characters from other social groups. Still, it was not the skill displayed in the performances but the fact that they were created by workers and for workers that seems to have mattered most. For both actors and audiences, the performances were an affirmation of their identity as cultivated people who appreciated drama.

Nevertheless, there were tensions between the proponents of a political theater and those who saw workers’ theaters primarily as a means of acquainting the working masses with a culture hitherto reserved for the privileged classes. One Petersburg troupe even split over this issue. In 1913 a group of workers founded the Workers’ Theater and invited Pavel Sazonov, an actor from the Gaideburov theater, to direct performances. During the 1913-14 season the troupe staged performances of works by Gorky, Hauptmann, Ostrovskii, Tolstoy, Pisemskii, and others, earning favorable reviews in the labor press. In the spring of 1914, however, a conflict broke out within the troupe over its ideological orientation. One group, led by Sazonov, defined itself as a partisan of “pure, nontendentious, classless, sacred art,” while a minority saw in art “the manifestation of real life [and] the influence of class domination.”<sup>72</sup> In a declaration of secession, the minority faction argued that the troupe had exhibited an “unconscious attitude” and had failed to understand the purpose of a workers’ theater, “having set itself on the path of merely entertaining workers.”<sup>73</sup>

The immediate cause of the split was a disagreement not over repertoire, but over the troupe’s decision to invite liberal literary critics to give pre-performance lectures on Hauptmann and Saltykov-Shchedrin. In the view of the minority, the critics had failed to present

their subjects from a class point of view; for instance, the lecture on Hauptmann had made no reference to the radical social content of the German playwright's work. The minority faction decided to form a separate troupe that would use the stage to "illuminate the class position of the working masses and show the way out of that position."<sup>74</sup> The breakaway Workers' Theater was soon shut down by the Okhrana, and some of the members sentenced to administrative exile, but the troupe managed to continue staging performances around St. Petersburg.<sup>75</sup> One of its members, Aleksei Mashirov, later played a key role in the creation of Proletkul't in 1917 and, under the pseudonym Samobytnik, became a well-known "proletarian poet" in the 1920s.<sup>76</sup>

#### TENSIONS BETWEEN WORKERS AND INTELLIGENTSIA

Another source of potential discord was the frequent reliance of the workers' troupes on the intelligentsia for advice and assistance in putting together their productions. Some workers were anxious to avoid appearing dependent on intelligentsia. For example, a 1913 article that called on Petersburg cultural-educational societies to form a united workers' theater, while acknowledging that "to form a workers' troupe . . . is not an easy business and initially requires the help of experienced persons [i.e., professional actors from the intelligentsia]," cautioned that "ideological leadership, which is primarily expressed in the choice of repertoire, should be in the hands of the workers' organizations."<sup>77</sup>

Few workers' theaters were able to function without outside assistance. Actors from the Moscow Art Theater (among them the young Evgenii Vakhtangov) gave acting lessons at the Prechistenskie Workers' Courses; they organized a troupe of about twenty workers who met twice a week to rehearse adaptations of stories by Chekhov, Turgenev, Vladimir Korolenko, and Gorky, as well as vaudevilles and light comic skits.<sup>78</sup> The actress Anna Brenko later supervised the troupe and opened a free drama school for some twenty-five workers. The workers staged several plays by Ostrovskii and in August 1915 opened their own Workers' Theater with a performance of Ostrovskii's *Storm*, which was praised by one theater journal as remi-

niscent of "the graduation show of a 'real' drama studio."<sup>79</sup> During the civil war the theater performed before units of the Red Army, and a number of Brenko's students went on to become professional actors.<sup>80</sup>

Workers also got valuable assistance from the Section for Assisting the Organization of Factory and Village Theaters, created under the auspices of the Moscow branch of the Imperial Russian Technical Society in 1911. The Section was composed of various theater figures, writers, artists, and other liberal intellectuals interested in fostering an appreciation for drama among the common people. It provided factory and village theaters with plays, scenery, costumes, and artistic guidance at a low cost; organized exhibits and lectures; and conducted drama courses. A number of workers' drama circles in Moscow got vital support from the Section, including the aforementioned Danilov workers. A group of workers who attended the Section's courses formed an amateur troupe, under the direction of the Moscow Art Theater actor Dmitrii Tolbuzin, which performed in factories in Moscow and the neighboring provinces.<sup>81</sup>

In 1912 the Section reorganized itself and became a division of the Moscow Society of People's Universities. Although most trade unions, cultural-educational societies, and socialist newspapers were suppressed at the outbreak of war in 1914, the Section, as well as many workers' theater groups, continued to function as before. Together with the Imperial Russian Theatrical Society, it initiated an All-Russian Congress of People's Theater Activists to discuss ways to further the establishment of theaters for lower-class audiences. Some 365 activists took part in the congress, which opened in Moscow in late 1915, including many prominent theater people who had long been involved in the organization of people's theaters, as well as representatives of workers' and peasants' theater groups.

The congress brought to a head the tensions within the workers' theater movement between workers and their intelligentsia mentors. The main dispute centered around the definition of a people's theater. The liberal intellectuals conceived of people's theaters as primarily cultural institutions, while the workers at the congress wanted to emphasize their class character and political significance. The intelligentsia activists took a traditional liberal *Kulturträger* view of the people's theater and held that it should be chiefly a means to democratize art by making it accessible to the common people. In the reso-

lutions presented by the Committee on Repertoire, a people's theater was initially defined as "a democratized theater, having art as its foundation."<sup>82</sup> The "democratic workers' group" rejected this formulation, arguing that it stood for "art for art's sake" and neglected the social and ideological functions of theater. After prolonged debate, the workers succeeded in substituting a resolution stating that people's theater, possessing a "self-sufficient artistic-aesthetic value," was at the same time a means of influencing the masses' "ideological outlook, independence and organization."<sup>83</sup>

The workers' group also objected to any emphasis on a play's "artistic value" as the fundamental criterion for determining repertoire, claiming that a play's "ideological content" was of equal importance.<sup>84</sup> Significantly, the workers wanted the congress to recognize that control over repertoire should be in the hands of "local democratic organizations, meaning trade unions, cooperatives, and cultural-educational societies composed of workers or peasants."<sup>85</sup> This proposal, which challenged the intelligentsia's claim to cultural leadership (and foreshadowed subsequent struggles in post-revolutionary Russia over who would control Proletkul't organizations), failed to win approval due to heated objections from other delegates, one of whom accused the workers of attempting to "oppress the intelligentsia [*sdelat' davlenie na intelligentsiiu*]."<sup>86</sup>

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The prerevolutionary workers' theater movement reflected the diverse and sometimes conflicting aspirations of those workers who sought to create their own cultural institutions. For some, workers' theater was first and foremost a weapon of propaganda and political struggle, while others saw it primarily as a way to acquaint workers with elite culture. Viewed in the context of the workers' theaters, "proletarian culture" meant different things to different people. In its most basic sense, it was simply the opportunity for workers to organize and stage theater performances independently. The performances might aim to raise class consciousness and promote proletarian solidarity, but the heart of the matter was that workers enjoyed staging plays because theater was an important part of the elite culture they hoped to make their own. At the grassroots level, proletarian culture sometimes had a radical political and social sig-

nificance, but its form was conservative, for the workers' theaters tended to accept mainstream cultural standards even as they challenged the exclusion of the working class from the mainstream of Russian cultural life. After the October Revolution this cultural conservatism, together with a strong desire for organizational autonomy, would often bring workers into conflict with Proletkul't activists, who tried to impose their more utopian vision of proletarian culture as a complete break with the past.<sup>87</sup>

Although the workers' theaters attempted to emulate the established high culture rather than to do away with it, this does not necessarily mean that in staging ("bourgeois") plays from the conventional repertoires of theaters attended by the privileged classes, workers subjected themselves to the "hegemony" of the dominant culture that produced the texts. In theater, texts acquire meaning only in performance, and it is the use to which a text is put that determines its significance and value for performers and audiences. The consumption of cultural products is itself a creative process that produces meaning, and many of the plays that were so popular among workers' theater groups offered them a readily accessible source of meanings that could be used to oppose the social order that subordinated them.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, much of Russian artistic culture was highly critical of the sociopolitical structure of autocracy, and art had long been viewed as a weapon in the struggle against the existing system.<sup>89</sup> In staging classic and contemporary plays about social issues and generational conflict, workers "made do" with what was available to them, and there was a good deal.<sup>90</sup>

The workers' theaters produced neither a corpus of proletarian dramatic literature nor a distinctively proletarian aesthetic of performance.<sup>91</sup> Not even their most fervent exponents made such a claim. Instead, they argued that the workers' theaters were preparing the ground for the proletarian culture that would someday flower under socialism. From this standpoint, amateur performances by workers were a sign of their aspiration for art and their power to create it for themselves. Even if there was no proletarian drama, there were proletarian theaters; in making theater, workers could lay claim to artistic creation. As Kleinbort pointed out in his 1913 article, "The Workers' Intelligentsia and Art," theater was the most accessible of all art forms to workers with no formal preparation.<sup>92</sup>

Finally, in performing and attending performances in their own theaters, workers implicitly rejected the passive role assigned to them by the proponents of "rational recreations" meant to "civilize" the common people from above. The labor press may at times have employed the discourse of "rational recreations," but it was nonetheless the workers' troupes that selected the plays they staged, whether they chose them for their ideological, political, or simply their entertainment value. And if they got help and advice from the intelligentsia, it was still the worker amateurs who performed on the stage. Though never completely autonomous, workers' theater was above all *samodeiatel'nost'*—doing it for yourself.

#### NOTES

1. For a recent examination of the ideological origins of Proletkul't, see Zenovia Sochor, *Revolution and Culture: The Bogdanov-Lenin Controversy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 3–77. Lynn Mally briefly discusses the influence of the workers' cultural and educational movement on the origins of Proletkul't in her book, *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 14–17.
2. A. A. Bogdanov, *Kul'turnye zadachi nashogo vremeni* (Moscow: F. Ia. Burche, 1911). For a summary of the views of Bogdanov and the Vpered group on proletarian culture, see John Biggart, "Anti-Leninist Bolshevism: The Forward Group of the RSDRP," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 23, 2 (June 1981): 146–50. See also Jutta Scherrer's contribution to the present volume.
3. See, for example, the Menshevik Aleksandr Potresov's critique of efforts to develop a proletarian culture under capitalism, "O literature bez zhizni i o zhizni bez literatury: Tragediia proletarskoi literatury," *Nasha zaria*, no. 6 (1913): 65–75; the article provoked an extensive debate in 1913 and 1914. Potresov's arguments and the responses they elicited in Social Democratic circles are discussed in V. L. L'vov-Rogachevskii, *Ocherki proletarskoi literatury* (Moscow: Moskovskoe aktsionerhoe izdatel'skoe obshchestvo, 1927), pp. 47–51.
4. A. K., "O rabochem teatre," *Rabochii*, 23 June 1914.
5. A. P-v., "Rabochii teatr v Peterburge," *Pravda*, 24 June 1912. The repertoire announced for the theater's first season included Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, Gorky's *The Lower Depths* and *Philistines*, Gogol's *Government Inspector*, and four works by Ostrovskii.

6. See E. Anthony Swift, "Fighting the Germs of Disorder: The Censorship of Russian Popular Theater, 1888–1917," *Russian History* 18, 1 (Spring 1991): 149.
7. "Rabochii teatr," *Pravda*, 30 May 1913.
8. V. Iu. Krupianskaia, "Narodnaia drama *Lodka*, ee genezis i literaturnaia istoriia," *Kratkie soobshcheniia instituta etnografii Akademii nauk SSSR*, no. 3 (1947): 71. N. E. Onchukov, "Narodnaia drama na Severe," *Izvestiia otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti imperatorskoi Akademii nauk* 14, book 4 (1909): 218.
9. One of the best-known and most widespread of all Russian folk dramas, *Tsar' Maksimilian* had many variants, but all of them center on a religious conflict between the pagan Maximilian and his son Adolf, who is executed because he refuses to honor his father's gods. N. I. Savushkina lists over seventy recorded versions of the play in her recent study of Russian folk drama, *Russkaia narodnaia drama* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1988), pp. 214–19.
10. N. A. Popov, "Zriteli i teatr"; unpublished manuscript, n.d., TsGALI, f. 837, op. 2, d. 120, kniga 1, ll. 46–52.
11. N. A. Popov, "O repertuare narodnogo teatra," in *Narodnyi teatr. Sbornik*, ed. E. V. Lavrova and N. A. Popov (Moscow: A. I. Snegirevaia, 1896), p. 243.
12. Cited in A. M. Konechnyi, "Obshchestvennye razvlecheniia i gorodskie zrelishcha v Tsarskom Sele (XVIII-nachalo XX v.)," in *Etnografiia Peterburga-Leningrada. Materialy ezhegodnykh nauchnykh chtenii*, no. 2, ed. N. V. Iukhneva (Leningrad: Nauka, 1988), p. 18.
13. I. Orlovskiaia, "K voprosu o borbe s al'kogolizmom," RGIA, f. 1288, op. 14, 1915, d. 153, l. 67.
14. P. M. Shestakov, *Rabochie na manufakture T-va "Emil' Tsindel'" v Moskve* (Moscow, 1900), pp. 72–73. Shestakov makes no mention of either the folk dramas or the performances of literary plays that the factory administration began sponsoring in 1894 (see *Teatral*, no. 4 [January 1895]: 98; Popov, "Zriteli," ll. 41–42, 46).
15. [S. I. Kanatchikov], *A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia: The Autobiography of Semën Ivanovich Kanatchikov*, trans. and ed. Reginald E. Zelnik (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), p. 93; Rose L. Glickman, *Russian Factory Women: Workplace and Society, 1880–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 198–208, 215–18.
16. Kanatchikov, *Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia*, p. 102.
17. Reginald E. Zelnik, "Russian Bebels: An Introduction to the Memoirs of Semen Kanatchikov and Matvei Fisher," part 2, *Russian Review* 35, 4 (October 1976): 422–43; Allan Wildman, *The Making of a Workers' Revolution: Russian Social-Democracy, 1891–1903* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 89–96; Tim McDaniel, *Autocracy, Capitalism, and Revolution in Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 208–12.

18. On the people's theaters, see G. A. Khaichenko, *Russkii narodnyi teatr kontsa XIX-nachala XX veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975); Gary Thurston, "The Impact of Russian Popular Theater, 1886–1915," *Journal of Modern History* 55, 2 (June 1983): 237–67; E. Anthony Swift, "Theater for the People: The Politics of Popular Culture in Urban Russia, 1861–1917," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1992. The term "rational recreation" may have come to Russia from England, where it was widely used in the nineteenth century to describe middle-class attempts to reform the working classes by altering their use of leisure. See Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830–1885* (London: Routledge, 1987), and Chris Ward, *British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture, 1884–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).
19. K. V. Skorobogatov, *Zhizn' i stsena* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1970), p. 50. Skorobogatov, a second-generation worker, was also educated and skilled; at the time of his participation in the workers' troupes he was working in the factory laboratory doing analyses of steel.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 50–52.
21. *Artist* no. 37 (May 1894): 235; *Teatr i iskusstvo*, no. 51 (19 December 1899): 928–29; RGIA, f. 776, op. 25, d. 624, l. 76.
22. Evtikhii Karpov: "Iz avtobiografii E. P. Karpova," *Teatr i iskusstvo*, no. 3 (20 January 1908): 59, and "Vospominaniia i moia zhizn'," unpublished manuscript, n.d., OR RNB, f. 106, d. 163.
23. N. Laman, "Fabrichnyi teatr v Moskve," *Khudozhestvennaia samodeiatel'nost'*, no. 1 (1963): 30–33; GARF, f. 7952, op. 3, d. 573, ll. 137–40.
24. Mark Steinberg, *Moral Communities: The Culture of Class Relations in the Russian Printing Industry, 1867–1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 100.
25. On workers' organizations prior to 1905, see Victoria Bonnell, *Roots of Rebellion: Workers' Politics and Organizations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1900–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 73–103.
26. Bonnell, pp. 210–21; Robert B. McKean, *St. Petersburg between the Revolutions: Workers and Revolutionaries, June 1907–February 1917* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 78–79; I. D. Levin, "Rabochie kluby v Peterburge (1907–1914 gg.)," part 1, in *Materialy po istorii professional'nogo dvizheniia v Rossii*, vol. 3 (Moscow: VTsSPS, 1925), pp. 99–107.
27. I. M. Pushkareva, *Rabochee dvizhenie v Rossii v period reaktsii, 1907–1910 gg.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1989), p. 90.
28. S. I. Kanatchikov, "Kul'turno-prosvetitel'naia deiatel'nost' v peterburgskikh professional'nykh soiuzakh," *Vozrozhdenie*, nos. 5–6 (April 1909): 51.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 51–52; Bonnell, pp. 261–62.
30. M. Leont'ev, "Obshchestva samoobrazovaniia v 1910 g.," *Nash put'*, no. 12 (14 January 1911): 10–11. Such complaints were common; referring to a lack

of interest in lectures among the workers of St. Petersburg's Vyborg District, one worker noted the workers' "almost total absence of any aspiration . . . to acquaint themselves with contemporary scientific thought, to dispel their intellectual darkness with [science's] life-giving rays and in general to break out of a condition of nearly primitive savagery" (Batrak, "Uchen'e-svet," *Nash put'*, no. 9 [7 November 1910]: 8).

31. Levin, "Rabochie kluby," part 2, in *Materialy po istorii professional'nogo dvizheniia v Rossii*, vol. 4 (Moscow: VTSPS, 1925), p. 217.
32. "Zaiavlenie Porokhovskogo Literaturno-Dramaticheskogo Kruzhka," in *Trudy pervogo vserossiiskogo s'ezda deiatelei narodnogo teatra v Moskve, 27 dekabria–5 ianvaria 1916* (Petrograd: Tipografliia L. Ia. Ganzburga, 1919), p. 133. The report is referring to the circle's conclusions based on seven years of experience organizing theater performances since 1908.
33. Levin, "Rabochie kluby," part 2, p. 217.
34. V. I. Voronov, *Put' k stsene* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1958), pp. 61–62.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 108; A. M. Filippov, "Revoliutsionnoe gnezdo," *Sud idet*, no. 4(68) (February 1927): 193–94; Boris Roslavlev, "Rabochii teatr: Iz vospominanii o zhizni rabochikh teatral'n. kruzhkov do revoliutsii," *Rabochii teatr*, no. 25 (23 June 1925): 4.
36. Voronov, p. 69.
37. T. V. Sapronov, *Iz istorii rabocheho dvizheniia (po lichnym vospominaniiam)* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1925), pp. 13–14, 16, 19–24, 50–51, 59; G. A. Arutiunov, *Rabochee dvizhenie v Rossii v period novogo revoliutsionnogo pod'ema, 1910–1914 gg.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), pp. 102–5.
38. V. L., "O kul'turno-prosvetitel'noi deiatel'nosti," *Nadezhda*, no. 1 (31 July 1908): 2 (as cited in Bonnell, p. 333; emphasis in original).
39. Kanatchikov, "Kul'turno-prosvetitel'naia deiatel'nost'," p. 55.
40. Bonnell, pp. 333–34.
41. *Pravda* and its successors were published from April 1912 to July 1914. A Menshevik daily, *Luch*, was published under various titles from September 1912 to January 1914. Both papers focused on practical issues of general interest and succeeded in attracting a relatively large working-class readership that was not limited to members of the two factions. *Pravda* had a circulation of 30,000–60,000, while *Luch's* fluctuated between 5,000 and 17,000 (McKean, pp. 149–50). However, as McKean has convincingly argued (p. 152), the bedrock readership for the socialist press was the worker-intelligentsia, "the small stratum of skilled male operatives in both factories and artisanal establishments who sought to widen their mental horizons beyond the level of minimum literacy and popular fiction." This is also the stratum that was most active in the workers' theater movement.
42. A. P-v., "Rabochii teatr v Peterburge."
43. "Teatr," *Pravda*, 13 November 1912; "Spektakl' rabochikh," *ibid.*, 3 April 1913.

44. Rabochii B. I-v., "Rabochii spektakl'," *ibid.*, 21 September 1912; Khaichenko, p. 212; A. P-v., "Rabochii teatr"; L. Kleinbort, "Rabochoiaia intelligentsiia i iskusstvo," *Vestnik Evropy* 48 (August 1913): 222–23.
45. N. Sh., "Dramaticheskie kruzheniia rabochikh," *Pravda*, 28 October 1912.
46. L. M. Kleinbort, *Ocherki rabochei intelligentsii*, vol. 2 (Petrograd: Nachatki znaniia, 1923), pp. 48–49.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50, N. Sh., "Dramaticheskie kruzheniia"; "Rabochie spektakli," *Pravda*, 19 January 1913.
48. A. T., "Rabochii teatr: Rabochie i iskusstvo," *Za pravdu*, 3 November 1913.
49. Ivan Kubikov, "Rabochii teatr," part 1, *Nasha rabochaia gazeta*, 9 May 1914.
50. *Ibid.*, part 2, *Nasha rabochaia gazeta*, 10 May 1914.
51. *Ibid.*, part 3, *Nasha rabochaia gazeta*, 22 May 1914. The Gaideburov theater, opened in 1903 at a People's House sponsored by Countess Sofia Panina, aimed to serve the Petersburg working-class population by staging literary plays at affordable prices. It generally got high marks in the theatrical press and was often mentioned favorably in the SD press.
52. D. Lentsov, "Rabochii teatr," *Put' pravdy*, 20 April 1914. The author signed himself "rabochii D. Lentsov."
53. *Ibid.*
54. A. K., "O rabochem teatre."
55. A. P-v., "Rabochii teatr"; Kleinbort, "Rabochoiaia intelligentsiia i iskusstvo," pp. 222–23.
56. Skorobogatov, p. 81. The actual lines are: "I'm not Korshunov [the rich merchant about to marry Liubim Tortsov's niece], I haven't robbed the poor" (Act 3, Scene 12). It is impossible to know, of course, whether Skorobogatov actually substituted "factory owner" for "Korshunov" in his performance, or whether he simply embellished the story in his memoir; in either version, the lines retain their power as a denunciation of the rich, powerful, and corrupt.
57. "Doklad ob otvetakh posetitelei gulianii i teatra Riazanskogo obshchestva narodnykh razvlechenii"; unpublished manuscript, 1899, OR RGB, f. 358, karton 11, d. 4, l. 12. Responses to a survey of Petersburg workers were published in Nikolai Mikhailovskii, "Literatura i zhizn'," *Russkoe bogatstvo*, no. 6 (1895), sect. 2: 55–60.
58. The play was performed at the Imperial Mal'yi Theater in Moscow in 1904–5, and at St. Petersburg's Suvorin Theater in 1905.
59. Rabochii B. I-v., "Rabochii spektakl'."
60. On the reception of *The Lower Depths* by contemporary audiences, see I. F. Petrovskaia, *Teatr i zritel' rossiiskikh stolits, 1895–1917* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1990), pp. 144–45.

61. See Vernon Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
62. Obodriaiushchii, "'Gor'kaia sud'bina' Pisemskogo v Rabochem teatre," *Rabochii*, 25 May 1914.
63. Iv. Petrovich, "O rabochem teatre," *Za pravdu*, 3 November 1913.
64. Pinkerton novels, the boulevard press, cinema, and even the phonograph were blamed for luring workers away from union activities. The journal of the Petersburg Metalworkers' Union sadly observed in 1910 that the Pinkerton novels "have been able to acquire a thousand times more readers than our workers' journals and brochures"; the journal even published an account of the Pinkerton agency's anti-union activities in America in an attempt to undermine the novels' appeal (*Nash put'*, no. 3 [25 June 1910]: 3–7). On the hostility of trade union activists to the boulevard press, see Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861–1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 137, 330–32.
65. Dmitrii Rodnov, "Razvlecheniia rabochikh," *Pravda*, 25 May 1912.
66. Molodoi rabochii, "Razvlecheniia dlia naroda: Narodnyi dom," *Za pravdu*, 3 November 1913.
67. *Ibid.*
68. V. Slob, "Chem vospityvat' narod: Pis'mo k redaktsii," *Pravda*, 25 January 1913.
69. Goriun, "Teatr rabochikh," *Naborshchik i pechatnyi mir*, no. 201 (September 1916): 20–52.
70. Lentsov.
71. Dorogomilovskii rabochii, "Spektakl' rabochikh," *Ob"edinenie*, no.3 (24 February 1915): 15.
72. "O raskole v 'Rabochem teatre'," *Put' pravdy*, 27 April 1914.
73. *Ibid.*, 18 April 1914.
74. *Ibid.*, 27 April 1914.
75. A. I. Mashirov-Samobytnik, "Kak my nachinali: Vospominaniia," in *Zabytym byt' ne mozhet* (Moscow: Izvestiia, 1963), p. 113.
76. On Mashirov's role in the founding of Proletkul't, see Mally, pp. 100–101.
77. Petrovich.
78. A. D. Dikii, "Narodnye talanty," in *Prechistenskie rabochie kursy: Pervyi rabochii universitet v Moskve* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1948), p. 187. These evening courses, established by the Moscow branch of the Imperial Russian Technical Society in 1897, offered workers instruction in a wide variety of subjects.
79. A. M., "A. A. Brenko i 'Rabochii teatr'," *Rampa i zhizn'*, no. 37 (13 September 1915): 11.
80. Khaichenko, p. 233.

81. On the Section's many activities, see Otdel sodeistviia ustroistvu fabrichnykh i derevenskikh teatrov pri Moskovskom otdelenii Imperatorskogo Russkogo tekhnicheskogo obshchestva, *Otchet deiatel'nosti Otdela za vremia ot 11 maia 1911 g. po 11 maia 1912 g.* (Moscow: Tipografiia T-va I. D. Sytina, 1912).
82. *Trudy pervogo vserossiiskogo s"ezda deiatelei narodnogo teatra*, p. 345.
83. *Ibid.*, pp. 347–54.
84. *Ibid.*, pp. 354–57.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 375.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 376.
87. See Mally; see also Gabriele Gorzka, *Arbeiterkultur in der Sowjetunion. Industriearbeiter-Klubs 1917–1929: Ein Beitrag zur sowjetischen Kulturgeschichte* (Berlin: Arno Spitz, 1990).
88. On consumption as a creative process in which culture consumers negotiate the uses and meanings of cultural products, see John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), and Paul Willis, *Common Culture* (Buckingham, England: Open University Press, 1990).
89. Brooks (p. 318) makes the same point in describing "culturism," or "the cultural idea of national identity," among the Russian intelligentsia.
90. The concept of "making do"—that is, the adaptation and manipulation of imposed cultural systems by subordinate groups—is borrowed from Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 29–42. Although Certeau's focus is on the culture of everyday life, the concept is equally applicable to artistic cultural forms.
91. According to Kleinbort, a handful of plays were written by working-class authors, but they were staged in workers' theaters only rarely, if at all; he mentions only one such performance, in Moscow, but does not indicate whether it was by a workers' troupe (L. M. Kleinbort, *Ocherki narodnoi literatury [1880–1925 gg.]* [Leningrad: Seiatel', 1924], p. 287). Censorship restrictions may have been responsible for keeping these plays off the stage.
92. Kleinbort, "Rabochaia intelligentsiia i iskusstvo," p. 222.

## **WHEN THE WORD WAS THE DEED: WORKERS VS. EMPLOYERS BEFORE THE JUSTICES OF THE PEACE<sup>1</sup>**

**Joan Neuberger**

Over fifteen years ago, when I first remarked that Russian workers often brought labor-related disputes to the tsarist courts to be resolved through arbitration with the official blessing of state authority, colleagues dismissed my comments as insignificant and misleading. How could Russian workers demean their cause by appealing to, rather than protesting, state power? Why would they resort to the word when they had so many opportunities to employ the deed? Or even if they did use the courts, could we really learn anything of value from their testimony and their experiences? Those days are long gone, of course, and labor historians now routinely search for insight beyond the radical vanguard, exploring the views and experiences of rank-and-file workers and other groups of urban poor. In addition, historians generally have responded to the methods and insights of cultural anthropology, feminist theory, literary studies, and that amorphous, repetitive, and contradictory library of texts known as cultural studies. Labor historians are now free to place workers' experiences in a broader social and cultural context and to ask different kinds of questions. To take a few brief examples, Reginald Zelnik has shown that the accepted "peasant-to-proletarian" paradigm is contradicted in the experiences of many vanguard, radical workers. Charters Wynn has shown that strike activism often flowed directly into a backlash of anti-Semitic and antiradical violence. In my own work on strike activism in 1914, I discovered that what was long assumed to be radical political activism was difficult to distinguish from apolitical, antisocial violence and cultural conflict.<sup>2</sup>

New questions that address the multitude of conflicting cross-currents that make up a worker's life have enlivened labor history,

particularly among historians who specialize in the histories of Western Europe and the United States. Although for us Russianists the question “Why was there a workers’ revolution in Russia?” may continue to overshadow the other questions that labor historians ask, the answers now have to take into account the many ambiguities and contradictions in the words and deeds of workers and the amorphousness of the social categories in which we place the workers. We need to study workers in both their interesting individuality and all their relationships within the various worlds through which they walked before we can talk again about a “working class.” In this paper, I will argue that the building blocks of working-class consciousness are to be found wherever workers engaged with the public sphere (and I use every term in that sentence loosely!). Through their behavior and language, many workers positioned themselves both at the gate of civil society and as challengers to its assumptions about hierarchy and identity. Even in situations designed to promote the power of the state (i.e., the courtroom), workers continuously advanced independent (and varied) conceptions of social organization, legitimate behavior, and justice.

The *mirovoi sud*, or court of the justice of the peace (hereafter JP), was a key site for this sort of encounter. Established in 1864 as the jurisdiction for petty civil and criminal cases, the JP court was also explicitly intended to “teach the law to the people.” Litigants in both civil and criminal cases were allowed to present their stories in their own words directly to the JP. Such informality was intended to win the trust of the people, make the JPs accessible to the illiterate and legally unschooled, and eventually spread “legal consciousness” by disseminating legal principles widely enough to wean the people from customary law to acceptance of statute law. In this connection, the JP was granted wide interpretive powers. Mediation (*primirenie*), based on the specific circumstances of the case as well as on local custom, was to be the main form of adjudication. JPs were expected to “decree a resolution” based on statute law *only* when mediation failed.<sup>3</sup> As a result of this peculiar combination of didacticism, paternalism, belief in the strength of popular legal custom, and a desire among reformers to integrate the common people (*narod*) into society (*obshchestvo*), the JP court offered the people a unique public tribunal for expressing their views and attempting to rectify social and economic injustices. The narratives that workers

composed for presenting their cases to the JP court are useful in two (related) ways: the workers' words reveal their evolving attitudes toward state authority and social power, but—more important for this paper—they also functioned as an ongoing process of self-definition and self-assertion. The court immediately became an arena where workers (and others among the unprivileged) could seize a public position, assert a public voice, and construct a public identity. Examining the languages of labor does not displace agency and radicalism, as some Marxist social historians feared; it reveals agency's complexities and uncovers arenas of agency where Marx (and Foucault as well) saw only supplication and oppression.

Finally, the JP court attracted many workers whose lives have been hidden from history because they worked for wages not in factories but in small workshops, stores, homes, and on the streets, as artisans and apprentices, salespeople and clerks, domestic servants, chimney sweeps, construction and railway workers, cab and tram drivers. The courtroom performances of these workers reveal that despite vast differences in their "relationships to the means of production," and despite their pronounced lack of what contemporaries often thought of as "class consciousness," they shared certain perspectives and values with factory workers, including even the highly skilled.

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Labor was at the heart of the deliberations that produced the new judicial structure established by the Judicial Statutes of 1864. The quickening of urban, commercial, and industrial life in the 1860s, bringing with it the need to regularize commercial transactions and mediate between the interests of employers and wage-earners, was a crucial factor in the reformers' original deliberations about the need for new judicial institutions, as was the perceived rise in petty crime.<sup>4</sup> On the rare occasions when historians have concerned themselves with the results of the judicial reform, they have been more attentive to its impact on rural society and the peasant population than on city people in the city courts.<sup>5</sup> But while the JP court was a disaster in the countryside, the new courts quickly sank roots in the economic, social, and cultural life of Russia's cities, where they scored their greatest successes. The overwhelming ma-

jority of court cases in the post-Reform period were heard in urban courts, and a large percentage of these involved people who worked for wages.

Unfortunately, the statistics of the JP courts do not record the occupation of defendants and litigants or the specific charges involved, so it is impossible to measure precisely the volume of cases brought by or against workers.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, workers are highly visible in the popular and commercial literature on the JP court and in the case records preserved in local archives—so much so, in fact, that only a handful of representative cases can be discussed here in the space available. The cases are a sufficient basis for examining the ways in which these workers represented themselves and their stories in court, the ways they were treated, and the ways they were then represented in publications for the general reading public, all of which contributed to the experience from which workers built their identities and their ideas about the legitimate uses of power, in both the workplace and the political arena.

### CONTRACTUAL DISPUTES

Disputes over contracts, especially those involving seasonal workers and their employers, were the most common labor cases brought to the JP courts in the post-Reform period. These cases demonstrated the perseverance of at least some workers in the face of what they clearly considered unfair labor practices, and they tested the JPs' skills at interpreting evidence (or finding it in the first place) and weighing the testimony of interested parties. During the first post-Reform decades it was customary for a contractor (*podriadchik*) from an urban enterprise to travel around the countryside, signing up workers for a season at a time, ranging from three or four months to as many as eight.<sup>7</sup> Although in some cases workers received a portion of their pay in advance, they were usually paid at the end of the work period in a lump sum. Labor contractors used every trick in the book to exploit workers and cheat them of their wages, while on the other hand employers complained that their workers often took off for their villages before their contracts had expired. So trouble arose, not surprisingly, when workers wished to leave the job

before the end of the contracted period or when employers were not forthcoming with the money owed.

One St. Petersburg JP of the 1860s, P. M. Maikov, proudly recounted the following case as evidence of the success of the new court, in both providing accessible mediation for workers and resolving disputes satisfactorily. One day a crowd of workers appeared in Maikov's courtroom, refusing to work but demanding that their internal passports be returned to them and that they be paid for the work they had done (*razschet*). "Clearly something was amiss," Maikov observed, but when he asked the contractor for his side of the story, all he got was a cryptic account of the workers' having been hired for the season but quitting before their contract expired. When Maikov turned to the workers, all he got was "noise" (*shum*). He then asked the workers to choose a few representatives to present their case, but they still could not make themselves understood, so he began asking them direct questions, which at last elicited "clear and fair" answers. The workers did not dispute the contractor's story but wanted their pay to be supplemented since summer wages offered to newly hired workers were higher than those they had been offered when hired in the spring. The contractor had refused, but the workers' "strike" had been effective in bringing them all to court. Here Maikov exhibited his mediation skills, persuading the contractor that if the workers quit he would have to hire new workers at the higher wage rate and convincing the workers that they badly needed these jobs, for it would be hard to find work in mid-summer. Financial compromise was reached at five additional rubles per worker. But then, just as the two sides were about to put pen to paper, the workers remembered the two days' wages lost to the dispute. Maikov persuaded them to accept an amount equal to half their pay for those days; "with some satisfaction," he drew up an agreement that each side signed.<sup>8</sup>

In this case the workers displayed remarkable persistence in the face of overwhelming odds and a willingness to entrust their jobs to an apparently incomprehensible judicial procedure (*sudoproizvodstvo*). But they were aided by three factors: both sides stood to win by negotiation and compromise; the workers had written contractual evidence; the JP was sympathetic to their cause (as well as eager to show off his skills as a mediator). But this constellation of factors was rare. More typical were cases like those described by an Odessa

journalist known as "Vanich," who publicized the variety of schemes used by several local labor contractors. In Odessa, he reported, it was common for employers to repeatedly take advantage of workers hired on the basis of oral contracts. "Indeed," he concluded his survey of cases, "who in Odessa doesn't know . . . that a clever person can erect a multi-story building without paying his workers a single kopeck!" A party of forty workers labors for a week, he explained, and on Saturday receives 100 rubles instead of the promised 600 or 700. Naturally, they quit and take their case to court, but without documents or *knizhki* (paybooks), they have no hope of a settlement in their favor. Meanwhile their employers can hire new workers and subject them to the same treatment. All told, as many as 500 suits may be brought to the JP court, but the building continues and eventually is completed.<sup>9</sup> Vanich also exposed the practices of a contractor named Mikhailov, who repeatedly found himself in court, accused by workers of cheating them. In one case, workers who had fulfilled their labor contracts were kept in town through November and into December while waiting for Mikhailov to pay them. In his defense, Mikhailov argued that although these workers had indeed showed up for work every day of their contract, he had the right to subtract pay for every hour they arrived late, every cigarette break, every minute spent spitting, and every time they blew their noses, all of which added up to a considerable number of working days per worker. Although the JP rejected Mikhailov's arguments and decided for the workers, in his summary Vanich emphasized the crucial point that the JP was able to decide for the workers only because they had written contractual agreements with their employer. Most workers did not. In fact, the majority of workers whose cases were reported in my sources could not read their contracts (when they had them) or any of the other documents that tied them to the world of work and were presented as evidence in courts of law. In some cases their employers too were unable to read, which obviously made the gathering of evidence even trickier and complicated the job of the JP.

An 1867 case heard by one of the more distinguished JPs, A. A. Lopukhin, pitted a master artisan, the cobbler Bogdanov, against his apprentice's mother, Osipova. Bogdanov brought a complaint against Osipova for removing her son from his workshop in violation of their contract. He wanted the boy returned to work and demanded compensation for the labor lost. But Osipova refused to

return the boy, claiming that Bogdanov not only beat him but also failed to teach him anything. Lopukhin based his decision on the terms of a written agreement that Osipova had signed which turned the boy over to Bogdanov for five years beginning in 1865. Osipova disclaimed the contract, arguing that since she could not read, Bogdanov could have written whatever he wanted. Based on this objection, the JP offered a mediated settlement whereby the boy returned to the workshop and the master agreed not to beat him (at which point the courtroom audience burst out laughing). Osipova agreed, but only if the boy received higher wages in return. The judge, however, repeated that he could not change the contract: "The law is the same for everyone," he said, "and no one can evade the law on the grounds of ignorance." He went on to warn Osipova that if she rejected the mediated settlement, he would decree a resolution. Osipova held out for the money, so the JP decreed, in exactly the same terms that he had "mediated" earlier, that she must return her son to the workshop under the conditions written into the contract.<sup>10</sup>

In this case JP Lopukhin displayed the contradictory attitude toward written evidence that was endemic to JP practice. On the one hand, JPs were given the power to make decisions based on the particular circumstances of the case or, if hard evidence was in short supply, on "inner conviction" and "conscience."<sup>11</sup> But on the other hand, Lopukhin made no effort to discover whether Osipova had indeed been deceived into signing this contract, if Bogdanov had a history of duping the illiterate parents of his apprentices, or if there were any other extenuating circumstances that might have made the settlement into more of a genuine negotiation.

The question of evidence was a vexing one for JPs, one that they approached in various ways. Although they were specifically instructed to take stock in their "inner conviction," many JPs in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Kharkov, and Kazan (my sample cities) refused even to hear cases in which there was no hard evidence. This was particularly true in labor disputes, where the law required that a paybook be kept for each worker (recording terms of work, salary, advances on salary, fines, and breaches of the terms of contract). In F. O. Sveshnikov's court, in Moscow's Piatnitskii district, workers were reprimanded for coming to the courtroom without a paybook: "How many times have I told your employer, and the other employers, and you too—for it seems to me that I've seen you in court before

today—that without a paybook I will not hear your grievance.”<sup>12</sup> The JP G. Ia. Titov, also of Moscow (Gorodskoi District), declared that “If you had had a paybook, there would have been no need for a court hearing.”<sup>13</sup>

Possessing a paybook, on the other hand, was no guarantee of either clear evidence or a fair decision, for like Osipova, most workers in such cases claimed that their bosses wrote whatever they wanted into the paybooks, knowing that the workers’ illiteracy prevented them from checking and grasping the content. Was this a ploy on the workers’ part? (It brings to mind the wily peasants of Bezdna who used their “naive” faith in the tsar to shorten the sentences they received for rebellion in 1861.)<sup>14</sup> If it was a ploy, JPs did not make much effort to find out. If anything, they would simply act as if they believed the workers were lying. In Moscow, the JP V. A. Verderevskii went so far as to ignore the written evidence of the paybook. When one employer refused to return a worker’s passport even though the contracted work was completed, the worker, a blacksmith (*kuznets*), went to court, where Verderevskii asked the employer: “Do you still need him in your shop?” The employer replied: “Of course I need him, this is our busy period, perhaps in a month or so I can spare him.” Then the JP addressed the plaintiff: “There, you see, your employer doesn’t agree to release you.” When the worker responded that he had already worked out the month (of the contract), the JP’s reply was: “Well, then you can work another.”<sup>15</sup>

In general, urban JPs in the 1860s and 1870s were hard on workers in disputes with their employers, much tougher than they were on peasants who brought suit against noblemen. Almost every memoir on the early period and a multitude of newspaper reports from the courts describe cases in which JPs bent over backwards to show that peasants were to be treated with “equal respect” in court, against the shrill and usually ridiculous protests of the noblemen concerned. But while JPs usually treated workers with respect and often condemned employers for demanding that JPs approach them with more deference, the JPs made little effort to uncover the true class relations behind the complaints brought by workers and tended to side with employers when evidence was murky. A cobbler in Kazan, for example, was convicted of breaching the artisanal statute and sentenced to eight days in a house of detention (*arestnyi dom*) for quitting work, despite his claims that he had been fired

and despite the evidence that his boss had even returned his passport.<sup>16</sup> In a similar case, also in Kazan, the owner of an artisanal workshop, a master silversmith named Kivenkov, charged one of his workers with walking off the job and thereby breaking the artisanal statute. The worker, Stepan Mannik, who had left the shop to go work for himself, claimed that many other workers had already done the same thing; he had already apprenticed nine years, he said, and the foreman had rudely mistreated him. Although Kivenkov only wanted to recover the money he had lost, the JP convicted Mannik of breaking the statute and sentenced him to two weeks' detention in addition to returning the 8 rubles and 83 kopecks he owed his master.<sup>17</sup> In a dispute between Muscovite employer Bakhtiarov and his worker Zakharov, a young boy, the truculent JP Verderevskii refused to listen to mitigating circumstances on either side. Zakharov did not want to work for Bakhtiarov any longer, so he found another job, earned the 10 rubles he owed on his contract with Bakhtiarov, and asked to buy out his contract. Bakhtiarov responded by taking Zakharov to court to force him to return to work. The JP insisted that Zakharov return to Bakhtiarov and work off the ten days of his contract, ignoring the fact that he had effectively bought it out.<sup>18</sup>

But in none of these cases did workers meekly accept their fate. On the contrary, they fought for what they perceived to be their rights, persisting despite their employers' protestations and the JPs' resistance. The blacksmith forced to work an extra month continued to protest the decision until the JP made him leave the courtroom.<sup>19</sup> The driver who provoked the JP to anger over his lack of a paybook, though described as a peasant who "meekly approached" the JP, politely but stubbornly corrected the JP's misapprehensions about him and his case: "Forgive me, your honor, may I be so bold as to point out that I have not appeared before you previously and you have never said anything to us about a paybook [*knizhka*]." In the same dignified, well-spoken way, he noted his own proper behavior in the case ("If I'd been given a paybook, I would have brought it with me") and his employer's impropriety.<sup>20</sup> A laundress, accused of stealing five shirts by the prince who had given them to her to be cleaned, insisted not only that the shirts had been stolen from her laundry and that she would pay for them, but also that the prince grossly overestimated their value; she was not prepared to pay quite

so much as he wanted. In the face of the power of the prince and his lawyer, she insisted that the court call in an independent “expert” to appraise the shirts. When the court messenger failed to find one, she sent him back out in the right direction. When the expert proved reluctant to speak (“Why should I get mixed up in someone else’s business?”), the laundress held her own until a reasonable compromise could be reached.<sup>21</sup>

At this point, it must be noted that even with verbatim trial transcripts it is nearly impossible to tell precisely what happened in any given case. Both sides would represent themselves in what they thought was the best possible light, and the court’s decision did not always reflect a considered investigation. The question, then, is whether one can find patterns in workers’ behavior at the hearings that tell us more than we can learn from the outcome of the cases alone.

Certain patterns do emerge. In particular, we have already seen repeated examples of both pragmatism and persistence, which in some cases may be something of a contradiction. Acting pragmatically, most workers seem to have taken their grievances to court in the earnest belief that the JP would decide in their favor. The JP courts were swamped with cases brought by the illiterate, the unprivileged, and the persecuted. In most instances, the litigants clearly articulated the belief that they had been wronged and conveyed their faith (though some were warier than others) that the court would provide a favorable resolution. Their efforts would be rewarded. But on the other hand, many complaints were tenaciously pursued by workers who either had no reason to hope for a favorable outcome or who had to have known that they were in the wrong to begin with. In Vanich’s cases of hiring fraud, hundreds of workers persisted in their suit against their employers despite strong evidence that it would do them no good. Similarly, seasonal railroad workers in Ufa province, living in the most degrading conditions and working for less than 20 rubles a month, persisted in bringing suit against their contractor-employer for withholding the pay he promised to send home to their families. They did this despite the JPs’ stated hostility to their case and their inability to find a lawyer to help them.<sup>22</sup> In some of the cases already cited, the workers, though clearly guilty of breaking the law, claimed that circumstances compelled them to do so. Mannik, the silversmith in Kazan who

wished to work for himself, knowingly “breached the artisanal statute” (*narushil remeslennyi ustav*), arguing that leaving the shop was common practice and that he had been badly treated by the master.<sup>23</sup> In short, there were workers who were prepared to use the opportunity for self-expression offered by the JP courts irrespective of their chances for success.

### DISPUTES OVER CONDITIONS AND IMPROPER TREATMENT

Almost all the cases we have discussed, whether brought out of desperation or hope, shared another common feature: the litigants’ awareness of the public character of the hearings, which lent them a kind of theatricality and encouraged the workers’ efforts to use that public arena to provide evidence of their individual worth and their right to respect. To one degree or another, this element may have been present in all the cases under review, but it was most explicit in cases brought to rectify cruel or improper treatment.

One workshop youth, for example, an apprentice, having found out that it was no longer permitted for masters to beat apprentices, filed a complaint with the JP the next time the master roughed him up. Once in court, the boy wanted neither to press formal charges nor to see his master sent to jail; what he did want was a public apology—and 2 rubles.<sup>24</sup>

In such cases, the JPs almost always favored the insulted workers and regularly used the occasion to educate employers about “proper” manners and “civilized” language. Certainly, the defendants made easy targets. “You will not be allowed to curse [your servant] with indecent words,” a JP lectured a merchant accused of insulting his female servant. “Even my servant?!” the merchant replied, astounded. The same merchant cursed, insulted, and lied to the JP, the servant (the plaintiff), and the witnesses. When, after lengthy discussion, the JP offered him mediation in place of a stiff fine or even detention, the merchant refused in the rudest terms. When he finally agreed to mediation and his servant required only that he apologize publicly for his abusive behavior, the merchant again responded to the JP, almost pathetically: “Your honor, I would really rather pay a fine of some kind,” and “Can’t you at least ensure

that this will not appear in the newspaper?" And when the servant refused to take money and insisted on a public apology, the JP, clearly disgusted at this point, chided the merchant: "In your place any decent person would have apologized long ago." The servant, meanwhile, steadfastly refused to be intimidated. To each of the merchant's attacks, she responded calmly and reasonably: "I have witnesses," and "I don't want money; I ask only that he beg my forgiveness." And when the merchant tried to weasel out of it ("Please don't be angry Tat'iana. Why, what's the point of recalling such trivial things?—don't be angry"), the servant was unmoved. "Just apologize," she replied.<sup>25</sup>

There were also numerous cases brought by workers solely to embarrass their employers in public or to demonstrate their equality with the employer in the eyes of the court (or, as one JP recalled such a situation, "to achieve the pleasure of standing in court beside a high official" in the capacity of an "equal citizen").<sup>26</sup> In another case (published in a book of humorous stories), three Petersburg carters (*lomovye izvozchiki*) entered the court and announced: "Your honor, we've come!" When asked what they wanted, they replied several times, as if their purpose were self-evident, that they no longer needed anything. Finally the JP got them to explain that they had been fighting but had reconciled. Eventually it became clear that they thought the JP ought to know and publicly record the fact that they had performed legally and properly, according to the goals of the new court system. Having fought and reconciled, they wanted public recognition of their legal accomplishment.<sup>27</sup>

Even in more bizarre cases, when workers must have recognized that they had behaved badly themselves, their insistence on filing a complaint and their tenacious demeanor in court suggested that they deeply resented the way their bosses treated them. One particularly interesting case, which occurred later than most of those cited here, unfolded in Kazan. A factory worker, Petrunkov, filed a complaint against the factory director for assault and battery (*oskorblenie deistviem*), claiming that when he requested a pass to go home, being too ill to work that day, the director not only refused, but hit him and cursed at him. Petrunkov's statement of complaint was a model of respectability, authoritative and persuasive, but when witnesses were called, many of whom were fellow workers, they painted a portrait of the worker as an inveterate drinker who

was drunk when he entered the director's office and was himself guilty of verbally abusing his boss. He lost his suit and the subsequent appeal as well. I puzzled over this case for a long time, wondering why this worker would bring a suit only to have to lie to the court in the face of many hostile witnesses. Perhaps he just did not understand what he was doing, or perhaps he simply enjoyed making a public spectacle of himself. But although the witnesses were ultimately more convincing, Petrunkov's statement did display a personal dignity, suggesting that he may have brought the suit in the belief that even a drunken shirker like himself was worthy of humane treatment.<sup>28</sup>

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The sorts of cases discussed in this paper appeared regularly in urban JP courts until the days they closed their doors in 1917–18. But they were joined in the twentieth century by cases that displayed more conventional labor grievances. In 1901, for example, the Petersburg street sweepers (*metel'shchiki*) employed by the company that ran the Nevskii Prospekt horsedrawn trams filed a complaint after being forced to work overtime (as much as twenty hours of work a day) and then were fired when they protested. They won their suit with the help of two lawyers from the legal aid bureau.<sup>29</sup> In 1905, workers won a suit they had brought against a factory engineer for slandering another worker. Early that year a factory worker named Stogov, a delegate to the abortive Shidlovskii commission (which was supposed to investigate labor problems in St. Petersburg), was fired from his job for "political unreliability." When workers went to the factory engineer to protest, he told them that Stogov had a falsified passport and had stolen 10,000 rubles. The engineer was convicted of slander and sentenced to two weeks' detention.<sup>30</sup> During the same period a number of different groups of workers successfully sued in the JP court for back pay for time lost during strikes.<sup>31</sup> In each of these cases, workers specifically brought up issues of proper treatment and personal honor.

\* \* \*

Although the JP court never became a major site for contesting labor issues, it remained an arena for individual workers who wished to challenge their employers. Even when they lost their cases,

workers achieved the distinction of having had their say in public. For the most part, the workers who appealed to the courts were not factory workers but members of smaller or more amorphous or more marginal occupational groups: servants, drivers, apprentices, construction and railroad workers. They defy easy social categorization, but they shared a number of other features. Mark Steinberg has shown us the extent to which honor and dignity motivated the printing elite, but while most of those who brought their complaints to court fell among the illiterate, benighted, and "*nekul'turnye*" masses of workers, I would argue that they too were resentful of the contempt with which they were treated and motivated by a similar desire for respect.

That so many workers turned to state judicial representatives, the JPs, to resolve their disputes does not suggest that they were unknowing dupes of the regime or supporters of the political status quo. Their use of the court should be seen as a pragmatic choice to exploit whatever means were available to them. Contrary to the prevailing contemporary view held by most members of educated society, including the intelligentsia, workers not only used the courts, but also showed that they could understand judicial procedure and in some cases could manipulate the court for their own ends. Those ends may not seem particularly ambitious in comparison with those of radical and vanguard workers, but they were an essential component in the construction of a civil society. These cases, and the countless others brought to JPs by the poor and illiterate population, show that there were many Russians who wanted a public voice and a public recognition of their right to personal respect and a role in the public sphere. In my view these feelings should not necessarily be seen as a denial of radical consciousness; rather, they played a role in shaping the particular kind of consciousness that evolved among Russian workers.

## NOTES

1. I wish to thank IREX (together with the U.S. Department of State and the NEH), the National Council for Soviet and Eastern European Research, and the Kennan Institute for their support of the research on which this article is based.

2. Reginald E. Zelnik, "On the Eve: Life Histories and Identities of Some Revolutionary Workers, 1870–1905," in *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class, and Identity*, ed. Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Ronald Grigor Suny (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Charters Wynn, *Workers, Strikes, and Pogroms: The Donbass-Dnepr Bend in Late Imperial Russia, 1870–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Joan Neuberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, Culture, and Power in St. Petersburg, 1900–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
3. On the basic characteristics of the JP court, see Joan Neuberger, "Popular Legal Cultures: The St. Petersburg Mirovoi Sud," in *Russia's Great Reforms, 1855–1881*, ed. Ben Eklof et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); B. V. Vilenskii, *Sudebnaia reforma i kontrreforma v Rossii* (Saratov, 1969); "Zapiska Gos. Kants. ob osnovnykh nachalakh sudoustroistva i sudoproizvodstva grazhdanskago i ugolovnago," in *Materialy po preobrazovaniiu sudebnoi chasti v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1864), vol. 18, part 1, pp. 34–39.
4. See, for example, requests and comments from local judicial and government officials in Odessa, Voronezh, and Kiev calling for simpler, oral procedure to expedite commercial life and protect their cities from the petty criminals who gravitated to commercial centers; "O vvedenii v g. Odesse mirovykh uchrezhdenii odnovrememno s vvedeniem onykh v stolitsakh," RGIA, f. 1405, op. 63, d. 4951 (1865); "Po otnosheniiu Kievskogo voennogo, Podol'skogo i Volynskogo General-Gubernatora o luchshem ustroistve gubernskikh i uezdnykh grazhdanskikh upravlenii vo vverenykh ego upravleniiu guberniakh," *ibid.*, op. 57, d. 6310, part 1 (1859); letter to Justice Ministry from A. Shakhmatov, Voronezh Provincial Prosecutor, 4 December 1862, *ibid.*, op. 60, d. 5966, ll. 187–214; also, Richard Wortman, *The Development of a Russian Legal Consciousness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 256–57.
5. Most contemporary historians have focused on institutions, the reform process, and the reformers (W. Bruce Lincoln, Wortman, F. B. Kaiser, Petr Zaionchkovskii, Larissa Zakharova, Vilenskii) or on rural practice (Cathy Frierson, Peter Czap, Beatrice Farnsworth, Stephen Frank). Prerevolutionary Russian historians were somewhat more concerned with the new courts' constituents, but they too primarily concentrated on institutions and personnel in the rural setting (G. A. Dzhanshiev, Iulii Gessen, M. Chubinskii). This was true of novelists as well—e.g., Tolstoy in *Resurrection*, Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov*. With rare exceptions (A. F. Koni among them) histories of the urban courts and their specific characteristics were the works of local judicial practitioners rather than trained historians or jurists, and these appeared in journal articles, annual reports, or memoirs.
6. Nor can we determine statistically the relative importance of the various kinds of cases in which workers were involved. Furthermore, archival preservation of case records (from among the millions of cases JPs heard between 1864 and 1917) has been based on archivists' often random evaluations of the significance of the various cases during periodic bouts of

archival housekeeping. According to archivists at Moscow's RGIA and at GIART (Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv Respubliki Tatarstana), little effort was made to preserve representative samples of cases.

7. On the practice as it related to legal cases in Odessa, see Vanich, *Stseny v mirovom sude* (Odessa, 1976), pp. 46–52.
8. P. M. Maikov, "Vospominaniia," in *Petrogradskii mirovoi sud za piat' desiat let* (Petrograd, 1916), pp. 1362–66. Peasants who left their villages to seek work away from home were required to have internal passports, which were temporarily surrendered to their employers or to local police authorities.
9. Vanich, p. 52.
10. A. E. Nos, *Mirovoi sud v Moskve: Ocherki razbiratel'stva u mirovykh sudei*, book 1 (Moscow, 1869), pp. 88–90.
11. *Sudebnye Ustavy*, vol. 2, *Ustav grazhdanskogo sudoproizvodstva*, art. 129; vol. 3, *Ustav ugolovnogo sudoproizvodstva*, art. 119.
12. Nos, book 1, p. 125; see also pp. 117, 118, 129.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
14. Daniel Field, *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976).
15. Nos, book 1, p. 117.
16. This sentence was overturned on appeal. GIART, f. 70, op. 1, d. 433, ll. 13–18; for other examples, see also *ibid.*, dd. 126, 258, 295, 433, 473, 513, 547, 577, 598, and f. 75, op. 1, d. 32.
17. "Mestnaia khronika: Narushenie remeslennago ustava (Iz kamery mirovogo sud'i)," *Volzhskii vestnik*, 16 December 1886.
18. Nos, book 1, pp. 118–19.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
21. Nos, *Mirovoi sud v Moskve: Ocherki razbiratel'stva u mirovykh sudei*, book 2 (Moscow, 1869), pp. 9–14.
22. *Volzhskii vestnik*, 24 September 1886.
23. "Mestnaia khronika."
24. "V kamere mirovykh sudei: Fel'ton," *Sudebnaia gazeta*, no. 36 (1893).
25. *Izbrannye stseny u mirovykh sudov v Peterburge i Moskve* (St. Petersburg, 1867), pp. 1–6.
26. Maikov, p. 1362.
27. A. F., *Nashi izvozchiki v mirovom sude: Smeshnaia stsena s natury* (St. Petersburg, 1871), pp. 15–16.
28. "Po obvineniiu Bernarta Andreeva Veselovskago v oskorblenii deistviem kr-na Petrunkova," GIART, f. 70, op. 1, d. 553 (1900), ll. 1–18.

29. "V kamere mirovvykh sudei: Isk metel'shchikov," *Peterburgskii listok*, 17 March 1901.
30. "V kamerakh mirovvykh sudei: Otkliki rabocheho voprosa," *Peterburgskii listok*, 31 May 1905; "V kamerakh mirovvykh sudei: Otkliki rabocheho dvizheniia," *Peterburgskii listok*, 9 October 1905.
31. Maikov, pp. 1126–53; *Peterburgskii listok*, 6, 21, and 31 May 1905.

## THE INJURED AND INSURGENT SELF: THE MORAL IMAGINATION OF RUSSIA'S LOWER-CLASS WRITERS

Mark D. Steinberg

Ideas about the self are often central to the ways human beings have reasoned about moral good, including social rights and justice. Conceptions of self and morality, however, are not universal. As much recent work by anthropologists and psychologists has shown, ideas of the self are shaped not solely in the natural actions of the mind, but also on the less determinant terrain where the inward self grapples with external worlds of meaning and experience. In the cognitive journey of the self in the social world, varied conceptions of self, and the moral perspectives that tend to be intertwined with them, have taken form. The particular notion of an interior and autonomous self, by nature endowed with a universal humanity—in its origins a Western idea—is only one of a range of “self” concepts, but one that has had a powerful historical effect on moral thinking and social and political reasoning in much of the modern world. It has nurtured the very consequential view that every person is endowed with dignity and natural autonomy, not because of any particular status, situation, or role, but simply by virtue of being human. One need not accept as a natural fact the universalizing assumptions of this conception of the self to recognize its historical importance. Nor need one accept their truth as a description even of the Western situation. On the contrary, that the real circumstances of social life have rarely lived up to this ideal has only made the ideal more compelling. Precisely because it has been so imperfectly realized, the universalized notion of the human self has made conflicts over social and political arrangements into battles over moral right.<sup>1</sup>

This essay concerns the central place of this ethical ideal of universal personhood in the discourse of activist workers in Russia in the early twentieth century. Historians of Russian labor, of course, have frequently noted workers’ demands for “polite address” and,

more generally, for treatment befitting the workers' worth as "human beings." These challenges to "humiliation and insult" (*unizhenie i oskorblenie*), however, were very often much more than mere items on a list of demands. They were at the heart of an ethical vision with which many workers judged the entirety of social and political life. At the core of this ethics, though often stated indirectly, was the belief in the natural and equal worth and hence the human rights of the individual person. The natural dignity and rights of the individual, not the particularistic interests of a class, became the foundation of social judgment, and the realization of those rights became the measure of a just society. Indeed, in the view of one astute contemporary observer of working-class attitudes in Russia, a fully developed *kul't lichnosti* (cult of the individual, or of personhood) or *kul't cheloveka* (cult of the person) existed in the discourse of activist Russian workers.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, however, the way workers made use of such notions often reinsinuated collective and class values into their particular kind of individualism. As they endeavored to give public voice to their experiences, anger, and ideals, to make sense of their own lives and the lives of others, activist workers reworked the various ideas, metaphors, and images that came to hand, including the ethical idealization of human personhood. Paradoxically, viewed through the prism of their own and other workers' lives, the universalized ideal of the individual person could also encourage class identity and commitment to class action. Heightened feelings of self-awareness and self-worth often stimulated workers to feel more intensely their *class* oppression. And yet, this identification of the individual with the collective remained ambiguous. Sacralization of the self simultaneously stimulated individual action in the collective cause and subverted the idea of class with an erosive "cult" of the individual person.

To illustrate these generalizations, I will focus on a particular, one might even say *odd*, group of workers: men (and a few women) who, with little formal education, began regularly writing poetry, prose, and essays while employed in various wage-earning jobs—both skilled and unskilled, in various industries, and in various cities of the Russian empire. The number of Russian workers who took to the pen for self-expression in the early years of the twentieth century was impressive. Well before the post-1917 official promotion by the Bolshevik state of "proletarian literature," workers began writing poetry,

stories, and essays and getting many of them published in socialist and trade union newspapers, commercial newspapers, popular weeklies, pamphlets, and anthologies of workers' writings.<sup>3</sup> To explain these workers' special impetus to express themselves in writing solely with reference to their social circumstances would be futile. In social origins and occupation, and even in education, worker-writers were not exceptional members of their class. Although they had usually attended a rural or urban primary school for two years (a few finished a four-year school), this level of schooling was no longer unusual among Russian workers and certainly did not propel most to become writers. Worker-writers differed from the average worker mainly in more personal ways—in the passion they brought to reading, in their drive to write, in an inner need for self-expression. Before 1917, very few of these plebeian writers were able to quit their shops and survive from their literary or journalistic work. But even if they continued to labor side by side with other workers, they created a subculture in the interstices of working-class existence—reading, pondering, and writing after hours and in stolen moments on the job. Clearly, these were not “typical” Russian workers. Indeed, they often felt alienated from their less self-aware, less cultured fellows.<sup>4</sup> But this is precisely why they are useful to study. In a society undergoing great and often traumatic change, these odd individuals stood, as it were, at social and cultural fault lines, at dynamic sites of overlap, friction, and uncertainty where social classes and cultural traditions and innovations met, and where, concerning the theme of this volume, the relationship between the intelligentsia and the working class involved not separate, discrete groups of people but a process in the lives of individuals.

The margins of the working class were also often its cutting edge and its most visible promontory; as such, workers who stood at those margins were often influential leaders. The cultural marginality of worker-writers within their class was often, paradoxically, a stimulus to collective identification with other workers and active involvement in class struggle. In general, class consciousness is often intimately bound up with workers' heightened awareness of their selves. As Jacques Rancière has written about nineteenth-century France, to become class conscious a worker did not need to be told that he was poor and exploited, which he already knew, but to acquire “a knowledge of self that reveals to him a being dedicated to something else

besides exploitation."<sup>5</sup> This subversive knowledge was most likely to be nurtured not in the depths of working-class life but at its margins, where everyday experiences of proletarian existence encountered ideas shaped in different settings and where aspiring and questioning workers were daily reminded of the social and political barriers around them. Historians have tended to neglect the influence of such marginal types in the formation of conscious collectivities. But it was precisely the ambiguous location of these workers within their own social class that made them an important conduit of ideas, vocabularies, and images across the thinning boundary between the educated and the masses. Indeed, many of these writers believed it was their duty to spread enlightenment and "consciousness" among other workers—echoing in a popular key the moral debt to the people felt by educated, upper-class *intelligenty*. Equally important, these marginal workers (like the marginal intellectuals) sought to erase the boundary that divided educated society from the "dark masses."

Their ability to do so was facilitated by a discourse about the self that pervaded Russia's flourishing civic life in the final decades of the old order, a discourse that provided the essential context for the articulation of working-class individualism by these writers, and one to which they also contributed. Since the end of the eighteenth century (though mostly after the middle of the nineteenth) public discussions of ethics and social order in Russia—in journals, newspapers, books, and meetings of all sorts—had focused increasingly (as in Western Europe, and often drawing on European sources) on the innate worth, freedom, and rights of the individual. The key word in these reflections was *lichnost'*, a term that denoted not simply the individual, but a person's inward nature and personality, the self, that which made individuals naturally deserving of respect and freedom. By the mid-nineteenth century, it had become an article of faith among intelligenty that social change ought above all to promote the freedom and dignity of the human person by removing the social, cultural, and political constraints that hindered the full development of the individual personality. The writings of such influential critics of the status quo as Vissarion Belinskii, Alexander Herzen, Dmitrii Pisarev, Nikolai Dobroliubov, Nikolai Chernyshevskii, and Peter Lavrov resounded with this credo of personal emancipation.

At the same time, these intelligenty also insisted on the social nature of their individualism. Most of Russia's influential social think-

ers in the nineteenth century shared Lavrov's conviction that "individual dignity is maintained only by upholding the dignity of all." The ideal of the "critically thinking individual," one of the central tropes of Russian radicalism, embodied this socialized individualism. Critically thinking individuals were expected, as Pisarev wrote, to assert their "originality and autonomy" against the conventional moralities of both the established state and "the mob." But the purpose of their self-assertion was to fight for social changes that would emancipate all. In the 1890s and after, Nikolai Mikhailovskii and others linked this tradition explicitly to Friedrich Nietzsche's ideal, increasingly influential in Russia, of the sacred and morally autonomous self, reaching out beyond narrow individualism.<sup>6</sup> In the same vein, some Marxists, especially Anatolii Lunacharskii and Aleksandr Bogdanov, advocated what Lunacharskii called a "macropsychic individualism" in which the personal "I" is "identified with some broad and enduring 'we,'" and the vital and autonomous revolutionary hero strives not for wolfish private gain but for the progress of all humanity.<sup>7</sup>

Although most literate workers were at best but faintly aware of these discussions among the educated strata, they encountered similar ideas about the person in more accessible and popular settings and texts. For the more literate common readers, popular belles lettres—especially the writings of Nikolai Nekrasov, Vladimir Korolenko, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Gorky—offered various representations of the ideal of the person as a moral category. These authors placed the individual and the self at the center of their attention, focusing, though with different purposes, on the development, suffering, and assertion of their characters' inward and social selves. Starting in the 1890s, echoes of Nietzsche's idealization of the proud, striving, exuberant, and rebellious individual became influential among those writers who, like Gorky and Leonid Andreev, were often read by lower-class Russians.<sup>8</sup> Gorky's stories in particular were filled with vital, restless, freedom-seeking individuals—plebeian supermen—living and wandering on the fringes of society, challenging established moralities and authorities, condemning the slavish submissiveness of the masses.<sup>9</sup>

It is particularly telling that worker-writers themselves interpreted Russia's literary and intellectual heritage as devoted to elevating and defending the human person. Nikolai Liashko, one of Russia's best-known worker-authors, portrayed the entire corpus of classical

Russian literature as fighting a heroic struggle “for the oppressed and humiliated, for truth and the dignity of the person.”<sup>10</sup> Ivan Kubikov, a compositor turned literary critic and union activist, writing in the paper of the Petersburg printers’ union in 1909, likewise found the most important “teaching” in Nikolai Gogol’s writings to be that “one must not forget one’s human dignity.”<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Kubikov viewed Belinskii as having taught chiefly “the dignity and social worth of man” and having shown how social conditions in Russia “hinder the development of the human person [*lichnost*].”<sup>12</sup>

Workers did not need to have read Belinskii, Pisarev, Gogol, or even Gorky, however, to have been encouraged to think about the worth and importance of the human individual. The popular commercial print media increasingly set before common readers images of the degradation and humiliation that individuals endured in Russia and provided readers with models of autonomous moral choice and individual achievement. Tales of bandits and adventurers, especially, spread positive images of “self-assertive and superior individuals,” of rebellious outsiders challenging authority and conventional restraints, among a wide audience.<sup>13</sup> In part, these themes reinforced a strain of individualism already present in lower-class culture (notwithstanding stereotypes about the collectivist mentality of Russia’s common folk). We see this, for example, in the many images of heroic champions and ingenious peasant tricksters that proliferated in peasant folklore and in the tales of saints, prophets, holy men, and visionaries common in popular religious narratives (and in religious ideas about the divine spark in each person). Innovations in popular culture strengthened this focus on the individual and the inner person and directed attention to new terrains. Popular fictional accounts of striving individuals and the growing attention in popular folk songs to personal needs were among the signs of this developing culture of the individual.<sup>14</sup>

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The critique of human suffering is one of the hallmarks of the modern Western consciousness of the self.<sup>15</sup> Appropriately, injury and suffering—specifically the harm to the self suffered by Russia’s poor (and by the authors personally)—were among the most pervasive themes in the writings of worker-authors. Those who wrote about the

lives of workers before 1905 invariably dwelled above all on their harsh labors, physical and spiritual exhaustion, hunger, illness, and death. The glassworker Egor Nechaev, for example, penned dozens of poems describing the physical and psychic torments he experienced: painful weariness from work and lack of sleep, harsh treatment, and cruel beatings. Thoughts of suicide, mentioned in many workers' autobiographies and creative writings, were emblematic. In a poem Nechaev first drafted in 1881, a group of young apprentices discuss throwing themselves into the river: "that would be the thing—to die, to sleep."<sup>16</sup> Death was sometimes symbolic, as in Nechaev's poem, of escape, but it was also an expression of the depth of workers' personal suffering. Many workers' imaginative writings portrayed death, especially of the young, pointing to the realities of disease and physical harm in workers' lives, but also evoking death as an expression of deep personal injury. Workers' poems often took the form of dirges. At a literary evening for printers in St. Petersburg in the summer of 1903, several workers read aloud mournful and fatalistic verses portraying workers dying of work-induced tuberculosis.<sup>17</sup> Nechaev repeatedly returned in his writings to his memory of a boy, a fellow apprentice and a friend, beaten to death by a factory foreman.<sup>18</sup>

Illustrations of the suffering personality were even more plentiful in writings after 1905: the anguish of a mother watching her children starve;<sup>19</sup> images of a childhood ruined and lost (part of a growing view of childhood as the time when the personality is nurtured);<sup>20</sup> the sexual abuse by foremen and employers of working women—"white slaves" whose "feelings of human dignity were trampled in the dirt";<sup>21</sup> the suicide of a young woman raped by her employer (in this case, felt to be a moral assault on the self);<sup>22</sup> the frustrated sexuality of male workers from the village who could not afford to keep their wives with them in the city (a most personal dimension of social suffering);<sup>23</sup> dreams "tortured by exhaustion" (even sleep was not an escape);<sup>24</sup> and the violence, work-related maimings, and death that often occurred in factories.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, premature death continued to be both a real and literary expression of the denial of workers' "right to live as a human being,"<sup>26</sup> as was suicide. The "epidemic" of suicides around 1910 among tailoring workers, for example, was explained not by poverty and unemployment—since conditions were in fact relatively good—but by workers' feelings that life had become a "big, dark,

empty and cold barn" in which there is "no one to whom they may tell of their insults."<sup>27</sup>

In the later interpretations of Soviet literary critics, such a mournful view of working-class life was not truly "proletarian." It was, they admitted, all too widespread among worker-writers, but mainly, so they claimed, before the 1905 Revolution and among workers of recent peasant background. (The latter claim was necessary to their relegation of such views to a "backward" stage in the development of a conscious working class.) Soviet critics purged this grim aesthetic from the orthodox canon by defining "true" proletarian literature ideologically (as expressing a worldview that was positive, confident, militant, and collectivist) rather than sociologically (as literature written by workers).<sup>28</sup> The trouble was, as Bolshevik critics in the early years after 1917 continued to recognize with distress, that among worker-writers, this grim view of working-class life persisted. Even after October, a Soviet critic characteristically complained, in a review of the poetry of the well-known worker-writer Aleksandr Pomorskii, there was still too much "bourgeois individualistic pessimism."<sup>29</sup>

Marxist critics had reason to worry about the gap between the actual and the proclaimed content of "proletarian" perception. Partly, they rightly saw passive stoicism in the writers' preoccupations with the suffering self. For some of these writings did indeed express a resignation to fate that was reminiscent of traditional rural funeral songs (*plachi*) in their cathartic voicing of suffering as a way to cope with life's burdens. And many of the writings evinced self-pity or converted anger into fantasies of escape. More complexly, many writers treated the worker's suffering self as a badge of identity and honor, of spiritual worth, and viewed their own "singing of suffering" as an act of devotion:

Don't expect happy tunes from me  
 Friend, I cannot comfort you  
 I learned to sing in menacing times  
 With sorrow in my mind and soul.<sup>30</sup>

I am a bard of the working masses  
 My song is not to be envied  
 I sing of neither flowers nor the sun.<sup>31</sup>

Personal injury was seen as the essence of the worker's social experience. Suffering both defined and ennobled the worker.

But at the same time, these worker-writers often viewed suffering with indignation and defiance. In the face of censorship, simply chronicling the sufferings of the poor implied a challenge and a protest. And even before 1905, undertones of anger, denunciations of pervading "evil," and allusions to dreams of "freedom" and "justice" partly belied the humble tone of most of these songs of suffering. In 1905 and after, of course, voices of anger and protest became more explicit and more frequent, though even then defining such protest as "class consciousness" tells us rather little. To be sure, most of these writers identified *themselves* as class conscious, by which they understood that they were engaging in a social critique of capitalist oppression of the working class. But the concept of class consciousness is both too sweeping and too anemic to convey the full weight and reach of their critique, which was built much more on ideas of moral right (a universal category of judgment) than on ideas about the class structure (a relative and historical category). And at the core of this moral critique was the category of the self. Although the suffering of workers and the poor was (and was acknowledged to be) shared with others in a similar social position, the notion of the injured self was at the very heart of how these writers understood social oppression and inequality, which they characterized as intolerable injustice.

Authorship itself served as the primary act of personal and social self-assertion for such workers. For them, the very practice of writing served as a challenge to their ascription to the lower class, a violation of conventional divisions between manual and intellectual labor, between popular and high culture. It was therefore significant that worker-writers almost invariably adopted an established literary style rather than a folk or plebeian style. Instead of echoing the rhythms and vocabulary of peasant songs and rhymes, worker-poets typically imitated popular, established Russian writers, especially Pushkin, Nekrasov, Ivan Nikitin, and Semen Nadson; foreign writers, such as Walt Whitman and Emile Verhaeren; and, though only rarely, contemporary poets such as Aleksandr Blok and Valerii Briusov. And instead of telling stories in the manner of the folktale—a style often adopted by radical intelligentsy who sought to appeal to

the people—worker prose writers were more likely to emulate Turgenev, Korolenko, or Chekhov.

Writing in the language of one's "betters" was, if only half-consciously, a transgressive and subversive gesture. High literary style was an emblem of the culture from which workers were excluded. Thus, in Russia as elsewhere, "workers' poetry was not at first an echo of popular speech but an initiation into the sacred language, the forbidden and fascinating language of others."<sup>32</sup> Its fascination derived precisely from its sanctified position in the established culture. Its otherness made it a symbol of workers' subordination and exclusion, making cultural imitation also appropriation, a half-conscious act of self-assertion and social rebellion. The reverence with which workers often regarded the printed word reflected this function of challenging boundaries. Still, this was not a collective challenge, though it defied boundaries that defined social groups. Reading and writing remained individual acts even when cast as part of a scenario of social protest.

Most important, when writing, workers constantly sought to show that the hierarchies and boundaries that set workers apart as different and subordinate were violations of the universal moral truth that all people are by nature equal. Exploitation, in this light, was defined less as an unequal economic relationship than an insult to workers' inward self (*lichnost'*); in the words of the printer and cultural critic Ivan Kubikov, it was a kind of "moral oppression."<sup>33</sup> In their writings, workers constantly referred to the universalized ideal of selfhood as possessing the "dignity that is common to all humanity" (*obshchechelovecheskoe dostoinstvo*).<sup>34</sup> This was a pervasive theme in Russia's first legal workers' newspaper, the only one before 1905, the printers' *Naborshchik* (The Compositor). The workers who contributed essays and poems to this widely read paper endlessly repeated variations on the same motif: "we are people like any other"; we are "men and not machines"; those in authority must "respect the human dignity in each of us"; "the rights of the worker, as a human being, must not be trampled upon."<sup>35</sup> In 1905 and after, articulate workers continued to interpret exploitation and the struggle against it as concerned above all with human worth and dignity. "One must stand at all the crossroads," wrote the compositor-essayist Stepan Tsorn in July 1905, "and shout that the strong are suffocating the weak. Let everyone know that . . . force still rules over the

human person [*lichnost' cheloveka*]." Repeatedly during the struggles of 1905 and after, workers reiterated that they were "human beings" not "cattle," "machines," or "slaves." This self-identity was treated as the essential and legitimating source of their rights. The universal right to "live as human beings" was a necessary sign of historical progress: "We live in the twentieth century," wrote the worker-publicist Savelii Degterev in August 1905, "when the human person [*lichnost' cheloveka*] is completely free and when every manifestation of a person's autonomy ought to be welcomed by every thinking person." This right was recognized as grounded in Western culture, especially in the ethical teachings of Christianity: Christ, Degterev insisted, "preached the freedom of the person [*svoboda lichnosti*] all His life."<sup>36</sup> Variations on these themes pervaded workers' writings in 1905 and after.<sup>37</sup>

The 1905 Revolution itself, as many saw it, was the moment not only when Russian workers first came together as a class, but when their human selves were awakened and workers were reborn as people. "Baker!," read a 1906 essay in the bakers' trade union paper—appropriately on the anniversary of the abolition of serfdom—"You are a Human Being [*Chelovek*]. From now on you will be a Human Being. Consider 1905 the year of your creation [*tvorenie*]."<sup>38</sup> The leaders of the Moscow tavern workers' union emphasized the same point by naming their union paper "*Man*" (*Chelovek*), ironically appropriating the customer's conventional term of address for waiters in order to remind others (and workers themselves) that the tavern worker is not simply a "'man' in quotation marks," but a "living human personality" (*zhivaia chelovecheskaia lichnost'*) whose "all-human dignity" must be respected.<sup>39</sup> The seemingly simple identification of the worker as a human being was, in Russia as elsewhere, a vital notion of universalized selfhood whose potent moral energy would be directed against all forms of social subordination.

Although most workers' writings were solemn in tone, a number of worker-writers made use of the subversive and transgressive power of satire and humor. Laughter, by its nature, can be life-affirming and self-confident but can also be a weapon of criticism, targeting, especially, personal indignities and social boundaries.<sup>40</sup> It is therefore not surprising that satire and humor were regular and popular features of Russia's new trade union papers between 1905 and 1917.<sup>41</sup> In 1907 printing workers established a short-lived journal

devoted entirely to humor.<sup>42</sup> From 1909 until the world war, a number of satirical periodicals appeared, directed at a wide popular audience; they were edited by self-proclaimed *samorodki*—a term used to describe uneducated but gifted common people who had become authors or artists.<sup>43</sup>

In satirical writings, as in more earnest pieces, worker-humorists sought to shame the institutions, classes, and individuals that humiliated them. Worker-satirists laughed most heartily at those who used their power to degrade workers, who treated workers as if they were less than human. For example, in a feuilleton that extended over two issues of the printers' journal *Balda*, a female teacher was lampooned for befriending a compositor when she did not know he was a worker, but then rudely acting as if she had never met him when she discovered him at work (where she came to place an order for calling cards).<sup>44</sup> Worker-writers were determined to respond to the "insults of the bourgeois," as one worker-poet put it, with a "free proletarian laugh."<sup>45</sup>

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As radicals, worker-writers refused to accept the inevitability of social injuries to the self. But their persistent focus on personal injury and personal dignity complicated the collectivism of their social protest. Likewise, their solutions to oppression continued to reveal their obsession with the self and the individual. They found salvation above all in individual self-assertion and will. Indeed, the notion of "will" (*volia*, meaning both freedom and will) preoccupied their thought about how to overcome humiliation and insult.

One essential means of resisting oppression, many of these worker-writers believed, was to strengthen the inner selves of the poor. They focused a steady stream of criticism on what they saw as the weak and undeveloped personalities of most lower-class Russians. Drunkenness was particularly targeted as both a sign and a cause of a weak self, a critique of workers' moral personalities that was made particularly forcefully in the difficult years from 1907 to 1912. Satirical and serious writings alike shamed workers for drunkenness, swearing, gambling, and other degrading "unseemly" behavior, for lying to their wives about wages squandered on drink,

and for treating women as sexual objects.<sup>46</sup> In 1908, an essay in the paper of the Petersburg Union of Metalworkers gloomily noted the irony that just at the moment when employers' assaults on labor were reaching the most "crude and inhuman forms," one saw among workers a "growing shallowness [*izmel'chanie*] of proletarian thinking [and] the manifestation of base instincts."<sup>47</sup> Two years later, the prominent worker-leader of the same union, Fedor Bulkin, wrote a stinging indictment of workers' "moral negligence" (*nравstvennaia khalatnost'*), dishonesty, crass literary tastes (*pinkertonovshchina*), and, more generally, of the "flourishing of low instincts" among workers. Like other Marxists, Bulkin blamed society and especially the autocratic state for "dehumanizing" workers, but he also insisted that workers, and especially their leaders, must take responsibility for this outcome.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Avgust Tens, a compositor well known for his many writings in trade union papers and for his years of leadership in the Petersburg Printers' Union, insisted that drunkenness cannot be dismissed as simply a product of social conditions: "Drunkenness is a disease of the will, and the will depends on reason. It is necessary to develop reason. It is all about culture."<sup>49</sup> And, one might add—for this was implicit—all about the self.

Drunkenness, lack of self-discipline, crude manners, ignorance, and a general lack of culture—all of these were condemned by worker-writers as practical obstacles to the workers' collective struggle, making workers "passive," "apathetic," "undisciplined," and unable to "stand up for their interests."<sup>50</sup> Taking a longer but still largely practical view, some worker-authors—for example, Kubikov (writing in 1909, when he was chair of the Petersburg Printers' Union)—insisted that workers must be culturally and morally prepared for their future historical role. Quoting Ferdinand Lassalle, Kubikov maintained that since workers were the "rock on which the church of the future will be built," that foundation needed to be strong and "polished." More immediately, he argued, echoing the views of many activists, workers' class consciousness was closely connected to their cultural level: every lecture on science and every reading of a classic work of literature led workers to "understand the order of things."<sup>51</sup>

But moral and cultural backwardness were denounced not only on pragmatic grounds (the needs of the class struggle), but also as inherent evils, inflicting great harm on the individual. Just as personal culture was seen as aiding the class struggle, class struggle was

seen as serving the development of the individual self. Each depended on the other. Indeed, the purpose of the labor movement, many believed, was precisely to emancipate workers' human selves. Even in the midst of the revolutionary year 1917, workers were still to be heard castigating drunkenness not only because it hinders collective action, but also because it "defaces the image of man" (*obezlichivaet obraz cheloveka*).<sup>52</sup>

A second and even more significant way in which worker-writers imagined the power of will as overcoming the injuries of class was in the attention they paid to heroes. The heroes were, first and foremost, the worker-writers themselves. They invariably portrayed their determination to write as reflecting a deep personal need and marking them as special individuals with a special mission. Egor Nechaev, for example, who worked in a provincial glass factory, described responding to a semi-mystical call that came to him when he was 17. His mother, a domestic servant, would bring home leftovers from her employer's dinner. Once they were wrapped in an old magazine that happened to contain the autobiography, portrait, and verses of the self-taught shopkeeper-poet Ivan Surikov. After feverishly reading these texts, Nechaev reported, an "inner voice" counseled him that he too could become a writer.<sup>53</sup> Nikolai Kuznetsov, whose parents were textile workers near Moscow, recalls that as a child left to wander the streets, he found himself uncontrollably drawn to book kiosks, where he would stand and stare at the books behind the windows—even before he had learned to read.<sup>54</sup> Gorky, who corresponded with hundreds of beginning writers before and after 1917, reported that many of his worker and peasant correspondents made similar allusions to some higher or inner force driving them to read and write. One worker, a turner, told Gorky that he could not sleep at night, so tortured was he by the thoughts inside him trying to get out. Many spoke of "fires" burning within them. A metalworker claimed—and Gorky reported that such expressions were typical—that a "mysterious force" (*nevedomaia sila*) drove him to write.<sup>55</sup>

Workers typically represented themselves not only as inspired to write, but as individually sanctified by their sufferings in the service of the writer's calling. Many recalled being beaten when their supervisors caught them reading or writing at work or even when their parents caught them reading or writing at home. Il'ia Sadof'ev,

for example, wrote that at the age of ten he was given an “exemplary thrashing” by his father for “the shame of wanting to be a scribbler”; the beating was so severe that he was confined to bed for two weeks. Sergei Obradovich, a stereotyper in a print shop, was repeatedly tormented by his foreman for writing poems on scraps of paper. Some workers even claimed to have tortured themselves out of devotion to reading—denying themselves food, for example, in order to save money to buy books.<sup>56</sup>

These autobiographical representations of assertive and suffering selves were mixtures of memory and conscious myth-making. But the myth they presented is a telling one. While insisting on their devotion to the common good, the writers gave voice to their self-identities as striving individuals—heroes and outsiders—not as members of one popular community or even as rank-and-file soldiers in the class struggle. Here we can recognize images refracted from literature: the self-assertive, superior, and rebellious individual of bandit tales and adventure sagas;<sup>57</sup> Nietzschean rebels against convention and slavishness. There were even echoes of the lives of saints—often the first literature that workers encountered—with their inspiring accounts of an exceptional individual suffering in the pursuit and the service of truth.

At the same time, like Nietzsche's supermen (but also in the Russian radical tradition), the worker-writers were individualists who realized themselves by looking beyond themselves. The worker-poet Aleksei Solov'ev recalled that after reading stories as a youth about bandits, heroes, and adventurers, he dreamed of himself “becoming one of the most daring of heroes . . . ruthlessly wreaking vengeance on the powerful, and especially on their lackey-parasites, for squeezing the juices out of the working folk.”<sup>58</sup> Solov'ev joined the Bolsheviks partly to realize this self-ideal in militant class struggle. But though a socialist, his self-image remained individualistic and heroic. Indeed, he chose as his revolutionary pseudonym “Neliudim,” which may be loosely translated as one who is not one of the ordinary, conventional people. Similarly, the metalworker Aleksei Mashirov, the Bolshevik poet, renamed himself “Samobytnik,” expressing his own self-image as unique and original.

Worker-writers frequently imagined themselves appearing to the suffering people as saviors. Though a Marxist, the young worker Vasili Aleksandrovskii represented himself as a Christ-like savior:

I will be there, where backs are bent  
 Where labor is profaned and defiled  
 Where the cries of grief are heard  
 And the noise and roar of machines.  
 I will be there, where children perish  
 In the grasp of rough labor. . . .  
 I will give them new thoughts  
 And instinctual distant desires.  
 Each is within me, and I am in everyone.<sup>59</sup>

It was not uncommon for worker-poets to envision themselves in flight, typically as eagles or falcons.<sup>60</sup> Sergei Gan'shin, a frequent contributor to *Pravda* in 1913–14, described himself as “an eagle from the skies,” whose “mighty voice, like a tocsin,” rings out the news of victory “in the great and sacred struggle.”<sup>61</sup> Aleksei Mashirov portrayed himself as coming to the people in sacrificial yet inspiring flight, like a “meteor falling into the deep abyss.”<sup>62</sup> Similarly, Kubikov was attracted by Gleb Uspenskii's fantasy (possibly stimulated by his mental illness) that he could fly and that the sight of him soaring above the world would shame the oppressors and inspire the oppressed.<sup>63</sup> In each case, these were heroic acts of individuals but performed not for themselves alone. In the tradition of the Russian intelligentsia, individualistic self-realization was linked to an identity and a purpose that went beyond self. Individual exaltation and devotion to the collective were assumed to be intertwined.

But ambivalence remained. The savior was still an exalted individual; “flight” above the common and harsh world was often for its own pleasure; idealization and assertion of the self often seemed an end in itself. Most important, at the level of ethics, the moral primacy given to workers' identity as human beings ultimately acted to undermine class identity. The purpose of the workers' movement, as voiced by these outspoken and influential workers, was not to build a “proletarian” social and cultural order, but to demolish the barriers that kept workers separate, that restricted their natural free selves. Class struggle, in their conception, was aimed less against a different and dominant class than against class difference and domination itself. At least implicitly, this view echoed the Marxist dialectic that saw the particularistic class outlook of the proletariat as ultimately negating the very idea of class, thereby giving to the working class a messianic historical role as a “universal class,” destined not only to save itself

but to deliver all humanity. The neat logic of this dialectic, however, did not erase the ambivalence in the self-identity of many workers. At the heart of the self-idea of most worker-writers remained, at a minimum, the desire to be treated respectfully, as human beings, and thus as individuals rather than as workers, and occasionally there were even more radical ideals of individual exaltation. But this ambivalence did not weaken the inspirational power of the cult of the person to explain, legitimize, and mobilize.

#### NOTES

1. Influential studies in a variety of disciplines that have explored the interrelations between the self, ideas about the self, and moral reasoning include Lawrence Kohlberg, *Essays on Moral Development*, 2 vols. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981–83); Clifford Geertz, "From the Native's Point of View': On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding," in C. Geertz, *Local Knowledge* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), pp. 55–70; Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes, eds., *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989); Richard A. Shweder, *Thinking Through Cultures: Expeditions in Cultural Psychology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 113–85; Gil Noam and Thomas Wren, eds., *The Moral Self* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993). During his last years, Michel Foucault began to explore the historical importance of ideas about the self in the "genealogy of ethics." See his interview in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 229–52.
2. L. M. Kleinbort, "Ocherki rabochei demokratii," part 1, *Sovremennyyi mir*, March 1913, pp. 32–44, and part 5, November 1913, pp. 178–85 (for use of these terms, see pp. 182, 185). A comparable expression had been used earlier by Emile Durkheim. See "L'Individualisme et les intellectuels" (1898), trans. Steven Lukes, *Political Studies* 17, 1 (March 1969): 19–30. Although Kleinbort employs "kul't cheloveka" in quotation marks, he mentions no source.
3. For discussion of and references to published sources, see M. Gorkii, "O pisateliakh-samouchkakh" (1911), in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 24 (Moscow: Gos. izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1953), pp. 99–101; L. M. Kleinbort, *Ocherki narodnoi literatury (1880–1923 gg.)* (Leningrad, 1924); V. L. L'vov-Rogachevskii, *Ocherki proletarskoi literatury* (Moscow: Moskovskoe

- aktsionernoe izdatel'skoe obshchestvo, 1927); N. V. Os'makov, *Russkaia proletarskaia poeziia, 1890–1917* (Moscow: Nauka, 1968).
4. This sense of alienation is attested to in numerous memoirs. For some published examples, see P. Ia. Zavolokin, ed., *Sovremennye raboche-krest'ianskie poety* (Ivanovo-Voznesensk: Osnova, 1925), and S. A. Rodov, ed., *Proletarskie pisateli* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1924).
  5. Jacques Rancière, *The Nights of Labor: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), p. 20.
  6. See the discussions in Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, ed., *Nietzsche in Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). On Mikhailovskii, see Ann Lane, "Nietzsche Comes to Russia: Popularization and Protest in the 1890s," in *ibid.*, pp. 63–65.
  7. A. V. Lunacharskii, "Voprosy morali i M. Meterlink" (1904); quoted in George L. Kline, "Changing Attitudes toward the Individual," in *The Transformation of Russian Society*, ed. Cyril E. Black (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 619. See also A. V. Lunacharskii, "Meshchanstvo i individualizm" (1909), in *Meshchanstvo i individualizm: Sbornik statei* (Moscow, 1923), pp. 5–136.
  8. See esp. the essays by Ann Lane, Mary Louise Loe, and Edith Clowes in Rosenthal, ed. Of course, Nietzsche was not the only source of "Nietzschean" ideas. Dostoevsky, in particular, voiced quite similar ideas. See the essay by Mihajlo Mihajlov in *ibid.*
  9. For a discussion of Gorky's attitude toward the individual in the light of Nietzsche's ideas, see Mary Louise Loe, "Gorky and Nietzsche: The Quest for the Russian Superman," in Rosenthal, ed., pp. 251–73.
  10. *Ogni*, no. 3 (January 1913): 27.
  11. I. Dement'ev [Kubikov], "N. V. Gogol'," *Pechatnoe delo*, no. 5 (21 March 1909): 9.
  12. *Novoe pechatnoe delo*, no. 1 (16 June 1911): 3–6.
  13. Jeffrey Brooks: *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861–1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), and "Competing Modes of Popular Discourse: Individualism and Class Consciousness in the Russian Print Media," in *Culture et révolution*, ed. M. Ferro and S. Fitzpatrick (Paris: Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1989), pp. 71–81.
  14. On the folk songs, see Robert Rothstein, "Death of the Folk Song?," in *Cultures in Flux: Lower Class Values, Practices and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Stephen Frank and Mark Steinberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 108–20.
  15. This is one of Taylor's arguments in *The Sources of the Self*.
  16. Egor Nechaev, "Na rabotu" (written 1881; first published 1919), in *U istokov russkoi proletarskoi poezii* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1965), p. 43. See also "Na rabote" (1880; revised for its first publication in 1920), in *ibid.*, p. 40.

17. *Naborshchik* 1, 45 (7 September 1903): 682. See also *ibid.*, no. 49 (5 October 1903): 745.
18. See esp. "Pered shabashom," in *U istokov*, pp. 40–41, and "Bublik," in Egor Nechaev, *Gutari: izbrannaia proza* (Moscow, 1938), pp. 7–12.
19. *Rodnye vesti*, no. 3 (4) (1911): 5–6 (Stepan Bruskov).
20. Nechaev: "Bezrobotnyi" (publ. 1909 and again in 1922); reprinted in *U istokov*, p. 48, and "Moia pesnia" (1906), in *ibid.*, p. 92.
21. *Golos portnogo*, no. 1–2 (10 May 1910): 10.
22. N. Ivanov in *Pervyi sbornik proletarskikh pisatelei* (St. Petersburg, 1914), pp. 56–61.
23. *Bulochnik*, no. 2 (26 February 1906): 20–22.
24. F. Gavrilov, "Son," in *Proletarskie poety*, vol. 1 (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1935), pp. 197–201.
25. *Metallist*, no. 4 (10 November 1911): 7–8; *Pechatnoe delo*, no. 24 (11 September 1910): 3–4.
26. *Pechatnyi vestnik*, no. 1 (12 February 1906): 2; *Pechatnik*, no. 1 (23 April 1906): 12; *Vestnik pechatnikov*, no. 6 (28 May 1906): 3.
27. *Golos portnogo*, no. 3 (10 July 1910): 3–4, 8. See also Petr Zaitsev (a shoemaker who briefly published and did most of the writing for this magazine for the common reader) in *Kolotushka*, no. 1 (1911): 3, and no. 2 (1911): 4; M. Chernysheva (a seamstress and salesgirl who wrote under the name "Baba Mar'ia") in *Dumy narodnye*, no. 7 (13 March 1910): 5.
28. See, for example, Valerian Polianskii (P. I. Lebedev), "Motivy rabochei poezii" (1918), in his *Na literaturnom fronte* (Moscow, 1924), pp. 23–28; L'vov-Rogachevskii, p. 14; Os'makov, pp. 50–51, 69–70, 100; "Proletarskaia poeziia," in *Istoriia russkoi literatury*, vol. 4 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1983), pp. 396–97.
29. Semen Kluben', in *Griadushchaia kul'tura* (Tambov), no. 2 (December 1918): 24.
30. Nechaev, "Mne khotelos' by pesniu svobodnuiu pet'" (1906), in *U istokov*, p. 89.
31. A. Pomorskii, "Pesnia," *Metallist*, no. 4(28) (3 July 1913): 4.
32. Jacques Rancière, "Ronds de fumée (Les poètes ouvriers dans la France de Louis-Philippe)," *Revue des sciences humaines*, no. 190 (April–June 1983): 33.
33. *Pechatnoe delo*, no. 24 (11 September 1910): 2.
34. For example, in the tavern-workers' paper *Chelovek*, no. 1 (13 February 1911): 1.
35. *Naborshchik*, no. 5 (1 December 1902): 89; no. 8 (22 December 1902): 134; no. 15 (9 February 1903): 251; no. 19 (9 March 1903): 313; no. 46 (14 September 1903): 694. Many such examples could be cited.
36. *Ibid.*, no. 9 (28 August 1905): 8.

37. For some typical examples, see *Pechatnyi vestnik*, no. 3 (23 June 1905): 21–23; no. 11 (11 September 1905): 3, 7; *Vestnik pechatnikov*, no. 3 (9 May 1906): 4; no. 5 (20 May 1906): 3, 5; no. 6 (28 May 1906): 2–3; *Pechatnik*, no. 3 (14 May 1906): 12–13; no. 8 (23 July 1906): 6–7; Nechaev, “Golos dushi,” *Zhurnal dlia vsekh* (1906); reprinted in *U istokov*, p. 88; *Bulochnik*, no. 3 (12 March 1906): 39–40; *Metallist*, no. 8 (13 January 1912): 8.
38. *Bulochnik*, no. 1 (19 February 1906): 8.
39. *Chelovek*, no. 1 (13 February 1911): 1.
40. A. V. Lunacharskii, “O smekhe” (1931), in his *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1967), pp. 531–38 (first printed in *Literaturnyi kritik*, no. 4 [April 1935]); Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965).
41. L. Kleinbort, “Ocherki rabochei demokratii,” *Sovremennyi mir* (August 1913): 190–91.
42. At first called *Balda*, the journal was renamed *Topor* when it re-registered after being closed by the government. The titles were terms in printers’ trade jargon referring to drinking customs.
43. For example, *Balagur* (Moscow, 1910–14), *Dolina* (Moscow, 1910–12), *Balalaika* (Moscow, 1910–11), *Boi-rozhok* (Moscow, 1911–14), *Ostriak: Kopekai-zlodeika* (Moscow, 1909–14), *Rodnoi gusliar* (Moscow, 1910–11), and *Veselyi skomorokh* (Moscow, 1911–13). Satire was also frequently used in other journals edited and authored by samorodki, in some cases identifiable as former workers, and directed at common readers; a good example is the worker M. A. Loginov’s *Dumy narodnye* (Moscow, 1910–12).
44. *Balda*, no. 2 (9 January 1907): 5–6; no. 3 (16 January 1907): 4–5.
45. *Balda*, no. 1 (9 January 1907): 2. This intent was also expressed in their motto, “In laughter—strength” (*smekh—sila*)—a wry but respectful echo of the ubiquitous workers’ slogan “In unity—strength.”
46. For example, *Naborshchik i pechatnyi mir*, no. 109 (10 May 1905): 203; *Pechatnyi vestnik*, no. 6 (7 August 1905): 4, and no. 2 (19 February 1906): 2–3; *Pechatnik*, no. 4 (21 May 1906): 6–7, and no. 8 (23 July 1906): 16; *Pechatnoe delo*, no. 15 (9 February 1907): 7; *Balda*, no. 1 (7 January 1907): 8, no. 2 (9 January 1907): 1, 4, 5–7, and no. 3 (16 January 1907): 2, 4–6; *Edinstvo*, no. 15 (12 March 1910): 11–12; *Chelovek*, no. 3 (27 March 1911): 12; *Pechatnoe delo*, no. 3 (17 June 1917): 7; *Pechatnik*, no. 2–3 (6 August 1917): 5–7, 15, and no. 6 (28 October 1917): 8.
47. *Metallist*, “K karakteristike nastroenii v rabochei srede,” *Nadezhda*, no. 2 (26 September 1908): 10.
48. Fedor Bulkin, “Bol’noi vopros (upadok npravov v rabochei srede),” *Nash put’*, no. 11 (20 December 1910): 7–8.
49. *Pechatnoe delo*, no. 13 (24 November 1909): 10–11.

50. *Pechatnik*, no. 1 (23 April 1906): 11–12; *Pechatnoe delo*, no. 15 (9 February 1907): 7; *Protokoly pervoi vserossiiskoi konferentsii soiuzov rabochikh pechatnogo dela* (St. Petersburg, 1907), pp. 80, 82, 109.
51. Kvadrat [Kubikov], "Alkogolizm i usloviia bor'by s nim," *Professional'nyi vestnik*, no. 26 (31 October 1909): 6–8.
52. *Pechatnik*, no. 2–3 (6 August 1917): 6. See also *Pechatnoe delo*, no. 2 (4 June 1917): 8.
53. Rodov, ed., *Proletarskie pisateli*, p. 434.
54. Zavolokin, ed., *Sovremennye raboche-krest'ianskie poety*, p. 128. See also pp. 15, 62.
55. Gorkii, "O pisateliakh-samouchkakh," pp. 105–8. See also Arkhiv A. M. Gor'kogo, KG-NP/A 22-4:1–2.
56. Zavolokin, ed., pp. 53–54, 76, 107; Gorkii, "O pisateliakh-samouchkakh," pp. 106, 108.
57. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, ch. 5.
58. Zavolokin, ed., pp. 115, 214.
59. V. Aleksandrovskii, "Novye pesni," *Nashi pesni*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1913), p. 11.
60. For Nietzsche's use of the symbol of human flight, see *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961), esp. pp. 68–69, 89, 166, 185. Gorky used the image of flight with consciously Nietzschean intent in his well-known and influential *Pesnia o sokole* (1895).
61. Sergei Gan'shin, "Orel," a manuscript poem sent to Gorky, in Arkhiv A. M. Gor'kogo, RAV-PG 37-13-1.
62. See especially Mashirov, "Moim sobrat'iam," *Prosnuvshaiasia zhizn'* (manuscript journal, 1913), and "Zarnitsy," *Proletarskaia pravda* (18 September 1913), both reprinted in *Proletarskie poety*, vol. 2 (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1936), pp. 89–90. See also "Grebtisy" (1912), in *ibid.*, p. 87.
63. *Pechatnoe delo*, no. 5 (11 May 1912): 9.

## **PATRIOTS OR PROLETARIANS? RUSSIAN WORKERS AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR<sup>1</sup>**

**Hubertus F. Jahn**

In the exploration of Russian labor history, World War I has customarily been reduced to an event either delaying or actually causing the Revolution of 1917. On the one hand, Soviet historiography depicted the revolution as the inevitable outcome of the historical process, which, due largely to the suppression of the Bolshevik party at the beginning of the war, was postponed from July 1914 to October 1917. On the other hand, a number of Western historians asserted that Russia was evolving toward a more democratic system along the Western model before 1914, and, consequently, that the pressures and catastrophes of the war laid the social and economic groundwork for the Bolshevik "coup" in 1917. In the aftermath of Leopold Haimson's observations on social stability in urban Russia, both standpoints have been questioned and revised. We now know that profound rifts existed within Russian society, rifts that deepened during the war and eventually led to the installation and then to the collapse of the dual power arrangement of February 1917. Likewise, the assertion of many Soviet historians that by 1914 the Bolshevik party was the representative of a mature, class-conscious, revolutionary proletariat can hardly be substantiated by historical data.<sup>2</sup>

Since the 1960s, Western historians who do not subscribe to the "coup" theory have focused almost exclusively on either the period before 1914 or the revolutionary year 1917 itself. By studying political parties and ideologies, economic developments, strike movements, labor organization, and the everyday life of workers, they have convincingly shown a process of radicalization over the 1890s through 1905, and again from the Lena goldfield massacre of 1912 through the strike waves of 1914. They have further demonstrated

that the success of the October Revolution depended on growing radicalism among workers, especially those of St. Petersburg and Moscow, as well as the initial flexibility of the Bolshevik party. Their attention was focused, perhaps inevitably, considering sources, on the revolutionary intelligentsia and to a lesser degree the worker intelligentsia.

Yet the critical group toward the end of the 1914 strike waves and during the renewal of the movement in 1916–17 was, in a way, the “mass” of workers, those thousands of workers whose individual voices only rarely speak to historians. We know little about their ideas, attitudes, or political views. We do know, however, that they may have supported a strike or some revolutionary action at one moment and then gone on to participate in a pogrom, as Charters Wynn has shown for the Donbass-Dnepr region.<sup>3</sup> Wynn’s examples suggest that the outlook of workers who were not part of the revolutionary elite was more complex than has been thus far documented. Different and even contradictory attitudes and ideas apparently could and did coexist within a single worker, thereby making identity a multilayered phenomenon, dependent not only on radical ideologies and socioeconomic factors, but also on levels of urbanization, job skills, education, and many other individual and collective experiences.

The attitudes of workers toward the world war corroborate this point. As is well known, the outbreak of war abruptly ended a major wave of strikes. In what appears like an about-face, workers in St. Petersburg factories expressed their patriotic support for the war by singing the national anthem at the start of the workday. Moreover, patriotic manifestations, which workers and their erstwhile left-wing allies, the students, joined in large numbers, occurred in all the major cities of Russia. In St. Petersburg, according to the popular newspaper *Peterburgskii listok*, workers and students composed the bulk of patriotic demonstrators through March 1915, when, after the fall of Przemyśl, women workers even led a patriotic demonstration from the city outskirts all the way to the Nevskii Prospekt.<sup>4</sup> Does this mean that workers were patriotic? Had patriotic loyalty to the nation displaced the economic and political demands of the July 1914 strike movement?

The narrative of labor history for the years 1914–17 has thus far relied considerably on the chronology and the intensity of strikes. With the help of statistics, strikes and those participating in them

have been traced from month to month and from the national to the provincial and local levels.<sup>5</sup> By investigating the number of strikes at a certain time as well as their economic or political character, historians have shown how workers, after an initial lapse into patriotism and away from strike action, found their way back to the cause. Patriotism thus appears as a kind of temporary deviation from the path to revolution and clearly in opposition to the strike movement, which supposedly expressed the workers' real attitudes.

The interpretation of both patriotic demonstrations and the strike movement is, however, more complex than meets the eye. It is impossible to know the exact mixture or personal motivations of the workers participating in patriotic manifestations, just as it is impossible to understand workers' attitudes toward the war simply by counting the number of strikes. Does the shift from demonstration to strike mean that political and economic issues had completely displaced patriotism in 1915 or only that the relative balance of their importance had changed? A chronology of strikes and, for that matter, of patriotic manifestations also reveals little about the content of workers' attitudes toward war and patriotism.<sup>6</sup> It cannot shed light on the associations workers made when they heard or sang the national anthem, nor does it illuminate their ideas regarding the enemy or, indeed, their country. To examine the content of workers' attitudes toward the war as well as their change over time, we must look beyond their dim reflection in the statistics of demonstrations and strikes.

The study of popular entertainment provides one point of access to the world of workers' thoughts and dreams. By 1914, industrial workers participated in an increasingly diversified urban mass culture. Aside from such customary leisure activities as drinking, fistfights, or promenading, they also went to the circus, amusement parks, movies, the "people's houses" (*narodnye doma*), and even plays and operettas. In addition, workers formed an important urban market for popular broadsides (*lubki*) and postcards (used to decorate their living quarters or to send greetings to relatives and friends), as well as for cheap literature, the penny press, and inexpensive journals. Alongside other urban groups, workers were assuming the role of consumers of cultural products; consequently, the "products" themselves—from the circus to the postcards—increasingly depended on their customers. The "primacy of the market

place" that Daniel Brower has identified for the penny press was of similar importance to other forms of mass entertainment. To survive, mass entertainments had to meet the expectations of their viewers and audiences.<sup>7</sup>

Attendance figures in 1915 and 1916 for typical lower-class entertainments, including the circus, people's houses, movies, and amusement parks, show the tremendous popularity of these venues. In 1916, Petrograd's people's theater (*narodnyi teatr*) was visited by more than 1.5 million people, followed by the amusement parks and the movie theaters, with about half a million visitors each. One can safely assume that workers made up a sizable number of the visitors. A similar conclusion must be drawn from the unprecedented output of *lubki* and postcards, which reached several million during the war. Although it is not possible to calculate the percentage of workers buying these pictures, many of them were expressly designed for the urban lower classes, which included many thousand workers.<sup>8</sup>

For some labor historians, it may seem inappropriate to subsume workers under the admittedly general term of urban lower classes rather than to construct them as *the* "working class," composed of particular subgroups such as the skilled and unskilled, textile workers, and metalworkers. But aside from their professional identity, workers were also part of the lower strata of urban society, and it is this aspect of their identity which has thus far remained understudied. This article will not recreate the workers as a separate entity, therefore, but instead investigate the broader group of which they were a part and with which they shared their leisure time and amusements.

Circus, theaters, movies, and other visual materials conveyed a variety of messages that shaped or confirmed images and ideas in the minds of their consumers, thereby constituting an important part of what anthropologist Victor Turner has called the "metaphors and paradigms in their heads."<sup>9</sup> These themes and motifs are available to the historian. Although the individual reception of and reaction to mass culture is usually beyond the historian's grasp, the images themselves provide categories of *Weltanschauung* that help us interpret historical actions and developments. Their analysis can thus illuminate the many aspects of human imagination that often elude historical explanation. As a contemporary art critic put it, referring

to patriotic *lubki*, cultural artifacts help us to grasp the “mood of an era.”<sup>10</sup>

Images of patriotism in Russian mass culture during World War I were colorful, numerous, and highly varied. Ranging from the solemn and ceremonial to the comical, the sentimental and melodramatic to the escapist, the images reveal a multitude of patriotisms. Official state symbols and heraldry competed with popular heroes and ethnic jokes; traditional folklore coexisted with the technological innovations and atrocities of this first truly modern war. In addition, older forms of popular and patriotic display such as *lubok* were recycled and ultimately supplanted by new genres of mass culture such as the cinema, phonographs, postcards, and posters. Popular cliché images of Germans, Austrians, and Turks were revived and adjusted to the new situation.

Integral to patriotism during a time of war is the fashioning of an enemy—that is, the projection of all sorts of negative stereotypes (which by definition are alien to one’s own national character) onto a foreign country, its rulers, and its people. In order to achieve highly differentiated (and divisive) results, crude simplification is crucial. Not surprisingly, popular culture excelled in this kind of negative patriotism. During the first months of war, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany became the main target of ridicule and abuse in lower-class entertainment; Kaiser Franz-Josef of Austria-Hungary and the Turkish Sultan came in a distant second and third, respectively.

Ordinary Russians could draw on a whole set of stereotypes about Germans. After all, since Germans had lived among them for two centuries as bureaucrats, merchants, craftsmen, and rural colonists, Russians knew them better than most other people. Germans were perceived, for example, as the typical representatives of the St. Petersburg petite bourgeoisie or *meshchanstvo*, with its presumed philistinism and self-importance. After the creation of the German empire in 1871, Germans were also increasingly associated with the allegedly Prussian qualities of military arrogance and malicious pedantry. At the outbreak of World War I, and along with the armies, all these clichés were easily mobilized, and in the first months of the war they converged on the figure of the Kaiser.<sup>11</sup>

Wilhelm II was the sole motif of about 30 percent of patriotic postcards and the main villain of comical *lubki*. Both of these art forms catered to a broad and mostly lower-class audience. Their

attacks on the Kaiser were unambiguous and razor-sharp. Lubki featured Wilhelm as the Antichrist riding on a wild boar and as a mad dog with a spiked helmet. Postcards represented him as a drunken marauder and as a beast in the Moscow zoo; they also give him “the finger” (actually: the fig, *figa*). In this way, both lubki and postcards evoked standard clichés about Germans and transposed them onto Wilhelm. The Moscow publisher I. M. Mashistov even offered lubok and postcard series of popular proverbs about Germans, with the Kaiser now playing the role of the German nation’s representative. One such postcard played on the common Russian epithet for a German, the sausage-maker (*kolbasnik*). It depicts a butcher, with the whiskers of Wilhelm II and the snout of a pig, who is holding hands with a sausage and a wiener; he is introduced as a “real German” (*nastoiashchii nemets*). A list of epithets for Germans then follows: *Nemets-shmerets*, *kopchenyi*, *kolbasa*, *kolbasnik*, *sosiska* (in free translation: the German, that smoked pain in the ass, sausage, sausage-maker, and wiener). Aside from the sausage motif, the text also contains an interesting pun. *Shmerets* is nothing other than the German word *Schmerz*, or pain. It is part of the saying *Akh ty shmerts kopchenyi* (Oh you smoked pain in the ass), a familiar curse against Germans in Russia which survived in the rhyme *nemtsy-shmertsy* well into the middle of this century.<sup>12</sup>

References to popular ethnic clichés and traditional folk entertainment were quite common. Another postcard shows Wilhelm II in the form of a roach, thereby alluding to the colloquial Russian expression for cockroaches, *prusaki* (Prussians—an expression, by the way, that is matched by the colloquial German denomination of these creatures as *Russen*, or Russians). Decorating the helmet worn by the Wilhelm-roach is a spade, a sign of malevolence. Finally, the postcard is divided into two consecutive scenes. In the first, roach Wilhelm pesters the Russian, who, in the second scene turns around and “peppers the German” with his club (*Russkii nemtsu zadal pertsu*). The whole scene is taken right from the Petrushka puppet theater, a staple of lower-class entertainment on the urban fairground, which had a German or German doctor as a standard character. Significantly, the German featured in a Petrushka booklet from 1915 also has whiskers like Wilhelm. As on the postcard, Petrushka beats him over the head with his club, thus providing yet another and in this case quite literal example of Kaiser-bashing.<sup>13</sup>

Attacks on the Kaiser were not restricted to popular forms of the visual arts. In circus shows, Wilhelm was carried into the ring in a wheelbarrow, suggesting a likeness with animal dung.<sup>14</sup> This stunt clearly evoked the tradition of workers' protest, in which a disliked manager or foreman was carted out of the factory in a wheelbarrow.<sup>15</sup> In low-quality films, which early in the war were produced in large numbers specifically for uneducated audiences, and which largely resembled moving lubki, Wilhelm likewise became the object of derision—a slapstick character galloping on a little hobbyhorse in front of paunchy generals, or a puppet-kolbasnik sitting on a zeppelin that resembles a sausage.<sup>16</sup> Patriotism thus reentered many of the traditional genres of popular urban entertainment (lubok, circus, Petrushka shows), but also appeared in new forms of mass entertainment (cinema). At the same time, it appropriated popular images (kolbasnik, the wheelbarrow, the fig sign) and thus became easily accessible, especially to lower-class audiences. This process occurred at the intersection of propaganda and market forces, as patriotism became a commodity, both creating and created by its audience of paying consumers.

The new genre of the movie also introduced a new incarnation for Wilhelm. In films with titles such as *The Shame of the 20th Century* (Pozor XX-go veka) or *The Antichrist*, he took the role of a bogeyman who commits unthinkable atrocities. The popularity of *The Antichrist* provides a good case study. After its release in the spring of 1915, it ran in Moscow for three weeks in a row, an unusual length in these days. Its first showing in the town of Buzuluk turned into Russia's longest movie session ever: from 7 a.m. until midnight. The popularity of the film undoubtedly stemmed from its many scenes of violence and titillating horror, including the destruction of Belgian towns and the sexual assault on a woman by Wilhelm's son. The pleasure and thrill deriving from collective outrage at a vile enemy, at the "German atrocities" (*zverstva nemtsev*), as they were then called, thus attained a certain "patriotic" respectability. That serious critics (quite understandably) despised this kind of film suggests that its popularity was a mass phenomenon, one that a well-educated middle class person found distasteful.<sup>17</sup>

Fashioning the enemy is only one part of patriotism. Of equal and perhaps even greater importance is the development of positive symbols of patriotic loyalty. That is, it is not only necessary to define

the “other,” it is also necessary to define the “self.” While mass culture had a clear focus on the enemy, it lacked a positive national identity. Instead, a variety of motifs and images coexisted, supplying various loci for patriotic loyalty. In Russia as in other countries, of course, the classical positive symbols of national identity were the flag and the national anthem. But these symbols usually come at no cost and, especially during times of war, in such quantities that they offer little value to a more refined analysis. In other words, the fact that the anthem was played in circus shows, in the opera, or in amusement parks was hardly the reason why people went to and paid for these entertainments. They went to see the performances themselves, and it is there that patriotism took on more diversified forms, just as it did in mass-produced *lubki* and postcards.

As a point of patriotic loyalty, Nicholas II in his traditional role of tsar-father (*tsar-batiushka*) was not very prominent in mass entertainment. He appeared on a few postcards, most of which were published by the Skobelev Committee, a semi-official organization in charge of propaganda and charity. Demonstrators carried his portrait at patriotic demonstrations, and it was also frequently displayed at the “Patriotic Concerts” organized by the “Soloist of His Imperial Highness,” the soprano of Petrograd’s Mariinskii Theater, Mariia Dolina. These concerts in particular, usually held at Petrograd’s Circus Ciniselli, were a serious exercise in jingoistic fervor in addition to being charitable events. They featured all the symbolic props of state and Russiandom appropriate to the ideological arming of wartime. Not surprisingly, the national anthem was sung repeatedly. Occasionally, announcements of decorations, imperial decrees, and pastorals of the Orthodox Church added extra solemnity and pomp. With the orchestras of the Imperial Guard Regiments and a huge “patriotic choir” performing the hits of Russian national music, the heroic past of the Romanov dynasty and the Russian military were both celebrated. Grandiose apotheoses and patriotic *tableaux vivants* showed scenes from military history and such national military heroes as Kutuzov and Suvorov against a background of flags, images of St. George, or double-headed eagles.<sup>18</sup>

Who, then, was attracted to these pillars of the Russian empire—tsar, military, and Orthodox Church? In fact, the audiences of Dolina’s concerts came from all walks of life, largely because tickets were distributed in locations as different as factories and the

Women's Medical Institute. Admission charges ranged from as high as 12 rubles to as little as 32 kopecks ("for the workers," as the program of 3 March 1915 stated). However, the fact that tickets had to be distributed at the factories suggests a rather low interest in the shows by actual workers.<sup>19</sup>

If official forms of patriotism and images of the Tsar held relatively little attraction, what *did* draw lower-class audiences? The evidence of circus, variety shows, and people's theater suggests that such audiences preferred motifs from their own world, especially those that built on already popular spectator events or pictured rural life. In other words, themes closer to life rather than abstract symbols had the stronger attraction. In the circus, show-wrestling—staged wrestling matches between "good guys" and "bad guys"—assumed a new patriotic form during the war. The mock battle was now between a Russian and a German (with the vociferous participation of the audience). The "bad German" would typically break some rule or commit some kind of offense, only to be brought to justice and suitably punished by the heroic Russian. Physical violence was a part of both village and urban workers' culture, as was the notion of justice (*pravda*). Wrestling matches both provided and presented the fiction of a simple, clear-cut world of good and evil, so appropriate to the wartime situation.<sup>20</sup>

Folk music and dances performed by traveling musicians in urban taverns, tea rooms, on variety stages, and in the "people's houses" also drew large audiences from the lower classes. At these occasions, workers, street vendors, doormen, and the like gathered to listen to the tunes from the village, to which many of them were obviously still sentimentally attached. If patriotism has a geographic connotation, the popularity of folklore suggests that for many people the "motherland" could be found in some ideal village, where life was idyllic and simple. In this respect the authenticity of the folklore consumed by urban audiences has little importance. Advertisements for all sorts of "Russian choruses," "balalaika orchestras," and "peasant singers" praised the sumptuous costumes of the performers, indicating that the allure of these events depended more on rural stereotypes than on actual country life and folk art. That people nevertheless went in large numbers to such performances suggests that they identified more easily with an abstract village than an abstract state.<sup>21</sup>

The favorite personages of patriotic mass culture were likewise not the Tsar or his generals, but heroes who were clearly closer to the social level and cultural imagination of the audience. As Jeffrey Brooks has shown, Cossacks were staple heroes of popular culture since the days of Stenka Razin. During World War I they became the supreme positive figures of popular patriotism. In the circus, Cossacks presented their famous horseback acrobatics, the *dzhigitovka*, during patriotic spectacles, while the print media produced countless pictures showing them beating up the Kaiser or catching zeppelins with their lances. Individual Cossacks also became the heroes of numerous stories recounted in the press and popular literature. Often introduced by name, they personified the “little” heroes of the war, those of modest social background who achieve fame by their deeds rather than their title or rank. One in particular, Koz’ma Kriuchkov, became a national hero. At the beginning of the war, he was said to have killed eleven Germans at one time with his lance. His heroic deed was reenacted many times in circus and variety shows, in movies and popular literature, and particularly on postcards and *lubki*. Almost all publishers included at least one version of Kriuchkov in their collections, typically the one showing him sitting on his horse with the German soldiers speared like shish kebab on his lance. This embodiment of bravery and cleverness stood in the tradition of such charismatic Cossacks as Stenka Razin, albeit without the rebellious side of the seventeenth-century hero. Nevertheless, Kriuchkov provided a character who combined qualities widely admired in the lower classes—mother wit, peasant instinct, individual prowess, and invincibility. It goes without saying that such idealized Cossacks had little in common with the real ones sometimes encountered by Russian workers and peasants as a brutal police force.<sup>22</sup>

While the deeds of heroic Cossacks allowed many Russians to relish their superiority over the Germans at a safe distance from the front, the war was not only a battle of right and wrong, good and evil. It also entered the real lives of many people, especially from the lower classes. Not surprisingly, therefore, as the war dragged on, human interest stories became increasingly appealing. Postcards and *lubki* showed sentimental scenes of parting couples, caring nurses, and lonesome soldiers standing next to birch trees or dreaming of their families. In the performing arts, the personal side of war caught the interest of broad audiences. The departure to the front of a loved

one and the separation of couples by war were old motifs of village songs; now they were presented in films, plays, and in Petrograd's Circus Ciniselli, where, during a patriotic show, troops paid their farewell and then left by train.<sup>23</sup>

On the drama stage of the Petrograd People's House, the wartime love story became a stock production, reworking the familiar motifs of heroism, tragic love, and loyalty to the motherland in various plots and settings. In the melodramatic play *Behind the Red Cross* (*Za krasnym krestom*), the audience watched a man enlisting in the army out of jealousy—his fiancée had become a nurse and was now tending heroic soldiers, while he, the coward, sat alone at home. In *Love and Motherland* (*Liubov' i rodina*), the classical predicament of a hero caught between loyalty to his beloved and to his country was played out in a fourteenth-century Italian setting, already complete with barbaric Germans! Sentimentality merged in these pieces with fascination for romantic places and situations. Most important, however, was the possibility to identify with the heroes and suffer through their wartime tribulations all the way to the appropriate and morally neat (if sometimes tragic) ending. Such plays provided either consolation or diversion in the face of one's everyday problems.<sup>24</sup>

But above all, during World War I it was the film that triumphed in mass entertainment as larger and larger audiences fell under its spell. According to contemporary observers, the wartime prohibition of alcohol played an important role in filling movie houses with lower-class spectators who would otherwise have gone to the tavern.<sup>25</sup> As an ideal medium for escapism, the movies nourished dreams of the most varied kind. Aside from the patriotic repertoire, spy and detective stories, love melodramas, and social themes (especially social rises and falls) were particularly popular. Newsreels about the war, the so-called *kinokhronika*, were a favorite among people with "connections to the front," as one journal noted—that is, among mostly lower-class audiences.<sup>26</sup> Not surprisingly, these people also flocked to the movie that became the second biggest box office hit in 1916, *The Poor Lad Died in an Army Hospital* (*Umer bedniaga v bol'nitse voennoi*).

*The Poor Lad* was released in the summer of 1916 by the Skobelev Committee. Based on a poem by "K. R." (the pseudonym of Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich) which had become a popular song sung by Nadezhda Plevitskaia, a famous interpreter of

folk music and one of Russia's first phonogram stars, the film was meant to boost patriotic morale. Instead, it soon turned into the symbol of war-weariness. It told the story of a young village lad going to war, saving the life of an officer, but being himself wounded in the action. In the end, the soldier dies far from home, all alone in a military hospital. People in the audiences were regularly moved to tears by this story, in which so many of them obviously recognized their own personal lot.<sup>27</sup>

The success of *The Poor Lad* suggests that the preferences of mass audiences had undergone certain changes since the beginning of the war. And indeed, by the middle of 1915, much of the jingoist repertoire, including the humorous and simplistic translation of the war into wrestling matches and Petrushka "peppers" had disappeared. The Kaiser, though still pictured as "bloody Wilhelm," was beaten up less and less. The funny and daredevil Cossacks became serious and pensive, just as folklore, sentiment, and human interest stories about the war became more popular. Most important, however, in 1915 the war and patriotism generally declined as motifs of mass entertainment, giving way to the customary prewar repertoire of love melodrama, detective stories, social drama, and all sorts of exotic diversions.<sup>28</sup> This development from jingoism to sentimentalism and escapism was of course related to the events of the war itself, to the huge losses of life in the defeats of 1915, and the ensuing disillusionment of Russian society. It was not, however, a ubiquitous development; patriotism did not disappear altogether but surfaced instead at quite unexpected places.

*A Life for the Tsar*, the epitome of Russian national opera, had been performed with declining frequency in the imperial opera houses during the war.<sup>29</sup> All the more surprising was its presentation in 1916 as a season opener at the Petrograd People's House—a novelty, as was noted then—and in the theater of the Putilov factory. It is difficult, of course, to interpret these events as a clear expression of patriotic convictions. Opera shows for workers, such as the one in the Putilov factory, tended to have a charitable character, and tickets were often given away or distributed in a lottery. But Glinka's opera was still a big draw in 1916, and it played to a full house.<sup>30</sup>

As a consumer-oriented enterprise, movies depend on market mechanisms, and specifically on the individual purchase of tickets. For this reason, they provide superior evidence regarding the attitudes

and preferences of their audiences. It was especially in this new mass medium that patriotism and the war lived on despite the general war-weariness. Already in early 1915, the film journal *Sine-Fono* had noted that patriotic films were tremendously successful in the Petrograd working-class neighborhoods near the Narva and Moscow Gates, this at a time when the patriotic repertoire in the cinemas in general was actually declining. *Sine-Fono* noted a similar popularity of patriotic films in the provinces.<sup>31</sup> According to another journal, in the summer of 1916 a movie theater in the city of Kharkov had no other choice but to show patriotic and war films if it wanted to hold on to its lower-class (*neintelligentnaia*) audience.<sup>32</sup> That same year, films about the taking of Erzurum and the resistance of Belgium, along with *The Poor Lad*, achieved great success throughout Russia.<sup>33</sup>

This evidence suggests that a clear opposition between radical politics and a taste for patriotic film could coexist in the same community, and perhaps even in the same individual. To be sure, the enjoyment of a film need not entail total agreement with its ideological content, just as participation in a strike may not indicate "political consciousness." The fact remains, however, that these films were popular among lower-class audiences at a time when economic and political discontent was rising. That chauvinistic films continued to draw an audience highlights the diverse and often contradictory meanings of the war in Russian society, meanings that could include personal suffering and nationalistic pride.

Unlike the semi-official propaganda offerings of such patriotic activists as Mariia Dolina or the numerous more civic-oriented charitable events, both of which provided free tickets for workers, the movies as well as other more consumer-oriented media (postcards, circus, *lubki*) offered choice at a price. In this first modern war, patriotism entered the mass market and mass culture, becoming a consumer item. The repertoire of mass entertainment changed over the course of the war in part as a response to consumer demand. The Kaiser-bashing and jingoistic spectacles common in 1914 and early 1915 generally gave way to more sentimental motifs, adventure stories, and simple escapism. Although this development was not linear or absolute, the pattern shows a significant shift in how the war was presented and consumed. Patriotism did not so much disappear as change its metaphors to fit the new (and worsening) situation both at home and at the front.

Rather than becoming more “internationalist,” however, the new metaphors alluded even more strongly to the village and the family, two traditional loci of motherland (*rodina*). Despite its pessimistic ending, therefore, *The Poor Lad* was still a patriotic film—only one based on empathy instead of enmity. Yet with its tragic overtones, did the movie inadvertently undermine the legitimacy of the war? Was the death of the peasant boy justified? Had the price of the war simply become too high? If patriotic loyalty was located more in the abstract village than in the Tsar and his government, it is possible that “patriotism” could also form a basis for opposition to the war. At the very least, and despite its complexities and ambiguities, patriotism did not demand a single, particular political point of view.

The attitudes of workers toward World War I cannot be stated, therefore, in absolute terms, whether they be “for” or “against,” “patriotic” or “proletarian.” Moreover, patriotism and radical politics need not stand in pure opposition. Some workers (in a manner parallel to those described by Charters Wynn) may not have perceived any contradiction between them, while others may even have found a patriotic motive for their political beliefs or opposition to the war. The evidence of mass entertainment suggests that lower-class patriotism did not provide an adequate conceptual framework for supporting the existing state or ultimately even the war itself. Once the simple vilification of the enemy gave way to the actualities of war, patriotism lost its clarity; it no longer provided a comprehensible and transparent identity for the enemy, or, more important, for Russians themselves. While the diversity of patriotisms could accommodate many people with disparate points of view, a single locus of loyalty failed to unite the classes and groups of Russian society.

#### NOTES

1. I would like to thank Susan Morrissey for her careful readings of this article.
2. Leopold H. Haimson, “The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905–1917,” *Slavic Review* 23 (1964): 619–42, and 24 (1965): 1–22.

3. Charters Wynn, *Workers, Strikes, and Pogroms: The Donbass-Dnepr Bend in Late Imperial Russia, 1870–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
4. "Patrioticheskie manifestatsii v Peterburge," *Peterburgskii listok*, 15 July 1914, p. 4, and 16 July 1914, p. 3; "Patrioticheskie manifestatsii. Den' russkogo edineniia," *ibid.*, 17 July 1914, p. 4; "V Kolpine," *ibid.*, 19 July 1914, p. 4; "Zhenskaia manifestatsiia na Peterburgskoi storone," *ibid.*, 23 July 1914, p. 2; "Populiarnaia voina," *ibid.* 221 (14 August 1914), p. 2; "Den' grandioznykh patrioticheskikh manifestatsii v Petrograde," *Petrogradskii listok*, 17 October 1914, p. 4; "Otgoloski ob"iavlenniia voiny Turtsii v Petrograde," *ibid.*, 21 October 1914, p. 5; "Vcherashniaia patrioticheskaia manifestatsiia," *ibid.*, 12 March 1915, p. 14. On the contacts between workers and students during the 1905 Revolution, see Susan K. Morrissey, *Heralds of Revolution: Russian Students and the Mythologies of Radicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), ch. 4.
5. See, for example, I. I. Krylova, *Rabochee dvizhenie v Petrograde v gody pervoi mirovoi voiny (iiul' 1914–fevral' 1917)* (avtoreferat) (Leningrad, 1960), and Iu. I. Kir'ianov, "Stachechnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v 1914–fevrale 1917 goda (Po materialam ofitsial'nykh istochnikov i 'khronik' vystuplenii rabochikh)," *Istoriia SSSR*, no. 5 (1990): 121–34 (with further bibliographic information).
6. Official statistics conflated patriotic demonstrations and political strikes under one "political" rubric. Kir'ianov, p. 125.
7. Daniel R. Brower, "The Penny Press and Its Readers," in *Cultures in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Stephen P. Frank and Mark D. Steinberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 148–50; on workers' reading habits, see Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861–1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 14, 137, 152–53.
8. A. V. Bobrishchev-Pushkin, "Khraniteli kul'tury," *Teatr i iskusstvo* 19 (1915): 733–35; for the attendance figures collected by the Petrograd city administration, see "Slukhi i vesti," *Teatr i iskusstvo* 21 (1917): 46. On the immense popularity of people's houses, see I. Petrovskaia, *Teatr i zritel' rossiiskikh stolits, 1895–1917* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1990), pp. 78, 83. On the wartime output of lubki and postcards, see Hubertus F. Jahn, *Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), ch. 1.
9. Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 13.
10. R. [A. A. Radakov?], "Voina i lubok," *Teatr i iskusstvo* 20 (1916): 302–3.
11. On Russo-German relations and national stereotypes in general, see (among many others) Günther Stökl, "Die historischen Grundlagen des russischen Deutschlandbildes," in *Deutsche im europäischen Osten. Verständnis und Missverständnis*, ed. F. B. Kaiser and B. Stasiewski (Cologne: Böhlau, 1976), pp. 18–34; Walter Laqueur, *Russia and Germany: A Century of Conflict* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965), p. 13 and passim; Georg von Rauch, "Streiflichter zum russischen Deutschlandbilde des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Jahrbücher für*

- Geschichte Osteuropas* 12 (1964): 5–47; S. V. Obolenskaia, “Obraz nemtsa v russkoi narodnoi kul’ture XVIII–XIX vv.,” in *Odissei* (Moscow: Nauka, 1991), pp. 160–85.
12. Barbara Monahan, *A Dictionary of Russian Gesture* (Tenafly, N.J.: Hermitage, 1983), pp. 86–87; V. Dal’, *Tolkovyi slovar’ zhivogo velikorusskogo iazyka*, vol. 4 (St. Petersburg: Vol’f, 1909), p. 1456.
  13. Catriona Kelly, *Petrushka: The Russian Carnival Puppet Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 77, 140–78; *Petrushka: Ullichnyi teatr* (Moscow: Sytin, 1915); A. Nekrylova, *Russkie narodnye gorodskie prazdniki, uveseleniia i zrelishcha: Konets XVIII-nachalo XX veka* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1988), pp. 84, 93.
  14. The circus show with the title “The Powers from Hell” (Sily ada) took place in Petrograd’s Cirque Moderne; see *Var’ete i tsirk* 28 (1915): 6; and “Tsirk ‘Modern’: Otzyvy sovremennoi pechati s 1908–1915 g.,” materials held in St. Petersburg’s Gosudarstvennyi muzei tsirkovogo iskusstva.
  15. This practice occurred both before and after World War I. For examples, see Heather Hogan, *Forging Revolution: Metalworkers, Managers, and the State in St. Petersburg, 1890–1914* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 222; Steve A. Smith, “Petrograd in 1917: The View from Below,” in *The Workers’ Revolution in Russia, 1917*, ed. Daniel H. Kaiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 63.
  16. On the relationship between film and lubok, see Neia M. Zorkaia, *Na rubezhe stoletii: U istokov massovogo iskusstva v Rossii 1900–1910 godov* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), pp. 95, 230–32; S. S. Ginzburg, *Kinematografiia dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1963), p. 199. The films cited are *Down with the German Yoke* (Doloi nemetskoe igo) (Pathé, 1914) and *The Stepson of Mars* (Pasynok Marsa) (Khanzhonkov, 1914).
  17. “Antikhrisť,” *Sine-Fono*, no. 13 (1915): 48, 90; “Antikhrisť” and “Redkii sluchai,” *ibid.*, no. 14–15 (1915): 78–79. For a review of the film, see “Kriticheskie ocherki,” *Vestnik kinematografii*, no. 111 (1915): 22–23; for criticism of violent films in general, see “Tragediia i poshlost’,” *ibid.*, no. 99 (1914): 11–12; “Otkrytoe pis’mo nekotorym gg. deiateliam kinematografii,” *ibid.*, no. 100 (1914): 10.
  18. A. M. Pruzhanskii, *Otechestvennye pevtsy 1750–1917: Slovar’*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1991), pp. 151–52, 166; *Rampa i zhizn’* 21 (1916): 8; *Petrogradskii listok*, 4 March 1916, p. 4. On the diminishing role of the Tsar as a focal point of popular national identity, see Brooks, pp. 216–17.
  19. On the distribution of tickets, see Tsentral’nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv g. S.-Peterburga, f. 1458, op. 2, d. 1043; f. 1365, op. 1, d. 62, ll. 331–44 ob.; and f. 436, op. 1, d. 14967, l. 35.
  20. Ivan V. Lebedev, *Istoriia professional’noi frantsuzskoi bor’by* (Moscow: Tea-Kino-Pechat’, 1928), p. 48; Mikhail Ialgubtsev, “Pobednaia bor’ba,” *Gerkules. Zhurnal sporta* 15 (1914): 16–18. On the concept of *pravda*, see Richard Stites,

*Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 15–17.

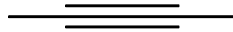
21. V. M. Sidel'nikov, *Russkoe narodnoe tvorchestvo i estrada* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1950), pp. 19–24. Many advertisements and reviews of folk singers can be found in *Var'ete i tsirk*; see, for example, the reports about M. S. Martynova and M. A. Korallova, who sang patriotic and folk songs in richly ornate peasant costumes in Moscow in the fall of 1916 (*Var'ete i tsirk*, no. 7–8 [1916]: 7). On the success of a balalaika concert in Petrograd's People's House, see "Kontsert velikoruskago orkestra V. V. Andreeva," *Teatr i iskusstvo*, no. 19 (1915): 924. On the mental and demographic relationships between village and city, see Reginald E. Zelnik, "The Peasant and the Factory," in *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), pp. 189–90, and Daniel R. Brower, *The Russian City between Tradition and Modernity, 1850–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 76–91.
22. Brooks, p. 176; Ben Hellman, "When the Brave Cossack Kozma Kryuchkov Fought the Sausage Germans: Patriotic Popular Literature during World War I," paper presented at the 22d annual convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Washington, D.C., 18–21 October 1990; Evgenii M. Kuznetsov, *Konnyi tsirk: Vystavka na temu "Konnyi tsirk"* (Leningrad: Muzei tsirka i estrady, 1930), p. 118; V. Okhochinskii, *Plakat* (Leningrad: Akademiia khudozhestv, n. d.), p. 71. For a collection of Kriuchkov lubki, see Gosudarstvennyi muzei politicheskoi istorii Rossii, St. Petersburg, f. 5.
23. F. Selivanov, comp., *Chastushki* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1990), pp. 111–47. The circus show was "Hero of the World War of 1914, or for Tsar, Motherland, and Slavdom!" (Geroi mirovoi voiny 1914 g., ili za tsaria, rodinu, i slavianstvo!); see *Organ*, no. 123 (October 1914).
24. On the shows in the people's house, see N. Tamarin [N. N. Okulov], "Narodnyi dom," *Teatr i iskusstvo*, no. 19 (1915): 128, 302.
25. M. Brailovskii, "Pered letnim sezonom," *Sine-Fono*, no. 11–12 (1915): 55–57.
26. *Var'ete i tsirk*, no. 9–10 (1916): 7.
27. V. I. Simakov, *Soldatskie pesni. Sbornik voennykh pesen* (Iaroslavl': Nekrasov, 1915), pp. 10–13; "Za god," *Vestnik kinematografii*, no. 122 (1916): 1; "Umer bedniaga v bol'nitse voennoi," *Proektor*, no. 15 (1916): 8–10; Ginzburg, p. 216.
28. For a discussion of prewar repertoire, see Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 9–34.
29. N. N. Fatov: "Opernyi sezon 1914–15 g. v Moskve," *Russkaia muzykal'naiia gazeta*, no. 25–26 (1915): 425–27, and "Itogi opernago sezona 1915–16 gg. v Moskve," *ibid.*, no. 26–27 (1916): 519–20.
30. On the distribution of tickets in a lottery, see Iu. Kotliarov and V. Garmash, comps., *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva F. I. Shaliapina*, vol. 2 (Leningrad:

Muzyka, 1989), pp. 97–98; on the opening performances of 1916, see *Teatr i iskusstvo* 20 (1916): 720, 822.

31. *Sine-Fono*, no. 6–7 (1915): 60; *ibid.*, no. 8 (1915): 51–52; “Programmy,” *ibid.*, no. 10 (1915): 80; “Peredvizhnoi kinematograf,” *ibid.*, no. 13 (1915): 54.
32. *Vestnik kinematografii*, no. 118 (1916): 17.
33. “Shturm i vziatie Erzeruma,” *Ekran Rossii*, no. 1 (1916): 20, 24–25, 27; S. L. [S. Lur’e], “Po povodu monopolizatsii kartiny ‘Vziate i shturm Erzeruma,’” *Sine-Fono*, no. 9–10 (1916): 53–56; “Liliia Bel’gii,” *Ekran Rossii*, no. 1 (1916): 20.

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