

BOLSHEVIK PARTY ORGANISATION
IN RUSSIA 1907-1912

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This statement is to certify that
the research described in this
thesis was my own original work.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>Lenin</u>	V.I. Lenin. <u>Polnoe sobranie sochinenii.</u> 5th ed., Moscow, 1958-
<u>PR</u>	<u>Proletarskaia revoliutsiia.</u> Moscow, 1921-40.
<u>Perepiska</u>	Iz perepiski mestnykh organizatsii s zagranichnym bol'shevistskim tsentrom v 1909 g. <u>PR</u> , 1928, no. 9, pp.152-92.
<u>Prot. V</u>	<u>Piatyi (Londonskii) s"ezd...1909 g.</u> <u>Protokoly.</u> Moscow, 1963.
<u>SD</u>	<u>Sotsial'demokrat</u> , Paris, 1909-12.

INTRODUCTION

Marxist ideas became a subject of discussion in the circles of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia in the eighties of the last century. Until that time the hopes of Russian revolutionaries had rested upon the peasantry as the class through which a socialist system would be established. Although polemics between populists and Marxists continued for some years, populism was a declining intellectual force and most of the younger members of the intelligentsia turned to Marxism, with the result that a fundamental re-evaluation of the perspectives and activity of the revolutionary movement took place. Attention was now directed to the small but rapidly growing urban working class. The early Russian Marxists whose social origins were far removed from those of the proletariat faced the same task as the populists of a generation earlier - of 'going to the people', that is, of establishing links with the revolutionary class and formulating the programme on which it was to go into struggle. The political activity of the first Marxist groups was confined to propaganda classes for the most advanced workers and the composing and printing of agitational leaflets which the worker members of the groups distributed in the factories.

Russian workers at this time were entering upon the fierce economic struggles arising from a harsh and rapid industrialization, asserting their industrial demands, since trade union organisation was banned, by means of mass strikes. By the end of the century Marxists were

divided as to the best way in which the organisation of the working class in the struggle for socialism should proceed. The immediate question was whether all efforts should be directed towards assisting vigorous industrial action in the factories and the political programme be left to the liberal bourgeoisie, or whether the first step should be to build up an illegal political party with a programme of revolutionary socialism. The significance of this division of opinion lay in the differing estimates made of the ability of the workers to proceed beyond the economic to the political struggle on their own initiative. Those who pointed to the necessity of the political party argued that revolutionary theory had to be brought to the workers by the educated classes and would never be generated by the economic struggle alone. The dispute was decided in favour of the political party when a group of intellectuals in exile, who included Plekhanov, Lenin and Martov, founded a newspaper Iskra which was to expound a political programme and act as an organiser to link the scattered groups in Russia into a single Social Democratic party. But at the congress of Social Democrats in 1903 at which a programme was adopted and the Party established as a functioning organisation with central institutions, a split also occurred among the founders of Iskra. Was the Party to be a tightly organised underground body of professional revolutionaries or was it to be less exclusive, less disciplined and counting among its members those who sympathised broadly with the aims of Social Democracy? Although the dispute was waged over the Party rules, it was indicative of a deep disagreement between Russian Marxists as to the nature of the coming Russian

revolution. The congress ended with the formation of rival Bolshevik and Menshevik factions, and after it the work of setting up and consolidating groups within Russia proceeded along separate lines with separate factional centres.

The events of 1905 took Social Democrats unawares. Unrolling in a series of actions from the massacre of January 9, through the spreading disturbances of the summer to the general strike, the setting up of the St Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the armed uprising in Moscow, the revolution of 1905 flung together workers and Social Democratic intelligentsia and brought the Party into the open political arena. Workers joined it in large numbers, and constituted a majority of the members for the first time. The concessions won from the government in the October Manifesto provided political parties, although still illegal, with greatly enlarged opportunities for open agitation, propaganda and organisation. For the Social Democratic Party there was a partial abandonment of conspiratorial methods and the introduction of democratic election to office although the leading positions continued to be held by the intelligentsia. The events of 1905 in opening up wide fields of operation for the Party also brought to light a feature of the local organisation that was to remain characteristic of it, namely an impatience with factional splits and a disregard of the underlying reasons for the divisions between the left and right wings of Social Democracy. The strong pressure within Russia for the burying of factional differences brought about the uniting of the factions at the Stockholm Congress in 1906.

Although the defeat of the Moscow uprising ensured the steady recovery of the government's authority, the gains won in the revolution were substantial enough to enable the Social Democratic Party to lead an active semi-legal existence with much open agitation and propaganda. It was not until the Stolypin coup of June 1907 that the organisation was forced back into the underground and renewed faction splits occurred.

This thesis is concerned with the organisation, activity and tactics of the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party in Russia from 1907 to 1912. All Historians in writing of the R.S.D.W.P. have to deal with the fact that, except for the interlude of 1905-7, the leadership of the Party until 1917 was to be found in exile and the rank and file in Russia. The Party journals, except again in the years 1905-7, were published abroad. It was the leaders in exile who decided policy and it was between these that the decisive factional struggles were waged. Both because of the importance of the disputes between Lenin and other Party leaders in determining the political direction of Russian Social Democracy and because of the difficulty of obtaining information about the organisation within Russia, historians of the pre-revolutionary period have tended to devote most of their attention to the life of the Party in exile. Schapiro's work, The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, concentrates largely on the evolution of policy and factional strife abroad. Keep's study, The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia, which deals with both aspects and throws much light on the local organisations does not go beyond 1906-7. The Social Democratic Party within Russia

from 1907 to 1917 has been very little studied outside the U.S.S.R. The most obvious reason for this is the scarcity of source material. Even for the major Party organisations the sources are largely confined to the reports printed in the Party newspapers of the time, correspondence from local organisations, police records and memoirs. The reports from local organisations which form such an important part of Bolshevik journals, while necessarily incomplete and partisan give a great deal of valuable information about membership numbers, the type of activity undertaken and the difficulties faced. The largest gaps occur when the organisations break down through arrests and reports cease for a short or long period to appear. Correspondence from the localities and reports to the police give very clear descriptions of the state of local groups. Much use was made of these records in compiling regional Party histories after the 1917 revolution, but only a small amount has appeared in the Soviet historical journals and archival publications. Finally, there are the memoirs, of which a great many appeared in the 1920s, in historical journals and as separate works. Most of these are of course the reminiscences of Bolshevik Party workers and give lively, partisan and often detailed accounts of the organisations of the pre-revolutionary years. The articles that appeared in the historical journal Proletarskaia revoliutsiia were obviously carefully studied and from time to time accounts were challenged in letters to the editors from other Party workers.

For an historian working in Australia in this field, there is an added difficulty in that much of the printed

material which can be read in Europe and the United States is still not available here. In the last few years, however, the acquisition by libraries of photostated and micro-filmed journals and books has made it possible to begin work in this country. The primary sources for this thesis consist mainly of the newspapers Proletarii and Sotsial'demokrat and memoirs and archival material printed in Proletarskaia revoliutsiia and other historical journals. It will be evident from the bibliography that there are major gaps, of which the most important are local Bolshevik illegal papers such as Rabochee znamia and the journal Krasnaia letopis'.

The amount of material available has been enough to give a fairly clear general picture of local organisations in this obscure period. It is possible to suggest answers to some of the questions that arise as to the changes in the organisation occurring during the revolutionary years. If 1905 had seen a change in the composition of the Party, from one consisting mainly of professional revolutionaries and intelligenty to one in which workers were in the majority, one might expect to learn something about relations in the local organisations between workers and intelligentsia, in the years that followed. Indeed this is so - from 1907 on there are frequent indications of tensions between the two groups, with the worker Party members relying on the intelligentsia for political leadership and propaganda, but resentful of their own dependence and contemptuous of the intelligentsia for their political cowardice. There is evidence also of the solid support among worker Bolsheviks for the left wing opposition to legal political activity. This support was

so strong, that although it was possible for Lenin to have the 'émigré' leaders of the left wing expelled, within Russia the rank and file of the left wing were never dislodged. There are plentiful signs of the comparative lack of interest within Russia in the factional disputes abroad. Finally the experience of the years of deep repression in Russia clearly indicates that in spite of all efforts of Social Democrats working legally, it was impossible to establish effective legal working class mass organisations - which largely accounted for the reviving workers' movement from 1912 onwards finding its real leadership in the illegal Party.

Dates have been given according to the Julian calendar in use in Russia until 1917, which was thirteen days behind the Gregorian. The words faction and fraction have been used with different meanings - faction to indicate a group within the Party - the Bolshevik or Menshevik faction, and fraction to denote an organised group of Social Democrats within a non-Party organisation - thus, the Duma fraction (the group of Social Democratic deputies in the Duma) and fractions of Social Democrats in trade unions.

CHAPTER 1

ILLEGAL, HALF UNDERGROUND

A picture of the Party organisation as it appeared in the first half of 1907 is full of contrast and variety. Widely varying levels of political sophistication and activity as well as of organisational complexity distinguished local groups one from the other. Factors such as the length of time a group had existed, the proportion of intelligenty to workers in the membership, the number of professional revolutionaries available, the distance from the largest city centres and the occupations of the local population strongly influenced the character of organisations. There were Party bodies in every stage of development ranging from newly established groups which remarkably resembled the circles of the time of the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of Labour, to the St Petersburg organisation, which in March 1907 changed its rules to incorporate certain features of soviet organisation within its own structure.

An example of the most primitive type of Social Democratic group may be found in Vladivostock. In December 1906 the group had been in existence for three months. There were 500 workers in the area of operation of the group, and thirty Party members, ten of them workers, with a leading collective of five (one a worker). No leaflets had been put out by the group because it had no technical facilities. Agitation was carried on orally. Three mass meetings of 30, 70, and 20 workers and one of

17 (for shop assistants) had been held. To carry on propaganda there were four workers' circles, with a total attendance of forty-five, one railway workers' circle of twelve, one student circle of ten and two circles for gymnasium students. There were no trade unions, wide contacts existed with the countryside but no regular work was carried on. 40,000 troops were stationed in the area and it was proposed to form a propaganda circle for them. Links had been established with other Siberian centres, but in all this time not a word or a leaflet had come from the Central Committee or the Siberian Soiuz. The group was carryong on a campaign for the Duma elections entirely independently.¹

Here is an account of Social Democratic political activity which, except for the fact that there were now opportunities for open mass agitation, had changed little since the time of the early Marxist groups and which faithfully reflects the relationship between intelligentsia and workers outlined in What is to be done? The majority of the members were intelligenty, the weight of whose propaganda and agitational activity was directed towards the workers. The group was operating in isolation, relying (except for the matter of a purchase of seventy roubles' worth of brochures) entirely on its own resources to carry on its missionary work.

But elsewhere, under the impact of the revolution, considerable organisational change and development had

¹
Proletarii [hereafter cited as Prolet.] no. 15, 25 March 1907, p.8.

taken place. The original basis of local organisation had been the town committees of professional revolutionaries. From here the building of factory nuclei had been undertaken and as the latter multiplied they became the primary units.

Party members in the factory constituted the factory soiuz (union).¹ This term however does not appear to have been much used and the factory organisation was usually referred to as the factory sobranie (meeting). A number of factory organisations were grouped into a raion (district) and the raions together formed the city organisation. Representatives from the raions comprised the city conference, the leading body, from which came members of the city committee which carried out the day to day tasks of political leadership.

The first bodies linking the local groups were also known as soiuzy. The Siberian Soiuz had been formed in 1901, and the Transcaucasian in 1903. The term soiuz, as applied to regional bodies, began to go out of use and be replaced by oblast'. The Transcaucasian Soiuz was renamed in 1906, but the Crimean and Siberian regions retained the term soiuz.

In the early stages of the Party's growth the linking bodies had simple functions, which were mainly to provide technical assistance for the Party workers and to issue and distribute literature. The early groups were self acting organisations whose basic purpose was to carry on agitation and propaganda, and at this low level their

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Procl. no. 15, 25 March 1907, p.8.

continued existence required merely the presence of intelligenty who were willing and able to instruct, and workers who were prepared to listen. The process of simple unification, proceeding within Russia before 1905 was however given a powerful push and made more complex by the efforts of leading Party intelligenty abroad, in particular Lenin, who wished to see the scattered Social Democratic groups united through a central Party leading body and a central organ.

The growth of the Party was vastly speeded up during 1905 and particularly after the October days. With the influx of thousands of new members two questions immediately arose, of organisational democracy and organisational ramification. The new situation was reflected in the decisions of the Tammerfors conference of Bolsheviks in December 1905, which stated that it was essential to put into effect a broad electoral principle and grant elected centres full powers in the matter of ideological and practical leadership, together with the removability, widest publicity and strict accountability of such centres for their actions. The conference also recommended the organisation of oblast' conferences and soiuzy with oblast' organs, in order to unify and stimulate work in the localities.

These oblast' (regional) organisations, of which the Central Industrial, Urals, Volga, Crimean, North-west, Transcaucasian and Siberian were the ones mentioned in the Bolshevik press from 1906 on, were immediately called upon to furnish far more than technical assistance and regional publications for the Party groups in their areas. This was noted in the report of the second conference of the

Central Industrial Region, which embraced the Moscow City and Moscow Okrug organisations, and those of a number of large industrial centres. The reporter from the Oblast' Bureau pointed to the number and variety of tasks falling to the Bureau. Apart from technical functions in connection with passports, transport and allocation of forces (personnel), almost from the very first day of its existence the Bureau had had to resolve organisational questions, and if not formally, at least in practice, had become an organ of political co-ordination and leadership of the Oblast', deciding disputes, assisting organisations financially and acting as an organ for the exchange of information.

The rules of the Oblast' adopted at this conference, which was attended by seventeen delegates representing 16,990 members, listed the nineteen local committees and groups currently comprising the Oblast' organisation, and stated that the regular Oblast' conference was to be summoned every three months for the discussion and resolution of general Party and local questions and the co-ordination of work in the Oblast'. The right of representation with full vote belonged to all independent organisations with not less than 200 members. Organisations with more than 200 members could send one delegate for every full 500 members. Organisations with not less than 100 members had a consultative vote. Delegates to the conference were to be elected either directly by all members of the organisation or by democratically organised conferences and congresses. The Oblast' Bureau was to carry out the decisions of the conference, allocate Party forces in the region, conduct

the regional institutions, organise the calling of the conference and prepare material for it, be in contact with the central Party institutions, inform the Party of the progress of Party affairs, draw up plans of campaigns and leaflets, and rebuild local organisations which had collapsed. Members of the Oblast' Bureau had the right to be present with consultative vote at the meetings of all organisations in the Oblast'. Oblast' organisations were to remit to the Bureau 5 per cent of all moneys received.¹

In August 1907 an Oblast' conference changed some of the rules, including those determining the basis of representation at the conference. The organisation had grown considerably in the past year although most centres reported a drop in numbers in the recent past. The new basis was to be one delegate per organisation of 300 members and organisations with more than 1000 members were entitled to one delegate for each full thousand. Election of delegates was to take place in local conferences, okrug congresses and similar meetings. The number of representatives was to be determined by the number of members registered. The membership totals were to be kept by the Oblast' Bureau, and the Bureau was to give organisations two to three weeks notice of conferences.

As well as changing the rules, the conference gave a series of organisational directives to the newly elected Oblast' Bureau, as follows:

The tasks of the Bureau were to arrange an Oblast' meeting place and assist in the allotment of forces;

¹

Proi. no. 4, 19 September 1906, pp.3-5.

inform local organisations of what was happening in the Party and inform the Central Committee of local happenings and requests; set up an Oblast' printing apparatus and issue agitational leaflets and supply literature.

The conference also expressed the wish that the Bureau would send monthly circulars to the organisations and make more frequent tours of the region.¹

Another linking organisation which came into existence as local centres expanded was the okrug. Such bodies as the Moscow Okrug organisation and the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Okrug organisation were simply bodies covering the districts surrounding, but excluding, a city. They were similar in constitution to the city organisations, worked closely with them but were in no sense superior Party bodies. Frunze who took an active part in the organisation of the Party in Ivanovo-Voznesensk remarks that the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Okrug body was formed at a conference of representatives from various centres in the area in 1905 and was set up simply because the city organisation was unable to cope with the demands made on it from places outside the city. One special feature of this organisation was that in November 1906, on the initiative of the City and Okrug committees a raion conference was held and it was decided to unite all organisations in the area into one special collective under the name of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soiuz.² This

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Prolet. no. 18, 29 October 1907, pp.5-6.

2

M.V. Frunze, 'Vospominaniia o partiinoi rabote ivanovo-vozhnesenskoi organizatsii bol'shevikov', in Partiia bol'shevikov v revoliutsii 1905-1907 godov. (M., 1961), pp.406, 408-9.

however, does not seem to have been a practice followed elsewhere.

A conference of Volga Okrug organisations in 1906 noted three types of leading okrug bodies. Work among the peasants in the first stage was carried on by the town committees themselves in more or less regular contact with separate groups and individuals, by distributing literature and sending out agitators. In the next stage agrarian work was undertaken separately. Special okrug organisations were attached to local committees with the standing of raions. They embraced all the Social-Democratic nuclei in the okrug, had their own organisers and acted autonomously. The third stage of development was reached when the okrug organisations became independent of the town committees with full powers and maintained direct contact with the Central Committee, issuing their own literature and following their own tactical programme.¹

The Okrug Raion attached to the Petersburg Committee appears to have been an example of an organisation of the second type and the Moscow and Ivanovo-Voznesensk Okrug organisations were the best known fully independent okrugs.

In some areas, however, it seems that the okrug was a linking body intermediate between small town organisations and the oblast' centre. Instead of the okrug groups being attached as a raion to the town organisation, the latter became the nucleus of an okrug organisation which had representation on the oblast' committee. The second

¹

Proi. no. 8, 23 November 1906, pp.5-6.

conference of the Central Industrial Region approved the renaming of the Kostroma Committee as the Kostroma Okrug Committee.¹ The account of work to form the Vladimir Okrug organisation in 1907 said that during the last few months there had been no Okrug committee because the members had left the area or been arrested. An organising bureau succeeded in calling an Okrug conference, which met in March, to elect delegates to the Party Congress. There were fifteen delegates with full vote from a number of local centres including the Vladimir town organisation. Rules for the Vladimir Okrug organisation were adopted, the Okrug committee budget fixed and the amount of contributions from the local organisations determined. The Okrug conference was to meet every three months, elected on a basis of one to every hundred organised workers. The conference elected an executive bureau which together with the representatives (one each) from the local organisations numbering not less than 150 organised workers constituted the Okrug committee. Between the monthly meetings of the committee work was carried on by the elected executive commission.²

The city organisations, as has been said, were divided into raions and as the membership grew, the raions were divided into podraions (sub-districts). The latter would consist of the nuclei in one factory, if a large one, or in a number of small work places. A small city organisation would have a mixture of territorial and

¹

Pro1. no. 4, 19 September 1906, p.4.

²

Pro1. no. 15, 25 March 1907, p.8.

occupational raions. Kharkov for example had three - Railway, City and Locomotive Construction. In Moscow the division, except for the Railway raion, was territorial, the seven local raions being Central, Zamoskvorechie, Rogozhskii, Lefortovo, Sokol, Butyrsk and Presnia. At the beginning of 1907 Petersburg had twelve raions, seven of them, City, Vasilev Ostrov, Vyborg, Petersburg, Moscow, Narva and Neva, based on city districts, and the remainder being Okrug, Railway, Shop Assistants, Latvian and Estonian.

In March 1907 a draft plan of reorganisation of the Petersburg City organisation was published in Proletarii. The plan contained inter alia, the following points:

No. 10. The leading organ of the St Petersburg organisation as a whole is the city conference. Conference is elected by direct vote on the basis of 1-50.

Note. Two stage elections are permissible only in case of insuperable police obstacles and then only with the agreement of the Petersburg Committee.

No. 11. Conference is a standing body, meeting at least twice a month.

No. 12. Elections for conference are held every six months.

Note. Conference elections may be held on request of half the members of the organisation or by decision of the conference itself.

No. 13. All members of the Party are eligible for election by conference to its executive organ, the Petersburg Committee.

The organisation was to be divided into territorial raions, except for railway workers who were to have separate raions.¹

In the following issue of Proletarii appeared an account of the conference which had adopted the new rules. It was held in Finland on March 27 and attended by 133 delegates of whom more than 100 were workers. Altogether 7,327 members took part in the conference elections which continued for over a month and were supervised by the Central Committee. The reason for the presence of the C.C. was to avoid a repetition of the bitterly disputed votes of the January 1907 Petersburg conference. The main item of discussion was the proposed reorganisation. Conference adopted the Bolshevik plan by a large majority, declared itself a standing body for six months with permissible re-elections if the workers wished it, at two weeks notice.²

On April 8, the conference assembled, again in Finland in the second regular session under the new rules. The agenda, not all of which was dealt with because of lack of time contained the following nine items: May Day, the meetings campaign (protesting against police restrictions on meetings), the council of representatives (factory delegates who chose the electors from the workers' curia), elections to the 5th Congress, reports from Duma deputies Aleksinkii and Petrov, organisational

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Prolet. no. 15, 25 March 1907, p.8.

2

Prolet. no. 16, 2 May 1907, p.8.

questions, the co-operative movement, the struggle against the Black Hundreds and unemployment.¹

In the same issue there was an article by Lenin in which, commending the reorganisation, he referred to the defeated Menshevik proposal. The main difference, he said, was that the Mensheviks wanted to dispense with the Petersburg Committee altogether and instead, divide the conference into a number of commissions (propaganda, agitation, trade unions, etc.) to deal with various aspects of Party work. An elected presidium of five would attend to relations with the central Party institutions. Lenin described the proposal to do away with the executive body, the Petersburg Committee, as reducing the centralism in democratic centralism to a fiction.

Another conference of the Petersburg organisation was held in October and was attended by fifty-seven delegates with full vote and eleven with consultative vote. Repression was already severe. The permanent session had obviously been dropped. Although the six monthly term of the conference was complete, it was decided not to proceed with full elections until the end of the campaign in connection with the trial of the Social Democratic deputies of the Second Duma. Supplementary elections were held to replace those who had been arrested or had gone away.²

1

Ibid.

2

Prolet. no. 20, 19 November 1907, pp.5-6.

Although there is no report in Proletarii of a similar reorganisation in Moscow,¹ it seems that in the summer of 1907 the Moscow conference met fortnightly as in Petersburg. Khodorovskii in his reminiscences of work in Moscow says,

Conferences were held regularly every fortnight, all through Saturday night into Sunday. By 8 o'clock in the evening representatives from all the raions would gather at the Izmailovskii Zoo. 150-200 raion representatives attended the conferences...[which] began in the evening in the twilight and generally finished at daybreak. In these deeply conspiratorial surroundings the mood of the delegates was notable for a special earnestness. Speeches were invariably business like, not a word too many was to be heard.

And before morning everyone set off on foot for their raions. I usually had to walk from the Izmailovskii Zoo to the Sparrow Hills (fifteen versts) where there was a meeting of the City Raion conference at my place at 9 or 10 on Sunday morning.²

It would also seem that the Sormovo town conference was a standing body meeting monthly.³

What conclusions can be reached on the changes that had occurred in the Party structure since 1905? It can certainly be said that the ramification of the regional

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The set of Proletarii available to me lacks Nos. 10, 11, 14.

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I. Khodorovskii, 'Nekotorye momenty iz zhizni moskovskoi partiinoi organizatsii v 1907 godu', in Proletarskaia revoliutsiia [hereafter cited as PR] (1925), no. 2, p.198.

3

I. Flerovskii, 'Partiinaia rabota v Sormove v gody reaktsii (1905-1907 gg)', in PR (1925), no. 6, p.181.

organisations answered local needs. The entire tenor of reports in the Bolshevik press was that more assistance was required from the oblast' leadership and failure in work was often blamed on the inadequacy of oblast' forces. The eighteen months of semi-legal operations were not long enough to indicate how relations between the Central Committee and powerful local centres would develop. With a Menshevik Central Committee in office for most of the time Bolshevik-led organisations took an independent stand whenever they disagreed strongly with its policy. Had the C.C. been Bolshevik, relations would have been more cordial, but the connecting links between the central body and the lower organisations would still have been somewhat tenuous. The line of transmission of policy from the top downward ran through the central press and the leading practical organisers. The shortage of these forces was so acute that considerable scope for initiative necessarily lay with local organisations.

Three general Party conferences were held in the comparative safety of Finland in 1906-7 on occasions when it was necessary to resolve major policy issues quickly, in particular those connected with elections to the Duma and its dissolution. As well as serving as a forum in which differences were made known, and policy was roughly decided by majority vote, the conferences acted as an organisational stimulant for local Party centres. So long as the delegates were able to make the journey to Finland and back without being arrested, attendance at the conferences provided a means for the rapid transmission and co-ordination of policy. Provision for the regular holding of such conferences was incorporated in the Party rules at the London Congress.

The unwieldy standing conferences of 1907 could not, of course, survive the repression. They constituted an interesting unfinished experiment. While their very size, had they continued, would have prevented them from doing anything in Petersburg and Moscow but delegate large powers to the executive body, they did nevertheless establish close links between leading committees and members, and above all, they offered the opportunity for the training of workers in forms of political activity and leadership, thus reducing the gap between the intelligentsia and the workers.

It was primarily through propaganda and agitation that Party members maintained day to day political contact with the workers. In cities and okrugs the organisation of propaganda circles, elementary, intermediate and advanced, was undertaken by the raion committees, or in some instances in Petersburg and Moscow, by the podraion committees. The circles were discussion groups usually eight to fifteen in number, of workers who were members of the Party or close to it. They read basic political texts and studied the theory of Marxism, political economy, the Party history and programme and tasks of the day. The two difficulties in the way of organising stable propaganda circles, which were always present, arose from the lack of suitable quarters and competent tutors. The crowded workers' dwellings could not accommodate even such small gatherings, so all sorts of premises were used, from clubs and union offices and student hostels to sympathisers' apartments - but there were never enough of them. The arrival of warm weather brought some relief, enabling outdoor classes to be held. Late in 1906 the leading

Moscow raion, Central, reported that with a Party membership of 1,373, twenty-four circles with eight to twelve members each were operating, and nineteen more had just been set up. It was admitted that morale in the raion was low owing to a recent unsuccessful strike and workers were apathetic and irregular in their attendance at factory meetings. The Butyrsk raion with 350 members appears to have had nine circles at this time.¹

The complaint of shortage of propagandists to take circles was universal, but in addition in Petersburg in 1906-7 an increasingly critical attitude on the part of advanced workers to the courses provided by Bolshevik circles became apparent. The Gvozdilnyi podraion (Vasilev Ostrov raion) reported that there were six factories in the area with circles in each, but that circles which had been almost the only means of influencing the masses no longer satisfied the workers. The most conscious ones, even Party members, were of the opinion that they had heard it all before. They hadn't arrived at a consciousness of partiinnost' but had gone far beyond the stage of circles. The remedy, it was suggested, probably lay in the serious organisation of advanced circles and circles for training agitators and propagandists in which the creative independence of the workers could develop.² The state of affairs in the Semiannikov podraion (Neva raion) was discussed in January 1907. During the previous two months, of twenty-two agitational and propaganda

¹

Prolet. no. 4, 19 September 1906, p.4.

²

Prolet. no. 7, 10 November 1906, p.8.

meetings attended by 750 people only four lectures had been devoted to programme and theory - the rest had all been on the election campaign. Propaganda work was unsatisfactory because the workers had outgrown the circles in which propaganda leaders repeated for the hundredth time, themes, words and phrases already familiar to the workers. The need was for experienced, well read comrades who could answer all questions and broad lectures were required on the programme, tactics and history of Social Democracy. It had been impossible to arrange this. Insistent approaches to higher committees had been unavailing. An attempt had been made to carry on a systematic course of lectures on the history of Social Democracy, but only three had been held. After that the lecturer had been arrested and imprisoned. A list of the subjects of the lectures and discussions held in the podraion was given in the report. The lecturers appear to have included both Lenin and Zinoviev. The subjects dealt with were election agreements, agreements with the Cadets, differences of view points of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks on the role of bourgeois democracy in the Russian revolution, origin of the Russian revolutionary movement, beginnings of the labour movement, parliamentarism, economism, and an agitational course.¹

By November 1907 the difficulties of organising propaganda in Petersburg had become acute. Neva, City and Narva raions and the Central podraion² all report in

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Procl. no. 12, 25 January 1907, p.6.

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Procl. no. 20, 19 November 1907, pp.6-7.

addition to the shortage of meeting places, demands from workers for serious education, which could not be satisfied. In the City raion conscious workers had expressed a strong wish for advanced circles to enable them to undertake systematic study, but on numerous occasions lecturers had failed to appear. In the Narva raion an advanced circle had been organised to train workers to speak on political questions at workers' meetings and for a study of the Party programme. Black Hundred activity and harassment by spies in the Putilov works had paralysed the energies of even the most active workers, who finding no satisfaction in Party work, were leaving the organisation 'until times change' and in order to engage in self education and independent work to develop their general outlook.

Nor was the critical attitude confined to Petersburg. In Ekaterinoslav at the end of September 1907 it was reported that hardly any propaganda had been carried on since May. The local propagandists did not satisfy the demands made on them and workers refused to attend their lectures. These propagandists were less interested in their Party work than in getting positions in trade unions as secretaries or office workers.¹ In the Orekhovo-Pavlovsk raion (Moscow Okrug), a purely proletarian centre, where there was enthusiastic support for the Party and the organisation numbered 500, with five professionals (two of them workers) and a regular monthly income of 150-200 roubles, workers were able to carry out organisational,

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Pro1. no. 18, 5 November 1907, p.7.

agitational and primary propaganda tasks, but for further propaganda needs local propagandists were inadequate. Workers complained that they already knew what they had to say. There were six circles in the raion.¹

A rare example of a satisfactory solution of the problem both of premises and teachers was found in the Sormovo organisation, a centre of quarrelling Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. Here one of the liberal gains of the revolution had been the occupation of two Church run schools and the turning over of their administration to a pedagogical council of thirty-five teachers, thirty-two of whom were Social Democrats. Bolsheviks and Mensheviks settled their differences sufficiently to appoint their factional nominees to the staff in strict alternation. A flourishing Sunday school was established, which using school buildings and staff, provided not only the elements of grammar, arithmetic and geography for the masses but also some fifteen classes a week in political economy, historical materialism, the Party programme and history of the revolution and the labour movement. Less advanced workers were catered for in the usual propaganda circles.²

The Lugansk organisation with over a thousand members divided into four raions, City, Railway and two factory raions, reported for the London Congress that in the second half of 1906 and the beginning of 1907 it was able

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Prolet. no. 8, 23 November 1906, p.8.

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I. Flerovskii, 'Partiinaiia rabota v Sormove v gody reaktsii (1907-1909 gg.)', in PR (1925), no. 6, passim.

to carry on extensive propaganda work in the spring and summer but the classes in winter dropped to ten-fifteen with attendances of ten-fifteen in each. Workers showed particular interest in the agrarian question and relations between Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries, Cadets and anarchists.¹

In the field of agitation reports from the localities indicated more success. Oral agitation in the form of quick factory gate and mass meetings was carried on wherever agitators could manage to get away with it. Conditions varied enormously from place to place even within the same city. Some podraions in Petersburg reported as early as 1906 that open meetings of workers in particular factories were not possible, but that leaflets were eagerly read. The number of mass meetings grew sharply in summer when people went to the nearby forests.

One form of open agitational-organisational activity which was very popular in some centres was the birzha (exchange). Descriptions of this in Samara, Dvinsk and Ekaterinoslav appear in Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia. Zalezhsii gives an account of what he says was the classic birzha in Ekaterinoslav. The Party organisation in 1906 numbered several thousand and was in his words, illegal and half underground. The city and raion committees, the conspiratorial meeting places, passport bureau and printing apparatus were all underground, while factory nuclei and well known local Social Democrats operated openly. The basic form of open Party life was

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Prolet. no. 16, 2 May 1907, p.7.

provided by the birzha which operated in the main city boulevards every evening between five and seven. Each party, Social Democrats, Bund, Socialist Revolutionaries, Jewish Socialists and anarchists had its own stand. Here the party members assembled, the news was discussed and people came in from the raions and factories to see agitators and organisers. Party literature was sold, meeting arrangements made and organisational matters attended to. At one time the police tried to clear the people from the boulevards but found the birzhi operating again next day, and thereafter contented themselves with seeing that the closing time of seven o'clock was punctually observed. Spies hung about the birzhi in large numbers. Zalezhskii observes that it was the collapse of the Ekaterinoslav Party organisation from within rather than any particular police action that put an end, until 1912, to the Ekaterinoslav birzha.¹

The most effective agitational weapon of the Party in 1905-1907 was the printed leaflet. One of the most important tasks of any Party centre was to acquire some sort of printing equipment, or at worst, duplicating machine, for the production of leaflets on local issues and current questions. The presses in Petersburg and Moscow also supplied surrounding areas. The agitational leaflet addressed to Party members, workers, peasants, soldiers, or society at large, served as a means of explaining Party policy and of organising support for it.

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V.N. Zalezhskii, 'V gody reaktsii: vospominaniia professionala', in PR (1923), no. 2, pp.352-3.

Piatnitskii was in charge of the Moscow Committee printing press in 1906-7. A shop was rented and stocked as a greengrocery specialising in Caucasian products. The printery was set up in the cellar. While the press was working the sound could be heard in the shop above, so that whenever a customer came in, a signal had to be given to stop the press. All paper for printing was brought in in the baskets of fruit and vegetables and all leaflets for distribution left the shop in the same way.¹

In the eight months of the operation of the printery under Piatnitskii's direction until its discovery in April 1907, a total of one and a half million leaflets was turned out. Of the forty-five titles, seven were leaflets addressed to workers on political and economic questions, twenty-one to the general public mostly on the political demands of the Party and the attitude of Social Democrats to various questions, four were leaflets for peasants, two for soldiers and one for railway workers. Also printed were two numbers of the railway workers' journal, the Party's agrarian programme, an appeal for assistance for arrested persons, reports of the Moscow Committee for November and December 1906, draft resolutions for the 5th Congress and an address to the Social Democratic deputies in the Duma.²

The Petersburg Committee reported for the month of October 1906 that they had printed 264,688 copies of

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O. Piatnitskii, Zapiski bol'shevika. (M., 1956), pp.106-8.

2

Ibid., pp.119-20.

leaflets, 4000 issues of Proletarii and 6000 of Vpered.¹ Nearly a year later they reported that 'in the recent period' they had printed a total of 251,000 leaflets, mostly on the Duma election campaign. They had also distributed 65,000 Central Committee leaflets.²

But in spite of the formidable amount produced the demand for agitational literature was unending and the needs of the outlying areas were never satisfied. The difficulties of printing there were much greater than in the capitals and the output of local leaflets was invariably insufficient. Kursk from January to August 1906 issued 51,500 leaflets (22 titles).³ Lugansk put out 30,000 leaflets in the second half of 1906 together with 20,000 reprints of Petersburg Committee and Central Committee leaflets.⁴ In the Orekhovo-Pavlovsk raion the position was worse. The local equipment could produce no more than 500-600 copies three to four times a month. They also received 10,000 leaflets a month from the Moscow Committee and Moscow Okrug Committee, but they reported that they needed 10,000 copies of each leaflet.⁵

The Urals, where the problems of distance and lack of intelligentsia were particularly acute, reported in October 1907 that literature was the nerve that united the

¹ Pro1. no. 7, 10 November 1906, p.7.

² Pro1. no. 17, 20 October 1907, p.7.

³ Pro1. no. 7, 10 November 1906, p.7.

⁴ Pro1. no. 16, 2 May 1907, p.7.

⁵ Pro1. no. 8, 23 November 1906, p.7.

far flung factory organisations with the Perm and Oblast' Committees. The need was for theoretically advanced Party workers but there was a chronic shortage both of these and of literature. The Urals had technical equipment but not the literary forces to make use of it.¹

The brief flowering in 1905 of legal newspapers published by the revolutionary opposition was cut short with the suppression of the Moscow uprising. 1906 began with the closure of more than eighty journals and the arrest of sixty editors. The Bolsheviks in Petersburg were able to do no more than publish in succession three legal dailies, Volna, Vpered and Ekho which survived from April to July. With the closure of the last they were without a legal press until early in 1907, when three weekly and four daily papers with even shorter lives appeared between January and April. In Moscow the legal Bolshevik papers Svetok, Svobodnoe slovo, Voprosy dnia and Istina appeared intermittently in 1906-7. The Caucasian, Kiev, Samara and Lugansk Social Democrats also published journals legally. But it was clear that there was very little future for a legal Social Democratic press in the aftermath of 1905. By summer 1906 Bolshevik leaders felt an urgent need both for a platform for their policy on important political issues and for a journal to counter the Menshevik controlled central organ Sotsial demokrat. And so the central illegal Bolshevik newspaper Proletarii began publication on August 21, 1906, appearing successively in Petersburg, Vyborg, Geneva and Paris. Lenin was the editor and contributed over a hundred articles and pieces. Until its closure with no. 50 on November 28, 1909 this redoubtable factional organ served

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Prolet. no. 20, 19 November 1907, p.7.

as a journal of political news and opinion, the bludgeon with which Lenin hammered his opponents on the Left and the Right, and very importantly, as a Party organiser. Regular reports of congress and conference resolutions and the activity of the Central Committee and accounts of happenings in the Duma, trade unions, factories, prisons and local organisations gave the Leninist political line and provided a picture of Party activity. Intended for circulation throughout the local organisations, it was essentially a journal for professionals, Party functionaries and advanced workers. Parallel with the first twenty numbers of Proletarii the editorial board published twenty numbers of an illegal popular paper for workers, Vpered. This ceased publication at the beginning of 1908 when the editorial board had to emigrate in order to continue publication of Proletarii abroad. In the preparation of Vpered workers took a more active part and meetings of the editorial staff with worker correspondents were held.

The shortage and inadequacy of Bolshevik journals suitable for worker readers were generally recognised. An attempt was made in the Petersburg City raion early in 1907 to publish a paper that would appeal to the masses because it was felt that Proletarii was rather too difficult for undeveloped workers to master. Since the Petersburg Committee press was fully occupied with leaflets, a separate printing apparatus had to be assembled. The students of the Okhta Technical School assisted in the work of the paper, Rabochii, but there was

an informer among them and in June arrests put an end to the venture.¹

Kazarma, an illegal paper for circulation among soldiers was published in Petersburg from February 1906 to March 1907. It was the organ of the Bureau of Military and Combat Organisations. At the end of 1906, 20,000 copies of each issue were published. The illegal paper of the Moscow organisation was Bor'ba which appeared between March 1907 and February 1908.

Publishing underground newspapers in the provinces was as a rule even more difficult than in the capitals. Either the technical facilities would be lacking or the people capable of acting as editors. Great efforts were made in the Urals to publish illegal papers. Between October 1906 and December 1907 five appeared, Ufimskii rabochii, Rabochii (each issue 10,000 copies), Uralskii rabochii, Krest'ianskaia gazeta (8000 copies) and Soldatskaia gazeta (2000). According to Liadov, sufficient type for three or four papers was provided by a raid on a gubernia printery by the Party combat group at the time when the Urals organisation was actively campaigning in the elections for the 2nd Duma and the 5th Party Congress.²

Social Democratic work among the peasants was a subject of discussion in Bolshevik okrug organisations in

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A. Vasil'ev, 'Izdanie gazety Rabochii v 1907 godu', in PR (1922), no. 5, pp.200-5.

2

M. Liadov, Iz zhizni partii nakanune i v gody pervoi revoliutsii (M., 1926), p.185.

1906 and 1907. With the general tactic that the peasantry would be the ally of the urban working class in carrying out a democratic revolution, the immediate problem was how to involve the peasants in wider issues than the shortage of land, and to find suitable organisational forms for the political struggle in the villages. Party organisers were fully aware, as a report from the Nizhni Novgorod district in September 1906 put it, that it was impossible to organise the peasants without using the slogan of the seizure of the land.¹ A conference of the Nizhni Novgorod Okrug organisation at this time saw its main tasks as being to encourage the peasants to refuse to pay taxes, withhold recruits, replace local authorities with peasant nominees and take possession of the land. The method of organisation was to set up revolutionary peasant committees and councils of peasants' Duma deputies.²

Reports from various localities agree that the readiness of the peasants to listen to Social Democratic agitation depended on the closeness of their contacts with urban workers. One reporter from the Ukraine pointed out that in Central Russia peasants who worked in towns and returned regularly, sometimes as often as once a week to their villages, were the transmitters of revolutionary ideas, whereas in the Ukraine the poor had remained in the countryside as a rural proletariat and the towns had not revolutionised the villages.³

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Pro1. no. 4, 19 September 1906, p.7.

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Ibid.

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Pro1. no. 7, 10 November 1906, p.7.

A conference of Volga Okrug organisations with representatives from Samara, Saratov, Nizhni Novgorod, Simbirsk and Kazan presented the most ambitious and detailed plan of work for a large peasant area.¹ The general conclusions from the reports given were that the central point around which all peasant demands were to be united was the slogan of the seizure of the land and that the most revolutionary elements in the village were the semi-proletarians and proletarians created by the presence of industry. There had been a general decline of confidence in the Tsar and peasants were beginning to see the value of fraternising with soldiers and the need for unity with the workers. Forms of mass struggle were to be directed towards using the peasants' traditional rejection of authority from above and encouraging them to seize authority at the village level. They were to be urged to refuse tax payments, boycott auctions of the possessions of tax defaulters, boycott courts and police who were to be refused quarters and fodder for their horses and to resist arrest, free those arrested, refuse to supply recruits and destroy recruiting lists. The favoured type of organisation was the non-party revolutionary peasant committee which would link the villages, distribute revolutionary literature and organise mass meetings. They should be in contact with local organisations of railway men and workers in district factories. Another field of activity was to ascertain what stores of firearms were held by the landowners, police and government and to organise peasant combat groups. At the moment of decisive

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Prolet. no. 8, 23 November 1906, pp.4-6.

struggle the peasant committees would assume the leadership in the localities and carry out land seizure under the control of the village. The conference also discussed a plan of okrug organisation.

The deliberations of this conference clearly reveal the difficulties that stood in the way of Social Democratic organisation in the countryside. While the forms of struggle envisaged, disruption, non-co-operation and civil disobedience, were familiar enough to the peasants and widely practised in times of social disturbance, they could not, by their very nature, be brought easily within the framework of disciplined revolutionary action under the control of the Party. To cope with the peasants once they did start to move the conference considered that it was essential to train cadres of peasant agitators from amongst urban workers who had retained their links with the village.

A report from Kasimov, Riazan province, stated that peasants in that area had already been influenced by the purely proletarian sons of semi-proletarian peasants, who came back each year from their factories in Petersburg, Moscow, Ivanovo-Voznesensk and Baku for the army call up, bringing with them Social Democratic ideas and literature. In Kasimov an organisation comprising twelve small podraions with five or six villages in each had been in existence for three months.¹

The most marked example of a peasant population responding to the ideas from the cities may be found in

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Prolet. no. 8, 23 November 1906, p.8.

the reports from the St Petersburg Okrug. Here there was strong criticism by organisers of the Party's agitational material and a popular organ was called for. Proletarii was dismissed as unsuitable but it was felt that Vpered could be improved if the editorial board would meet the group working among the peasants to discuss articles about the villages.¹ In mid-1907 it was reported that the work of Social Democratic groups in the Okrug had been much assisted by workers returning to their native places because of unemployment or administrative banishment. Their role was more important than that of the village teachers. The peasants regarded the Party very seriously. The report also stated that in some areas the whole community contributed to Party expenses and there were districts where Social Democratic organisations were in the forefront in all local activities and led the economic struggle against the landlords for the lowering of rents on pasture and meadow land.²

The election campaign preceding the convocation of the 2nd Duma in February 1907 was the occasion of fierce disputes between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in the recently re-united Party. The Stockholm Congress resolution on the Duma had stated that the antagonism between the new bourgeois society and the old regime would precipitate conflicts between the government and the parliamentary body, and it was the duty of Social Democrats to use these conflicts and those within the Duma itself to extend and

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Prolet. no. 9, 7 December 1906, p.8.

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Prolet. no. 16, 2 May 1907, p.7.

deepen the revolutionary movement. But each faction emphasised different parts of the resolution. The Mensheviks, whose views were later summed up by Martov at the London Congress, recognised that with the defeat of the revolutionary challenge in December 1905, the militant mood of the masses was declining, but the Duma, owing its existence to the revolution and forced to struggle with the autocracy to survive, could constitute a rallying point for broad sections of the population, and this would assist the regrouping of social forces in the interests of further revolutionary development. The linking of the anti-government struggle of the Duma with the proletarian movement became the overriding aim of Menshevik tactics. They urged the conclusion of electoral agreements with the liberals wherever this was necessary to keep out candidates from the Right. They raised the slogans of the Duma as an organ of power to achieve a constituent assembly and of a ministry responsible to the Duma.

Bolshevik thinking expressed by Lenin rejected the idea of constitutional development and insisted that the political struggle between autocracy and people would have to be resolved by revolutionary means. The Duma could not be used to realise the demands of workers and peasants, and the primary task of Social Democratic deputies was to use the platform it provided, not for legislative purposes but for revolutionary agitation and propaganda. There could be no alliance between the working class and the essentially counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. In the matter of electoral agreements there could be no deal with the Cadets who would compromise with the government. Since Lenin discounted the danger of candidates of the

extreme Right winning support there was no general need for agreements, but if they were called for, they must be concluded only with the parties to the left of the Cadets - the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Trudoviks.

The opposing programmes resulting from these tactical aims brought Bolsheviks and Mensheviks into collision in a number of localities and in Petersburg led to a split in the organisation. Under the electoral law there were four categories of voters, landowners, peasants, urban dwellers (determined by property and residential qualifications) and workers. The elections were not direct, all categories voted separately in their own curiae for electors (vyborshchiki), who met all together in city or provincial assemblies and chose from amongst themselves the number of deputies allotted to the district. For peasants there were two extra stages in the elections and for workers one. The workers first elected representatives (upolnomochennie) on the basis of one for factories of 50 to 1000 workers, and for larger factories one for every 1000 workers. Work places with fewer than fifty employees and certain establishments such as bakeries and produce factories, which were not included in the categories of industrial, manufacturing, mining, metallurgical or railway undertakings were not entitled to elect representatives. Meetings of representatives chose electors from their number to go to the general electoral assembly. In the workers' curia where Social Democrats commanded overwhelming support the question of agreements did not arise, but in the peasants' and urban curiae and in the higher stage of the election, in the electoral assemblies, it did. At the beginning of the campaign in

December 1906 a Party conference met at Tammerfors to discuss the elections. Menshevik tactics were adopted. In the workers' curia no agreements with any parties which did not accept the idea of the class struggle of the proletariat were permitted. In other curiae agreements with any opposition parties were permitted to ensure the defeat of the Right. The Bolsheviks were opposed to the majority line but managed to get the conference to agree to allow local organisations to make their own agreements within the general directives of the Central Committee without being forced to include non Marxists in their lists.

The rift in the Petersburg organisation occurred in January 1907 when the Mensheviks tried to carry out a policy of agreement with the Cadets, and the Bolsheviks, in a majority on the city committee, used the loophole of the conference decision giving discretion to local organisations. The withdrawal of the Mensheviks from the city conference in January followed bitter disputes over credentials. As a result of the split Socialist Revolutionaries made considerable gains in the workers' curia in the Duma election. Organisational unity, but not harmony, was restored when a new city conference was elected under the supervision of the Central Committee. It was this conference with a Bolshevik majority of 92 to 41, which adopted the reorganisation proposals discussed above.

In general in the conduct of the Duma campaign the formation or not of blocs with other parties depended on which faction was in control of the local organisation. Odessa Bolsheviks complained that the local organisation

having decided to support agreements with the Cadets had devoted the organisation's apparatus and experienced agitators to the Cadet campaign. It turned out that of the 82 Odessa electors, 27 were Cadets, 33 Jewish Union of whom half were Cadets, 17 Social Democrats and 5 Socialist Revolutionaries. There never had been any danger of the Black Hundreds winning places, according to the Bolshevik account.¹

As might be expected, the factional programmes were interpreted in some of the localities in a grossly simplified if not distorted way, colouring the whole approach both to the Duma elections and to Party work. Lenin's formulation that the political crisis was a revolutionary one demanding direct struggle by workers and peasants became for many Bolsheviks a programme of preparation and accumulation of forces for the imminent uprising. Liadov who was an organiser in the Urals recalled that for the Bolsheviks the elections to the 2nd Duma were conducted in the main under the slogan of preparation for armed insurrection under the leadership of the Party. The address to the voter was couched somewhat as follows:

Representatives of various parties are addressing you, all of them promising you that they will achieve a great deal in the State Duma, if you elect them. We, on the contrary, promise you nothing and emphatically declare that no matter whom you send to the Duma, they won't be able to get you a thing. The Duma is powerless to give anything at all. If it meets as a revolutionary Duma, it will be dissolved by the Tsar just as the 1st Duma was. If it is a Black Hundred or

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Prolet. no. 13, 11 February 1907, p.6.

Cadet Duma, it will help the Tsar to stifle the revolution and defend the landlords' land against the peasants, and the factory owners' profits from inroads by the workers. If you want to carry the revolution through to the end, if you want to drive the landlords from the land for good and all, and if you want to defend the eight hour working day for the workers, then elect members of our Party. They will not go to the Duma to give you anything or to get through legislation that will benefit you, but in order to organise, in conjunction with you and workers and peasants throughout Russia, the armed uprising, the decisive assault on the whole Tsarist-landlord order. Elect only those people as electors and deputies, who can organise all you voters and prepare for action. It won't be the Duma, but you yourselves with your elected deputies in the van, who will carry through the revolution to the end, beat back all the attacks of reaction and take the whole of the landlords' land. Let only those go to the Duma, who are prepared to end up in penal servitude or on the gallows instead of in the Duma.¹

Khodorovskii in his article on Party life in Moscow at the same time was scarcely more subtle. He said that at workers' meetings discussions with the Mensheviks revolved around two points - estimation of the present situation and relations with non-proletarian parties. On the first point the armed uprising was paramount - the crisis could be resolved only by armed revolt, and on the second, there could be agreement only with those parties that wished to overthrow the autocracy and expropriate the land.²

Bobrovskaiia, who was working in Ivanovo-Voznesensk, where

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M. Liadov, op. cit., pp.186-7.

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I. Khodorovskii, op. cit., p.195.

it was generally recognised that the workers' militancy had declined and there were sharp divisions among Party members as to whether a planned regional strike of textile workers had any chance of success, said that for both supporters and opponents of the strike the prime need was to build up strength for the final struggle, the armed insurrection, which seemed closer to them than it was in fact. Disagreements were purely on a tactical level.¹

Equally the Menshevik idea of the broad popular opposition was oddly interpreted at times, as in Ekaterinoslav, where it was argued among Party members that the weakness of the Party was due to it reaching only a fraction of the working class, but that councils of workers representatives (upolnomochennie) brought into being by the electoral laws could be used entirely legally to create a democratic nucleus for wide sections of the proletariat. In the discussion which this evoked the preoccupation with forms of mass organisation became evident. It was suggested that the councils of representatives might replace factory committees or that they could serve, after being democratically broadened by elections from all undertakings, as links between the Party and the broad masses, or that they could act as centres organising around themselves the population at large and not just the working class.² The element of crackpottery in these suggestions and the impractical

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Ts. Zelikson-Bobrovskaja, Stranitsy iz revoliutsionnogo proshlogo 1903-1908 (M., 1955), pp.52-3.

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Prolet. no. 15, 25 March 1907, pp.6-7.

hopes entertained for a non-party workers' congress, a project much favoured in 1906 and still discussed in 1907, are evidence of the immaturity and fluidity of organisational forms at this time, due to the absence of a tradition and history of stable working class or any other voluntary organisations in Russia. In this context the Mensheviks' search for ways of approach to the workers on a broad class basis was a difficult one, but on the other hand, they could point to signs indicating that the workers would respond to class organisation. Another report from Ekaterinoslav said that the interest of workers in the Social Democratic programme was very great. Leaflets handed out at factories brought immediate demands for propagandists and organisers. But the local proletariat was neither revolutionary nor politically interested, it refrained from voting in the elections from apathy and indifference rather than as an active boycott. What it was interested in, was a class programme and tactics.¹

The performance of Bolsheviks in the Duma election campaign showed that while Lenin was engaged in working out and expounding the tactics which would maintain intact a revolutionary opposition within the framework of a parliamentary regime, many of his followers were only half converted from a conviction that the bourgeois parliamentary institution should be boycotted. They used the elections to provide themselves with an agitational platform but their minds were filled with the coming insurrection. With such attitudes it was natural enough

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Prolet. no. 18, 29 October 1907, pp.7-8.

that the greatly reduced area of tolerated political activity after June 1907 would give rise to disillusionment with all legal political work and renewed attachment to the boycott during the 3rd Duma elections.

From shortly after the Stockholm Congress the Bolsheviks had been urging that an extraordinary congress be called on the grounds that the Mensheviks were grossly over-represented on the Central Committee, and that the slogan of the Duma as an organ of power to convene a constituent assembly was not supported by the Party membership.¹ At the Tammerfors conference it was decided that a regular congress would be called in 1907 and the Bolsheviks began to organise energetically for the numbers to overturn the Menshevik Central Committee and reverse Menshevik policy. Liadov describes how he was sent by Lenin with four organisers to the Urals to collect as large a contingent as possible for the congress from that solidly Bolshevik region. This he did with great vigour and according to his own account, finding on arrival a membership of over 5000 saw it doubled in a matter of months, entitling the Urals to 24 delegates, all Bolsheviks. In fact there seem to have been 19 from the Urals at the congress (one of them a Menshevik).² To make this organisational tour de force possible it was necessary for the boevaia družina (fighting squad) to

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V.I. Lenin, Sochineniia. 5th ed. (M., 1958-)
[hereafter cited as Lenin], XIV, pp.63-5.

2

Piatyi (Londonskii) s"ezd...1909 g. Protokoly. (M., 1963)
[hereafter cited as Prot. V], pp.621-5; Istoriia
Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuza (M., 1964-),
vol. 2, p.212 map.

carry out two expropriations - a robbery of a mail train and a raid on a gubernia printery to give them the money and type to publish newspapers, indispensable organising agents in so large a region.¹

Bolshevik organising methods in other areas were less crude. Bobrovskaja writing of the same campaign in Ivanovo-Voznesensk spoke of the two factional platforms being put to the Party members, even where it meant in the absence of Mensheviks that a Bolshevik had to do it.² Khodorovski also said that in Moscow both programmes were presented to the workers.³

With a weak central organisation and clearly defined differences of policy the two factions tended to concentrate their strength and find support in separate areas. Where one faction was stronger than the other and entrenched in a higher committee the smaller faction would try to consolidate itself in the leadership of a lower Party body, exercising the utmost autonomy and ignoring as far as possible the existence of the higher committee. This was the case in the Petersburg organisation. In the Bolshevik controlled City and Neva raions the Mensheviks were in a majority in the Franco-Russian and Obukhov podraions and were reported to be operating independently, ignoring the raion committees and in the case of the Obukhov podraion, refusing to transmit dues.⁴

¹ M. Liadov, op. cit., pp.184-92.

² Ts. Zelikson-Bobrovskaja, op. cit., p.53.

³ I. Khodorovskii, op. cit., p.194.

⁴ Prolet. no. 20, 19 November 1907, pp.5-6.

In Sormovo with a total membership of 500, the Mensheviks with 300 had a majority on the town committee and in two raions. In the third the Bolsheviks had a strong organisation. Formal unity was maintained in the form of the general meetings of the town conference of delegates from factory nuclei once a month. The Bolsheviks had one member on the town committee to keep themselves informed. They had their own printing press, issued their own leaflets, organised circles, had separate meetings and a direct unofficial link with the Central Industrial Oblast' Bureau. Apart from this irregular contact with the regional organisation, all their other activities were formally in accordance with Party rules. Their raion committee was elected at the raion conference. Its members included outstanding Party workers who did not necessarily belong to the raion, and workshop representatives from outside the raion. Where expedient the committee resorted to co-optation confirming this by later election.¹

In the Vyborg raion on the other hand where the Mensheviks were overwhelmingly strong and the Bolsheviks supporters scattered, the latter were reduced to complaints that the Mensheviks were preventing the distribution of Bolshevik political literature, failing to inform them of Party meetings and ignoring or ridiculing Petersburg Committee decisions. In view of this, it was reported, a meeting of thirty-seven representatives of factories in the raion, representatives from the shop assistants and several Bolshevik organisers and

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I. Flerovskii, op. cit., pp.181-2.

propagandists had resolved to set up a commission of one representative from each undertaking and to establish contact with the city committee independently of the raion.¹

The congress that finally assembled in London from April 30 to May 19, 1907 was a trial of strength for both factions. Their numbers were almost equal, 89-88,² but both sides drew allies from the recently admitted national groups. The Bundists tended towards the Mensheviks and the Poles and Letts to the Bolsheviks. The Bolshevik censure of the policy of the Central Committee and the conduct of the Duma Social Democratic fraction aimed to discredit the Mensheviks but failed to win the support of the congress. The weight of the attacks was directed against the Central Committee's concessions to the liberal opposition and the abandonment of a revolutionary position in the Duma. The vote on the Central Committee however, was that having heard its report, the congress pass on to the next business. The only implied criticism was in the directive that the Central Committee in future should circulate, not less than six weeks before a regular congress a report on its activities, work in the localities, electoral agitation where this had been carried out, and a financial statement. On the report of the Duma fraction, the Bolshevik resolution criticising the group's wavering attitudes and indicating the strictly

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Pro1. no. 13, 11 February 1907, p.7.

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Istoriia Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuza
(M., 1964-), vol. 2, p.215.

independent revolutionary path it was to follow, was defeated. A short general resolution of Bundist origin was carried approving its activities and expressing confidence that it would work under the leadership of the Central Committee.

The Bolsheviks however, did register some important victories. The resolution on relations with bourgeois parties characterising them by their class position and calling for united action only with the Popular Socialists, Trudoviks and Socialist Revolutionaries against reaction and the liberal bourgeoisie was written by Lenin. The resolution on the workers' congress and non-party workers' organisations in which the Mensheviks were isolated, deserted even by numbers of the Bund,¹ tersely asserted the significance of the trade unions as the most important form of mass organisation for the defence of the economic interests of the masses other than the Social Democratic Party, and while the importance of participating in mass organisations was recognised, it was added that the idea of a workers' congress led to replacement of Social Democracy by non-party workers' organisations and to disorganisation of the Party. The brief resolution on trade unions supported the idea of partiinnost' (partyness) recently adopted by the Bolsheviks.

The Party rules adopted by the congress provided for the obligatory holding of Party conferences every three or

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The voting figures were 165 for the resolution, 94 against, 21 abstaining. Unfortunately the names of those voting have not been recorded in the Minutes. Prot. V, p.561.

four months, elected on a basis of one delegate to every 5000 members. Their decisions were to become binding only if they were subsequently confirmed by the Central Committee. The institution of conferences as a means of strengthening the links binding the local organisations with the centre was regarded with satisfaction by the Bolsheviks.¹ The new Central Committee elected at the congress comprising Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Poles, Bundists and Letts gave the Bolsheviks a majority with the support of the Poles and Letts. The abolition of the favoured position of the editorial board of the central organ, whose members had had a full vote in the Central Committee on political questions, but was now relegated to the position of a Party institution under the control of the Central Committee was also welcomed by the Bolsheviks as a strengthening of the authority of the central body.²

The only vote at the congress which indicated a deep division of opinion among Bolsheviks was that on partisan acts. The resolution condemning partisan attacks and expropriations (armed robberies) was carried 170-35 with 52 abstaining. There was very little discussion since the item came up almost at the end of the congress. A considerable number of Bolsheviks neither voted nor abstained, were simply absent. In the report from the Central Committee Martov had said that terrorist acts of protest against government repression occurred when mass

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G. Zinoviev, 'Organizatsionnye voprosy', in Itogi Londonskogo s'ezda R.S.D.R.P. Sbornik statei. (Spb., 1907), p.79.

2

Ibid., pp.77-8.

political militancy and activity were declining. Partisan terror and the armed robberies which accompanied it demoralised the revolutionary elements of the proletariat. He drew attention to the change in the role of the boevye druzhiny (fighting squads) which at the height of the revolutionary uprising had functioned as a necessary Party organ carrying out certain technical tasks. But with the subsiding of mass revolutionary activity certain elements in the fighting squads attempted to set up independent para-military organisations occupied with the preparation of the armed insurrection. In order to secure supplies these groups had to resort to expropriations from the government and private individuals. Enjoying the sympathy of anarchist minded workers the boeviki helped in the process of demoralisation. The Central Committee wished to dissolve the fighting squads but had met with resistance from people engaged in creating a centralised fighting organisation linked with the troops.¹

Lenin's position on the question of partisan warfare had been stated in September 1906 in his article Guerrilla warfare.² Starting from an historical analysis similar to Martov's he came to different conclusions. Guerrilla actions arising as part of the mass struggle in the course of the class war were a feature of that stage of the Russian revolution that followed the defeat of the armed uprising. It was not guerrilla actions in themselves that demoralised the mass movement. Disorganisation and demoralisation arose when the Party was incapable of exercising control over them.

¹ Prot. V, pp.79-81.

² Lenin XIV, pp.1-12.

Lenin had argued that guerrilla warfare springs spontaneously from a certain stage of the class war. 1906 could be regarded as a case in point, when a combination of declining mass struggle, acute economic conditions and repressive retaliatory acts by the government produced partisan actions and expropriations. But by 1907 Stolypin's draconian measures had re-established the government's authority. Armed struggle had declined to the point of individual acts of violence and robbery. Demoralisation of the workers was affecting the Party ranks. It was at least time to draw attention to the dangers of the situation, as had been done in a letter from Moscow on expropriations.¹ But Lenin was notoriously silent on the matter at the congress. He voted against the resolution. It is clear why he could have nothing to say.² He was too deeply involved with the large scale robberies being carried out by the Bolshevik technical commission. The last major one took place in Tiflis in June 1907 shortly after the congress. It was not until 1909 in the course of his struggle against the left wing of the Bolshevik faction that Lenin characterised the tendency to withdraw into independent secret groups for the preparation of terrorist acts and armed insurrection against the government as anarchism, having nothing in common with Social Democracy.

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Pr. no. 4, 19 September 1906, pp.5-6.

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For an account of the involvement of Bolshevik leaders in expropriations, see Bertram D. Wolfe, Three who made a revolution (Penguin Books 1966), chapter 22.

The voting figures on the partisan resolution give some interesting information. Of the 34 who voted with Lenin against the resolution, no fewer than 17 were Letts, the greatest expropriators of them all. Of the remaining 17, all Bolsheviks, 5 were from Moscow, 4 from Petersburg, 3 from the Urals, 3 from the Central Industrial Region, 1 from Siberia and 1 from Odessa. Of these, Liadov (Urals) and Yaroslavskii (Petersburg) had been leading figures in the organisation of fighting squads. The most noticeable feature of this voting is the fact that areas where expropriations flourished, the Urals, the Volga and the Central Industrial Region, provided so few supporters of the practice among Bolshevik Party workers and professionals. Turning to those who abstained from voting we find even more eloquent figures. Of the Bolsheviks, there were 9 from the Urals, 13 from the Central Industrial Region, 3 from the Volga region, 3 from the Caucasus, 5 from other provinces, 6 from Petersburg, 3 from Moscow, 1 from Siberia and 1 from the Finland army group. There were also 5 Poles, 2 Letts and 1 Bundist. Three Bolsheviks, two from the Central Industrial region and one from Voronezh voted for the resolution.¹

What seems to be indicated here is that in the regions where Bolshevik professionals and Party workers had experience of the effects of partisan actions and expropriations, whether carried out by Socialist Revolutionaries or Social Democrats, they found themselves in general unable to dispute the correctness of the resolution. Liadov in his memoir spoke complacently of

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Prot. V, pp.582-3, 621-9.

the Urals druzhinniki who carried out expropriations and having observed that they operated strictly under Party control, appeared to think that no problems of morale or discipline existed. But clearly other delegates from the Urals did not share this opinion and in the following year there were reports of the shattering effects on the Party organisation of the partisan acts of Socialist Revolutionaries and Social Democrats in that region. Bobrovskaia spoke with heartfelt disapproval of the expropriations in Ivanovo-Voznesensk and the offers of the expropriators to share the loot with the Party.¹

The Sormovo Bolsheviki, whose income came entirely from membership subscriptions found themselves at the end of 1907 in extreme need of money for an illegal paper, literature and the support of professionals. When attempts to organise fund raising concerts and lectures failed, their thoughts turned to the possibility of a well managed expropriation of a local factory pay roll. This had just been decided upon when V.P. Nogin arrived in the town on tour from the Central Committee and flatly forbade the venture on the grounds that expropriations had degenerated into hooliganism and robbery and were corrupting the Party. No amount of pleading about the good of the cause could make him change his mind.²

In Odessa on the other hand it appears to have been the experience of local organisations themselves that led them to take active steps to dissociate the Party from

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Ts. Zelikson-Bobrovskaia, op. cit., p.51.

²

I. Flerovskii, op. cit., pp.188-91.

expropriations. Here these had begun with raids on stores to secure clothing for people arrested as well as arms and rapidly turned into robberies in which professional criminals took part. Active agitation in the factories by means of proclamations and talks with workers persuaded the latter to leave expropriations to robbers and 'lumpens'.¹

The intensity and nature of partisan exploits and expropriations varied according to the regions in which they occurred. In the Baltic provinces and the Caucasus, they were bound up with the national struggle and in the remote and backward Urals expropriations at times took on a mass character with Robin Hood bands operating with the sympathy and support of the local population. Partisan actions in the Central Industrial Region declined rapidly into small scale robberies and minor terrorism. Even after acts of lawlessness lessened, the attitudes of mind that went with them persisted, symptomatic of a raw, militant and undisciplined working class movement at a low level of political consciousness. The task of Bolshevik professionals and Party workers struggling with the demoralising results of criminal actions and indiscipline amongst their supporters was of course made a good deal more difficult by the Bolsheviks' own preoccupation with hastening the development of the revolutionary movement into armed insurrection.

The workers themselves seemed to have had a confused recognition of the dangerous effect of widespread robbery

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L. Vol'shtein, 'Zapiski fabrichnoi rabotnitsy', in PR (1922), no. 9, p.168.

and violence upon the standing of the Party, while at the same time they held fast to the principle of expropriation. This may be seen in the recommendations from Moscow factory committees in 1906 that the Party itself should embark upon a major programme of controlled expropriations. The resolution of one meeting read,

In view of the fact that the [Stockholm] Congress did not foresee the lamentable consequences of the banning of expropriations of public property, thus allowing expropriationist tendencies to assume distorted forms; in view of the fact that there are no forces to restrain these tendencies, it is proposed, in order that the Party should not be entirely discredited:-

1. that we take upon ourselves the organisation of expropriations of public property, at the same time pointing out the complete impermissibility of public property expropriations and stating this publicly;

2. in view of the spontaneous growth of militant actions in the forms of all sorts of confiscations and attacks, and the impossibility, owing to the decisions of the Unification Congress, of organising and regulating this tendency within the Party, the meeting declares itself in favour of the creation of non-party revolutionary combat squads in order to carry out partisan actions and assist the proletariat in the organisation of the armed uprising¹.

The congress resolution on trade unions, a brief statement passed almost without discussion at the end of the congress by a majority of 155 to 5, with 19 abstentions and 3 refusals to vote, declared support for the Stockholm Congress resolutions which had urged the setting up of non-party trade unions and active

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Procl. no. 4, 19 September 1906, pp.5-6.

participation of Social Democrats in union work, but added to this the following:-

Congress reminds Party organisations and Social Democrats working in trade unions of one of the fundamental tasks of Social Democratic work in them: to assist in the recognition by the trade unions of the ideological leadership of the Social Democratic Party, and in the establishment of organisational links with it, and of the necessity where local conditions permit, to put this aim into effect.¹

This last part of the resolution, a concise summary of partiinnost' expressed the newly adopted position of Bolsheviks on the trade union question, and represented a significant change from the views they had held for some years. In What is to be done? Lenin had sharply asserted the prime importance of the political struggle and the prime need to build the political party. Bolsheviks paid little attention to trade unions, but in 1905 the problem of defining the organisational relationship between the industrial and political wings of the working class movement suddenly became a pressing one, when the great political strikes were followed by massive moves by the workers to form trade unions. Discussion in the Bolshevik press, and approval by the Bolshevik Central Committee of certain articles give a clear idea of the reactions of the leadership to the emerging mass trade unions. While there can be no doubt that they meant it, when they said again and again that the economic (trade union) struggle was an indispensable part of the struggle of the working class and every encouragement should be given to develop it, there were present nevertheless shades of the old

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Prot. V, pp.583-4.

controversy with the economists, a patent fear of 'vulgar economism' in the careful defining they made of the boundary between the economic and political struggles. Trade unions were regarded as important mainly because they drew into action the backward elements of the working class, enabling them to proceed further to the struggle for socialism. Being legal institutions they could relieve revolutionaries of some functions in the field of culture and economic agitation. An attempt was made by M. Borisov to set down precisely the relationship between Party and unions. When his article On the Trade Union Movement and the Tasks of Social Democracy appeared in Proletarii it received the explicit approval of the editorial board and was later reprinted in the Bolshevik legal journal Novaia Zhizn. It may be said to represent the views of the Bolshevik leaders in 1905. The author, having recognised the growth of trade unions as an inevitable phenomenon saw them in competition with the Party not for the support of the masses but for the limited number of available functionaries. The needs of trade unions however, could be met by workers who were not of a revolutionary turn of mind. A second problem of keeping the trade unions free of politically opportunist elements could be solved by preventing any political colouration at all. If it was impossible to indoctrinate the unions with the full socialist and political programme of the Party, it was better not to indoctrinate them at all. Pointing to the danger presented to German Social Democracy by the rankly opportunist, money grubbing German unions which constituted an integral part of the Party, he urged that the economic organisation of the proletariat should be

strictly separated from the political. In Russia the Party must assist in the formation of trade unions but confine their activities to strictly economic limits, not permitting them to discuss Party affairs. Trade unions were merely a sphere of influence not a component part of the Party. The article gave a five point statement of relations between Party and trade unions. (1) The trade unions were completely autonomous in their own sphere. (2) Trade unions were not to impinge on general Party affairs. (3) Party members in unions and union functionaries should take steps to ensure Social Democratic agitation in unions. (4) Trade unionists with influence and belonging to the Party were to form a special agitational bureau and to be members of the raion committee. (5) These people were on the raion committee not as trade union representatives but as Party members with special functions. Borisov's concluding words eloquently summed up the suspicions of the Party in regard to the mass economic organisations and its determination to preserve its own political purity.

In this way the Party has its own private agency within the union, but not official representation. Mutual relations of this kind, in my view, are highly advantageous to our Party. They free it from the necessity of expending energy on the purely economic struggle and enable the application of forces which otherwise would remain dead capital. On the other hand, they guarantee the Party from the intrusion of opportunist elements and assist its further growth without forcing it to change the revolutionary tactics already adopted by it.¹

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Novaia Zhizn, no. 7, 21 November 1905, pp.12-9.

One other point may be noted at this stage. In 1905 the actual Bolshevik experience of trade union work in Petersburg was negligible. The shop assistants were the only trade union organisation under Bolshevik influence.¹

This view of the role of trade unions remained official Bolshevik policy throughout 1906. The resolution on trade unions at the Stockholm Congress in April which was unanimously recommended by the trade union commission of the congress, was passed with no dissentents and two abstentions. The Menshevik draft with an additional clause and minor alterations, became the final resolution. The Bolshevik draft gave much more grudging recognition of the value of trade unions and exhorted the Party to train those workers belonging to unions in the spirit of understanding of the class struggle and socialist tasks of the proletariat in order that they might achieve a leading role in the unions and these unions might under certain conditions directly adhere to the Party without excluding non-party members. Both drafts however, were agreed that the prime tasks of Social Democrats was to facilitate the formation of non-party unions. The resolution in its final form added that the class solidarity and consciousness of unionists must be strengthened in order organically to link unions with Party in struggle and agitation.

As late as December 1906 Lenin once again emphatically stated that Bolsheviks adhered to the policy

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Iu. Milonov, Kak vznikli professional'nye soiuzy v Rossii (M., 1929), p.220.

of neutrality of trade unions (that is, that they should be non-party) when in a footnote to his article Crisis of Menshevism he attacked a proposal by the Menshevik Larin to admit trade unions into the Party.¹ But by the time of the London Congress in May 1907 the official Bolshevik attitude to trade unions had changed and they were declaring for the ideological leadership of the unions by Social Democracy and the establishment of organisational links. How may one account for this?

It would appear that the rigid theoretical stance of the Petersburg oriented leadership had been successfully challenged by practical Party workers in the Moscow organisation, who had actually had experience in trade union work. According to V.P. Nogin, the Bolshevik-led Moscow Committee in October 1906 which had hitherto been preoccupied with the armed revolt and looked on trade union work as opportunist changed its attitude to the unions and appointed one of its organisers, Nogin himself, to work in the unions. The change in policy closely followed Nogin's own arrival in Moscow from Baku where he had taken part in the strikes of oil workers. Nogin soon became chairman of the Moscow Central Trade Union Bureau. In February 1907 the new approach was apparent in the calling of a Textile Workers' Conference sponsored jointly by the union and the Moscow Committee, at which Nogin officially represented the Party. On the way to the 5th Congress Nogin and other members of the Central Industrial Region delegation had discussions with Lenin in Finland and put the viewpoint of partiinnost of the trade unions,

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Lenin, XIV, p.166 n.

which was based on a recognition of the vast power of the economic movement and the necessity not to separate the economic and political struggles, but to give the economic struggle itself a political character through Social Democratic leadership.¹

The idea of a close link between the economic and political wings of the working class movement was not a new one. The problem of the neutrality of the trade unions had become an increasingly uncomfortable one in the German Social Democratic movement. Kautsky in 1905 had written an article for the Polish Social Democratic paper condemning neutrality and supporting partiinnost' in general terms. Rosa Luxemburg in her pamphlet The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions written in 1906 had come out strongly against the theory of equal authority of the unions in the German movement and had called for unity of the Party and unions, without making any specific organisational recommendations.

The distinctive Bolshevik contribution to partiinnost' was in the organisational framework they devised to put it into effect. But this cannot be fathered upon Lenin. Nogin in discreet but unmistakeable terms claims credit.

Recognising the need to make use of all legal avenues, taking part in all institutions from the State Duma to the trade union and co-operative organisations of the working class, Bolsheviks everywhere laid primary importance on the need to unite the Party members in these organisations. At one of the conferences of the Moscow organisation I was the first to introduce a resolution,

¹ V.P. Nogin in PR (1925), no. 2, pp.206-12; N. Nelidov in PR (1924), no. 7, pp.154-7.

later supported by the rest of the Party organisations, on the creation of Party nuclei (iadra) as we called them then, which later became widely known under the name of Party cells (iacheiki).¹

Again according to Nogin, the idea of Party nuclei in legal organisations was worked out at the Party conference at Kotka in Finland in July 1907, where although no resolution was passed, trade unions were discussed at length.

The basic ideas I put forward in my report to the Kotka conference were accepted by the Bolshevik centre and then by the Central Committee, and were developed in my articles in the Bolshevik collections of the time. It may be said, therefore that the basic position of Bolsheviks in their attitude to trade unions originated in the Moscow organisation and was confirmed by Moscow practice. Our Petersburg comrades very soon took the same line and in this way we practical workers in this field found allies in the Petersburg comrades. Comrade Zinoviev was one of the first of these.²

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V. Nogin, '1906-1907 gg', in Revoliutsiia i R.K.P.(b) v materialakh i dokumentakh (M.-L., 1925-7), vol. 4, pp.205-6.

2

V. Nogin, 'Vospominaniia...o moskovskoi organizatsii', in PR (1925), no. 2, p.211.

CHAPTER 2

REPRESSION

Shortly after the London Congress ended the Stolypin coup of June 3 took place. The Duma was dissolved, the Social Democratic deputies arrested for high treason and a new electoral law proclaimed which reduced the representation of workers and peasants and ensured a reactionary majority in the next Duma. With the parliamentary opposition greatly weakened and the liberals thoroughly frightened, the government felt free to launch oppressive measures against the Social Democrats. Arrests of active members and seizure of Party literature and printing presses had been going on since 1906, and had become more frequent in 1907. But after June conditions became much more difficult. The long tolerated open agitational meetings could no longer be held, pressure on the trade unions deprived the Party of meeting places and an intensified search for printing presses began.

Articles 102, 125 and 126 of the Criminal Code provided ample grounds on which to secure convictions in the courts for membership of a revolutionary party. Article 102 covered the most serious crime of belonging to an association set up to carry out attempts on the life, health and liberty of members of the imperial family or attempts to dethrone the monarch, for which the penalty was forced labour for life; or attempts to change by violence the form of government or the order of succession to the throne, for which the penalty was forced labour for

a fixed period. Article 125 provided that those guilty of belonging to an association which deliberately aimed at inciting disobedience or opposition to laws, decrees or lawful orders, or of arousing enmity between classes or estates, or employers and workers, or of inciting workers to begin or continue certain strikes could be punished by imprisonment in a house of correction or fortress.

Article 126 provided for those guilty of belonging to an association deliberately set up to overthrow the existing social order or of causing the commission of grievous crimes with explosives or firearms, forced labour for not more than eight years or exile. If the association itself was in possession of explosives or a store of weapons the term was forced labour for a fixed period.

Where evidence incriminating suspects could not be found, the practice of administrative banishment was frequently resorted to. The police chief of a city was empowered without resort to a court, to expel anyone for periods up to five years. Simple banishment from a particular place was not a punishment which deterred professional revolutionaries, but it was an effective weapon against trade union leaders or rank and file members.

Even in the most open period of the Party's existence some of its activities remained conspiratorial and secret, particularly those connected with the printing of Party literature. Professional revolutionaries also habitually observed elementary rules of conspiracy in the use of false names and secret meeting places. In order to track down leading activists and to discover them with incriminating evidence the police relied heavily on secret

agents. There were two kinds of informers, agents of external observation, or simply spies, whose work was to watch and follow suspects gathering as much information as possible about them, and agents of internal observation who entered the illegal organisations, carried out Party tasks without exciting suspicion and passed on information to the police. Informers within the organisation (or provocateurs as they were universally known in the revolutionary movement) were responsible for tremendous losses in arrests and seizure of literature. They were recruited from the intelligentsia and working class, joining the service for many reasons, sometimes bribed or blackmailed by the police, or quite often offering their services voluntarily. Golubkov relates that on one occasion when he was detained at the Moscow Okhrana building he saw hanging behind the door of the cell a schedule of rates of payment for information, beginning with five roubles for an address where meetings were held and rising to the top rate for the location of stores of explosives.¹ As repression increased and the Bolshevik wing of the Party went ever deeper underground, necessarily becoming isolated from the workers, it became more and more the prisoner of the provocateurs in its midst.

The main political question facing the Party after June was once again connected with the Duma. The elections to the 3rd Duma were to be held in the autumn. The electoral law had been amended to ensure one elector

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A. Golubkov, 'Iz epokhi reaktsii: otryvki vospominanii', in PR (1928), no. 9, p.127.

for 350 people in the landowners' curia, one for 1,000 and 15,000 in the two categories of the urban curia and one for 60,000 and 125,000 respectively in the peasants' and workers' curiae. Since this meant that an unshakeable majority of the deputies would come from the right Centre and extreme reactionary groups, most Bolsheviks, professionals and rank and file alike, now advocated a complete boycott of the elections. Lenin rejected the boycott, arguing that it was a weapon to be used only in a period of revolutionary upswing developing into insurrection. In the absence of such conditions it was correct to take part in the elections. His article Against Boycott was published jointly with Kamenev's defence of the boycott.

At the general Party conference at Kotka, Finland in July, which discussed the Duma elections Lenin was the only member of the Bolshevik delegation to vote against the boycott. However, his resolution advocating both participation and a resolute struggle against reaction and against the hegemony of the Cadets in the liberation movement was carried. The boycotters, although entirely unconvinced by his arguments, voted with Lenin and the Poles in order to prevent the broad Menshevik interpretation of support for the Duma gaining ground.¹

Work in the election campaign which for many local Party organisations was the last occasion for some years upon which the Party appeared openly before the public, was

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K.P.S.S. v resoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh (M., 1953) Part 1, pp.173-8.

carried on under the difficulties arising from government repression and a lack of conviction that the campaign was worth waging. The Petersburg organisation reported that it was bound hand and foot, unable to carry on open agitation and able only to distribute illegal leaflets. Workers in many factories were in favour of boycotting the elections and this feeling was shared by Party members.¹ The Central Industrial Oblast' Bureau sounded a resigned note when it said that the Oblast' organisation was boycottist but had bowed to the Kotka Conference decision. The masses were apathetic and passive towards the elections and Social Democratic workers were consciously boycottist but it was hoped that their trust in the Party was sufficiently great to take them to the polls.²

Reporting after the elections the Petersburg Committee said the campaign had been a bad one. The strongly boycottist mood of the workers had meant that very few of those entitled to had enrolled on the voting lists and workers had taken an insignificant part in the actual campaigning. Agitation at pre-electoral level had been unsatisfactory and the Party had had no legal election literature.³

In the second part of 1907 trade unions for the first time occupied an important place in Bolshevik discussions. The relationship between Party and unions had been

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Pro1. no. 17, 20 October 1907, p.6.

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Pro1. no. 18, 29 October 1907, p.6.

3

Pro1. no. 20, 19 November 1907, p.5.

discussed at length at the Kotka Conference because of the forthcoming all-Russian trade union congress. Four draft resolutions had been presented but none adopted. At the Stuttgart Congress of the 2nd International in August there had been a major debate on the role of the trade unions and of the political parties in the emancipation of the proletariat. A resolution had been carried which, asserting the independence of the unions and urging the creation of close links between the political and economic struggles, gave comfort both to neutralists and supporters of 'partyiness'. The Bolshevik interpretation of 'partyiness' of trade unions was published in October in the form of a report from a group of Bolsheviks working in trade union and Party organisations in various parts of Russia. The proposals in this document were adopted without change by the Central Committee at the beginning of 1908.

The draft resolution on trade unions presented by Lenin to the Kotka Conference had urged that Party organisations and the Party press should study and discuss the question of trade union life in general and the forthcoming trade union congress in particular.

The response of Bolshevik organisations in the localities to this lead from above may be seen in the appearance of trade unions as items on the agendas of Party conferences in the Urals, Petersburg and the Central Industrial Region. The Urals Oblast' conference urged all organisations to pay increased attention to the formation of trade unions. Party members were to join unions and to strive to broaden their aims and tasks to match those of the Social Democratic Party. The Oblast' Bureau was

instructed to assist in the unification of trade unions in the Urals through the organisation of an Oblast¹ trade union bureau and to arrange for the supply of trade union literature from the centre.¹

The St. Petersburg conference reported that its work in the trade union field had been very weak. Bolshevik workers and functionaries alike had stood aside from the unions, but now they must take an active part in the day to day work of unions, strengthening Social Democratic influence in the lowest bodies by practical work and consistent agitation. The Party organisation as such should approach the union only with concrete proposals of the sort recently put up to the unions, the question of the trial of the Social Democratic deputies, unemployment and so on. Only where it would cause no internal upheavals should the Party propose to the unions that it have official representation with consultative vote. This sort of work had already had some results and workers had responded in a friendly fashion. But trade union functionaries, Social Democratic intelligentsia and Mensheviks with few exceptions had been carrying on anti-Party agitation in the unions, frightening workers with stories that the Petersburg Committee wanted to turn all legal unions into illegal ones and to attach a party label to them forthwith.²

The Central Industrial Region conference reported that trade unions had been closed down and were showing

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Procl. no. 17, 20 October 1907, p.8.

²

Procl. no. 17, 20 October 1907, p.7.

little sign of life. The question that arose was in what form should the unions be liquidated - should they go underground or become legal as mutual benefit societies? The conference resolved that one of its central tasks was to strengthen partiinnost' in the unions. Party nuclei which had survived when unions collapsed must carry out the functions of unions.¹

A report from the Donets basin described the great difficulties trade unions had to face in areas outside the large cities. The conditions of savage exploitation in this centre of mines and metallurgy were described - low wages, extremely long working day, child labour, health hazards and lack of amenities. Then there were the miners who responded with their hearts more than their minds to speakers' ideas, rejecting subtleties of political economy and the like. The reason for this was the extremely low level of intellectual development of the miners

who spend two-thirds of their life underground; the rest of the time in most cases is devoted to Bacchus and it has only been with the coming of organisations that their former drunkenness has decreased to any extent.

But in these circumstances so favourable for industrial organisation of the workers we read that the unions were not growing because of the prohibitory measures of the Governor of the province. The union in one particular mine was unable to get its rules registered. A normal set of rules adopted by it was mutilated beyond recognition by the Governor, who altered point one, which read 'The union defends and improves the economic position of its members',

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Procl. no. 18, 29 October 1907, pp.5-6.

to 'The union expounds the economic position of its members'. Amongst the established unions the only one to flourish was one which was exclusively occupied in managing shops and putting on theatrical performances.¹

The Governor, in demolishing the first point of the unions' aims, was in fact merely interpreting literally the regulations applying to rules of societies. The trade union movement in no way escaped the repression which enveloped the Party. Legalised under the Provisional Regulations of March 1906, the unions were never formally declared illegal but they could be closed down if they constituted any threat to public order and security and the objectives they were permitted to work for excluded any active defence or improvement of wage standards or hours of labour. They could seek means to remove misunderstandings between employees and employers, explain rates of pay and other conditions of work to their members, organise funeral benefit and mutual benefit funds and undertake cultural and educational activities. A circular sent out in May 1907 from the Police Department directed local authorities to pay particular attention to union rules and activities and permit their registration only where there was undoubted evidence of absence of links with Social Democratic groups, and the slightest attempt of unions to retreat from their stated limits of activity was to bring about their closure. In addition where there was sufficient foundation for charging of active members of the unions, criminal prosecutions were to be launched against them.

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Procl. no. 19, 5 November 1907, p.8.

Throughout the autumn conditions in all localities grew worse. The Central Industrial Region reported that the organisation was on the defensive. In nearly all centres there had been a fall in membership, professionals, finance and printing presses were lacking and there was a shortage of literature and local intelligentsia. Organisations in Tver, Tula, Kostroma, Yaroslavl and Nizhni Novgorod had collapsed. An unsuccessful strike of textile workers had furthered the decline in the Kostroma and Ivanovo-Voznesensk areas. The main tasks were to strengthen the organisational nuclei, improve propaganda and reduce the dependence on the intelligentsia by putting workers into responsible positions.¹

Petersburg which was endeavouring to organise a one day mass strike to take place on the first day of the trial of the Social Democratic deputies of the 2nd Duma also reported lagging work, a decline in morale and the need to rebuild factories committees.²

The decline in the organisations in the Donets basin was accompanied by expropriations. Here the workers had expected that the dissolution of the 2nd Duma would be followed by a general strike and perhaps armed insurrection. The authority of the Central Committee had suffered because this had not occurred. Then mines and railway stations had been occupied by troops, arrests and searches had followed and some members had to leave the area and others had abandoned Party work.³

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Pro1. no. 18, 29 October 1907, pp.5-6.

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Pro1. no. 18, 29 October 1907, p.7.

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Pro1. no. 19, 5 November 1907, p.8.

The Central Committee was having its own difficulties. It was reported as suffering from an unstable majority. Only Bolsheviks supported its practical work and assisted it financially. The other factions, it said, were at best neutral, or at worst like the Mensheviks, actively hostile. In the last few months the Committee had been unable to reach decisions on such questions as the central organ, a leaflet dealing with terror and expropriations, the trade unions, what the Duma fraction should do first and contributions to the bourgeois press. The objective conditions under which the Committee worked were appallingly difficult but it was its composition and the conduct of some factions on it, that would place both Party and Committee in an impossible position if things continued in this way.¹

In November the entire Petersburg committee was betrayed and arrested. Finland, which with a liberal constitution and a certain measure of independence had provided meeting places for Party conferences and the Petersburg organisation, premises for the printing of Proletarii and asylum for Party leaders long after they had had to leave Russia, was now, under the pressure of Russian reaction, no longer a possible base for the leadership. By the end of the year the leaders of both factions were once again in emigration.

When Proletarii resumed publication with No. 21 in Geneva at the end of February 1908 after a break of three months, reports from local centres showed a drastic

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Prolet. no. 20, 19 November 1907, p.5.

worsening of the situation. The police actions in the autumn of 1907 had been followed by a severe and widespread wave of arrests in January 1908. Arrests of members of leading committees, removal of professional revolutionaries through flight or imprisonment, seizure of printing presses, breaking of the links connecting groups with each other and with oblast¹ centres and the Central Committee, and the disappearance of members, above all of the Party intelligentsia, had, in the space of six months, reduced the loud voice of revolutionary protest to a whisper.

It is very difficult to estimate by how much the numbers in the organisation fell in the first months of repression. Some figures have been suggested for various areas and various periods. In the Ukraine, the Kiev organisation numbered 1,235 in spring 1907; 80 remained at the end of 1908; Kharkov from April 1907 to March 1908 declined from 762 to 150.¹ In May 1907 Social Democratic organisations in Transcaucasia had 15,670 members; at the beginning of 1908 14,100, and this number fell to 12,530 in the next nine months.² In Ivanovo-Vosnesensk in the middle of 1907 there were 2,000 members; not more than 600 remained by May 1908.³ The well entrenched and ramified organisations of Petersburg and Moscow also suffered. In 1907 the Petersburg membership had been 8,000 and Moscow

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Ocherki istorii Kommunisticheskoi partii Ukrainy (Kiev, 1964), p.101.

2

Ocherki istorii Kommunisticheskoi partii Gruzii (Tbilisi, 1957), Part 1, p.186.

3

Proi. no. 30, 10 March 1908, p.3.

7,500. In February 1908 it was 3,000 in Petersburg.¹ Moscow claimed 3,500 in August 1908.² What fraction of the 1907 membership remained by mid-1909, how much lower than one-tenth, it is impossible to say. By that time there appear to have been less than 1,000 in Petersburg and 1,500 in Moscow.

The reasons for the outflow of members that began before the question of decimation through factional fights had arisen can be sought first in the repression itself. For intelligenty, membership of the Party meant imprisonment and the end of chances of advancement in their careers. Some left politics altogether, others went into legal activity. This happened to worker members as well, but the main reasons why workers were lost were to be found in the industrial depression occurring in a number of centres and a general counter-offensive by employers against the working class. The considerable advances in hours and wages won piecemeal by workers were now subjected to a massive attack. Wholesale dismissals accompanied the worsening conditions, employers' black lists were drawn up and workers who were unable to get certificates of reliability from the police could not find employment. Since many factory workers did not have permanent lodgings but were housed in barracks or subrented rooms, loss of a job often meant that they had to leave a district. Unemployment was high in parts of the Central Industrial Region, some Petersburg industries,

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Pro1. no. 22, 19 February 1908, p.6.

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Pro1. no. 34, 25 August 1908, p.6.

the South, and above all in the Urals where many enterprises were closed down in the disorders of the summer of 1907 and did not return to normal operation for some years. According to a report from the Urals in February 1909 the industrial crisis affecting half the population there had had a worse effect on the organisation than police repression.¹ And a Party Menshevik in 1910 surveying the experience of the worst years said that the loss of three-quarters of the Party membership had been due less to direct repression than to unemployment and dismissals. In the Motovilikha factory at Perm, the most revolutionary centre in the Urals, only those workers who were members of the Union of the Russian People had escaped dismissal and some Party members had actually joined that highly reactionary organisation.²

It can be said of the drop in membership beginning in the second half of 1907 that all centres suffered, the provinces much more severely than the capitals. In some places organisations disappeared almost entirely and the areas which suffered most were those in which unemployment was severe or where expropriations had been carried out on a large scale either by Social Democrats or Socialist Revolutionaries or both, as in the Urals and in the Volga region. There the losses sustained were due not only to the severity of police reprisals but also to the resentment of the inhabitants who were often victims of the more irresponsible acts of violence.³

¹ Prolet. no. 42, 12 February 1909, p.7.

² Sotsial'demokrat [hereafter cited as SD], no. 13, 26 April 1910, p.8.

³ M.S. Aleksandrov (Ol'minskii), 'Posle 1905 g.', in Revoliutsiia i R.K.P. (b) v materialakh i dokumentakh (M.-L., 1925-27), Vol. 5, p.6.

That aspect of the repression which was emphasized repeatedly in Proletarii in 1908 as having the most disastrous immediate effect on the Party was the flight of the intelligentsia. What silenced the local organisations of the Party at the beginning of 1908 was not so much the absolute loss of members, which became much more severe later, as the disappearance of the key Party workers, without whom written agitation and propaganda work could not at that time be carried on at all. These were the Party intelligenty, the majority of whom were not professional revolutionaries. The breakdown clearly showed the extent to which the Party still depended on the intelligentsia for political leadership and instruction. Although the old relationship of teacher and taught between professional revolutionaries and a few advanced workers had been much modified in the revolutionary years when workers had flocked into the Party and shown great aptitude for mass organisation and action, for the political word they still relied on the agitation and elementary propaganda classes supplied by the intelligentsia. In conditions of increasing repression when it became impossible to hold mass meetings of workers the printed leaflets and illegal newspapers became indispensable agitational, propaganda and organisational weapons but the workers simply did not have the necessary political knowledge, literacy or technical competence to produce these unaided.

The effect of the loss of the intelligentsia was discussed in the Party press at length. From Petersburg it was reported in February that the numbers of Party intelligenty were decreasing, those elements having gone,

that had come from a bourgeois milieu and only worked in the organisation when it was safe to do so.¹ In the following issue of Proletarii it was estimated that nine-tenths of the Petersburg intelligentsia had left.²

A long report appeared in August discussing what was described as the internal revolution in which workers had replaced the intelligentsia in all fields of activity in the city organisation. It was recalled that in September-October 1907 there had been four or five workers and the rest intelligenty on the city committee, whereas now there were four intelligenty (two with full vote) and the rest workers. By the middle of June in the whole Petersburg organisation there were 12 intelligenty; as many as had been in one podraion nine months before. There had been a mass desertion of the students. Only four were still working in the organisation. Student fractions in the higher educational organisations no longer supplied Party workers but were turning into groups occupied with academic questions. Most of the Party workers of six months before had literally fled from their work. They had been students. The reasons for their disappearance suggested in the report were fear of punishment, careerism, the humdrum nature of organisational work, political and moral instability and finally that general spiritual decay which now possessed the whole of the bourgeois intelligentsia. Between January and June only twelve intelligenty had come into the Party and all of these were from other cities or

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Prolet. no. 21, 13 February 1908, p.5.

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Prolet. no. 22, 19 February 1908, p.6.

prison or had escaped from exile. The most damaging aspect of the flight of the intelligentsia was the loss in the numbers of professional revolutionaries that it caused, since the intelligentsia supplied nine-tenths of the professionals. Many of these had now been arrested or were in hiding or had left work altogether and it was difficult to replace them, since workers had always been reluctant to become professionals. In Petersburg in November 1907 there had been 15-17 intelligenty who were professionals; by June 1908 there were 5. The other side of the picture was that workers were obliged to take over the jobs of the intelligentsia. By the beginning of 1908 the organisational and technical work of the raion committees was being done by workers. But propaganda and political leadership in the raions were still in the hands of the intelligentsia. Resolutions were constantly being passed in raions asking for help from the Petersburg Committee, but, said the reporter, unless the question was strongly raised of workers carrying out all functions, the organisation would collapse.¹

From other places the story was the same. In the strongly working class centres of the Central Industrial Region where there had always been a shortage of them, Party intelligenty had disappeared almost entirely. A conference of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soiuz Council reported in May that in the whole region with its tens of thousands of workers there was not one intelligent left working in the organisation. This information had a mixed

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Prolet. no. 33, 23 July 1908, pp.4-5.

reception at the conference. Some said it was a good thing that the intelligentsia had left. At least it was now possible for the workers to stand on their own feet and it was to be hoped that the intelligentsia would not come back. They couldn't be trusted. The workers would do everything themselves. Others pointed out that all intelligently could not be lumped together and although the workers were capable of doing all the usual organisational tasks and even elementary propaganda and agitation, political leadership was also necessary and they were not able to provide that for the time being. The Soiuz Council decided to ask the Oblast' Bureau and Central Committee to send a comrade to give political leadership.¹

In organisations which had been heavily dependent on the intelligentsia, their going was attended with bitterness. In Tver the organisation had almost collapsed through lack of professionals, although workers were receptive to Social Democracy, and Social Democratic intelligently were plentiful. It had not been possible to develop responsible functionaries from amongst the workers, and the Tver intelligently were now either preoccupied with their professional interests and gradually turning into obyvateli with paunches and nice little homes (s briushkom i domkom), or were engaged in 'self-perfection', paying no attention whatever to the workers.²

It was reported from the Crimea that Party committees were now working class in composition. Some of the

¹
Proi. no. 30, 10 May 1908, pp.3-4.

²
Proi. no. 26, 19 March 1908, p.7.

intelligentsia had left altogether, others were demoralising those around them with complaints about the futility of underground work. Such whining was often a cover for political cowardice. In order to justify themselves these people were assuring everyone that the Party had ceased to exist and the Central Committee was not functioning or had collapsed.¹

From Nizhni-Novgorod the report was that after the organisation had been shattered in the previous summer and practically no meetings were being held, it was decided to concentrate all forces on work in the trade unions, which however were soon suppressed. Only two, the metalworkers' and bakers' unions were still left. When the results of the decision became apparent a provisional organising commission was formed, which called a conference in February and a committee was elected. The conference with an attendance of 112 was a stormy one. Some comrades put forward a proposal that the Party organisation should be disbanded, there being no need for it, and Party work replaced with cultural and educational activities. The proposal was rejected.²

The position in Moscow received attention in Proletarii in July and August. In a report of activity in Moscow from August 1907 to April 1908 it was stated that work had been carried on within narrower limits since the dispersal of the 2nd Duma due to the reaction and the massive withdrawal of Party functionaries, which had had a

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Prolet. no. 25, 12 March 1908, p.7.

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Prolet. no. 30, 10 May 1908, p.5.

serious effect on the worker Party members, some of whom had followed the intelligentsia while others accepted the necessity of doing the work themselves. The departing workers echoed to some degree the sentiments of the intelligentsia with such remarks as,

We have done our job, we are tired and need a rest to do a little of our own work and study. Younger people must be drawn in, we certainly haven't changed our beliefs, we are old time Marxists in outlook, we'll return to work when necessary and we'll come back with new knowledge and new strength. But frankly just now revolutionary work amounts to bashing one's head against a wall.

On the other hand some workers said of those that had gone out, that we were well rid of them. The intelligentsia had played out their role and it was time for the workers to get started. Certainly study was necessary, but study within the Party.

The question of the shortage of functionaries and the lowering of standards of work, continued the report, was being discussed throughout the organisation. At a recent meeting in the Lefortovo raion, Bolsheviks said it was necessary for workers to be trained as functionaries to take the place of the intelligentsia by forming special circles for training them from among the most advanced. The Mensheviks were against this narrow posing of the question and supported the wide use of legal opportunities.¹

In August in a discussion of the flight of the intelligentsia in Moscow it was suggested for the first

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Prolet. no. 32, 2 July 1908, pp.6-7.

time that the desertion was due to something more than the cowardice and instability which had been suggested as the reason in an earlier article in March. This had said that the great mass of the intelligentsia now racing each other away from the proletariat had embraced Party work in 1905 inspired only by the idea of political freedom and when reaction triumphed temporarily and the working class and Party were driven underground such intelligently deserted.¹

By August a new factor was observed. The writer described what he considered to be the most harmful of the many forms of flight, which was not a quiet peaceful one. Some people wanted an official sanction, that is, to receive permission to flee, 'to have their hands untied', as they put it. This urge to have their hands untied had appeared at the beginning of March among some Petersburg Mensheviks who wanted to call a conference of representatives of separate organisations in order to state that

only remnants of the Party remain; it doesn't exist in fact, and therefore all those who have hitherto had in one way or another to take account of the views of these remnants are now freeing themselves from this burden and can go freely into legal organisations where they will be carrying out work it is possible to do, that of creating a new workers' party.

A delegate from this group was sent to Moscow in March to have a talk with the Mensheviks but in spite of his argument that Petersburg workers did not want to hear of any sort of illegal work and would not even read illegal newspapers the proposal was rejected. But, added the

¹
Prol. no. 26, 19 March 1908, p.3.

reporter, there were nevertheless people in Moscow who thought that the Party no longer existed and were urging that since the organisations that did exist were led by the intelligentsia, a new workers' party should be created free from the yoke of the intelligentsia.¹

Although according to the writer of the Moscow article the main arguments in support of what was later known as liquidationism were being advanced in Petersburg and Moscow as early as March, in the form of suggesting that the most effective work could be done by Social Democrats freeing themselves from the burden of the disintegrating illegal organisation, working legally and trying to lay the basis of a legal workers' party, it does not appear that it was until August that the flight of the intelligentsia was connected with the liquidation as well as the desertion of the Party.

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Prolet. no. 34, 25 August 1908, p.7.

CHAPTER 3

DISINTEGRATION

In 1908 in a series of articles in Proletarii Lenin continued the examination begun in 1907 of the lessons of the revolution. He found confirmation in the political events of the period of reaction of the argument advanced by him in 1905 in Two Tactics of Social Democracy that the Russian bourgeoisie was unable to complete its own revolution and would become counter-revolutionary and that the overthrow of the autocracy and the establishment of a bourgeois democratic republic would have to be undertaken by the working class in alliance with the revolutionary peasantry. He drew the conclusion that the main tactical need was to strengthen and consolidate the illegal Party organisation in the period of reaction.

In the article On to the Straight Road written in March after studying a number of reports coming from the localities he observed that the flight of the intelligentsia had made necessary a reconstruction of the class basis of the Party in the sense of drawing leaders from the advanced workers. In the mass organisations where a movement from non-party to Party ideology was taking place, the aim should be to establish Party groups and give leadership in the spirit of revolutionary class struggle. He pointed to the path the Party was taking - that of

a strong illegal organisation of Party centres, systematic illegal publications and, most important of all, local and especially factory

Party nuclei, led by advanced members from among the workers themselves, living in direct contact with the masses: such is the foundation on which we were building, and have built, a hard and solid core of a revolutionary and Social Democratic working class movement.¹

It was this form of adaptation to conditions of severe repression which, Lenin stated again and again in the next few years, was essential if the Party was to survive.

Mensheviks were also examining the experience of the revolution and the blows suffered by the Party and were coming to the conclusion that it was not possible for the working class to return to the old conspiratorial methods. They believed that the bourgeoisie in spite of its manifest weakness in 1905, would be forced by its own class interests into decisive struggle against the old order and a majority of the class would be fellow travellers of the proletariat. They also recognised that the bourgeois revolution was not completed and there would be a new revolutionary upsurge in the future, but for the present period of reaction it was necessary to work in the most appropriate way within the limits of the legal framework; to direct the Duma activity not towards stepping over the barriers in a revolutionary way, but towards exploiting the laws for the preparation of conditions that would make it possible to step over them. It was this tactic of Social Democratic work as intensive as possible within the legal framework as a means of accumulating organisational forces for the coming new

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Lenin XVII, p.7.

revolution that guided Mensheviks in the next few years, most of all in the field of parliamentary work.

Mensheviks emphasised the importance of the development of the class consciousness of the workers and they claimed that the institutions and organisations permitted as a result of the partial gains of the revolution, the trade unions, clubs, trade union press, non-party factory committees, co-operatives and the Duma fraction had become centres of concentration of the masses.

Having had much more experience in the mass organisations than the Bolsheviks they saw in them the best hope of maintaining contact with the masses in the period of repression.

At the beginning of 1908 the reports in Golos sotsial' demokrata, the monthly paper edited by Martov and Dan drew attention to the same state of affairs as the Bolsheviks were noting in Proletarii. The flight of the intelligentsia and the failure of the students' fraction to act as a Party body were referred to in April. They spoke of the need to recreate the political organisations of the proletariat as an essential task of the proletarian movement, not as a mechanical act to unite scattered groups but as the organisation of conscious elements actively working in the name of revolutionary socialism in all fields of the working class movement. The importance of the Duma was emphasised and the Bolshevik slogan for recall of the Duma fraction was criticised. The reports from Kiev, Kharkov, Baku and the South were similar to those appearing in Proletarii, speaking of the growing difficulty of maintaining support for the trade unions as they became less effective and the difficulty of

organisation owing to the lack of Party workers. In Kiev and Kharkov there were joint Menshevik-Bolshevik organisations, in Baku in 1908 parallel factional organisations existed.

During 1908 a critical change in emphasis took place in Menshevik work in Petersburg and Moscow. Whereas in the early months, the reports from the capitals in Golos sotsial' demokrata dealt with Party matters as in Proletarii, by the end of the year the emphasis, in Nos. 10-11, was entirely upon the mass organisations of the working class and the legal public congresses, of which three, the congresses of popular universities, co-operatives and women were held in 1908. In the capitals where the legal organisations existed, the Mensheviks in devoting their attention to this form of work appear to have made a sober estimate of its limited value in providing schools of political education for the workers but accepted the limitations as temporarily necessary. In Petersburg most of all, links with the underground Party were abandoned by Mensheviks not only as a necessary condition of effective legal work but also because they found themselves increasingly opposed to the policy of the Central Committee and the Petersburg Committee, both Bolshevik controlled. With the otzovist Petersburg Committee it was impossible for them to work and their opposition to the Central Committee stemmed both from factional disagreements abroad and from the attempts of the Central Committee to exercise control over the Duma fraction. During 1908 they proposed that the Central Committee be no longer recognised as a leading body but be transformed into an information bureau. The

tendency in centres where legal work was possible to regard it as incompatible with membership of the underground organisation, the talk of forming a purely legal workers' party and the challenge to the authority of the Central Committee were developments to which Lenin responded late in 1908 by speaking of a trend towards the liquidation of the Party. In his article Assessment of the Present Situation he stated that the task was to strengthen the illegal Party organisation in spite of the reactionary outcry of the Mensheviks who were trying to bury it,¹ and again in the following issue of Proletarii in Two Letters in which he discussed otzovism, he spoke of the tendency of Menshevism which was directly and openly, or secretly and shamefacedly, burying the Party and was scarcely represented at all within the local organisations.² But it was not until 1909 that the Leninist campaign against the trend of liquidationism became vehement.

The main ideological issue occupying Lenin's attention in 1908 was the dispute with the Bolshevik left wing - the otzovists. The resolution of this conflict was important in determining the political direction of Bolshevism. The defeat of the left wing with its anarchist leanings brought the theory and practice of Bolshevism close to the position occupied by the left wing of Menshevism (Party Menshevism) by 1910. The dispute is often seen as little more than an intra-factional brawl between Lenin and the

¹ Lenin XVII, p.284.

² Ibid., p.290.

émigré leaders of the trend, led by A.A. Bogdanov, which ended in the expulsion of the otzovists-ultimatumists in 1909 and the formation of a new faction known as the Vperedists from the name of the journal they published. But this view entirely neglects the support the Bolshevik left wing received in the localities and its persisting influence on the outlook of working class members of the Party.

During the years when the revolutionary Party was able to operate semi-legally and carry on the agitational, propaganda and organisational activities of an open political party, the Mensheviks had been concerned above all with the legal mass organisations, particularly trade unions and with the creation of a parliamentary Social Democratic group - all this activity being directed towards using to the utmost the gains of the revolution. The Bolsheviks who wanted to use the gains of the revolution to make new demands on the autocracy never lost sight, as we have seen, of the importance of the armed struggle as the culmination of the revolution to overthrow the autocracy. Even after the defeat of the December uprising they still expected that a new revolutionary upsurge would offer a more successful challenge to the regime. Although in many parts of the country Bolsheviks and Mensheviks using the available political opportunities competed side by side for the support of the members and local workers and undertook similar activities, the legal organisations were in the main left to the Mensheviks while the subversive para-military operations of the Party were in the hands of the Bolsheviks. What Dan called the military-technical side of the revolution including the recruiting and training of combat groups, the carrying out

of acts of violence and the smuggling of arms was the concern of men who had little interest in legal political activity. The combat groups in the localities were supposed to function as separate bodies under the leadership of the Party committee, but they frequently acknowledged no control at all from the Party. Some of those most closely involved in organising the supply of weapons and in the expropriations, such as Krasin and Bogdanov, later became the 'émigré' spokesmen of the left wing. But more important than the combat groups, as the solid core of the left wing within Russia, were the working class members of the Bolshevik faction. Workers who had joined the Party or came close to it during the revolution knew from their own experience that the main gains of 1905 in the matter of hours, wages and conditions had been won by the massive confrontation of capital by labour in the form of strikes waged without benefit of trade unions and certainly without benefit of leadership from Social Democratic professional revolutionaries. During the twelve to eighteen months when trade unions enjoyed comparative freedom and some strikes were legal, workers joined up in great numbers. But the support given to the institutions won from the autocratic government remained, in the view of many revolutionaries, conditional as long as the autocracy survived. This was particularly the case with the parliamentary institution. Once the Duma was established in 1906 the response of most Bolsheviks and many Mensheviks was to reject it as the creation of tsarism and to support the slogan to set up a constitutional assembly by revolutionary means. When it became apparent both that the workers had ignored the slogan to boycott the Duma elections and that the peasants

had unexpectedly elected the most militant candidates offering, Mensheviks threw their entire efforts into making the Duma an instrument of legal opposition to the autocracy. Two Party conferences were given over to disputes on the attitude to be taken by Social Democrats to the Duma. In the elections to the second Duma in 1907, Lenin supported a change in the tactics of boycott on the ground that the revolutionary wave was receding and the Duma offered a platform for Social Democrats. He managed to get the support of a majority of his faction for participation in the elections on a platform different from that of the Mensheviks, that is to say, rejecting agreements with the Cadets or the formation of a united opposition. As we have seen in the case of the 2nd Duma the application of Lenin's election programme was heavy handed and at times disruptive. And with the 3rd Duma, participation in the elections went deeply against the convictions of the Bolshevik rank and file and of large numbers of urban workers. The tendency to reject any dealings with the reactionary institutions of the autocracy persisted and when the boycott was no longer appropriate after the elections, it reappeared in the form of a campaign to recall the Social Democratic deputies from the Duma (otzovism).

The otzovist programme was a simple one. Since the tasks of the revolution were not completed and a new social uprising would take place in the future, it was the duty of Social Democrats basing themselves on the coming rise in militancy and not the present stagnation to prepare for the new upsurge by preserving the illegal party. In the Duma the Social Democratic group had failed to fulfil its task of agitation and propaganda, all hope

of expanding its work must be abandoned, its continued presence in the Duma was a mistake and it should be recalled.

The boycott had been supported by the great majority of Bolsheviks in the period of working class militancy. Its successor, otzovism (recallism) had to win acceptance when the revolutionary tide was retreating and workers were in no mood for political gestures of defiance, and it found support only among the left wing of the revolutionary opposition. Whereas the right wing of Social Democracy, Menshevism, accepting all the restrictions imposed by police repression, worked within legal limits so constricted that its activity appeared to lose all political complexion, the left wing in the face of the apathy of the masses and the emasculation of their organisations proposed to retreat entirely into conspiratorial conditions in order to preserve the kernel of the Party, and to form small underground groups to keep the militant spirit alive - and with this went rejection of work in legal organisations, especially the Duma. As developed by Bogdanov the ideas of the left leaned more and more to the training of combat groups in preparation for the next mass upsurge and their anarchist character became more pronounced after the split from the main body of Bolsheviks.

The problems of political tactics brought forward by the otzovists were much discussed by Bolsheviks within Russia from the spring of 1908. Articles by the émigré spokesmen were matched by resolutions in local committees. An otzovist resolution demanding the recall of the Social Democratic deputies was debated in the Moscow Committee in

May 1908 and defeated 18-14.¹ In the Petersburg organisation the otzovist and ultimatumist² supporters were strongly represented and indeed held a majority of the Petersburg Committee for much of 1908 and 1909. In November 1908 Lenin opened up a full scale campaign against otzovism which continued throughout 1909.

If we try to estimate the strength and nature of the otzovist-ultimatumist tendency within Russia it has to be said that it appears to have been widespread among the Bolshevik rank and file. In areas where Bolsheviks had either organised combat groups and engaged in expropriations or sympathised and co-operated with those that did, the support for boycott had been very strong. Where the Party organisations in such places survived into the period of deep repression otzovism also found supporters. Saratov and the Urals, the only two centres outside Moscow and Petersburg which sent delegates to the Conference of Combat Groups and Military organisations in 1906 were strongly boycottist. In June 1907 five-sixths of the Saratov organisation voted for boycott of the 3rd Duma.³ Expropriations in that area continued till 1908. There was no record of otzovism in Saratov but it must be remembered here that the expropriations (mainly the work

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Pro1. no. 31, 4 June 1908, p.6.

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Ultimatumism was a variant of otzovism popular in Petersburg, which called for an ultimatum to be presented to the Social Democratic deputies to adopt a genuinely revolutionary policy in the Duma. If they failed to comply they were to be recalled.

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Pro1. no. 35, 11 September 1908, p.7.

of the Socialist Revolutionaries) brought down such severe police reprisals that there was practically no organisation left for some years. The forests surrounding the Motovilikha works near Perm had been the scene of the exploits of the legendary Socialist Revolutionary expropriator, Lbov. There were supposed to have been more than a thousand Party members in the works at the time of the London Congress.¹ Both the Perm and the Motovilikha organisations had a record of strong support for boycott and recall. By 1909 the membership had declined to two groups of 25-30 each in the town and at the factory and the workers were said to be no longer otzovist.² This was hardly surprising, since police repression and unemployment had combined to reduce the Social Democratic organisations in the Urals to a dim half life after the turbulence of 1906-7, from which they feebly emerged in 1911-12 to participate in the Russian Organising Commission and the Prague conference.

But the boycottist-otzovist tendency was also strong in Petersburg and Moscow where boevism had not greatly influenced the minds of Party members. Here the tendency expressed itself in an insistence on the importance of the underground Party, contempt for the futility of legal organisations, utter dislike of the feeble part the Social Democratic fraction was playing in the 'Black Hundred Duma', and at times resentment against the intelligentsia. The last was most noticeable in Moscow. An early report

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Prolet. no. 32, 2 July 1908, p.7.

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Prolet. no. 46, 11 July 1909, p.8.

on the flight of the intelligentsia mentioned a tendency towards makhaevshchina¹ among Moscow workers.² By 1909 when the disputes between Bolshevik leaders had become prolonged, public and bitter, the disposition of the rank and file to blame the squabbling intelligentsia for the Party's troubles increased. Meetings of otzovist supporters were reported as saying that although the intelligentsia could not be dispensed with entirely, they should be carefully vetted and the role of the small number of elected representatives reduced to that of 'ideological technicians'. The reporter commented that this sort of thing could only end in the old dated makhaevshchina.³

Throughout 1908 the decline in the strength of the Party continued. Unremitting police persecution, arrests of those who had replaced the committee members, disappearance of the professionals and the extreme difficulty of circulating Party publications had meant the breakup of the organisation outside a few centres, into isolated groups. Only in the Central Industrial Region and the Caucasus did the oblast' organisation continue to

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This refers to the ideas of V.K. Makhaiskii (1866-1926), Polish sociologist who held that intellectuals, possessing a fund of invisible capital in their higher education, had interests distinct both from the capitalists and the manual workers. They led anti-capitalist movements in order to win political democracy and jobs under capitalism, or in order to occupy leading political and managerial positions, in a socialised economy. Makhaiskii rejected the political struggle in favour of a purely economic struggle of the workers.

2

Prolet. no. 32, 2 July 1908, p.7.

3

Prolet. no. 44, 8 April 1909, p.8.

function. In the provinces arrests, the departure of members and the loss of links were much more important than faction fights in bringing activity to a standstill. The needs of the small centres so frequently expressed in Proletarii were for the help of professionals, guidance from the Central Committee, a supply of Party literature and restoration of links with other groups. The question of open liquidationism was not relevant where there were no legal organisations. But in the capitals and the few other areas where legal work was possible recriminations between the factions was an important factor in further reducing, dividing and demoralising the members. There were particularly acute difficulties in Petersburg where the decline and demoralisation were much more marked than in Moscow. Here a strong legal Menshevik centre led by Potresov and Akselrod and firmly based on the Duma fraction and the legal trade union centre with its journal Professional'nyi Vestnik attracted many members away from the underground organisation. The rival claimant for Social Democratic leadership, the Petersburg Committee, dominated by the otzovists and characterised by bitter left hostility to the Duma fraction, harassed by spies and provocateurs and disrupted by frequent arrests had little authority.

Those Mensheviks who regarded the existence of the illegal Party as something to be defended were quite unable to accept the Petersburg Committee and worked independently.

The position in Moscow was rather different. Here the legal Mensheviks lacked the strong rallying point of the Duma fraction. They were entrenched in the trade

unions although less strongly than in Petersburg. There was a separate centre of legal Mensheviks but there were also Party Mensheviks, as was shown by the letter from 'Alexei Moskovskii' (G.I. Khundadze) published in Rabochee Znamia, the paper of the Central Industrial Region, at the end of 1908 and reprinted in Sotsial'demokrat in 1909. This was a brief statement dissociating the Mensheviks working in the Moscow organisation from the intelligenty in legal organisations calling themselves the Group of Social Democratic Mensheviks who were, according to the writer of the letter, carrying on a struggle against the R.S.D.W.P.¹ Reacting indignantly to the accusation the legal Mensheviks demanded its retraction at a meeting of Moscow Mensheviks, but without success.² Proletarii branded the Group of Social Democratic Mensheviks as hidden liquidators. It would seem however, that since the basis of pure legalism in Moscow was narrower than in Petersburg its attraction for Mensheviks was correspondingly less.

Although there was a solid core of otzovists in the Moscow organisation, the Leninist policy of combination of legal and illegal work was supported in the Moscow Committee and only one raion, Lefortovo, was regarded as a stronghold of otzovism. Bolsheviki and Mensheviks did not polarise into such bitterly opposed groups as in Petersburg, with the result that the organisation was less fragmented. In spite of severe losses through arrests,

¹ SD, no. 2, 28 January 1909, p.9.

² Prolet. no. 33, 8 April 1909, p.8.

the Moscow City and Okrug committees were recognised as leading bodies even when they were temporarily out of action. It was a considerable achievement that in 1908 they managed to publish seven issues of their paper and to hold Party conferences.

The Fifth Conference of the Party which met in Paris at the end of 1908 (o.s.) marked a very low point in the organisation. It was summoned with great difficulty, opposed by the Mensheviks as being unrepresentative, and only sixteen delegates representing organisations within the empire could be mustered - 5 Poles, 3 Bundists, 3 Mensheviks representing the Caucasus (émigrés) and 5 Bolsheviks (3 of them otzovists). Of the Bolsheviks there were one each from Moscow, the Central Industrial Region and the Urals, and two from Petersburg. The otzovists came from the C.I.R., the Urals and Petersburg. One more Menshevik from Kiev arrived as the conference was ending and a Bolshevik from the North-west region after it was over. Four Bolsheviks from other parts failed to arrive.¹

The main resolutions of the conference which were all, as Krupskaya said, in the Bolshevik spirit, dealt with the current situation and tasks of the Party, the Duma fraction and organisational questions, and all made significant statements of Bolshevik policy.² The brief resolution arising from the reports merely stated that in a number of places there had been attempts by a certain

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KPSS v resoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh (M., 1953), Part 1, p.194; Pro1. no. 42, 12 February 1909, p.2.

²

KPSS v resoliutsiiakh, 1, pp.195-205.

section of the Party intelligentsia to liquidate the existing organisation and replace it with an amorphous union within legal limits, although this would be purchased at the expense of the programme, tactics and traditions of the Party. Conference found necessary the most resolute ideological and organisational struggle against liquidationist attempts and called on Party workers regardless of faction and tendency to an energetic rejection of these attempts. It was further stated in this resolution that the Central Committee would not function properly unless the minority submitted to Party discipline and worked loyally within the one institution and its executive organs.

The resolution on the current situation and tasks of the Party was the work of Lenin at his most terse and lucid. It noted the evolution of the autocracy into a bourgeois monarchy, the present role of the various classes, the unresolved problem of the bourgeois revolution, the deepening conflict between ruling and working classes and the certain development of a new revolutionary crisis. The tasks were to strengthen the Party in the form in which it had been built up during the revolutionary period and to resist attempts to whittle down the slogans and liquidate the illegal organisation. The functions of the intelligentsia were to be transferred to the workers themselves. The economic struggle of the workers was to be assisted along the lines laid down by the London Congress of the Party and the Stuttgart Congress of the International. The Duma was to be used as a rostrum for revolutionary Social Democratic propaganda and agitation.

The resolution on the Duma fraction directly opposed the Menshevik view of its role, in stating that it was to serve as one of the organs of the Party in propaganda, agitation and organisation, and to refrain from so-called positive legislation and chasing after trifling reforms. It should bring forward measures on the 8-hour day, freedom of unions and strikes and workers insurance. In listing the fraction's mistakes, laying down a militant agitational policy and insisting on its subordination to the Central Committee the resolution was clearly designed to meet some of the criticism of the performance of the Social Democratic deputies, upon which a great deal of otzovist dissatisfaction was based. The otzovist Bolsheviks here found themselves in a difficult position. They voted for the resolution on the current situation although with the rider that they did not agree with point 5, on the use of the Duma. On the Duma resolution they voted with the Leninists to maintain a united front against the Mensheviks. On the organisational resolution they had no position other than the official Bolshevik one.

The resolution on organisational questions having repeated the Leninist estimate that present political conditions made it less feasible to maintain Social Democratic work within the limits of legal and semi-legal workers' organisations and made impossible the full application of the principle of the democratic structure of the organisation, recommended that the greatest possible use be made of both legal and illegal organisations. However work could be undertaken fruitfully only where Party committees, even small ones, existed in every industrial enterprise and if all work in legal

organisations were carried on under the leadership of illegal Party organisations. In order to co-ordinate Party work in the localities, oblast' centres were to be organised in each oblast' to give technical assistance and ideological leadership, to rebuild organisations which had collapsed and to establish close links between local and oblast' organisations and the Central Committee. The principle of co-optation should be permitted in local organisations with the co-opted members being replaced as soon as possible by properly elected comrades.

On the Central Committee the conference supported the Central Committee plenum decision to set up a bureau in Russia with plenary powers although questions of principle should be decided by a plenum. Links with the centre were to be strengthened by more frequent tours by Central Committee members and improvement of communications. The conference insisted that the printing of the central organ, Sotsial'demokrat should be resumed as soon as possible.

Lenin, unlike Zinoviev who dismissed the 5th Conference in his history of the Party as of little importance, had a high regard for its decisions. He considered that it had made a correct estimate of the political situation in the years of counter revolution and had laid down a policy (his own) which remained substantially correct for the next few years. He not only referred in later works with approval to its decisions, but at his suggestion the Prague Conference of 1912 mentioned the 5th Conference resolution on the current situation

whose propositions on the historical significance and class content of the whole June 3 regime on the one hand and the growth

of the revolutionary crisis on the other have been fully borne out by the events of the last three years.¹

From the resolution on organisational questions it is clear how weak the Central Committee had become. The recommendation to set up a small committee (fixed at five by the plenum following the conference), to lead the work inside Russia was not a new one, but the record of the Russian bureau in 1908 had not been impressive. The Central Committee had begun the year with brisk resolutions on trade unions and co-operatives and letters to Party members on how to work in trade unions. Zinoviev in his report on the 5th Conference described these resolutions outlining the method of fraction work in mass organisations as amongst the most important the Central Committee had taken between the 4th and 5th conferences. The record of activity was not long. The Central Committee had published one number of a trade union paper and had endeavoured without success to call a conference of Social Democrats working in trade unions. It had carried on agitation in connection with the trial of Social Democratic deputies of the 2nd Duma, it took part in the preparation and work of Social Democrats in the congresses of co-operatives, popular universities, women and students (the last one was illegal). Members of the Central Committee had made a number of tours to organise and consolidate oblast' centres in Central Russia, the South, Urals, Volga, Crimea, North West, Caucasus and Northern Caucasus. They participated regularly in local

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KPSS v resoliutsiiakh, 1, p.271.

work in Petersburg. A Bureau to assist the military organisation with agitation and propaganda had been set up and Central Committee members sent to settle organisational disputes in Baku and Taganrog. It published one number of the central organ, Sotsial'demokrat, in Petersburg and several leaflets, and had made a number of attempts to get the central organ published regularly in Russia. Finally it had devoted a good deal of attention to the task of leading the Duma fraction, but absolved itself from responsibility for a number of its mistakes, since the fraction at times acted contrary to the advice or instructions of the Central Committee. It had done its best to establish close contact between the fraction and local organisations by issuing appeals to the Party and on their tours Central Committee members had drawn the attention of local comrades to the matter.

One reason for the ineffectiveness of the activity of the central body, Zinoviev observed, was the unstable majority which meant that obstructive actions by the Mensheviks at times prevented the Central Committee from acting at all.¹

A plenum of the Central Committee had met in Geneva in August 1908. This meeting was marked by bitter quarrels between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. The former managed to divert an enquiry into expropriations pressed for by the Mensheviks into a Bolshevik controlled commission, while the Menshevik proposal to turn the Central Committee into an information centre was brought to light. These two points of dissension showed the gulf

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Prok. no. 42, 12 February 1909, pp.2-4.

existing at that time between the two wings - the Mensheviks condemning the resort to anarchist lawlessness and the Bolsheviks denouncing the attempts to liquidate the Party. 1908 had begun with the two factions on the Central Committee disagreeing but able to reach decisions at least by majority vote and occasionally unanimously. During the year the Menshevik members virtually boycotted the Central Committee. The question after the 5th conference was whether the organisational proposals would make the Committee a functioning body. In the event they did not.

The record of Bolshevik activity in the trade unions in 1908 vividly illustrates the gap between intentions and performance. In February 1908 a resolution was published on Social Democratic work in trade unions which it was stated, had been drawn up by a commission of the Central Committee and adopted by the Committee in January. As mentioned earlier, this resolution contained the same proposals as those put forward by a conference of Bolshevik activists late in 1907.

It began with the statement that Social Democratic work in trade unions must be carried out in the spirit of the London and Stuttgart resolutions, that is, not in the spirit of neutrality or non-partyness of trade unions but on the contrary, in the spirit of unremitting striving for the closest possible rapprochement of unions with Party.

Trade unions in their period of legal existence had not in general succeeded in creating solid, organised nuclei in industrial enterprises. Therefore government repression had led not only to the closing of many unions

but to complete destruction of some. Thus the central task was the creation of such solidly organised nuclei. Without such nuclei it was impossible either to build stable unions or to lead the economic struggle of the proletariat.

In existing legal trade unions these nuclei had to be organised in all factories, that is, primary trade union organisations had to be created. Members of the Party should form solid groups in all such organisations in order to influence them systematically in a Social Democratic spirit.

Where police repression had entirely broken up the legal trade unions, illegal trade unions were to be organised. As with the legal ones the basis of these illegal unions must be the organisation of as many workers as possible in the trade union nucleus of an undertaking, and within this nucleus it was necessary to organise a trade union group of Social Democrats in the undertaking.

In order to co-ordinate all Social Democratic work in trade unions, union groups of Social Democrats were to be set up in every occupation, which would unite the union groups of the various enterprises. All these groups were to carry on work in close organisational contact with the local Party centre.¹

This resolution was followed by a long explanatory letter from the Central Committee on work in trade unions in which the reason for the collapse of unions in the face

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Procl. no. 21, 13 February 1908, p.4.

of repression, namely the instability of their organisation, was examined and the tasks of Social Democrats in restoring them outlined.

The organised groups of Social Democrats were to work (1) through meetings of Party members of union management boards and delegate meetings for preliminary discussion of important questions; (2) by discussion in raion and other Party meetings of trade union questions; (3) by organisation where possible of meetings at city, raion and podraion level of Social Democrats in a particular industry for such discussion; (4) because of the organisation of Russian trade unions on industry and not occupational basis, the discussion of trade union questions could take place in workplace Party meetings.¹

In the discussion that these proposals brought forth there were objections on the ground that they presented a danger both to the unions and to the Party. The Party would be in danger of degenerating into a trade union party, or on the other hand, the existence of Social Democratic groups within the unions could lead to schisms, even to the formation of special Party unions. The defenders were ready for this, they pointed out that the groups were not Party nuclei and political questions would be decided not by meetings of Party members of this or that union but at Party meetings. There would be nothing to fear from the second danger, that of splits caused by the operations of Social Democrats within unions, since the groups would meet only to discuss important questions

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Procl. no. 23, 27 February 1908, pp.4-5.

on which it was essential to have a final decision. In the end a compromise was reached - organised groups were to be formed only in union boards of management and delegate meetings.¹

It seems clear that the proposers of the new system of organised groups within the mass organisations were aware of the possible danger of an independent body parallel to and challenging the authority of the Party being set up and they were careful not to construct a fraction in which the chain of authority ran directly from the leading Social Democrats in the mass organisation to the rank and file Party members, but instead at every level, Social Democrats in the unions were in consultation with and subordinated to the appropriate Party body. The system was devised as much to protect the Party from encroachment by the mass organisations as to bring the latter speedily and efficiently under the ideological influence of the Party.

In the same issue of Proletarii a letter from the Central Committee appeared proposing that an all-Russian conference of leading Party workers in the trade unions be held in April 1908. It pointed out that Social Democrats had taken a leading part in the development of trade unions in the last $2\frac{1}{2}$ years but their trade union work had no organised character, it was carried on in isolation and mistakes occurred again and again. There was a need to sum up the experiences of these years. The Central Committee had recently decided to set up organised groups

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Prolet. no. 28, 2 April 1908, p.3.

in trade unions and the completion of the uniting of these groups must be an all-Russian co-ordination of Social Democratic activity by means of a special conference.

The suggested method of election of delegates to the conference was that it should be as democratic as possible, embracing all Social Democrats working in trade unions, or if that were not possible, embracing Party members on union boards of management and in union delegate meetings, or in extreme cases, only those on the central trade union bureau. The final order of election was left to oblast¹ and local organisations to arrange.

Police persecution was too intense for the conference to be held.

A Moscow Committee resolution on trade unions in 1908 is of some interest. It stated that under existing police conditions legal leadership of the economic struggle was impossible, and illegal boevye prof. tsentry (militant trade union centres) would have to be organised to undertake this leadership. To form these centres, city conferences by trade of the most active members of unions and representatives of factory Party nuclei should be held. It was essential to reactivate and re-establish the legal trade unions. Boevye prof. tsentry were to elect representatives to a central all-trade union group attached to the Moscow Committee which would have representatives from the Moscow Committee and every Party raion and would lead the trade union struggle under the control of the Moscow Committee.²

¹ Pro1. no. 28, 2 April 1908, p.3.

² Pro1. no. 31, 4 June 1908, pp.6-7.

The Moscow resolution on work in trade unions was adopted by a Party city conference.

The elaborate plans of work in trade unions drawn up by Bolshevik committees in 1908 proved quite impossible to put into effect. Shattered by internal dissension and loss of members the Bolshevik faction was too preoccupied with its own difficulties to restore unions which had collapsed or to challenge Menshevik domination of the legal unions. Articles by faction leaders continued to appear in the Party press defending neutrality or partiinnost'. Martov attacked the bureaucracy of the Bolshevik proposals pointing out that the main activity should be energetic agitation against repression of the unions and the barbarous policies of the government. His view of the role of the trade unions which cast them as organs of struggle while respecting their organisational independence was more constructive than Lenin's. But there was one catch. Under Russian conditions there was no possibility for the time being of the trade union movement developing in that direction. The emasculated legal trade unions on which the Mensheviks lavished so much care failed precisely to protest against the repression of the unions or to attack the barbarous policies of the government. A perusal of Professional'nyi Vestnik, the journal of the Petersburg legal trade union centre, for 1908-9 shows that it conducted no agitation on wages and conditions and made no overt protests against government policy. In 1908 it did indeed print an article on the eight hour movement - in western Europe. It recorded without comment the enormities perpetrated by the authorities against the trade union organisations. For a

small politically literate section of the workers there was an eloquent message in this Aesopian language. But to the mass of the Russian workers it had nothing to say.

In a report from Kiev in Golos sotsial'demokrata on the position of the trade unions there, the story was that of unions rapidly losing both members and funds, fearing for their continued existence and reduced to a state where they were carrying on no economic struggle at all. There was one exception, the woodworkers, who had gone on strike and after a week were successful in having the working day reduced from 10½ to 9 and 8 hours and in raising wages in six workshops. There was also a sequel. The union was closed by the Kiev administration.¹

The conditions of exploitation of labour in Russia, a rapidly industrializing backward country were severe, as they were in many parts of Europe at that time. But whereas elsewhere organised labour had a voice and could state its grievances, in Russia complete silence was imposed on the legal labour movement on the issues which concerned it most. It was not allowed to state such a simple fact of industrial life as that the boss was an exploiter or to prepare a programme of claims to be made against him. In the end it was the illegal revolutionary political party which had to do these things, which was not at all what Lenin had envisaged in What is to be done?

1909 was a year of continuing disintegration. Even as the Bolshevik organising centre, the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee failed and by the end of the year

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Golos sotsial'demokrata, no. 6-7, May-June 1908, p.27.

had almost ceased to function. The Bureau had five members with one representative each from the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Bund, Poles and Latvians, but never functioned with full numbers. The day to day work was done by I.F. Dubrovinskii (Innokenty) as the Polish delegate, with the Bolshevik chairman Meshkovskii responsible for work with the Duma fraction. Soon after the 5th Conference the Central Committee published a questionnaire addressed to Party organisations. They were asked to state their numbers, how they defined membership and to propose a date for the next Party congress, basis of representation at it and an agenda.¹ It was in the answers to this questionnaire that rough figures for the membership of various organisations were given. The few replies published to the question of definition of membership conformed fairly closely to the Leninist formula put forward at the 2nd Congress. From the brief reports of the activity of the Committee appearing in Sotsial'demokrat in 1909 it would appear that it concerned itself with the policy to be adopted at the legal congress of factory medical officers, announced that a May Day leaflet calling for a one day strike would be published, drew up a protest for Social Democratic supporters against the death penalty, different from the liberal one which was being widely circulated, discussed the Duma fraction, made a number of proposals on the policy it should adopt and asserted its right of veto over fraction decisions, pronounced on the desirability of a separate organisation for women workers, regarding it as temporarily admissible, and sent agents to

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SD no. 2, 28 January 1909, p.7.

restore organisations. No further reports for 1909 appear after the issue of Sotsial'demokrat No. 5 in May.

A report on the work of the Central Committee Bureau was given by Meshkovskii at the enlarged editorial board meeting of Proletarii in Paris in June 1909, which unfortunately was not preserved in the minutes, but from the discussion it would appear that there had been disagreements with the Petersburg Committee and some of the practical workers at the meeting were very critical of the Bureau for its lack of activity. The reason for the complete inability of the Bureau in the first half of 1909 to fulfil its function as the leading Party body seems to have been with a remarkable performance of provocation by a trusted functionary in the Bureau secretariat. A memoir of work with the Bureau in 1908 and 1909 by Golubkov gives a vivid account of the undermining process which both halted the work of the centre and made it so dangerous that local organisations boycotted it. From the first message received early in 1909 from Burtsev in Berlin, through Krupskaja, that there was a provocateur, identity unknown, close to the centre, Golubkov recounts the growing uncertainty and tension as the signs pointed to a most valued secretarial worker Lucia (Julia Serova), wife of one of the exiled Social Democratic deputies of the 2nd Duma. The centre had suffered a series of setbacks, the two leading professionals Dubrovinskii and Nogin had been arrested unexpectedly, the printed resolutions of the 5th Conference had been seized when the police raided the apartment where they were awaiting distribution, and the May Day leaflets printed in Poland had been lost when the courier bringing them in was arrested. It seemed clear

that the Bureau was able to carry on some work of a conspiratorial nature, find premises, have appointments, provide accommodation and supply passports and money. But as soon as it moved beyond these narrow limits and tried to do any real work such as printing resolutions, distributing leaflets or getting people out of the country it met with some obstacle.

By June suspicion of Lucia was almost a certainty. Golubkov attending the enlarged editorial board meeting asked Lenin what should be done and received the characteristic reply that they should build the organisation so that provocateurs could not get in. Then he relented and advised Golubkov to remove anyone on whom there lay the smallest suspicion. It was decided in Paris to wind up the Bureau office.¹

Rumours that provocation was centred in the leading bodies of the Party had been circulating in the Petersburg organisation for months. In March 1909 the fourteen members of the Petersburg Committee present at a meeting were surprised and arrested. The Provisional Executive Commission which endeavoured to rebuild the Committee found the Petersburg raion organisations extremely suspicious and reluctant to have anything to do with it. Four raions proposed the setting up of an inter-raion, but not city, investigating committee to examine the arrests and rumours. The Provisional Executive itself set up an investigating committee and proposed more conspiratorial methods of reconstituting the Petersburg city committee,

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A. Golubkov, op. cit., pp.121-51.

that is, by reducing the number of raion representatives from two to one each, to be nominated by the raion executives instead of being elected by the raion conferences. It was hoped that nomination would ensure greater safety for delegates, as would the smaller city committee of 8-10 which would replace the former cumbersome body numbering 16-17.¹

The Petersburg organisation had given up the practice early in 1908 of electing representatives to its leading committee at the city conference because it had become impossible to hold large meetings, and had adopted the system of having the raion conferences elect two representatives each.²

As finally adopted, the new rules provided that delegates to the Petersburg Committee were to be elected by the raion executive commissions wherever it was not expedient for them to be elected by the raion committees. An executive commission of three, with power to co-opt two more members was to be elected by the city committee. The term of office of the committee continued to be six months.³ But even these extreme conspiratorial precautions were not successful in protecting the committee and in the new batch of members that took office

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¹ 'Iz perepiski mestnykh organizatsii s zagranichnym bol'shevistskim tsentrom v 1909 g.', [hereafter cited as Perepiska] in PR (1928), no. 9, pp.162-6.

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Pro1. no. 21, 13 February 1908, pp.4-5.

3

Partiia bol'shevikov v period reaktsii (1907-1910 gg).
Dokumenty i materialy (M., 1961), pp.254-5.

in the summer, there was the inevitable provocateur present, this time Poliakov ('Katsap').¹

For the Petersburg organisation as powerful a disruptive factor as arrests and provocation was the bitter intrafactional struggle between Leninists and otzovists which flared up after the conference of the enlarged editorial board of Proletarii expelled Bogdanov from the Bolshevik faction and condemned otzovism and ultimatumism as a deviation from the path of revolutionary Marxism. This conference was attended by the editors of Proletarii, five Bolshevik Central Committee members and three representatives from localities. The resolutions dealing with the tasks of the Bolsheviks in the Party, and the tasks of Social Democrats in relation to the Duma restated Leninist policy. The resolution on otzovism and ultimatumism described the origin of the tendency and stated that it had nothing in common with Bolshevism. The resolutions on God building tendencies, the Party school abroad and agitation for separate Bolshevik congresses and conferences condemned the various splitting activities and un-Marxist tendencies amongst otzovists and their associates.²

In a report on the conference which accompanied the publication of the resolutions in a supplement to Proletarii, Lenin clearly stated that the conference had not declared a split in the Bolshevik faction and the resolutions were not to be understood as an instruction to

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Perepiska, p.165.

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KPSS v resoliutsiiakh, 1, pp.211-32.

expel otzovist-minded workers.¹ Nevertheless the last paragraph of the resolution on otzovism and ultimatumism disclaiming any common ground between Bolshevism and the otzovist tendency and Lenin's article Liquidation of Liquidationism, where he stated that the Party could make no headway until it liquidated otzovist as well as Menshevik liquidationism² were bound to produce the impression that a split was about to occur.

The minutes of the enlarged editorial board conference reveal that some of the practical workers present, in particular Tomskii and Rykov, were greatly concerned that members should not be driven out. Tomskii after twice saying that he feared that the pages of Proletarii would be filled with the struggle against otzovism made a statement supported by Rykov and Shantser (Marat) asking the editorial board not to be carried away by the discussions on otzovism to the detriment of more important questions.³ He also made a statement on the main resolution on otzovism supporting it as a whole, but opposing the last paragraph. Other practical workers present shared his views.⁴ Tomskii's gloomy predictions about the content of Proletarii were fully borne out. The next two issues had supplements devoted to otzovism, and

¹ Lenin XIX, pp.6-7.

² Ibid., p.50.

³ Proletarii. Protokoly soveshchaniia rasshirennoi redaktsii...1909 g. (M., 1934), pp.110, 119-23.

⁴ Ibid., p.38.

there were polemics against Bogdanov who had issued a statement defending his viewpoint.

There was an immediate reaction in Petersburg. Emphatic letters from Party functionaries, F.I. Goloshchekin and V.O. Volosevich expressed similar views to those of Tomskii and Rykov - support of the political line of Proletarii combined with outright rejection of any move to expel otzovists. Everyone was agreed that otzovism represented a mood or an attitude and not a policy. The way to change this attitude, according to the men on the spot, was through persistent re-education and not the setting off of a factional brawl.¹

On August 9 the Petersburg Committee, at that time divided 4-4 between otzovists and Leninists, at a meeting at which there happened to be a majority of otzovists resolved, apropos of the pending Duma by-elections,

On the question of the elections the Executive Committee, without attaching special importance to the State Duma and our fraction there, but being guided by the general Party decision, resolves to take part in the elections, not investing all the available forces, but merely putting forward its own candidates to collect the Social Democratic votes and organising an election commission answerable to the executive of the St Petersburg Committee through its representative.²

This crass but not untypical example of otzovist political thinking caused great embarrassment in the organisation and an unofficial inter-raion meeting of activists was hastily

1

Perepiska, pp.166-9, 173-9.

2

Ibid., pp.170-1.

called which repudiated the resolution and expressed support of the political line of Proletarii, together with strong disagreement with the methods of struggle against ultimatumism pursued by the editorial board. A later meeting of the Petersburg Committee rescinded the otzovist resolution. On the occasion of the inter-raion meeting, Goloshchekin wrote to the Bolshevik centre saying how wrong they had been to adopt disruptive methods of struggle, drowning a grain of truth in a sea of muck.¹ Volosevich, organiser in the Vasilev Ostrov raion and a member of the Petersburg Committee also wrote in strong terms. He said that a split was looming in the organisation with the inevitable accompaniments of intrigue, raging quarrels, demagoguery and other morally dubious methods of factional struggle. The wish to discredit the theoretical position of one's opponents often led to entirely impermissible means of discrediting Party organisations and even the Party itself. All this put on the alert comrades who valued the organisation, weak as it was and forced them to concentrate all their forces to prevent a split. This had been the reason for the calling of the unofficial inter-raion meeting. Volosevich believed he was correctly expressing the feeling of the meeting in saying that they would not allow a split to occur.²

The uncompromising rejection of a heresy hunt by the men in Petersburg and their critical attitude to the

1

Ibid., p.171.

2

Ibid., pp.173-5.

editors of Proletarii produced a conciliatory article from Lenin, A Word to the Bolsheviks of St Petersburg.

The Petersburg Committee however, remained deadlocked and incapable of action, because the November six monthly elections returned a 5-3 majority for the otzovists. Reports of meetings told of arid arguments and lack of action.¹ The ultimatumist variety of otzovism which flourished in Petersburg lacked any positive policy. In November their main concern seems to have been to prevent workers from participating in the coming congress on alcoholism. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that had the Central Committee had a functioning centre or had there been any of the leading professionals able to work in the city at this time, the confusion in the Petersburg Committee could have been cleared up. But the centre had disintegrated and there is no evidence of the continued presence of experienced professionals. Goloshchekin had gone on to Moscow and local functionaries retreated to the raions. While the committee was foundering, such work as did go on was in the raions, where a cautious rapprochement between some Party Mensheviks and non-otzovist Bolsheviks had begun.

The situation in the eight raions was discussed in Sotsial'demokrat and Proletarii in 1909. A report to a meeting of the city committee at the end of January 1909 gave numbers of organised members. This report covering six raions gave a rough total of 520.² Mention was made of

¹ Ibid., pp.179-86.

² Prolet. no. 42, 12 February 1909, p.7.

united work with Party Mensheviks in the Petersburg and Vasilev Ostrov raions and there was a member of the Petersburg Committee on the Central Trade Union Bureau. Leadership was entirely in the hands of workers in three raions, Narva, Neva and Moscow, where there were no intelligenty. In those raions arrests and unemployment were severe. Vasilev Ostrov was the raion where the otzovists were strongest. It claimed 200 members and seven intelligenty. City raion No. 1 with 250 members had four intelligenty. Vyborg belonged to the Mensheviks and there was very little Bolshevik organisation there.

In June an article described the parlous condition of the Petersburg organisation as a whole. Rumours of provocation had undermined confidence and otzovism had done great harm because it caused the neglect of organisational work. Activity was being started again but because of the shortage of professionals most organisers had to work both in the city committee and in the raions. Police persecution was particularly intense because the Okhrana which had hitherto devoted attention to the Socialist Revolutionaries, maximalists, makhaevtsy and anarchists was now concentrating solely on the Social Democrats. There had been almost no activity for May Day. A radical change in methods of work was necessary. Having grown used to legal conditions and having expanded enormously in the 'days of freedom' the Party found it difficult to adapt itself to repression. The organisation of nuclei wherever there were links, even in very small enterprises required forces which the Party did not have. The task therefore was to build up strength in the large undertakings. There was an extreme shortage of functionaries and propagandists, and the Party

press from abroad came in such small quantities that it could not give guidance, nor were its articles understood by the workers. There were at the present time less than 1000 members in Petersburg although the prestige of Social Democracy stood as high as it had done before.¹

The attitude of workers in the organisation at this time as it occasionally appears in correspondence with the Bolshevik centre abroad reflected a mixture of dependence and resentment. A letter full of emotion from a worker said,

And know what we people working in the raions and factories have decided. We have decided to exclude the otzovists from the executive and take their places. You are going to make a fuss about this? What is going on? Dumping the professionals? Yes, comrades, the Party is dear to us, as dear as Social Democracy. If we can manage to get our people on to the executive things won't be any worse than before because they couldn't be...we have decided that although we are not educated in the sense of having lofty thoughts we will be able to organise around us an ideological leadership and leaders from among those not wishing to work with the present executive...a serious question faces us. Is there to be a Petersburg organisation or not? There has got to be help from us.²

The tendency of a good many politically conscious workers at this time however was to withdraw from the organisation and wait. Worker activists, Mitrevich and Pireiko, both speak of this in their memoirs.

¹ SD no. 6, 4 June 1909, p.7.

² K. Ostroukhova, 'Otzovisty i ul'timatisty', in PR (1924), no. 6, pp.27-8.

Our revolutionary activity consisted merely of meeting together frequently and chatting about the past over a bottle of beer and belonging to cultural and educational circles and technical schools in the factories.¹

Pireiko wrote,

Of workers who had formerly been in the Party, some took to exes [expropriations], others to drink and a few went off to study in evening courses or at a club. This latter workers' group represented the Party at that time.²

Accounts of Party life in Moscow and the Central Industrial Region testified to the livelier state of the organisation there. Although otzovists had considerable support they were not as obsessed by the shortcomings of the Duma fraction as were the Petersburg otzovists. Otzovist workers boycotted the legal trade unions but provided great support for the Party school abroad. Free of the exacerbating presence of the Duma deputies and an overwhelmingly strong legal Menshevik centre the Bolshevik left wing was less disruptive in Moscow than in Petersburg. Another reason for the greater solidity of the Moscow organisation may be found in its being somewhat less plagued, until 1909, with spying and provocation than the Petersburg organisation. It was not until after the 5th Conference that Moscow adopted the more conspiratorial system of raions electing two representatives each at their own conferences, to the city committee.

1

A. Mitrevich, 'Vospominaniia o rabochem revoliutsionnom dvizhenii', in PR (1922), no. 4, p.219.

2

A. Pireiko, 'Partiinaia rabota v 2-m gorodskom raione Peterburga (1905-1910 gg.)', in PR (1923), no. 4, p.163.

One of the many proposals to cope with the internal difficulties caused by the disappearance of the intelligentsia and the inability of worker Party members to undertake political leadership was for an advanced propaganda and organisational school to be organised outside Russia to give workers a basic theoretical and practical training lasting some months. First suggested in circles abroad by the otzovist Aleksinskii, the idea was taken up by Bogdanov, Gorky and a Moscow Party worker N. Vilonov ('Mikhail Zavodskoi'), who, suffering from tuberculosis, was at that time living in Capri. Early in 1909 Vilonov submitted a prospectus for publication in Proletarii. Unfortunately for the future of the school, its most active supporters abroad were to be found among the otzovists and the God builders Lunarcharskii and Gorky, and Capri, Gorky's headquarters, was the place where it was to be held. At a time when the struggle between Lenin and the otzovists was approaching a critical stage and both sides were manoeuvring for tactical advantage, this was enough to damn the project with the Bolshevik centre, which understandably considered that the purpose of the school would be to lay the basis of a new factional tendency. It refused to countenance the school unless it was run in Paris under its control. Vilonov, a Bolshevik committed neither to the Leninists nor to the otzovists, but single-mindedly involved in getting the school launched wished to see it kept under the control of local organisations and standing outside factional disputes. He approached the Moscow Committee directly for approval of the plan. Under pressure from the editorial board of Proletarii this was

refused.¹ Vilonov returned to Russia to organise support for the school himself and members throughout the Central Industrial Region responded enthusiastically. In otzovist organisations such as the Lefortovo raion, approval was combined with charges that the Bolshevik centre was trying to freeze the plan. Other Party bodies, in Shuia, Sormovo and Yaroslavl, gave their support on condition that the school should be held under the aegis of the Bolshevik centre or the Central Committee.² Finally the otzovist-led Central Industrial Oblast' Bureau gave its approval and candidates were elected in the organisation.

The school which opened in Capri with thirteen students, all from the Central Industrial Region, in August 1909 was in the hands of the otzovists and God builders. Its stormy history, the revolt and withdrawal of Vilonov and some of the students and the organisation of later schools are not the concern of this work. What may be noted here is that the first Russian Party school was brought to fruition by the dedicated efforts of a worker Party functionary and received its greatest support from worker Party members. The project was caught in the crossfire of factional battles and the particular interests of those who stood to benefit by it were lost to sight. It was not until Lenin met Vilonov for the first time, not long before the latter died, that he understood the motives of the man who had fought to get the school started and saw

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S. Livshits, 'Kapriiskaia partiinaia shkola (1909 g.)', in PR (1924), no. 6, p.39.

²

Ibid., p.47.

that for worker Party members it had an importance which had nothing to do with factional disputes.

I regarded the school merely as the centre of a new faction. It has turned out that this is wrong - not in the sense that it was not the centre of a new faction (the school was that centre and is so now), but in the sense that this was not complete, not the full truth. Subjectively, certain people made such a centre out of the school, objectively, it was such, but in addition the school attracted genuine, leading workers from real working class life. (Lenin to Gorky, November 16, 1909).¹

The Central Industrial Region had managed to hold an Oblast' conference in November 1908 to elect delegates to the 5th Party Conference. Sixteen representatives with full vote attended from Moscow, Moscow Okrug, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Nizhni-Novgorod, Sormovo, Orel, Kineshma, Morshank, Briansk and Vladimir Okrug. The six with consultative vote were made up of members of the Oblast' Bureau, reporters to the conference and secretaries. It had proved very difficult to summon the conference since the Oblast' Bureau was not functioning and links with local centres had been broken. The Moscow Committee had done most of the organising work and in the absence of ideological direction from the centres had drawn up the political platform and practical recommendations.

The reports from the localities all pointed to the decline in activity and the disappearance of the local intelligentsia. The workers were giving both ideological and practical leadership. The difficulties created by this

¹

Lenin XLVII, p.219.

change were increased by the scarcity of Party literature. Proletarii arrived in small quantities and did not give the answers to questions raised by the workers. The local illegal paper Rabochee Znamia was also in short supply and was too small to deal in detail with theoretical and tactical problems. The consensus of the reports was that the worst ill was not the indifference of the masses but the lack of a functioning Party apparatus. The need was for agitational material and the training of worker organisers and propagandists. A resolution was carried calling for a Party congress to help the organisation to adapt to conspiratorial conditions and create effective central institutions.¹

In April 1909 the Moscow membership was reported as being 1500. All seven raions were supporting one professional each and five or six were maintained by the city committee. A recent meeting of the committee had been informed that the raions had considered the new form of election, adopted it and were to hold elections for representatives to the committee.² During the year however, a major breakdown occurred. The city committee was put out of action by arrests in May and a provisional executive was set up, but the full committee was not yet functioning in October, when only three of the raions were reported as still having organisers, although the raion committees were meeting. The main difficulties were the usual ones of lack of organisers, propagandists and meeting places. It was

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Prolet. no. 41, 7 January 1909, pp.5-6.

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Prolet. no. 44, 8 April 1909, pp.5-6.

pointed out that in Petersburg between seven and ten per cent of workers rented their own dwellings but in Moscow it was between one and two per cent. The reasons for this, it was said, were the very low wages and high rents. Considerable numbers of workers still lived in barracks attached to factories.¹

In September the Moscow Okrug organisation of eight raions reported a membership of about 300. There had probably been between two and three thousand at the time of the London Congress. The Okrug conference at which these figures were produced, was attended by sixteen delegates, eleven of whom were workers and five intelligently. Nine, eight of them workers, had full vote. The organisation was reported to be firmly on its feet after two years of unsuccessful effort. Local groups had survived even where they had had no contacts with higher bodies for over a year. The conference listened with great attention to a report by the executive on the present situation but refused to carry the anti-otzovist resolution presented with it. Instead it deferred its decision, asking for more time to consider.² The conference was by no means fully otzovist in sympathy, since it passed a resolution on the Duma fraction recognising the value of work in the Duma. The refusal to accept the executive's lead seems to have been an instance of local worker Party members resisting the attempts of intelligently on leading committees to carry the anti-

¹

Prolet. no. 49, 3 October 1909, p.9.

²

Prolet. no. 47-48, 5 September 1909, pp.6-8.

otzovist campaign to the point of hounding the otzovists in the local organisations.

From the various centres of the Central Industrial Region reports continued to come in of collapse of organisations through arrests. The most complete seems to have been that of the formerly vigorous Ivanovo-Voznesensk organisation. Two groups which did survive were in Yaroslavl and Kineshma. Both of these reported that the closing down of, or the failure to launch such much needed mass organisations as co-operatives, clubs and trade unions left no alternative but to build the illegal Party.¹

The Kineshma area was one of backward workers of whom only 20 to 25 per cent were literate. The reason why the organisation survived the first years of the repression appears to have been that a core of intelligently remained in the town, several of whom were women working at the zemstvo hospital. According to R. Kovnator's account of work in the organisation, an active worker Party member was recruited as a provocateur in 1909 and from then on all the affairs of the organisation were known to the police. Indeed, police reports give a very detailed picture of the fortunes of the organisation. In an endeavour to combat provocation a new plan of organisation was drawn up. It was decided to give up electing a committee, and calling factory meetings and instead, to organise one stable independent circle of eight to ten of the most conscious workers on whose shoulders would rest all Party activity. The organisation was able to carry on local work but when it

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SD, no. 5, 23 April 1909, p.10.

endeavoured in 1910 to call a conference to reunite the unlinked Party organisations in Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Shuia, and other places, the police descended and arrested the participants. By 1911 the last active Party workers in Kineshma were arrested and the revolutionary movement there died down until 1917.¹

As has been said before the decline in the Urals was especially drastic. The Oblast' organisation collapsed in 1908 and could not be revived. Perm and Ekaterinburg suffered very severely from repression. At the beginning of 1909 not one trade union remained in Ekaterinburg and the city Party committee was overtaken by arrest every three months.² There were cases of partial revival in isolated centres such as Tiumen. After arrests as a result of a strike in 1907 the organisation there was rebuilt by Party members coming to the town in 1908. The numbers grew from 18 to 180 and more than 35,000 copies of leaflets, brochures and newspapers were issued. The Party printing press was one of the very few that survived in the Urals. But collapse occurred again in 1909 as a result of provocation.³

The position in the Urals was one of extreme repression and frequent arrests of Party committees. The Oblast' bureau being beyond revival, particular difficulty was experienced in maintaining any contact at all with the centre because of the area's remoteness.

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R. Kovnator, 'Rabochee i s.d. dvizhenie v Kineshemskom raione (1897-1910 g.g.)', in PR (1924), no. 6, pp.167-85.

²

Proi. no. 42, 12 February 1909, p.7.

³

SD no. 6, 4 June 1909, p.8.

A report from the Donets basin showed that the miners were still militant although the Party organisations were weak and disrupted by provocation. The Petrovsk organisation, with a membership of fifty-five, had recently had its printing press seized, which it had had for eighteen months and on which it had printed eight leaflets of 24,000 copies each for the Iuzovka-Petrovsk district and two local leaflets of 2,000 copies each. In spite of the lack of meetings, leaflets or organisation a number of mines had struck on May Day. The report ended with an appeal for Party literature that the workers could read and help from the Central Committee and the declaration that matters were bad only because of lack of organisers.¹

During 1909 there were frequent complaints from the members in the localities that Proletarii was not the sort of newspaper that the workers wanted. Its style was criticised as well as the content. Since locally produced illegal newspapers could not survive long, the desirability of a popularly written central paper was stressed. Trotsky's Pravda was often mentioned as being more popular with the workers than Proletarii because it could be understood. At the enlarged editorial board meeting the needs of the Party press were discussed. All agreed on the desirability of having a popular organ printed, if possible, in Russia and for Proletarii to be replaced or radically changed. It was decided to explore the possibilities of having Pravda made an organ of the Central Committee.²

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Pro1. no. 46, 11 July 1909, pp.7-8.

²

Proletarii. Protokoly soveshchaniia...1909 g., pp.109-12.

Finances were also discussed at the editorial board meeting. Much was made of the needs of the localities by the practicals present. A reduced budget of three to four thousand roubles a month for the Bolshevik centre was decided upon. It was also resolved that subsidies to local organisations would have to be reduced in the autumn. Tomskii dissented. He wanted the subsidies to the national organisations and legal press reduced instead.¹ The reductions that took place in the autumn were keenly felt in the local organisations and loud protests were heard. There was extreme distress in Petersburg because the Bolshevik centre entirely cut off supplies pro tem to prevent them going to the otzovist Petersburg Committee. Goloshchekin was ungracious enough to point out to the editors of Proletarii that raions struggling to put out little papers and leaflets were stopped for lack of five or ten roubles when Proletarii was arriving in minute quantities, not answering local demands and had vast sums to spend.² In November Bagdatiev wrote asking for money to be sent since it was two months since they had had any, but it was not to be sent to the Petersburg Committee.³

The story from Moscow was the same. In October Goloshchekin and Golubev writing from Moscow said that either the existence of the Party organisation must be ensured with a minimum subsidy to the Moscow Committee of

¹

Ibid., pp.129-34.

²

Perepiska, p.172.

³

Ibid., p.180.

200 roubles a month (even if the publication of Proletarii had to be cut down) or nothing remained but to liquidate a fully functioning Party apparatus. The Moscow Committee had no money and professionals were going hungry. An urgent plea was also sent from Moscow for 120 roubles a month to enable Rabochee Znamia to be published.¹

While Party organisations were still functioning regularly they occasionally issued brief monthly financial statements which would appear on the back pages of Proletarii and Sotsial'demokrat. Most of these came from the Moscow Committee and all related to 1908. The budgets were usually small. Receipts of the Moscow Committee were 692 roubles 45 kopeks in April, 423.65 in July, 405.83 in August and 1014.31 in December. The main items of expenditure were in respect of printing and the maintenance of professionals.

Policy and tactics for the Bolshevik faction appropriate to the period of repression were worked out by Lenin in 1908 and remained the basis for Bolshevik policy for some years. He argued that because the revolution of 1905 had not been carried to completion and the bourgeoisie itself had become counter-revolutionary, the minimum programme of social and political reforms had still to be fought for by the working class. Since the struggle had to be carried on against a reactionary regime unwilling to yield anything, it had to go on by revolutionary means.

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Ibid., pp.187-9.

The autocracy feared to permit the growth of a legal trade union movement which could have separated the industrial from the political struggle, and indeed constantly frustrated the development of working class leaders by its repression of the unions, hence workers were driven along the path of semi-legal and illegal economic struggle into close association with the entirely illegal political movement. The Russian working class in the course of striving for the most elementary economic demands were made politically conscious. The relentless persecution of the trade union movement in the years of repression had the effect of combining the political and economic leadership of the working class in the revolutionary political party. The opposition to the government took on a character that was to prove deadly to the autocracy when even the struggle for a minimum programme of moderate reforms had to be carried on by revolutionary means.

The revolutionary years had brought large numbers of workers into the Social Democratic Party. In the decimation of the succeeding years when the leaders were forced into emigration and the intelligentsia deserted, the workers constituted the solid core of what was left in Russia. The Party never again reverted to being circles of intelligenty instructing a few workers. Leadership had been exercised from the emigration before 1905 but a different relationship developed between the membership in Russia and the leaders in the second emigration. The Russian members had a greater sense of their own identity and capacity to judge local affairs. The bitter factional brawls of the émigrés could not be carried on entirely

independently of the Russian scene. In the end the policy reached the members and was judged by them. The protest that arose in 1909 against the anti-otzovist campaign of the Bolshevik centre was couched in terms of rejecting a split imposed on them from outside. On the other hand many of the issues violently debated by the émigrés were of little or no interest to the membership within. The Bolshevik record with Party finances which aroused scandals abroad and discredited them in the international socialist movement did not worry Party workers in the localities. What was unpardonable was to fail to send supplies to keep the work of revolution going or to waste money in the printing of polemics.

Within the Russian membership the workers began to be aware of their own weight. They had always been conscious of the gulf that separated them from the intelligentsia. But the desertion of the intelligenty in 1908 left worker Party members with no alternative but to try with a mixture of resentment and determination to take their place. The idea of a Party school at which workers would receive a thorough political training was warmly supported by workers in spite of Lenin's anathema. Although they never ceased begging for help and guidance from abroad, the members within Russia felt upon occasions that their interests were not identical with those of the émigré leaders. They were quick to criticise the Party press as unsuitable for workers. Although their needs varied somewhat, they all required an effective Russian centre, functioning regional centres, Party literature and the services of professionals. In the provinces there was little criticism of policy but in the capitals the workers

brought an increasingly appraising judgment to bear on the policy resolutions presented to them.

The structure of the organisation which had been based on democratic election to office in the years of revolution adapted slowly to the conspirational requirements imposed by the repression and democratic elections were abandoned piecemeal.

CHAPTER 4

PHOENIX DISTORTED

By the end of 1909 there was a strong feeling among many Social Democrats both in exile and within Russia who were members of the illegal Party that unity of all factions prepared to recognise the necessity of an underground organisation was possible. These factions, from the left, were the otzovists-ultimatumists who regarded themselves as Bolsheviks who correctly estimated the importance of the revolutionary underground and considered legal work as the sowing of illusions among the masses; the main body of Bolsheviks who since the Fifth Conference at the end of 1908, had, while recognising the primacy of the underground organisation, stressed the necessity of using all legal possibilities of work; the Plekhanov Mensheviks who supported Plekhanov's defence of the illegal apparatus in face of its abandonment by many Mensheviks and finally, the Martov Mensheviks who represented the main body of Menshevik thinking, seeing the illegal organisation as a necessary evil but defending the value of the activity of those Social Democrats who in the interests of work in legal organisations, had severed all connections with the underground Party. All these tendencies had their ideological leadership in exile and their rank and file in Russia, and in all cases the latter found that the reality of Russian political conditions modified, tempered and sometimes even contradicted the theoretical positions adopted by the leaders abroad and

transmitted through the four factional journals. There was a fifth journal Pravda edited by Trotsky, written in a popular style which had a fairly wide sale in Russia and stood for the unity of all factions.

Nineteen hundred and nine had been a year of severe inner-Party struggle. Lenin had concluded his ferocious campaign against the otzovist-ultimatumist leaders in the Bolshevik faction and had had them expelled. His other campaign, against the so-called liquidators of the right had assumed a particular form. He no longer identified the whole of Menshevism as a non-revolutionary trend in Russian Social Democracy, but indicated that a minority opinion within it expressed by Plekhanov had remained true to revolutionary tradition, and the future development of Social Democracy lay in the rapprochement of the Bolsheviks and Party Mensheviks on a programme of struggle against liquidationism of the left and right. The public ideological defeat of the Blanquist policies of the otzovist-ultimatumists and the firm assertion of the need for partyness by Plekhanov emphasised that for the time being many old points of disagreement between Bolshevism and Menshevism such as the armed uprising, the Duma boycott and expropriations had ceased to be relevant. For Social Democrats in the period of counter-revolution, the policy was to carry on the struggle for the overthrow of the autocracy with tactics adapted to the conditions of repression, strengthening and uniting the illegal organisation and making the utmost use of legal opportunities. For this, the overriding need was the combination of available forces and ideological and organisational guidance from a reconstituted Russian centre.

The Leninist programme of unity was laid down at a meeting of members of the Proletarii editorial board with Social Democrats working directly with the masses, which discussed the problem of revolutionary Social Democratic work in legal workers' organisations. It stated once again that what was necessary was a strong network of illegal Party nuclei surrounded by legal workers' organisations and the transformation of these organisations into strong points of systematic Party Social Democratic work among the masses.

In order to achieve this it was essential to discuss the practical experience of Party Social Democrats working in legal organisations and congresses.

The meeting recommended that at the next Party conference there should not only be delegates with full vote elected by oblast' conferences but also delegates with consultative vote coming in the first place from raion Party nuclei and other Party bodies in direct contact with the masses, and in the second place, from Social Democratic Party groups working in legal and semi-legal workers' organisations.

Measures should be worked out to strengthen the links between illegal nuclei and Party groups in legal organisations. Bolsheviks were reminded that all Party Social Democrats should be drawn in without regard to factions.

Bolshevik Central Committee members were asked to introduce the proposal of the Party conference at the next meeting of the committee. The meeting regarded the holding of a conference of Party activists in legal and

semi-legal organisations, which was not linked with a general Party conference as an undesirable step.

The questions which should be considered by the Party conference were those of the publication of a popular workers' paper by the Central Committee, the issue of brochures, development of the trade union movement, Party schools and an effective Party centre.

The meeting described its deliberations as being directed towards the consolidation of all Party Social Democrats under the Party banner around its institutions, with the aim of restoring and stabilising the influence of the Party in all fields of work.¹

The recommendations of this meeting clearly indicated the Bolshevik concern to assert the leading role of the Party in the working class movement and to exclude from unity moves those people who might regard themselves as Social Democrats but were not prepared to accept the ideological and organisational leadership of the Party.

In the meantime in Petersburg the renewal of relations between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks was taking place less formally. The first move came from the Mensheviks of the Vyborg raion who addressed a letter to Social Democrats working in trade unions, educational associations, schools, co-operatives and other legal workers' institutions. They emphasised the value of work in the mass movement but drew attention to a new danger threatening work in legal organisations. As a result of

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Procl. no. 50, 28 November 1909, pp.2-3.

the loss of organisational unity and ideological clarity which had been provided by membership of the Party, parish pump politics and unprincipled opportunism were frequently a feature of mass work. They pointed to the shrinking of the aims of workers' educational associations, which bypassed lectures on subjects of social and political significance in favour of narrowly technical instruction and social activities. Trade unions were tending to become dues collecting organisations, to avoid discussion of controversial issues and to stand aside when issues of importance to the working class arose. The authors concluded with a call for the uniting of Social Democrats in the ranks of the illegal Party without any sacrifice of legal work.

Proletarii reprinted the letter under the title Legalists' Hangover, happily greeting it as a sign of a change of heart and a return to partiinnost' among some members of the right wing of Social Democracy.¹

The Petersburg Committee followed with a resolution to the effect that disagreements in the Party were the result of the disruptive activities of the legalists and it called on all comrades who valued the Party to join a single Party organisation and break with the Menshevik centre.²

The steps which effectively brought about a rapprochement of the factions in St Petersburg were taken

¹ Prolet. no. 45, 13 May 1909, p.2.

² Prolet. no. 47-48, 5 September 1909, p.9.

by the Mensheviks, who summoned two meetings of Social Democrats working in legal organisations, which were attended by trade union activists and Party workers of both factions. Between thirty-five and forty people, including representatives of the Petersburg Committee and some raions were present at the second meeting in November. A leading trade unionist gave the main report and pointed to the damage done by the isolation and fragmentation of Social Democrats in the mass organisations. The only possible way to end this was by uniting Party members and Party activists in the open movement in a single illegal organisation. There was general agreement on the basic points of the report, except for the otzovist representative of the Petersburg Committee who charged all present with opportunism and legalism. The meeting played an important part in establishing links between the Party and those who had left the ranks. It was followed by amalgamation of factional groups in the raions, most importantly in Vyborg. By the end of December two Mensheviks were on the city committee and united work in preparation for the congress on alcoholism was under way. The Petersburg Committee however, still otzovist inclined, continued to act obstructively.¹

The general feeling that unity in the Party was both desirable and possible led to the calling in January 1910 of a plenum of the Central Committee in Paris. It was on this point of unity that Lenin found himself in opposition to all other members of the plenum, including the leading

¹

SD nos. 15-16, 30 September 1910, p.14.

Bolshevik practical workers, particularly Dubrovinskii and Nogin. As we have seen, Lenin's view was that the only basis of unity within the Party was in a rapprochement of the Leninist Bolsheviks and Plekhanov Mensheviks. He held that the policy of Martov and Dan as expressed in Golos sotsial'demokrata, was in fact liquidationist although they remained within the Party. Liquidationism of the left was represented by the otzovist-ultimatumists with the journal Vpered. Both these trends were dangerous to the Party and should be named and condemned. He tried in the discussion in committee to get a formal condemnation included in the main resolution but this ran counter to the whole feeling of the meeting and all that emerged was a careful passage which named neither the liquidators nor the Vperedists, but stated that the influence of the bourgeoisie on the proletariat was to be seen both in the denial and underestimation of the role of the illegal Party, and in the denial of Social Democratic work in the Duma and of the use of legal opportunities.¹

The resolution on the summoning of the Party conference was a compromise between Lenin's position that the admission of Social Democrats working in the legal movement to the conference should rest upon their recognising themselves as linked with the Party and the Menshevik view that the establishment of formal links should not be a pre-condition. It was decided to allow 'supplementary' representation of Social Democratic groups in legal organisations which were prepared to establish

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KPSS v resoliutsiiakh, 1, p.236.

links with local Party centres. It was to be left to the conference to decide whether such delegates should be given full or consultative vote.¹ The Letter to Party Organisations in which these approaches to Social Democrats in legal organisations were explained in detail² was drawn up and agreed upon unanimously by a commission consisting of Zinoviev, Dubrovinskii and Martov.

The extent to which Lenin was overruled in the plenum may be seen by comparing two articles he wrote, one before and one after the plenum, on Party unity. The first, Methods of the Liquidators and the Party Tasks of Bolsheviki, was along the familiar lines of the basis for co-operation between Bolsheviki and Party Mensheviki, the need to combat liquidationism and the need to strengthen the illegal organisation for persistent work through the strong points of legal opportunities. In the second article, Towards Unity, published in February 1910, he gave a nonfactional analysis of the decisions, pointing out that conditions of work in the localities, the difficult position of the Social Democratic organisation and the urgent tasks of the economic and political struggle of the proletariat had impelled all factions to unite Social Democratic forces, and further, 'a year of acute factional struggle has led to the decisive step being taken in favour of abolishing all factions and every kind of factionalism in favour of unity of the Party'.³

¹ Ibid., p.237.

² SD no. 11, 13 February 1910, pp.11-2.

³ Lenin XIX, p.194.

But within six weeks of that article being published, his attacks on liquidationism had been resumed at full strength. In the next issue of Sotsial'demokrat he attacked Martov for interpreting the decisions of the plenum to mean equality of the legalists with the illegal organisation, and the Menshevik centre in Russia for refusing to take part in the work of restoring the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee. From this time on Lenin resumed the attacks on Martov and Golos sotsial'demokrata accusing them of shielding liquidationism, along exactly the same lines as before the plenum. He continued to seek the support of the Party Mensheviks, referring frequently to Plekhanov's articles in Dnevnik sotsial'demokrata. His practical efforts were devoted at this time to finding some way of getting the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee to work.

The plenum had fixed the number of the Russian collegium as seven, made up of two Mensheviks, two Bolsheviks and three representatives of the national parties. The Mensheviks had left the naming of their representatives until the practical leaders in Petersburg could be consulted. But very soon reports began to come back from the Bolshevik members that the Mensheviks were refusing to have anything to do with the Russian Bureau.

The January plenum marked a brief truce secured with unwilling concessions from the main contenders in the factional war. If we leave aside the precariousness of the balance of forces and the unreconciled differences among the leaders abroad and turn to the Russian scene, it must be said that the proclamation, unreal as it was, of the unity of the Party and the end of factional strife

answered the desires of those left in the underground organisation.

In a more fundamental sense the plenum decisions also reflected a temporary state of equilibrium, or rather, dead point at which the Russian working class movement had arrived. By 1910 the militancy of the revolutionary years had died down, the workers were silent and the organisation which had been the spearhead of the revolution was fragmented. A legal labour movement of sorts had struggled into existence. The question to be answered was whether the working class would move along a broad path of legalism or whether there was a leading role for the illegal revolutionary party. In 1910 the new phase of the class struggle which would determine the issue had not begun - hence the balance between legalism and the underground, represented in the January plenum.

The position of the Party within Russia at the time of the plenum was one of scattered unlinked groups in which in general the oblast' organisation had broken down. This was recognised to be the position by the plenum when it proposed that where it was impossible to hold oblast' conferences to elect delegates to the forthcoming conference, delegates should be elected directly by the major centres. Instead of, for example, the Central Industrial Region sending four delegates from its oblast' conference, it might be decided, depending on the state of the organisation in the various cities to designate Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Kineshma, Tver and Orel as centres to send one delegate each. From Sotsial'demokrat itself in the reports from localities appearing in 1910 and 1911 it appeared that the central organisations in Moscow,

Petersburg and the Central Industrial Region frequently lost contact with the lower Party bodies. The Central Industrial Region was reported in March as having restored links with nine centres, but in some of these places the organisation was not functioning, and was in desperate need of assistance. In December 1909 there were massive arrests in the Moscow Committee and the work of leadership fell to the Central Raion between December and February. By this time an Executive Commission had re-established links with four raions.¹

The solution to the organisational collapse as far as Party members could see was in restoration of links, assistance from professional Party workers and more efficient transport of illegal literature. By now the great majority of those left in the locality organisations were workers and they still needed assistance in the conduct of propaganda circles. Workers were described as being much less politically experienced, but with more interest in general social questions than the worker members who had joined before and during the revolutionary years.

The news of the plenum which had taken place unknown to those in Russia reached the underground organisations after some delay. The decisions on unity and the holding of the conference were received with great enthusiasm. Reports of reactions in the localities began to appear in July. In Petersburg Bolsheviks and Mensheviks of the Moscow raion were working together in spite of the

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SD no. 13, 26 April 1910, p.11.

opposition of the Vperedists. In Moscow where, owing to the arrests at the end of 1909 the Central raion still occupied the leading position, that raion had discussed the plenum decisions, supported the calling of the Party conference and at the raion committee elections six Bolsheviks, one Party Menshevik and one Vperedist were elected to office.¹

From Petersburg in September it was reported that unity of action of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks had proceeded in the preparatory work for the Congress for the Struggle against Alcoholism in January 1910, in face of the obstruction of the otzovists who wanted to boycott the congress. In spite of this a considerable amount of joint agitational work had been carried on in trade unions, educational associations, schools and clubs. After the congress there had been arrests of members of workers' delegations, which depleted trade unions and other organisations of their best activists. In the reports on the congress made to Party groups, raions and legal organisations, two tendencies were apparent in the discussions, that of the otzovists who urged the uselessness of participation for the workers in such undertakings, and a tendency which was boycottist from opposite premises, namely, that to participate in congresses in a political way led only to arrests and repression and hence less politics. Rumours of the plenum had come to Petersburg at the end of January and the text of the resolutions reached them in February in Pravda. The policy of combination of legal and illegal work and

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SD no. 14, 22 June 1910, pp.9-10.

the turning of factions into tendencies not disruptive of the unity activity 'was hailed with joy', according to the report. In the raions where there were few otzovists the arrangement of joint activity proceeded smoothly, but where they were in control, organisational unity was either being prevented or reduced to a formality.¹

There seems to have been less trouble with the otzovists in Moscow, where, it was reported, Bolsheviks worked with some Party Mensheviks and Vperedists in the same organisations with very little wrangling. Vperedists even joined legal organisations. The liquidators gave no trouble, since they were so busy with their legal paper and so occupied with the struggle against the Party that they had no time to think of the existence of the working class.²

If in the capitals the resolution devoted to unity received much attention, in the smaller centres it was the promise of revival of the organisation that was warmly greeted. It was here that the question of a functioning illegal organisation was critical and that of combined legal and illegal work not an immediate one, because there were either no legal organisations or they were severely circumscribed. A letter What is to be done? from a Party Menshevik examined the position of Party organisations in the areas outside the capitals. He pointed out how narrow and inward-turning Party circles had become. Their

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SD nos. 15-16, 30 August 1910, p.13.

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SD nos. 19-20, 13 January 1911, p.10.

failure to put out leaflets on local issues was not through lack of printing presses but through isolation and inactivity. In discussing means by which Social Democrats could take a more active part in day to day struggles he said that on the one hand Social Democrats working in legal organisations tended not to operate as organised groups, and hence adopted a narrow and opportunistic approach, submitting to the limits imposed on them, while on the other, because of the inadequacy of the trade unions as organs for the protection of workers' economic interests, the real battles were being carried on outside the unions. He recommended the setting up of Party cells in legal organisations and where legal unions did not exist, he proposed, since he was doubtful of the value of illegal unions, a reversion to the old pre-revolutionary forms of trade union activity - temporary unions of struggle, strike funds, fighting funds and regular mass meetings. These were forms of organisation not usually defined in Party relationships but they had stable personnel and would be in some sort of liaison with the local Party leadership.¹

Trade unions received considerable attention in the Party press at this time. The failure of the unions to form any effective organisations for the carrying on of the economic struggle was frequently mentioned. In one report it was stated that the employers had calculated that union membership, estimated at 235,000 in 1907, had dropped to 20,000 at the end of 1909. Between 1906 and

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SD no. 13, 26 April 1910, pp.7-8.

1910 the rules of 106 unions had been submitted for registration through the Moscow factory inspectorate, resulting in sixteen legally registered unions in that city in 1910. Other figures equally eloquent of the decline were cited. Trade unions having no opportunity to do what they were intended for, that is to carry on economic struggles, were felt even by the workers to be useless. The extreme legal constrictions imposed on them led many activists to seek artificial paths to the masses, through mutual benefit activity. They might frankly acknowledge that this was inadequate but asked what was to be done. On the possible lines of action for the unions the writer rejected that of legality - the campaigning for a fully legal existence by permitted methods alone, and the renunciation of all revolutionary slogans, as a surrender to the enemy. He urged the organisation of illegal unions when all legal possibilities had been exhausted and like the author of the letter What is to be done? he thought the fluid pre-revolutionary organisational forms should be used.¹

Reports from centres outside Petersburg and Moscow consistently indicated that in places and situations where there was a need for trade union organisation at a basic economic level, it was there and then that trade unions were most stringently banned. In Ekaterinoslav gubernia it was said that wages had been lowered, there was serious unemployment, with employed workers maintaining those out of work and there had been outbreaks of cholera and

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Ibid., pp.3-5.

terrible sanitary conditions in the iron foundries in the Iuzovka raion, but all attempts to get union rules through the gubernia office had been unsuccessful. The police were active speculating on the workers' poverty and it was said they were offering 70-100 roubles a month for collaborators.¹ In a large southern town, unnamed, where a few mutilated unions had survived, the workers' attitude was that only the aristocracy of labour became unionists because this gave such people their only chance of public activity, since politics on the job were much too dangerous. The result of this was that apart from the careerists, only the very few really advanced and conscious workers joined the unions, while less advanced militants failed to see any value in doing so.² In Moscow until 1909, it was reported, a number of unions had operated actively, but in the autumn there had been such a severe clamp down that only minor unions were left, with the exception of the Textile Workers with one thousand members which had survived on condition that it did not hold meetings. The Metal Workers had applied eight times for registration and the Bakers three, but had been rejected. But bad as the position had now become in Moscow, it was worse in the surrounding industrial region where in most towns, including such large manufacturing centres as Ivanovo-Voznesensk there were no legal unions at all. In the whole of Russia, said the report, there were only four or five points where legal work could be carried on.³

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SD no. 12, 23 March 1910, pp.9-10.

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SD no. 13, 26 April 1910, p.12.

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SD no. 18, 16 November 1910, p.10.

With the notable exception of Petersburg, and less notably Moscow, the trade unions in the first five years of their legal existence in Russia had failed to establish themselves as independent organisations of the working class. The narrow limits allowed them and the constant harassment of the police forced them to operate at the primitive level of friendly society activity and made it almost impossible to lead any movement for better wages and conditions. If they observed the restrictions and operated legally they were under pressure to bypass the vital economic interests of the workers. If they became directly involved in these interests, they were thrown back into illegal activity where they became an appendage of the revolutionary political movement. An example of the marginal relevance, even of semi-legal trade union activity, to the basic needs of the workers may be seen in the list of agitational leaflets published by the St Petersburg Central Trade Union Bureau for the year 1909. They concerned the Womens' Congress, cholera, workers' insurance, the lockout of Vilno leatherworkers, the bristle workers' lockout, the building disaster in the South and the strike in Sweden. Ten thousand copies of a questionnaire on the reasons for the widespread alcoholism among Petersburg workers were also published.¹ That there was even one leaflet, on workers' insurance, dealing with a major economic preoccupation of labour would be connected with the fact that workers' insurance was a projected government measure and a subject of wide public discussion. It was not until 1912 that the eight hour day

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SD no. 11, 13 February 1910, p.9.

slogan was widely raised again for the first time since the revolutionary years - and then it was on the initiative of the Bolsheviks, not the trade unions.

As has already been said, the overwhelming need in Party circles outside the capitals was for restoration of the organisation and links with the centre. It was the plenum decisions for the holding of an all-Russian conference and re-establishment of the Russian centre which were welcomed. The tenor of the reports from provincial centres in 1910 indicated that a certain stability of local groups had been reached. There were no longer professional revolutionaries attached to them, the old members had disappeared and the new ones were inexperienced, but the groups existed. There was a little more money available. A laconic report from Tver by a functionary (Oblastnik) from the Central Industrial Oblast, organisation who had managed to make a tour of the area, stated that there were none of the old members left, the work was entirely in new hands, a recruiting leaflet had been issued, there were 120 paying members in the city and they wanted someone from the Oblast Bureau to lead the work. He said of Sormovo which had a long history of revolutionary activity and which Nogin had described as a rare exception among provincial organisations, that the Social Democratic collective had existed all along, leaflets had been well distributed, particularly those on May Day and the reason for inactivity was the need for a political line and a lack of confidence in their own forces. The summing up of Oblastnik was that there was an overriding need to unite the isolated groups and that this

was the function of the Party centre.¹ In the Central Industrial Region, in the absence of links with the Oblast Centre in 1909, it was found that Social Democratic workers themselves without outside assistance had been trying to restore Party organisations. In some towns, Kineshma and Teikhovo, they had been successful. In others such as Ivanovo-Voznesensk, where arrests and provocation had been particularly severe, the general mood of apathy and suspicion had been too much for them. During 1910 and 1911 there were no reports from the Urals until the Russian Organising Commission organiser Semen Schwartz made his way there on the autumn of 1911 and found Social Democratic groups in Ufa, Perm and Ekaterinburg entirely isolated not only from the rest of Russia but from each other.

The mingled hope and anxiety of the Party members in Russia in respect of happenings abroad became more evident by the end of 1910 as news of the violent, renewed faction fighting became known, and confusing proposals and counter proposals about the Party conference were put forward in Sotsial'demokrat and Pravda. Two letters from Stalin, coming to the end of a term of exile at this time gave a view which was probably widespread among the Bolshevik practicals. The first written in December 1910 to Semen Schwartz and intended for Lenin's eyes, supported the Lenin-Plekhanov bloc against the liquidators, but insisted that the most important thing was the organisation of work inside Russia. The liquidators had established a firm

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SD no. 18, 16 November 1910, p.11.

position in the legal organisations and had their own Russian centre, while the Bolsheviks were still only rehearsing. The immediate task was to organise a central Russian group co-ordinating illegal, semi-legal and legal work in the main centres.¹ In another letter written shortly afterwards, in January 1911 and not intended for Lenin he said

We have of course heard from abroad of the 'tempest in a teapot' there; the blocs between Lenin-Plekhanov, on the one hand, and between Trotsky-Martov-Bogdanov, on the other. The attitude of the workers towards the first bloc is, as far as I know, favourable. But the workers are generally beginning to look with disdain on what's going on abroad: let them climb the walls to their heart's content. So far as we ourselves are concerned, whoever holds dear the interests of the movement, will keep on working, the rest will take care of itself. This, in my opinion, is for the best.²

By the end of 1910 all efforts of the Bolshevik organisers to get the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee convened and functioning had failed. In December the Bolsheviks abroad denounced the plenum agreement and applied for the return of funds deposited with the German trustees. This action, which had been provided for in the 1910 Central Committee plenum agreements, should have been followed by a summoning of a plenum abroad by the Bureau of the Central Committee Abroad. In an article The State of Affairs of the Party

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I.V. Stalin, Sochineniia (M., 1946-9), Vol. 2, pp.209-11.

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L. Trotsky, The Stalin School of Falsification (N.Y. 1937), p.182.

Lenin explained this step as being the only possible way of having a plenum summoned. By this time however, he must have decided to act unilaterally to the extent of setting up parallel bodies to the Bureau of the Central Committee Abroad and the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee, which would undertake the task of organising a Russian conference. From what Piatnitskii in his Zapiski bol'shevika says, Lenin was contemplating this by the end of 1910.¹

In the spring of 1911 a private meeting of seven Bolshevik and Polish members of the Central Committee living abroad took the first steps towards the unilateral calling of a Party conference. It was decided that the Bolshevik and Polish members of the Bureau of the Central Committee Abroad would withdraw from that body, and Rykov as a member of the Russian Bureau would summon a Central Committee plenum abroad. Both these decisions were carried out, the Bolshevik Semashko moved out of the B.C.C.A. with its funds and in June the meeting of Central Committee members summoned by Rykov took place. It was, of course, in no sense a plenum, only eight members were present, two of whom a Menshevik and a Bundist, withdrew before the resolutions were adopted.

At this meeting two bodies were set up, a Technical Commission which was to find the material and technical means for the summoning of a conference and an Organising Commission Abroad (Z.O.K.) which was to bring into action representatives of local organisations in Russia to

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O. Piatnitskii, op. cit., pp.154-5.

establish a new Russian collegium of the Central Committee. The other Party groups abroad with the exception of the Golosists were invited to join these bodies. All refused, although Plekhanov's group was not in opposition.

Four agents of Z.O.K. were sent to Russia to set up a Russian Organising Commission (R.O.K.). Two of them, Breslav and Rykov, were arrested on reaching Moscow in August, Semen Schwartz who went to the Urals and Ordzhonikidze to the south, escaped arrest.

In spite of the scandals and indignation which the completely unconstitutional actions in setting up Z.O.K. and the Technical Commission had aroused in Party circles abroad, the appeal of the Z.O.K. agents to local Party groups to take active steps for the summoning of a conference and the transfer of the initiative to Russian organisations, met with considerable support. The feeling in favour of practical action was very strong, the widely known refusal of the Menshevik practicals to restart the Russian Bureau made people inclined to accept the idea of a substitute organisation and the furore over the unconstitutional actions of Z.O.K. was much muted in Russia. There were reports of meetings in St Petersburg (4 raions), Kiev, Tiflis and Moscow (2 raions) supporting the efforts being made to call the conference.¹

In September a meeting, gathered by the two remaining Z.O.K. agents, was held in Tiflis, of representatives from the Kiev, Ekaterinoslav, Baku, Tiflis and Ekaterinburg organisations and four others with consultative vote. The

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SD no. 23, 1 September 1911, pp.9-10; SD no. 24, 18 October 1911, p.8.

representative from Petersburg failed to arrive. This meeting constituted itself the Russian Organising Commission (R.O.K.) after discussing whether such a narrow gathering could properly so constitute itself, without representation from Petersburg, Moscow and the Central Industrial Region. It was decided that the matter could not be delayed any further.

The relations of R.O.K. with its disreputable parent Z.O.K. were considered at its second session. It would appear that the local delegates who now constituted R.O.K. were anxious to sever connections as soon as possible, to the extent of declaring Z.O.K. dissolved. But Ordzhonikidze as representative of Z.O.K., with consultative vote, protested that this would be a premature step if the members of R.O.K. were to be arrested and put out of action. A compromise was reached whereby Z.O.K. and the Technical Commission were declared to be subordinate to R.O.K. and were told not to publish anything or spend money without the agreement of R.O.K.¹

In allotting mandates for the conference the factors to be taken into consideration were the importance of a given centre, the numbers of organised members and the length of its existence. To have a vote a centre must have had at least 30 members and have been in existence at least two months before the beginning of the conference.²

¹ SD no. 25, 8 December 1911, p.8.

² O. Bosh, 'Prazhskaia konferentsiia', in PR (1925), no. 4, p.200.

If we look at the Party organisations whose representatives took these audacious decisions we see that there were only two which had any claim to being stable or well established. They were those of Kiev and Baku, in both of which Party Mensheviks were prominent. Kiev was led by Mensheviks with Bolsheviks participating as junior partners, and this organisation had not only enthusiastically responded when approached by Ordzhonikidze but had undertaken to help him by reviving the Ekaterinoslav organisation. In Baku the leadership was in the hands of a united Bolshevik-Menshevik committee which carried on legal and illegal work.

In spite of the participation of Mensheviks the action of the September Tiflis meeting in constituting itself Russian Organising Commission and serving an ultimatum on Z.O.K. bore all the marks of a Lenin organised coup. And indeed this was how the Polish and Bolshevik 'conciliator members' of Z.O.K. and the Technical Commission interpreted it. In ~~their~~ Open Letter to the Russian Organising Commission in November they criticised it for its untimely haste and the narrowly Bolshevik character of its support. They accused R.O.K. of misinterpreting its organisational tasks and allowing itself to be manipulated by the Leninist Bolsheviks into organising, not a general Party conference but a narrowly factional one. Such a factional policy could only frighten Party Mensheviks away from work on the conference and strengthen the sceptical attitude of their leaders, particularly Plekhanov. If such a conference were to be called the Poles would not participate, and it would not be a conference of unity but of a split.

It was pointed out that R.O.K. had been constituted without representation from Moscow, Petersburg and the Central Industrial Region, the Poles had not been invited to R.O.K. before its constitution, and although the Z.O.K. agents had been sent to Russia with precise instructions to safeguard the Party character of the conference, they did not inform Z.O.K. of a number of their actions but consulted with the Leninists instead. By giving the Urals three votes at the conference as against Petersburg's three and Moscow and the Central Industrial Region with four between them, the impression was created of a biased representation against the Menshevik Oblasts in favour of Bolshevik ones.

Z.O.K. insisted that R.O.K. should not consider itself finally constituted but should hold a second session with wider representation and the time of holding the conference should be decided to allow for the inclusion of a considerable majority of the Party if not of all Party tendencies.¹

Ordzhonikidze replied to the Open Letter and other criticisms of Z.O.K. in a letter to the editors of Sotsial'demokrat with a series of flat denials of the charges - R.O.K. did not have an exclusively Bolshevik character, it was working in a hurry because it had urgently been instructed to do so, it was receiving wide support in Russia. The Moscow, Petersburg, Nikolaev, Rostov, Saratov, Kazan and Vilno organisations now supported it, the Poles had been invited to join but had

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O. Bosh, op. cit., pp.193-8.

not replied and the withholding of funds by Z.O.K. at a critical moment had meant the arrest of Semen Schwartz.¹ By the end of the year it was stated that twenty organisations had given their support to R.O.K.

But in fact Z.O.K.'s charges remained unanswered. The conference that was organised in such haste was thoroughly Bolshevik, even though the Kiev and Ekaterinoslav Mensheviks stayed to attend it. It was not widely representative of Russian organisations. It would seem that a much broader conference could have been held in spite of the extraordinarily difficult conditions of organisation due to the presence of provocateurs in the heart of the Bolshevik faction. But by 1911 Lenin had decided not only that there was to be a split in the Party and how it was to be done, but also that it was essential to carry the operation through with the utmost speed.

The question of the kind of Marxist party the Russian working class needed, which had been raised in 1908 in the context of the defeat of the revolution and the break up of the Social Democratic organisation through repression, was by 1911 being discussed in terms of immediate perspectives, of what to do next. Political conditions had changed to the extent that the Duma had become a nuisance that the Government had learnt to live with and was approaching the end of its term without further curtailment of its rights or arrests of its members, a good deal of political argument was permitted in the press, and there had been a general widening of the area of

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SD no. 25, 8 December 1911, p.9.

public activity and discussion. Reforms of land ownership designed to tackle the problem of low agricultural productivity and to create a stratum of prosperous peasant owners on the surface of the impoverished and turbulent villages, together with the resumption, after prolonged social disturbance and depression, of rapid industrial growth brought to the fore social problems which received attention in the press and in public congresses.

As the elections for the 4th Duma came near there was much discussion of campaign strategy and political programmes, and a general expectation of more active participation in political life. Stabilization of the regime after the upheavals of 1905-6 had been achieved by Stolypin with savage military and police repression and the destruction of the political organisations of the revolutionary opposition together with the breaking of their links with the working class. With the completion of the pacification however, decontaminated left wing intellectual groups, free from contact with the remnants of the proscribed underground parties were able to take advantage in 1910 of the greater leniency of the press laws and establish legal journals in which they could write not only of theoretical questions of Marxism, but also, in Aesopian terms, of the state of the working class movement and the political tasks of Social Democrats. The most important of these journals were Nasha Zaria, the organ of legal Mensheviks in Petersburg and Zvezda, the journal of the Social Democratic deputies in the Duma, to which Lenin frequently contributed.

For Social Democrats discussing the form that the working class political organisation should take, the

immediate question was whether the electoral system of June 3, 1907 provided the prerequisites of a slow but certain advance of new bourgeois forces without need of a further bourgeois revolution, or whether as a result of 1905, the old power had but taken a step along the path of transformation into a bourgeois monarchy, preserving the real power of the feudal land-owners, so that the conditions which gave rise to the revolution would continue to operate. If the first assessment was accepted, a new type of workers' organisation was called for, which would draw in the widest possible membership and, in defence of its particular interests, would gather its forces and acquire socialist consciousness. In the second case the need was for the maintenance of the hegemony of the working class to lead a popular revolutionary movement to destroy the remnants of feudalism, hence the reconstitution of the illegal revolutionary party was also required. The line up of forces supporting the differing viewpoints was by no means a simple Menshevik-Bolshevik or Right-Left division. The most consistent advocates of the open, class party were the Petersburg Mensheviks engaged in legal work with the trade unions and Duma group but they received strong backing from the formerly Bolshevik intellectual N. Rozhkov. On the other side, defending the necessity of an illegal party were Plekhanov and Kamenev who took up positions argued from the theoretical propositions of Marxism. The practical workers in the localities who wanted a revival of the old party were those who were running up against the barriers imposed on any but narrowly opportunist legal activity or were struggling under conditions which permitted no legal work. The

Martov Mensheviks who proceeded from an analysis of the regime as a contradictory combination of absolutism and constitutionalism believed that the building of the open workers' movement was the prime task, together with the fight for legality by every means, and within this movement would be found the elements for the revival of the Party. The difficulty of this case lay in the assignment of priorities. While the need for the guiding role of the Party was not denied, it was dependent upon the creation of a wide mass movement, which left Martov open to Lenin's charges of liquidationism.

Lenin's polemics in 1911 were greatly enlivened by the desertion of Rozhkov to the class party viewpoint. Unlike the legalists who argued in fairly general terms Rozhkov tried to set out a programme for the immediate formation of an open workers' association. His article An Essential Beginning sent to Sotsial'demokrat late in 1910 provoked a strong reaction in the editors. Kamenev with Zinoviev and Lenin concurring, argued the opposite case in a letter begging Rozhkov to withdraw his article,¹ and in April 1911 Lenin replied (although Rozhkov's article had not been published) with his Conversation between a Legalist and an Opponent of Liquidationism in which he countered the arguments for an open association with the objection that the Government would not permit any such organisation genuinely to defend the interests of the working class. In replies later in the year to other articles of Rozhkov in Nasha Zaria on open political

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Leninskii sbornik (M.-L. 1924-45), Vol. 25, pp.66-70.

association he elaborated the argument that under existing Russian conditions such an organisation could not adopt anything more radical than a liberal policy.

As has been shown earlier there was fair support by 1911 for the reconstitution of the underground Party. Since the Central Committee was deadlocked, this could not be done within the bounds of strict legality, but a general Party conference, provided it was representative of as many Party organisations as possible from inside Russia and of the factional groups abroad which recognised the need for the illegal Party would have been regarded as a satisfactory means of beginning the rebuilding. Lenin's moves in bypassing the still existing central institutions and setting up his own initiating bodies were condemned by his opponents abroad, but they were powerless to stop him. It was only when it became apparent that the Party conference he contemplated was to be confined to the supporters of the Leninist line on liquidationism, that his allies, the Poles, and the 'conciliator' Bolsheviks revolted and protested publicly. In reply to the defectors he wrote one of the most interesting of his polemics, The New Faction of Conciliators, or the Virtuous in which, sweeping away the plea of the conciliators for organisational unity of the party and representation of factions, he defended the exclusion of the Vpered, Pravda and Golos groups on the ground that they represented non-Social Democratic trends. He asserted that it was no longer a question of organisation but one of the entire programme, tactics and character of the Party, 'or rather a question of two parties - the Social Democratic Workers' Party and the Stolypin Workers Party of Potresov, Smirnov,

Larin, Levitsky and company'. The question was now whether the Party was to be Social Democratic or liberal in character. Summing up, he said,

Certain objective soil already exists (for the first time in Russia) for the liberal labour policy of Potresov, Levitsky, Larin and company. The Stolypin liberalism of the Cadets and the Stolypin workers' party are already in the process of formation.¹

This admission, guarded as it was, was the largest Lenin made publicly of the possibility of a successful launching of a mass party. His own plans for the calling of a factional conference which would speak in the name of the whole Party, excluding all who did not accept his uncompromising stand against liquidationism were now well under way, and in January 1912 the conference he had planned met in Prague.

The question must be asked why Lenin, in the face of support for a conference which would probably have repudiated liquidationism but maintained the unity of what was left of the Party, decided on a split. It is clear that well before the plenum of January 1910 he had felt that a formal break between the revolutionary and reformist wings of the Russian Social Democratic movement would have to be made. At the plenum he had done his best not only to have liquidationism declared an anti-Party trend, but also to name and outlaw certain groups as liquidationist. He was overruled. In common with various orthodox Marxists elsewhere he was watching with concern the growing influence of reformism in the German Social

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Lenin XX, pp.337, 353.

Democratic movement. Having attended the Copenhagen Congress of the International in 1910, he spoke of the crisis in the German Social Democratic Party which was 'due to the growth of an inevitable and decisive break with the opportunists'.¹ For Lenin liquidationism was the manifestation of reformism in Russia. In the conditions of 1911, it did look as though there was some chance of a wider base of political activity being tolerated and some sort of mass workers' association might be set up. This, in Lenin's view, would mean the smothering, instead of the revival of the spirit of revolutionary Social Democracy. Martov's insistence that the party should not be isolated from the mass movement and could not be rebuilt without it, was in these circumstances, particularly obnoxious to Lenin. It cannot be said, in spite of Lenin's attacks on him, that Martov's position was identical with that of the legalists. He never denied the necessity of the political leadership of the working class by the Social Democratic Party, but if the recreated party envisaged by Martov was to spring out of a liberal working class movement, its centre could only have been pulpy, quite unlike the rock hard nucleus that Lenin believed to be necessary.

The resolutions of the gathering at Prague began with an account of the calling of the conference and the support that had been received from upward of twenty organisations in Russia. The conference constituted itself a general Party conference, 'the supreme party body'.² It was stated that the three non-Russian national

¹ Lenin XIX, p.352.

² K.P.S.S. v resoliutsiiakh, I, p.270.

parties had been invited and that non-attendance was their own responsibility.

On the tasks of the Party, the policy adopted was an endorsement and a continuation of that laid down by the 5th Conference. The beginning of a political revival in the form of strikes and demonstrations was noted. Arising from this, the task was the continued work of socialist education, organisation and unification of the politically conscious masses, and the re-establishment of the illegal organisation of the Party, using every legal opportunity, extending political agitation and giving support to the incipient mass movement.

The Duma elections and the Duma group were treated at some length. Participation in the elections was seen as a means of carrying on socialist, class propaganda and the organisation of the working class. The election slogans were to be a democratic republic, the eight hour day, and confiscation of all landed estates. The general tactical line on the elections was to maintain the independent position of the Party, rejecting common platforms with other groups and electoral agreements with any other parties in the workers' curia, but in other curiae to have agreements with the democratic (Trudovik, Populist and Socialist Revolutionary) groups, and in certain cases with the Cadets against the Government parties.

In the resolution on the character and organisational forms of Party work, the conference noted that the new upswing of the working class movement made possible further development of work through the formation of illegal Social Democratic nuclei surrounded by the widest possible

network of legal workers' associations. Social Democratic nuclei in unions organised on an industrial basis should function together with nuclei organised territorially. The importance of extending legal work in unions, libraries, reading rooms, workers' entertainment societies, and the press was emphasised. Reference was also made to the need to revive the forms of illegal mass activity such as the birzhi and factory Party meetings.

On liquidationism the conference declared that by its conduct, the Nasha Zaria and Delo Zhizni group had placed itself outside the Party.

Changes in the Party rules were made which recognised the extreme difficulty of summoning general conferences and congresses. Clause 8 of the rules adopted at the London Congress which provided for the summoning of conferences every three or four months was replaced by one to the effect that conferences of representatives of all Party organisations were to be convened as often as possible. In regard to representation at Party congresses the basis was to be decided by the Central Committee. An addendum to Clause 2 (which stated that all Party organisations were to be constructed on the principle of democratic centralism) was made to the effect that co-option was considered permissible - in accordance with the decisions of the December 1908 conference.¹

The policy and programme of the Prague Conference were based on an estimate of the reviving temper and political interest of the masses; the illegal Party was to

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K.P.S.S. v resoliutsiiakh, I, pp.270-84.

be reconstructed on the supposition that wide sections of the working class were prepared to accept its leadership, the opportunities for legal work were recognised to be much wider and more varied than in the years of repression, and above all, it was now considered timely to raise illegal militant slogans as mass political demands.

The conference to split the Party had been organised by Lenin to the accompaniment of violent polemics, rifts, defection of long time supporters, recriminations, scandals in the international socialist movement and the hearty disapproval of most Social Democrats in the emigration. But having laid down the policy of revolutionary Social Democracy, the Leninists turned with a remarkably conciliatory mien to the Russian membership. In the resolution on the reports of the local organisations it was noted that everywhere in the localities Party work was being conducted jointly and harmoniously by the Bolsheviki and the pro-party Mensheviki in the main, as well as by Vpered supporters wherever there were any, and by all other Social Democrats who recognised the need for an illegal R.S.D.W.P. As has been said, the only group on which anathema was pronounced was that of the St Petersburg legalists. To all other Social Democrats in Russia, a cordial invitation was extended to join the ranks.

It is not possible to estimate the numbers who participated in the elections to the conference, but they must have been very small indeed. Eighteen voting delegates attended, five from the emigration and the rest directly representing local organisations - Petersburg, Moscow, Central Industrial Region, Kiev, Ekaterinoslav,

Nikolaev, Baku, Tiflis, Saratov, Kazan, Vilno and Dvinsk. There was not one of the leading Bolshevik practical workers present (they had all been arrested). The thirteen were members of local organisations, some of whom had worked as district or city organisers, three had gone through Lenin's Party school at Longjumeau and two were police spies. As well as the centres represented, four other centres had supported the conference but were unable to send delegates, and the Urals contingent was prevented by arrests from attending. A Central Committee of seven was elected which included one provocateur, Malinovsky.

Because of the breakdown of Party committees in a number of centres, delegates had been directly elected at general meetings. In Petersburg 110 members from five raions took part in the voting. In Kiev, where Mensheviks and Bolsheviks worked together, a city conference of 16 representatives elected a delegate, and in Ekaterinoslav a city conference of 10. Baku and Tiflis delegates were elected by the members directly - more than 200 in Baku and more than 100 in Tiflis.¹

Lenin's conference aroused violent condemnation in émigré circles. His opponents, denouncing the unconstitutionality of its actions declared that the conference represented no more than a fraction of all those who called themselves Social Democrats, and they were certainly right. On the other hand the Bolsheviks in claiming that the twenty and more organisations associated

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Vserossiiskaia konferentsiia Ros. sots. - dem. rab. partii 1912 goda (Paris, 1912), pp.6-7.

with the conference represented the majority of the functioning organisations in Russia were probably not outrageously wrong either. Certainly, no counter conference was ever called of representatives from Russian local organisations to denounce the usurpers of the Party name, authority and central newspaper. This may well have reflected both the weakness of the illegal organisations up to 1914 and the chronic tendency of the Russian membership to consider itself Social Democratic first and factional second.

CONCLUSION

The Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party at the beginning of 1907 was an illegal but vigorous and ramified organisation numbering upward of 80,000 members, harassed by arrests and police spying but in many places still enjoying under thin disguise the freedom to meet and associate won in 1905. Its agitation and much of its propaganda was carried on openly. Its press, after the suppression of the short-lived legal journals of 1905 was printed under conspiratorial conditions but circulated freely. Mass meetings were held, particularly in summer as open air gatherings. A great variety of premises in union offices, private dwellings and educational institutions was still available for Party conferences, committee meetings and propaganda classes. Widespread agitation and propaganda permitted general discussion of Party policy by the rank and file and non-party workers. The organisational core, the committees, remained underground and professional revolutionaries observed elementary rules of conspiracy to avoid arrest.

The years of deep repression that followed Stolypin's coup d'état of June 1907 saw the flight of the leaders into exile, destruction of the central institutions, loss of the greater part of the membership and disintegration into a number of bitterly hostile factions mutually more antagonistic abroad than within Russia. At the end of the period occurred the reconstitution from outside of part of the Bolshevik faction, the declaration of an open

organisational break between the Leninists and other factions, the assumption of the Party name and central institutions by the Leninist group and the rebuilding of the organisation within Russia as an underground party with a programme of revolutionary socialism.

The severe political persecution of the revolutionary opposition on which the June 3 regime was established was for the Social Democratic Party a blow which suddenly interrupted its organic development, separated leaders from members and members from the mass milieu, driving those Social Democrats whose work lay in legal spheres to sever their connection with the Party, and constraining within the proscrustian bed of the underground those who remained.

The government took a decision to deal the coup de grace to a political organisation whose revolutionary actions had already been defeated, an organisation which, placed on the defensive by the rapidly declining militancy of the workers, was adjusting to a phase of legal parliamentary opposition and to work in the emerging legal trade unions. In a situation in which it was recognised by the Menshevik wing that the revolutionary period of armed struggle had passed, and by the Bolsheviks that a mass of day to day political activities now stood between them and the next armed uprising, the differences between the reformist and revolutionary perspectives were not so acute that the possibility of an open break was an immediate one. The tendency in the formally united Party was rather for the rival factions to concentrate their forces in certain areas and in certain fields of activity,

with the Mensheviks entrenched in mass work and the Bolsheviks in the central Party apparatus.

Certainly the differences in tactics arising from the differing perspectives were considerable. The Mensheviks looked to a period of accumulation of the forces of the working class, training in political organisation and activity and the use of legal opportunities to build a broad popular opposition to the autocracy. The Bolsheviks with the prospect of the armed revolt moving away into the future, were turning to a militant use of legal opportunities both to put forward the revolutionary viewpoint and to demonstrate the impossibility of using bourgeois institutions in radical defence of working class interests. These differences however led more often to work along separate lines than to headlong confrontation except on certain immediate issues such as the Duma election campaign which provoked opposing policies on the relationship with bourgeois parties.

By 1907 the militancy of the economic movement of the working class was declining rapidly. The sweeping mass strikes of 1905 which had won important improvements in wages and hours had been followed by a lowering of morale after the defeat of the Moscow uprising, hastened by some unsuccessful strikes and fairly widespread unemployment in 1906. But at this time the creation had begun of those institutions, the trade unions, which would channel and direct the economic demands of the class, both those which were common to the entire work force and those which made up the vast number of bitterly felt sectional grievances. In addition, right from their inception Russian trade unions had undertaken broad cultural-educational activities

and some social services. A trade union movement was coming into being, belated but vigorous and many sided, uncluttered by restrictive traditions, directly reflecting in its activity the social and economic needs of its members and the shortage of voluntary institutions in Russian society. Like the political parties, the trade unions depended on the educated classes for the conduct of their cultural-educational programmes, legal aid and medical services and for technical assistance with press and management, a state of affairs taken for granted as an intermediate stage in the workers' development.

Both factions of the Party took an active interest in trade unions. The Mensheviks stood for the utmost encouragement of the unions without organisational attachment, so-called neutrality. The Bolsheviks had recently changed their approach from one of rigid neutrality to that of partiinnost', that is, the winning of ideological influence over the unions and the establishment of organisational links between Party and unions. The result of the entry of the Bolsheviks into the field of trade union work, which they had hitherto left to the Mensheviks, would most likely have been a fierce struggle for influence in some unions, with the Bolsheviks winning commanding positions in associations of unskilled and semi-skilled workers and the Mensheviks influence remaining predominant amongst skilled workers.

While the immediate prospects of the R.S.D.W.P. in the first half of 1907 were those of further retreat and a loss of membership in the face of pressing reaction and disillusionment of the educated classes with the results of the revolution, it had nevertheless established itself

as the only political party that the great majority of urban workers considered in any way as their own and it had close links with the growing trade union movement. It faced the difficult but not impossible position of being illegal but only half underground, persecuted by the government but retaining its links with society.

The Party had reached a stage in its development on the eve of the coup in which there was increasing interaction between the membership and leading committees, at least in the most advanced centres. Policy was determined by the leadership and constantly assessed by the rank and file. The influx of thousands of workers into the Party in 1905 had meant the introduction of democratic forms of election and in addition, the system of standing conferences in Petersburg and Moscow provided both an immediate indication as to how policy was received by the members, and through the conference delegates elected directly from the work places, information on the mood of the workers at large.

The Stolypin reaction destroyed all this, with momentous consequences both for the Social Democratic Party and for the Russian working class.

Although the drastic step taken was not dictated by any immediate danger, the government did recognise the serious threat to its stability that had been posed by the events of the revolutionary years. The political motives for the Stolypin land reforms were to lessen the social unrest in the villages by the creation of a conservative layer of peasant landowners. As Lenin himself recognised, the reforms had a fair chance of succeeding, given time. The problems facing the government in dealing with the

numerically small but highly volatile class of industrial workers were more formidable. The revolutionary years had presented the alarming spectacle of industrial mass militancy in alliance with a conscious political element.

Stolypin acted ruthlessly and efficiently to sever the connection between the working class and the revolutionary intelligentsia. But while the revolutionary political party could be reduced to fragments, the problem still remained of what form the working class movement could be allowed to take. The German path of permitting the development of an industrial trade union movement cut off from the outlawed political party could hardly be followed in Russian conditions. Industrialization was still at the stage where a large unskilled labour force of low productive capacity endured the severe exploitation of long hours, low wages and bad working conditions. Extensive unionisation of the huge Russian industrial enterprises must have led to insistent demands being placed on highly resistant employers. But Russia's heavy dependence on foreign capital for industrial investment called imperatively for a stable, cheap and docile work force. Pressed by the contradictions in which it found itself, the government was not prepared to allow the development of a viable, legally recognised trade unionism, which could have hastened the emergence of a stratum of conservative working class leaders and provided a broad alternative channel for working class demands to that offered by the illegal political Party.

The government's attack on the Party institutions, carried out over a period of time was highly effective. First, the entire semi-legal superstructure was swept away,

the mass contacts broken and serious inroads made into the illegal apparatus. Then in 1908-9 the underground organisation itself was broken up, mainly through the successful use of spying and provocation. The loss of members and the danger to the very existence of mass organisations presented by any link with the proscribed revolutionary Party sharply pointed up the problems of the underground organisation divorced from the class it was supposed to lead and educate. The Mensheviks pointed out the self destroying character of the isolated conspiratorial circles, but the alternative they sought in the broad path of reformist work with the class likewise yielded barren results. The type of persecution to which the legal movement and in particular the trade unions were subjected, was not of the kind which would allow them to come back time after time to fight the employers. They were simply headed off by state regulation from any effective activity on wages and hours on behalf of their members. Specifically bound as they were by the Provisional Regulations of 1906 not to defend but to elucidate the economic interests of their members, as soon as the rules were literally and obstructively applied they found themselves deserted by the majority of those who had joined with such enthusiasm. In the years of repression, in spite of the efforts of Social Democrats working legally, no mass class organisation was able to take the place of the Party.

Those Social Democrats, the Bolsheviks, who retained a revolutionary perspective and clung to the illegal Party were faced with a catastrophic situation. The noisy outgoing Bolshevik local organisations, left with a

fraction of their membership and shorn of their leading committees found themselves reduced to the hunted life of the underground and dependent for funds, literature and leadership on the Bolshevik centre in exile. The attack on the over-extended Party organisation revealed the organic weaknesses that sprang from excessive dependence on the services of the intelligentsia. When this underpinning was suddenly removed with the mass withdrawal of the intelligentsia the structure collapsed and propaganda and agitation in many areas ceased altogether.

Considerable numbers of Social Democrats accompanied the Party leaders into exile. In the various European cities in which they settled they tended to form émigré communities and to continue the arguments of the immediate past. The Party lived two lives - one in the brawling emigration and the other in the shrinking underground. Leaders of the factions abroad studied the lessons of the revolution, outlined political programmes and diagnosed the ills of the Party largely in terms of the misdeeds of factional opponents. In addition to the fundamental divergence between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, bitter differences of opinions developed within the Bolshevik faction itself. Tactical disagreements, which when the leaders and members were together, could be argued, discussed, put to the vote as they arose and the decision tested in practice, became when leaders and members were separated, prolonged and deadly disputes leading to splits and expulsions among the émigrés, and in the decimated local organisations, confused quarrelling. Although the tendencies of the Right to abandon the Party (liquidationism) and of the Left to renounce legal action

(otzovism) arose naturally from the disintegration and demoralisation within Russia, the mutual antagonisms of the embattled local members were never as fierce as those of the émigrés. Most legalists were regarded as being entirely outside the Party, but amongst the remaining members, Leninist Bolsheviks and many otzovists and Party Mensheviks, a disposition to forget past disputes was evident by the end of 1909. This mood was strongly expressed by the practical workers in the Bolshevik organisation. These men who had influenced aspects of policy in regard to the Party's relations with mass organisations in 1906-7, continued in 1908-10 to urge upon the Bolshevik centre views which reflected the state of affairs in Russia and from time to time were directly opposed to those held by Lenin. The most noteworthy instances were the fierce objections to extending the anti-otzovist campaign in the form of expulsions to the local organisations and the strong support for the unity moves leading to the January 1910 plenum.

During the years of severe repression when the local illegal press was almost silent the views of the Bolshevik membership are to be inferred mainly from their response to initiatives from the Bolshevik centre. As the energetic representations of the professionals indicated, the responses were sometimes negative. Aware of their dependence on the centre for the means to carry on Party agitation and propaganda, they resented the unending brawls of the émigrés. Even when they were in firm agreement with Lenin's general line they felt at times that their urgent needs were neglected, while time, energy and money were spent by the Bolshevik leaders scoring off

factional opponents. The scandals that enlivened and poisoned the atmosphere of the emigration were of much less interest to those in Russia. Menshevik charges that the Bolshevik leaders had been deeply implicated in major expropriations could hardly be expected to arouse echoes of indignation in the rank and file otzovists who had either done their share of small robberies themselves or sympathised with the men who had. While the Bolshevik record with Party finances excited horror abroad, the main complaints from Bolshevik Party committees concerned the meagreness of the subsidies allowed them.

The Central Committee plenum held in January 1910 represented the last concerted attempt to arrive at a working agreement between all factions still in the Party. When news of it reached Party Social Democrats in Russia they welcomed with enthusiasm the possibility it offered of reviving the illegal organisation on as broad a basis as was then possible. These hopes were destroyed in the internecine war that broke loose again in the emigration and the process of disintegration of the Russian organisation into unlinked groups continued to the point where whatever response the membership could offer, either of support or resistance, to moves from abroad, was negligible.

Lenin who had been overruled at the plenum in his attempts to prevent the reconstitution of the Party in any form but that of the centralised illegal organisation, resumed his attacks on liquidationism at the first sign of obstruction by the Mensheviks. Fearing the possibility, in view of the disintegration of the underground organisation, of a revival of Social Democracy as a legal

mass party, he moved with great speed to recreate an exclusively Bolshevik organisation. He finally managed, having lost all his practical men who had been elected as Central Committee members or candidates at the London Congress, to put together a flimsy organisational framework using new agents. In the face of denunciations abroad and the passive abstention of the inert Russian membership, the Prague Conference took the Party name and drew up a Party building plan along the old lines of the constitution of a network of illegal nuclei surrounded by legal organisations. The programme adopted - that of revolutionary Social Democracy, called for the broadest possible struggle against the autocracy.

The Party organisation that was rebuilt in 1912 bore the marks of the years of repression. Political conditions were still such that neither a large membership nor democratic procedures were possible. In comparison with the Party of the revolutionary years it was cramped and undemocratic. The forms of organisation and activity however were well suited to ensure the maximum amount of influence among broad masses of workers. The concept of stable groups of Social Democrats working in mass organisations evolved a few years earlier proved particularly useful. The field in which the Bolsheviks could operate was now much wider than it had been in the post-revolutionary period of reaction. The daily illegal newspaper Pravda offered the means of reaching and influencing large numbers of workers and strikes and demonstrations provided a broad basis for agitational activity.

The programme of revolutionary Social Democracy combining political with economic demands, with its minimum programme of the democratic republic, the eight hour day and confiscation of the landed estates, suited the reviving the temper of the industrial workers and won their support. Large numbers, certainly, did not flock to join the Bolshevik organisation, because it was indeed the minimum demands that interested them more than socialism at that time. Battered by the repression and the years of factional fighting the organisation remained fragile. The severely shaken Petersburg Committee did not regain its standing among Bolshevik-minded workers of the capital until 1917. But for Lenin the essential task was to bring about a formal division between the revolutionary and reformist wings of Russian Social Democracy and this was accomplished in 1912.

He had no doubt that a new revolutionary crisis would come and that the maturing revolution would be bourgeois and democratic. That the Russian bourgeois revolution could be rapidly followed by a socialist revolution he believed possible, but the necessary condition of this end was leadership of the proletariat by a revolutionary party from which all trace of bourgeois influence, that is, reformism had been removed.

In 1917 the Bolshevik organisation hacked out by Lenin in 1912 was able, after only a brief hesitation to accept the new revolutionary perspectives opened up by the April Theses of that remarkable man.

APPENDIX 1

RULES OF THE CENTRAL INDUSTRIAL OBLAST'
ORGANISATION R.S.D.W.P. 1906

The Central Industrial Oblast', or Raion as it was often called, was the most important of the Bolshevik led oblast' organisations. These rules were adopted at a conference in 1906.

1. The Central Raion embraces all organisations that look towards Moscow.

Note. At the present time the Central Raion comprises the following organisations: 1. Vologda group, 2. Yaroslavl Committee, 3. Rybinsk group, 4. Kostroma Okrug Committee, 5. Nizhni-Novgorod Committee, 6. Vladimir Okrug organisation, 7. Ivanovo-Voznesensk Committee, 8. Ivanovo-Voznesensk Okrug Committee, 9. Moscow Committee, 10. Moscow Okrug Committee, 11 Tver Committee, 12. Smolensk Committee, 13. Kaluga Committee, 14. Tula Committee, 15. Orel Committee, 16. Briansk Committee, 17. Kursk Committee, 18. Tambov Committee, 19. Voronezh Committee.

2. Regular Oblast' conferences are summoned quarterly to discuss and resolve general Party and local questions and to co-ordinate work in the oblast.
3. Independent organisations with not fewer than 200 members are entitled to representation with full vote.

Organisations numbering more than 200 are entitled to one delegate for each 500 members.

Independent organisations with not fewer than 100 members are entitled to a consultative vote.

Independent organisations with less than 200 members may combine to send a delegate with full vote on matters of common interest.

4. Delegates to conference are elected either directly by all members of the organisation or by democratically organised conferences and congresses.
5. The Oblast' Bureau puts into effect the decisions of the Oblast' conference, assigns the party forces in the raion, manages general raion undertakings, organises the calling of conference and prepares material for it, communicates with the central institutions of the Party, informs local organisations of the progress of Party affairs, draws up drafts of campaign plans, leaflets and so on, and restores local organisations which have collapsed.
Note. Members of the Bureau or its agents are entitled to attend meetings of all organisations in the Oblast' with consultative vote.

Organisations of the oblast remit 5 per cent of all receipts to the Bureau.

Proletarii, no. 4,
19 September 1906, p.4.

APPENDIX 2

DRAFT RULES OF THE PETERSBURG
ORGANISATION R.S.D.W.P. 1907

The rules under which the conference of the St. Petersburg organisation constituted itself a standing body were adopted in March 1907.

1. A member of the Petersburg organisation of the R.S.D.W.P. is one, who, in accordance with Point 1 of the Party rules, accepts the Party programme, pays membership dues and belongs to some local Party organisation.
2. The members of the Petersburg organisation working in a factory or workshop constitute the factory union (soiuz). Small factories and workshops may combine to form one union.
3. All Party work in the factory or workshop is led by the factory committee, which is elected by a general meeting of the factory union. The number of members of the factory committee is determined by the meeting of the union.
Note. Members of the Party not working in a particular factory but carrying on Party work there enjoy the rights of members of the factory union.
4. The Petersburg organisation as a whole is divided into territorial raions.

Note I. The final determination of boundaries between raions rests with raions themselves in collaboration with the Petersburg Committee.

Note II. Railway workers are grouped into separate raions.

5. The leading organ in each raion is the raion conference elected by direct vote on a basis of 1 to 25. Elections to the raion conference are carried out at the meeting of the factory union or at the meetings of a number of unions.
6. The raion conference directs all raion work in accordance with the directives of the city conference and under the direct leadership of the Petersburg Committee.
7. The raion conference elects the raion committee to carry out day to day work in the raion.
8. The military organisation is attached to the Petersburg Committee as a special autonomous raion, being represented at the city conference by one full vote, if it is not possible for all members of the organisation to take part in the election.
9. The combat organisation is a technical organisation attached to the Petersburg Committee, and is entitled to send its own representative to the city conference with consultative vote.
10. The city conference is the leading organ of the whole of the St Petersburg organisation. Conference is elected by direct vote on the basis of 1 to 50.

Note. Two stage elections are permitted only in case of insuperable police obstacles, and then only with the agreement of the Petersburg Committee.

11. Conference is a standing body meeting not less than twice a month.

12. Elections for the conference are held every six months.

Note. Elections for conference may be held upon request of half the membership or by decision of the conference itself.

13. All Party members are eligible for election by conference to its executive organ, the Petersburg Committee.

Note. Attached to the Petersburg Committee and to each raion are special collectives created for work among artisans, trade unions and national groups.

14. Executive organs, as elected institutions, are not entitled to co-opt, but have the right to invite comrades to attend with consultative vote.

Proletarii, no. 15, 25 March 1907, p.8.

APPENDIX 3

EXTRACT FROM THE LETTER OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE
ON SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC WORK IN TRADE UNIONS
FEBRUARY 1908

Once the Bolsheviks had adopted the position that the workers' mass organisations offered valuable opportunities for Social Democratic activity, the Central Committee in resolutions and letters explained how the work was to be done. The following letter gives an idea of the importance attached to work in trade unions, the way in which Social Democratic fractions were to be organised, and the role of the Party in assisting the economic struggle of the trade unions.

'The following tasks in connection with the trade unions...face the R.S.D.W.P.:

1. To give the activity of the trade unions a more strikingly militant character and to direct all S.D. agitation in the spirit of the London and Stuttgart congresses.
2. To strengthen disintegrating, unstable organisations.
3. To create new stable trade unions in place of the ones that have disappeared.

All these aims can be realised only when Social Democrats in trade unions stop carrying on their work entirely without contact with each other, when they form

compact groups throughout the unions, which will have a clear idea of the immediate problems of the trade unions, and direct their own activity in the spirit of Social Democracy under the leadership of local Party centres. The absence of such links has already caused great damage and, in St Petersburg for example, has led to a whole series of undesirable complications. It is enough to point out that for this reason many unions did not take part in the organisation of the one day strike on November 22, and even agitated against it while on January 9 the typographers struck on their own and have now been subjected to severe repression. On the other hand numerous examples can be cited of economic action taking place without the Party as such participating, although individual Social Democrats have taken an active part in them. The Central Committee calls upon all Social Democrats to start upon the organisation of the above mentioned groups in all trade unions, legal and illegal, both in the union as a whole and in its separate sections. In the local organisation all such groups must be united and in close organisational contact with the local Party centre. All Party organisations must devote great attention to trade union activity and to see to it that all members belong to their trade unions, and that having joined the union they try to get all union members to join the Party.

Co-ordination of the activity of Social Democrats in a union may be achieved only through great expenditure of energy and will probably cause difficulties at first because of the non professional pattern of Party organisations, which as a rule answers all needs.

However the following tasks may be placed on the immediate order of the day without difficulty.

1. Meetings of Social Democrats who are members of union boards or delegate meetings for preliminary discussion of the most important trade union and Party questions.
2. Discussion in raion and other (Party) meetings of the most important general trade union questions.
3. Meetings - and this will prove more difficult - at city, raion and podraion level of Social Democrats in a particular trade for the purpose of such discussions.
4. Owing to the organisation of our trade unions by industry and not by occupation, discussion of trade union questions are quite feasible in Party meetings of Social Democrats.
5. Formation of permanent leading Social Democratic commissions in separate unions and city commissions, which are democratically elected by S.D. union members; or the organisation of Social Democratic leadership in another form, depending on local conditions.

All this amalgamating of Social Democrats within the professional organisations, in the lowest as well as the highest bodies, must be effected gradually and to begin with, have a fairly loose form depending on local conditions.

Social Democrats must not attend the union with resolutions prepared beforehand on each and every question.

This could have undesirable effects in the unions, where the Social Democratic line must be put forward with great tact and particular care. All this amalgamation has as its aim the consolidating of Social Democrats in the unions for the general direction of union work in a Social Democratic spirit, for preliminary discussion and working out of basic principles for the resolution of the main questions arising from the day to day struggle. At the same time Social Democrats must certainly raise with workers who join the Party all current questions of the economic struggle and factory life.

All Party organisations must concern themselves closely with these day to day questions. Together with Social Democratic groups from the trade unions and with their help they must involve themselves in the economic life of the working masses; carry on a struggle against overtime work, and against worsening conditions of labour, take up collections for the strikers in the name of the Party, during economic strikes call for solidarity strikes, organise help for the unemployed and so on.

One of the main tasks in unions at the present moment is the organisation of cultural-educational work. Social Democrats working in unions here too must be in the front rank and place the whole matter on a class basis. By means of our national Party apparatus we can and must facilitate oblast' and national unification for the unions. We must help unions to become as well informed as possible about their particular branch of industry, we must help to raise union literature to the required level.

Friendly mutual work of Party and union organisations will strengthen both, leading to mutual improvement of work and enabling the more rapid unification of the broad masses under the banner of socialism.' C.C.R.S.D.W.P.

Proletarii, no. 23, 27 February 1908, p.5.

APPENDIX 4

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MOSCOW COMMITTEE
R.S.D.W.P. FOR DECEMBER 1908

The few financial statements of Party committees published naturally conceal more than they reveal. The main items of interest relate to the expenditure on the printery (tekhnika) and on the maintenance of professional revolutionaries.

Financial Statement

Moscow Committee of the R.S.D.W.P. for December 1908.

(Owing to circumstances beyond our control the Statement for November has not been published and will be issued later).

Receipts

Brought forward to December 1 (printery fund) 311 rub.; from Seraphima 50 r.; from anon. for Rabochee Znamia 100 r. 6 k.; per E.E. 15 r.; received from commercial employees 12 r.; from Zamoskvor, raion for Rab. Znamia 6 r.; from Financial Commission 396 r.; from M.N. for Rab. Znamia 25 rub.; from G.S. for prisoners 15 r. 75 k.; from G. as a loan 20 r.; from M.N. as a loan 50 r.; from students' union for B. (political prisoner) 14 rub.

Total 1014 rub. 31 kop.

Expenditure

Printery 383 rub.; small printery 11 r.; maintenance of professionals 243 r.; subsidy to 3 raions 30 r.; loan to M.O.K. 25 r.; to prison from G.S. 15 r. 75 k.; for purchase and transport of books 60 r.; organisational expenses 20 r. 25 k.; to Yaroslavets 3 r.; debit to commercial and industrial employees 25 r.; S. and G. 125 r.; secretarial expenses 22 r. 75 k. Total 963 rub. 75 kop.

Carried forward to 1st Jan. 1909 51 rub. 6 kop.

Total 1014 rub. 31 kop.

Sotsial'demokrat, no. 4, 21 March 1909, p.8.

APPENDIX 5

MODEL RULES OF A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC
FRACTION IN A TRADE UNIONMOSCOWMODEL RULES OF A FRACTION OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC
MEMBERS OF A TRADE UNION

1. The fraction is organised with the aim of influencing the activity of the association in the spirit of the programme and tactics of the R.S.D.W.P.
2. With this purpose in view:- (1) all questions concerning the activity of the association are discussed at general meetings of fraction members, (2) all questions of Party and political life in general are discussed, (3) reports are given on the activity of the Party collectives.

MEMBERSHIP OF FRACTION

3. All members of the association who accept the programme and tactics of the R.S.D.W.P. and abide by the organisational rules of the fraction are recognised as fraction members.
4. Members of the fraction not paying dues to a Party organisation are to assign 1 per cent to the fraction funds.
5. All members of the fraction must observe Party discipline and the decisions of the general meeting and Bureau of the fraction.

GENERAL MEETINGS

6. General meetings of fraction members are summoned by the fraction Bureau.
7. All questions at general meetings of the fraction are decided by simple majority vote.

FRACTION BUREAU

8. A fraction Bureau of eight is elected at a general meeting.
9. The fraction Bureau elects from its number one representative to the Party-trade union group as a link with the Party.
10. The fraction Bureau is the executive organ.
Note. In exceptional circumstances the fraction Bureau may itself decide various questions and the general meeting may challenge such decisions.
11. All questions at Bureau meetings are decided by simple majority vote.
12. The Bureau elects from its number a secretary and treasurer.

PROCEDURE WITH REGARD TO ADMISSION AND EXCLUSION OF MEMBERS

13. Newly admitted members are confirmed by the fraction Bureau.
14. Members of the fraction may be excluded from its ranks only by decision of the general meeting.

The editorial board of Sotsial'demokrat added the following comment on the above rules.

'The present draft of model rules was drawn up in Moscow. We print it, as an interesting first experiment in this field. The Central Committee of our Party with its well known (unanimously adopted) resolution on trade unions long ago pointed out the necessity of organising Social Democratic nuclei in all workers' trade unions. The last general Party conference also emphasised the necessity of organising these Social Democratic Party nuclei in all workers' organisations. Using the opportunity once again to remind comrades of this urgent task we draw attention to the first attempt at a legal formulation of this problem, which must first of all be solved practically in those places where for some reason or another it has still not been done.'

Sotsial'demokrat, nos. 7-8, 8 August 1909, p.9.

APPENDIX 6

EXTRACT FROM THE PROVISIONAL REGULATIONS
IN RESPECT OF ASSOCIATIONS AND SOCIETIES
MARCH 1906

The Provisional Regulations in respect of Associations and Societies comprise 73 articles. Reproduced are some which apply specifically to associations of employers and employees. These indicate the extent to which the economic aims of trade unions were circumscribed, the close and constant scrutiny to which they were subjected, and give an idea of the opportunities for delay in registering the rules presented by the many authorities through whose hands they had to pass to secure approval.

The following regulations in respect of professional associations set up for persons employed in commercial or industrial enterprises or for the owners of such undertakings are laid down:-

1. Professional associations have as their aim the elucidation and co-ordination of their members' economic interests and the improvement of working conditions, or the raising of the productivity of enterprises belonging to them.
2. In particular professional associations may have as their aim: (a) the investigation of means of removing by agreement or arbitration misunderstandings arising

from conditions of contract between employers and employees; (b) the ascertaining of wage rates and other conditions of work in the various branches of industry and commerce; (c) the payment of grants-in-aid to their members; (d) the establishment of funeral benefit funds, endowments, mutual benefit funds and so on; (e) the establishment of libraries, trade schools, courses and public readings; (f) the provision for their members of opportunities of advantageous acquisition of items of necessity and of instruments of production; (g) the rendering of assistance in the search for employment or for a labour force; (h) the provision of legal aid for members.

3. Institutions formed by professional associations for the realisation of their aims are subject to the general regulations governing such institutions.
4. Professional associations may present to the appropriate authorities petitions on matters affecting the aims and activity of the association and likewise convey the considerations moving them in the matters aforesaid, upon the demand of these authorities.
5. A professional association may open branches of the association for certain districts or certain groups of its members on condition only that the above mentioned branches do not have managements separate from that of the association.
6. The combining of two or more professional associations into a union is forbidden. Professional associations controlled by institutions or persons abroad are also forbidden.

7. Only those persons of both sexes may join a professional association who are engaged in the same, similar or linked occupations or trades in commercial and industrial undertakings, public and private; likewise owners of identical, similar or linked industrial or commercial enterprises.
8. Minors may join a professional association if the rules of the association do not restrict their admission as members.
9. Persons wishing to form a professional association must, not less than two weeks before the commencement of their activities, supply the Chief Factory Inspector or District Mining Engineer in the place where the association's management board is located, with a written notification accompanied by a notarial certification of the legal capacity of applicants and the authenticity of their signatures, together with two copies of the certified rules of the association, and also money for the necessary approval of the notification of the formation of the institution.
10. Details of the mode of operation of the association and its branches and the form of control of its affairs, in so far as this is not laid down in the present regulations are to be defined by the rules of the association.
11. The rules of an association (Art. 10) must indicate:-
 - (a) the name of the association, its aims, area and mode of operation and the location of the association;
 - (b) the full names, rank and addresses of its founders;
 - (c) conditions of admission and exclusion

of members; (d) rights and duties of members; (e) membership subscription rates and method of paying them; (f) members of the management board and their addresses; form of ownership of property of the association, method of election and powers of the management board and persons entrusted with the direction of the affairs and property of the association; (g) the term of office of the management board and of persons entrusted with the direction of the affairs and property of the association, and procedure with regard to dismissal from office before the appointed time; (h) the method of book keeping; (i) procedure in regard to the calling of general meetings of the association and its branches and the length of notice given; (j) matters brought before the general meeting; (k) conditions under which decisions of the general meeting are deemed valid; (l) procedure with regard to altering the rules and closing the association and the method of liquidation of the affairs of the association; (m) the establishment of various ancillary institutions of the association, mutual benefit funds, funds for payment of grants-in-aid, libraries, trade schools etc., if such are envisaged; (n) procedure with regard to opening branches of the association in appropriate cases.

12. Notification of the formation of professional associations with drafts of their rules are to be presented by the Senior Factory Inspector or District Mining Engineer to the Governor or the Chief City Official (gradonachal'nik) who will pass them on to

the Provincial or City Office for Matters relating to Associations, for consideration and further submission on the basis of Articles 23 and 24 of Section I of the present regulations.*

13. For the investigation of matters concerning professional associations the Senior Factory Inspector or District Mining Engineer or persons acting in their stead are deemed to be members of the Provincial or City Office for Matters relating to Associations.
14. The Minister of Trade and Industry in agreement with the appropriate ministers is empowered, in respect of those places where the positions of Senior Factory Inspectors or District Mining Engineers have not been approved, to entrust their duties to other local officials.
15. The form of the register of professional associations is laid down by agreement of the Ministers of the Interior and Justice with the Minister of Trade and Industry.
16. The Provincial or City Office for Matters relating to Associations informs the Department of Industry in the Ministry of Trade and Industry of the registration of a professional association and sends the articles for approval in the prescribed manner in the Senate Announcements and local provincial or oblast gazettes.
17. Every professional association elects at its general meeting from the number of its adult members a board for the management of the affairs of the association

- on the basis of the rules of the association (Art. 11) and special decisions of the general meeting.
18. The management board of the professional association immediately upon its election (Art. 17) must supply a written notification of the same to the officials designated in Article 9 enclosing a list of the persons who are members of the board and also other persons taking part in the management of the affairs of the association with the designation of the position and occupation of each of them.
 19. The management board of the professional association must immediately notify the officials designated in Article 9 (a) of every change in the composition of the board and generally, in the composition of the persons taking part in the management of the affairs of the association; (b) of all changes in the rules; (c) of the opening or closing of a branch of the association (Art. 5) and (d) of the closing of the association.
 20. Persons and institutions mentioned in Articles 12-14 are obliged, in case of necessity, to give information about the notifications filed (Art. 9, 18 and 19) to state and public institutions and also to officials and private individuals upon their notifications and requests in the matter.
 21. The Senior Factory Inspector or the District Mining Engineer or officials acting in their stead (Art. 14) inform the officials in charge of public institutions of the notifications received (Arts. 9, 18 and 19) and of information concerning the approval of professional associations for persons working in public enterprises.

* Articles 23 and 24 of the regulations in Section I provided that the Provincial or City Office for Matters relating to Associations had a month in which to investigate and accept or reject the draft rules of an association; and that registration of association rules was to be signified by the affixing of the signature of the Governor or Chief City Official.

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