

The Nature Of Labour Participation  
In The Russian Revolutionary  
Process, 1890—1917

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**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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DECLARATION

Certified that the dissertation entitled  
The Nature of Labour Participation in the Russian  
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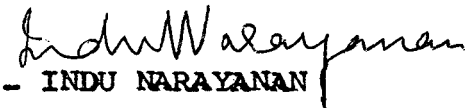
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## INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

This is an attempt to study the nature of labour participation in the revolutionary movement from 1890 to 1917/ <sup>in Russia.</sup> Labour protest in various forms, had existed before the 1890s, but it is only from this period that it took on a coherent, organised form. It is also from this period that the radical intelligentsia made a conscious effort to mobilise the workers in support of their political programme. This merger of the workers' movement with the political movement of the radical intelligentsia constituted the radical opposition to the Autocracy. Beginning in the 1890s the workers movement culminated in October 1917, in the coming to power of the Bolsheviks.

The evolution of the workers' movement and all the changes undergone by it will be the main focus of this study. The increase in worker participation in the movement, with its extension will be looked at along with the factors that affect worker participation like business cycles, the concentration of industry, political mobilisation and the existence of a revolutionary situation.

The growth and spread of political and working-class consciousness among the workers will be studied along with the variations in such consciousness within different sections of the working class and the possible reasons for these variations. Here the role of the radical intelligentsia operating either on their own or through political parties becomes very important.

Labour activism in Russia took the form of strikes, walk-outs, demonstrations and on occasion, of armed insurrection. The most common and visible form of labour protest was the strike. In the unfree political atmosphere of Russia, strikes were not only part of industrial conflict but often expressed political protest as well. The real character of a strike could not be deduced from the demands put forward by the strikers. Studies of industrial conflict have shown that strike demands need not indicate the real grievances of the strikers and traditional demands like a demand for higher wages might just be a symbolic representation of a more generalised, diffused discontent.

Sometimes the political content of a strike was indicated by its timing as when it occurred on days of



political significance. However the distinction between political and economic strikes cannot be rigidly made as to the workers, the struggle for position on the shop-floor was closely related to the struggle for position in society and in that sense, industrial conflict can also be seen as political. As will be shown, the struggle for control of production was a very important part of the struggle for state power in the months from February to October 1917.

The element of class conflict inherent in a strike becomes more apparent in the case of general strikes. When a strike involving a section of the workers triggers off sympathy strikes and culminates in a strike involving all the workers, in all trades and industries in a particular area, then it becomes difficult to see it as part of normal labour--management conflict. A general strike is an expression of the strength of organised labour as a class and is therefore strongly political in character.

Studies of labour activism often make a distinction between labour activism in revolutionary times and labour activism in non-revolutionary times. This kind of division results in undue importance being given to one

at the expense of the other. Depending on the writer's political position, reformist activity becomes practical, close to the worker's real interests, while revolutionary action becomes illogical, irrational and misguided. A diametrically opposed position would see all trade union activity as a betrayal of the final purpose of the workers' movement that can be served by revolutionary means alone.

In fact this distinction between revolutionary and reformist activity is itself based, not on actual differences in the form of labour action but differences in the perception of these by the Establishment against which they are directed. A revolutionary situation has been defined, for example, by Charles Tilly as one in which there is more than one centre of sovereignty commanding the allegiance of a considerable section of the people, and the government is either unwilling or unable to suppress the alternate centre of authority. Revolutionary situations point to a division in state power and the weakness of the government. Often the form of labour activism continues to remain the same. As Louise Tilly points out it is the revolutionary outcome that constitutes a break while the revolutionary process itself shows continuity.

However, the awareness of the weakness of the political authority does influence labour activism. The failure of governmental repressive machinery permits the extension and intensification of labour activism and the emergence of new forms of organization and activity not permitted earlier.

In trying to understand labour activism, it is more productive to see it in continuity over both revolutionary and non-revolutionary periods rather than attempting to make strong breaks between them. Here the concept of 'collective action' evolved by Charles Tilly is very valuable as it encompasses all forms of concerted action by the workers. It enables the study of labour action without unconsciously assuming the political considerations of the authority threatened.

The study of Russian working-class history is a relatively new area of research as is the case with all attempts at 'collective history or mass history'. Earlier accounts of Russian revolutionary history tended to revolve around political movements, organisations and ideologies. Many areas in Russian labour history are still being worked upon and many areas are yet to be

explored. Studies on this subject are still relatively few. This work relies largely on the studies published in English on this relatively more recent Russian labour history.

CHAPTER ONE

## CHAPTER ONE

Constituting as it did the workers' whole world, the influence of industry on the workers' movement was manifold. The material conditions prevailing in industry determined the workers' lifestyle, the level of his wages, the availability of employment and had a clear influence on the intensity of worker activism. The technological level of <sup>a</sup>particular industry influenced the characteristics of the work force employed there, particularly the kind of skills they possessed. Concentration in terms of industrial location and in terms of the workers employed in an industrial unit, both affected labour radicalism and mobilization. Management attitudes and policies towards labour were very important in deciding the direction that the labour movement took.

### BUSINESS CYCLES

Business cycles have been demonstrated to have a strong influence on the timing and the intensity of labour activism, particularly in developing economies.

Expansion in production makes employment relatively easier to obtain and more secure particularly for those categories of skilled labour that are scarce in a developing economy. Labour, particularly skilled labour, finds itself in a favourable bargaining position vis-a-vis their employers. The employers because of the relatively higher rates of profit being earned are much more amenable to making concessions. Also, they stood to loose more from an interruption in production resulting from a strike or a lock-out. Generally industrial conditions in a boom favour an aggressive labour movement and foster the growth of labour organizations.

The situation is reversed in a slump when the labour movement finds itself with its back against the wall. There is strong employer pressure to rescind on concessions granted earlier and to resist granting new ones. Wages move downwards, but greater misery is caused by the unavailability and insecurity of employment. Workers are more careful about participation in strikes and other forms of protest as jobs are difficult to find and substitute labour easily available. The labour movement in these times becomes passive or engages only in defensive struggles to protect earlier gains.

Russian industry began booming in the 1890s assisted by protective tariffs and by the government policy of encouraging investment by foreign capital. In this period from 1890 to 1899, industry grew on an average at an annual rate of 8.03%.<sup>1</sup> Growth was particularly great in heavy industry which benefitted from state orders and from catering to the needs of the fast expanding railways. The Ukraine was developed in this period and by 1901 was producing 92 million poods of pig iron (compared to 49.2 million poods produced in the Urals) and 75 million poods of iron and steel (compared to the 35.6 million poods produced in the Urals).<sup>2</sup> The Baku Oil industry was also developed in this period and increased production by 243% in the period from 1892 to 1901.<sup>3</sup>

RATE OF INDUSTRIAL GROWTH IN RUSSIA, 1885-1913<sup>4</sup>

Year	Annual Rate (Percentage)
1885-1889	6.10
1890-1899	8.03
1900-1906	1.43
1907-1913	6.25
1910-1913	7.50

- 1 M.E. Falkus, The Industrialization of Russia 1700-1914, Anchor Press, Essex, 1972, p.46.
- 2 Roger Portal, "The Industrialization of Russia", in H.J. Habakkuk and M.M. Postan, eds., Cambridge The Economic History of Europe, vol.VI, part-II, Cambridge University Press, 1966, p.827.
- 3 T.H. Von Laue, Sergei Witte and the Industrialization of Russia, Columbia University Press, 1963, p.267.
- 4 Falkus, op.cit., p.46.



The labour movement responded by becoming increasingly aggressive. Labour unrest began in Russian Poland with the Lodz Movement of 1892. By 1895, the unrest had spread to the Jewish proletariat of the Pale of Settlement. Beginning with the artisans there, it spread to the factories. Between 1895 and 1904, 2,276 strikes involving Jewish workers had taken place in the Pale.<sup>5</sup> From there it spread to St. Petersburg where in 1896 the spinners and weavers of the textile industry went on a strike that finally involved 35,000 workers.<sup>6</sup>

The workers movement also showed considerable development in terms of strategy and organisation. The tendency towards 'Buntarstvo' or violent spontaneous uprisings decreased, at least among the more skilled workers. The workers no longer dissipated their energies in spontaneous violence against immediate oppressors like foremen. The movement became increasingly disciplined, sustained and peaceful, giving the government forces little

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5 Ezra Mendelsohn, Class Struggle in the Pale. The Formative Years of the Jewish Workers Movement in Tsarist Russia, Cambridge University Press, 1970, p.85.

6 Theodor Dan, The Origins of Bolshevism, Secker and Warburg, London, 1964, p.202.

chance of intervening on the excuse of maintaining law and order. The workers were showing a growing sense of unity and identity as indicated by the increasing participation in May Day strikes and demonstrations. On 1st of May 1900 there was an open street demonstration in Kharkov, May Day in 1901 in St. Petersburg led to the incident of the "Obukhov Defense",<sup>and</sup> / May Day in 1902 was marked by a general strike in Rostov-on-the Don.

But the end of the 1890s there was increasing evidence of the emergence among the workers of a tendency towards trade-unionism, or as the Social Democrats called it, 'economism'. Sections of the workers began to break away from the tutelage of the revolutionary intelligentsia and to reject the political goals of the Social Democrat Movement. This tendency was represented by the journal 'Rabochaia Mysl' that claimed to present the real views of the workers.

In 1900 the Russian economy went into a crisis from which<sup>it</sup> began recovering only by 1909. The crisis was partly caused by overproduction and was partly the result of a crisis in the international money market

with which Russia had become closely linked. The average annual growth rate in the period, 1900 to 1906 plunged to 1.43% from 8.03% in 1890-1899.<sup>7</sup> Particularly hard hit was the heavy industrial sector where in some industries production actually declined. Between 1900 and 1908, pig iron production declined by 3.2%, iron and steel by 9.5% and oil by 16.2%.<sup>8</sup> Light industry fared better, being cushioned by good harvests in the initial years and grew at a slow rate. The worst affected areas were the newly developed areas of Baku and the Ukraine.

The workers movement in this period did not become passive but grew increasingly political in character. The growing opposition movement to the Autocracy, involving the upper classes and the militant students movement in this period, drew the workers into the struggle for political reform. Even the 'economist' journal 'Rabochaia Mysl' began calling for political agitation. But the years from 1900-1905 also saw the development of economism in a new form, through the efforts of the government at setting up unions sponsored by them. At its height these unions attracted considerable sections of the

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7 Falkus, op.cit., p.46.

8 R. Portal, op.cit., p.844.

workers, including those, who had earlier participated in the social Democrat Circles. This attempt at police unionism petered away in the face of employer resistance into cultural activity in Moscow. In St. Petersburg, the unions merged with the political movement that culminated in the Revolution of 1905.

The economy had shown signs of revival in 1904, but was interrupted by the Revolution of 1905. After 1907 the depression deepened further. Wage levels in the years from 1905 to 1909 plunged even below the level in 1900, already a depressed year.

Year	Index of Average <sup>9</sup> Wage in Real Terms (1900 = 100)
1900	100.0
1901	102.5
1902	101.0
1903	106.4
1904	101.5
1905	95.8
1906	99.7
1907	92.4
1908	93.2
1909	94.2
1910	100.0

9 Olga Crisp "Labour and Industrialization in Russia", in P. Mathias and M.M. Postan, eds., The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, vol.VII, Part-II, Cambridge University Press, 1978, p.407.

In the years from 1906-7 extensive growth of labour organization had taken place in the wake of the concessions granted by the Autocracy legalizing unionization in March 1906. After June 1907, however, the government turned repressive and began attacking the worker unions. Employer attitudes also became much less amenable. The conditions of labour were affected by the severity of unemployment that affected virtually every sector of the economy as well as by the falling wages of the favoured few who did manage to secure work. Activism in the form of strikes declined drastically in these years of economic slump and political repression. The labour movement continued among the skilled workers through cultural societies, clubs, etc. However, it involved only a limited section of the workers like the printers and the metal workers of St. Petersburg and Moscow. However, the valuable organizational experience gained by these workers put them in the forefront of the labour movement when it gained strength once again from 1912 onwards.

By 1909, Russian industry began emerging from the depression. Revival began in the light industries and later encompassed the heavy industries also. This second growth period from 1909-1914 saw the industry

begin to lessen its dependence on government orders and to cater to the consumer market that had grown with the rising grain prices from 1906-1912.

As employment grew and the labour force expanded, the worker movement began showing unmistakable signs of militancy. Beginning with the artisans, construction workers and printers in 1910-1911, agitation spread to the metalists and the textilists. The movement took a dramatic turn with the incident at the Lena Gold Mines in Siberia on the 4th of April 1912 when soldiers fired at workers wounding and killing hundreds. The protest strikes that took place in Russia following this incident in the next month alone, involved twice as many workers as had struck in the four years from 1907-1911.<sup>10</sup>

While the labour movement was strongly political and militant in the years from 1912 to 1914, labour unions were not allowed to revive to any great extent because of organised resistance by the employers and their refusal to recognize the unions as representing the workers and to negotiate through them. The government also followed a policy of allowing the unions to exist

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10 Victoria E. Bonnell, *Roots of Rebellion: Workers Politics and Organizations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1900-1914*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1982, p.354.

Year	Strikes	Strikers	No. of strikes listed as political	No. of strikers listed as political
1905	13,995	2,863,173	6,024	1,082,576
1906	6,114	1,108,406	2,950	514,854
1907	3,573	740,074	2,558	521,573
1908	892	176,101	464	92,694
1909	340	64,166	50	8,863
1910	222	46,623	8	3,777
1911	466	105,110	24	8,380
1912	2,032	725,491	1,300	549,812
1913	2,404	887,096	1,034	502,442
1914 (first six months)	3,534	1,337,458	2,401	985,655

without permitting them to function as unions.

The failure of the workers to secure any important concessions resulted in disillusionment with reformist methods and was probably the reason for the politicization of the movement.<sup>12</sup> This radicalization was assisted by freer conditions that permitted the radical intelligentsia to mobilize the workers.

11 Leopold Haimson, 'The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905-1917' in Slavic Review, Part 1, vol.23, no.4, December 1964, p.627.

12 Bonnell, op.cit., p.434.

The strike movement reached its height in the first half of 1914. It involved principally the printers and the metal workers. The movement was at its most militant in St. Petersburg but was also strong in Moscow. Militancy, however, died down with the declaration of war, probably due to a revival of patriotism.

Russian industry proved inadequate to supply the needs of the war. Oil production fell, that of coal, pig iron and manufactured iron rose but were still inadequate. Metal industries expanded, particularly the armaments industry. Inadequate communication network caused shortages of raw material and fuel and delays in the conveyance of manufacture. Industrial production suffered further by the loss, by the summer of 1915, of the entire Polish industry and the Baltic industry upto Riga.

About 400,000 to 500,000 workers were conscripted into the army. This amounted to 20% - 25% of <sup>the</sup> 1914 workforce in Russian industry.<sup>13</sup> An estimated 17% of the Petrograd workforce in 1914 and 27% of Moscow's workforce

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13 S.A. Smith, Red Petrograd: Revolution in the Factories 1917-1918, Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1985, p.21.



in 1914 was conscripted.<sup>14</sup> At the same time the expansion of production for war led to the expansion of the work-force with the induction of women, youth, children, peasants, some persons from the middle class and refugees from the Western Provinces.

Wages, at least for the categories of skilled workers that were in demand, rose in these years. But most of the increase was eaten away by inflation. By the autumn of 1916 shortages and scarcity had begun and by February 1917, food was being rationed.

Initially, labour activity was suppressed by increased policing and by threatening the conscription of trouble makers. However, strikes soon revived. The number of strikes in plants engaged in defense production alone, rose from 7000 in the second half of 1914 to 16,000 in 1915 and to 82,000 in 1916, almost a twelve-fold increase.<sup>15</sup> From the autumn of 1916 the movement escalated taking on an increasingly political tone and culminating in the February Revolution of 1917. The continuing deterioration

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14 Diane Koenkar, Moscow Workers and the 1917 Revolution, Princeton University Press, 1981, pp.78-79.

15 Ibid., p.89.

of industrial conditions from February and October was very important in alienating the workers from the Provisional government and in radicalizing them.

Booms led to intensified labour activity in both 1890 to 1900 and in 1909 to 1914. In the first instance, the success of labour agitation contributed to economism and reformism. In 1909 to 1914 the frustration of the workers attempts to improve their conditions led to the radicalization and politicization of the movement. The slump of 1900-1903 did not result in dampening labour activity due to intensified political activity involving other sections of society. The depression of 1907-1909 combined with political repression resulted in labour passivity. In the war years, falling standards of living seems to have contributed to labour protest but the highest paid workers were in the forefront of the struggle.

Another relationship that has often been drawn between the level of prosperity and labour activism is that economic deprivation leads to revolutionary activity. Economic need, it is claimed makes the workers more receptive to ideas that advocate a complete destruction of an unjust social order rather than limited reform within that social system.

This would appear to be confirmed in the Russian case by the fact that both the Revolutions of 1905 and 1917 took place in a time of economic downswing. It is possible that economic need could function as a 'consciousness-raising' factor in the case of the less politically aware workers, drawing them into the political struggle where more abstract political ideals might not have.

However, the highest paid workers seem to have been the most involved in revolutionary activity, as is demonstrated by Diane Koenkars' study of the relationship between wages and strike activity in Moscow.<sup>16</sup> This shows a pattern of revolutionary activity similar to that of trade unionist activity. The workers with greater reserves to fall back on, whose labour was in greater demand and therefore whose employment was more secure, were the most active.

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16 Ibid., p.299.

Wages for Industries with High Strike Propensities<sup>17</sup>

Industry	Strike Propensity	1916 Annual wage (rubles)	Change in real wages, 1913-1916 (% of 1913 wage)
Wood	3.13	628	80
Metal	2.64	981	114
Leather	2.35	811	121
Average for 22 industries	1.00	620	101

With the exception of the wood workers who suffered a fall in real wages, the most active of Moscow's workers were the highest paid. However, the study also shows that a relative decline in living standards in the recent past also contributed to activism. In the case of two industries with the same rate of decline in wages, the industry with the higher, initial 1916 wage, was more active.<sup>18</sup>

Political and revolutionary activity, aiming at a change of government or state structure itself, was probably based on assumptions independent of the material prosperity of industry. Here factors like the perceived

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., p.300.

weakness of the established order, the preparedness of revolutionary forces, etc., are probably more important. However, labour activism cannot be compartmentalised into revolutionary and reformist activities. As demonstrated above, considerations important in trade unionist activity might continue to be important in revolutionary activity as well. Also, the constant manoeuvring of positions that take place in reformist activity can result in fairly revolutionary changes in the worker's position in society.

CONCENTRATION OF INDUSTRY: IN TERMS OF INDUSTRIAL LOCATION AND IN TERMS OF NUMBER OF WORKERS EMPLOYED IN AN UNIT

Russia's industry was not equally distributed over the wide expanses of her territory but was concentrated into important industrial regions. Within these regions, industrial installations could be widely separated from each other. An extreme example was that of the Urals where industry was located along the riverside or in a few important towns in the midst of forest lands. Even in the intensely industrialized Central Industrial Region, in its most important provinces of Moscow and Vladimir, industrial installations were separated by fields.

However, in an industrial location, industry was concentrated spatially and in the distribution of the workforce. In 1880, one-third of Russia's workers employed in factories of more than 100 workers, were in factories employing more than 1,000 workers. In 1890 the proportion was two-fifths, in 1902 half.<sup>19</sup> There was considerable variation in concentration among the different industrial regions. The City of Petrograd had the highest concentration of labour. In 1917, two-thirds of its workforce were employed in 38 plants each employing over 2000 workers. Concentration in Petrograd was 40% over the national average. The average Petrograd plant employed 388.5 workers.<sup>20</sup> In the Moscow Province, an average 247 workers were employed in a plant and in the Vladimir Province, an average of 482 workers were employed in a plant. In Moscow City itself the factories were much less concentrated. On an average 202 workers were employed in a plant.<sup>21</sup> The average is inflated by the presence of a few large units and most plants in Moscow employed fewer workers. Though industry in Moscow was relatively small-scaled, it was still

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19 Falkus, op.cit., p.68.

20 David Mandel, The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Regime, the Macmillan Press Ltd., London, Basingstoke, 1983, pp.44-45.

21 D. Koenkar, op.cit., p.23.

larger than the industrial structure in cities like Kiev, Tiflis and Baku. In the Ukraine in 1910, 39.8% of the workforce was in factories employing more than 500 workers and in 1914, the proportion had increased to 46.3%.<sup>22</sup> But the industry here was much less concentrated than Russian industry as a whole, where in 1914, 56.5% of the workers were in units employing more than 500 workers.<sup>23</sup> However, the industrial structure in the Ukraine was larger than that of the earlier developed Urals. In 1900 only 18.2% of the factories were factories employing less than 500 workers and 13.6% of the factories employed more than 3000 workers. In the Urals, 65.2% of the factories were those employing less than 500 workers and there were no factories employing more than 3000 workers.<sup>24</sup> While concentration in Russian industry was undoubtedly high, some distortion of data has taken place, as pointed out by Olga Crisp, because of the tendency of the Factory Inspectorate to ignore small-sized units in its records.<sup>25</sup> Allowance must be made for this.

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22 Ralph C. Elwood, Russian Social Democracy in the Underground - A Study of the RSDRP in the Ukraine 1907-1914, Von Gorcum & Co., Assen, Netherlands, 1974, p.243.

23 Falkus, op.cit., p.83.

24 R. Portal, op.cit., p.830.

25 Olga Crisp, Studies in the Russian Economy Before 1914, Macmillan, 1976, p.38.

Distribution of Factory Workers by Size of Enterprise  
(in per cent) in Petersburg Province, Moscow City and  
European Russia<sup>26</sup>

	Number of workers per Enterprise				
	0-49	50-99	100-499	500-999	1000+
Petersburg Province (1901-1905)	6.7	8.1	31.8	15.5	37.9
Moscow City (1910-1911)	8.0	10.4	30.4	17.3	34.2
European Russia (1901-1905)	14.1	9.8	28.5	16.4	31.2

Concentration in Russian Industry<sup>27</sup>

Size of Plant	Percentage of workforce	
	In 1901	In 1914
Less than 100	24.4	17.8
101-500	28.9	25.7
501-1000	15.8	15.1
1000 and above	30.9	41.4

26 V.E. Bonnell, op.cit., p.35.

27 Falkus, op.cit., p.83.



The large size of industry in Russia was not an indication of the modernity of her industrial technology but precisely of its backwardness. Alexander Gerschenkron saw largeness in plant size as a manifestation of the process of 'substitution' by which the scarcity of managerial and entrepreneurial personnel was made up for <sup>by</sup> minimizing the need for them.<sup>28</sup>

These giant units generally combined under one roof a variety of operations. As supporting industries were often underdeveloped, their functions had to be undertaken by the main unit itself. Also to minimize capital costs, simple operations were performed manually, inflating the workforce with unskilled manual labourers. A single factory could be engaged in producing a great variety of goods. The factory was an agglomeration of small workshops producing different articles, like the famous Putilov factory of St. Petersburg that in 1900 was divided into 30 shops that produced steel, iron, copper, railway cars, boilers, locomotives, engines, steam engines, armaments and ammunition.<sup>29</sup> Similarly

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28 Alexander Gerschenkron, Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective, Harvard University Press, 1966, p.129.

29 S. Smith "Craft Consciousness, Class Consciousness: Petrograd 1917", History Workshop Journal, no.11, 1981, p.36.

the Nobel factory was engaged in the production of armaments, equipment for the Nobel oil installation in Baku and a variety of electrical goods.<sup>30</sup>

However, the fact remains that a large number of workers were collected together under a single roof and the problem being examined is the effect of such concentration on labour activism and militancy. The question will be examined by looking at the industrial structure of St. Petersburg.



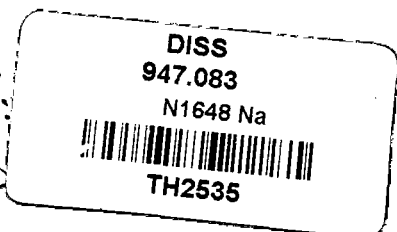
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Industry in St. Petersburg was concentrated along the outskirts of the City. The greatest concentrations of the working class were in the district of Vyborg, 45.8% of whose population were workers, Petergof district with 39.7% of its population being working class, Vasilevskii Ostrov with 19.4% and Narva district with 18.6%.<sup>31</sup> The rates of public transport being so high as to be considered a luxury, most workers found it necessary to live near their workplace.<sup>32</sup> The availability of labour was in fact a very important consideration in

30 James H. Bater, St. Petersburg: Industrialization and Change, Edward Arnold Ltd., London, 1976, p.225.

31 D. Mandel, op.cit., p.53.

32 J.H. Bater, op.cit., p.282.



deciding the location of industry.<sup>33</sup> So areas with a large number of industrial units, also had a large proportion of workers in its residential population.

In the case of Vyborg and Vasilevskii Ostrov districts, which had concentrated in them 17.9% and 13.5% respectively, of the city's workforce, concentration seems to have bred radicalism. Both these districts were extremely militant and were strong centers of Bolshevik support. Vyborg had been in the forefront of the workers' movement in 1912-1914 and as early as March 1917 had been in general meetings called for the setting up of a Provisional Revolutionary Government, that excluded all bourgeois elements. Vasilevskii Ostrov district supported the Bolsheviks and the Menshevik-Internationalist and together they gained control of the district as early as May 1917. Vyborg and Vasilevskii Ostrov districts along with Petergof were the most active districts in the July Days in Petrograd.

Despite the presence of the huge Putilov, Tilmans and Langezapan factories, the Petergof district was not

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33 Ibid., p.250.

very active in 1917 except briefly in June-July. Narva was even less active and the Nevskii district was a strong centre of support for the moderate SR-defencists. Nevskii was the least active of the working class districts despite the location there of the huge Nevskii and Obukhovskii plants.

The critical determinant of activism does not seem to have been concentration. Other factors, like in the case of Nevskii, of landholding by its skilled workforce; in the case of Narva, of very low percentage of metal workers (who were the most active section of the workforce) in the district; in the case of Petergof, dilution of the workforce by the influx of peasant workers into its ordnance factories, seem to have offset the strong presence of workers in these districts.

Looking at the city's industry as a whole, a distinct correlation can be found between the concentration of the metal industry and the extreme radicalism of the metal workers. The average metal factory, employed 626.3 workers compared to the average plant size of 388.5 workers for the city. However, high concentration in the chemical industry with an average of 691.2 workers per plant and

the textile industry with 441.2 workers per plant,<sup>34</sup> were not paralleled by any great activism or radicalism on the part of these workers. Again the printers who were in the vanguard of the revolutionary movement in 1905-07 and who continued to be active, even if politically moderate in 1917 were located in factories that employed an average of 121.5 workers per plant. The critical factor determining activism seems to have been skill rather than concentration with skilled workers like the metalists and the printers being active while semi-skilled and unskilled textile and chemical workers were not.

The St. Petersburg workforce being exceptional both in terms of concentration and of worker radicalism, the relationship between concentration and activism is better studied in the more varied and complex industrial structure of Moscow.

In the most important industries in Moscow (in terms of the percentage of workforce employed) in 1917

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34 D. Mandel, op.cit., p.45.

the average size of a plant varied from 196 workers per plant in the metal industry (machine construction factories employed 216 workers per plant), 226 workers per plant in the chemical industry and 236 workers per plant in the textile industry. The average size of a printing unit was 71 workers.<sup>35</sup> Here again, the high concentration of the textile and chemical workers did not result in any great activism or radicalism. These workers showed a tendency to be involved in economic agitation at a time when the more conscious workers were concentrating on the political struggle. The machine construction workers followed by the metal workers were the most active and politically aware even though the average metal plant had a workforce smaller than that of the city average of 202 workers per plant.<sup>36</sup> Again the printers were extremely aware and active despite the small size of the printing unit.

This tendency was more marked in 1905 when the metal industry had not yet expanded for the needs of the war and was smaller-scaled than in 1917. Only 35% of Moscow's metal workers in 1905 were in factories at all. The

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35 D. Koenkar, op.cit., p.30.

36 Ibid., p.23.

textile industry was much more concentrated with 60% of the textilists being employed in factories with 500 or more workers.<sup>37</sup> In both the metal industry and in printing, small units were more common. About 85% of the printing units and 80% of the metal units employed fewer than 100 workers. The variations in their activism is shown by the table. The textile workers show greater activism as the size of the plant increased. On the other hand the much less concentrated metal workers show greater activism for every corresponding size of plant. Again the metal workers also show an increase in activism with an increase in plant size. The printers show greater strike participation than the metalists and the textilists in plants that employed fewer than 500 workers. In the printing industry, strike participation actually declined with an increase in plant size after peaking with plants employing 100 to 499 workers.

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37 Laura Engelstein, Moscow 1905 Working Class Organization and Political Conflict, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1982, p.27.

38 Ibid., p.35.

Extensiveness of Strike Participation by Moscow Factory Workers According to Plant Size<sup>39</sup>

Branch of Industry	Index of extensiveness for plants with			
	less than 100 workers	100-499 workers	500-999 workers	1000 & above
Textiles	.50	.76	1.13	1.23
Metal and Machine	.55	1.09	1.20	1.36
Printing	1.00	1.28	1.18	.59

Strike Propensities of Some Moscow Industries in 1917<sup>40</sup>

Metal	..	2.64
Textile	..	0.46
Chemical	..	0.43
Printing	..	0.22

Activism as indicated by strike participation in 1917 also follows a similar pattern except in the case of the printers whose low strike propensity is explained by the strong commitment of these workers to the February Revolution and an unwillingness to harass the Provisional Government.

39 Ibid., p.230.

40 D. Koenkar, p.298.



However, when Moscow's industry is considered as a whole there is a strong correlation between strikes and plant size.<sup>41</sup>

Size-Plant	% of all workers	% of all strikes
1-100	12.2	5.4
101-300	14.2	12.9
301-500	9.6	11.0
501-1000	14.1	14.8
1000 and above	49.8	56.0

Activism, as indicated by the passing of resolutions by the Moscow workers in 1917; also shows a strong direct correlation to plant-size. Only 5% of the plants with fewer than 100 workers passed resolutions while 42% of the plants with more than 100 workers did. Of the 50 plants with more than 1000 workers only 10% did not pass resolutions.<sup>42</sup>

Concentration of a large number of workers seems to have assisted activism to the extent that it helped

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41 Ibid., p.301.

42 Ibid., p.234.

their mobilization and organization. This was particularly true in the case of Russia where except in 1905-1907 and in 1912-1914, trade unions were not allowed to function and the factory unit was the most convenient base for organization. This tendency can be seen in the fact that factory committees were the first worker organizations to emerge in both 1905 and 1917. Workers employed in an industry with small units could achieve the same strength of numbers by maintaining strong union links, as in the case of the printers.

It would also appear that a large factory could function as the ideal surroundings for the adaption of a worker into urban surroundings. The presence of more aware 'active' workers would by their example draw in the new migrants into the workers movement. On the other hand when such an active elite of workers was absent, the large factory might actually isolate the workers there from the rest of the workforce. When the skilled elite was conservative, the entire plant would remain passive, as happened in the case of some state owned factories.

Huge worker concentrations were useful to the workers movement by facilitating mobilization. This could also raise the morale of the workers and feed their confidence. But concentration on its own was not an unfailing determinant of activism.

#### LEVEL OF TECHNOLOGY

Even by 1917, Russian industry had not equalled the level of technological development attained by industry in the West at the same time. Russia relied on these more advanced nations for technical knowhow that she adapted to her own requirements. Often this resulted in an incongruous mixture of the modern and the primitive that existed side by side in the same factory. As machinery was scarce and expensive and unskilled labour easily available, simple tasks continued to be performed manually. Huge blast furnaces that matched in their size the largest in the world, continued to be fed by wheel barrows.

Alain Touraine, the sociologist, differentiated the process of organization of production into three consecutive phases; the first, traditional system

relying on artisan skills, using universal machines like the lathe and producing more than one article; the second, where some amount of division of labour and mechanisation had taken place and the machines were operated by unskilled labour and the third phase of complete automation, eliminating productive work by humans. Russian industry in the early 20th century could be said to be moving from the first to second phase.<sup>43</sup>

The technological level of production varied from industry to industry. In the metal industry, production was still dependent on the skilled artisan-like workers. The metal industry had expanded in the boom of the 1890s. This growth had left the factories with a haphazard, disorderly and congested structure, the result of random additions that had been made to earlier existing units. As demand for metal manufactures was fickle and unreliable, the manufacturers spread their risks by producing a wide range of goods. This lack of specialization made it difficult to introduce division of

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43 Steve Smith, Red Petrograd, p.28.

labour and mechanization. The factories were organized into a number of artisan-like workshops. The metal industry was slowly mechanizing and moving on to a more efficient organization of production. This change was becoming evident in 1912-1914 as can be seen in the skilled workers' complaints of 'dilution' but this process was far from complete even in 1917. The industry's dependence on the abilities of the skilled worker put this kind of worker in a favourable position, where wages, availability and security of employment was concerned. This had a positive effect on his activism. The threat to his privileged position from 'dilution' and 'deskilling' also made him more radical.

The printing industry also relied on skilled workers. This industry was organized into small units with a few large, mechanized plants. The printers again like the metal workers were very active in the workers movement.

Industries that were the most advanced in mechanization and division of labour made use semi-skilled and unskilled machine operatives, particularly women. Textile, food-processing and chemical industries fitted into this category. In textiles and food-processing

there were also small workshops that engaged in production using manual labour. But even these did not require skill beyond those traditionally acquired within the family. The skills of these workers were easily acquired and that made them easily substitutable. These workers had little security of employment, lower wages and all this contributed to making them less active than the skilled workers.

Artisan production continued to survive in Russian industry in trades like tailoring, shoemaking, locksmithery, cabinet making, etc. Some artisan trades like leather working and woodworking had been transferred to a factory setting. The artisan workers in their small shops showed great political interest and activity. The smaller size of their workplace seems to have helped them build closer bonds to each other and stronger traditions of craft solidarity made them more inclined to form organizations.

#### MANAGEMENT POLICY TOWARDS LABOUR

##### 1. Labour Discipline

As Russian industry was young and reliant on rural-born labour, the employers had to inculcate discipline

and practices needed for efficient functioning of industry. Until the beginning of the 20th century a major concern was the retention of a year-round supply of labour. Workers were still inclined to return to their villages for agricultural work in summer. The employers tried to prevent this by fining those who left and giving bonuses and rewards to those who stayed on. Higher wages were granted for the summer months. This problem of a fluid labour force was felt more acutely in South Russia, the Ukraine and the Don rather than in the older industrial regions or the cities.

Workers were given workbooks with the rules of the factory and the terms of their contract. Rules were also put up on the factory walls. Fines were imposed on those who infringed on these. The management also tried to prevent late coming and absenteeism and impose some kind of discipline in the utilisation of time in the factory. These rules were not as rigorous or efficient as those in advanced industrialised countries. Factory discipline in Russia was relatively slack.

In the period from 1900 to 1910, in the economic stagnation that had afflicted industry, the employers felt the need to tighten up labour discipline and to

raise labour productivity. In an attempt to more efficiently utilise factory time, automatic time clocks were set up, restrictions were placed on tea and other breaks and a continuous watch was maintained on the workers to see that they did not use more than the requisite time to perform a task. Wage rates were structured to favour fast workers.<sup>45</sup> These changes were made in a conscious attempt to rationalize industrial organization under the influence of Taylorist ideas.

Attempts at imposing discipline on workers produced resentment particularly when the introduction of new rules were seen as encroaching on existing privileges. The attempt to introduce Taylorist methods in factory organization in the Metal working industry in St. Petersburg was strongly resisted by the metalworkers whose resentment was reflected in the journal of the metal union, "Metallist", from 1912 to 1914.<sup>46</sup> To the extent that disciplining of labour produced resentment among them, it can be seen as affecting labour activism.

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45 Heather Hogan, "Industrial Rationalization and the Roots of Labour Militance in the St. Petersburg Metal working Industry, 1901-1914", The Russian Review, vol.42, 1983, pp.179-180.

46 Ibid., p.188.



2. Employer Organisations and their Resistance to Collective Bargaining by the Workers

Employers in Russia remained strongly resistant to the idea of introducing labour-management relationship based on collective negotiation. The first attempt to do so, during the Zubatovschina was aborted in the face of employer resistance following the Guzhon incident.<sup>47</sup> As soon as the demand for worker representation was made in the Gapon petition of 1905, the Petersburg employer organisation called "the Petersburg Society to Assist the Development and Improvement of Factory Industry" instructed its members not to allow worker participation in deciding wages or settling disputes.<sup>48</sup> Even when compelled by worker agitation to allow the formation of factory committees, the employers' would not permit their participation in the hiring and firing of workers, in fixing wage rates or regulating the internal factory order, all of which were seen as employer prerogatives.

The law of March 1906 that legalized trade unions also legalized employer associations. Employers who

47 Madhavan K. Palat, "Police Socialism in Tsarist Russia, 1900-1905", Studies in History, 2, 1 n.s. 1986, p.123.

48 V.E. Bonnell, op.cit., p.118.

had initially united only to pressurize the government into looking after their interests now united to resist the organized workers movement. By mid-1907 eighteen such employer organisations had been formed in St. Petersburg and seventeen in Moscow.<sup>49</sup> Due to the importance of St. Petersburg the employer organisation of St. Petersburg the employer organisation of St. Petersburg called the "Petersburg Society of Factory Owners" became the most important employer organisation in Russia. In principle the society favoured negotiation with the workers but in practice it refused to recognise or negotiate with worker organisations. The Society justified itself by claiming that the unions were unrepresentative and only a few workers participated in them. The only exceptions to this stand were the employers of the printing industry who were more amenable to negotiating with their workers.

The employer organisations had stabilised and became powerful by 1912. On the other hand the worker organisations had been harassed and hounded by the police in the

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49 Ibid., p.281.

years of repression and did not regain their strength of 1905. The most powerful of the employer organisations were the Societies of Factory Owners of St. Petersburg and of Moscow. The Petersburg Society declared its intention in May 1912, not to permit worker representation; not to negotiate with representative organisations; not to allow worker participation in the hiring and firing of workers, in deciding wages, in matters affecting the internal organisation of the factory.<sup>50</sup> The resistance of the employers to worker unionisation in the period from 1912 to 1914 resulted in frustrating the workers attempts at improving their conditions through negotiation. This was important factor that caused the worker movement to move away from reformist tactics.

The experience of the war had totally disillusioned the industrialists' with the Autocracy. At the same time they were also increasingly nervous of the strength of the workers movement. Following the February Revolution, the employers adopted two different strategies in dealing with the workers. One was to attempt to suppress the workers and to try and restore the

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50 Ibid., p.382.

oppressive worker-management relations that had existed before 1917. This policy was adopted by the employers of the Urals and the Donbass. The other option was to make concessions to the workers and to attempt to establish collective bargaining. This was attempted in Petrograd.<sup>51</sup>

But there was considerable gap between the concessions the employers were willing to make and the prerogatives that the workers had appropriated. The employers worked on the assumption that a liberal democracy would be set up and their actions were decided by this. The workers seeing themselves as the chief architects of the Revolution had expectations that were accordingly high. The clash between the workers and the management came principally on the question of 'workers control' i.e., the participation of workers in hiring and firing, in organising production, in setting wages etc. These were areas seen by the employers as crucial to their authority, intrusions into which they could not countenance.

The workers' main demands from the Revolution were for an 8 hour day, better wages and more democratic

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51 S. Smith, Red Petrograd, p.76.

worker management relationship. The workers were inclined to impose these by direct action. Such attempts were seen by the employers as attempts to socialise the economy.

The crisis of confidence experienced by the industrialists led to attempts to shut down production, to smuggle out raw materials and machinery and in July an attempt to evacuate industry out of militant Petrograd (ostensibly to save it from the German advance). In the face<sup>of</sup> these attempts that were perceived by the workers as employer treachery, the relationship between the two became even more embittered. The movement for workers' control developed and finally culminated in the socialisation of industry.

### 3. Attempts at Disrupting Worker Unity

Following the Revolution of 1905 in which they were faced with an organized workers movement, the employers felt compelled to rethink their policy towards labour. The workers who had shown themselves to be the most militant were the skilled workers, particularly those employed in the metal industry. The employers began

initiating a definite strategy of reducing dependence on the skilled worker by advancing mechanization and inducting semi-skilled workers. This process can be seen reflected in the growth in the number of women (who were almost never highly skilled) in the metal industry. Between 1901 and 1910, the number of women in metal working grew by 33% while the male workers grew only by 8%.<sup>52</sup> The role of the skilled worker was further reduced by the employment of trained technical personnel above him, thus making many of his abilities unnecessary.

Another way of neutralizing skilled worker militance was to favour them by giving them flats, small plots of land, bonuses and medals. This practice was common in state enterprises like the Obukhovskii Steel Mill and the Factory of Military-Medical Preparations in St. Petersburg.<sup>53</sup> This contributed to the relative passivity and lack of militancy of the state factory workers in 1905 and 1917.

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52 H. Hogan, op.cit., p.185.

53 D. Mandel, op.cit., p.37.

CHAPTER TWO

## CHAPTER TWO

The Russian working class was not a monolithic entity but showed considerable variation in skill, in the degree of integration into urban life, literacy and of course in age and sex. It must be expected that these variations would lead the different sections of the work force to perceive and react to events differently. The central problem to be considered is the effect of these variations on worker activism and political consciousness.

The effect of variations in the degree of integration into industrial life will be examined together with the related problem of the persistence of peasant links among large sections of the workforce. Variations in skills possessed by different sections of the workers will be related to differences in their participation in worker activism. Literacy, youth and sex are the other characteristics whose effect on worker activism will be studied.



### Degree of Integration into Industrial Life

A peculiarity of the Russian workforce that was recorded by virtually all observers of the Russian working class was the persistence of strong links to the countryside among workers engaged in modern industrial labour. But along with this undeniable fact, there was also evidence of the growth in Russia of a permanent working class. Evidence regarding the degree of integration of workers into urban society will be examined to see if the two phenomena were as contradictory as they appear.

Strong, peasant links were only to be expected in the workforce of a country whose industrialization had been packed into about half a century. It is a feature commonly noted today in the industrial proletariat of developing countries industrializing in a similar situation. As Russia's urban artisan population was insufficient to meet the labour requirements of her fast growing industry she was forced to fall back on her peasant population whose only experience in manufacture was what they had acquired in the 'kustur' or handicraft industry they practised alongside agriculture.

The presence of peasant links can be demonstrated by several indicators. Firstly, there is the most obvious indicator of workers actually returning to the countryside for agricultural work. However, by 1900, such intimate connections with the countryside had become a rarity except in the case of a few categories of workers like the construction workers and the tailors. In 1900 in firms employing more than 50 workers only 9% of the workforce left for the country. In the metal industry, the percentage was even smaller, only 3%; in the cotton industry 5% of the workers left; in mineral processing, however the percentage of workers leaving for agricultural work was as high as 24%.<sup>1</sup>

Another indicator was the large percentage of urban residents who had been born in the countryside. In Russia this percentage was very high even upto 1917. In 1881, in St. Petersburg, 70% of the population was born outside the city; in 1890 and in 1900, the proportion of those born outside the city was 68% and in 1910 just under 68%. In Moscow in 1882, 74% of the population was born in the country; in 1902, 72.3% and in 1912, 68%.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Olga Crisp, "Labour and Industrialization in Russia", op.cit., p.371.

2 Ibid., p.364.

In Moscow in 1882, 20% of the city's population had lived there only for a year, in 1890, 14.3% had lived in Moscow for less than a year and in 1910, 15.1%.<sup>3</sup>

The dominance of immigrants in the worker population is reflected in the preponderance among the workers of certain age groups. The age groups from which the workers were drawn i.e. the age groups from 15 to 50 were much more heavily represented than age groups between below 15 and above 50. A comparison with the demographic structure of Europe demonstrates this fact.

Age Group	Per Thousand Persons <sup>4</sup>			
	C. Europe	Berlin	Moscow	St. Petersburg
0-15	329	279	221	217
16-30	253	318	387	396
31-50	248	277	286	286
51 and above	170	125	115	104

That this distribution of the population was not a demographic peculiarity of the Russian population as a whole, can be shown by comparing the structure of the worker population with the structure of the general population. A comparison has been made of the worker

3 Ibid., p.365.

4 Ibid.

population of the Glukhovsk factory of the Bogorodsk district of the Moscow province with the structure of the population of that district. The structure was identical for the age groups from 9 to 40 but variations can be seen in above 40 age groups.

Age	Worker Population	District Population <sup>5</sup>
Above 40	14.5%	25.3%
Above 50	5.5%	15.2%

This kind of age structure indicates a kind of life-style in which children were born and brought up in the countryside, came to the cities as adolescents to be apprenticed in factory work, worked in the cities till 40 years of age or at the latest 50 years, and then returned to the countryside.

Another indication that the workers were predominantly male immigrants was the under-representation of women among the workers. In St. Petersburg in 1869, there were 830 women for every thousand men in the city's population. Among those categorised as

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5 Ibid., p.367.

'peasants'<sup>6</sup> the number of women was 454 for every 1000 men and among peasants engaged in industrial labour, in two of the most industrialized quarters of the city, there were 250 women to a 1000 men. A similar structure existed among the workers of the whole Empire. The 1897 Census showed 150 women to every 1000 men among the factory labour force.<sup>7</sup>

Most workers could not afford to keep their families with them. According to the 1897 Census, 60% of all wageearners in the Russian Empire lived away from their families. Of married wage earners, only 48% lived with their families.<sup>8</sup> The average size of a worker's family was 1.98 persons while the average size of a Russian family was 5.63 persons.<sup>9</sup> In the more industrialized areas the proportion of workers living without their families was even higher. In St. Petersburg 86.5% of wage earners were without their families and only 18.8% of married wage earners were with their

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6 The government persisted in classifying workers as peasants even after their long engagement in industrial work. In 1900, nine-tenths of the workers were classified as belonging to the peasant estate. J.G. Glicksman, "The Russian Urban Worker: From Serf to Proletarian", in C.E. Black (ed.) The Transformation of Russian Society, Harvard University Press, 1970, p.313.

7 Olga Crisp, "Labour and Industrialization", p.368.

8 Ibid., pp.368-369.

9 Glicksman, op.cit., p.314.

families.<sup>10</sup>

Only the highly skilled, better-paid workers could afford to keep their families with them. In St. Petersburg in 1897, 87% of the textile workers had their families in the country while only 67% of the printers, and 69% of the metal workers had their families in the country.<sup>11</sup>

Since a large number of the workers kept their families in the country, this meant that the number of second generation workers might in fact be greater than may be presumed from the percentage of the population born in the city. In 1899, 94% of the Tsindel Cotton Mill in Moscow were registered as peasants, but 56% of them were second-generation workers.<sup>12</sup> Hence a worker born in the countryside was not necessarily unfamiliar with or alien to urban life.

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10 Crisp, "Labour and Industrialization", pp.368-369.

11 V.E. Bonnell, op.cit., p.56.

12 Diane Koenkar, op.cit., p.50.

More than a rural birth, a serious indicator of the workers incomplete commitment to industry was their continued ownership of land. In Moscow in 1907, even among the most urbanized section of the workers, the printers, 50% operated farms. In St. Petersburg, the links of the printers to land were less close; Only 20% worked their farms through their families and another 20% owned a house and some land in the country.<sup>13</sup>

Land ownership was a feature that persisted well into the 20th century. A Soviet survey conducted in 1918, involving about a million workers (excluding the Ukraine and the Urals) showed that 33.3% of the workers owned land in 1917 and of these 20% had worked it through their families.<sup>14</sup> The proportion was probably higher, the survey being conducted at a time when food scarcity had driven workers with substantial peasant links back to the countryside. The situation was the same even in the principal industrial cities of Russia as the

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13 O. Crisp, "Labour and Industrialization", p.373.

14 Ibid.

Industrial Census of August 1918 shows.<sup>15</sup>

City	Owned Land	Worked it through families
St. Petersburg	19.5%	7.9%
Moscow	39.8%	22.8%
Ivanovo-Voznesensk	35.7%	22.6%

The St. Petersburg work force was more relatively detached from land while that of Moscow was closer to the pattern seen all over Russia.

Land was maintained by the workers as insurance against old age, illness, accidents and infirmity. Its possession was particularly important in the absence of other forms of security or insurance.

However, there was a small but growing section of the workers whose ties with the country, even if they had any were not of primary importance to them and whose commitment to urban, industrial life was more or less complete. This kind of worker was more common in the skilled industries of printing and metalworking. A 1908 study of the metalworkers of Moscow Province shows that

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15 David Mandel, op.cit., p.47.



54% of them had worker fathers (as against 48% of the textilists). None of the metalworkers left for agricultural work. In 1912, 14% of the metalworkers were born in Moscow, while the proportion was only 9.5% for the entire working class in the city.<sup>16</sup> A survey conducted in 1909 by the Russian Technical Institute showed that 22% of the printers were Moscow born and 38% of them had severed all links with the country. The percentage was even higher in the case of the highest skilled section of the printers, the type-setters, of whom 65% in 1907 did not have any links with the country. Among the less skilled lithographers and binders (also of the printing industry), 24% and 28% respectively did not have any links with the countryside.<sup>17</sup>

This tendency towards the development of a permanent work force was strengthened in the depression when high unemployment and the easy availability of substitute labour made it risky for the workers to leave their jobs midway. The tendency towards permanency was

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16 Diane Koenkar, op.cit., p.29.

17 V.E. Bonnell, op.cit., p.53.

stronger among the skilled workers who had invested time and efforts in acquiring skills and who were paid enough to make it worth their while to shift their loyalties completely to industrial labour.

Protest by the urbanized worker was organised, disciplined and sustained in its character. The more urbanized workers came from the ranks of the skilled workers and showed greater political awareness. The peasant-worker was more likely to express dissent through violent, sporadic outbursts or 'buntarstvo'. They were virtually incapable of organized protest. A favourite form of protest was 'carrying out' the person who was the object of their displeasure in a wheelbarrow. They were inclined to pointless violence unlike the urbanized skilled worker.

Western historians on the Russian Revolution have long been inclined to favour the proposition that it was the newly arrived migrant, uprooted, dis-oriented, resentful and forced into the alien urban situation who was inclined to revolutionary activity.<sup>18</sup>

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18 For example: L. Haimson, "The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia"; J.L.H. Keep, The Russian Revolution; T.H. Von Laue, "Russian Peasants in the Factory, 1892-1904". J. Glicksman, "The Russian Urban Worker". R.E. Zelnik, "The Peasant and the Factory".

Revolutionary action is seen as the result of the destabilization resulting from the change in life style of the migrant. By implication, if the Russian workforce had been more urbanized, more integrated into industrial life, it would have been less attracted to extremist ideas.

The preposition that uprooted, unintegrated individuals are inclined to revolutionary activity has been made more generally about all revolutionary activism. This view is increasingly coming under attack as recent studies show that it is integrated, stable individuals who have the requisite abilities and resources to be effective in revolutionary activity.<sup>19</sup>

Besides the rural migrant was not the totally uprooted and friendless individual assumed by these historians. The patterns of migration and residence in Russia shows the importance of "Zemliachestvo" or ties between people of the same region among the workers.<sup>20</sup>

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19 Charles Tilly, "Revolution and Collective Action", in F. Greenstein and W.W. Polsby (eds.) Handbook of Political Science, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., London (etc.) 1975. R. Cohen, P.C.W. Gutkind and P. Bezzer (eds.) Peasants and Proletarians: The Struggle of the Third World Worker, Hutchinson, London, 1979.

20 R.E. Johnson, quoted in D. Koenkar, op.cit., p.48.

These ties continued to exist even in the city and helped the newly arrived migrant to adapt to city life. They also seem to have been important in the political mobilization of the workers. For instance, half of the twenty strikers from the Gvozdev leather factory (employing fifty six workers) were from the Bronnitsy uezd and six of them from the same village. At the Zelig and Meier rubber weaving factory (with three hundred and ninty nine workers) 17 of the 45 strikers were from the Smolensk Province.<sup>21</sup>

Also, as already shown, because of the peculiar life style of the Russian workers. of keeping his family in the village, a rural born worker might be more familiar with urban life than supposed from his rural birth.

#### SKILL DIVISIONS

The Russian working class showed considerable variation in the degree of skills possessed. At one end of the spectrum was the highly skilled, artisan-like workers mainly belonging to the metal and the printing

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21 Ibid., p.49.

Industries. At the other extreme was the 'Prishlie', the newly arrived peasant worker with no special ability for industrial work. In between the two were the growing cadres of semi-skilled labour, who were mainly machine operators. It was the possession of skills that determined the worker's pay scale; his standing in the factory, in the workers organisations and clubs and in his own eyes.

Very broadly the workers can be divided on the basis of skills possessed into skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers.<sup>22</sup>

Skilled workers can be defined as those who had acquired special abilities through apprenticeship or practical training on the job. In 1900, an apprenticeship system existed in all skilled occupations including both artisanal trades and skilled factory occupations.<sup>23</sup>

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22 A division on these lines has been made by Steve Smith (Red Petrograd, pp.27-31) and Diane Koenkar and W.G. Rosenberg (Skilled Workers and the Strike Movement in Revolutionary Russia) David Mandel does not study skill divisions directly but looks at different types of political culture among the workers. (The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Regime, p.9). This gives him three divisions of skilled workers, unskilled workers (in which he includes the semi-skilled also) and a labour aristocracy.

23 V.E. Bonnell (ed), The Russian Worker: Life and Labour Under the Tsarist Regime, University of California Press, Berkeley (etc.), 1983, pp.8-9.

skills could also be created by restricting entry into a trade and by denying access to the acquisition of these skills. Steve Smith calls these, skills that are 'determined by class struggle'.<sup>24</sup>

A great majority of the skilled workers came from the metal industry, followed by workers of the printing industry. In a study of the 21,792 metal workers in Petrograd metal factories of more than 500 workers in 1918, Strumilin calculated that 22.7% were highly skilled; 23.1% were skilled; 21.1% were semi-skilled and 29% unskilled,<sup>25</sup> i.e. 45.8% of the metal workers were skilled. Assembly lines and batch production had not been introduced in any great extent in the metal industry. The industry relied on the skilled worker who possessed skills and considerable personal ability. The highly skilled workers were expected to work with drawings and exact measuring instruments. To this category belonged the instrument makers, pattern makers, milling-machine operators, electricians, platers or engravers in the metal industry. Below these were the

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24 S. Smith, Red Petrograd, p.27.

25 Ibid., p.32.

ordinary skilled workers whose work was less complex but yet required training. In the metal industry this included the fitters, turners, electricians, mechanics, planers, mortisers, etc.<sup>26</sup>

Most skilled workers had acquired some training in addition to primary schooling. This training was acquired either in technical training through apprenticeship, or through practical experience on the job. A survey of fitters in the Putilov factory in 1918 showed that 67% had undergone a period of apprenticeship lasting on an average, 3.3 years. Thirty-two per cent of them had worked as assistants to craftsmen for 4-5 years on an average.<sup>27</sup> As fitters were among the less skilled of the skilled workers in the metal industry, it can be assumed a highly trained worker would undergo training for an even longer period.

There was a great deal of similarity between skilled workers in a factory and craftsmen in workshops. Skilled workers in factories worked in workshop-like conditions

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26 Ibid., p.28.

27 Ibid.

as the huge metal planks were divided into workshops. The skilled factory worker and the artisan both had a strong sense of pride in his skills and in the maintenance of standards of excellence in his field. Negatively this attitude could become one of craft exclusiveness and of contempt towards less skilled workers. Workers like A.M. Buiko and A. Buzinov have noted the existence of craft consciousness or 'Tsekhovschina' among the skilled workers.<sup>28</sup>

The skilled workers in the metal industry were mainly in machine construction plants and to a lesser extent in the metal working plants. Skilled metalworkers were also employed by other industries as mechanics, repair and maintenance workers.

Next to the metal industry, the printing industry employed the greatest number of skilled workers. Among the printers, the lithographers and the typesetters were the highest skilled and the binders and machine operators the least. The Printing industry workers as a whole

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28 Ibid., p.29.



possessed some amount of skill. The typesetters formed one-third of the printing industry workers in Petrograd and were the highest paid.<sup>29</sup> The newspaper compositors among them were higher paid than the book typesetters. The typesetters often formed a 'kompaniya' that undertook swift completion of work in return for higher charges. The kompaniya often acted as employers farming out work that they could not handle.<sup>30</sup> The printing industry retained many characteristics of an artisan industry. Despite some mechanisation, the industry relied largely on manual skills. Entry into the printing trade was restricted and required recommendation by another printer.

The printing workers were very highly paid, earning in 1913 (in Petrograd) 56.4 rubles to 42 rubles earned by the metalworkers. But by 1916 they were overtaken by the metalworkers who were paid 51 rubles to the printers' 38 rubles.<sup>31</sup>

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29 Ibid., p.33.

30 D. Mandel, op.cit., p.36.

31 Ibid., p.14.

The printing industry had a sizeable labour aristocracy among its workers,<sup>32</sup> particularly the typesetters. This aristocracy was distinguished by its tendency to favour middle class clothes and life style, by its close and friendly relations with its employers, by its non-'proletarian' birth<sup>33</sup> and its political moderation.

The newly arrived peasant worker, the 'prishlie' comprised the majority of the unskilled labourers who were engaged in manual labour. As Russia was short of capital but had a sufficient supply of unskilled labour to draw upon, simple manual tasks of loading, carting, etc., were kept unmechanized. These were performed by the unskilled workers. In the metal industry, they worked in the so-called 'hot shops', the foundries and the furnace shops, where they were engaged in hard manual labour under fairly difficult conditions. In textiles, they were engaged in sorting and cleaning raw cotton or wool, as bobbin-tenders, heddlers and

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32 Ibid., p.33. S. Smith, Red Petrograd, p.34.

33 Kabo's Study of 19 printers showed that six came from white collar 'Sluzhashchie' background while only 2 out of 17 metalworkers did. D. Mandel, op.cit., p.34.

twisters. The unskilled workers constituted 20% of the work force in the textile industry and 29% of the workforce in the metal industry in Petrograd.<sup>34</sup> In the Petrograd workforce as a whole in 1918, 37% of the work force was unskilled while 34% were skilled and 24% semi-skilled.<sup>35</sup> The unskilled workers or the 'Chernorabochie' as they were referred to, were held in considerable contempt by other workers.

Semi-skilled workers were largely machine-operators who emerged due to technical reorganization and increasing mechanisation of Russian industry, particularly after 1909. They staffed assembly lines or worked as operators in mechanized plants. Their work required some training but not of the same quality or length as the apprenticeship of the skilled worker. The semi-skilled worker could acquire his skills on the job in a relatively short time. The semi-skilled workers dominated the more mechanised industries of chemicals and textiles. In textiles, they tended

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34 S. Smith, Red Petrograd, pp.32-33.

35 Koenkar and Rosenberg, op.cit., p.610.

jennies and fly-frames or operated power looms and constituted an overwhelming 72% of the work force in the industry.<sup>36</sup> In the metal industry they were a growing element but constituted only 21.1% of the workforce.<sup>37</sup> Here, semi-skilled workers were engaged chiefly in ammunition making and weapon assembling.

The close connection between skill and political consciousness has been remarked upon by many observers; the Social Democrat activists, the workers memoirists and studies of the workforce. A. Buzinov reports in his memoirs, the intelligence and articulateness of the skilled machinists as opposed to the 'loutish', manual workers of the 'hot-shops' in the Nevskii ship and Machine Construction Factory where he worked. He also noted a similar difference between the metal workers in his factory and the textile workers of the nearby textile factories.<sup>38</sup> A study conducted in 1924 of the Moscow Workers by E. Kabo also noted the high correlation between skill, literacy and general awareness of the workers.<sup>39</sup>

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36 S. Smith, Red Petrograd, p.33.

37 Ibid., p.32.

38 A. Buzinov, quoted in D. Mandel, *op.cit.*, p.11.

39 E. Kabo, quoted in *ibid.*, p.10.

The greater political discernment and awareness of the skilled worker was reflected in the intensity of their participation in collective action, in the radicalism of their political views and in their ability to generate leadership cadres not only for themselves but also for less skilled workers. The character of their protest showed a greater preoccupation with political questions in 1912 to 1914 and again in 1917. This was indicated by various factors like a greater number of political strikes and the timing of strikes for days of significance to the workers like the anniversary of Bloody Sunday (9th of January) and May Day.

Protest by the unskilled worker was generally instinctive, unplanned and sporadic. They were known for their 'buntarstvo' or spontaneous, mercurial uprisings. They often resorted to physical violence against the most accessible representative of the factory administration, the foremen or the plant manager.

'Carrying out'<sup>40</sup> was a favourite form of protest. The

40 As mentioned above with regard to protest by peasant workers, 'Carrying Out' involved seizing the victim, blackening his face, dumping him a wheelbarrow and carrying him out of the factory with the intention of throwing him into the closest river. They were generally restrained before fulfilling this final aim.

unpredictable temper of the unskilled workers could also turn against their own leaders and representatives. In May 1917 at the Pipe Works in Petrograd, Kapanitskii, an SR Soviet Deputy was 'Carried Out' by the foundry workers. Again, in the Metalworks in November 1917, a member of the metalworkers union was beaten up by the unskilled workers over a dispute over the categorisation of workers used to decide wages.<sup>41</sup> As is evident, protest of the unskilled workers was often self-destructive.

The semi-skilled workers showed a level of consciousness half-way between these two extremes. These workers showed growing organisation and discipline in their protest but almost till October 1917, continued to be involved in economic disputes alone. This will be demonstrated in more detail below.

While these differences in political consciousness related to differences in skill have been impressionistically recorded by virtually all observers, to find concrete indicators of these differences is a more

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41 S. Smith, Red Petrograd, p.196.

difficult task. Data available generally relate to a factory or an industry and covered workers of varying skills. Workers of no industry were coincident with a particular skill division. It becomes necessary to generalise assuming that the workers of an industry, the majority of whose workers belonged to one skill group, reflected the views of that group. Thus, the metal industry whose proportion of skilled workers was much higher than that of other industries and whose workers constituted the majority of the skilled workers is taken as representative of the skilled workers.<sup>42</sup>

In Petrograd in 1918, 22.7% of the metal workers, were highly skilled and 23.1% skilled. Considering together they accounted for 45.8% of the workforce. But, it must be remembered that 21.1% of the metal workers were semi-skilled and 29% unskilled.<sup>43</sup> The proportion of skilled workers was higher in the machine construction factories and lower in the metal working factories. Wherever possible more, more precise distinctions will be made regarding differences in skills and activism within the metal workers themselves. To

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42 This method is used by David Mandel in The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Regime, by D. Koenkar, Moscow Workers and the 1917 Revolution, by D. Koenkar and Rosenberg, "Skilled Workers and the Strike Movement in Revolutionary Russia", by S. Smith, Red Petrograd.

43 S. Smith, Red Petrograd, p.32.

take textile workers as representing semi-skilled workers is less problematical as 72% of the textile workers were semi-skilled.<sup>44</sup> Unskilled workers being spread over different industries, no one industry can be taken as representing them. Instances have to be sought of their striking or engaging in other forms of collective action, alone.

An indicator of skilled worker activism is the great degree of militancy shown by the metalworkers as a whole. Areas where the metalworkers were concentrated showed great militancy as in the case of the Vyborg district in Petrograd 84% of whose workforce were metalworkers.<sup>45</sup> Most of these workers belonged to the skilled worker category as can be seen by the fact that 15 out of 21 large plants in Vyborg were machine construction plants.<sup>46</sup> As early as first of March 1917, workers of Vyborg declared in a meeting their hostility to the Provisional Government and demanded that it be replaced by a revolutionary government.<sup>47</sup> At this point of time, this was a stance that

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44 Ibid., p.33.

45 David Mandel, op.cit., p.9.

46 Ibid., p.10.

47 Ibid., p.69.



was far more radical than that of the working class as a whole and was even to the left of the Bolsheviks. The workers of the Vyborg Machine Construction Plants were in the forefront of those demanding a Soviet takeover following the incident of the 'Miliukov Note' in April 1917.

Diane Koenkar has made a detailed analysis of resolutions passed by Moscow's Workers (and recorded by the newspapers in the course of 1917).<sup>48</sup> The kind of resolutions passed, the time of its passing (the radicalism of a resolution was greatly relative to whether passed early in the revolution, towards the middle of the year or close to the Bolshevik takeover in October 1917), the percentage of workers participating in its passing, all reflected the level of political consciousness of the workers involved. The maximum number of resolutions (169) was passed by the machine construction workers followed by ordinary metalists who passed 168 resolutions, 67.6% of the machine construction workers and 65.1% of the metallists passed resolutions compared to 49.8% of the printers and 39.5%

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48 Koenkar, op.cit., pp.228-268.

of the textile workers.<sup>49</sup>

In July, the tone of the resolutions became strongly political showing the reaction of the Moscow workers to the July Days in Petrograd. Once again the largest number of workers to participate in passing resolutions were the machine construction workers (13,280 in number) and the metalists (13,710 in number) the participating workers constituted 41.8% and 24.3% of the workforce of their respective industries. Only 7.7% of the printers and 6.2% of the textile workers participated in passing resolutions in July.<sup>50</sup>

Resolutions calling for a Soviet take over were good indicators of the degree of political radicalism of the workers passing them. Before July, of the 10,000 (approx.) workers who passed Soviet-power resolutions, 32% were machine construction workers, and 21% were metalists. Following the July Days, 4300 workers passed Soviet power of which 63% were machine construction workers and 16% were metalists. Following the Kovnilov Mutiny, 11,000 workers passed resolutions demanding Soviet

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49      Ibid., p.235.

50      Ibid., p.249.

power. Of these 64% were metalists but there were no machine construction workers. Evidence from worker memoirs indicates that at least some machine building and metalworkers were preparing for an armed confrontation. This probably accounts for the fall in resolutions passed by machine construction workers who may have felt the need for measures stronger than resolutions. By the fifth of September the Moscow Soviet accepted Soviet power in principle. By October 25, about 54,000 workers in thirty-eight plants called for Soviet Power. In October, 27% of the workers passing these resolutions were metalists, 1% machine construction workers and 25% textilists. Soviet Power had become a measure of last resort to prevent economic collapse. An increasing number of textilists were participants in October drawn on by economic necessity. Many of the resolutions passed in October explicitly stated economic deterioration to be the reason behind the demand.<sup>51</sup>

The skilled workers were disciplined enough to postpone economic agitation when they saw it as jeopardising

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51 Ibid., pp.261-264.

their political struggle. This fact was demonstrated, when the Petrograd Soviet called for an ending of the general strike on the 5th of March 1917. The general feeling among the workers of Petrograd was that the strike need be ended only after their demands for an eight hour day, better wages and democratic worker-management relation were met. Despite their disagreement with the directive of the Soviet, it was the politically more radical workers who were the first to return to work. By the 7th of March, most of the 18 factories of Vyborg were working.<sup>52</sup> At this stage, the politically conscious workers were extremely aware of the need to preserve revolutionary unity and refrained from any act that might endanger it.

Koenkar's and Rosenberg's analysis of 900 strikes that took place between 2nd March and 25th October 1917, also confirms the propositions already made. The strike statistics attests to the fact that the skilled workers were extremely active in this period. The skilled workers accounted for 35% of the strikes and 25-30% of the strikers.<sup>53</sup> But an interesting fact uncovered by this

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52 Mandel, op.cit., p.87.

53 Koenkar and Rosenberg, op.cit., p.609.

study is that of the greater activism shown by the semi-skilled workers who struck almost as many times as the skilled workers and exceeded them in the number of strikers. Unskilled workers on their own were very passive. Striking alone they accounted for less than 2% of the strikers.<sup>54</sup>

A month-wise breakdown of the strikes in 1917 shows that the skilled workers remained dominant in the strike movement until July. They accounted for 60% of the strikers in March and more than 65% of the strikers in July. However, their participation declined after July and they accounted for less than 10% of the strikers in October. In October, the strikers were largely semi-skilled workers particularly textilists from around Moscow and Vladimir.<sup>55</sup>

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54 Ibid., p.610.

55 Ibid., p.614.

Strike Participation in Russia, March to October 1917<sup>56</sup>

Skill Level	No. of Strikes (for which data is available)	Estimated No. of Strikers
Skilled workers	309	301,980
Semi-skilled workers	282	477,140
Unskilled workers striking alone	47	19,120
Plants employing skilled and semi- skilled workers in roughly equal proportions	38	296,840
Clerical employees and skilled service workers	117	35,370
Service employees	60	44,730
Professionals	23	275
Total of production workers only	676	1,095,080
Total	876	1,175,455

56 Ibid., p.609.

Timing of the Strikes by Skill Level<sup>57</sup>

Month	Skilled		Skilled and semi-skilled		Semi-skilled	
	Stri- kers	Stri- kes	Stri- kers	Stri- kes	Stri- kers	Stri- kes
March	14,570	23	0	0	8,450	19
April	2,400	24	300	1	5,580	25
May	10,660	44	50	1	14,260	46
June	40,380	54	25,270	6	25,450	36
July	169,450	27	65,940	9	11,400	23
August	29,840	35	124,400	6	34,190	29
September	17,280	46	1,350	3	30,090	38
October	17,400	33	79,350	11	347,720	38

The declining participation of the skilled workers after July can be explained in terms of their perception that, in the prevailing conditions of economic disorganisation strikes were unlikely to succeed and might give the industrialists the excuse they were looking for to shut down production. The political struggle, to them had taken the first priority. These were precisely the reasons put forward by the Factory Committee of the

57 Ibid., p.614.

Petrograd Cable Plant on October 24th to restrain the semi-skilled workers of its India-rubber plant. The Factory Committee pointed out that while the demands of the workers were correct and justified, the political situation demanded that they restrain themselves. Again in October in Moscow, the metal union's journal as well as the Moscow's Central Bureau of Trade Unions also put forward similar <sup>arguments</sup> saying that economic demands would have to be solved by the political struggle and that strikes per se would not be successful.<sup>58</sup> The drop in skilled worker strike participation in October demonstrates once again the discriminatory and disciplined nature of skilled worker activism.

The skilled workers were also able to generate leadership cadres from amongst their ranks. A great many leaders of worker origins emerged from the metalists - Kalinin, Voroshilov, Kiselev, Shotman.<sup>59</sup>

The other section of skilled workers, the printers proved to be much less militant and active in 1917.

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58 Ibid., pp.614-615.

59 L. Haimson, op.cit., p.637.



However, this had not been the case earlier and the printers had been the leaders of the Russian working class when it came to organization and activism. They had been the first to unionize and had played a dominant, militant role in 1905 and in 1912-1914. In 1917, the printers showed a very low strike propensity of only .36 compared to 1.52 of the metalists and 1.06 of the textilists. Their political moderation could be seen in the tone of the resolutions they passed. The resolution, in the passing of which the maximum number of printers in Moscow participated was one condemning the Soviet takeover of power in October 1917. They were the only section of workers to pass such a resolution.<sup>60</sup>

The lack of militancy of the printers has been explained in terms of the greater integration of these workers into society. The highly skilled section of the printers, the typographic workers, formed a labour aristocracy who were barely distinguishable from their employers. The skilled typesetters emulated the upper classes in dress and lifestyle and maintained excellent relations with their employers who held them in considerable respect.

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60 D. Koenkar, op.cit., p.259.

The skilled section among the metalists, on the other hand were militant, with a strong sense of class unity and a related hostility to the upper classes. Unlike the skilled metalists, who were being threatened by 'de-skilling' and 'dilution' by semi-skilled labour, the typesetters did not face such a threat from modernization of their industry. They succeeded in guaranteeing that the hand compositors would operate the new Linotype machines. Also, there was considerable tension between skilled and less skilled workers in the printing industry over categorisation of wages. This prevented unity within the printers and probably mitigated against activism. Also, politically the printers supported the Mensheviks, and the political order established in February 1917 and were not inclined to attack it in any way.

#### LITERACY

There tended to be a close relationship between literacy and skill among the Russian workers. The skilled worker had a higher rate of literacy than the unskilled. Women workers were as a rule less literate than men workers in the same industry. Younger workers

tended to be more literate than the older workers.

Russian Workers Literacy Rates by Industry, 1918<sup>61</sup>

Industry	Men (Per cent literate)	Women (Per cent literate)
Printing	97	89
Metal	84	54
Wood	84	47
Chemical	79	55
Paper	78	53
Food	75	48
Mining	74	43
Textile	74	38
Leather	70	45

There was considerable growth in literacy among the workers in the period from 1897 and 1918.

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61 D. Koenkar, op.cit., p.29.

Literacy Rates of Factory Workers, 1897 and 1918<sup>62</sup>

Trade	Average 1897	Total 1918
Mining	31.8	70.0
Metallurgy	38.2	
Metal working	66.2	76.5
Machine, instrument and apparatus	82.9	83.6
Timber processing	58.4	69.6
Chemicals	49.7	70.0
Food and drink	49.7	66.0
Printing and Allied Trades	82.6	94.7
Textiles	38.9	
Cotton		76.4
Woollen		68.2
Linen		78.3

The high rate of literacy among the workers was probably due to the fact that the workers had a great incentive to acquire literacy as this seems to have raised their earning powers. A study conducted in 1908 among 70,000 workers of the Moscow Province

62 Olga Crisp, op.cit., p.392.

showed that literate workers earned 13% more than the illiterate. In the case of skilled trades like machine construction, the differential was as high 23%.<sup>63</sup> Also workers, being urban dwellers, had greater opportunities of acquiring education. In fact, workers had higher literacy rates than even the urban population as a whole.

Literacy Rates, 1897 (Per cent of total)<sup>64</sup>

Whole Population	..	21.1
Urban	..	45.3
Rural	..	17.4
Wage-earners (including agricultural labour)	..	40.2
Workers (Industry Transport and Commerce)	..	53.6
Factory Workers	..	50.3

Literacy seems to have helped in raising the workers political awareness and increased his ability to engage in organised disciplined action. The more literate workers were found in the skilled trades and were relatively more active.

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63 Ibid., p.387.

64 Ibid., p.389.

## YOUNG WORKERS

The younger workers were in the forefront of worker organisation and of revolutionary activism in Russia. The youth and the militancy of the activists of 1912-1914 was remarked upon by various observers.<sup>65</sup> The militancy of the young workers was so great that, in 1910 the Petrograd Council of Metal Entrepreneurs decided that workers below twenty-one could not participate in the general assemblies of the metal workers union. The Union Secretary Bulkin saw this as an attempt to keep the most active workers outside the Union.<sup>66</sup>

The youth were particularly dominant in the Bolshevik Party. In 1917 the Bolshevik District Committee members, one-third were under 27 years of age, 60% were under 32 years and only 18% were older than 37 years.<sup>67</sup>

The youth were more militant as they had fewer responsibilities and commitments and were more willing to take risks. Also the youth tended to be relatively more literate as a result expanding opportunities for

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65 L. Haimson, op.cit., p.634.

66 D. Mandel, op.cit., p.40.

67 Ibid., p.40.

education.<sup>68</sup> Their greater literacy also had a positive effect on their activism and militancy.

Literacy of Petrograd Metal Workers by Age and Sex  
(early 1918)<sup>69</sup>

Age group	Percent of Literate Workers		
	Male	Female	All
Upto 20	98	81	94
21 - 30	95	70	89
31 - 40	90	47	85
41 - 50	84	48	82
50 +	51	21	74
All	92	70	88

Another factor contributing to the activism of young workers was their greater integration into urban society. A greater number of them tended to be second-generation workers and even those born in the country were more familiar with industrial life than their parents had been. Besides they had grown up in the atmosphere of class isolation and hostility to the upper

68 In Moscow 1910 primary education was made compulsory for 4 years by the Municipality. In addition there were night classes, discussion groups, dramatic circles etc.

69 D. Mandel, op.cit., p.41.

classes that had characterised the workers movement after 1905.

Also, it would appear that a great number of them were engaged in the skilled trades. Diane Koenkar's study of the memoirs of 80 youth leaders shows that most of them came chiefly from skilled occupations of the metal working and printing rather than textiles. It is possible that the war time expansion of the metal industry led to it absorbing the more urbanized, literate and relatively more skilled (following the removal of large numbers of male workers in conscription) youth from the other industries also.<sup>70</sup>

Also migration from the countryside led to the break up of the patriarchal authority of the family heads on the young. Working and earning gave them a sense of equality with the adults. Few of them could afford to marry and set up families. Recreational facilities were limited and the young workers were thrown increasingly into the company of others of their own age. As Diane Koenkar points out, the growth of this 'youth culture', and the formation of youth groups made the young workers easily mobilisable.<sup>71</sup>

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70 D. Koenkar, "Urban families, working class youth groups and the 1917 Revolution", in D.L. Ransel (ed.) The Family in Imperial Russia, Urbana, Illinois, 1978, p.301.

71 Ibid., p.286.



## WOMEN WORKERS

Women were a sizeable section of the Russian work force. They were subject to all the privations of the male worker and in addition, to those imposed on a woman by a conservative society. Traditionally the Russian peasant woman was expected to contribute her labour, both at home and in the field but was not given any kind of decision-making power. The position of the worker woman was much the same.

Worker women were employed largely as semi-skilled and unskilled labour. They were practically never found among the skilled workers. Even in the industries in which the women dominated like textiles, food processing, and chemicals, they were engaged in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs. The few skilled workers in these industries engaged in maintenance, supervision, etc., were generally men. Women found in the workforce of the high-skill industries like metal working and printing were engaged in unskilled labour.

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Percentage of Women Employed in Factories in European  
Russia in 1885 by Industry<sup>72</sup>

Okrug	Percentage of Women in selected Industries			Percentage of women in all indus- tries
	Textiles	Paper	Tobacco	
Moscow	31.2	47.2	47.5	31.7
Vladimir	25.0	41.5	10.2	36.3
St. Petersburg	45.6	29.8	84.3	36.5
Kiev	32.2	27.4	22.7	10.1
Kharkov	54.7	27.3	56.9	22.9
Kazan	40.0	--	--	5.2
Voronezh	25.6	48.9	47.3	16.3
Vilna	39.0	30.0	59.4	16.3
Total	36.7	35.9	46.9	22.1

The proportion of women workers in the workforce grew swiftly as can be understood from the 1897 Census figures for women employed in textiles.<sup>73</sup>

	1885	1897
Moscow Okrug	31.2	40.8
Vladimir Okrug	25.0	42.9
St. Petersburg Okrug	45.6	46.2

72 Rose L. Glickman, "The Russian Factory Woman 1880-1914" in D. Atkinson (ed.) *Women in Russia*, Sussex, Harvester Press, 1978, p.67.

73 Ibid.

In the workforce as a whole the proportion of women workers grew from 26.8% in 1901 to 30.9 in 1909.<sup>74</sup>

Female labour was in demand because it was cheap, particularly after restrictions were placed on the use of the other source of cheap labour, children.<sup>75</sup> Also, women workers had a reputation of being dependable and passive and unlike male workers were not disposed to indulgence in either alcohol or revolutionary activity.

Women worker's wages were considerably lower than that of the men. Their annual wages throughout Russia were half to two-thirds of that of men in every industry including both those in which men and women did the same work and those in which women dominated the workforce.<sup>76</sup>

Women workers as already shown above were much less literate than the male worker. They also seem to have lacked the skills required for the more specialised trades. For instance, skilled sections of the workers like the printers were predominantly men. In 1918 the proportion of male workers in printing was an overwhelming 84%.<sup>77</sup> In the metal industry, the proportion of women in

74 Ibid.

75 Factory Law of June 1st 1882, prohibited the employment of children below 10 years and established an 8 hour day for child workers between 10 and 15 years of age. Ibid., p.70.

76 Ibid., p.69.

77 D. Koenkar, op.cit., p.34.

the semiskilled workforce was 37.5%. But in toolmaking, the easiest acquired specialization, the proportion of women was as low as 1%.<sup>78</sup>

In addition to factory labour the women worker also had to handle domestic work and look after her children. Pregnant women were not eligible for maternity leave on pay and were expected to continue working till the end of her pregnancy and to rejoin immediately after childbirth. Infants were generally farmed out on elderly women who took care of them in return for payment. Women workers were also subject to sexual harassment and exploitation by both foremen and fellow workers.

The women workers were almost proverbial for their political passivity. Heavy domestic responsibilities gave women little time to participate in night-courses, study circles or discussion groups all of which were so important in raising political awareness.

Female children were not encouraged in Russian society to acquire skills or education. Women workers

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78 Ibid., p.29.

were hence less literate than the male workers and were generally found in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations. Overwork, low literacy, low pay, lack of skills, all these discouraged political activity by the women workers. In addition, the women worker was socialised in a pattern of quiescence and obedience that made aggressive, militant action, difficult.

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The profile of the politically active worker that can be put together from this study shows him to be urbanized, young, highly skilled and literate. The politically inactive worker on the other hand was a newly arrived migrant, older, less literate and unskilled. These factors were reinforced if the worker was also a woman.

While it is possible to point out characteristics that aided activism, none of these factors can be said to determine activism. Political attitudes cannot be deduced from social characteristics. Political activism was a product of many factors, political mobilization by parties and activists being not the least of them.

CHAPTER THREE

### CHAPTER THREE

The growth of political consciousness among the Russian workers, both as a result of their own experiences and of political mobilisation by the radical intelligentsia and parties is the subject of study here. The development of an ideology among the workers, the evolution of working-class organizations and the emergence of leadership cadres from among the workers will be looked into as various aspects of this phenomenon.

#### THE GROWTH OF IDEOLOGY

The shaping of a particular ideology among the workers was due, not only to political propoganda and agitation by the revolutionary intelligentsia, but also to the workers' own perceptions of, and reactions to life and events.

The spread of social Democratic ideas among the workers was the result of the propoganda among them of the Social Democrat activists. Initially the radical intelligentsia maintained contact with the workers through

study circles or 'kruzhki'. When it was found that these circles were reaching only a small minority of the workers and were creating worker 'intelligenty' who held themselves superior to the mass of the workers, the social democrats modified their tactics. As advocated by the pamphlet 'Ob agitatsii' they began organising the workers on the basis of their economic grievances in the hope that the experience of agitating for reform would lead to the dissemination of Social Democrat ideas.

The new tactic was justified by the evidence of growing Social Democrat influence on the workers. This new alliance between the radical intelligentsia and the workers was remarked upon by the authorities. But this influence was as yet extremely tenuous. Evidence for it must be sought in the manifestation of these ideas in worker demands and in the growing organisation, discipline and unity that characterised the worker movement from the 1890s onwards.

Information imparted to the workers on the conditions of labour in western societies and of the aims and demands of the international working class, influenced the demands put forward by the workers in the strike movement in the late 1890s. For instance, in the case of the textile strike



of May 1896 in St. Petersburg, the 1st of May pamphlet (written by Lenin) calling for working-class unity, was believed to have had an enormous influence in precipitating the strike. There is a report from the New Cotton Spinning Mills that the Strike would not have taken place without the May pamphlet. Takhtarev, a Social Democrat also mentions several workers claiming this. When asked to justify their demand for shorter working hours to a factory inspector, a worker in a crowd cited data for England, Lodz and the metal plants of St. Petersburg in support of a shorter working day, quoting from the Social Democrat pamphlet *Rabochii Den*. Wildman feels that *Rabochii Den* provided the program for that summer's strikes.<sup>1</sup>

In Moscow the Social Democrats organised strikes among the metalworkers in the late 1890s in the kursk railroad shop, Veikhel't machine plant and Perepud metal factory. There were also strikes in metal factories in which the Social Democrats were influential like the Guzhon, Bromlei, Dobrov and Nabgol'ts factories. The influence of the Social Democrats among the textilists was much weaker.

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1 A.K. Wildman, The Making of a Worker's Revolution, Russian Social Democracy 1891-1903, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1967, pp.73-75.

There is little evidence of actual organisation by the Social Democrats though their pamphlets were found in the Prokhorov mill in July 1896 after a strike.<sup>2</sup>

In this period the influence of Social Democracy was in the spread of its ideas rather than of actual organisation or leadership.

The growing sense of unity among the workers was indicated by their growing participation in May Day celebrations which had become routine by 1896. By 1900 the May Day pamphlets were used to set out the more abstract goals of the working-class movement. May Day came to be marked by strikes and demonstrations. Another indication of growing working-class consciousness was the frequency of general strikes resulting from supportive strikes by workers of a city acting in solidarity with protest launched by a section of them. The Social Democrats contributed to the development of the workers' consciousness of themselves as a collectivity. They gave the workers a sense of wider goals and purposes above their immediate concerns.

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2 L. Engelstein, op.cit., pp.56-57.

While Social Democrat propaganda and the experience of participation in collective bargaining gave the workers a sense of unity and purpose, this was limited largely to the struggle for the amelioration of their material conditions. The workers' movement had not yet developed a political position and nor had it come to see the Autocracy as an impediment to the attainment of its aims. The Social Democrats also did not in this period make attempts to subject the workers to political propaganda in the belief that experience in the struggle for economic reform would naturally lead to political awareness.

As the economic struggle had the highest priority, the workers saw nothing contradictory in appealing to the Autocracy as the arbiter of their fortunes. This faith in the Tsar was not shattered until the massacre of Bloody Sunday on January 9, 1905. Aleksei Buzinov, a metalworker at the Nevskii plant describes in his memoirs the enormous loyalty and faith the workers repositied in the Tsar and of how they resented anyone attacking this faith.<sup>3</sup>

This loyalty to the Tsar, a remnant of the traditional peasant vision of the Tsar as the patriarch, made

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3 V.E. Bonnell, Roots of Rebellion, p.102.

the workers vulnerable to the blandishments of the Autocracy. Also there was a stratum of worker-intelligenty, sincerely devoted to the worker's cause, who believed that the immediate priority of the workers movement was the improvement of the worker's material conditions. This, they expected, to easily accomplish under the auspices of the Autocracy and felt would be better undertaken without antagonising the state. Hence, the success of the government's attempts at police unionism initiated by the Chief of Moscow's Secret police, S. Zubatov. The influence of Zubatovism was widespread among the workers. The worker-activists prominent in this movement were often those who had some experience of Social Democrat circles.

At the same time the workers were also being drawn into the agitation for political reform with the growth of opposition to the Tsar involving the upper classes and the students. Also the tendency of the government to liberally use force in putting down worker unrest made it difficult to see the government in the role of impartial arbiter as portrayed by the Zubalovists.<sup>4</sup> As the Social Democrats hoped the course of the economist struggle itself resulted

4 Troops were called in to put down workers - 19 times in 1893; 50 times in 1899; 33 times in 1900; 271 times in 1901; and 522 times in 1902. Cited in Lionel Kochan, Russia in Revolution, 1890-1918, Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1966, p.33.

in growing disillusionment with the government. The massacre of January 9th was <sup>the</sup> culmination of this growing disenchantment.

The Social Democrats tried to combat economism through propaganda, particularly through the journals 'Iskra' and later 'Vpered' (1904). But the opposition movement that culminated in the Revolution of 1905 was also drawing the workers away from reformism.

The gunning down on January 9, 1905, of hundreds of workers who had been petitioning the Tsar for help, marked the watershed in the relationship between the workers and the Autocracy. This incident, along with other instances of brutality by the State, like the suppression of the uprising in Moscow in December 1905, helped wean the workers away from seeking governmental assistance in solving their problems.

The intense activism of the year 1905 in the form of strikes, demonstrations and meetings and the experience of forming and participating in working-class organisations contributed more to forging worker unity and raising political consciousness than years of propaganda had. The relatively free atmosphere gave the Social Democrats considerable opportunity to increase their influence. Now the radical parties were assisted in their task by the newly emergent worker organisation like the factory Committees, the trade

unions and the Soviets. Most of the activists prominent in these organisations were also members of the radical parties.

In their propaganda, the Social Democrats stressed the need for collective action to bring about reform and the need for institutionalised change rather than individual reforms. They put forward the idea of society as constituted of classes and of class-conflict. They constantly stressed the irreconcilability of the interests of labour and capital. As the organ of the St. Petersburg textile union put it, the interests of capital and labour were opposed 'like fire and water, like day and night'.<sup>5</sup> The Social Democrats had to constantly counter official propaganda that the interests of the workers and the employers could be reconciled within the structure of the Tsarist state itself. The Social Democrats stressed the need for worker unity and fought all fissiparous tendencies of craft consciousness, factory 'patriotism' and shop loyalties.

The influence of the Social Democrats over the workers grew enormously during the revolution. In the beginning of the year, in February 1905 only 25 per cent of the electors to the Shidlovskii Commission, in St. Petersburg had been

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5 V.E. Bonnell, Roots of Rebellion, p.264.

Social Democrats. Almost 50 per cent of them had been Gaponites.<sup>6</sup> However, by 1907, as the results of the election to the <sup>II</sup> Duma show, the influence of the Social Democrats on the Working Class was dominant. The Social Democrats together won 98 out of the 145 seats for electors to the workers Curia.<sup>7</sup> They also dominated the trade unions. By 1909, the St. Petersburg Secret Police reported that 18 out of 25 unions in the city were under Social Democrat influence. In Moscow they were less dominant with only one-third of the unions professing Social Democrat ideology.<sup>8</sup>

After 1905 the workers' movement was marked by a strong sense of class 'separation' and of hostility to the upper classes. This was a result not only of Social Democrat propaganda but of the experiences of the revolution itself. The workers movement had entered the revolution in an ancillary role to the liberal movement for political reform, involving the upper classes. In the course of the revolution, the workers discovered that their demands were made not so much on the Autocracy as the capitalists. The capitalists on the other hand were

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6 L. Engelstein, op.cit., p.66.

7 David Lane, Roots of Russian Communism, A Social and Historical Study of Russian Social Democracy, 1898-1907, Martin Robertson & Co., London, 1975, p.57.

8 V.E. Bonnell, Roots of Rebellion, p.338.

willing to support worker activism against the Tsar but were less than pleased to see it being turned against themselves. In St. Petersburg, this break with "Census Society"<sup>9</sup> was almost symbolised by the struggle for the 8-hour day launched under the auspices of the Soviet, that resulted in defeat, lock-outs and wage-cuts. The alliance was never reformed and the opposition movement split into liberal and socialist streams.

This hostility to 'Census Society' marked the labour movement when it revived in 1912-1914. Dan noted this new characteristic that was very different from the romanticism that had characterised the workers' movement before 1905.<sup>10</sup> A policy survey of the worker movement in November 1915 in Petrograd noted the unwillingness of the workers to accept financial assistance from employers in setting up consumer cooperatives.<sup>11</sup> The tendency was towards independence in worker activities. All forms of fraternisation with the employers was looked on in contempt.

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9 The propertied classes and those members of the intelligentsia that identified with them.  
D. Mandel, op.cit., p.xi.

10 L. Haimson, op.cit., pp.629-630.

11 D. Mandel, op.cit., p.18.



The opposition from the employers and the (at best) ambivalent attitude of the State did not allow the institutionalisation of collective bargaining in the relationship between workers and employers. The worker organizations that had flourished from 1906-1907 found themselves under attack in the repressive years from 1907-1911. In the boom years, from 1912 to 1914 also the workers found their attempts at achieving reforms through the trade unionist methods being thwarted at every point. This turned the workers' movement increasingly extremist and revolutionary. Observers like A.S. Izgoev (in *Russkaia Mysl*) and Dan (in *Nasha Zaria*) noted the extremism, the radicalism and the impatience of the workers movement in 1912-1914.<sup>12</sup> The growing extremism of the movement manifested itself in the growing support for the Bolsheviks and in the growing appeal of maximalist slogans. The revolutionary tone of the movement can be explained by the failure of reformist tactics to produce results.<sup>13</sup>

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12 Quoted in L. Haimson, *op.cit.*, pp.629-630.

13 In the years from 1910-1914, the rate of success of economic strikes in Russia shows a decline. In 1910, 47.6% of the strikes resulted in complete or partial victory for the workers; in 1911, 50.6%, in 1912, 41.5%, in 1913, 36.5% and in the first half of 1914, 31.5%. Cited in V.E. Bonnell, "Trade Unions Parties and the State in Tsarist Russia: A Study of Labour Politics in St. Petersburg and Moscow, in Politics and Society, vol.9, no.3, 1980, p.306.

While the Social Democrat influence was strong among the workers they were not affected by the factionalism within the Social Democrats. Such divisions were incomprehensible to them and attacked their ideal of worker unity. David Lane's study shows that even by 1907, the worker masses were largely unaffected by the division of the Social Democrats into Mensheviks and Bolsheviks.<sup>14</sup>

Activists and Rank and File by Faction

Faction	Activists (in %)	Rank and File (in %)
Bolshevik	29.1	12.3
Menshevik	18.0	5.1
Unknown	52.9	82.6

As can be seen the vast majority of the ordinary workers and most of the lower rungs of Social Democrat leadership had not committed themselves to either faction.

Partisan divisions remained weak within the working class even upto early 1917. Most sections of the workforce were unaware of the subtleties of the ideological battles that raged between the two factions of the Social Democrats. Awareness of the political platform of the

<sup>14</sup> D. Lane, op.cit., p.45. The evidence concerns 240 activists and 511 rank and file workers.

three parties and crystallisation of support along these lines took place only after July 1917 and close to October 1917. Lev Lande, a Menshevik noted that the yearning for working-class unity was so strong that all factions of the Social Democrats had to profess interest in the idea of a single, united worker party.<sup>15</sup> But right upto October organizations representing the working class as a whole, like the Soviets, had greater authority among the workers than any of the radical parties. It was in acknowledgement of this that, in October 1917, the Bolsheviks attacked the Provisional Government and seized power in the name of the Soviet rather than of their party.<sup>16</sup>

By 1917, the Russian working class had developed an ideology of its own that was not strictly coincident with the political programme of any of the Socialist parties. It was characterised by the dominance of socialist ideas, by a strong sense of the need for worker unity and of hostility to the propertied classes and

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15 D. Mandel, op.cit., p.21.

16 A. Rabinowitch, The Bolsheviks Came to Power, NLB, London, 1979, p.225.

their political parties. In its purest, most idealised form these ideas were held only by the skilled, 'conscious' workers but the rest of the working class was also moving towards these. In the course of 1917 itself, the more backward sections of the workers took great strides on the road to political consciousness.

#### ORGANIZATIONAL EVOLUTION

Artisan guilds and mutual-aid societies were the earliest legal organisations to exist among the workers. By the 1890s, the Populists and the Social Democrats had organised 'Kruzhki' or study circles among the workers. Later the Social Democrat intelligentsia cells that were trying to organise worker protest, used to maintain parallel but subsidiary cells of workers who were entrusted with practical work like distributing pamphlets, supplying information about factory conditions etc. Participation in and membership of the Social Democrat underground organisation was a matter of considerable risk, to be entered into only by those with strong commitment, who were willing to risk arrest, imprisonment and exile. The risks involved in participating in illegal

union activity was also the same. In fact, those who were members of the illegal unions would also very often get drawn into the party. This was the case with the printers union of 1903 in Moscow most of whose members were also in the party. Illegal unions tended to be very like illegal party cells.

The Zubatov unions and the Gapon Assemblies were the first legal workers' organisations involving a substantial section of the work force. The 'Zubatovschina' was an attempt by the government to introduce negotiatory labour-management relations and to provide a legal outlet for the expression of the grievances of the workers. In the face of resistance from the industrialists and some government circles the experiment soon collapsed. In Moscow after 1902, the Zubatov unions survived only as cultural and educational organisations. In Moscow, there were ten Zubatov unions between 1901 and 1905. The Unions of the metalworkers and of the weavers were the most active. Unions also existed among carpenters, tobacco makers, printers etc. The actual membership of these unions were only a small proportion of the entire workforce. For instance the Society of the tobacco workers had a membership of 150-200 people out of the

3000 workers in the industry. The Union of Candy makers had a membership of 200 out of the more than 3000 workers in the industry.<sup>17</sup> But the meetings organised by these unions were widely attended and it was through these<sup>that</sup> the Zubatovists managed to reach thousands of workers. Particularly in its initial years, these unions provided the workers with valuable information on western trade union practices, working-class history, the tactics of collective bargaining etc. Through these the workers gained the experience of participating in collectively negotiating solutions for their grievances. These unions gave the workers a legal forum at which to meet, organise and discuss their common problems without the fear of police harassment.

In St. Petersburg, the most successful police-sponsored union was the Gapon Assembly that was set up in 1903. Uptil 1904 the membership of the organisation was limited to 170 workers,<sup>18</sup> however after Plehve's assassination it swelled to 8,000.<sup>19</sup> It was divided into sections on the basis of occupation - chiefly those of metalworkers, weavers and lithographers.

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17 V.E. Bonnell, Roots of Rebellion, p.83.

18 Ibid., p.87.

19 L. Engelstein, op.cit., p.64.

The opportunity to openly and legally engage in collective action drew to the Zubatov and Gapon union's many worker-intelligents who had earlier been part of the Social Democrat circles. The exclusion of these workers-activists from positions of responsibility within the Social Democrat circles and their growing resentment at the authoritarianism of these intelligentsia sponsors, had led to an exodus of these workers into the police-sponsored unions.

It was mainly the young workers who were willing to take the risk involving in joining social Democrat unions and these workers had practically no influence among other workers in the factories. The situation was worsened for the Social Democrats by the split within the party and by the appearance of rival parties like the SRs and the liberals. At this point there were very few workers who were able to distinguish between the ideological positions of the different parties.

The number of workers who were actually members of the Social Democrats or the SRs was quite tiny. Before 1905, the strongest Social Democrat cells in St. Petersburg were in the Narvskaja, the Peterburgskaia and the

Vasilostrovskaiia districts. The largest cell was in Narvskaiia and involved 35 workers out of a population of 30,000. However these cells existed in almost all industries and trades and formed the core of working-class activity once the political mood of the country was radicalized.

The year of the revolution of 1905 saw the proliferation of worker organisations. In St. Petersburg, the election of electors to the Shidlovskii Commission, also led to the setting up of factory committees. Though the Commission never became functional, the electors continued to function as worker representatives and many later became deputies to the Soviet. The large factories like the Pulitov, the Nobel, the Nevskii, the Aleksandro-<sup>and</sup>vskii, the Obukhovskii, <sup>and</sup>the Baltiiskii metalworking plants were the first to constitute factory committees. The large size of these units made it difficult for the workers to function in a coordinated fashion without a central organising body. The strength of the factory Committee movement was due to its closeness to the workers as well as the strong feelings of loyalty to and identification with the factory units. This factory patriotism was due to it being the most convenient unit of



worker mobilisation in the authoritarian structure of the Russian state.

The factory Committees evolved from the earlier existing tradition of electing factory elders or 'Starosty'. The right was legalized by the government in 1903 in the law on 'the establishment of Elders in Industrial Enterprises'. But the implementation of this law was left largely to the discretion and initiative of the industrialist and was implemented in a lukewarm fashion or not at all. By 1905 only 30-40 factories in the whole of Russia had implemented it.<sup>20</sup> Even according to the terms of the law, the 'Starosty' were not given any real authority. The industrialist had the power to select the elders from among the representatives elected by the workers. The sole function of the 'starosty' was to communicate the worker's grievances to the management.

The principal demands of the factory Committees in 1905 were for the right to elect representatives and the right of these representatives to participate in decision-making in matters that concerned the workers. Worker

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20 V.E. Bonnell, Roots of Rebellion, p.117.

participation in decision-making was strongly contested by the industrialists who saw this as an encroachment on their authority. Even by the end of 1905, such participation, particularly in hiring and firing workers, was not possible due to the resistance of the industrialists. They were willing to raise wages and improve work conditions but not to sacrifice their monopoly of decision making. The owners of the printing industry were relatively more amenable to negotiating with factory representatives than the industrialists in other sectors. The Factory Committee movement did not have the importance in 1905 that they acquired in 1917 and were soon replaced in importance by city-wide bodies like the Soviet and the trade unions.

Trade unionisation in any major fashion took place only in 1905. Earlier illegal unions like 'the Union of Typographical Workers for the struggle to Improve Conditions of labour' that was set up in Moscow in 1903, had existed. An illegal knitter's union had also functioned in St. Petersburg since 1902. These unions had a very small membership due to the risks involved in illegal union activity.

Unionization though it began in the beginning of 1905, gained momentum and became intense only by October and November of that year, when conditions became free enough to allow mass meetings without the risk of police repression. By the end of 1905, in addition to the two illegal unions and three Zubalov societies in both these cities seventy four unions had been set up in St. Petersburg and ninety one in Moscow.<sup>21</sup>

Workers in artisanal and skilled trades were the earliest to unionize. Most artisanal workers tended to form craft unions. In Russia craft unions and industrial unions appeared almost simultaneously (in the space of few months) unlike in the West where craft unionism preceded industrial unionism.<sup>22</sup> Earlier organisational experience seems to have assisted unionization. Workers who had earlier participated in Social Democrat Circles or in illegal unions tended to be in the forefront of union activity. Trade Unions often grew out of earlier

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21 Ibid., p.122.

22 V.E. Bonnell, *Radical Politics and Organized Labour in Pre-Revolutionary Moscow, 1905-1914*, in the Journal of Social History, vol.12, no.2, March 1979, p.284.

existing strike committees and industry-wide strike councils. The Unions of printers, bakers, tobacco workers and tea packers in Moscow emerged from strikes. As these workers already had some experience in working together these unions tended to be the strongest.<sup>23</sup> Sometimes factory committees took the initiative in setting up unions. For instance, the St. Petersburg Metalworkers Union was created at the initiative of the 'Starosty' of the Nevskii plant.<sup>24</sup>

Intelligentsia ~~activists~~, Social Democrat and others, provided information as to the organisation of unions, their functions, rules of functioning etc. They also gave lectures and provided books and pamphlets on trade unionism in the West. The intelligenty also often held important posts within the unions and to them the unions were an important forum of contact with the workers.

The actual membership of the unions was not a very large proportion of the total workforce but was fairly respectable considering the recency of unionisation. The printers were the most active in unionization and 19% of

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23 L. Engelstein, op.cit., pp.172-173.

24 V.E. Bonnell, Roots of Rebellion, p.130.

the industry's workforce in St. Petersburg and 32% of that in Moscow were unionized, the bakers were also well unionized with the Moscow Union comprising of 18% of the labour force and the St. Petersburg Union of 12% of the labour force.<sup>25</sup>

The Soviets were born of the need for city-wide coordinating bodies. The basis of representation to the Soviet was not clearly specified and both occupational groups or trades and industrial units sent representatives. At its peak the St. Petersburg Soviet, that was set up on the 11th of October, had 562 deputies.<sup>26</sup> The Moscow Soviet was set up later, only by the 21st November, and the opening session had 145-200 deputies.<sup>27</sup> The Moscow Soviet did not enjoy the importance of the St. Petersburg Soviet because there already existed an earlier constituted Strike Committee and powerful local Soviets in Moscow.

The Soviets drew strength and support from the trade unions that participated in the activities of the Soviet through their representatives. The trade unions already possessed organisation, funds and followers that

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24 V.E. Bonnell, Roots of Rebellion, p.130.

25 Ibid., pp.136-137.

26 Ibid., p.174.

27 L. Engelstein, op.cit., p.163.

could be taken advantage of by the Soviet. The printers union in St. Petersburg played an important role in the activities of the Soviet there. The meetings of the Soviets' Executive Committee was held in the Union's office and the Union was responsible for the publication of the Soviets' Organ, the 'Izvestiia Soveta rabochikh deputatov'.<sup>28</sup> The Moscow Soviet also received similar support from the Unions of the printers, the tailors and the bakers.

The Soviets as working class organisations represented all the workers of the city. Starting as a Strike Committee, the St. Petersburg Soviet became a second centre of authority in the City. At the height of its authority the Soviet removed press-censorship and in a final act of defiance, published a financial manifesto calling for the financial boycott of the Autocracy. The struggle for an eight-hour day was launched under its auspices. The Moscow Soviet did not enjoy the same authority as did the St. Petersburg Soviet. In Moscow it was the district Soviets that were more powerful. The Moscow Soviet came into existence very late and

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28 V.E. Bonnell, Roots of Rebellion, pp.177-178.

survived for only two weeks. Both the Soviets were not party organisations and though the Social Democrats participated in their activities and played an important leadership role, the Soviets did not comply with the directives from any political party.

On the 6th of March 1906, trade unions were legalized for the first time in Russia and remained free until the Stolypin reaction beginning from 3rd June 1907. This was the most fertile period in the growth of unionisation as government repression was at its weakest and employer organisation as government repression was at its weakest and employer organisations as yet, disunited. Between March 1906 and June 1907, 72 trade unions were registered in St. Petersburg and 65 in Moscow (some of these were re-registrations). In the country as a whole 904 Unions were registered between March 1906 and December 1907. In the short period since the beginning of unionisation in Russia, 9% of the workforce of St. Petersburg and 10% of that of Moscow had been unionised. This was a considerable proportion when compared to Germany where legal unions had been functioning since 1890, the proportion of workforce unionised was 22% only.<sup>29</sup>

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29 Ibid., p.205.

Workers from small and medium-sized firms showed a greater tendency to join unions probably due to their need to organise in large numbers to be effective in collective action. Large factories like the Putilov constituted a large contingent on their own. In Moscow, in the Metalworkers' Union, 44% of the workforce from firms employing 11 to 50 workers had been unionised while only 10% of the work force in firms employing over 500 workers had been unionised by December 1906.<sup>30</sup>

After June 1907, the government began repressing trade unions and employers, sensing the change in government attitudes began withdrawing concessions granted earlier. Unions began closing down. In 1907, 159 unions were shut down; in 1908, 101; in 1909, 96 were closed and in 1910, 88 were closed down. In the period from 1907-1912, about 604 unions were not allowed to register legally, 206 union activists were imprisoned and a further 357 sentenced to administrative exile.<sup>31</sup>

The workers who continued to be members of unions and active in them were predominantly skilled. In St.

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30 Ibid., p.223.

31 Geoffrey Swain, Russian Social Democracy and the Legal Labour Movement, 1906-14, the MacMillan Press Ltd., London and Basingstoke, 1983, p.31.



Petersburg, 84% of the new members joining between January and June 1908 were skilled. While in 1907, 16% of the total membership had been unskilled, in 1909 the proportion of unskilled worker members fell to 10% and in 1910 to 5%.<sup>32</sup> A large number of the workers who continued to be union members, were also Social Democrats. With the drainage of less committed worker members, the proportion of Social Democrat workers in the union membership increased. In 1907, one-third of the union members were also party members. In 1909 (according to the Police) half of the union members also belonged to the party.<sup>33</sup>

As the union came under attacks, workers began meeting in workers' clubs and cultural societies. In 1909, in St. Petersburg, there were 21 clubs and cultural societies, with 6,830 members.<sup>34</sup> In 1910, in Moscow, there were 7 clubs and cultural societies involving 3,124 workers.<sup>35</sup> Clubs were used to meet, to

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32 V.E. Bonnell, Roots of Rebellion, p.324.

33 G. Swain, op.cit., p.61.

34 V.E. Bonnell, Roots of Rebellion, p.328.

35 Ibid., p.330.

hold lectures and to organise various cultural and educational activities. The Social Democrats used the clubs to maintain contacts with the workers. A secret police report of 1910 noted that many of the organizers of these clubs and cultural societies in a district were also members of the Social Democrat Party Committee of that district. Eight out of twenty such organisations in St. Petersburg were under Social Democrat influence.<sup>36</sup>

Consumer and producer cooperatives or artels proliferated also. By 1909, 32 cooperatives had been established in Moscow and 31 cooperatives in St. Petersburg.<sup>37</sup> Artels were set up among construction workers, tailors, candymakers and leather makers in an attempt to bypass the middleman. Trade unionists and Social Democrat activists were important in these organisations as well.

Workers and their intelligentsia organizers often strongly disagreed on the question of mutual aid programs. To the workers these were an important function of the

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36 Ibid., p.334.

37 V.E. Bonnell, Roots of Rebellion, p.335.

union while the intelligenty saw these as unnecessary. The importance of this issue to the workers can be seen from the fact that the workers of the Kolomenskii Machine Construction Plant in Moscow in 1907 showed little enthusiasm in joining the union as a better unemployment benefit program was being organised by the plant directors wife.<sup>38</sup>

The years from 1912-1914 showed an enormous increase in labour activism and militancy but unionisation did not reach the 1906 level. In 1914, in Moscow there were 35 organisations both legal and illegal with a membership of 16,434 compared to the 1906-7 level of 75 organisations with a membership of 52,000. Similarly, in St. Petersburg there were 37 organisations with a membership of 28,629 compared to the 1906-7 level of 76 organisations with a membership of 55,000.<sup>39</sup> In the whole of Russia by the end of 1913 there were 188 legal unions with a membership of 75,000 to 100,000 workers.<sup>40</sup>

In St. Petersburg, the largest union was that of the metal workers while in Moscow it was the printers,

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38 Ibid., p.258.

39 Ibid., p.355.

40 V.E. Bonnell, Trade Unions, Parties and the State in Tsarist Russia, p.308.

the sailors, the metalworkers and the bakers. Again, the artisanal workers were in the forefront of unionisation.

Worker activism in this period was foiled by resistance from employer organisations which refused to recognize the unions as representing workers and refused to negotiate with them. The government too followed an extremely ambivalent policy of allowing the unions to exist but clamping down on them when they attempted to fulfill their functions as unions. The frustration of trade unionist methods led to the radicalization of the workers mood. This was reflected in the fact that the important unions that, as late as the beginning of 1912, were under Menshevik influence, came under Bolshevik control. By August 1913, the Bolsheviks controlled the union of Metal workers in St. Petersburg and by 1914, half of the board of the traditionally Menshevik printers union.<sup>41</sup> By July 1914, the Bolsheviks could inform the Socialist International that they controlled 14½ out of 18 governing bodies of trade unions in St. Petersburg and 10 out of 13 governing bodies of trade unions in Moscow.<sup>42</sup>

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41 L. Hainson, op.cit., p.630.

42 Ibid., p.631.

Worker radicalism was so great that the unions often found themselves pushed aside or ignored. They were frequently not consulted by the workers in declaring a strike and not accepted by the owners, as workers' representatives. This could be seen in the case of the strike at the Lessner Plant in 1913. The union was called in to intervene only on the 82nd day of the strike and then the owners refused to negotiate. On the hundredth day the strike ended in defeat for the workers.

The Bolsheviks followed a policy of encouraging strikes, that is reflected in the high percentage of union funds that they devoted to strike support in the St. Petersburg metalworkers' union.

Percentage of Union Funds devoted to Strike Support<sup>43</sup>

Year	Percentage
1911	07.8
1912	30.6
1913	48.3
1914	Union closed down

43 V.E. Bonnell, op.cit., p.407.

Even during the repressive years of the first World War, workers organisation survived in the form of sick funds, cooperatives, workers' clubs and schools and also illegal unions and party cells. In Moscow, the sick funds were the worker organisations with the largest mass base. Seventy-seven per cent of the Moscow workers under the supervision of the Factory Inspectorate were members of the sick funds.<sup>44</sup> Educational clubs, dramatic societies and other cultural organizations combined cultural activities with political discussions. The structure and leadership provided by these organisations gave an element of continuity that assisted the re-emergence of the movement in 1917.

The Soviet of 1917 in Petrograd did not emerge from the February strike. It was a predominantly intelligentsia creation. In this, it differed from the Soviets of 1905. The Soviets of 1905 had been strike committees and organs of workers' self-government. The Petrograd Soviet of 1917 was intelligentsia-dominated and only 7 out of the 42 members of the Executive Committee were

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44 D. Koenkar, op.cit., p.74.

workers.<sup>45</sup> By March 1917, party divisions had become apparent in the Soviet and Anweiler feel that the Soviet was more of a 'semi-parliament' than a 'supra-party revolutionary body'.<sup>46</sup> The insurgents who had led the strikes and demonstrations on the streets resented the pre-emption of the leadership of the workers movement by the *intelligentsia* leaders. These predominantly Bolshevik workers-leaders in fact, refused to attend the first meeting of the Soviet and continued the struggle in the streets.<sup>47</sup> However, once the Soviet was set up and commanded the allegiance of the working class, it became a very powerful body.

The Petrograd Soviet was set up on the 27th of February by the two Social Democrat (Menshevik) Duma Deputies, Chkeidze and Skobelev, the 'worker's group' members and two independent Social Democrats, Sukhanov and Sokolov. They formed themselves into a Provisional Executive Committee and called for factories to send

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45 O. Anweiler, "The Political Ideology of the Leaders of the Petrograd Soviet in the Spring of 1917" in Richard Pipes (ed.) Revolutionary Russia, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1968, p.116.

46 *Ibid.*, p.117.

47 T. Hasegawa, "The Bolsheviks and the Formation of the Petrograd Soviet in the February Revolution, Soviet Studies, vol.29, no.1, January 1977. P.104 .

delegates to the Soviet.<sup>48</sup> The Moscow Soviet also was constituted on the 27th of February by a meeting of local political activists. The composition of the Moscow Soviet is available. It had 625 deputies among whom workers dominated (80%). Sixteen per cent of the deputies were from the white-collar elements and only 4% were intelligently. Representation in the Soviet was mixed, with factories sending representatives as did trade unions, cooperatives, political parties and the railroad workers. 500 workers were allowed one deputy up to a maximum of 3 deputies for a factory. Large factories had a deputy while small ones joined together to elect a deputy.<sup>49</sup>

The skilled metalworkers dominated the Moscow Soviet accounting for 46% of the deputies. The textile lists constituted only 12% of the deputies despite being 25% of the total worker population. The dominance of the metalworkers was due to the fact that they worked in other industries as technicians and machinists and were getting elected from the non-metal factories as well.<sup>50</sup>

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48 D. Mandel, op.cit., pp.65-66.

49 D. Koenkar, op.cit., p.103.

50 Ibid., p.104.



Most of the deputies were veteran political activists. About 58% of them had been members of political parties by 1905 and 25% of them had been arrested for political activism.<sup>51</sup>

The Soviet had a 75 member executive which itself was being guided by a 7 member Presidium. The three radical parties had 20 members each in the Executive Committee. 52% of its members were workers, 29.2% were professionals, doctors and civil servants. The Executive Committee had a greater proportion of veteran activists, 66.6% of them had been party members by the end of 1905 and 75% had been arrested for political reasons.<sup>52</sup>

Factory committees sprang up spontaneously in factories (particularly the larger ones) following the February Revolution. The factories that did not have factory committees were instructed by the Soviet to form them. Being closest to the workers at the grass-root level, the factory committees were intensely involved in the issues that concerned these workers. The movement for workers' control of industry hence developed around these organisations.

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51 Ibid.

52 Ibid., p.105.

The right of the workers to intervene in management decisions involving them particularly in the hiring and firing of workers was an issue strongly contested by the management. It was on the basis of their right to 'control over internal order' that factory committees began intervening in a variety of issues from the length of the workingday, the employment and dismissal of workers and the minimum wage. The assertion of these rights and the purge of unpopular factory administrators following the February Revolution were claims to control that could potentially extend over production itself.

In the early months of the Revolution, this control was limited to supervision and observation to prevent sabotage by the management and to protect the livelihood of the workers. In the state factories, the workers decided to manage the factories but later retreated when they found that they lacked sufficient technical knowledge. The railroad and post and telegraph workers were the most inclined to seize control.

With the increasing deterioration in economic conditions and growing instances of deliberate sabotage by the owners through the removal of machinery, raw material and so on, the factory committees became more

aggressive. The factories themselves became an important arena in the struggle for power complementing the battle in the political forum. Worker control began to extend from supervision and control of raw materials to control over finance and accounting as well. Tensions sharpened when the government's plans to evacuate industry from Petrograd became known. By October, workers control had become quite widely prevalent in Petrograd. 74% of the city's workforce worked in factories in which some form of workers' control had been instituted. But this was principally in the large enterprises and most of the smaller units that accounted for 90% of the industrial units in Petrograd did not have workers' control.<sup>53</sup>

As Rosenberg pointed out the movement for workers control in 1917 was "primarily a struggle for economic security and material betterment rather than a political movement - an effort from below to satisfy long standing worker grievances and establish new conditions for continued production..."<sup>54</sup> There is little evidence to that the movement arose from Syndicalist sympathies. The movement was at its most developed in Petrograd and did

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53 S. Smith, Red Petrograd, p.185.

54 William Rosenberg, "Workers and Worker's Control in the Russian Revolution", History Workshop, 1977, no.5, p.92.

not develop to the same extent in Moscow.

Trade unions were relatively late in establishing themselves in 1917. In February, there were eleven illegal unions and three legal unions in Petrograd with a small following. Following the Revolution, the unions re-established themselves, with thirty of them being set up in the first two weeks of March itself. Unionisation however reached its full strength only by October 1917.

Earlier patterns of unionisation repeated themselves. Artisan workers were the first to unionize, workers in large factories being more inclined to form factory committees. The tendency towards craft unionisation continued.

Union	Petrograd <sup>55</sup>	
	Membership as on	
	1st July 1917	1st Oct. 1917
Metal Workers	82,000	190,000
Textilists	28,000	32,000
Wood workers	15,000	20,500
Leather workers	15,750	16,708

55 S. Smith, Red Petrograd, p.105.

In March there were twenty craft unions in the metal industry and a consolidated city-wide union of metal workers was established only in April.<sup>56</sup> The tendency towards the maintenance of craft identities was satisfied by allowing the various trades to form different sections within the industrial union. The Third Trade Union Conference in 1917 (the first after the Revolution) declared that unions should be formed according to industry. Union development some times took place from top downwards with professional activists setting themselves up as representatives and then organizing the unions. The Central Bureau of Trade Unions in Moscow was set up in this way by Bolshevik activists as an alternate centre of power to the Soviet.<sup>57</sup> Once set up, it became a real centre of working class activity. The increasing strength of unionisation over the year can be seen in the increase in the percentage of strikes that were union led in Moscow.

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56 Ibid., pp.104-106.

57 D. Koenkar, op.cit., p.148.

Strikes with Reported Trade-Union Leadership<sup>58</sup>

Month	Strikes	Percentage Union led
March	23	13
April	39	23.1
May	61	26.2
June	45	28.9
July	31	45.2
August	21	33.3
September	28	53.6
October	21	42.9

The area of activity undertaken by the Soviets, the factory committees and the trade unions was not clearly delineated and there was considerable overlap. The factory committees being closest to the workers tended to be drawn into labour-management conflict though legitimately an area of trade union activity. The Soviet reserved for itself the right to intervene in any question concerning the workers and were seen by the workers as the final authority. The breakdown of governmental authority led to these organisations

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58 Ibid., p.154.

performing functions like the provision of food and other necessities, the organisation of cultural activities and even policing in areas where the local Duma was weak.

#### EMERGENCE OF LEADERSHIP CADRES

The first cadres of leaders of worker origins grew out of the 'Kruzhkovschina', the Social Democrat programme of organising study circles among the workers. These worker-intelligents tended to imitate the gentry in their dress and habits though most of them were committed Social Democrats with a firm grounding in socialist thought. A well known example is that of the activist I.V. Babushkin, a veteran Social Democrat of St. Petersburg. This particular generation of activists were firmly loyal to social democrat principles and unlike the succeeding generation, were not tempted by economism.

Once the Social Democrats moved into organising the workers into agitation for economic reform they began recruiting a different kind of worker. He was no longer the serious worker 'intelligent' bent on self-improvement but the younger, more militant worker.

The intelligentsia cells of the Social Democrats selected a Committee of worker representatives that was clearly subordinate to them and whose functions were purely advisory. The workers were expected to undertake the distribution of pamphlets, supply information about factory conditions and otherwise follow the directives of the intelligentsia. Many of them resented this tutelage of the intelligentsia as well as the shackling of the workers' movement with the political aims of Social Democracy. Their commitment was principally to the improvement of the material conditions of labour and they did not as yet think political struggle necessary for this.

Many of these activists who had little knowledge and less commitment to Social Democracy, were drawn into the Zubatov and Gapon unions. These gave them a chance to work openly without the fear of police harassment. The support of the government also helped to redress many of the economic grievances of the workers. The Zubatovist worker leaders like M. Afanas'ev, F. Ignat'ev, P. Emelin and N. Krasivskii were ex-social Democrats.<sup>59</sup>

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59 M.K. Palat, op.cit., p.89.



Essentially the role of the worker activists in the 1890s was to act as a bridge of communication between the intelligentsia and the worker masses. As the worker-activist Nemchinov put it, "the mass of workers at that time (the 1890s) did not understand the intelligentsia's language. Thanks only to a cadre of translators, so to speak, from the ranks of a semi-intelligentsia workers (organizational) activity at all successful".<sup>60</sup>

In the Revolution of 1905, all the worker activists including both those who had remained with the Social Democrats and those who had joined the police-sponsored unions, played a very important leadership role. They led the workers movements in the streets, guided the formation of workers' organizations and represented the workers in them.

Following the Revolution of 1905 there was a withdrawal of intelligentsia activists from the workers' movement. This 'betrayal of the intelligentsia'<sup>61</sup> caused much resentment among the workers. The workers were

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60 L. Engelstein, op.cit., p.58.

61 L.M. Kleinbort, quoted in D. Mandel, "The Intelligentsia and the Working Class in 1917", Critique, vol.14, 1981, p.68.

increasingly left to fall back on their own resources. This 'flight of the intelligentsia' was a consequence of the polarisation of Russian society along the lines of class that took place after 1905. The radicalism of the workers' movement and its growing hostility to Census Society (and not Tsarism alone) itself alienated the more moderate intelligentsia leaders.<sup>62</sup>

The scarcity of intelligentsia activists, increased the importance of the worker-leaders, who were compelled to become more independent. In the period from 1906-1907, these activists devoted their energies to work in the legal unions. They continued this work even in the period of repression and slump when the existence of the unions became increasingly precarious. In 1912-1914 when the workers' movement turned radical, these worker-leaders who had been legal activists abandoned their liquidationist Menshevik sponsors for the more militant Bolsheviks.

Being closer to the worker-masses, these worker leaders were more aware of the changing mood of the working class and quick to respond. This 'sub-elite'

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62 Ibid., p.81.

or 'middle-echelon activists' as Hasegawa calls them,<sup>63</sup> played an important role in 1917. These workers were the central core of the movement, maintaining contact with each other, coordinating the movement and giving it continuity. They provided leadership to the spontaneous movement on the streets guiding it according to their earlier planned strategy. They radicalized the worker movement by converting the vague discontent of the workers into concrete political objectives.<sup>64</sup> The radicalism of these activists sometimes brought them into conflict with the top leaders as in the case of the February 1917 strike movement in Petrograd. The Russian Bureau of the Bolshevik Central Committee under Shlyapnikov refused to support the movement fearing its spontaneity but both the Petersburg Committee and the Vyborg District Committee supported the movement in defiance of the Central Committee.<sup>65</sup>

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63 T. Hasegawa in "The Problem of Power in the February Revolution of 1917 in Russia", Canadian Slavonic Papers, vol.14, no.4, 1972, pp.613-4, and in "The Bolsheviks and the Formation of the Petrograd Soviet in the February Revolution", Soviet Studies, vol.29, no.1, January 1977, p.88.

64 Hasegawa, The Problem of Power, p.615.

65 Hasegawa, The Bolsheviks and the Formation of the Petrograd Soviet, pp.90-91.

These worker activists who had been in the forefront of the strike movement resented the attempt of the intelligentsia to seize the leadership of the worker movement through the Soviet.<sup>66</sup> Almost from the beginning, the worker activists looked on the Soviet in suspicion.

Most worker-activists belonged to one of the radical parties. However, the closer a worker organization was to the workers, the greater the number of its members who were non-partisan. The Factory Committee was elected by workers of a factory who did not hold managerial positions. The Putilov Works Committee in 1917 had 21 members - 6 Bolsheviks, 6 non-party members, 1 Menshevik international, 2 SRs, one anarchist and 5 whose political affiliations were unknown.<sup>67</sup> Assuming that the five with unknown political affiliations did not have any strong affiliations, the number of non-party members on the Committee was 11, i.e. a majority of one.

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66 Ibid., p.104.

67 S. Smith, Red Petrograd, p.81.

In the higher levels of worker organizations, the number of non-party members falls drastically.

In the Petrograd Central Council of Factory Committees, the composition of members on June 1917, was entirely of people with political affiliations. Of the 25 members, 19 were Bolsheviks, 2 were Menshevik, 2 SRs, 1 Meshraionets, and one Syndicalist.<sup>68</sup>

The same is the case with the First All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions, which was attended by 500 delegates, representing 19 national unions. Of the 428 delegates with voting rights; 281 were Bolsheviks, 67 Mensheviks, 21 left SRs, 10 Right SRs, 6 SR maximalist and 37 non-party. The percentage of non-party delegates in the Conference was 8.7% only.<sup>69</sup>

It would appear that a high percentage of the activists in the workers organizations were of worker origins. Eighty per cent of the deputies to the Moscow Soviet were workers and only 4% were intelligentsia. But the percentage of workers was much smaller in the Executive Committee, only 52%.

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68 Ibid., p.84.

69 Ibid., p.217.

The composition of the identified District Committee members of the Bolsheviks in May-June 1917, gives an indication of the extent to which workers constituted the ranks of the party at the district level. It would appear that workers dominated the party at least in its lower rungs. It must be expected that the proportion of workers would diminish in the top echelons of the party.

Social Background of Identified Bolshevik District Committee members, May-June 1917.<sup>70</sup>

District	Percentage of			Total identified members
	Work- kers	Intel- ligent- sia	Others	
1. Vyborg	89.5	8.8	1.7	57
2. Narva-Petergof	85.7	10.7	3.6	28
3. Nevskii	83.4	16.6	0	12
4. Petrograd	82.1	10.7	7.2	28
5. Second City	76.7	13.3	10	30
6. Porokhovskii, Liteinyi, Okhta and Railroad	64.3	28.6	7.1	14
7. Moscow	63.6	18.2	18.2	11
8. Vasilevskii Ostrov	57.6	30.6	11.8	26
9. First City	50.0	50.0	0	16
10. Rozhdestvenskii	35.7	28.6	35.7	14
All Districts	74.1	18.2	7.7	236

70 D. Mandel, op.cit., p.56.

## CONCLUSION

## CONCLUSION

In this study broadly three determinents of worker activism have been looked at - the effect of industry, the influence of variations in the Sociological characteristics within the workforce and the role of political mobilisation.

The effect of industry has been studied with regard to the influence of business cycles, the concentration of industry, the technological level of industry and management policy towards labour.

Business cycles had a demonstrable influence on trade unionist activity. Booms led to an extension of worker activism and organisation while slumps discouraged labour activism. The effect of business cycles on political and revolutionary activity is less clear. It is possible that economic deprivation when combined with political mobilisation led to political radicalism.

Industrial concentration in terms of the location of industry as well as in terms of the number of workers employed in an unit, helped labour activism. Large units with their huge concentrations of workers were more easily



mobilised. This was particularly so in the restrictive Russian conditions that made organisations extending beyond a single factory, risky. Concentration of the workers assisted the growth of confidence and unity among them. On the other hand, artisanal workers with traditions of organisation could be equally effective in labour activism through unions despite being located in small units. Indeed skilled, artisanlike workers were among the most active of the workers. Also concentration did not always aid activism as for instance in the case of the large textile units which actually served to isolate the workers from the mainstream. The textile workers despite being located in large plants did not manifest any great militancy.

The level of technology existing in an industry determined the kind of workforce that would be employed there. The metal industry relied considerably on skilled labour that had to be trained for three to four years and hence was not easily substituted. This gave the metalworkers greater bargaining power which, combined with their greater literacy, confidence and awareness made them the most radical section of Russia's workers. The textile industry on the other hand was at

the technological level that permitted the use of semi-skilled labour that could be trained in a relatively short while. The textile workers could easily be replaced. They were hence lower paid, more vulnerable to management pressure and conspicuously less active than the metalists.

The primitiveness of Russian management policy towards labour and its unwillingness to tolerate negotiatory labour-management relations, were very important in pushing the Russian worker movement away from reformism into revolution. In their attitude to trade unions, the industrialists were even more conservative than the government which was willing to make concessions to the worker movement after 1905.

The Sociological attributes that showed a high correlation to activism were relative integration into urban society, skill, literacy, youth and maleness. These characteristics were closely interconnected. The worker who had stayed longer in the city was one who was likely to have acquired skills and literacy. Such workers were almost overwhelmingly male. The activism of youth was very noticeable particularly in the years

1912-14 and again in 1917. It can be attributed <sup>to</sup> ~~their~~ integration into industrial society (many of them were second-generation workers), fewer family responsibilities and the greater militancy and idealism that characterised youth everywhere.

While all these factors contributed to labour activism, actual political commitment or affiliation was the result of the process of political mobilisation. The growth of political awareness was the result of propaganda by political activists and parties, of the workers participation in collective action and working-class organisations and of objective conditions as well. As the radical parties functioned illegally the greater part of the period, their ideological influence among the workers was much greater than is indicated by their membership figures. Once worker organisations emerged these became important forums of contact between the workers and the radical intelligentsia and these played a very important role in politically mobilising the workers. The leaders who emerged from within the ranks of the working class, including, both party activists and non-party 'conscious' workers being more accessible to the worker-masses, helped the spread of political consciousness.

In the revolutionary process that culminated in 1917, the workers can be shown to have played a complex and independent role. They were not blind followers of any particular political party. By 1917, their responses to changing conditions showed considerable political awareness and sophistication. No single party could be certain of the worker's allegiance and their loyalties shifted with changes in their mood. The workers switched from supporting the Mensheviks to the Bolsheviks in 1912-14 and back again to the moderate Menshevik-SR alliance in February 1917. They had again swung over to the Bolsheviks by October 1917. These changes were determined by changes in the prevailing conditions the corresponding adjustments in party policies and the influence of these on the workers.

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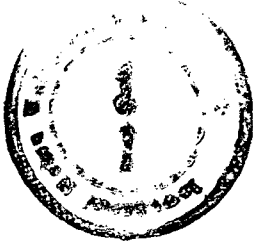
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