

Documents of Revolution
General Editor : Heinz Lubasz

The Mensheviks in the Russian Revolution

EDITED BY ABRAHAM ASCHER



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Edited by Abraham Ascher

A discerning and catholic selection of important Menshevik documents is provided in this valuable anthology. Articles, pamphlets, letters, speeches, resolutions, and other contemporary materials trace the development of Menshevism and illuminate the twists and turns of its strategies. Lenin, Plekhanov, Axelrod, Martov, Dan, and other key figures are represented, and each group of related sections is preceded by a concise historical note. In an informative introduction, the editor analyzes the policies, attitudes, and values that formed the core of their creed.

Professor Ascher's book is the first general history of the Menshevik movement in any language, and its documentary section includes extensive material never before translated into English.

ABRAHAM ASCHER is Professor of History at Brooklyn College, City University of New York.

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***The Mensheviks
in the Russian Revolution***

EDITED BY ABRAHAM ASCHER

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To Deborah, Rachel and Stephen

Documents translated by Paul Stevenson

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Introduction

THE ORIGINS OF MENSHEVISM

STUDENTS of Marxism and of revolution have found Menshevism to be an elusive term. Although it was a distinct political current within Russian Marxism and in 1912 became the doctrine of an independent party, Menshevism never evolved into a genuinely cohesive movement, either ideologically or organizationally. The most prominent leaders frequently disagreed with each other about basic issues, and at times several differed only slightly with the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks' major rivals for working-class support. To complicate matters further, during the brief span of two decades the Mensheviks publicly changed positions on several critical questions. The best way to arrive at a definition of Menshevism, therefore, is to examine its development chronologically. Such an approach will enable us to focus on those policies, attitudes and values that remained constant and may be considered the core of the Menshevik creed.

Menshevism was born in the summer of 1903, when the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' party (RSDWP) met for the purpose of uniting the twenty-six groups that comprised the labour movement. Among the delegates arriving in Brussels for the opening sessions it was generally assumed that Russian Marxism, representing no more than a few thousand people, had finally overcome its penchant for uncompromising, internecine polemics. The six editors of the underground newspaper *Iskra* (Pavel Axelrod, Vladimir Lenin, Iulii Martov, Georgii Plekhanov, Alexander Potresov and Vera Zasulich), who had organized the Congress, appeared to share a common outlook and to work together harmoniously. They were all orthodox Marxists who subscribed to the views that the 'father' of Russian Marxism, Plekhanov, had set forth in the 1880s and 1890s. Plekhanov had contended that Russia, economically and politically a backward country, must undergo two revolutions: first, a bourgeois revolution that would introduce industrial capitalism and democracy; then, after the proletariat had grown into a large and politically mature force, a second revolution that would establish socialism. The six editors also agreed that because

of the weakness of the Russian middle class the proletariat was destined to play a major role even in the first revolution. Until that time, they believed, Marxists must concentrate on the political education and organization of the working class. By virtue of this consensus, the six revolutionaries formed a solid bloc on all the issues that were discussed during the first twenty-one sessions of the Second Congress.

At the twenty-second session, however, the editors split, and most of the delegates were startled by the heat of the debate over the seemingly minor question of how to define a party member (Documents 1, 1a). Their puzzlement became even more acute when Lenin declared that 'I do not at all consider our differences so vital that the life or death of the party depends on it.'¹ For it did not take the delegates long to learn of Lenin's relentless efforts to secure the adoption of his formulation. Obviously, he believed that a crucial principle was at stake.

Although it was not generally understood at the time, Lenin felt deeply about the controversy because he saw it as a challenge to the theory of party organization that he had outlined in his well-known pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?*, published in 1902. In that work he argued that unless the workers were subjected to the direction of the revolutionary intelligentsia, they would fall prey to the allure of trade unionism and limit their aspirations to the improvement of their material conditions. 'Social-Democratic consciousness,' he contended, 'cannot exist among the workers. This can be introduced only from without. . . . The teaching of socialism has developed out of philosophical, historical and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the possessing class, by intellectuals.'² Lenin proposed that Russian social democracy be organized along hierarchical lines and that it be run by 'professional revolutionaries', men who were thoroughly schooled in Marxism and who would devote themselves full time to preparing the revolution. He welcomed the help of mass organizations such as labour unions but considered most of their members unsuitable for admission into the party even if they professed to subscribe to Marxist doctrine. In short, in contrast to the traditional Marxist view that workers would spontaneously become class-conscious in reaction to their economic position in society, Lenin declared that the proletariat as a class would never attain the requisite degree of political consciousness without outside tutelage. Hence his insistence on the adoption of his restrictive definition of a party member.

At first Axelrod and Martov, who were to become the chief ideologists of Menshevism, did not fully appreciate the implications of

Lenin's organizational ideas, but during the discussions at the Second Congress they sensed that Lenin intended to chart a radically new course for Russian Marxism, which had always stressed the necessity and desirability of broad working-class participation in the coming revolutionary events (Documents 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 1f). Their suspicions of his motives were further aroused during some private caucuses at which he revealed his plan to pack the central committee with a majority of his followers. Not only did Lenin favour an elitist party; he also appeared to harbour ambitions of personal predominance in it.³ Consequently, Axelrod and Martov considered it vital not to yield. Among the editors of *Iskra*, only Plekhanov sided with Lenin, whose formulation lost by a vote of twenty-eight to twenty-three.

Infuriated by the defeat, Lenin launched a massive campaign to secure control of *Iskra* and of the committees to be elected by the Congress. As a result of clever manoeuvring on his part and of some fortuitous events, several delegates who had voted with his opponents on the question of party membership walked out of the Congress in protest. With the number of his opponents now reduced, Lenin succeeded in winning a series of crucial votes by a narrow margin. Even though he had been defeated on the one substantive issue, he presumed to name his 'hard' faction 'Bolsheviks' (majoritarians) and his 'soft' opponents 'Mensheviks' (minoritarians). But his triumph proved to be a pyrrhic victory. The Mensheviks, comprising most of the gifted writers and many seasoned activists, declared that 'we are not serfs' and refused to submit to the authority of the new committees. The Congress had achieved only formal unity, for it had also given rise to two factions vying for supremacy.

For several months polemics dominated party affairs, to the confusion of rank-and-file members, who were not privy to the deliberations at the Congress. The Mensheviks denounced Lenin as an inveterate intriguer, a would-be dictator, a man without tact or principle. These charges gained in credibility in November 1903 because at that time Plekhanov, still the most eminent exponent of Russian Marxism, denounced Lenin as an unscrupulous man – he actually dubbed him a 'Robespierre' – and joined the Menshevik faction. Virtually isolated among the leaders of the movement, Lenin felt that he had no choice but to turn *Iskra* over to the Mensheviks, who were jubilant. The Bolsheviks had been dealt a severe blow; but Lenin was much too resourceful to give up the struggle. He maintained his faction intact and continued to vilify his adversaries as hopelessly 'soft' and 'opportunistic'. Many party members concluded that the conflict had degenerated into a mere struggle for power between ambitious and egocentric politicians.

It was only in late 1903 and early 1904, with the publication of Axelrod's two-part essay in *Iskra*, that the movement at large began to realize that more than power was at stake (Document 2). Axelrod's assertion that the dispute between the factions had produced two diametrically opposed conceptions of a Marxist party – of an hierarchical party controlled from above and of a mass party controlled from below – appeared as a revelation to readers of the newspaper. 'It was,' one prominent Menshevik recalled, 'as though lightning had cut through the thick darkness and had lit up an entire neighbourhood with a dazzling light – right to the horizon. It was then that Menshevism became conscious of itself, understood the schism, found its ideology, hoisted its banner.'⁴ Axelrod's thesis that in order to remain true to its Marxist heritage Russian social democracy must be converted into a mass party controlled from below and composed of politically mature workers remained a key element of Menshevism throughout its history.

When Lenin read Axelrod's article he became 'so furious that he was like a tiger'. He called it the 'nastiest muck I've ever had to read in all our party literature . . . Axelrod has spat on three years' work of *Iskra*, on everything it has achieved. . . . Only a dolt or a madman could write such nonsense.'⁵ He urged the Central Committee to protest Axelrod's article and to repudiate its ideas: 'Do you not feel that, enduring this [article] silently, you are transformed into neither more nor less than transmitters of scandals . . . and into spreaders of calumny (concerning bureaucrats, i.e., you yourselves and the entire majority)? And under such "ideological leadership" you consider it possible to do "positive work"?'⁶ Lenin's outbursts were no doubt prompted by his realization that in clarifying the ideological differences between the factions Axelrod had taken a step that was bound to put the Bolsheviks on the defensive as well as to deepen the conflict.

It would be interesting to make a definitive statement about the social composition of the two factions, but, unfortunately, only very scanty information is available on this subject. It is possible, however, to venture a few generalizations. Although both groups were dominated by intellectuals, the Mensheviks appealed much more than their rivals to members of minority groups in the Russian Empire. Georgians and Jews played an especially important role in the Menshevik movement. The prominence of the Jews became evident from the earliest moments of the split. Out of fifty-seven revolutionaries who attended the Second Congress, twenty-five were Jews: six of these belonged to the Bund (the General Union of Jewish Workers), four were Bolsheviks and fifteen were Mensheviks (there

were only seventeen Menshevik delegates in all).⁷ It may well be that Menshevism owed its Western orientation – a dimension that Bolshevism lacked – to the prominent position occupied by Jewish intellectuals, who traditionally maintained ties with the world beyond Russia and tended to be rooted in the more cosmopolitan urban centres. Specifically, this meant that the Mensheviks admired the mass character of Western socialist parties (especially the German) and their tendency to tolerate a variety of viewpoints within their ranks. There is no doubt that many Mensheviks looked upon these parties as models for Russian social democracy. At the same time, their Western orientation may help to explain their failure fully to understand the nature of Russian society, which was still basically agrarian. Unlike the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks never formulated a programme that could appeal to the peasants, by far the largest group in the country.

This Western orientation was reinforced after 1907, when the Mensheviks established close links with the Jewish Bund. At the Second Congress the Bund had severed its ties with Russian social democracy because most delegates (Menshevik as well as Bolshevik) voted against its proposal to organize the party as a federation of national parties, a scheme that was designed to grant the Bund autonomy in matters of specific interest to the Jewish community. The Russian Marxists were motivated not only by a desire for a highly centralized party but also by a deep antagonism towards nationalism, which they considered to be a bourgeois phenomenon impeding the development of proletarian internationalism.

A democratic party on the German model, the Bund commanded far greater mass support than did the Russian movement and could therefore afford to maintain its independence. Still, after a few years the leaders concluded that their organization was ideologically so close to the Russian party, and especially to its Menshevik wing, that continued separation was senseless. In 1907 the Bund rejoined the RSDWP and thereafter allied itself with the Mensheviks, who in 1912 formally changed their position on the national question by accepting the formula of 'national cultural autonomy'. Within a short period there was such intimate collaboration between the two groups that several men prominent in the Bund were also leaders of Menshevism.

THE SCHISM WIDENS

In the meantime, a controversy over tactics, engendered by a dramatic turn of events in Russia, eliminated the last traces of doubt in the minds of Social Democrats about the seriousness of the rift within

Marxism. A few months after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in February 1904, discontent with the tsarist government reached unprecedented intensity. The people had been led to believe that in the event of war Japan would be easily defeated, but, instead, the Russian military proved to be thoroughly incompetent and suffered one defeat after another. Virtually all strata of the educated population now publicly turned against the government.

During the summer the liberal opposition, emboldened by the government's loss of prestige, inaugurated a wide-ranging campaign for a constitution and for civil as well as personal rights for every citizen of the Empire. Russia's miserable performance during the war was clear evidence to all except the most reactionary that the country's institutions needed to be modernized. Numerous *zemstvos* (the local organs of government established in the 1860s) organized banquets for the month of November to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the introduction of such legal reforms as trial by jury, independence of the judiciary and more humane punishment of criminals. At the festivities speeches were planned calling for fundamental changes in the political system. A *zemstvo* congress convoked in St Petersburg turned out to be a 'revolutionary assembly which publicly stated the need to abolish the autocracy in Russia. The country's population instinctively sensed . . . [the assembly's] historic significance.'⁸ Russian liberalism had at last emerged as a vibrant political force. How were Marxists to react to this new situation?

The Mensheviks, inspired by the tactical views of Axelrod, called for a '*zemstvo* campaign', a series of working-class demonstrations to be held late in 1904 for the purpose of pushing the liberals in the *zemstvos* to the left (Document 3). In this way the Mensheviks hoped to strengthen Social-Democratic organizations and their ties to the masses, to heighten the workers' political consciousness and to prod the liberals into wresting concessions from the Tsar – such as universal suffrage, civil liberties and the convocation of a constituent assembly – that would benefit all the people, not merely the middle classes. In advocating such a campaign, the Mensheviks believed that they were assigning a crucial role to the proletariat without violating the doctrine upheld until now by all Russian Marxists, that in backward Russia the first revolution must be basically a bourgeois affair.

The Bolsheviks, however, rejected the plan as utterly defective. Lenin, the undisputed leader of his faction, dismissed it as 'a downright banality' and 'mishmash'. He no longer considered the bourgeoisie a progressive force because he was convinced that despite its opposition to the autocracy it would refuse to undermine completely the authority of the monarchy, the standing army and the

bureaucracy. He therefore argued that instead of supporting the liberals or trying to influence them, the working class should move directly against the government and thus take the lead in overthrowing the old order. In brief, the Social Democratic party should prepare for the 'decisive battle' against the autocracy which should take the form of a 'popular insurrection'.⁹ Lenin's proposal was significant not only because it widened the cleavage between the factions. It also raised a troublesome theoretical question. If the middle class could not be counted upon fully to destroy the existing political order, did it make sense to insist on the necessity of a bourgeois phase before socialism could be established? In the course of 1905, when revolution engulfed the country, that question agitated a growing number of Social Democrats.

The turbulence of 1905 began on 22 January¹ with a peaceful demonstration led by a priest, Father Gapon. Carrying icons and portraits of the Tsar, thousands of workers marched to the Winter Palace in St Petersburg with the intention of asking their ruler to grant them civil liberties, equality before the law, release of political prisoners and better conditions in the factories. Before they reached the Palace they encountered a barrage of bullets that killed 130 persons and injured several hundred. The senseless massacre outraged people throughout the country. In May news of the disastrous defeat of the Baltic navy in the Straits of Tsushima gave additional impetus to the oppositional forces, and within a few months four protest movements were active.

The liberals, dominated now by men who called for parliamentary government and a democratically elected constituent assembly, grew more vocal in pressing their demands. In the countryside peasant unrest became widespread. Various nationality groups agitated for autonomy or independence. Finally, in October, the workers, supported by many segments of the middle class, staged a general strike in most of the larger cities. Not since the French Revolution of 1789 had any country experienced so massive an upheaval. Moreover, the working class had never before played so dynamic a role as did the Russian proletariat in the autumn and winter of 1905. During the general strike a Soviet of Workers' Deputies¹⁰ emerged spontaneously in St Petersburg for the purpose of directing the work stoppage. For the first time the disfranchised workers elected deputies who for a few weeks exercised a remarkable degree of authority

¹ In the Introduction all dates are according to the Western calendar, which was thirteen days ahead of the Russian (Julian) calendar. The Soviet Union adopted the Western calendar in February 1918. In the footnotes I have retained the dates that appeared in the original.

within revolutionary ranks. Soviets were quickly formed in some forty to fifty cities of the Empire, and several of them became important political centres.

The general strike virtually paralysed the country and for a few days the fate of the old order seemed to hang in the balance. In despair, Tsar Nicholas reluctantly issued the so-called October Manifesto, which gave the people civil liberties and promised to convoke an elected *Duma* that was to participate in all future legislative work. No one knew precisely how the Manifesto would be implemented, but few doubted that Russia's political institutions would be substantially liberalized.

All these dramatic developments took place within ten months and caught even the optimists among the revolutionaries by surprise. Understandably, many were confused and uncertain about what course of action to follow. Menshevik policies are especially difficult to describe because the faction failed to produce a clear-cut programme or to maintain a unified stance on the revolution. That the Mensheviks were floundering is clear from the resolutions they passed at their conference in April–May 1905 (Documents 4, 4a). On the one hand, they declared that they did not oppose an armed uprising; yet they insisted that before embarking upon armed action, Social Democrats must engage in extensive agitational and organizational work. Although they held that Marxists must not participate in any provisional government that might be formed after the fall of the autocracy, they claimed that this injunction 'of course does not rule out the desirability of a partial, episodic seizure of power and the formation of revolutionary communes in a particular town or area, purely with the object of extending the scope of the rising and disorganizing the government'. It is worth noting that the essentials of this resolution came to be embodied in Martov's broad strategy – widely supported by Mensheviks in the second half of 1905 – which called for the creation of a network of organs of revolutionary self-government throughout Russia in the hope that these would ultimately amass enough strength to launch an assault on the central government.¹¹ Most astonishing was the Mensheviks' suggestion at the conference that Russia might skip the bourgeois stage: in one resolution they refused to exclude the possibility of a proletarian seizure of power in Russia should the revolution spread to those advanced countries of Europe that were already 'ripe' for socialism. This ran counter to what had been the prevailing view on the subject within Russian Marxism.

By November 1905 several leading Mensheviks had returned to Russia and were completely carried away by the revolutionary mood

that had gripped the masses. 'We live as though in a state of intoxication,' Fedor Dan wrote from St Petersburg; 'the revolutionary atmosphere affects people like wine.' A few days later he pointed out that 'as far as the general strike is concerned, it engendered the most revolutionary and activist mood among the St Petersburg workers, [and] it strongly affected the leaders'.¹² Together with Alexander Martynov, Parvus (Alexander Helphand) and Leon Trotsky, Dan founded a newspaper, *Nachalo*, which, late in 1905, carried articles that in some respects were more radical than those in the Bolshevik organ, *Novaia zhizn'*. Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, which suggested that Russia might skip the bourgeois phase and enter the socialist era even before the upheaval spread to the West, became a major theme in *Nachalo's* editorials (Document 5). Among the prominent Mensheviks in Russia, Martov was one of the few who refused to sanction so radical a departure from the view of Russia's development traditionally upheld by Russian Marxists.

Axelrod, who had emigrated to Switzerland in 1881 and had remained there in 1905 because of his wife's illness, emerged as the most outspoken Menshevik critic of the radical line. Under no circumstances would he abandon the traditional view of his movement concerning Russia's future course of evolution. In fact, he contended that should a conflict develop between the 'special tasks of social democracy' and the general democratic demands of bourgeois progressives, the 'party would have to renounce . . . its tasks'.¹³ For Axelrod, concessions by the proletariat were preferable to a split among the forces opposing the autocracy that might well have the effect of giving tsarism a new lease on life. But this did not mean that workers should sit idly by and abstain from political activity. In the autumn of 1905 he published a pamphlet proposing a workers' congress, whose purpose would be to transform the labour movement into a genuine mass organization controlled from below (Document 8).

Axelrod was moved to write the pamphlet by the realization that although for two years the Mensheviks had been advocating the broadening and democratization of their movement, yet very little had been achieved along these lines. Because of the faction's illegal status during almost the entire period from 1903 to early 1917 (the exception was the few weeks late in 1905), little hard information is available about its organization or membership. But the data on these subjects that did come to light were not encouraging. According to an estimate of 1907, the Bolsheviks could boast of 46,143 followers and the Mensheviks of 38,174. These figures were probably

inflated,¹⁴ but even so they were not impressive, given the fact that the industrial population numbered about two million. In an interesting study of social democracy during the Revolution of 1905 Martov provided some statistics that also suggested indifference on the part of the masses to sustained work in party organizations. He pointed out that in 1905 workers' dues amounted to only a small proportions of the budgets of all local Social-Democratic committees (Menshevik as well as Bolshevik). In Riga, workers' contributions constituted 22 per cent of the budget; in Sevastopol, 14 per cent; and in Ivanovo-Voznesensk, 53 per cent, which was larger than in any other locale. Martov contended that the principal reason for the disappointing statistics was that the Mensheviks had failed to involve large numbers of industrial labourers in the everyday affairs of the movement. The most obvious means of reaching the masses, public meetings, was unavailable because of police restrictions. But in addition the faction's 'cumbersome' and 'hierarchical' organization impeded contact between leaders and rank-and-file members. The result was that vital issues and policies were rarely discussed in local committees. In the circumstances, the politically mature workers who sympathized with the basic aims of the Mensheviks saw no value in being active in local organizations.¹⁵ This troublesome situation received much attention in the Menshevik press throughout 1905, and Axelrod's plan for a workers' congress was designed as one solution.

Many of Axelrod's Menshevik colleagues, under the influence of the militant mood of the masses, were initially cool to what they perceived as a prosaic proposal. Assuming as they did that their differences with the Bolsheviks were now insignificant, these Mensheviks undertook to promote collaboration between the factions. The Leninists responded favourably, and by the end of 1905 representatives of the two groups cooperated in local areas on a wide range of activities. Agreement was also reached to convoke another congress of the party to bring about the formal reunification of the factions. Far more workers than ever before took part in the elections of delegates; and the Mensheviks, to their delight, won sixty-two seats as against forty-six for the Bolsheviks.

But when the Congress convened in Stockholm in April 1906, it turned out that the factions were further apart on strategy and tactics than had been assumed. In large measure, this was due to the fact that late in 1905 the revolutionary tide had begun to recede. Not only had the socialist revolution failed to materialize: the government was reasserting its dominance over all the oppositional forces. After the conclusion of a peace treaty with Japan in the summer of 1905, the

autocracy brought reliable troops into European Russia and used them to crush various uprisings, including one staged by the Bolshevik-dominated soviet in Moscow. France advanced generous loans to the government, bolstering financial stability in the country. The October Manifesto had gained the support of a section of the middle class, and, as a result, the opposition no longer constituted a united force. By late November 1905, even the proletariat's enthusiasm for revolution had waned: when the authorities dissolved the St Petersburg Soviet the masses took no resolute action. In view of this sudden reversal in the political situation, numerous Mensheviks retreated from the radicalism they had embraced in the autumn of 1905.

The Bolsheviks, however, continued to cling to the strategy outlined by Lenin. Having rejected the possibility that the bourgeoisie might adopt a progressive stance, he argued in favour of a provisional government, the so-called 'revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry'. In other words, he now considered the peasants a revolutionary class that, together with the proletariat, could form a government charged with introducing democratic reforms and arranging for the election of a constituent assembly. Lenin generally stressed that the provisional government should not overstep the bounds of bourgeois democracy, but on one occasion he suggested the possibility of an immediate attempt to establish socialism. With increasing vehemence he urged Social Democrats to concentrate on preparations for an armed uprising.¹⁶

Now that the Mensheviks were shying away from extremist positions they rallied around Axelrod, who became their chief spokesman on strategy at the Stockholm Congress. In a wide-ranging speech he chided Russian Marxists for having strayed from orthodoxy, warned against the danger of maximalism and re-stated the principles of Menshevism. Moreover, he pleaded with the delegates to vote for participation in the elections to the *Duma*, the parliamentary institution granted by Tsar Nicholas. Although the government invested the *Duma* with far less power than the opposition had sought and did not concede universal and equal suffrage, it did allow certain categories of workers to vote. Axelrod did not find this arrangement ideal, but he considered it a step in the right direction, and one that could lead to further concessions if properly exploited (Document 6).

Lenin promptly accused the Mensheviks of falling into a trap. If the workers participated in the elections, they would frequently be forced to support candidates representing the Constitutional Democrats (also known as Kadets), a liberal bourgeois party, because

in many districts they were the most progressive men with any chance of winning. But, as Lenin saw it, the Kadets would use their power in the *Duma* to suppress the revolutionary movement. He also argued that Social-Democratic support for the *Duma* would mislead the masses into believing that democracy could be established by peaceful means.¹⁷ Not long after these deliberations Lenin completely changed his mind and advocated participation in the elections to the *Duma*. Soviet historians acknowledge that on this issue Lenin committed his one error of judgment – which, however, he quickly rectified.

Even before Lenin had reconsidered the matter, the Mensheviks at the Stockholm Congress had passed a resolution in favour of participation by a vote of sixty-two to forty-six. The gathering also adopted the Menshevik proposal on the agrarian question (Document 7), which differed markedly from the Leninist plan of ‘nationalization’ of the land. Finally, the Congress elected a Central Committee of seven Mensheviks and three Bolsheviks. Formally at least, the party was reunited and for the first time the Mensheviks dominated Russian Marxism.

Although Lenin expressed satisfaction with the accomplishments of the Congress, he did not really accept its decisions. He maintained his organization intact and soon called for another congress in the hope of recapturing control of the party. By the same token, the Mensheviks failed to disperse their forces. Under the circumstances, it did not take long for new clashes to break out.

One of the more divisive issues was Axelrod’s plan for a workers’ congress, which by 1906 the Mensheviks generally supported. Lenin considered this proposal every bit as harmful as the Menshevik views on party membership formulated at the Second Congress. He attacked Axelrod’s scheme as the ‘prototype of all *Iskra* absurdities’, as ‘comedy, phantom . . . chaotic ideas . . . scholastic pedagogy’. ‘The labour party,’ he declared further, ‘is not a club for intelligentsia “discussions”, but a fighting proletarian organization. Discussion, discussion, but it is necessary to live and act.’ Axelrod’s plan, if enacted, would surely lead to the triumph of opportunism and to the subordination of the working class to the bourgeoisie.¹⁸

Meanwhile the Mensheviks were becoming increasingly distressed by the Bolshevik ‘expropriations’ or ‘partisan actions’, which were armed robberies of banks or government institutions for the purpose of procuring funds for the revolutionary movement. The Mensheviks considered the criminal acts morally objectionable and a blot on the honour of every Social Democrat. At the Stockholm Congress they had succeeded in passing a condemnation of the partisan actions,

but the Bolsheviks paid no attention. The illicitly procured money, as well as Lenin's gifts as an organizer, enabled the Bolsheviks to elect more delegates than their rivals to the Fifth Party Congress, which met in London in May 1907. In addition, the Bolsheviks could count on the support of the forty-five Polish and twenty-six Lettish delegates, whereas the Mensheviks generally received the support of the fifty-four representatives of the Bund.¹⁹

The relative civility that had marked the previous Congress was nowhere in evidence at this gathering. The Bolsheviks, pressing their advantage to the limit, savagely attacked Axelrod's proposal for a workers' congress and passed a resolution condemning the idea on the ground that it would 'inevitably lead to the disorganization of the party'.²⁰ The Leninist majority also denounced the Kadets as deserters from the revolutionary cause, a decisive departure from the more moderate attitude of the Mensheviks. But, surprisingly, the Congress again repudiated, by an overwhelming vote of 170 to 35, with 52 abstentions, partisan actions and expropriations (Document 9). Even most of the Bolsheviks could not sanction these forays, but Lenin continued to defy the will of the Congress and to ignore the squeamishness of his followers.

Anyone who reads the protocols of the Congress cannot fail to be struck by the atmosphere of unreality that pervaded the meetings. The delegates took the discussions of tactics very seriously, because they assumed that a revolutionary situation still prevailed in Russia. But two weeks after the Congress adjourned, P. A. Stolypin, the Prime Minister, engineered a *coup d'état* that marked the end of the Revolution of 1905. He dissolved the *Duma*, ordered the arrest of hundreds of revolutionaries and placed most of the country under a state of emergency.

Martov, who had returned to the West, professed great optimism on hearing of these actions: 'Eternal irony of fate! It seems to me that in the end the *coup* that has been staged will be beneficial to the revolution since it will remove much of the ambiguity and bring the nation back to that starting-point of the revolution when a small group of privileged people stood in opposition to the aggregate of all the objectively progressive classes.' Such a development would be a 'brilliant justification of those revolutionary perspectives which we depicted in our platform before the [London] Congress . . . [as well as] our predictions that the . . . [Kadets] will again "become more radical"', and, finally, our tactics in the *Duma*.²¹

In this instance, as in so many others, the optimism of the Mensheviks proved to be totally unfounded. The Russian government easily crushed their organizations and the proletariat failed to

respond to appeals to protest against the *coup*. An economic recession and the turbulence of the two previous years had engendered widespread apathy among the working class. Dan, who remained in Russia, reported that he could not even raise enough money to start a newspaper. Over a decade later, Martov accurately summed up the effect of Stolypin's repression: 'At this point the forces of the party collapsed like a house of cards.'²²

The experiences of the Revolution of 1905 were crucial in leading to a clarification of the doctrines of the two factions. Although both groups represented ideological variants of revolutionary Marxism, by 1907 each had evolved a self-contained set of attitudes towards Russia's future development. In part, the process of self-identification arose from a curious dynamic: whenever one faction advocated a policy, the other not only criticized it but offered an alternative buttressed by an elaborate theoretical rationale. The result was that by 1907 the conflict between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks encompassed a variety of issues, most of which had not figured in the initial schism.

The Mensheviks concluded that it was fatal to concentrate on the preparation of an armed uprising, not only because it provoked massive repression but also because it distorted the nature of the Social Democratic movement by transforming it into a conspiratorial party organized along hierarchical, military lines. They also contended that the advocacy of extremist tactics would inevitably split and therefore weaken the opposition to the autocracy. In any case, even though the Mensheviks frequently criticized middle-class progressives, they refused to write them off as a force that might play an effective role in opposing the tsarist regime. Finally, more than ever before, the Mensheviks resolved to establish closer ties with the masses and build large organizations dedicated to imbuing the greatest possible number of workers with class-consciousness.

By contrast, the Leninists believed that the course of events during the years 1905-7 had confirmed the soundness of their view that only a rigidly centralized, elitist party devoted primarily to illegal work could be effective in autocratic Russia. Moreover, they were now persuaded that the middle class could not be relied upon to take decisive action against the old order. For this reason the Leninists came to stress the necessity of collaboration between the proletariat and the peasantry in carrying out the first, so-called bourgeois, revolution. The Mensheviks' rejection of these principles and strategies made it inevitable that a stormy future awaited Russian social democracy.

Indeed, during the period of reaction that followed the *coup d'état* (1907–14), the two factions of the RSDWP grew further apart. A principal source of conflict was the Bolshevik persistence in staging partisan actions (Document 10). Late in 1907 Axelrod was stunned by the revelation that some Leninists had been caught by the Berlin police manufacturing counterfeit rubles: 'If all this is true, then I ask: How can we remain with them in one party?'²³ Ultimately, the Mensheviks recoiled from a final break; but the Bolsheviks' use of their ill-gotten funds to build up underground cells was bound to enrage their adversaries, especially because the Menshevik organization was a shambles.

Gradually, by 1908, Menshevik fortunes began to improve somewhat. In the West, the leaders of the movement founded the paper *Golos sotsialdemokrata*, and this provided them with an official mouthpiece that could serve as a rallying point. In the Russian Empire three centres of Menshevik strength emerged: an underground organization in Georgia; a group of intellectuals in St Petersburg led by A. N. Potresov, which, from 1910 to 1914, published the highly literate *Nasha zaria*; and finally, an assortment of so-called 'practicals', who worked in the trade unions, cooperatives, workers' educational institutions and clubs, insurance programmes and other organizations still tolerated by the government. The practicals hoped to train worker intelligentsia for participation in the running of Social-Democratic organizations.

In the meantime, a new ideological controversy had erupted among Russian Marxists. From 1909 until 1914 Lenin characterized anyone who disagreed with him as a liquidator, a term of abuse whose meaning was never clear. Apparently, he had learned this technique of discrediting opponents from Plekhanov. 'Plekhanov,' he told an associate in 1904, 'once said to me about a critic of Marxism (I've forgotten his name): "First, let's stick the convict's badge on him, and then after that we'll examine his case." And I think that we must "stick the convict's badge" on anyone and everyone who tries to undermine Marxism, even if we don't go on to examine his case.'²⁴

In the hope of demolishing his adversaries, Lenin charged that liquidationism infected Menshevism from top to bottom. And in hurling this invective he steadily escalated its meaning. The liquidators wished to eliminate 'the existing organization of the RSDWP and to replace it with a shapeless association'; they were 'intrepid opportunists' who planned to destroy the illegal party and, in fact, the entire party; they opposed 'the revolutionary class

struggle of the proletariat' and had fallen prey to reformism and to 'non-Social-Democratic, bourgeois tendencies'.²⁵

These charges were far-fetched. The Menshevik leaders continued to subscribe to the notion of class struggle, historical materialism, the inevitability of revolution and to Marx's economic doctrines. It is true that the conflict between the factions had assumed a new dimension, but an examination of the arguments discloses that the disputants had really resumed the debate, begun in 1903, over the nature of a proletarian party. Thus, Dan asserted (Document 11) that if it was to remain true to its proclaimed aims, social democracy must emphasize legal work without, however, abandoning illegal, underground activities. Potresov dismissed the charge of liquidationism entirely on the ground that in the wake of the counter-revolution the party had disintegrated and that therefore there was nothing left to liquidate (Document 12).

Lenin found both these positions heretical. He contended that precisely because open political work was so difficult in autocratic Russia, the party should concern itself primarily with strengthening its underground structure – though he favoured utilizing those legal possibilities for political work that still existed. Most Mensheviks reversed the order of priorities, in large measure because they realized that despite severe government repression the scope for legal work was now greater than it had been before 1905. They wanted to take advantage of this new situation to broaden the movement as much as possible. The Bolsheviks, however, sought to maintain the party as an elite corps of professionals.

Despite the acrimony of the polemics over liquidationism, in the years from 1907 to 1912 attempts at reconciliation continued to be made. Like many radicals, Menshevik leaders found it difficult to believe that they faced implacable enemies on the left. But Lenin was determined not to collaborate with men who might challenge his authority and policies. In 1912 he convened a meeting in Prague of his closest followers, who at best represented one-fifth of the membership of the Social Democratic movement. After declaring itself the 'Sixth Conference of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party', the gathering expelled the 'Menshevik liquidators'. The party was now formally split, and in the zealous competition for working-class support the Bolsheviks came to enjoy an advantage.

Between 1912 and 1914 several legal workers' organizations, created after 1905 and initially Menshevik centres of strength, transferred their allegiance to the Leninists. It will suffice to cite a few examples. In the August 1912 election to the governing board of the Union of Metalworkers in St Petersburg, the most powerful union in

the capital, the Mensheviks were overwhelmed by the Bolsheviks. Half a year later the Bolsheviks won control of the All-Russian Insurance Council and the St Petersburg Insurance Office. In April 1914 they succeeded in electing one half of the members of the governing board of the Printers' Union in Petersburg, known as the 'citadel of Menshevism'. There is evidence to suggest that by the summer of 1914 the Leninists controlled $14\frac{1}{2}$ out of 18 governing boards of trade unions in the capital and 10 out of 13 in Moscow.²⁶

This shift of allegiance on the part of workers in the two major cities of the Empire apparently occurred in consequence of the changes that were taking place in the character of urban Russia. During the upsurge of industrial growth from 1910 to 1914 the industrial labour force increased from 1,793,000 to 2,400,000, which meant that a sizable number of younger people had moved from the countryside to urban centres. Many of the new arrivals in large cities were particularly responsive to the 'extremist objectives and tactics advocated by Bolsheviks' because they lacked the discipline and moderation usually acquired during long periods of union activity and because they had not undergone the 'chastening experience' of the defeats of the Revolution of 1905. Another probable reason for the electoral successes of the Bolsheviks is that their underground organizations were more extensive and effective than those of the Mensheviks. In de-emphasizing illegal organizations the latter had handed the Leninists a clear advantage in waging propaganda and in recruiting supporters among the workers.

In the circumstances, it is not surprising that Lenin was in no mood to compromise when the International Socialist Bureau (ISB), the executive of the Second International, made an effort during the first half of 1914 to reunite the warring factions. The ISB intended to exert pressure on the Bolsheviks by officially condemning them for their intransigence at the next congress of the International, which was scheduled for August.²⁷ In the meantime, however, World War I broke out and the scheduled congress never met. The war produced new, irreconcilable differences, which virtually ensured that the split would be permanent.

WORLD WAR I

For the Mensheviks, as for most socialists, the outbreak of hostilities was a traumatic event. For years individual parties and the International had discussed the causes of war and the measures that socialists might take to prevent military conflict. The deliberations usually ended with a denunciation of war as an outgrowth of

capitalism and imperialism and with an evasive statement on the tactics to be employed to avert resort to force. The only effective tactic seemed to be a general strike, but most socialists were not prepared to commit themselves to so radical a measure. Nonetheless, Marxists clung with a kind of religious faith to the notion that at the moment of crisis the working class would act decisively to halt the descent into what they considered the madness of war.

Consequently, the decision of the German Social Democratic party – the largest, best disciplined and most respected in the world – to support the Kaiser's government in the war effort provoked acute shock and disillusionment among Marxists the world over. The German party offered a plausible reason for its stand: Germany, surrounded by hostile nations, was defending Europe against 'Asiatic barbarism', i.e., Russia. But this sort of reasoning cut both ways. Thus, a majority of French socialists argued that in supporting their government they were defending a democratic country against Prussian authoritarianism. Moreover, both French and German Marxists felt that they could not ignore the fact that the masses, contrary to expectations, turned out to be patriotic. Had the socialist leaders advocated opposition to the war, they probably would have lost much of their following. Yet in every country a sizable number of socialists refused to follow the patriotic line, and passions ran so high that it became impossible to maintain the unity either of the Second International or of any national party.

The Mensheviks divided into several groups on the war issue. Their seven *Duma* representatives refused to vote for the military budget and together with the five Bolshevik deputies issued a declaration (drafted by a group of Mensheviks) repudiating the war (Document 13). Most Mensheviks, agreeing with the declaration, became 'internationalists'; that is, they condemned the war as an imperialist adventure and urged that a unified socialist movement exert pressure on all governments to end hostilities on the basis of 'no annexations and no indemnities' (Document 14). But there were some differences among the internationalists. For example, the Siberian Zimmerwaldists (Dan, I. G. Tsereteli and Wladimir Voitinsky) contended that under certain conditions defence of Russia might be justifiable.²⁸ After February 1917, when Russia was a democracy, this theme became a cardinal feature of the doctrine of revolutionary defensism, the official policy of the Menshevik party.

The right wing of the movement, led by Potresov, advocated a rather subtle approach to the war issue (Document 15). It approved a 'civil truce' (suspension of class struggle) for democratic France and England but not for autocratic Russia. As Russia's defeats exposed

ever more strikingly the incompetence of the government, the right wing, supported by several well-known publicists and leaders of the workers' intelligentsia, intensified its demands that the state structure be democratized. It is noteworthy that very few Mensheviks suggested unconditional support for their government's war effort.

It is equally noteworthy that all the Mensheviks rejected Lenin's position on the war, which was the most militant in the Marxist camp. His principle of revolutionary defeatism embodied the notions that Marxists should work for the defeat of their countries and that for the Russian proletariat 'the least evil' would be a defeat of tsarism. In addition, Lenin urged a break with the Second International, because it had demonstrated by its failure to take decisive measures against the war that it was infected with 'petty-bourgeois opportunism'. Finally, he advocated a transformation of the international conflict into civil war. The full significance of the Menshevik and Bolshevik positions on the war became apparent only in 1917, after the collapse of the autocracy, when the attitudes of the two proletarian parties on this central question vitally affected the course of events in Russia.

THE REVOLUTION OF 1917

The revolution that broke out early in 1917 took the Mensheviks – as well as everyone else – by surprise. For years Marxists had talked of revolution and claimed to be organizing the masses for it, but early in 1917, according to one observer, 'Not one party was preparing for the great event.'²⁹ No one perceived the depth of the people's desperation. During the three years of war the country had suffered devastating defeats at the hands of the Germans, innumerable losses in human lives, food shortages and exceedingly rapid inflation. In most people's minds these disasters could be traced directly to the blunders and incompetence of the tsarist authorities. The conservative *Duma* deputy V. V. Shulgin accurately described the situation in the capital (Petrograd): 'The trouble was that in that large city it was impossible to find a few hundred people who felt kindly towards the government. That's not all. The government did not feel kindly towards itself. There was not a single Minister who believed in himself or in what he was doing.'³⁰ No government so lacking in public confidence or in self-confidence can remain in office very long in the face of active and massive opposition.

On 8 March the Social Democrats in Petrograd planned to celebrate International Women's Day with meetings and speeches. Nobody had ordered any sort of militant action, but the constant bread shortages impelled some disgruntled women from the textile

factories to go out on strike and to ask other workers for support. On the first day about 90,000 strikers marched in the streets and within twenty-four hours the number doubled. Their placards carried both political and economic slogans: 'Down with the autocracy!', 'Down with the war!', 'We want bread!' By the third day 240,000 people were demonstrating and the city was virtually paralysed. Ultimately, it was the army's attitude that made possible these manifestations of hostility towards the government. At first, the soldiers made half-hearted attempts to disperse the throngs; but by the fourth day many of them, weary of the war, refused to charge their fellow citizens and some even joined the demonstrators. On 12 March it was clear that governmental authority had collapsed: Tsar Nicholas, who at first did not take seriously the reports of disorders in Petrograd, could do nothing but abdicate. The spontaneous revolution had brought down an empire of over one hundred million persons within four days at the cost of 1,315 people killed and wounded.

Formally, power passed into the hands of a Provisional Government, led by Prince George E. Lvov, a moderate liberal. The programme proclaimed by the new government provided for civil liberties and legal equality for all, as well as for the democratic election of a constituent assembly that would determine the political future of Russia. But from the beginning the Provisional Government could rule only by the grace of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Elected, rather haphazardly, by workers and soldiers, the Petrograd Soviet – the most authoritative of all the soviets that soon appeared in many localities – was the only institution that could command the loyalty and obedience of the masses. In reality, there existed in Russia what has come to be known as a system of dual power. The Provisional Government had the responsibility, but not the power, to govern; the Soviet had the power, but failed to take the responsibility, for directing the affairs of state.³¹ The system was bound to generate conflict, confusion and inefficiency. Not one of the pressing problems facing the country – the war, economic disintegration, political reorganization – could be satisfactorily resolved.

For much of 1917 the Petrograd Soviet was dominated by a coalition of Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries (a radical peasant party). Although most of the two to three thousand deputies did not formally belong to any party, they tended to follow the lead of these two movements. On 9 March the Bolsheviks formed an independent 'fraction' in the Soviet; but they could claim the support of no more than forty deputies. The decline in Bolshevik strength within the St Petersburg working class since 1914 resulted from the

fact that during the war the government had decimated Leninist underground organizations by arresting and exiling many Bolsheviks.³² Because the Mensheviks were better organized, more experienced and had at their disposal a larger number of talented politicians (most notably Tsereteli, Dan and Nicholas Chkheidze) than the Socialist Revolutionaries, they became the senior partners in the ruling coalition within the Soviet. Thus, Menshevik policies were crucial in influencing the course of events in 1917.

These policies were formulated by the revolutionary defensists, the centrists, who controlled the party. Convinced that Russia was undergoing a bourgeois revolution, they ruled out the assumption of power by the proletariat. Two additional considerations tended to strengthen their resolve to shun power: fear that, as in 1905, excessive radicalism would split the progressive forces; and a suspicion that the working class was not equipped to run the state. The Mensheviks therefore offered support to the Provisional Government on condition that it would not abandon the democratic gains already achieved (Document 16). Most important, the Mensheviks favoured continuation of the war to protect the Revolution against authoritarian Germany (Documents 17, 18, 20), although they urged the government and the international socialist movement to seek a speedy, negotiated peace. They sensed, correctly, that without peace it would be exceedingly difficult to solve Russia's internal problems; but their suggestions on how to bring the war to an end proved thoroughly unrealistic. For one thing, the Provisional Government showed little interest in a negotiated peace, in large measure because some of its most influential members still harboured hopes of annexing Constantinople after defeating the Central Powers. In addition, the International remained ineffective as a peacemaking organization: not only was it still sharply divided, but several countries (the United States, France and Great Britain) would not allow their citizens to attend a socialist conference designed to exert pressure for a peace based on compromise.

Within their own party the revolutionary defensists had to fend off criticism from two sides. On the right a small group led by Potresov put greater stress than the centrists on vigorous prosecution of the war (Document 22). A weightier challenge came from the left wing, the Menshevik internationalists, who in May opposed the party's decision to bolster the faltering bourgeois regime by entering the Cabinet as junior partners. In July, Martov, leader of the internationalists, made a bold proposal: the establishment of a 'government of the democracy', i.e., one based on all parties represented in the soviets, which was to take Russia out of the war and

supervise elections to the Constituent Assembly (Documents 23, 23a).

Martov suggested this radical move at a time when the government was amply demonstrating its weakness. On 16 July, soldiers, sailors and workers, without instigation by any political party, rebelled in Petrograd and demanded that the Soviet take power. Only the refusal of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet to yield to the appeals of the demonstrators prevented the fall of the regime. After two fruitless days of marching and sporadic shooting, the crowds grew tired and went home.³³ At about the same time four Kadet ministers resigned in protest against the government's policy of allowing all Ukrainian military units to take orders from the Ukrainian *Rada* (Council). Now that the organized bourgeoisie (the Kadets) no longer exercised power, Martov considered it senseless for proletarian leaders to remain in a coalition dominated by middle-class ministers who did not formally represent a significant social force; a 'government of the democracy' should now be formed.

Had the Mensheviks heeded Martov's advice, it is more than likely that they could have taken power and governed with a reasonable degree of effectiveness. The masses were eager for radical change, as is revealed most dramatically by this remark, made by a worker to Victor Chernov, the Socialist Revolutionary Minister of Agriculture: 'Take power, you son of a bitch, when it is given to you.'³⁴ More important, as one historian has put it, 'the Executive Committee [of the soviets] was at this time the *de facto* government: it put down the riots, restored order, brought troops to Petrograd, and received affirmations of loyalty from most garrison units. . . .'³⁵ But the inhibitions we have already mentioned continued to predominate in the thinking of Menshevik leaders (Document 21).

In the meantime, the *immobilisme* of the Provisional Government led to a steady decline in its authority. Because of the turbulent conditions throughout the country it postponed the election of a Constituent Assembly, the one institution outside of the Soviet that could have created a regime based on popular support. By the summer there were widespread peasant disorders, often accompanied by land seizures; but the Government could neither stop the violence nor reach a final decision on agrarian legislation. Nor could it prevent local soviets from seizing control over local regions, workers from taking over factories and nationality groups from asserting their autonomy or independence. Worst of all, the government lacked a vigorous peace policy. As Russian troops became increasingly unwilling to fight, the rate of desertion reached alarming proportions. By the autumn of 1917 Russia was in an advanced stage of disintegration.

Not surprisingly, the Mensheviks, who were prominent in both the soviets and the Government, could not retain the confidence of the masses. A few statistics tell the tale. In June the Mensheviks elected 248 delegates to the First Congress of the Soviets, whereas the Bolsheviks managed to elect only 105. But at the Second Congress of the Soviets, which met in October, there were only 70 to 80 Menshevik delegates as against 300 Bolsheviks. During the early stages of the Revolution the largest Menshevik organization in Petrograd consisted of 10,000 members; but by October it had virtually ceased to exist. 'Membership dues,' so wrote a Menshevik at that time, 'were not being paid, the circulation of the [Menshevik paper] *Rabochaia gazeta* declined catastrophically, [and] the last all-city conference did not take place for lack of a quorum. . . . In the [recent] election of the Moscow regional *dumas* the Mensheviks won 25 out of 560 seats. The withdrawal from the party of groups and individuals is an everyday occurrence.' When the elections to the constituent assembly were finally held in November, the Mensheviks received 1.4 million votes, in contrast to 16 million for the Socialist Revolutionaries and 9.8 million for the Bolsheviks.³⁶

Unlike the Mensheviks, Lenin refused to be hampered by political or ideological restraints. As soon as he had arrived in Petrograd in April he had called for fraternization at the front lines as a substitute for the government's defensist posture, and for a socialist revolution, a programme vigorously denounced by the Mensheviks (Document 19). After much reluctance, the Bolshevik party in May adopted his programme and strategy. As mass disorder spread, Lenin indiscriminately supported the demands of almost everyone who defied authority. He approved of workers taking over factories, which amounted to syndicalism, a movement always scorned by Marxists. He favoured peasant seizures of land, which ran counter to the Bolshevik programme of nationalization. He gave his blessing to the soviets that assumed power on the local level, despite traditional Bolshevik insistence on the principles of centralization and hierarchy. The Mensheviks could now score telling points by accusing Lenin of repudiating cherished doctrines; but he enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing his party overtake its rivals in popular support.

In September the Provisional Government's prestige and authority sank to their lowest level. It had survived an attempted right-wing *coup* by General Lavr Kornilov only because the Petrograd Soviet had spontaneously acted to defeat the counter-revolutionary forces. Although some of the Bolshevik leaders had been arrested after the 'July Days', the Leninist party contributed substantially to the efforts against Kornilov, and this helped raise its standing among the people.

Also, during the Kornilov threat the Bolsheviks were permitted to create an armed workers' militia, which came to be the core of the military forces they used in overthrowing the Provisional Government. Then, when Alexander Kerensky, the Prime Minister at this time, failed to take measures to punish the insurgents, many people believed the widespread reports that several Ministers had been sympathetic to Kornilov. In mid-September a decisive shift to the left could be discerned in Petrograd and Moscow: for the first time the Bolsheviks gained majorities in the soviets in both cities. For Lenin, this was the signal that the moment to strike had arrived. After some prodding, the Bolshevik Central Committee agreed to prepare for an armed uprising. The *coup* took place on 7 November and, as Lenin put it a few months later, the seizure of power was as 'easy as lifting a feather'.

BOLSHEVIK RULE

The Mensheviks were united in their hostility to the Bolshevik *coup d'état* (Document 24), even though the party moved to the left in mid-November, when Martov and his internationalist group gained ascendancy. Martov, supported by such former centrists as Dan, persuaded his party to initiate negotiations for an all-socialist government ranging from the Popular Socialists (a moderate peasant party) to the Bolsheviks (Document 25). Several considerations prompted Martov to make this proposal: a desire to avoid both one-party rule by the Bolsheviks and a return to the *immobilisme* of the Provisional Government; fear of losing working-class support to the Leninists; and, finally, the existence of a sizable Bolshevik group opposed to the seizure of power by one party. Martov hoped to secure the support of the latter and thus force Lenin to agree to his plan. After some discussion of the proposal, apparently the only absolute condition posed by the Mensheviks, 'the cessation of political terror', was rejected by the Bolsheviks.³⁷ Most likely, Lenin was merely looking for a pretext to break off negotiations. He had taken power without help from his rivals in the radical camp and he now resolved not to share it with them.

All sectors of the Menshevik party were pessimistic about Russia's prospects under the Bolsheviks. Axelrod, for example, was convinced that history would avenge itself on those who had violated its rules by taking power in a country not yet ready for socialism. He therefore predicted that the life of the Bolshevik regime 'will be short; its days and weeks are numbered. But it is very doubtful whether the Revolution can still be saved and Russia can escape ruin.'³⁸ Martov contended that 'Although the masses of workers are for Lenin, his

regime more and more becomes a regime of terror not of the proletariat but of the *sans-culottes* – ill-assorted masses of armed soldiers, “Red Guards”, and sailors.’ The Bolshevik attempt to govern the country could not lead to anything but failure.³⁹

Under Martov’s leadership the Mensheviks in Russia adopted the strategy of acting as an oppositional party that criticized those policies they considered misguided or pernicious. Thus, they objected to Lenin’s dissolution, early in 1918, of the democratically elected Constituent Assembly, an action that he justified on the ground that a ‘republic of soviets is a higher form of the democratic principle than the customary bourgeois republic with its Constituent Assembly’⁴⁰ (Document 27). Similarly, they condemned the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk which, while it brought an end to the war with Germany, cost Russia 26 per cent of her population, 27 per cent of her arable land and 33 per cent of her manufacturing industry (Document 28). They denounced political terror and the suppression of freedom of the press, although later, in 1919, they believed that only the working class and its parties should enjoy this freedom. And they repudiated War Communism, the purpose of which was to establish tight government control over the economy, even at the price of terrible human suffering (Documents 26, 29). Ironically, the Mensheviks’ economic programme, reviled by the Leninists in 1918 and 1919, was to be adopted by the government in 1921, when the dreadful failure of War Communism was everywhere in evidence.

In voicing their criticisms the Mensheviks displayed admirable courage, for they, too, were the target of repression. On 1 December 1917, the government suppressed their central newspaper. In June 1918 they were expelled from the Central Committee of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets and shortly thereafter from all the soviets in Russia. Late in 1918 the authorities lifted some of the restrictions; but at best the status of the Mensheviks was one of semi-legality.

Nevertheless, the Mensheviks modified somewhat their hostility towards Bolshevism without, however, abandoning their criticisms. They were convinced that they faced an agonizing dilemma. They felt that they had to choose between Leninist rule and a regime dominated by counter-revolutionary forces, which by mid-1918 had amassed a formidable army. After Britain, France, Japan and the United States landed troops in Russia in the spring and summer of 1918, the Mensheviks were more certain than ever that their assessment of the alternatives facing their country was correct. To be sure, the stated purposes of the Western interventionists were to prevent the Germans from capturing valuable war supplies and to reopen the Eastern front, but soon the foreign troops helped the anti-

Bolshevik armies. To many people it now seemed that the Leninists were defending Russia against the despised imperialists, who would surely try to restore the old order. In the circumstances, the Mensheviks preferred the Bolsheviks, who were at least representatives of the working class and therefore – so they thought – subject to the influence of other Marxists. Martov and his colleagues began to talk of ‘straightening out’ the Bolshevik revolution and leading it along a more humane and realistic path. The outbreak of the German Revolution in November 1918 gave the Mensheviks new hope. They expected that the centre of world socialism would shift to Berlin and that this would have a salutary effect on the Leninists (Document 30).

But even after the German Revolution turned out not to be a genuinely socialist affair, the Mensheviks accorded the Bolsheviks strong support (Document 31). Inevitably, such an attitude prompted the Mensheviks to revise their assessment of Lenin’s revolution. The government’s continued existence led Martov to conclude that Bolshevism was a historically necessary stage that the country had to endure (Documents 32, 35), a line of reasoning that appealed to men schooled in the theory of dialectical materialism. This reasoning was carried to an extreme at a party conference in March–April 1920, when the Mensheviks predicted a course of development for all of Europe that would in some important respects resemble the recent history of Russia (Document 33).

At the same time, the Mensheviks altered their policy towards international socialism (Document 34). They now repudiated all attempts to resurrect the ‘opportunistic’ Second International, although they also rejected participation in the Third (Communist) International because they could not sanction the total subordination of world socialism to Moscow. Instead, in February 1921, the Mensheviks joined the so-called ‘Vienna Union’ or ‘Two-and-a-Half International’, which, broadly speaking, adopted a programme embodying their political principles. The new organization attracted members mainly from the Austrian, German and French parties, but it never evolved into a significant movement. It disbanded in 1923 and joined the remnants of the Second International in founding the Socialist and Labour International.

The shift in Menshevik thinking in the years 1917–20 is difficult to explain. True, the party’s hatred and fear of counter-revolution was an important consideration. But another factor must also be taken into account, the frame of mind of revolutionary Marxists living in a country that had supposedly experienced a working-class revolution in which they could not participate. The Mensheviks’ mood is poignantly illustrated in a private letter Dan wrote from Moscow

early in 1920. Dan explained that the party's situation was 'far from brilliant'. Deprived of freedom of the press, assembly or organization, without funds, 'under severe persecution', the Mensheviks were reduced to impotence. In the circumstances, Dan did not find it surprising that a growing number of his colleagues was being 'pushed' into embracing Communism. In his view, it was by no means only the 'careerist elements' who were defecting; nor were they simply attracted by the 'strength of Bolshevism or the brilliance of its outward successes'. Above all, they were motivated by a 'craving for activity'. In the face of this powerful yearning, Dan concluded, it was remarkable that the Menshevik organization had been able to survive at all. He even thought it likely that some good might come from the Menshevik swelling of the Bolshevik ranks because his former comrades might question Leninist policies and thus help to create a crisis within the Soviet system.⁴¹ Although Dan's conclusion is debatable, his description of the mood of many Mensheviks in Russia helps explain the gradual acceptance of a more sympathetic attitude towards Bolshevism by the movement as a whole.

A minority of Mensheviks in Russia resisted this trend, but it had virtually no opportunity to air its views. Axelrod, however, who had been in Stockholm at the time of the Bolshevik *coup*, remained in the West and could speak freely. The party had asked him to serve as its foreign representative and since he could not establish regular contact with his colleagues from 1918 to 1920, he assumed that the agreement between them on fundamental issues that had existed late in 1917 continued to prevail. In the name of his party, therefore, he launched a campaign to mobilize Western socialist opposition to the Bolshevik regime.

Axelrod refused to make any compromises with the new rulers, but neither would he lend support to the counter-revolutionaries or the Allied interventionists. Instead, he urged Western socialists to send a commission of inquiry to Russia to examine conditions there (Document 36). If his assessment of the Bolshevik system as a repressive form of government was publicly confirmed, the Leninists would find themselves in a dilemma: they would either be forced to moderate their policies or defy international socialism. Adoption of the first alternative would be an enormous victory for democratic socialism. Adoption of the second would erode the moral position of the Bolsheviks and embolden the democratic socialists in Russia.

Axelrod's call for a 'moral and political intervention' in Russian affairs by Western socialists may appear quixotic today. But it must be remembered that in the summer of 1918, when he first made the

proposal, the Bolshevik position was precarious. The harsh peace treaty imposed by the Germans had aroused a considerable amount of opposition in the country and even within Lenin's party. The counter-revolution and, to a lesser extent, the Allied intervention posed a grave military threat. The economy continued to deteriorate, and War Communism only aggravated an already chaotic situation. The Bolshevik leaders themselves feared that without help from socialists in the West they would not be able to survive for long.⁴² In this situation Axelrod's hopes of influencing the Bolshevik regime seem not to have been all that unreasonable.

But his attempts to gain support for his proposal encountered one obstacle after another. Initially, in mid-1918, many German Marxists opposed his scheme because it ran counter to their government's policy of promoting 'Bolshevik chaos' in Russia and thus keeping that country weak while war raged in the West. There was also a general fear among socialists that criticism of the Bolsheviks might be interpreted as giving aid and comfort to reactionaries. Some socialists, though they repudiated Leninism, nonetheless admired the Bolsheviks for having staged the revolution for which Marxists had yearned for decades. Still, after much wrangling, Western Social Democrats meeting in Bern in February 1919, in an attempt to resurrect the Second International, decided to send a commission of inquiry to Russia. It never carried out its mission, because the Entente Powers refused to grant passports to the delegates. Axelrod assumed, probably correctly, that the governments feared that the commission might expose the 'recklessly reactionary conduct' of Western agents and troops in Russia, and also that the visitors might return with glowing reports about conditions there that would enhance Bolshevik influence in the European labour movements. Axelrod was deeply disappointed, all the more so because Western socialists made so few efforts to obtain a reversal of their governments' decisions.

In September 1920, Martov went to the West and soon thereafter the leading Mensheviks made public their disagreements with one another. In an attempt to steer the movement back to his concept of traditional Marxism, Axelrod published a long letter in the party newspaper (now printed in the West) indicating his criticisms of official Menshevism (Document 37). He could not accept the leadership's views on the nature of Bolshevism, the likelihood of revolution in the West, and, above all, the relationship between political democracy and socialism. In reply, Martov reiterated his position: the Leninists had fulfilled a 'historically necessary' task in carrying out their revolution and any government that was likely to rise from the ashes of this one would be even worse for Russia. 'In the

struggle against Bolshevism, when it defends the authentic achievements of the Revolution (together with its dictatorship, liable to be abolished) against the counter-revolution, we openly and without reservation take the side of Bolshevism, and do not fear to say to the proletariat: in the face of [P. I.] Wrangel's and [P.] Struve's 'democracy' in quotation marks and the 'democracy' of [David] Lloyd George and [Marshal Ferdinand] Foch in quotation marks, you should support the 'Soviet power' in quotation marks and the tyranny – without quotation marks – of Lenin and Trotsky as the lesser evil. The logic of our theoretical position cannot commit us to any other [conclusion].'⁴³ Martov insisted that despite these views he was by no means an apologist for the new government.

Axelrod found this reasoning utterly misguided. He, too, opposed Lloyd George's interventionist policy in Russia, but he nevertheless could not accept the idea that the Leninist system of arbitrary rule was superior to that of Great Britain. He also could not agree that Marxists had to choose between Communism and a counter-revolutionary government led by Wrangel. It was precisely to avoid such a choice that he had proposed the plan of socialist intervention, and Martov's indifference to this possibility (which he had previously favoured) especially grieved Axelrod. This meant that Martov was prepared to forego any determined pressure on the Soviet government rather than collaborate with Social Democrats whom he considered to be opportunists. Ultimately, the difference between the two men turned on the weight each assigned to traditional, liberal democracy. For Axelrod it was of decisive importance; without it there could be no socialism as he understood the term. Martov was not contemptuous of democracy, but as his comments on Lloyd George suggest, he did not attach nearly as much significance to it as did Axelrod.

The debate between Martov and Axelrod brought to light the assumptions and attitudes of the two principal factions within Menshevism. It is also important because it delineated the controversy over the Bolshevik revolution that has raged for over five decades and still continues to intrigue people concerned with contemporary politics.

In the 1920s Martov's views prevailed within Menshevism, but this had little practical significance. For in 1921 Lenin decided to reduce the movement to impotence. The Bolsheviks were worried by the Mensheviks' popularity and influence in the trade unions, which had risen sharply in the two preceding years in consequence of their accurate prediction that Lenin's attempt to introduce socialism in backward Russia would be ruinous for the economy. Then, in 1921,

Lenin embarked on the New Economic Policy and, as Leonard Schapiro has argued: 'To have left . . . [the Mensheviks] at liberty even with such restricted political freedom as they had enjoyed in 1919 and 1920 would have invited the obvious question why the party, whose policy had hitherto failed, should not yield power to the party whose [economic] policy was now being adopted.'⁴⁴ Hundreds of Mensheviks, including the entire Central Committee, were arrested. A year after this massive repression, early in 1922, some of the prisoners staged a hunger strike and the government therefore allowed ten prominent leaders (among them Dan) to emigrate. But many others, thoroughly demoralized, offered their services to the government in the belief that it was their obligation to help rebuild the country. A few (G. V. Chicherin, I. M. Maisky, A. S. Martynov, A. A. Troianovsky, A. Ia. Vyshinsky) actually rose to high positions in the Soviet state. The Bundists, close allies of the Mensheviks, suffered a similar fate. A minority joined the Communist party, but the Bund officially opposed the Leninists and was therefore suppressed. By the end of 1921 it virtually ceased to exist in Russia. By this time it had established a separate party in Poland, where it functioned until World War II.

The precipitous decline of Menshevism is most graphically demonstrated by the fact that in the election to the Moscow Soviet in January 1922, the party managed to have only one of its members chosen as deputy out of a total of two thousand. Small underground groups continued to exist until the early 1930s, but Menshevism had ceased to be a mass movement.

Most of the émigrés settled in Berlin, where, under Martov's direction, they founded a periodical, *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*, at the time the most reliable source of information on Russia in the West. The Mensheviks obtained much of this information by carefully studying Soviet publications; but, more important, they occasionally had access to Soviet officials who visited the West on government business and revealed details about developments in Russia that could not be found in printed works. Even today students engaged in research on the early history of the Soviet Union turn to *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* for factual accounts as well as astute analyses of trends.

After Martov's death in April 1923, the paper continued to subscribe to his views on the Bolshevik system of rule. If anything, his successor as leader of the movement, Dan, tended to be more optimistic about the Soviet Union's future course. Early in 1922, he declared: 'I do not believe that the sojourn abroad [of the émigrés] will be especially long. The contemporary accursed regime is

saturated to such a degree from top to bottom with contradictions that it can hardly hold out in its present form for any length of time.’ The Bolsheviks would either have to move to the right, towards Bonapartism, or to the left, towards democracy. Even if a Bonaparte assumed control, he would be forced to introduce ‘more or less’ liberal measures. ‘In any case,’ Dan concluded, ‘the Bolsheviks will either have to cease controlling the government, or – in one sense or another – stop being “Communists”.’⁴⁵

But there existed a minority of rightists among the Mensheviks in exile who did not share this optimism and, in fact, could not find any redeeming features in the Soviet experiment. As a result, the ideological debates within the movement once again became rancorous. Incensed over the difficulties the rightists encountered in airing their views in the party newspaper, one of their spokesmen caustically rebuked Dan and his supporters in 1925: ‘At bottom, this is a continuing heritage of Bolshevik methods, which twenty-five years ago were followed by *Iskra* under Lenin’s leadership. Opposition within the party is something impermissible . . . it must always remain silent.’⁴⁶ The indictment had the desired effect: the leaders relented and the minority was allowed occasionally to publish its views in the party press.

After Hitler’s rise to power the Mensheviks moved to Paris and by 1940 most had emigrated to the United States, where they published *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* until 1965. In the meantime, their thinking had drifted gradually to the right. They still considered themselves Marxists, but most of them now criticized Soviet totalitarianism without qualification. But there were important exceptions. In 1946, Dan, apparently under the impact of Russia’s struggle against Nazism, asserted that ‘with the disappearance of the internal and external dangers’ there was good reason to believe that ‘democratization will soon become historically more and more necessary’.⁴⁷ These divergent assessments of Bolshevism so many years after Lenin’s seizure of power demonstrate once again the ambiguity of the Marxist heritage.

MENSHEVISM IN GEORGIA

The history of Menshevism in Georgia, a region in Western Transcaucasia with a population of about two million, is sufficiently unusual to merit separate treatment. It was only in Georgia that Menshevism evolved into a mass movement with deep roots among the intelligentsia, workers and peasants. It was also here that the Mensheviks from 1918 to 1921 governed an independent state that

had broken away from Soviet Russia. At this time the Mensheviks in Russia proper actually repudiated their colleagues for their separatist course and for having invited the Allied Powers to send troops to their country to ward off a possible attack by the Bolsheviks. In December 1918 the Menshevik party officially declared that the policies of the 'Georgian comrades' precluded the maintenance of any organizational link with them.⁴⁸ It can therefore be argued that Menshevism in Georgia now constituted a distinct party with its own programme and policies.⁴⁹

Still, from 1903 to 1917, Georgian Menshevism was an integral part of the all-Russian movement. Irakli Tsereteli, Noah Zhordania, Nicholas Chkheidze and Akaki Chkhenkeli, to mention but a few, were more concerned with national politics than with local affairs. Prior to the Bolshevik seizure of power these men paid scant attention to Georgian nationalism and none advocated separatism. Zhordania, the founder of Transcaucasian socialism, and a major theorist, consistently rejected as Utopian the demand for autonomy by national minorities. He believed that with the democratization of the Russian Empire Georgia would be given enough latitude for self-government to allow for all the national self-expression that was desirable. In 1910 the Georgian Mensheviks slightly modified this stand and began to favour self-rule in linguistic and cultural matters, but this in no way diminished their devotion to the goals of Russian and international socialism.

Nonetheless, a careful study of the tactics and proposals of the Georgian Mensheviks in the pre-1917 era suggests that even then this group diverged somewhat from the official programme of Menshevism. This is hardly surprising given the special conditions in Georgia. The peasants in that largely mountainous region suffered even more acutely from a shortage of land than did their counterparts in the rest of the Empire. For example, in 1905 the farms of 89 per cent of the peasants in the Georgian province of Kutais were no larger than eleven acres, a plot adequate only for the most wretched level of subsistence. Moreover, a number of the peasant dues that had been eliminated in Russia proper early in the 1880s were still being exacted in Georgia. Small wonder, then, that the rural population in this region resorted to especially militant action. Disorders began in 1902 and continued for several years, reaching their highest point during the Revolution of 1905, when elected committees ousted local authorities in a number of places and assumed some of their administrative functions. The peasants made it abundantly clear that they wished to own the land, a desire that, of course, ran counter to the principles of Marxian socialism. The leaders of Georgian

Menshevism, many of whom came from a rural rather than urban background, sympathized with the peasants' yearning. They did not officially repudiate the party's call for 'municipalization' of the land; they simply disregarded this plank of the programme and advocated private ownership instead. Because of their pragmatism they succeeded – whereas their Russian colleagues did not – in mobilizing a large and secure following, consisting of peasants as well as workers.

When the Bolsheviks took power in November 1917, they could not extend their authority to Georgia, where the Mensheviks controlled the soviets and commanded wide popular support. Again exhibiting greater political and ideological flexibility than their Russian comrades, the Georgian Mensheviks formed a government and in May 1918 proclaimed the independence of Georgia. For two and a half years they strove to realize their democratic and socialist goals, though they did not hesitate to adapt to the exigencies of their situation.

The most pressing problem facing the new state was security. There existed the very real danger of internal subversion by Communists, and Bolshevik as well as White armies posed the threat of invasion. The Menshevik government dealt with the first danger by outlawing the Communist party (in February 1918); it dealt with the second by tolerating German troops on its soil as protection against foreign attack. When World War I ended and the Germans withdrew, the Georgians welcomed British troops for the same reason. These were not easy decisions, especially in light of the official Menshevik condemnation of all foreign intervention, but they followed logically from the dictum enunciated by Zhordania, President of the Republic: 'We prefer the imperialists of the West to the fanatics of the East.'⁵⁰

The Mensheviks' domestic programme helped consolidate their political predominance within the country. They established a democratic form of government, and in the elections early in 1919 they won 105 of 130 seats in the National Assembly. They tackled the vexing land problem by confiscating all private landholdings in excess of forty acres and leasing these lands (together with the properties of the tsarist family, Imperial government and the Church) to the impoverished peasants. After 1919 the peasants could purchase the land at a nominal price. In addition, the Menshevik government nationalized the main industries and means of communication, so that by 1920 approximately 90 per cent of all non-farm labourers worked in state or cooperative enterprises.

Because of the danger of foreign attack, the Georgian republic had to create a military force that absorbed a disproportionate share of the

state's meagre revenues. The Popular Guard, a militia of volunteers, came to be the core of that force and was democratically run: officers were elected and periodic congresses of soldiers participated in reaching decisions. There also existed a small regular army and in time of emergency about fifty thousand men could be mobilized.

The Mensheviks ran the country with a reasonable degree of efficiency, in large measure because their party organization consisted of an extensive network of local groups that helped administer the state and implement government directives. Moreover, the widespread popularity of the government's reformist programme contributed to producing greater political stability here than in any of the other states that had become independent and were eventually reconquered by the Communists. But Georgia was a poor and small country, no match for the Bolsheviks once they felt free to attack the republic.

Initially, the Communists were so preoccupied with the struggle against the Whites and foreign armies that they could not afford a determined strike against Georgia. Indeed, in May 1920 the Leninist regime, fearing imminent war with Poland, agreed to recognize 'without reservations the independence and sovereignty of the Georgian state'.⁵¹ In a secret clause of the agreement the Georgian government promised to release all Communists imprisoned after the abortive *coup* of November 1919. The Mensheviks also legalized the Communist party, which immediately proceeded to agitate against the government. Early in 1921 Moscow called for a Communist uprising in Georgia and ordered the Red Army to march into the country to assist the rebels. When the Menshevik leaders attempted to discuss the invasion with the Communist rulers in Moscow, the latter claimed not to know anything about the Soviet attack. The Georgians fought bravely, but it took the Red Army only about a month to occupy all of Georgia. This marked the end of the only Menshevik experiment in governing a country.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing account of the ideological struggles among Mensheviks and of the turns and twists in Menshevik policies raises the question whether Menshevism may be regarded as a movement with a set of clearly definable doctrines. It would be misleading to offer a dogmatic answer. Yet, if we look upon Menshevism as an ideological persuasion rather than as a rigid, cohesive doctrine, it is possible to discern three tenets that the party, despite occasional deviations, considered to be central features of its political outlook. In the first

place, the Mensheviks insisted that social democracy's task in Russia was to create an independent, politically conscious working class capable of participating in running the affairs both of their party and of their country. Second, they argued that although the proletariat should help to bring about the bourgeois revolution, it must not attempt to establish socialism before capitalism had run its course. The third feature was more elusive and intangible, but nonetheless important in distinguishing the Mensheviks from the Bolsheviks. This was the former's concern with the moral dimension of politics. They rejected the belief that there existed no universal code of ethical conduct and that any action promoting the socialist cause was therefore inherently moral.

That these ideas were firmly rooted in Menshevik thinking became most apparent in 1917. To be sure, there were several reasons for the Mensheviks' refusal to take power that year: fear that such action would prompt many people to go over to the reactionaries or conservatives, still potentially powerful forces in the country; a reluctance to do anything that might further weaken Russia in the struggle against authoritarian Germany; a feeling that they did not possess the administrative skill to run the country. But few would deny that in addition the Mensheviks' rigid adherence to doctrine played a critical role. Most of them could not abandon the party's cherished dogma that the proletariat should take control of the state only after capitalism had been solidly established over an extended period. Even after Lenin's seizure of power, the Mensheviks in Russia whose hostility to the new regime had waned somewhat, did not jettison the movement's principles. They did not unequivocally embrace Bolshevism. They continued to call for democratization of the soviets, denounced the 'utopian' attempts to introduce socialism in a backward country and, in condemning the Leninist terror, acknowledged the principle of moral restraint in politics.

The tenacity of the Mensheviks in upholding their beliefs was surely a commendable trait. But at the same time their doctrines suffered from serious defects that ultimately caused the decline and disappearance of the Menshevik movement. The notion that in under-developed Russia an organized proletariat could strive for bourgeois democracy without attempting to take power for itself was theoretically plausible, but in practice quite unrealistic. If the bourgeois revolution could not be staged without working-class participation on a decisive scale, would it not be unreasonable to expect the proletariat to contain its political and economic aspirations? Had any class ever helped to make a revolution and then voluntarily stepped back to allow another to reap most of the

benefits? Indeed, as early as 1906, a worker expressed his impatience with Menshevik strategy:

‘Here Comrade Iurii [Garvi] tells us that the workers’ congress is the best means of assuring the independence of the proletariat in the bourgeois revolution; otherwise, we workers will play the role of cannon fodder in it. So I ask: what is the insurance for? Will we really make the bourgeois revolution? Is it possible that we will spill blood twice – once for the victory of the bourgeois revolution, and the other time for the victory of our proletarian revolution? No, comrades, it is not to be found in the party programme [that this must be so]; but if we workers are to spill blood, then only once, for freedom and socialism.’⁵²

In 1917 Lenin perceived that such a mood was widespread and consequently he followed a strategy that succeeded in attracting large numbers of workers to his party.

Lenin appreciated the significance of another factor ignored by the Mensheviks, the revolutionary potential of the peasants in Russia, still a predominantly agrarian country. He advocated a measure that they found appealing – seizure of the land – and thus gained their political neutrality, if not support. With modifications, Lenin’s strategy has been adopted by Communist movements in backward countries the world over.

Perhaps the Mensheviks’ gravest oversight was their underestimation of the fragility of the state machinery in a backward country. It is true, of course, that the Russian government disintegrated in large measure because of the dislocations caused by World War I, and this was a development that neither the Mensheviks nor anyone else could have foreseen. Nonetheless, there can be little doubt that the Mensheviks’ rigid dogmatism prevented them from making the adjustments in strategy and tactics that might have saved them from the fate they were forced to endure. They did not understand that in competing with a person as flexible, resourceful and unscrupulous as Lenin, men of principle do not stand a chance.

Part One

The Origins of Menshevism

During the last two days of July and throughout most of August 1903, fifty-seven Russian revolutionaries representing at best a few thousand supporters met, first in Brussels and then in London, for the purpose of uniting twenty-six groups into one Social Democratic party. This so-called Second Congress was to adopt a programme, elect party committees, and decide a series of tactical and organizational questions. The delegates, all but three of them intellectuals, were adept at debating fine theoretical points, but neither a willingness to compromise nor a grasp of practical issues was among their virtues. Even so, most delegates were surprised when a passionate discussion – and eventually a split – arose over what appeared to be a trivial question: how to define membership in the party. Documents 1 and 1a indicate how insignificant the differences were in the wording of the two resolutions on party membership. The following five documents reveal that a few speakers on the resolutions sensed that despite appearances the dispute did in fact touch on basic issues.

*Still, it was only six months after the adjournment of the Congress that the cause of the schism was fully understood. At that time, Axelrod published his analysis of the background to the conflict (Document 2) and showed that Menshevism was committed to political principles clearly at variance with those of Bolshevism. Axelrod did this not by explicitly discussing the controversy that had erupted at the Second Congress, but rather by analysing the reasons for the emergence of a centralized, hierarchical workers' party in Russia, which he considered contrary to the true aims of Marxism. Although Axelrod did not mention Lenin by name, his article clearly constituted an indictment of the ideas Lenin had set forth in *What Is To Be Done?* and that had guided the organizational work of the party immediately prior to the Second Congress. Axelrod's views on the proper organization and tasks of social democracy came to be key features of Menshevism.*

1 Lenin's Resolution on Party Membership

Anyone who accepts the party's programme and supports it by personal participation in one of the party organizations is to be

considered a member of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' party.

Resolution by V. I. Lenin at the Second Congress of the Social Democratic party, July–August 1903: *Vtoroi s'ezd RSDRP: Protokoly* (Moscow, 1959), p. 262.

1a Martov's Resolution

Anyone who accepts the party's programme, supports the party by material means, and renders it regular personal assistance under the guidance of one of its organizations is to be considered a member of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' party.

Resolution by L. Martov at the Second Congress: *Vtoroi s'ezd RSDRP: Protokoly* (Moscow, 1959), p. 425.

1b Egorov on the Membership Resolutions

Egorov said that there were evidently two schools of thought as to the definition of the term 'party'. Lenin's formula represented a narrow definition, while Martov's enlarged the meaning to such an extent as to open the door to 'democratism'. It must be remembered that while we are an underground organization, we are also linked with the broad masses, and . . . we must draw the logical consequences of our position.

Statement by Egorov at the Second Congress: *Vtoroi s'ezd RSDRP: Protokoly* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 262–3.

1c Axelrod on Party Membership

I think we must draw a line between the notions of 'party' and 'organization', which are getting dangerously confused here. Remember the strictly clandestine and centralized organizations of the past: 'Land and Freedom'¹ and 'People's Will'.² A whole lot of

¹ Land and Freedom was an underground organization founded in 1876. It favoured propaganda among the peasants in preparation for a general uprising, the purpose of which was to be the introduction of socialism.

² People's Will was formed in 1879 when Land and Freedom split over the question of tactics. The People's Will party advocated terror and political action rather than propaganda and agitation among the masses. It also favoured the seizure of power by a revolutionary minority.

people were attached to 'Land and Freedom' who were not actually part of the organization, but helped it in one way or another and considered themselves party members. 'People's Will' was more exclusive, but it conformed to the same basic principle, and that principle should be applied even more strictly in our Social-Democratic organization. . . . If we adopt Lenin's formula we shall be throwing overboard some who are party members even though they cannot be directly enrolled in the organization. Of course it is our first object to create an organization of the most active party elements, an organization of revolutionaries; but as we are a class party it behoves us not to exclude people who belong to it by conviction even if they may not be especially active. . . . The first paragraph of Lenin's formula shows a complete conflict of principle with the essential aims of a Social-Democratic party of the proletariat.

Statement by P. Axelrod at the Second Congress:
Vtoroi s'ezd RSDRP: Protokoly (Moscow, 1959),
p. 267.

1d Martov on Party Membership

This is a very important matter. The more we are determined to be revolutionaries, the more attention we should pay to what Comrade Axelrod has just said. We are the conscious exponents of an unconscious process. The party organization is the flywheel which activates the party's work in our sense of the term. The question of rights and duties is settled by the formula 'That's your work.' I am not afraid of what is called a 'conspiratorial' organization. Under our draft, the party member has the right to inform the centre of his ideas and wishes, and to play a part in forming the general opinion, and the more we 'conspirators' take account of that opinion, the less danger there is that questions will be raised about rights. Let there be organizations with a large membership – they are bound to grow, and the party cannot do without them even though they cannot belong to the party organization. The more people are entitled to be called party members, the better. We can only rejoice if every striker, every demonstrator who is called to account for his actions can declare that he is a member of the party. To my mind, a clandestine organization only makes sense in so far as it is the nucleus of a large Social-Democratic workers' party. . . . I agree with Lenin that in addition to organizations of professional revolutionaries we need '*lose Organisationen*'¹ of various types. But our formula is the only one to reflect

¹ *Lose Organisationen*: loose organizations.

our aim to have the organization of professional revolutionaries linked with the masses by a series of other organizations. In our view, the workers' party does not consist solely of the organization of professional revolutionaries, but of the latter plus all the leading active elements of the proletariat.

Statement of L. Martov at the Second Congress:
Vtoroi s'ezd RSDRP: Protokoly (Moscow, 1959),
pp. 270–71.

1e Lenin on Party Membership

Lenin briefly defended his formula, emphasizing that it constituted an incentive to form organizations. It was not to be thought that party organizations should consist solely of professional revolutionaries. They needed the most varied organizations of every type, level and shade of opinion, from the most restricted and clandestine to the other extreme of broadly based, free, loose Organisations. The essential hallmark of a party organization was its endorsement by the Central Committee. . . . The basic mistake of those who defend Martov's formula is that they ignore one of the chief evils of our party life, or rather they do not ignore it but glorify it. This evil lies in the fact that, in an atmosphere of almost universal political discontent, when our activity is wholly clandestine and the greater part of it is concentrated in small secret groups and private meetings, it is next to impossible to distinguish the workers from the chatterboxes; and there can hardly be any country besides Russia in which these two categories are more often confused, or in which their confusion produces greater harm. Our intelligentsia and working class both suffer badly from this state of affairs, and Comrade Martov's formula would have the effect of sanctioning it. The inevitable result of his formula would be that absolutely anyone could be a party member – as he himself admitted with the words: 'Yes, if you like.' Well, that is precisely what we don't want, and that is why we strenuously oppose Martov's formula. It is better that ten workmen should be unable to call themselves party members – what do ranks and titles mean to a genuine working man? – than that one chatterbox should have the right to call himself a member. . . . What we have to do is to preserve the purity, strength and consistency of our party. We must aim to raise higher and ever higher the importance and dignity of party membership – and that is why I am against Martov's formula.

Statement by V. I. Lenin at the Second Congress:
Vtoroi s'ezd RSDRP: Protokoly (Moscow, 1959),
pp. 265, 267–8.

1f Plekhanov on Party Membership

The question at issue is what elements are to be included in our party. Under Lenin's draft, to be a party member one would have to belong to one organization or another; the opponents of the draft say that this would create unnecessary obstacles. . . . I also cannot understand why it is thought that if Lenin's draft were adopted it would close the door of party membership to a mass of workers. Those workers who wish to join the party will not be shy of joining organizations – they are not afraid of discipline. Those who will be afraid are the many intellectuals who are steeped in bourgeois individualism, but that is all to the good. Such bourgeois individualists generally stand for all kinds of opportunism, and they are the people we want to keep away. Lenin's draft may serve as a barrier to keep them out, and for that reason alone it should be supported by all enemies of opportunism.

Statement by Plekhanov at the Second Congress:
Vtoroi s'ezd RSDRP: Protokoly (Moscow, 1959),
pp. 271–2.

2 The Unification of Russian Social Democracy and Its Tasks P. AXELROD

The Russian Social Democratic party – a proletarian party as far as its theoretical basis and programme are concerned, but far from being one in its social composition and the character of its organization – is constantly subjecting itself to severe criticism and 'pausing to cast a hard look on the shortcomings in its activity'. It does this not only in a spontaneous, uncontrolled way, but in accordance with its duty to keep a close and systematic watch every step of the way and to criticize ruthlessly any mistake or wrong emphasis in tactics. This obligation derives from the fact that, while the party sets out to be the political organization of the working masses, in reality the composition of its leading elements at the present time makes it for the most part only an organization of those members of the revolutionary intelligentsia whose principles lead them to embrace the cause of the proletariat. Apart from this, the issue in Russia is not that of a 'proletarian revolution' in the sense of the establishment of a dictatorship [by workers], but merely a bourgeois revolution, i.e., the liberation of the whole population of the Empire from political slavery. If the radical intelligentsia is drawn towards socialism and the proletarian cause, the ultimate, objective, historical reason for this does not lie in the class struggle of the proletariat but in the general democratic need of all nations and classes to free themselves from the

oppressive survivals of the era of serfdom. The influence of the proletarian or Social-Democratic element on the contemporary revolutionary movement in Russia can only be felt inasmuch as the preparation for a bourgeois revolution is at the same time a process of political education and the unification of the working masses in a revolutionary socialist party. It is the purpose and duty of the Russian Social Democratic movement to ensure that in this way the liquidation of the regime based on class, autocracy and bureaucracy becomes a direct prologue to the class struggle of the proletariat, the first aim being to achieve the political expropriation of the bourgeoisie as a prelude to socialist revolution. . . .

The triumph of revolutionary social democracy over other trends in our party was officially confirmed and proclaimed at its Second Congress. But if we now ask ourselves what positive results of a specifically socialist character have been achieved in consequence of that triumph, the answer must be that the results are more or less confined to the realm of aspirations, sympathies and ideas; on the practical side, by contrast, our movement has progressed in a general revolutionary sense but not in a purely Social-Democratic one. . . .

There is thus a sharp contrast, not to say a downright contradiction of principle, between the ideological or theoretical achievements of revolutionary social democratism within our movement and the objective trends of our activity. . . .

The victory of bureaucratic centralism in party organization – that is what revolutionary social democracy has to show for its struggle against ‘amateurism’;¹ yet nothing is more akin to amateurism than the inner tendency of this very centralism. ‘Amateurism’ sums up the period of the *rapprochement* between social democracy and the working masses on the basis of their economic discontent and the spontaneous manifestations of this discontent. The effect of that period was to revolutionize the masses, but not to educate them and unite them to play an independent political role. . . . Mechanical centralism stands for the period when the masses, who were beginning spontaneously to manifest their resentment of arbitrary police power, were drawn into the struggle with absolutism. . . .

For the fetishists of centralization, the problem [of creating a party in accordance with the principles of revolutionary Marxism] is a simple one. All that has to be done is to introduce technical

¹ The reference is to the period from the late 1890s to 1902, when the labour movement in Russia was characterized, according to the orthodox Marxists, by ‘a provincial outlook, amateurish techniques, absorption in local needs and demands’. See Allan K. Wildman, ‘Lenin’s Battle with *Kustarnichestvo*: The *Iskra* Organization in Russia’, *Slavic Review*, XXIII (September 1964), pp. 479–503.

improvements of an organizational character, to make a concentrated effort to specialize party members in ever smaller functions, to regulate strictly the distribution and demarcation of these functions, to set up a multiplicity of departments, agencies, offices, sections and workshops, all staffed by a hierarchy of professional and semi-professional revolutionaries with the proper ranks of departmental head, clerk, sergeant-major, NCO, private, constable, foreman or whatever it may be. All this huge army of civilians, officers or technicians would be working away feverishly in separate ant-heaps, without any communication between them. As for political work in the socialist-proletarian sense – not a sign of it! Who on earth could carry it out, when the party members have been turned into so many cog-wheels, nuts and bolts, all functioning exactly as the centre decides? . . .

Clearly the divergencies which have recently arisen in our movement cannot be removed by the action of a few individuals. We need a collective effort by the whole party and a conscious initiative by the mass of practical workers, who must raise themselves from the amateurish-technical to the political level. This programme is of course incompatible with a bureaucratic regime within the party, which would have to relax its hold as soon as the more independent elements embarked on a new course, unless [the party] were to become a stronghold of new opportunist tendencies, this time political instead of economic. But the more system and energy we devote to reforming our practice from the proletarian and doctrinal point of view, the more rapidly we shall cut the ground from under the feet of the advocates of a type of centralism which distorts and compromises the centralist principle itself. . . .

I was contrasting not individuals, but two aspects of our movement, a subjective and an objective one: on the one hand ideas, principles, affinities and states of mind prevailing among the majority of its members, and on the other hand the substance of their activity. . . .

The phenomenon we are concerned with here owes its origin to the elemental historic process which gave birth to the Social Democratic movement in Russia and for a considerable time determined its character and social content. The elucidation of this process is bound to be of vital practical interest to us.

The Russian Marxists set themselves from the beginning the same fundamental aim as that which international social democracy recognizes as the supreme criterion of its own methods and achievements. This aim, as we all know, is that of developing the class-consciousness and political self-reliance of the working masses

and uniting them into an independent revolutionary force under the banner of social democracy. But at the time when our movement arose, the most elementary conditions for the immediate fulfilment of this aim were not present in Russia, and our first task was to bring about such conditions. I do not mean by this that any of us deliberately said: 'We will first achieve this, and then take up the true proletarian cause' – not at all. On the contrary, the proletarian cause in our view comprehended all the vital tasks of contemporary Russian life, and we believed that the two main objectives – that of preparing the ground for a widespread organization of the proletarian struggle, and that of working directly to instil class-consciousness into the workers – merged into a single indissoluble whole, the paramount cause of social revolution. But history decided otherwise, by decreeing, behind our backs as it were, that the main emphasis in our movement should fall upon the means and not the end – not on the basic, fundamental objective but on the more elementary conditions which, objectively speaking, had first to be fulfilled, at all events in some measure, before the main aim could be systematically pursued. This meant that Russian social democracy was beset by a contradiction which has persisted through every phase of its development. . . .

What do we mean by a highly developed proletarian consciousness? In the first place, awareness by the proletariat of the basic antagonism between it and bourgeois society, and secondly an awareness of the world historical importance of its struggle for liberation. Closely linked with both these is an understanding of the historical conditions in which the working class is to carry out its liberating mission. As for the political self-reliance and independence of the working class, we mean by this the planned, systematic participation of the working masses, organized into a class party or guided by such a party, in all aspects of social and political life. In this way the masses come face to face with the enemy, that is to say their direct exploiters – individuals in pursuit of private gain – and also those members of the upper class who set themselves up as representatives and spokesmen of public opinion and the 'national interest', but are in fact the ideologists, leaders, advisers and plain political agents of the exploiting classes. For this reason active participation in social and political life is the best, if not the only school in which to develop the class-consciousness of the proletariat. . . .

As soon as the Social Democrats made their appearance in the capitalist countries of the West, they began the work of educating the proletariat by inducing the working masses to take an active and

independent part in the political struggle. This was encouraged by the fact that the bourgeoisie was then in political power in those countries or at least enjoyed a share of it; moreover, political agitation was easier to conduct on a large scale because the *Rechtsstaat*¹ gave it a kind of legal basis. Above all, however, the proletariat was culturally and politically to some extent prepared for its role thanks to the influence of the democratic and freedom-loving intelligentsia during and after the revolutionary outbreaks of the bourgeoisie. As a rule, social democracy in the West represented from the outset a revolutionary advance guard of socially active sections of the proletariat, together with some individuals from the intelligentsia, and thus expressed a new phase in the development of the class war which had already begun.

None of these indispensable conditions for the development of a proletarian movement in the strict sense obtained at the time when Social-Democratic ideas first took shape in Russia. The development of social democracy was determined above all by two factors. In the first place, the Russian proletariat – apart from a few more enlightened workers who were lost in the mass of their fellows, and apart from occasional isolated strikes – was wholly uncultivated and plunged in immemorial slumbers. It contained no element within itself which could have taken on the task of breaking its sleep and leading it into the arena of history: this task had to be performed by an outside element, the radical intelligentsia; which leads us to the second of the two factors mentioned. In order to create in Russia an independent, class-conscious movement of the working masses, they had to be subjected to the intellectual and political influence and guidance of a different section of the community with, for the most part, a different class background. In the West, one of the first tasks confronting the Social Democrats was to free the proletariat from the influence and tutelage of a freedom-loving democratic intelligentsia. In Russia, on the other hand, it was necessary for the social and political development of the workers that the Marxists should take the initiative of putting the radical intelligentsia in touch with the proletariat and aiding the former in every way to assume revolutionary leadership over the latter. However we look at this, there was a glaring contradiction between the subjective aims of the founders of our movement and the choice of means that history thrust upon them.

Pavel Axelrod, 'Ob'edinenie rossiiskoi sotsialdemokratii i eia zadachi', *Iskra*, no. 55, 15 December 1903; no. 57, 15 January 1904.

¹ *Rechtsstaat*: state based on the rule of law.

Part Two

The Revolution of 1905

During the years of revolutionary turmoil, 1904 to 1907, it became evident that the Mensheviks not only subscribed to a distinctive position on the organizational issue but also on matters of strategy and tactics. Document 3 demonstrates that the Mensheviks believed that middle-class progressives could play a decisive role in the struggle against the autocracy. But the Mensheviks were nevertheless apprehensive about the intentions of their potential allies, and therefore they advocated massive demonstrations by workers wherever liberals assembled in order to prod them to press for genuinely democratic reforms. The success of the tactic was not outstanding: the working class in Russia was still small and fairly amorphous, the government severely hampered all political activity by oppositional groups and Menshevik organizations were neither numerous nor experienced in mobilizing workers. Still, in a number of cities workers did stage demonstrations outside the buildings where liberals held meetings and in a few cases these led to a slight shift leftward in the resolutions passed by middle-class progressives.

The remaining documents in this section illustrate the initial confusion and oscillations within the Menshevik camp once the Revolution erupted, and the eventual agreement, by the spring of 1906, among party leaders on broad tactical issues. The movement now possessed an identifiable programme that touched on a wide range of subjects.

3 Letter to Party Organizations by Menshevik Leaders, November 1904

As regards the existing *zemstvos*,¹ our business is to present to them those political demands of the revolutionary proletariat that they are bound to support if they are to claim any right to speak for the nation or to possess the firm support of the working masses. An assembly of notables holding in their hands the fate of the whole country and disposed to sell the nation's freedom for a mess of pottage would be a

¹ *Zemstvos* were local organizations of limited self-government established in 1864. They functioned in rural areas.

direct and immediate foe to all democracy, and it would be our party's duty to fight it to the death. The liberal *zemstvos* and *dumas*,¹ on the other hand, are enemies of our enemy, but they are unwilling or unable to fight that enemy to the extent required by proletarian interests. They are officially opposed to absolutism and put forward demands that would lead to its destruction, and in this sense (though in a very relative way) they are our allies in practice, but their actions are indecisive and their aims insufficiently democratic. The manifestations of their indecision and half-heartedness give a clear picture of the social make-up and socio-political tendencies of the bourgeois groups and the antagonism between the classes they represent and the proletariat. Our duty, of course, is to use this evidence to the utmost, in accordance with the basic requirements of our programme. But within the bounds of the struggle against absolutism, especially in its present phase, our attitude to the liberal bourgeoisie should be to encourage it in general and induce it to support the demands of the proletariat led by the Social Democratic movement. It would, however, be a fatal mistake for us to seek, by adopting energetic measures of intimidation at this stage, to compel the *zemstvos* or other organs of the bourgeois opposition to give a formal promise, under the influence of panic, to support our demands vis-à-vis the government. Such a course would jeopardize the whole Social Democratic movement by turning our political campaign into a lever for the benefit of reaction. A direct struggle, as is waged against undisputed enemies, is permissible only against those organs of 'public opinion' which present themselves as allies of reaction – and this, I may add, applies to liberal or semi-liberal *zemstvos* and *dumas* in cases where they support absolutism out of opportunistic motives or from cowardice. One such case was the allocation of millions of roubles to meet the government's military needs: our party was obliged to organize workers' protests against this expenditure of the people's money to uphold the prestige of its oppressor. . . .

In carrying out the proposed plan of action we must remember that we are taking the first steps along a new road of political activity involving the systematic intervention of the working masses in public life as an independent force with the immediate object of setting them against the bourgeois opposition, representing as they do an independent force with different class interests, but at the same time offering terms to the bourgeoisie for a vigorous joint struggle against the common enemy. We must not forget that we are trying out this

¹ The reference is to the city *dumas* established in 1870; these were analogous to the rural *zemstvos*.

road for the first time and are, so to speak, training the proletariat and our own party in preparation for future battles with parties of the exploiting classes and with the state power itself. . . .

Simultaneous manifestations in all these centres where our party is strong enough to organize large demonstrations will increase to an extraordinary degree the impact and significance of our party's political activity in all localities, including those where there are *zemstvos*. The only difference is that in towns which have provincial assemblies we must try to bring the masses into direct contact with those assemblies and to concentrate manifestations around the buildings in which the deputies are in session. Some of the demonstrators will make their way into the hall and, through a specially appointed speaker, will at the right moment ask the assembly's permission to read a declaration on behalf of the workers. If this is refused, the speaker will protest loudly against the fact that an assembly purporting to represent the people should be unwilling to hear the voice of the people's true representatives. But in order for the Social Democratic party to put forward the workers' demands in this way in conflict with the official constitutional statements of the liberal opposition, two conditions must be realized. Firstly, there must be a substantial number of active demonstrators and they must fully understand the radical difference between an everyday demonstration against the police or government, on the one hand, and on the other hand a demonstration designed to combat absolutism by the direct influence of the revolutionary proletariat on the political attitude of liberal elements at the present moment. Secondly, the executive commission must take steps beforehand to ensure that the appearance of several thousand workers in front of the assembly hall, and up to a hundred or even more in the building itself, does not throw the deputies into a state of panic which might make them seek the shameful protection of police and Cossacks, so that a peaceful manifestation would become an ugly brawl or barbaric slaughter and its whole purpose would be defeated.

To avoid a fiasco of this kind, the executive commission should warn the liberal deputies of the proposed demonstration and its true purpose. It should also try to reach some agreement with representatives of the left wing of the bourgeois opposition and ensure, if not their active support, at least their sympathy for our political stand. The commission should of course negotiate with them in the party's name, on the instructions of the workers' circles and meetings; the latter should not only discuss the main lines of the political campaign but should be informed of its progress, of course, in strict secrecy. . . .

To sum up, the whole success and the real value of our appearance on the stage of politics will depend on the degree of awareness with which the working masses oppose their demands to those of the liberals. For this reason we repeat once again that the success and intensity of our actual effort will depend on the success and intensity of our preliminary work.

Letter of November 1904 reprinted in V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniia* (3rd ed., Moscow, 1926-37), VII, pp. 412-13, 414-15, 416.

4 Concerning an Armed Uprising

Regarding it as its task to prepare the masses for a rising, the Social Democratic party will endeavour to bring the rising under its own influence and leadership and use it to serve the interests of the working class.

In view of the fact that:

1 it is impossible to ensure a simultaneous rising throughout the country at a pre-determined date and to prepare for it by means of clandestine organization, if only because of the weak organization of the leading ranks of the proletariat and the inevitably spontaneous character of the revolutionary movement of the broad masses who must be brought swiftly into conflict with tsarism if our victory is to be assured; and

2 favourable conditions for a successful rising depend first and foremost on a continuing ferment among the masses and growing disorganization of the forces of reaction; the Social Democratic party, in preparing the way for a rising, must above all:

a extend the scope of its agitation among the masses against the background of current political events;

b associate with its own political organization, and bring under its influence, any independent socio-economic movements that take shape among the proletarian masses;

c strengthen the masses' awareness of the inevitability of revolution, the need to be ready for armed resistance at all times and the possibility of transforming it into a rising at any moment;

d establish the closest links between the fighting proletariat in different localities, so as to make it possible for the Social Democratic party to take initiatives to transform spontaneous movements of revolt into a systematic rising. There should also be the closest links between the proletarian movement in the towns and the revolutionary movement in the countryside;

e by means of widespread agitation, arouse the interest of as many sections of the population as possible in the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat for a democratic republic. In this way the militant action of the proletariat, led by an independent party formed on a class basis, will receive the maximum of active support from non-proletarian groups.

Only if the Social Democratic party deploys its activity in these various ways can it bring nearer the day of a general rising and improve the chances of subjecting it to our leadership. Only if we act thus will the technical and military preparations of our party organizations for a rising deserve to be reckoned with seriously.

Resolution adopted by Menshevik Conference,
April–May 1905:

*Pervaya obshcherusskaia konferentsiia partiinykh
rabotnikov. Otdel'noe prilozhenie k No. 100 'Iskry'*
(Geneva, 1905), pp. 18–19.

4a On the Seizure of Power and Participation in a Provisional Government

A decisive victory of the revolution over tsarism may be marked by the establishment of a Provisional Government following a victorious national uprising, or by a revolutionary initiative on the part of some representative body which may decide, under direct revolutionary pressure from the people, to organize a National Constituent Assembly. Either one of these victories will usher in a new phase of the revolutionary era.

In this new phase, the immediate task imposed by the objective conditions of social development will consist in the final liquidation of the whole system based on classes and monarchy, which will result from a contest between different elements of the politically liberated bourgeois society, each seeking to attain power and assert its social interests. Consequently, if a Provisional Government were to take on itself the task of resolving the problems of what would historically be a bourgeois revolution, it would follow two policies: by regulating the contest between antagonistic classes of the newly liberated nation it would be obliged on the one hand to advance the process of revolution, but on the other to combat those elements which threatened the foundations of the capitalist system.

In these circumstances the Social Democratic movement should endeavour to maintain, throughout the course of the revolution, whatever position will best enable it to advance the revolutionary

cause, not tying its hands in the struggle with the inconsistent, self-seeking policies of bourgeois parties and not allowing itself to become merged in bourgeois democracy. It follows that the party should not aim to seize power or share it within a Provisional Government, but should remain a party of the extreme revolutionary opposition.

This tactical line of course does not rule out the desirability of a partial, episodic seizure of power and the formation of revolutionary communes in a particular town or area, purely with the object of extending the scope of the rising and disorganizing the government.

Only in one eventuality should the Social Democratic party, on its own initiative, endeavour to seize power and hold on to it as long as possible: viz. if the revolution should extend to the advanced countries of Western Europe, where conditions are already in some degree ripe for the establishment of socialism. In that event the restricted historical limits of the Russian revolution may be significantly enlarged so that it is possible to enter upon the process of socialist transformation.

By so framing our tactics as to retain for the Social Democratic party, throughout the revolutionary period, the position of an extreme revolutionary opposition to every successive government, we shall be best preparing ourselves to make use of governmental power if it should fall into our hands.

Resolution adopted by the Menshevik Conference of
April–May 1905:

*Pervaia obshcherusskaia konferentsiia partiinykh
rabotnikov. Otdel'noe prilozhenie k No. 100 'Iskry'*
(Geneva, 1905), pp. 23–4.

5 The Peasant Question and the Revolution

The socialist revolution must be preceded by a democratic one. But we should remember that, both in our towns and in the countryside, survivals of the old regime of serfdom and class rule are closely interwoven with the new capitalism. As a result, firstly, the struggle of democratic elements in general (represented in the countryside by the peasant class) against autocracy and the landowners is complicated by the simultaneous fight waged by proletarian democracy (in the countryside, farm labourers) against the bourgeoisie. Another consequence is that although we are bound to go through a democratic revolution as a prelude to the socialist one, the two may not be separated, as in the West, by a long period of peaceful development. It is quite possible that, if civil war were prolonged for any length of time, what began as a democratic revolution in our

country might turn into a socialist one. At all events we must never lose sight of this possibility. The Social Democratic party has always maintained, as against Utopian anarchism, that Russia cannot leap forward to the stage of socialism without passing through a bourgeois revolution; but we have never sought to define the exact interval between the two. The longer history postponed the collapse of autocracy, while world capitalism went on developing and capitalist conditions began to transform the old order in Russia, the more logical it became to expect a direct transition from democratic to socialist revolution.

Superficial Marxists generally reply to this argument that the character of a revolution is determined by the state of development of productive forces, and that a socialist revolution is technically impossible in Russia in the near future because those forces have not yet matured sufficiently. But this is a misunderstanding of Marxist doctrine. The state of development of productive forces certainly determines the character of a revolution, but only in the final analysis. What it does is to determine a certain economic development and, through it, a development of the class struggle, and it is this struggle which primarily and directly determines the character of a revolution. We must remember that compared with the development of productive forces, the class struggle develops much more convulsively and is far more subject to what we call elements of chance.

‘Krest’ianskii vopros i revoliutsiia’, *Nachalo*, no. 7,
20 November 1905, p. 1.’

6 Axelrod’s Speech at the Fourth Party Congress

In the developed capitalist countries of the West, social democracy is faced by a mature, fully developed bourgeois society in which the proletariat and the bourgeoisie confront each other directly as irreconcilable antagonists: one a conservative force fighting to preserve the existing social order, the other a revolutionary force bent on destroying it. In these countries, social conditions irresistibly impel the revolutionary or proletarian elements to prepare the way for a socialist revolution. In particular cases one or another of these elements may stray from the main path leading towards revolution, but in general the tactics of social democracy in the West are not at variance with its basic aim and do not conflict with the preparation of a socialist revolution. In the case of our own party, however, its historical position is characterized by contrary tendencies, and its immediate task consists not in organizing the proletariat to

overthrow bourgeois rule, but in destroying root and branch a social and political order which prevents the bourgeoisie from attaining unfettered power. Social relations in Russia have not matured beyond the point of bourgeois revolution: history impels workers and revolutionaries more and more strongly towards bourgeois revolutionism, making them involuntary political servants of the bourgeoisie, rather than in the direction of genuine socialist revolutionism and the tactical and organizational preparation of the proletariat for political rule. Yet it is the thorough and consistent pursuit of this aim which distinguishes social democracy, as a class party of the proletariat, from all other political or ideological groups that may claim to be described as socialist. . . .

The tactical point of view of the opponents of our resolution [on the *Duma*] may be briefly described as a conspiratorial-insurrectionary mixture of anarchist and Blanquist tendencies, dressed up in the terminology of Marxism or social democracy; and I maintain that in absolutist Russia these tendencies are absolutely incompatible with our basic proletarian objective. At the present time, owing to the general absence of political rights, there can be no question of a direct struggle of the proletariat with other classes for the attainment of political power, and thus the socialist element in our contemporary revolutionary movement can in practice only take the form of developing the class-consciousness of the working masses and uniting them into a party based on class, in the context and for the purpose of the struggle against absolutism. . . .

We cannot, in absolutist Russia, ignore the objective historical requirement for 'political cooperation' between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, the political crux of Russian social democracy consists precisely in the problem of organically and systematically uniting the cause of the proletariat with the claims of a broad democracy as they are determined by the social content of our revolution. To put it more exactly, the problem of uniting the cause of developing the class-consciousness and political coherence of the working masses with the imperative democratic interests and demands of the Russian revolution has been and still is the most important tactical concern of our party and the basis on which it is obliged to act. In the nature of things this dual and self-contradictory objective permits of only a compromise solution, not on account of any subjective wishes or calculations of party representatives but because at the present juncture of history our party's position and its socio-political mission are in an essentially contradictory state. Accordingly I do not believe that there is any talisman at our disposal to counteract those elemental tendencies in the Russian revolutionary

movement which are opposed to the class unity of the Russian proletariat in the struggle against absolutism. The means of achieving a conditional, relative or approximate solution of our tactical problems consisted for the most part in systematically using in the interest of the working masses those organs of self-government and social institutions, created by the state or the educated classes, which constitute as it were surrogates or embryonic forms of constitutionalism and might serve as a preparatory school or rudimentary forum for class education and the uniting of the proletariat. . . .

The concentration of our party's attention and efforts on the use of terrorist and conspiratorial methods can only lead to the dissipation of the proletarian spirit and the transformation of the party, as far as the actual social content of its activity is concerned, into a bourgeois revolutionary organization. I say 'bourgeois revolutionary' because the tactics in question, if pursued consistently and on a large scale, would lead to the very result our party has tried to avoid. Instead of taking advantage of the nation-wide movement against the old régime so as to raise the proletariat to the status of an independent organized force within that movement, we should have helped to place the proletariat under the hegemony of the democratic bourgeoisie, to serve as cannon-fodder and a mere instrument of the revolution directed by the latter. Having made it our main practical aim to prepare and carry out elaborate terrorist plans and mass uprisings – and there is no political sense in such actions unless they involve actual military tactics and physical force on a large scale – we should have had to fill the ranks of our party, and especially the leading cadres and general staff, with members who had the right personal qualities for such activity, the right skill and experience and so on. But these qualities are by no means always combined with those that are required if a man is to be a staunch Social Democrat, politically aware and devoted to the cause of the proletariat. . . .

We did not by any means assume that the old régime would be peacefully liquidated: we reckoned seriously with the likelihood of a national uprising, or rather a series of large-scale risings, as an inevitable stage in the final battle with that régime. But it was and is our belief that the party as such, as a political unit, can and should prepare itself and the working masses for that battle by political means and not military, technical or conspiratorial ones. That is to say, on the one hand we should revolutionize the masses in the name of their class interests and by developing their socio-political independence, and on the other, in close conjunction with propaganda work on those lines, we should continue to urge liberal elements to act systematically on the middle and higher ranks of the

army and bring them over to the revolutionary cause. Our opponents [the Bolsheviks] on the other hand . . . wanted the party to concentrate all its strength on technical military preparations for an armed rising. This was the basis of what I have called the conspiratorial-insurrectionary school of thought, which I regard as socially and politically contrary to our party's aims. . . .

I have tried to explain the essence of the disagreement on tactics which underlies the two resolutions concerning our relations with the state *Duma*. One draft calls on us to adopt a completely negative and hostile attitude towards it, on the ground that it can only foster 'constitutional illusions' and act as a brake on the revolution or the creation of an atmosphere favourable to preparations for armed rebellion. Our draft, on the other hand, is based on the conviction that the *Duma*, short-lived though it may be, will serve, whether intentionally or not, as a powerful means of dispelling constitutional illusions among the general public and creating conditions for a successful national rising. The reason why the drafters of the other resolution cannot agree to ours is that they cannot or will not accept its basic premise, namely that the chief agent of the Russian revolution is the fact that the absolutist system based on class conflicts irreconcilably with the vital needs of society and the development of Russian capitalism. Our opponents' hopes and calculations are all founded on the idea of an armed uprising prepared by conspiratorial means, and of our party bending all its efforts to preparing such an uprising; they do not realize that this is the essence of bourgeois revolutionism and would divert us completely from our proper purpose, namely the political development of the working masses and their formation into a single class-conscious organization. Their policy would deprive the proletariat of its political personality, since it would turn the working masses into a mere fighting force with no political will or organization of its own. Such a will and such an organization are best created in the atmosphere of a broad socio-political struggle in which the working masses, led by social democracy, come face to face with the organized forces of other classes. But such an atmosphere requires for its formation a constitutional system that opens a wide field for the organized struggle of various classes to attain political power and influence. From the point of view of developing the proletariat's class-consciousness and political independence, I will venture to say that even the most wretched caricature of a parliamentary system offers immense advantages compared with the useless means that have so far been at our disposal. For this reason we should take advantage of every concession the government may make to the forces of

opposition and revolution, even if they are only paper ones designed to isolate and weaken the revolutionary parties. Bogus concessions by the government will not achieve this aim or prevent Asiatic despotism from yielding to constitutional order. All its zigzags and vacillations will only increase the nation's antagonisms and help the cause of revolution. That is why it has been our course from the very outset to exploit every step the government has taken to meet the demands of society, every attempt of the autocracy to save itself by means of hypocritical concessions – for each of these represents a further stage and a means of widening the scope of organized independent political action by the working masses, conquering systematically for them and for ourselves more and more broadly based positions in the overt legal struggle for the freedom and rights of the nation.

At the same time we declare that, in spite of the government's hopes and calculations, the state *Duma* will or can be a weapon and a lever in the hands of revolutionaries, to combat reaction and help bring about revolution. These hopes of ours are not based on the presence in the *Duma* of members of the left wing of the liberal bourgeoisie or the radical democrats – although personally I believe that the composition of the *Duma* is favourable to its becoming a weapon of revolution. They are not, I say, based on any consideration of personal intentions, but on the objective state of affairs, on the conflict between absolutism and the vital needs of the whole Empire – a conflict which has reached an acute stage and is bound to produce dissension between the government and the *Duma*, whatever the precise strength of liberalism or radicalism in that body. The need to make a thorough clearance of the old regime is so overwhelming that the *Duma* would be bound to clash fundamentally with the government even if it contained a majority of such moderate liberals as the Octobrists¹ Heiden and Stakhovich. Only if it were wholly composed of Black Hundred² elements might the *Duma* perhaps be able to get on with our reactionary government; but in that case its existence would do no good to the autocracy, for it would be crystal clear to anyone with common sense that it was a sham organ of

¹ The Octobrists were the right-wing liberals who believed that in granting the October Manifesto in 1905 the government had made substantial concessions; they therefore maintained that the opposition should now work with the authorities in an attempt to reconcile the government with the people.

² The Black Hundreds were reactionary organizations that incited mob violence against revolutionaries; in addition, they unleashed pogroms against Jews for the purpose of diverting popular discontent with the government into rioting and looting.

opinion and a mere tool of reaction. In other words, even if the *Duma's* composition were ideal from the government's point of view, it would still not serve our adversaries' purpose.

Speech by P. Axelrod at the Fourth Party Congress of April–May 1906: *Chetvertyi (ob'edinitel'nyi) s'ezd RSDRP: Protokoly* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 248–9, 251, 254, 264–5, 271–3, 324.

7 The Menshevik Agrarian Programme Passed by the Fourth Congress

A THE AGRARIAN PROGRAMME

In order to destroy the surviving elements of serfdom which weigh grievously upon the peasants, and to permit the free development of the class struggle in the countryside, the RSDWP calls for:

- 1 the abolition of all restraints, based on class, on the persons and property of the peasantry;
- 2 the abolition of all payments and dues related to the class isolation of the peasants, and of all debts having the nature of a servitude;
- 3 the confiscation of Church, monastery and imperial domains, which, together with state lands, should be entrusted to the chief organs of local self-government comprising urban and rural districts. Lands required for the resettlement fund, and forests and waterways of national importance, should come under the control of a democratic state;
- 4 the confiscation of land owned by private individuals (except smallholders), which should be placed under the control of major organs of local self-government: these organs should determine the minimum size of holdings subject to confiscation.

B TACTICAL RESOLUTION ON THE AGRARIAN QUESTION

By supporting the revolutionary demands of the peasantry up to and including the confiscation of landowners' estates, the RSDWP will at all times be resolutely opposed to any attempts to retard the course of economic development. As the revolution develops victoriously the party's objective will be to have the confiscated lands transferred to democratic organs of local self-government, or, should conditions prove adverse to this, it will advocate the distribution to the peasants of lands on which small-scale husbandry is practised or which are necessary to round off smallholdings. In all circumstances, and

whatever the position as regards democratic land-reform, the party will work unremittingly towards an independent class organization of the rural proletariat. It will make it its business to explain to the rural proletariat the irreconcilability of its interests with those of the rural bourgeoisie; to warn it against being taken in by the system of smallholdings, which in a commodity economy can never provide a remedy for the poverty of the masses; and to demonstrate the necessity of a complete socialist revolution as the only way to put an end to all poverty and exploitation.

Chetvertyi (ob'edinitel'nyi) s'ezd RSDRP: Protokoly
(Moscow, 1959), pp. 522–3.

8 *The People's Duma and the Workers' Congress*

P. AXELROD

It seems to me that the attention of the most active and prominent members of the party should be concentrated on the practical objective of organizing and summoning an all-Russian workers' congress – neither more nor less – to debate and adopt specific decisions concerning the immediate demands and plan of action of the working class. . . .

The chief object of the congress should be to discuss current public issues such as the summoning of a Constituent Assembly, the attitude to be adopted towards the government's caricature of a representative body, the organizations and assemblies of the bourgeois opposition and our policy towards them. Other questions are the tactics and plan of action of the workers' union in the battle for the summoning of a Constituent Assembly on proper conditions, the terms on which the working class could and should enter into agreements with liberal-democratic bodies and afford them support, and, finally, the economic and political reforms which the Constituent Assembly should carry out and for which we should agitate before and during the elections to that body. . . .

Clearly, printed appeals to the workers are only one of the ways in which we should agitate for a congress. Our comrades must carry out an extensive programme of agitation and *organization* in preparation for the congress, among working-class groups that are affiliated to our organizations or accessible to their influence. They must also endeavour to inspire the worker members of our 'professional revolutionary' organizations with enthusiasm for the idea of a *Social-Democratic* congress, consisting of those members of the main congress who share our programme and also representatives of our

party organizations, for the purpose of reforming the party as a whole. The ideal, of course, would be that the party should take such an active part in the general [workers'] congress that that congress and the resulting association would be permeated by the spirit of the Social Democratic movement and prepared to go forward hand in hand with it. . . .

I believe that the slogan of a 'workers' congress' can certainly captivate tens of thousands of workers, and a mass of this size, at a time of general revolutionary ferment, is sufficient to endow the congress, its decisions and the organization set up by it with tremendous authority, both among the less conscious masses of the proletariat and in the eyes of liberal democrats. . . .

It goes without saying that agitation must be concentrated first and foremost on organizing popular forces to resist actively the government's attempt to substitute for a national parliament, a national *Duma*, its own caricature in the shape of the state *Duma*, and persuading them to fight with every means in their power for the establishment of a *national* Constituent Assembly which would really be a national *Duma*, freely elected by universal, equal, direct and secret ballot. . . .

If, and as far as, the Social Democratic party comes forward on this occasion as an initiator and as the leader of widespread agitation, it will be able to carry along with it not only the Social-Democratic and party social workers, but also large masses of proletarians who have at present no link with the party. . . .

But it is quite clear that the workers' political organization that I am advocating can only be brought about by the energetic action and with the direct participation, if not on the initiative, of the Social-Democratic workers and intelligentsia as a compact nucleus, working according to a definite plan and inspiring socially-minded members of the proletariat with enthusiasm for the idea of entering the socio-political arena as an independent organized political force. Only if these members of the proletariat are thus inspired will they take a strong interest in agitating for the summoning of a workers' congress. A party of this kind, imbued with the slogan that 'Only the working class can liberate the working class'; a Social Democratic party in whose eyes the revolutionary action of the proletarian masses is not simply a help in pursuing extraneous aims but is an end in itself, inasmuch as it develops the independence of those masses as a class and provides a lever for their rise to power; a party which adopts this attitude towards the political mobilization of the proletariat – such a party, and it alone, is in a position to use the summoning of a general workers' congress in the interests of the true political unity of its

active revolutionary elements, combined into an independent revolutionary force. That is why I insist that our Organizing Commission and local groups or committees should enrol in this work as many Social-Democratic workers as possible; and for the same reason I see a direct connection between the summoning and activity of the congress and the problem of reorganizing our own party, a task which will fall on those delegates to the congress who are elected by Social-Democratic workers' assemblies. . . .

The atmosphere of general revolutionary excitement is bound to dispose the leading elements of the proletariat to look favourably on the summoning of a congress of their representatives for the purpose of establishing a united centre of direction for the proletariat. To ensure that the atmosphere has this effect, to transform latent sympathy into strong, conscious enthusiasm for the creation of such a centre, to carry the elements in question along with us towards this aim – such is the duty of the Social Democratic party, which by right of history constitutes the nucleus of the political party of the proletariat. In the course of uniting the advanced elements of the proletariat our party must reform itself and develop into a true party of the working masses: it must inspire their day-to-day struggle for partial alleviations in the light of their basic aspirations, and must take part in that struggle as their conscious revolutionary advance guard. . . .

Even supposing that, by reason of some exceptional government measures, the attempt to convoke a congress or national *Duma* does not succeed, does it follow that the party's work of agitation and organization, in which practical application is given to our slogan, will have been carried out in vain? I need not tell you that that is not so, provided we make use in our campaign of all the material that current events provide for the political enlightenment of the working masses, strengthening their combative spirit and developing their ability and readiness to meet force with force in defence of their rightful demands. Provided our campaign is conducted in this way, it may at the right time give the impulse for a genuinely national uprising in one local centre or another. . . .

It behoves us to concentrate the strength of our party and democracy in general not on the Utopian idea of preventing Bulygin's¹ brain-child from coming to birth, but on mobilizing and

¹ A. I. Bulygin (1851–1919) was the Minister of the Interior who chaired the committee that worked out the details of the first major concession granted by the Tsar in 1905. On 6 August of that year the government published an edict providing for the creation of the so-called 'Bulygin *Duma*', a purely consultative assembly to be elected by a very small number of citizens.

organizing the forces which are capable of turning even that bureaucratic and reactionary device into a weapon and lever of revolution.

Pavel Axelrod, *Narodnaia дума i rabochii s'ezd*
(Geneva, 1905), pp. 3, 4, 6, 7-8, 9-10, 11, 12, 13.

9 Resolution on Partisan Activities Passed by the Fifth Congress

In view of the circumstances that:

1 as a result of the intensified economic struggle, unemployment and the savage policy of tsarism, some sections of the proletariat are showing an inclination to carry on the struggle by means of partisan activities, i.e., individual and group attacks on the lives of government agents and representatives of the bourgeoisie;

2 in this connection and on this basis, there is an increase in the scale and frequency of expropriations of state and private property;

3 these anarchistic methods bring disorganization into the ranks of the proletariat, obscuring its class-consciousness and creating the illusion that the efforts of self-sacrificing individuals are a substitute for organized struggle: the effect of this is to weaken the inclination of the proletariat to embark on independent mass action and destroy its habit of doing so;

4 partisan activities and expropriations are used by the government as a pretext for intensifying repressive measures against the law-abiding population, and they create a fertile soil for Black Hundred agitation among the mass of the people and especially in the army;

5 such [*sic*] involvement of party members in partisan activities and expropriations impedes the party's efforts to combat anarchist tendencies in the working class; it also compromises the party in the eyes of the broad masses and is causing demoralization within its ranks;

for all these reasons, the Congress decides that:

1 party organizations must carry on a resolute campaign against partisan activities and expropriations, explaining to the working masses that these are harmful to the cause of revolution and are useless in the struggle for the political and economic interests of the working class;

2 party members are forbidden, on pain of expulsion, to assist or take any part whatever in such activities and expropriations.

In addition, and without prejudging the question of methods of arming the masses at times of overt action or for self-defence, the

Congress is of the opinion that detachments belonging to party organizations as permanent institutions with specific combat functions, and necessarily distinct from workers' organizations, are inclined to be attracted by terrorist tactics in the revolutionary struggle and to encourage partisan activities and expropriations. The Congress therefore decides that all special fighting detachments belonging to party organizations shall be disbanded.

Resolution of the Fifth Party Congress of April–May
1907: *Piatyi (Londonskii) s'ezd RSDRP: Protokoly*
(Moscow, 1963), pp. 650–51.

Part Three

The Era of Reaction, 1907–1914

In the years from 1907 to 1914 the factions wrangled primarily over the Bolsheviks' armed robberies and the nature of the party organization in Russia. Document 10 describes some of the criminal activities of the Bolsheviks and demonstrates the Mensheviks' outrage. Documents 11 and 12 present the Menshevik views on liquidationism, which Lenin claimed to be the cardinal heresy of his opponents within Russian social democracy. He charged, among other things, that the Mensheviks intended to liquidate the entire underground structure of the movement.

The charge cannot be substantiated, but it is true that the Mensheviks placed greater emphasis than their rivals on the formation of legal workers' groups. Although the Mensheviks did not manage to build a very extensive network of such groups, by 1911 they had made impressive progress. According to one report, there were eleven active clubs with more than 3,000 dues-paying members in St Petersburg, as well as five trade unions with a total membership exceeding 7,000, seven trade union newspapers and two general publications. One of the newspapers registered a circulation slightly over 6,000. In other cities there were fewer organizations, and frequently all were subjected to government harassment. Nevertheless, in many larger cities (Riga, Kharkov, Odessa, Kiev, Baku, Tiflis, Voronezh and Vilno) working-class willingness to organize and subscribe to Menshevik doctrines was obviously growing.

Unfortunately, we do not know how these groups were run or precisely what their influence was in shaping the party's policies. The major decisions were made by the party leaders (Martov, Dan, Axelrod, among others) who lived abroad, but there is no doubt that in the conflict over liquidationism these men took into account the views of the so-called 'practicals' who dominated the Menshevik organizations inside Russia. After 1912 the Bolsheviks began to take control over some of these Menshevik centres of strength; the reasons for this shift are discussed in the Introduction.

10 Saviours or Destroyers? L. MARTOV

In July 1907 a major expropriation of Treasury funds, to the amount of over 200,000 roubles, was carried out at Tiflis. Some months later,

Russian émigrés were arrested at Munich and Stockholm when attempting to change 500-rouble notes from the Tiflis haul. Other arrests followed at Geneva, and later the well-known Bolshevik V.,¹ arrested on a Paris station, was found to have a large number of these notes in his possession.

Some time before this the Berlin police, who had been investigating the activities of Russian émigrés, seized a quantity of arms and a supply of paper intended, as they suspected, for the manufacture of three-rouble notes: this suspicion was confirmed by experts of the Imperial Bank.

All those arrested in this connection were more or less well-known Bolsheviks. The unfortunate Mirsky, arrested in Berlin, was detained in a psychiatric hospital and handed over from there to the Russian authorities, who charged him with being directly involved in the Tiflis expropriation.

The Central Committee, which was at the time in Russia, decided to hold a strict inquiry into the Tiflis and Berlin affairs and the changing of notes. The investigation outside Russia was confided to the then Central Foreign Bureau; in the Caucasus it was conducted by the Caucasus District Committee, which identified a number of people who had taken part in the expropriation and who, shortly before it took place, had given notice of their resignation from the local party organization. The District Committee decided to expel them from the RSDWP, and made its decision publicly known: that is to say, as they had withdrawn from the local organization, it declared that they were barred from membership of any other party organ. The District Committee also communicated to the Central Committee its findings as to what had become of the money from the expropriation.

The Central Foreign Bureau also carried out a thorough investigation which produced some highly important facts; but the person chiefly incriminated, Comrade V., refused obstinately to indicate on whose orders and for what purpose he and his companions had planned the exchange of the notes known to be expropriated. . . .

Having given this strictly factual account [of Bolshevik involvement in the expropriations] I need only add for the benefit of uninformed readers that:

I When all these matters came to light, N. Lenin did *not* dissolve in shame.

¹ This seems to be a reference to Victor Taratuta, one of Lenin's most trusted as well as most unprincipled agents.

2 He did not beg the CC to set up an impartial court to establish how far he was guilty towards the party.

3 This N. Lenin is the very same man who is at present defending the party against 'liquidators' and accusing us Mensheviks of being renegades and traitors.

Once it was known that the 'investigation' of the expropriation at Tiflis had been kept in ignorance of the embarrassing fact of the search at Comrade Viktor's abode, the whole question of the changing of 500-ruble notes became clear. On the political side there was no more to say; from the practical point of view it seemed useless and hardly fair to punish the agents who had been detected in the Caucasus and abroad, when the organizers of the whole enterprise refused openly to assume responsibility for it. Rather than pursue the question of an investigation and risk seeing it turn into a farce once more owing to the lack of scruple, shall we say, of Lenin and his friends, it seemed to us better to let the matter drop and the guilty parties be 'amnestied' in return for firm guarantees that there would be no further attempts to turn this expropriation to use. We therefore stated that we were prepared to grant a full amnesty to the Caucasian 'fighters' and the foreign 'money-changers' if we could be assured that the 500-ruble notes that the police had failed to seize would not be again presented at any bank, lest the scandal should flare up again. The Bolsheviks saw the point, and a member of the Bolshevik Centre proposed to the CC that it should instruct him to persuade 'those concerned' to destroy all the remaining notes, failing which the 'amnesty' resolution would not take effect. The CC agreed, and 'those concerned' evidently paid heed to the arguments put to them, as a certain number of notes were in fact destroyed. . . .

Since 1907 we have been combating, by methods of agitation, the disruptive policy of the Bolshevik Centre. For two years, at the risk of being accused of covering up for the Centre, we refrained from informing the whole party of its criminal activities, which we repeatedly drew to the attention of the central institutions which have been usurped by the Leninist group. Last year,¹ when the systematic corruption of the party by the Bolshevik Centre had succeeded in enfeebling its official institutions and estranging many valuable

¹ Early in 1910 a plenum of the Central Committee of the RSDWP reached a compromise concerning the money procured by the Bolsheviks from their expropriations and other questionable activities. The money was to be handed over to three German trustees who were to disburse it to the CC if the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks managed to cooperate on political work inside Russia. The factions did not cooperate, the Bolsheviks retained a substantial portion of the money, and the conflict over the funds intensified.

elements from them, we agreed to support a compromise policy worked out by the plenum, though we had little faith in the intention of certain participants to carry it out. We could only agree to this policy at all in so far as it offered a hope of doing away with the virtual dictatorship of a handful of men whose attitude is irreconcilable with the fairly clear lines along which social democracy has worked in Russia. If these men, through anybody's fault, should once more be given the opportunity to impede the restoration of the party, we shall resume full liberty of action. . . .

It is for the comrades to choose. To make the choice easier and to prevent anyone adopting an ostrich attitude, we have thought it our duty to strip the mask from the self-styled 'saviours of the party' and to display them and their policy in the same light as that in which they were seen by last year's plenum. We have shown that the Nechaev¹ type of policy which the plenum sharply condemned is still being pursued; that the group which was ostensibly dissolved is still active and is doing its best to keep the dictatorship in its hands; and that the methods by which it maintains its supremacy in underground circles and which it is seeking to impose on the overt workers' movement are introducing confusion and dissension into the latter.

What we have here is not simply a fight between personalities for leadership of the party but a battle between two principles – on the one hand outdated conspiratorial elements, on the other the living spirit of social democracy.

If the leading elements of the party do not recognize the seriousness of the situation and draw proper conclusions from the decisions of last year's plenum, and if they allow any 'conciliatory' tendencies to persuade them to support the war which the party Jacobins are waging against the Social Democratic movement, then they will have lost both the formal and the moral right to speak and act as representatives of the party.

L. Martov, *Spasiteli ili uprazdniteli?* (Paris, 1911), pp. 22–3, 27, 40, 41.

11 The Struggle for Legality F. DAN

Not the rejection of legality, but a united, concentrated, ten-times-intensified battle for legality – that is the Russian proletariat's answer to the systematic campaign of the government's hired ruffians to defeat the legal organization of the workers.

¹ Sergei Nechaev (1847–82) was a notorious fanatic who would stop at nothing, including murder, to promote the cause of revolution.

Yes, the systematization of the government's campaign means that we must intensify and unify our struggle for legality. It presents the leaders of the legal workers' movement with new obligations and problems. We must make every possible use of the available means of fighting to maintain, consolidate and extend our legal positions, from the courts to the press, congresses, organs of self-government, and the *Duma*, together with a broadly based programme of agitation directed at the working masses, the democratic elements of the population, the international proletariat and world public opinion.

All this, of course, is easier to say than to put into effect. Much time and effort will be needed before the battle for legality is joined on as wide a front as the interests of the workers' cause require. But it is our duty at this stage, none the less, to present the problem in wide terms, so as to cover all the particular steps that may be taken by the Social-Democratic vanguard to secure the right of overt, legal existence for the workers' movement and its organizations. And the first prerequisite of a systematic campaign is to overcome the fragmentation which at present exists in considerable measure among the leaders of the legal workers' movement, narrowing the scope of their activity and giving it something of an amateur or localized character. To achieve an economy of forces, making use of every opportunity that presents itself, sharing the lessons of experience and giving our fight the dignity of a nation-wide struggle – to do this we urgently need a higher degree of *unity* among Social-Democratic leaders of the workers' movement. This conclusion is inescapable, whichever aspect of the battle for legality we are considering and however minor it may be. If we desire, for propaganda reasons, to pursue through the courts at every level each case of the oppression of workers' organizations, or to campaign against it in the press and by interpellations in the state *Duma*, it is vital on such occasions that the Social-Democratic leaders who are now scattered should present a united front. Their association may at first take modest forms and pursue modest aims, but it is evident that present conditions impose a new responsibility on Social-Democratic leaders of the legal movement and that, if they respond to it, they will increase a hundredfold their readiness to take the offensive and their ability to lead the working class to victory in a situation of growing complexity.

But that is not all. The *fight* for legality has nothing in common with a policy of begging our present masters for legal recognition, and is even contrary to such a policy. It is a *political* problem and cannot be solved in isolation from the general political struggle of the proletariat, but only in close conjunction with it. By inscribing on

their banners the slogan of a fight for legality, the Social-Democratic leaders of the legal workers' movement have gone beyond the bounds of 'purely professional' or 'purely cooperative' and 'purely educational' problems, and have thus inevitably overstepped the limits of 'legality'. It may sound paradoxical to speak of conducting a political struggle to make possible the overt existence of non-political workers' organizations, or of rallying illegal forces in the fight for legality; but this is in fact the situation to which the Russian working-class movement has been brought by every feature of its historical development.

F. Dan, 'Bor'ba za legal'nost', *Golos sotsialdemokrata*, III, no. 19/20, January/February 1910, pp. 2-3.

12 *Critical Sketches* A. POTRESOV

Russian Marxism, we may say, is at present suffering doubly, from the deficiencies of the proletariat and those of the intelligentsia. The proletariat is at a molecular stage of development and is only now, with great difficulty, evolving the first cadres of its own intelligentsia, and the intellectuals who, before the revolution, united themselves as a group to the proletariat are becoming daily fewer owing to the atmosphere of reaction, the economic crisis, the low-spiritedness of the proletariat and their own uncertainty how to act in the present critical juncture. The position is the more serious as the old organizational forms of the movement have shown their inadequacy all too clearly, while new ones have barely started to take shape.

We are thus, as it were, becalmed between the past and the future, poised in a vacuum of inertia and mental impotence. People's minds are not getting to grips with the vital problems of the movement and the abundant material furnished by experience, nor are they grappling with the obstacles which bestrew the path of social democracy. Instead they prefer to mark time, to stray into byways and diversions or stupefy themselves with all the trifles that proliferate, as we know too well, in a period of stagnation like the present. Drifting along the line of least resistance, we debate feebly about literature, philosophy, religion or anything else in the world except politics and economics, which are the mainspring of a socio-political movement like Marxism. Yet there are a multitude of economic and political questions which we must solve before we can move a step further, so that Russian Marxism may become an ideology imbued with the whole energy and strength of the revolutionary consciousness of our era. . . .

What has happened, too, to the political thought which used to be the life-blood of Menshevism – its delving into problems of organization, its analyses of the past and evaluations of the present? Instead of intellectual activity, all we behold is a sterile desert, with here and there a mirage on the horizon representing some inflated interest, an illusion blown up to the status of a first-class event. . . .

Liquidationism, the new enemy, was denounced by the chorus of Bolsheviks abroad, by Plekhanov and lesser fry in Russia and, in all seriousness, by *Sovremenny Mir*.¹ When we ask what exactly the term means, we are told that it signifies non-recognition of the party, working openly or secretly against party interests. But I fancy for my part that the discovery of liquidationism in Russia in the summer of 1909 will go down in history on a par with the alleged discovery of the North Pole by Dr Cook – with the difference that the North Pole doubtless will be discovered some day, while the more we chase after liquidationism the harder it is to detect. Let my readers judge: in the summer of 1909, can there exist in sober reality, and not merely as the figment of a diseased imagination, a school of thought that advocates liquidating what has already ceased to be an organic whole? The party, to be sure, exists as an ideological inheritance, an unshakable link between the rallying proletariat and the ideology of the movement; it has its representatives in the *Duma*, it possesses various fragments of the past, but it does not exist as a coherent, hierarchic institution. It is difficult and sad for a Marxist to speak of this within earshot of the movement's enemies, but he is bound to do so, because there is nothing worse in socio-political life than distracting oneself with trifles, and no more disgraceful sight than playing with toy soldiers in the face of tragedy.

Unlike the members of other movements, Marxists have always had the courage fearlessly to reveal their internal dissensions, to describe the situation, however intolerable, as it is and not hide it under a cloak of hypocrisy. They possess this courage because they believe in their own movement and can always say, in Chernyshevsky's² words, 'Just you wait: our turn will come!' It has always been so in the past; are we really to suppose that that courage has evaporated and that, confronted with unpleasant reality, a Marxist cannot say boldly: 'What was old has crumbled and vanished, but the new order is coming to fruition.' And that new

¹ *Sovremenny Mir* was a popular journal, moderately liberal in its political orientation, designed to appeal especially to young people.

² N. G. Chernyshevsky (1828–89) was a major radical publicist in the 1850s and 1860s. His most notable work was the novel *What Is To Be Done?*

order – not the old one of the intelligentsia, but a wider one based on the working masses – will in its own good time take over whatever is useful from the old, above all the ideological inheritance and the imperishable values of Marxism.

A. Potresov, 'Kriticheskie nabroski', *Nasha zaria*,
no. 2, 1910, 59, pp. 61–2.

Part Four

World War I

Unlike the socialist parties in Central and Western Europe, the Menshevik leadership tended to denounce the war and urged the proletariat not to support governments engaged in hostilities (Documents 13 and 14). Even Potresov and his small group of colleagues on the right wing did not favour support for the Russian government's war effort. But Potresov did contend that there were important differences between the warring coalitions and that socialists must keep these in mind in formulating their positions (Document 15). In suggesting that democratic England and France merited socialist support against 'semi-absolutistic' Germany, Potresov and his colleagues implied that once Russia had been democratized, it, too, would be worthy of socialist support. This line of reasoning influenced the thinking of many Mensheviks on the war after the fall of the autocracy in March 1917. And it was the Mensheviks' attitude towards the war in 1917 that proved to be an important factor in their loss of popular support.

13 Declaration of Menshevik and Bolshevik Deputies to the Duma

The nations of the world have been stricken by an appalling, unprecedented calamity. Millions of workers have been torn from their peaceful labours and cast into a maelstrom of blood and destruction. Millions of families are condemned to starvation. War has broken out. . . . When the European governments were making ready for war, the proletariat of Europe, led by that of Germany, protested with one accord against the warlike preparations of ruling circles.

The workers of Russia were prevented from openly joining in this protest by a series of acts of violence, immediately before the war, against working-class newspapers and organizations. But at the time when the European proletariat demonstrated with all its might against the war, the hearts of Russian workers beat in unison with those of their foreign comrades. And we, the representatives of Russia's working class, consider it our duty to declare that the present war, stemming as it does from the policy of annexation and violence practised by all capitalist states, is one for which responsibility rests on

the ruling classes of all the belligerent countries, while it is as repellent to the feelings and desires of the proletariat in Russia as in every other country of the world.

Spurning the false patriotism that the ruling classes use as a cloak for their predatory policies, and defending as ever the freedom and interests of the nation, the proletariat is ready at all times to fulfil its duty and protect the nation's welfare and way of life from internal or external attacks of any kind. But when we hear appeals to the nation to rally behind its government, we are obliged to denounce the hypocrisy and emptiness of this call for unity in view of the fact that the peoples of Russia, as of all other countries, have been involved in war against their will by the fault of their governing classes. There can be no unity between a people and its government when that government does not express the people's conscious will but on the contrary holds it in slavery; when the masses who bear the brunt of the war have no legal rights; when the workers' and peasants' press is stifled and their organizations destroyed; when the prisons are crowded with fighters for the people's freedom and welfare, and when we have just seen Petersburg workers shot down by the army and police. Nor can there be any unity between the government and the many nationalities in Russia which are subject to persecution and live in an atmosphere of violence and oppression.

The thinking proletariat of the belligerent countries could not prevent the eruption of war with all its barbarities, but we are firmly convinced that the international solidarity of the world proletariat will enable humanity to bring the war to a speedy end. And when the peace treaty is signed, its terms must be dictated not by the diplomats of rapacious governments but by the nations themselves taking affairs into their own hands and settling their own destinies.

We express, too, our deep conviction that this war will finally open the eyes of the popular masses of Europe to the true source of the violence and oppression under which they suffer, and that the present frightful outburst of barbarism will be the last in history.

Declaration to the *Duma*, August 1914, drafted by Mensheviks: A. Badaev, *Bol'sheviki v gosudarstvennoi dume. Vospominanii* (8th ed., Moscow, 1954), pp. 346-7.

14 Working-Class Problems of War and Peace

While the capitalist classes, putting their faith in guns and gold, are going about the shaping of tomorrow's Europe, the socialist movement, tied in each country by the suspension of class struggle, is

condemned by the logic of its own policy to be a mere passive spectator. This is because, for the sake of patriotism and national defence, it failed to take the opportunity of stirring up the masses to oppose international imperialism. Blind to the historic fact that this war has brought to light a revolution in the conditions of the working class's struggle for liberation, the socialists of this school have opted for national unity and support of the war and in so doing have weakened, squandered and dissipated the revolutionary strength which the proletariat had mustered and which could alone have counteracted those that undermined peace in Europe.

Amid the present debauch of passion and greed, official socialism in Germany, France and elsewhere can do no more than utter platonic hopes for a 'democratic' peace that will not trample on peoples' rights, while renouncing of its free will all hope of influencing the events on which the terms of peace will depend. Socialists of this kind are like the well-intentioned scions of bourgeois democracy who fail to see that their humanitarian and pacifistic illusions are being ruthlessly buried by the development of their own capitalist society. But it is worse still, though more and more frequent, for 'patriotic' socialists to take on themselves the mission of those bourgeois democrats who have sold out to imperialism, by misusing democratic formulae to embellish plans that the rulers of Europe have evolved in the smoke of battle, providing for the conquest of territory, the carving up of nations and the building of economic and military coalitions. It is as though these socialists considered it their sacred duty to use the trappings of ideology to cover the unseemly nakedness of imperialism.

The proletariat should keep the sharpest possible eye on the design of its governments and ruling classes to follow up this shameful war by a no less shameful peace. The bourgeoisie is attempting by the war to resolve the irreconcilable contradictions of the capitalist order and so prolong its life, and this means that the war is contrary to the vital interest of the working class. The essential interests of the proletariat are also opposed to the predatory plans of the two warring coalitions, which each side wishes to see embodied in the terms of peace. The proletariat must acquaint itself with the content and true significance of these plans so that it can oppose to them its own programme of militant action based on the strength of an awakening class movement.

PLANS FOR ASSOCIATIONS OF STATES

As the war has shown, the capitalist world economy has developed to a point at which it is incompatible with its present political

framework. The root cause of the war, in fact, was the imperative need of the national economies to widen their territorial basis, and accordingly we find this need reflected in the peace plans of both coalitions. . . . The way in which the capitalist classes hope to solve the problem is directly opposed not only to proletarian and democratic interests but to the true needs of social development of any kind. Larger economic units are to be created by separating them more or less completely from the rest of the capitalist world, by strengthening protectionism where it exists and introducing it where it does not. The cruel economic war which is now being prosecuted along with the war in the trenches would become a permanent feature of life, blighting the growth of economic resources. Europe would be divided for good into two hostile camps, and fuel would be added to the irreconcilable opposition between them and the bastions of American and Asiatic capitalism. Within each of the new economic alliances, moreover, the interests of the weaker and less developed states would inevitably be sacrificed to those of the more powerful leading groups. . . .

As the imperialist cliques make ready to violate nations and perform experiments on their living bodies, social democracy stands up for the right of peoples to determine their own destiny in freedom and to control their politico-legal relations with one another. It denies that the class-ridden states of today are able or willing to secure this right for any nation, and it believes that its principles can only be fully realized by the destruction of the class state itself and the conquest of political power by the proletariat. Like all other democratic rights, that of which we are speaking has been betrayed by the bourgeoisie who once proclaimed it; but social democracy protests, now and for the future, against all attempts in the context of the peace treaties to dispose of nations against their will and without their consent. It protests against forcible annexations, open or concealed, and the division and fragmentation of unitary peoples; against relations of vassaldom between the great powers and weaker nations enjoying a pretence of sovereignty; and against the violent suppression of enslaved nations in alliance with states reduced to servitude. . . . The only way to thwart the evil intentions of these [imperialist] cliques is to weaken the stranglehold they exercise, and this can only be done through the revolutionary pressure of the proletariat. Agreements among governments for the reduction of armaments, even if they were carried out, could not prevent the unleashing of war: the way to do that is to disarm the governments themselves by radically democratizing the military system, abolishing standing armies and introducing a people's militia. This body, moreover, should not be

established in a form distorted by the mutual hostility of the capitalist states, so that it remains part of the army caste and is in practice an instrument of plutocratic dictatorship – instead, it must be a true armament of the whole people, protected as such by democratic guarantees. . . .

If the proletariat is to secure real guarantees for the abolition of wars and occasions of war, it must unite more closely than it has yet done into an international political force. It must shake off the surviving influence of national exclusiveness and refuse to subordinate its broad interests to the claims of national solidarity and what is falsely called national defence. As a united force it must support, as part of the common cause, each of its local or national components in their struggle against the capitalist or feudal centres of international reaction; and, scorning all opportunism, it must protest and fight by every means in its power against the oppression of foreign nations by its ruling classes. . . .

The extent of the influence that the International can exercise on the peace terms after this war depends closely on the political role of the proletariat during hostilities. If it is able, through struggle and resistance, to compel the governing classes to end the war at an earlier moment than they judge favourable to themselves, then, and only then, the proletariat may hope to have some influence on the terms of peace.

It follows that the proletariat must reject as harmful and absurd the argument by Huysmans,¹ Vandervelde² and the other spokesmen of official socialism to persuade it to desist from the revolutionary struggle against war and imperialism. On the one hand these spokesmen urge the proletariat of each country to ‘see it through’ and fight to secure their government’s war aims, and on the other they advise the proletariat of all countries to work out a ‘peace programme’ which the international diplomats are certain to chuck into the waste-paper basket. The tragedy of a fratricidal struggle endorsed by representatives of the proletarian parties in the various countries is to be consummated by a farce of fraternization on the basis of a purely platonic understanding – an understanding which, before the eyes of the bloodstained capitalist world, will afford devastating proof of the complacent impotence of a party which once declared its resolve to fight that world to the death! We who have remained true to the principles of international revolutionary

¹ Camille Huysmans (1871–?) was the secretary of the International Socialist Bureau of the Second International from 1905 until 1922.

² Emile Vandervelde (1866–1938) was a leader of the Belgian Socialist party and a prominent member of the Second International.

socialism appeal to the proletariat in all countries to spurn the policy of surrender and self-contradiction and to follow the way proclaimed by the Zimmerwald Manifesto.¹ To what does this point? To the resumption of a common class struggle against bourgeois society, which is a single society despite the war that divides it. To the utter rejection of so-called national solidarity, the inter-party truce and the 'union sacrée'. To a relentless battle against all the social forces that are waging this war, prolonging and exploiting it so that the whole of Europe, from 'freedom-loving' Britain to tsarist Russia, may continue to be subjected to unendurable political and social oppression. To an agreement among the proletariat of all countries that will put an immediate stop to the war. To the overthrow of the class rule of the bourgeoisie, and the achievement of social revolution! . . .

Down with the war! Down with annexations and indemnities! Away with hostile economic coalitions and Chinese walls that divide nations! Down with standing armies and secret diplomacy! Long live peace and socialism! Long live the revolutionary class struggle of the international proletariat! Workers of the world, unite!

P. Axelrod, S. Lapinski, L. Martov, *Kriegs- und Friedensprobleme der Arbeiterklasse: Entwurf eines Manifestes vorgelegt der zweiten Zimmerwalder Konferenz* (Zürich, 1916), pp. 6–8, 11–12, 14–15, 16–17, 18.

15 Letter Addressed to the Copenhagen Conference

Dear Comrades,

. . . We assume, in the first place, that neither socialists in the belligerent countries nor the International as a whole can be completely indifferent as between the two groups of combatants. The outcome of the war will determine the general course of events for years or even decades to come; and, while socialists are against war as a means of solving differences, once it has broken out in spite of their efforts they are bound to take account of it as an ineluctable fact and to draw such advantage from it as they can. In electoral campaigns they have learnt, as a policy of the lesser evil, to support this or that element of bourgeois society against another without detriment to their own socialist posture. In the same way they are entitled and bound in

¹ The Zimmerwald Manifesto was issued in September 1915 by anti-war socialists. It denounced the war as 'the outcome of imperialism', but it failed to advocate the radical measure favoured by Lenin, that is, an official break with the Second International.

wartime to select the party whose victory seems most likely to further the interests of world development. Marx, Engels and Lassalle all acted in this way, and so in recent months have the leaders and theoreticians of international socialism. We are of course aware of the difficulties which face socialists in deciding what combination of countries or events affords the best starting-point for the victorious advancement of our cause. Any war is hard to analyse in such terms, much more so the present one in which both camps include states differing so widely in their social and political structure, and in particular republican France and free Britain are arrayed with tsarist Russia against semi-absolutist Germany. None the less, we consider that socialists are bound to grapple with the problem even at the risk of being mistaken, for it is better to be mistaken than to have no fixed line of international policy. . . .

What, then, is our attitude to the war? In reply to Emile Vandervelde we declared that to Social Democrats living and working on Russian soil the problem of the war was a dual one: on the one hand its European or world-wide aspect, on the other the question how socialists should act in Russia. Looking first at the general problem, we considered that as far as it was at all possible to foresee events, the defeat of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey was incomparably more to be hoped for from the socialist point of view than the defeat of Britain, France, Belgium and Russia. Of course such calculations are always in a large measure conjectural, but it could hardly be doubted that if Belgium lost her independence and Germany conquered France by force of arms, it would be a grave and lasting setback in those countries to the workers' and socialist movement and would mean the revival of all kinds of reaction, while the defeat of Britain would give an impulse to extreme militarism in that country. Would these disadvantages be outweighed by the likely developments in Germany and Austria in the case of their being victorious? We believe, on the contrary, that all socialists should reflect that a victory for the Central Powers would be a disastrous encouragement to the *status quo* of semi-absolutism which, especially in Germany, has already held out successfully for half a century against the best-organized proletarian movement in the world.

The defeat of Germany and Austria, on the other hand, would not only unshackle the national movement in those countries but might, in some circumstances, lay the foundation for a process of democratization throughout Europe. This process would be aided and accelerated by the fact that the collapse of German militarism would destroy a whole ganglion of conservative and reactionary forces in Europe (cf. the German government's influence on the

Russian government in 1905), and would mean the demise of the regime compounded of feudal Junkerdom and financial capitalism. Historical conditions would at last be propitious to the activity of that class whose strength has accumulated over decades and which represents the core of the present International.

The respective advantages of one or the other outcome of the war would in fact be quite clear, and there would be no difficulty of choice, if the situation were not complicated by the existence of tsarist Russia and the likely consequences of her victory or defeat. If she were defeated, we are convinced that the situation of 1905 would not repeat itself. In 1905 the population vented its misery at the consequences of the war by rising in revolt against a regime which, as was widely known to all classes, had launched on a military adventure outside its borders which was not even in the interest of the bourgeoisie. In the present war, on the contrary, the Russian people is under the firm impression that its country was attacked and that the government neither desired the conflict nor provoked it. Such being the state of the public mind, even the least favourable outcome of the war would hardly afford an opportunity of laying the blame for Russia's troubles on the government and starting a revolution or even a campaign for major reform, especially as the defeat would not be only that of the tsarist regime but would also involve democratic France and Britain. More important still, it is not a mere question of a peripheral or colonial war such as that with Japan: a defeat in the present struggle would be accompanied by all the miseries of foreign invasion. Economically backward as she is, Russia would be totally devastated; her economy might well be harnessed increasingly to the needs of the invader, its development would be arrested or slowed down, and the whole of society, but especially the proletariat, would sink into a condition of lethargy which would preclude any vigorous or widespread social movement. . . .

Finally, a defeated Russia would in all probability abandon her unprofitable alliance with France and Britain and would take the first opportunity of entering into a new 'Holy Alliance' with the German and Austrian empires, devoted to conservative principles and unequivocally hostile to the liberation of the European working class.

For all these reasons we reject the idea that the International has anything to hope from the defeat of Russia. At the same time, without indulging in any illusions, we are sceptical as to the dangers that might arise from a Russian victory. As our fears in relation to a defeat are based on the likelihood that it would bring about a state of depression and stagnation, conversely our hopes in the event of victory are encouraged most of all by the increase in civic

consciousness that has taken place since the war began, with the amorphous mass of citizens gradually developing a tendency to demand more from the powers that be. We are also heartened by the prospect that reforms for the benefit of the bourgeoisie and peasantry will react favourably on the proletarian movement.

A victorious Russia, of course, would be no less exhausted and disorganized than a defeated one, but it would be in a state of enthusiasm instead of depression, and the aspirations of various classes might lead to awareness of the need for further Europeanization, which would help to weaken the survivals of the old semi-Asiatic autocracy. If Russia were to become Europeanized in this way it might resemble Germany or Austria after their nineteenth-century reforms, not least in the [political] incompetence of the liberals and their exacerbated nationalism. But even so, a strong impulse would be given to the socialist movement among the proletariat, which would have every chance of finding support in Europe for its socio-political activity and class consolidation. Besides, Russia would be unlikely to follow the German or Austrian pattern altogether, since the international situation after the war would hardly resemble the static condition of the years after 1870. All the signs suggest, on the contrary, that there will be stormy international conflicts and internal upheavals in many states, and especially a profound democratic transformation of Central Europe. . . .

For all the above reasons we see no cause for the international proletariat to alter its attitude to the European war on account of the belligerency of tsarist Russia. However, as already mentioned, there is a further aspect of the problem, viz. what part should be played by socialists in Russia as events develop? Assuming that our view of the war is correct, does it follow that they can and should support their country's government in more or less the same way as do the socialists of France, Belgium and other belligerent countries?

To this question we answer emphatically No. The conduct of socialists in each country is determined not only by their judgment of the world situation brought about by the war, but also by the pattern of social forces within the country, their view of the relationship of these forces and of the national government and its policy.

Russian socialists are confronted by a reactionary government which prohibits all action by independent social forces even for the sake of national defence, which calls for the fullest exertion of the people's energies. Even at this period of historical crisis the regime continues its time-honoured policy of persecution and of inciting one nationality against another, and allows no one to share in the

formation or execution of its war aims. Foreign socialists are well aware of how our government treats proletarian organizations, how it persecutes and imprisons our comrades; how it muzzles the press, destroys the work of trade unions and societies and opposes even the faintest manifestation of independence; how it stifles the enthusiasm of all classes, paralyses the national spirit, poisons the atmosphere by casting infamous suspicion on Jews, wipes out at a stroke the cultural achievements of the Galician Ukraine and, even in the case of the Poles, offers enticements but no true guarantee of freedom. The Russian government has no intention of concluding a truce on the home front for the duration of the war, and it is therefore clearly impossible and useless for the socialists of Russia to do so. A truce in these circumstances could only mean their unconditional surrender to the power which continues to destroy the country even in the crucial time of war. The duty of Russian socialists at this time is not to abandon the mission of liberation which conditions in the country have forced upon them, but to harmonize that mission with the tasks and purposes imposed by world events.

The socialists of Russia have one great, immediate task while the war continues: in the interests of the masses weighed down by social misery, . . . they must hold aloft the banner of their long struggle against the present regime. They must exert all their powers to ensure that if the Entente wins the war, the Russian regime is prevented as far as possible from interfering with world developments: the adverse effects of a Russian victory on the peace terms must be kept to a minimum, and the antidote to the Russian poison must be kept alive in Russia itself. Consequently, while the Russian socialists do not oppose the national effort of self-defence, and while they recognize that the war raises issues which must be judged and solved, now and in future, by all classes of the community, they continue with all their powers to fight against the Russian government. They do not oppose the war or put out anti-war slogans, not only because these would be ineffectual but because they would consider them harmful. They do not, as Vandervelde feared, organize unrest behind Russian lines. But they do not trust the evil men who are ruling Russia, and are not prepared to grant funds to them for the war. They consider that the Russian proletariat should put forward all its accustomed energy and organize aid to those who have suffered from the war. They believe that it is now time to prepare for peace, and would wish to combine their efforts for this purpose with those of their foreign comrades, being deeply convinced that the formulation of peace terms cannot be left to socialists of any one country but is the business of the whole movement, the immediate and vital task of the International itself.

We shall not here embark on this difficult and complicated problem, which will probably involve not one but many conferences, as well as consultations among socialists of different countries, before their conclusions are finally sanctioned by the International.

St Petersburg, 1915

Letter from Potresov and colleagues, early 1915:
'Kopengagenskoi konferentsii', *Izvestiia zagraničnago sekretariata organizatsionnago komiteta rossiiskoi sotsialdemokraticheskoi rabochei partii*, no. 1, 22 February 1915, p. 2.

Part Five

The Revolution of 1917

During the fateful year 1917 the Mensheviks reached the pinnacle of their influence in Russia. Until September they were the senior partners in a coalition (with the Socialist Revolutionaries) that dominated the Petrograd Soviet and after May two Mensheviks, I. G. Tsereteli and M. I. Skobelev, occupied ministerial posts in the Provisional Government. But, as the documents in this section illustrate, the Mensheviks did not formulate policies that might have dealt effectively with the major problems facing Russia: the war and the collapse of governmental authority.

The centrists, or revolutionary defensists, controlled the party and their outstanding spokesman was Tsereteli. A powerful orator, lucid thinker and strong personality, Tsereteli offered the most coherent exposition of Menshevik policies (Documents 17, 18, 20). His moderate policies were undoubtedly well-intentioned. Tsereteli was committed to democracy and to a negotiated peace, and he opposed any precipitous action on the part of the government that might jeopardize the chances of achieving these goals. But, as Martov, leader of the Menshevik party's left wing, realized, the Mensheviks were out of step with the increasingly militant mood of the masses (Documents 23, 23a). After three years of a devastating war, the people had grown weary of waiting for an end to the bloodletting. And the government's failure to cope with the many economic and social problems plaguing Russia inevitably produced despair among the people. When the Leninists struck against the Provisional Government in November 1917, they did not encounter much resistance from the Russian people, who were not so much pro-Bolshevik as apathetic. Perhaps one of the lessons to be drawn from the events of 1917 is that in a revolutionary situation moderate parties must act decisively on the most vexing issues if they are to retain political influence.

16 A Menshevik Statement on the Provisional Government

It is *temporary*, i.e., it exists only until the time when the Constituent Assembly creates a permanent one. It is *revolutionary*, i.e., it was created by a revolution in order finally to consolidate its gains and to cast down the old regime. It is a *government*, i.e., it possesses the full

power which is supported by the revolutionary army and the people.

Its tasks are clear and simple: with the support of the people and the army, to destroy swiftly and decisively *everything* that remains of the old order and that interferes with the new one, and to create, just as swiftly and decisively, everything without which the new order cannot exist. The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies has already exercised its influence, at the formation of the Provisional Government, to the effect that the programme of the Government contains all the measures that are necessary for the establishment of democratic Russia.

The workers and the army are ready – while preserving their independence – to march together, and they say: act, demolish and build! Without delay, for delay is like unto death.

Arrest the entire Imperial family. Appoint new officials and replace the old, unfit ones. Introduce by decree a democratic organization in the army and abolish there the hated system of bondage. Establish civil equality before the law, legalize all freedoms, abolish all discriminations. The decrees must be brief, simple and intelligible to everyone: 'Class privileges for upper classes and class discriminations against lower ones are hereby abolished. All citizens are equal before the law.' This decree, consisting of a few words, would tear out by the roots, to the very foundation, the disfranchisement of the peasant class, on the one hand, and the unlimited privileges of the gentry, on the other. Or: 'Local self-government is established on the basis of universal franchise.' Out of a few words, a new free Russia emerges. In order to destroy the master-slave relations in the army, all Guchkov has to do is to issue immediately a number of orders abolishing all former measures which humiliated the human dignity of the soldiers and deprived them of all civic rights.

If the Provisional Government fulfils its duty, *if* it begins to act, without reservation and delay, in the way that the interests of democratic Russia demand, if it carries *to the end* the struggle against the old regime, then it inevitably will enjoy the confidence of the people, and the struggle will be carried on on a single front: against the common foe – the remnants of the old regime.

The proletariat and the revolutionary army showed by their entire demeanour, during the first and most difficult week of the Revolution, their readiness not to split, and to conduct the cause of the liberation of Russia together with the liberal bourgeoisie. Now it is up to the Provisional Government to show by its *actions* that it deserves the support accorded it.

Members of the Provisional Government! The proletariat and the army await immediate orders from you concerning the consolidation

of the Revolution and the democratization of Russia. Our support is contingent on *your* actions. The sooner and the more decisively you act, the sooner and more thoroughly will preparations be made for the Constituent Assembly, whose decisions will determine the subsequent fate of Russia. Let us get down to work, and destroy the old and preserve the new Russia! We demand from you the immediate realization of your programme!

Rabochaia gazeta, no. 1, 7 March 1917, p. 1, quoted in Robert Paul Browder and Alexander F. Kerensky (eds.), *The Russian Provisional Government 1917: Documents* (Stanford, 1961), III, pp. 1204–5.

17 Tsereteli on War Aims

In the resolution that we have directed to your attention, we are declaring, comrades, that the Russian democracy has no desire for conquests, that, on its part, it renounces annexations of foreign territories, and that this rupture with the imperialist ambitions of the old regime has been proclaimed by the new Provisional Government. We are declaring that the Russian democracy considers it necessary for the Provisional Government to enter into negotiations with the Allied powers for the purpose of working out a general agreement on this platform, and that it invites other peoples in every country to do the same. . . . we declare that the Russian democracy is sacredly fulfilling its duty to Russia and to all the peoples of the world and will continue to fulfil this duty, but as long as its aspirations remain unrealized both in Russia and in other countries, it considers it its debt of honour to stand in the defence of the country, and it views the present war in the light of those conditions under which it is being waged – under the ascendancy of Russian democracy – as the cause of Russian democracy. We are told: our Provisional Government has announced its renunciation of annexations and indemnities, our Provisional Government may perhaps enter into negotiations with the Allies for the purpose of working out a mutual agreement; but the moment has not yet arrived when all the Allies, united in a common cause, can propose such a platform of peace, or when Germany would reply to it. And then they say: until this time has come to pass, until Russia as well as all the Allies accept these conditions, we cannot regard the war that Russia is now waging as a democratic cause, or as a cause of revolutionary Russia. I am saying, comrades, that within the available scope of action inside Russia, we have already accomplished the most important thing. Through the voice of the Provisional

Revolutionary Government we are declaring that Russia renounces all plans of conquest, and we will continue to abide by this commitment. But comrades, until the time comes when the same results have been achieved in other countries as in Russia – which is what Russian democracy must do – and if, comrades, we on our part are performing our duty at a time when democracy has triumphed in Russia, when in its foreign policy the democracy has succeeded in adopting a course it considers to be the only course of salvation, if at that moment, comrades, Russia should be defeated, would not the whole Russian democracy then be defeated, and I will say more, would not world democracy be defeated? Of all the warring nations, Russia was the only country to prove capable of advancing the platform we upheld, the platform of renouncing indemnities and annexations. This is a turning point, a shift in the course of the whole World War. If at this moment the country which first realized this, which first ushered in this turn of events, should fall under the blows of the enemy, then would this not signify, comrades, that democracy fell under the blows of imperialism? (*Storm of applause.*)

Izvestiia, no. 31, 2 April 1917, p. 2, quoted in R. P. Browder and A. F. Kerensky, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 1082–3.

18 Tsereteli's Speech on Returning from Siberian Exile

Comrade-workers, it was arm in arm with all the living forces of the country that you cast the autocracy into oblivion; it was together with the revolutionary army, the peasantry, and all the progressive bourgeoisie. Your achievement is great, comrades-workers, but the greatness of this achievement is equalled by your other achievement; having overthrown the old regime, you weighed the circumstances from the point of view of the interests of the great people, you understood that the time has not yet come for achieving the ultimate aims of the proletariat, the class aims which have nowhere as yet been achieved, but [you understood] that the hour had struck for the complete triumph of democracy, the triumph which the working class and all the living forces of the country are interested in. And you, having no opportunity fully to realize all those lofty ideals which will be realized by the combined efforts of the world proletariat, you did not want to assume the responsibility for the collapse of the movement [which would have occurred] had you in a desperate attempt decided to force your will on the events at that time. You

understood that a bourgeois revolution is taking place, that it represents a stage of the social revolution, and that, first of all, you must strengthen your position at this stage in order to accelerate the progress of all Russia, the progress of all mankind towards the bright ideals of socialism. The power is in the hands of the bourgeoisie. You transferred this power to the bourgeoisie, but at the same time you have stood guard over the newly gained freedom – you control the actions of the bourgeoisie, you push it into the fight, you support its resolute measures in the fight against the old order. And in order to fulfil this task, you, together with the revolutionary army, have created a powerful bulwark of freedom, standing guard over new Russia. . . .

The Provisional Government must have full executive power in so far as this power strengthens the Revolution, in so far as it is overthrowing and breaking down the old order. The proletariat represents the prime moving force behind these decisions; the proletariat dictates the decisions; the proletariat supports them with all its strength. But in order to apply its revolutionary tactics it is imperative to have organization and strict discipline in the ranks of the proletariat itself. I know, comrades, that at the present moment you are occupied with the problem of improving your organization in view of the fact that the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, having assumed the leadership of the all-Russian revolutionary movement, has now expanded to such an extent that it technically cannot cope with all the tasks that confront it. We believe that the question of reorganizing the revolutionary vanguard of Russia is a basic, cardinal question: will¹ we succeed in organizing a workers' representation and a representation of the revolutionary army on such principles as would enable them actually to subject the bourgeoisie to their control, actually to dictate revolutionary measures to the bourgeoisie, and at the same time to exert all their authority in support of those actions of the executive power which are essential to free Russia?

But should the moment arrive when this Government renounces the revolutionary path and chooses the path of negotiations, the path of compromises, then you and we together, comrades, will march dauntlessly against this Government and together we will cast it into oblivion in the same way as we did the old regime. But as long as this Government, under the impact of revolutionary events, is following the revolutionary path, as long as the interests of the bourgeoisie are embodied in acts which coincide with the common national interests

¹ In text: 'if we'.

of the democracy, as long as the Provisional Government carries the banner of the Constituent Assembly . . . and as long as its measures are directed towards the liquidation of the old order, we, together with you, will support it. . . .

Comrades, allow me to close my speech with that national cry with which all speeches at public meetings are brought to a close: 'Long Live Free Russia! Long Live the Constituent Assembly! Long Live the Democratic Republic!' (*Stormy applause.*)

Izvestiia, no. 20, 21 March 1917, pp. 2-3, quoted in R. P. Browder and A. F. Kerensky, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 1219-21.

19 The Mensheviks on Lenin's Programme

When Lenin, just returned from exile, was reading his report at the conference on unification of the Social Democrats, many of his listeners felt the touch of a real, genuine tragedy, the tragedy which is concealed in every revolution, the tragedy of revolution's transformation into reaction. The developing revolution is always menaced by danger not only from the right, but from the left as well. The revolution can successfully struggle against reaction and force it out of its position only so long as it is able to remain within the limits which are predetermined by the objective necessity (the state of productive forces, the level of mentality of the masses of people corresponding to it, etc.). One cannot render a better service to reaction than by disregarding those limits and by making attempts at breaking them.

Lenin arrived in our midst in order to render this service to reaction. After his speech, we can say that each significant success of Lenin will be a success of reaction, and all struggle against counter-revolutionary aspirations and intrigues will be hopeless until we secure our left flank, until we render politically harmless, by a decisive rebuff, the current which Lenin heads. . . .

It is imperative, by active struggle and propaganda, to render the Revolution safe from this stab in the back which is being prepared for it.

People who call to their aid the best, the most cherished aspirations of the proletariat are coming to the aid of reaction. Basing themselves on those aspirations and on the illusory possibility of putting them into effect, they will arouse against the Revolution the backward majority of the population of the country, and thereby pave the sure road to reaction.

An undoubted danger threatens the Revolution. Before it is too late, Lenin and his supporters must be given a most decisive rebuff.

Rabochaia gazeta, no. 24, 6 April 1917, p. 1, quoted in R. P. Browder and A. F. Kerensky, *op. cit.*, III, p. 1208.

20 Policies of the Provisional Government

I. G. TSERETELI

In taking upon itself the fight for universal peace, the Russian Revolution has also to take over the war, begun by other governments, the end of which does not depend on the efforts of the Russian Revolution alone. . . .

In order that it may succeed in its object, the Provisional Government must say clearly and emphatically . . . that it has broken with the old imperialist policy, and must propose to the Allies that the first question in order of importance is to re-examine on a new basis all agreements made until now. . . . [so that] this general platform of war and peace may be given out, not only in the name of the Russian Revolution, but in the name of all those who are allied with us. . . . We are moving in that direction. . . . We should do nothing which would break our ties with the Allies. . . . The worst thing that could happen to us would be a separate peace. It would be ruinous for the Russian Revolution, ruinous for international democracy. . . . A separate peace is both undesirable and impossible. Should we bring about a situation that would break relations with the Allies and necessitate a separate peace, the Russian Revolution would be obliged, immediately afterwards, to take up arms on the side of the German coalition. Even if we brush aside the talk of a possible attack by Japan . . . picture to yourself the condition of the Russian Revolution after the conclusion of a separate peace, while the rest of the world goes on fighting. Her economic and financial ties with the powers with which she is now united would be severed. . . . Under the circumstances, can there be any doubt that the German coalition, continuing with the war, would force the weaker side to give military support? . . . He who talks about a separate peace talks about Utopia. . . .

We come to the question of taking an offensive, the actions of the Minister of War, Comrade Kerenski, and the whole Provisional Government, in their effort to strengthen the front and the army. It is said that due to pressure from the imperialist circles, the Provisional

Government, and the Minister of War in particular, are taking steps to bring about immediate action at the front, in order thereby to put an end to the political campaign for universal peace, which this same Provisional Government is carrying on. . . . We believe that the measures taken by Comrade Kerenski tend to strengthen the cause of the Revolution and prepare the way for the success of our object in the field of international relations and universal peace. It is clear to us that now, when our country is threatened from the outside, the Russian revolutionary army should be strong, able to take the offensive. . . . Comrades, this inactivity which has been going on at the front does not strengthen, but weakens and disorganizes our revolution and army. . . .

I should like to paint in a few strokes a picture of our internal situation. . . . The Russian Revolution has taken over the burdensome inheritance of the three years' war and the ten years' reaction of 16 June.¹ The economic disorganization, the crushing financial difficulties, the food chaos which threatens to bring the country into a state of famine – all these are the inheritance of the old regime. We firmly believe that we can solve these problems, but we know that they can be solved only if the Russian democracy will make unheard-of sacrifices and self-denials. The most radical and extreme fiscal measures could not at the present moment altogether liquidate the financial crisis and bring the finances of the country into a normal condition. A country that spends sixteen milliards and has a net income of not more than half that amount cannot be saved by mere financial reforms, by fundamental reorganization. Only great self-sacrifice and mighty efforts can help at this moment. . . . All classes of the population should be called upon to make these sacrifices and self-denials. . . . We are charged with not having done anything so far [in economic regulation] but laws alone will not benefit Russia. . . . Even that revolutionary organization² which criticizes the acts of the Government and demands a speeding up, has nothing better to offer than declarations and principles. Time is necessary to put these into acts. . . .

As to the land question – we regard it as our duty at the present time to prepare the ground for a just solution of that problem by the Constituent Assembly. We believe that the question of the passing of the land into the hands of the labouring class can be and should be definitely settled by the Constituent Assembly. . . .

¹ Electoral law of 16 June 1907.

² The Bolsheviks.

At the present moment, there is not a political party in Russia which would say: 'Hand the power over to us, resign, and we will take your place.' Such a party does not exist in Russia. (*Lenin*: 'It does exist.') . . . They [the Bolsheviks] say: 'When we have a majority, or when the majority comes over to our point of view, then the power should be seized.' Comrade Lenin, you said that. At least the Bolsheviks and you with them say it in their official statements.

Gentlemen, until now, there has not been a single party in Russia which has come out openly for getting for itself all power at once, although there have been such cries by irresponsible groups on the Right and the Left. . . . The Right says, let the Left run the Government, and we and the country will draw our conclusions; and the Left says, let the Right take hold, and we and the country will draw our conclusions. . . . Each side hopes that the other will make such a failure, that the country will turn to it for leadership.

But, gentlemen, this is not the time for that kind of a play. . . . In order to solve the problem of the country, we must unite our strength and must have a strong government . . . strong enough to put an end to experiments dangerous for the fate of the Revolution . . . experiments that may lead to civil war. . . .

This, gentlemen, is our policy. . . .

Izvestiia, no. 84, 19 June 1917, p. 1, quoted in Frank Alfred Golder (ed.), *Documents of Russian History 1914-1917* (New York, 1927), pp. 361-3.

1 The Mensheviks Explain

The Revolution is in danger, comrade-workers! You have started it, and you must save it, for there is not another class that needs so much the liberties won in the Revolution, as the working class.

What threatens the Revolution most of all?

It is the war – the principal cause and source of all the calamities we are now suffering.

But all Russians are agreed that it is impossible to end the war by a separate peace with Germany. Peace must be general. Only such a peace will serve the common interests of all nations. We are not going to secure peace by urging the already launched offensive to stop by disorganizing the army, as the Leninites have done. Their tactics are a direct stab in the back of those who are perishing by the thousands on the battlefields. It has already resulted in serious military defeats; it will cause mutual bitterness, fratricidal hatreds among the soldiers at

the front, disintegration of the revolutionary army, and perhaps, a new invasion by Hindenburg.

No, at this time, when the whole Russian democracy and the Russian government have come out in favour of peace on a democratic basis, all our incessant appeals should be directed not to our army, which is doing its difficult duty to the Revolution, and which we are all bound to aid to the limit of our strength, but to the European democracy, to the workers of the Allied as well as enemy countries, that they may at last compel their governments to accept our basis for peace. . . .

Not fraternizing at the front, but the fraternization of the proletarians of all countries at an international socialist conference, a common struggle for peace, will end the war. These are the objects to which all our thoughts should be devoted.

The other peril threatening the Revolution is our internal chaos, the disruption of our entire economic life, the imminent famine, and unemployment. Will that seizure of power which the Leninites propose help in this case? No, because no seizure whatever will furnish bread to the people; on the contrary, it will merely aggravate the general disorganization, will create a panic, that is, an absurd, senseless fear, mutual distrust, and bitterness. And that slogan, 'All power to the soviets!' which many workers follow, is a dangerous one. The soviets are supported only by a minority of the population, and we must strive by all means to have those bourgeois elements, which are still able and willing to defend with us the conquests of the Revolution, take over with us the difficult legacy which has been left to us by the old regime, and the enormous responsibility for the fate of the Revolution, which rests upon us in the sight of the nation.

This is why the conduct of the Kadet party must be regarded as treacherous and criminal. It refused to submit to the demands of the democracy and deserted the Government, so as to leave the still inadequately organized and struggling revolutionary democracy, but especially the proletariat, to fight alone against chaos and the growing counter-revolution. Equally treacherous and criminal is the conduct of the industrialists, who are secretly contributing to the disorganization of economic life, so as to force the helpless working class to accept their own terms. . . . But what our opponents desire cannot be to our advantage.

While refusing to seize all the power, we must take into consideration the growing economic disintegration, and the bankruptcy that threatens the state. We must carefully weigh the demands that are to be presented, and we must not act in a disjointed manner, but only under the guidance of our trade unions, so that the

struggle with the industrialists may not lead to the destruction of industry itself.

This is why it should be our immediate aim to help the state in its struggle against the economic chaos by means of regulation and control of industry. Mere criticism and shouting, 'Down with the capitalists!' will get us no bread.

Pressure must be exerted upon the organs of the government, but we ourselves must also show independent action, display creative ability and initiative.

Organization, close rallying around our organizations, around the soviets, around our elected representatives in the municipal councils, these must be our principal means of combating the chaos.

Lastly, the third peril which endangers our Revolution and our freedom is the union of all the dark forces, of all the secret and open counter-revolutionists.

Counter-revolution can derive strength only from mass support; without it, the counter-revolutionists are not formidable. In order that the masses may not succumb to the agitation of the enemies of the Revolution and the people, we need incessant educational and organizational activity. The best way to disarm the counter-revolution is to combat and overcome ignorance and darkness in our own ranks by extensive and intensive participation in trade unions, educational organizations, cooperative societies, and, especially, in our own Social Democratic party.

We, Menshevik Social Democrats, warned you continuously, comrade-workers, against the ruinous tactics of the Leninites and anarchists.

You have convinced yourselves that we were right. Join, then, the ranks of the Menshevik organizations. Only [by being] a large, well-organized and powerful party, shall we be able to save the country and lead it safely to the Constituent Assembly. Only then will the voice of the working class make itself impressively heard and felt in the Constituent Assembly, which will settle the future of Russia for many years to come. To work, comrades! Everybody join the unions and our party!

Long live the Russian Social Democratic Labour party!

Statement of the Organizing Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Labour party, July 1917:

S. A. Piontkovski, *Khrestomatiia po Oktiabr'skoi Revoliutsii* (Moscow, 1924), pp. 161-4, quoted in F. A. Golder (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 457-9.

22 Resolution of the Defensist Group

A. N. POTRESOV

1 The war and the Revolution have confronted Russia with the national aims of defending the country and organizing its social and economic forces. Only by achieving these aims is it possible to save Russia from catastrophe and thus save the Revolution.

2 The achievement of these aims concerns all classes and groups whose business it is to avert catastrophe and enable the country in future to develop its productive forces without hindrance.

3 Such development is only possible within the framework of a democratic state, freely existing and developing in independence. The whole movement of the working class towards socialism, its final aim, is organically linked with the continuous, unfettered development of productive forces, and consequently it has a stronger interest than any other social class in ensuring that the national purpose is achieved in an orderly manner, in accordance with the interests of the whole country.

4 At the present critical juncture, when war devastation and the profound disorganization of the country are threatening to bring infinite distress on all classes, the proletariat has a stronger interest than any other class in defending the integrity of the state and ensuring its continued existence.

5 The salvation of the country is necessary from the point of view of class development as well as of state development, and for this purpose the proletariat must be ready for extreme sacrifices. It is entitled to expect similar sacrifices from all other classes, and will influence all the active forces of a democratic state in this direction.

6 In order to defend with all its might the interests of the state as a whole, the proletariat must function as an active part of the authority responsible for ensuring this end.

7 That authority must naturally be a concentration of all the forces whose existence and development are organically bound up with the unfettered, continuous development of productive forces which at present is threatened by mortal danger. It must, in other words, be a concentration of the forces of the proletariat, the peasantry and progressive elements of the bourgeoisie.

8 Only in this way will it be possible to achieve the national purpose and carry out the immediate task of the coalition government. This task has two basic, interconnected aspects:

1 To defend the country, and for this purpose to create an army capable of encountering and defeating the invader and thus

bringing nearer the prospect of a democratic peace, such as is desired by democrats in all countries;

2 to organize the country's economic forces, and for this purpose to create a machinery capable of mobilizing all economic forces and adopting heroic measures to improve, strengthen and develop the productive forces of Russia by regulating production, organizing distribution and carrying out radical financial and social reforms.

9 In putting this programme into effect the Revolutionary government must firmly combat the forces of counter-revolution that are raising their heads, and also the anarchy which is penetrating and disorganizing the revolutionary movement, aided by increasing economic chaos and the irresponsible agitation of certain political groups.

In the light of these facts, the Russian Social Democratic party should rally under its banner the broad masses of the proletariat, aiding it in every way to improve its class organization and to combat the rebellious and predatory tendencies of an unenlightened section of the working class which is disturbing the regular and democratic advancement of its cause.

The programme set out can only be put into effect consistently and forcefully if the party of the proletariat, as the advance guard of democracy, pursues tactics that will enable it to draw the broadest masses of the population into the work of building up the political and economic system so as to save the Revolution and the country itself. In so doing, and by the pressure of organized democracy, the party must also secure the responsible participation of progressive elements of the bourgeoisie.

Only in this way will the presence of Social-Democratic representatives as members of the coalition government be of real significance for the purpose of safeguarding the above programme and putting it into practice without deviation.

B. I. Nicolaevsky (ed.), *A. N. Potresov: Posmertnyi sbornik proizvedenii* (Paris, 1937), pp. 257–8.

23 Martov Urges Soviet to Seize Power

There is only one proper decision for us at present: history demands that we take power into our own hands. The Revolutionary parliament¹ is bound to take account of this, but it must not be thought that the question is decided under the pressure of armed force

¹ In referring to the 'Revolutionary parliament' Martov seems to have had in mind the soviets.

alone. The masses may be accused of lacking political consciousness, but we must put the question here, in what direction are we going? It has been said that we have to do with a minority, but it is a minority which shows great activity in our direction and supports us. The majority at present is in a passive state. I believe that if the whole population of Russia could be consulted it would turn out that we have the support of revolutionary democracy. Objective necessity obliges us to recognize that we must move forward. Our decision at this moment of crisis must not be such as to split the democratic front, for what we need now is unity in the face of attack and budding counter-revolution.

Excerpt from speech by L. Martov, 16 July 1917;
A. G. Shliapnikov, *Kanun semnadtsatogo goda*
(Moscow, 1931), IV, p. 289.

23a *Martov's Resolution: Introduced at a Meeting of Executive Committee of Soviets*

I The withdrawal of Kadet representatives from the Provisional Government means that the last organized group of the Russian bourgeoisie has turned its back on the Revolution.

II By this withdrawal the Kadet party has left the peasants' and workers' democracy to bear the whole brunt of winding up the tsarist inheritance: the imperialistic war, embarked on and conducted with the criminal complicity of all bourgeois parties; the economic chaos caused by the war, which the bourgeoisie prevents us from combating as it opposes all the revolutionary measures that alone can save Russia; the dissensions between nationalities, stirred up and exploited by the Russian bourgeoisie in order to weaken the revolution.

III The withdrawal of the Kadet party means that the Russian bourgeoisie as a whole has definitely gone over to the attack against the peasants' and workers' democracy.

IV Revolutionary democracy responds to this attack and this challenge by taking over the state power, which it has hitherto refrained from doing. It assumes this responsibility in order to endow Russia with a Constituent Assembly, to put into effect the principles for which the Russian people shed its blood in the fight against tsarism, and above all to rescue the country from a war which is stifling the Revolution and preventing the consolidation of our revolutionary conquests.

V The All-Russian Central Committee therefore demands that at least a majority of the Provisional Government be composed of representatives of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies and that the Government should carry out the following programme:

1 Immediate negotiations for a general peace on the basis that all parties renounce annexations and indemnities and recognize the right of nations to self-determination. Russia to cease participating in the imperialist war waged by the Quadruple Entente for purposes of national aggrandizement. A democratic reorganization of the army, to enable it to defend the Revolution against imperialist designs from any quarter.

2 A relentless struggle against the centres of counter-revolution, and a thorough reorganization of government departments and institutions to purge them of counter-revolutionary influences.

3 The preparation of measures to ensure that the Constituent Assembly may in the shortest possible time carry out a land reform based on the confiscation and distribution to the people of all Crown and Church lands and private estates.

4 Stringent financial reforms: a property tax, a forced loan, state monopolies, etc.

5 To combat economic disorder, the state should control production, distribution and supply; productive forces should be systematically redistributed so that the national economy may gradually revert to a peace footing.

6 Lockouts, boycotts, sabotage and similar action by the industrial bourgeoisie should be fought by every possible means including the sequestration of plant.

7 The development of revolutionary self-government should be aided in every way, likewise the organization of the forces of revolutionary democracy in the political, economic, cultural and occupational fields.

Resolution from L. Martov, 17 July 1917:

A. G. Shliapnikov, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

24 ***A Menshevik Appeal to Workers and Soldiers***

In this portentous hour of the Russian Revolution, when the enemy stands at the gates of Petrograd, when a wave of pogroms is sweeping over all Russia, and when the counter-revolution has mobilized all its forces, the Bolshevik party wants to call you out into the streets to overthrow the Provisional Government and seize power.

Comrade-workers and soldiers, your demonstration will [spell] the triumph of the counter-revolution.

The organized dark elements, led by an experienced hand, are waiting for your demonstration in order to convert it into a pogrom and frustrate the Constituent Assembly.

Comrades, think [carefully] about the outcome of your demonstration!

All the monarchistic and Black Hundred gangs will be able to take advantage of any demonstration to drown the Russian Revolution in torrents of blood.

The slightest disruption in the regularity of tram and railway services will leave the town and the army in the field without bread or other food supplies.

Your demonstration will cause a split in the ranks of the army and the navy, and will give the enemy an opportunity to capture revolutionary Petrograd with ease.

Your demonstration will give rise to a civil war in the ranks of the democracy and it will bring nothing but harm to the cause of revolution and socialism.

Comrade-soldiers and workers! Raise the question of the demonstration in all factories, plants, and barracks; explain its danger to the cause of the Revolution and appeal persistently for a refusal to demonstrate.

Let no one betray the cause of the Revolution at this alarming moment! Let each one of you exert every effort to calm down the masses, which have been aroused by demagogic and criminal slogans!

Let everyone rally to the cause!

Remember your revolutionary duty!

Long live the Russian Revolution!

Long live the proletariat and the revolutionary army!

Long live the Constituent Assembly.

Menshevik communication of 6 November 1917:
Izvestiia, no. 205, 24 October 1917, p. 1, quoted
in R. P. Browder and A. F. Kerensky, *op. cit.*, III,
pp. 1771-2.

Part Six

Bolshevik Rule

The Menshevik party was united in opposing the Bolshevik seizure of power. In fact, the internationalists, the left wing throughout 1917, were no less emphatic than their colleagues in condemning the coup d'état (Document 25). Moreover, for the next four years the Mensheviks in Russia consistently criticized the political and economic policies of the new regime (Documents 26, 27, 28, 29). Nonetheless, the party, dominated after the coup by Martov and his followers, gradually modified its attitude towards Bolshevism (Documents 31, 32, 33, 35). The result was a sharp division within the movement: the right wing, led by Axelrod, denounced the Bolsheviks as counter-revolutionaries who had destroyed democracy in Russia (Documents 36 and 37); but the official leadership contended that the new order deserved qualified support because any system of rule likely to replace it would be reactionary and therefore worse than Bolshevism. The Menshevik leaders continued to press for an end to terror and for a relaxation of economic policies.

By 1922 the controversy among Mensheviks aroused little visible interest in Russia, for by that time Bolshevism was firmly entrenched and the government prohibited even Marxists – if they were not Bolsheviks – from publicizing their views. In the West, however, the few people who had both an interest in the Soviet experiment and an open mind on the subject sought information from the Menshevik émigrés, the most knowledgeable students of Soviet affairs.

25 Statement by the Menshevik Internationalists

Together with the other socialist parties, the Menshevik internationalists made preparations to defend their revolutionary programme at the Second Congress of Soviets. In so doing they hoped, in common with all far-sighted elements in other socialist parties, to defend the Soviet organization in its entirety and to prevent occurrences which might ruin the Russian Revolution.

On the eve of the Congress, in accordance with a premeditated plan, the Bolshevik party carried out a *coup d'état* in Petrograd, seized power in the name of the soviets and overthrew the Provisional Government.

In this way the Congress was prevented from discussing the substantive question of the transfer of power to the soviets and, moreover, the question of the manner of such transfer and whether the problem should be solved by peaceful or violent means.

All socialist parties other than the Bolsheviks – e.g. the defensist parties which directed the Revolution during its first six months, the Left SRs, the Menshevik internationalists, the internationalist ‘unifiers’ who defended the Bolsheviks from persecution and violence and who always fought stoutly for peace, land distribution and democratic power – all these were suddenly faced with a revolution whose consequences will profoundly affect the cause of the proletariat and of workers’ democracy.

This political *coup* also took no account of the Central Executive Committees of the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies, the All-Russian Unions of railway and post office workers, the army organizations of front-line fighters and the Central Committee of the Fleet.

On becoming aware of these facts, and realizing that the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks and its transfer in such circumstances to the Congress of Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies meant the outbreak of a civil war which was bound to end in the triumph of counter-revolution, we requested the Congress, as soon as its session began, to discuss with all revolutionary organizations and socialist parties the possibility of resolving the crisis peaceably by agreeing in the formation of a general democratic government which would be recognized by all democrats alike. We also asked that warlike operations should be suspended until such discussions were held.

Our requests were not granted, and before discussing them the Congress adopted a declaration that all power had passed into its hands. The rest of the organized democratic movement was faced with the choice of accepting the *coup d’état* or submitting to violence on the part of the usurpers.

Being unwilling to take responsibility for an act of civil war, we withdrew from the Congress, We did so for the purpose of working in every sphere for the unity of the revolutionary democratic movement.

Our intentions are: *to find a peaceful solution of the crisis and put an end to quarrels among democrats*; and to unite all democrats in opposition to counter-revolutionary attempts to exploit the position so as to trample in blood the proletarian movement and stifle the revolution which has been so grievously wounded.

We shall appeal both to the Bolsheviks and to all other democrats not to permit a civil war to break out among the working people.

All peasants, workers and soldiers are united in the common cause of democracy. All must rally to the banner of a united government of all democrats, for the sake of peace, land for the peasants and the immediate convocation of a Constituent Assembly. The call must go out for unity among all revolutionary parties and all branches of the democratic movement.

Menshevik-internationalist fraction of the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies

Committee of the Petrograd organization of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' party (United)

Petrograd, 27 October 1917

Statement issued 9 November 1917: *Rabochaia gazeta*, 28 October 1917, reproduced in B. I. Nicolaevsky (ed.), *Men'sheviki v dni 'oktiarbr'skogo perevorota* (New York, 1962), pp. 29-31.

26 *Suppression of the Press*

The central organ of our party, the *Workers' Gazette*, has been forcibly shut down, along with other papers, by the War Revolutionary Committee. But the Bolsheviki have not stopped at this. After our new central organ, *The Ray*, started to appear, the printing works were seized by sailors and Red Guards who, in this manner, have muzzled the proletarian party.

Persons who claim to act in the name of the Social Democratic Workers' party have thus once again disgraced the socialist cause and shown their contempt for the working class.

By reducing the proletarian party to silence they hope to pursue unhindered their aim of betraying the interests of revolutionary Russia to world imperialism by conducting peace negotiations which flout the interests of the Russian and international proletariat and have nothing in common with the just and democratic peace that is desired by workers throughout the world.

Under the banner of socialism they plan to enforce without hindrance a regime of arbitrary violence and terror which makes the very name of socialism, the salvation of all peoples, hateful to tens of millions of human beings. They hope without hindrance to continue the anarchic policy of destroying the productive forces of the country, confiscating factories and installations, sharing out consumer goods and disorganizing the workers' movement. They declare this policy to be socialism, but it is in fact a huge deception of

the working masses, exhausted and starving as they are. It will inevitably lead to vast unemployment and the bloody suppression of the proletariat; it will render the working class helpless and abandon it for many years to the mercy of a victorious bourgeoisie.

These men, whose power is based on bayonets, are determined to prolong their dictatorship and for that purpose are destroying all freedoms including those of the press and assembly, the right to form trade unions and to strike. They are dispersing the city *dumas* and preparing to disperse the National Constituent Assembly, thus destroying in advance every stronghold of democracy against the onslaught of counter-revolution.

The Central Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' party (United) believes that it would be failing in its duty if, in these circumstances which recall the worst days of tsarism, it did not do its utmost to ensure that the party's voice is able to ring out clearly – to unite politically conscious workers to fight the usurpers, to warn the deluded masses against the pernicious appeals of Bolshevism and to preserve the honour of Russian socialism in the eyes of the international proletariat.

The Central Committee therefore informs all members of the party and the whole of the workers' international that if the campaign against the press continues it will continue its efforts to re-establish the party's central organ, and will be compelled – after nine months of revolution and under the rule of what claims to be a proletarian party – to consider on its own behalf and that of the whole party the necessity of once more setting up a system of publications *outside the law*, such as that which enabled the Russian proletariat to wrest its freedom from the shameful tsarist regime.

Statement by the Central Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' party (United) on suppression of the press, 22 November 1917:
Zaria, 22 November 1917, reproduced in B.I. Nicolaevsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 96–8.

27 The Constituent Assembly

I The proletarian cause can only triumph as the cause of a majority of the people. Consequently the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat, in countries which are truly ripe for socialist revolution, cannot be based on flouting the principles of democracy but, on the contrary, presupposes the systematic exercise of unfettered popular rule, based in the first instance on genuinely equal and universal suffrage. If the

Revolution, on account of the establishment of a dictatorship in the name of 'soviet power', deliberately turns its back on a Constituent Assembly elected by the whole people, this does not signify in practice that it has attained some higher form of revolutionary-proletarian development. What it signifies is that there has been foisted on the Revolution a Utopian programme, which is radically out of keeping with the backward state of the country and, being devoid of solid support in the present state of political forces, can only be pursued in opposition to the wishes of the majority.

II In the Russian Revolution the National Constituent Assembly was clearly the historical form in which the dictatorship of the working masses could best express itself, based on a union of the working class with the peasantry and urban democrats and having as its task the solution of the basic problems of the Revolution – the conclusion of a general peace, as favourable as possible to the Russian and world revolution; the extirpation of tsarism and the establishment of a democratic republic; the transfer of land to the people; extensive labour laws, and regulation of production by the state with workers' participation. As it is, the policy of the Bolshevik dictatorship, in direct connection with the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly, has driven into the ranks of counter-revolution a great part of the peasantry who form the bulk of Russia's population, and also large numbers of urban democrats; while other democrats who connect the fate of the Constituent Assembly with Allied imperialism and reaction on the home front have done their part to undermine the confidence of the broad masses in the Assembly. The upshot is that the Constituent Assembly can be invoked as a slogan and a pretext for direct counter-revolution, and in these circumstances even a re-election might turn it from its proper purpose into a counter-revolutionary organ.

III The present situation is the result, on the one hand, of the pernicious Bolshevik policy which in practice has fostered and continues to foster counter-revolutionism throughout the urban and rural masses, and, on the other, of the no less ruinous policy of petty-bourgeois democrats who seek accommodation with foreign imperialism and domestic reaction. In this state of affairs the Social Democratic party continues, by means of agitation and propaganda, to support with all its power the cause of popular rule, universal suffrage and the Constituent Assembly. Taking the Soviet order as its starting-point on the ground of established fact and not of principle, the party sees it as its main task, at the present stage of the Revolution, to work upon the masses in such a way as to rescue them from the Utopian illusions of the Soviet dictatorship and make possible the

restoration of the revolutionary alliance between the working class and the peasants and urban democrats. Only in this way can the Constituent Assembly once more become a war-cry and a means of saving and strengthening the Revolution, which has been led into an impasse by an anti-democratic dictatorship.

Menshevik Resolution, passed at Party Conference,
27 December 1918–1 January 1919.
*Partiinoe soveshchanie RSDRP. 27 dekabria 1918 g. –
1 ianvaria 1919 g. (Rezoliutsii)* (Moscow, 1919),
pp. 23–5.

28 *The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk* L. MARTOV

Comrades! We are asked to ratify a treaty the text of which some of us have not seen, at least neither I nor my comrades have seen it. Do you know what you are signing? I do not. You Bolsheviki, of course, know everything. The most complicated things are simple in your eyes. Talk about secret diplomacy! During the last two weeks all the free press has been closed. The Russian socialist proletariat cannot be held responsible for what is being done here. If this treaty is signed the Russian proletariat will make war on the government that signed it. This treaty is the first partition of Russia; Japan is preparing for the second; and the third will not be long in coming. By this treaty we obligate ourselves not to carry on propaganda against the governments of the Quadruple Alliance. In return these governments obligate themselves not to do anything against the Soviet government. I congratulate Lenin. From now on he is under the protection not only of the Red Guard but also of Kaiser Wilhelm.

Our Social Democratic party asks this Congress not to ratify the treaty. The Soviet of People's Commissars had no right to conclude it, and should, therefore, resign in favour of a government capable of tearing up this document and carrying on the war against imperialism.

J. Bunyan and H. H. Fisher, *The Bolshevik Revolution. Documents and Materials* (Stanford, 1934),
pp. 532–3.

29 *To All Working Men and Women*

What Is To Be Done? The Menshevik Programme, July 1919

What must we do, comrades, in order to save the Russian Revolution, beset as we are by external enemies – Kolchak, Denikin, Iudenich¹ and the Allied imperialists – and by dangers and calamities in our midst: lack of food and fuel, shortage of goods, the appalling rise of all prices, the despair and apathy of the working masses, the embitterment of the peasantry and destitute city-dwellers? That is the question which torments all politically conscious workers, who see how every day saps the internal strength of the Revolution, while the desperate masses express their discontent in strikes and riots which make the situation still worse.

The Central Committee of the RSDWP appeals to responsible workers of every political shade – Social Democrats and Communists, Right and Left SRs and non-party workers – to give their attention to a programme which, in the Committee's opinion, offers the only way out of the present grave situation and the impasse into which the Revolution has fallen.

All responsible workers must aim to defend the Revolution and ensure its normal, healthy development so that, uniting in a mighty surge with the revolutionary proletariat of the West, it may extend the principles of socialism ever more widely throughout political life. For this purpose we must maintain, strengthen and establish on rock-like foundations the political power of the working classes of our country, and we must lay the basis for the restoration of our economy, which has been crippled by four years of foreign war and two of civil war.

How are we to achieve these aims?

First and foremost, of course, is the task of winning the war. To defend the workers' power and the conquests of the Revolution against its enemies, to provide the country with food and raw materials, to induce the Allies to raise the blockade which is strangling our economy – to do all this we must strain every effort to defeat the counter-revolutionary hordes who are attacking Soviet Russia and to show the governments and peoples of Europe that our Revolution cannot be conquered on the field of battle.

But the war is closely connected with economic and political problems. It is not enough to defeat a Kolchak or a Denikin and drive their forces away from Moscow, Kharkov or Petersburg: we must

¹ Admiral A. I. Kolchak (1870–1920), General A. I. Denikin (1872–1947) and General Nicholas Iudenich (1862–1933) were commanders of the anti-Bolshevik forces during the Civil War.

see to it that, once defeated, they cannot renew their attack in three months' time. They must not be allowed to find masses of peasants, workers and Cossacks ready to fight under the banner of counter-revolution, or to overrun huge areas with small bodies of troops because the revolutionary power is hamstrung by the peasants' and workers' apathy, embitterment, exhaustion or disappointment and cannot mobilize sufficient forces to win a rapid, decisive victory. We must, in short, put an end to the kind of situation that has already occurred in the Ukraine and Belorussia, on the Don and the Volga, in the Urals and in Siberia: the masses at first welcomed the revolutionary power that saved them from the landlords and White Guards, but after two months they longed for the latter to come back and rescue them from the hardships of the revolutionary order and from acts of violence and lawlessness that discredit our cause.

If we are to succeed in fighting off the counter-revolutionaries we must also put a stop to the economic chaos and growing impoverishment of the workers which makes it impossible to supply and transport our armies or to enlist active and ready support from the workers and peasants. We must have better methods of production and exchange than Soviet Russia has so far known, and make better use than hitherto of social forces that can help to restore the economy. We must, in short, radically alter our economic policy, and cease acting in a partial or haphazard way, jumping this way and that in order to plug the latest hole in our defences: we must work to a definite plan and with a single aim, allowing the state to do all that it can with the resources at its disposal, but letting private persons, organizations and groups carry out any tasks that they are better fitted to perform rapidly and reliably than the state.

At the same time, if we are to solve the military problem and meet our urgent economic requirements, we must correctly understand and solve the political problem as well. Under the present system a single party, representing a small fraction of the population, enjoys exclusive power, governing without any control on the part of the masses who are deprived of rights, and resorting freely to terror. A system of this kind is clearly incapable of solving the problems of military defence or coping with economic chaos. It involves the squandering of untold millions of public money which might be used to improve the workers' lot; in the provinces, it confers authority and privileges on careerists and small groups of workers and peasants who look down on their fellows as subjects without rights; everywhere government offices and institutions are manned by an incompetent bureaucracy which values people not for their abilities but for their submissiveness to authority.

The system enables bureaucrats and privileged Communist cells to hamper and thwart any measure they do not like, however useful and necessary it may be. Organs of the police and Cheka¹ have undisputed control over the fate of every working man and peasant, just as they have over the intelligentsia and the bourgeoisie. The peasants and working masses lose all interest in politics and public affairs, which are settled in prolonged sessions of small groups, impenetrable to outsiders. At a time of acute peril, when the Revolution can only be saved by a spiritual upsurge and by the creative independence and revolutionary activity of the masses, responsible members of the proletariat find with horror that the ordinary working man or peasant is sunk in lethargy, passively waiting for the crisis to resolve itself and bovinely muttering 'It's no concern of mine', however desperately one seeks to arouse him to ward off counter-revolution and improve production and labour discipline. The workers and peasants behave like this because they have been forcibly discouraged from taking any free, independent part in political life. They no longer feel that they are the masters of the state and that the government and its officials are their clerks and servants; on the contrary, they have been taught that the power which governs in their name is in fact independent of the great bulk of the people.

Not only, therefore, must we pursue the war energetically and introduce radical economic reforms, but we must transform the political system no less radically.

For these reasons the Central Committee of the RSDWP suggests to all politically conscious workers the following list of measures which, it believes, could arrest economic collapse and the deterioration in working-class conditions, reunite the workers with the peasants, inspire them and the democratic masses with renewed faith in the Revolution, enable them to organize fruitfully, increase revolutionary Russia's warlike capacity and bring about a speedy victory over the counter-revolution and an end to the Civil War.

ECONOMIC MEASURES

I The peasants should retain, on a collective or individual basis as they may freely decide, the public and privately owned lands which they seized and parcelled out at the time of the Revolution. Other lands, not as yet distributed, should be leased on a long-term basis to

¹ *Cheka* was the acronym for the Extraordinary Commission for Struggle against the Counter-revolution. It was established on 20 December 1917 for the purpose of suppressing actual or suspected political opposition to the Bolshevik regime.

needy peasants and peasant associations, except for those lands on which large-scale model husbandry is being, and can continue to be, carried out by the state or by leaseholders. The decrees abolishing the Committees of the Poor should be put into effect without exception.¹ Agricultural communes should not be established by force, either directly or indirectly. Government-held supplies, agricultural implements and seed should be equitably distributed not only among communes but to all peasants who need them on communes and soviet lands.

2 The present food supply system should be replaced by one on the following basis:

a The state should purchase grain at agreed prices involving a large application of the barter principle; it should then be sold at low prices to the poorest dwellers in town and country, with the state making up the difference. The state should make purchases through its agents, cooperatives or private traders on a commission basis.

b The state should purchase, at a price equal to the cost of production, a certain proportion of the grain surpluses held by the better-off peasants in the more fertile provinces, the proportion being decided with the advice of freely elected representatives of the local peasantry.

c Grain should be purchased by cooperatives and workers' organizations, who should at the same time make over the stocks they have procured to government organs concerned with food supply. The state retains the right to requisition supplies from large landowners who are deliberately hoarding them for speculative purposes. Transport arrangements are under the primary control of the state, cooperatives and workers' organizations. All anti-profiteer detachments should be disbanded. The transfer of foodstuffs from a particular locality shall not be prohibited save in exceptional circumstances and by a decision of the central legislature.

The state shall assist, materially and by administrative measures, the transfer of workers and their families from places where food is scarcest and their resettlement in fertile areas.

3 The state should retain control of major industrial enterprises that are fundamental to economic life, such as mines, metallurgical

¹ In May 1918 Lenin called for the formation of Committees of the Poor in the villages for the purpose of expropriating grain and other agricultural products from the better-off peasants. This was designed to bring the class struggle to the countryside and increase the food available to the poor and the people in cities. But it provoked so much resentment that late in 1918 the government ordered the dissolution of the committees.

plant, the chief branches of the metal-working industry, etc. However, in all places where this seems likely to improve or animate production or to extend its range, recourse may be had to organizing such enterprises by a combination of state and private capital, by the compulsory formation of a trust under state control or, in exceptional cases, by means of a concession. All other large industrial enterprises, except where state control is desirable for fiscal or other reasons and would not be deleterious to production, should as a rule be gradually transferred into private hands, by leasing to a cooperative or a new entrepreneur, or to the former owner on condition that he accepts the obligation to restore and organize production. The state shall regulate the distribution of fuel and raw materials to different branches of production, enterprises and areas.

4 Small-scale industry should in no case be nationalized.

5 The state shall regulate the distribution to different areas, in accordance with a fixed plan, of the chief articles of mass consumption such as textiles, farm implements, salt, lighting materials, etc., with the aid of cooperatives and private traders.

6 As regards trade in other articles of the first necessity and also in luxuries, the state should refrain from imposing restrictions and should allow cooperatives and private enterprise to function freely, except in cases where regulation or even monopoly is desirable on account of the extreme scarcity of the product, e.g. medical supplies.

7 The credit system should be so reorganized as to facilitate in every way the use in trade and industry of available funds accumulated by producers in town and country and to afford scope for private initiative in trade, industry and agriculture.

8 The repression of speculation and trading abuses should be left to the courts and governed by specific legal provisions. All arbitrary acts of requisition, confiscation and the detention of goods should be punished. The law should protect rights of ownership in the case of all industrial and commercial concerns that are released from nationalization. In future, when expropriation is required by the public interest it should take place on the basis of a decision by the supreme legislative bodies and on conditions determined by them.

9 Workers' unions, in addition to taking a direct part in the work of regulatory bodies, are also and primarily representatives of the interests of the proletariat vis-à-vis the state and private entrepreneurs. In this latter capacity they should be wholly independent of any state bodies.

10 Wage rates in state enterprises should be raised and minimum rates fixed for private enterprises in accordance with the commercial price-level for necessary goods. . . .

11 The decree on consumers' communes should be revoked. Workers' and general cooperatives should be preserved as autonomous organizations, without the imposition of appointees or other interference in their internal affairs. They should also have the right to carry on non-commercial activity such as publishing, education, etc.

POLITICAL MEASURES

1 The right of voting for members of soviets should be extended to all workers of both sexes. Town and village soviets should be elected freely by all workers, with a secret ballot and freedom of canvassing by word of mouth and by the press. Soviets and Executive Committees should be subject to re-election at fixed intervals. Soviets shall not be entitled to exclude individual members or groups from their midst on political grounds. All officials and public bodies shall be subordinate to local soviets and Central Executive Committees.

2 The Central Executive Committee of Soviets should once more function as the supreme legislative and administrative body, its proceedings being open to public observation. No law shall come into force without being discussed and approved by the CEC.

3 Freedom of the press, of assembly and of association should be restored, and any party representing the workers shall have the right and be allowed to use premises for meeting, paper supplies, printing works, etc. Any restriction of this right that may be necessitated by the war against counter-revolution shall be established and clearly defined by the legislature; it shall not infringe the basic liberty and shall be applied only by the courts and institutions under their direct control.

4 The Revolutionary Tribunals should be reorganized in such a way that the judges are elected by all the workers. Together with their subordinate investigatory commissions they should have sole responsibility for combating counter-revolution. All officials should be directly liable to prosecution before these Tribunals for illegal acts committed in the execution of their duties, at the suit of the injured party in each case. Terror shall be done away with as an instrument of government; the death penalty be abolished, and likewise all investigatory and punitive organs independent of the courts, such as the Extraordinary Commission (Cheka).

5 Party institutions and cells should be deprived of state authority, and party members of all material privileges.

6 The bureaucratic apparatus should be simplified by the extension of local self-government.

7 A policy of understanding should be pursued vis-à-vis the nationalities which have for any reason broken away from Russia, in

order to put a speedy end to the Civil War and restore the unity of the state on a basis of national self-determination. The Cossack districts – Don, Kuban, Tersa, the Urals, Astrakhan, Orenburg, etc. – should be allowed the widest possible autonomy and there should be no interference in their internal affairs or system of land tenure. Siberia should have regional self-government, and the independence of Finland and Poland should be recognized.

Central Committee of the RSDWP, 12 July 1919:
Sotsial-demokratiia i revoliutsiia. Sbornik dokumentov
(Odessa, 1920), pp. 9–15.

30 Letter to our German Comrades L. MARTOV

At last I have an opportunity to congratulate you and all our friends on the German Revolution. By the time this letter arrives, the first breach will no doubt have been made in the wall that has cut us off hermetically from the West. We are in a state of complete isolation from Germany, and to form an opinion of events there and in the rest of Europe we have to rely on the contradictory, casual and highly dubious reports of Rosta [the Russian Telegraph Agency]. Our lively interest in German events is thus heightened almost to the point of morbidity, and any disquieting news, however doubtful its reliability, throws us into a highly nervous state. Naturally there is plenty to be anxious about. The revolution in Germany and Austria is taking place in such extremely unfavourable conditions that one might be alarmed for its future even if one had not lived through two years of the Russian Revolution. As it is, our own experience has been full of warnings for politicians and parties who have not succeeded in understanding the motive force of social development or who, in attempting to gain control over the elements of revolution, have overstepped the bounds that separate political realism from Utopian and adventurist policies. . . .

Despite all these misgivings, we now look on Berlin and not Moscow as the centre of the Revolution. If this letter reaches you before the convocation of the Reich Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, our Central Committee hereby requests you to convey our party's greetings to the Congress and our welcome to the German Revolution. We ask you also to proclaim to the Congress the thought embodied in our resolutions and appeals, that *Germany is today the heart of the proletarian world revolution* whereby the backward nations forced into revolution by the catastrophe of war will be able

to escape from the blind alley in which they are caught. Tell the German comrades, too, that we still feel a sense of solidarity with the Independent Social Democratic party; that our representatives will come to Germany at the first opportunity to establish a permanent link between Russian and German social democracy; and that we await impatiently the moment when it will be possible to organize close intellectual and spiritual contacts between the two revolutionary peoples.

L. Martov, 'Ein Brief an die deutschen Genossen',
Der Sozialist, no. 52, 28 December 1918, pp. 10–12.

31 *Speech to the Seventh All-Russian Congress of Soviets, November 1919* F. DAN

At this great moment in the history of the Russian Revolution I come to the rostrum to send a greeting to all Russian workers and peasants and to the revolutionary proletariat of the whole world. You all well know the reasons which prevented our party from sending its members to the Congress as the elected representatives of the working masses which give it their support. None the less, in this hour of responsibility we have decided to come here on the basis of the Presidium's invitation, so that at this historic juncture and under the eyes of the friends and enemies of the Russian Revolution we may earnestly appeal to all workers and peasants to form a single revolutionary front against the attacks of counter-revolution and predatory international imperialism.

Much as we disapprove of the policy of the Bolshevik government, and in spite of the persecution and violence we have suffered at its hands, let all enemies of the Russian Revolution take notice that when it is a question of defending the Revolution, our party with all its power stands shoulder to shoulder with that government. For in defending the Revolution we are not defending one or another government or political group, but our own flesh and blood and the common cause of workers everywhere. We are defending with every ounce of our strength the achievements of that mighty upsurge of the working masses which began two and a half years ago in Russia and is gradually encompassing the whole world, shaking the very foundations of national, political, social and economic enslavement and capitalist exploitation, and raising the standard of battle for the complete social liberation of workers everywhere. . . . I end my speech with this appeal: Long live the single revolutionary front!

Long live the Russian and world-wide Revolution! Long live Russian and international socialism!

Sotsial-demokratiia i revoliutsiia. Sbornik dokumentov
(Odessa, 1920), pp. 50-51.

32 The Dictatorship of a Revolutionary Minority

L. MARTOV

In a class struggle which has entered the phase of civil war, there are bound to be times when the advance guard of the revolutionary class, representing the interests of the broad masses but ahead of them in political consciousness, is obliged to exercise state power by means of a dictatorship of the revolutionary minority. Only a short-sighted and doctrinaire viewpoint would reject this prospect as such. The real question at stake is whether this dictatorship, which is unavoidable at a certain stage of any revolution, is exercised in such a way as to consolidate itself and create a system of institutions enabling it to become a permanent feature, or whether, on the contrary, it is replaced as soon as possible by the organized initiative and autonomy of the revolutionary class or classes as a whole. The second of these methods is that of the revolutionary Marxists who, for this reason, style themselves Social Democrats; the first method is that of the Communists.

L. Martov, 'Konets odnoi dvusmyslennosti', in
Sotsial-demokratiia i revoliutsiia. Sbornik dokumentov
(Odessa, 1920), p. 49.

33 Resolutions of the Party Conference

WORLD-WIDE SOCIAL REVOLUTION AND THE TASKS OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

Theses proposed by the Central Committee of the RSDWP to all Marxist socialist parties as a basis for common action.

SOCIAL REVOLUTION

I The development of world imperialism has brought about the catastrophe of a world war, the collapse of ancient empires, a shifting of historic boundaries, the devastation of the whole European continent and the displacement of numberless people. It has thus

created on a world scale the preconditions for a social revolution, marking the close of the capitalist era and inaugurating that of socialism.

2 These preconditions may be defined as follows.

From the *economic* point of view, it is materially impossible to rebuild the economy, exhausted by war, in terms of the former system of production, distribution, international trade and credit, based on competition among individual capitalists. On the other hand, the capitalist states have little power to restrain this competition and regulate economic life in a way contrary to the interest of the capitalist classes.

From the *socialist* point of view, the war and its aftermath have turned the working masses into a revolutionary class, whose augmented demands can only be met by making deep inroads into the capitalists' revenue and obliging them to bear the chief burden of war debts – a course precluded, however, by the fact that the capitalists are the mainstay of government.

From the *political* point of view, the post-war situation has revealed the inability of the capitalist states to establish international relations on the basis of a lasting peace, to give them any kind of stability or to free the economic system from the burden of the huge unproductive expense of preparing for fresh wars.

3 A world-wide social revolution thus appears as the inevitable result of the whole historical development of the most economically advanced countries, which display in their clearest form the tendencies of modern capitalism. . . .

THE POLITICAL REVOLUTION AND THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

7 This political revolution cannot be achieved by the proletariat carrying on a legal struggle within the framework of the state institutions of bourgeois society, as the ruling capitalist minority, having the material and military means to maintain its control, will resist any legal transfer of power to the workers. Consequently it is a necessary condition of social revolution that the powerless majority should be prepared and able to overthrow the power-holding minority by force. . . .

9 The class dictatorship of the proletariat, having set itself the object of liberating all the exploited and oppressed, is directed only against parasitic social groups which batten on the economy and at present hold a monopoly of the means of production. It represents the organized coercive force of the revolutionary state against this

minority in so far as the latter attempts to resist the social revolution, and the form and extent of its coercive measures are determined by the strength and effectiveness of that resistance. By its nature the class dictatorship can in no circumstances be directed against other elements of the working masses: for the latter's active and willing cooperation is essential to the process of social transformation, and can only be assured by the proletariat solving the problems of transmuting economic forms on the basis of a further development of productive forces. The elements referred to comprise non-proletarianized small businesses in town and country, the white-collar proletariat and the bulk of technicians in modern industry. The socialist dictatorship of the proletariat is based on the interests of an overwhelming majority of the working people and on that majority's growing awareness of its true interests. There is no question of the proletariat's will being imposed by force on a majority of the nation: the proletariat, as the revolutionary advance guard of the toiling majority, gives organized expression to the latter's will and puts it into effect.

10 The notion of a class dictatorship of the proletariat has of course nothing in common with that of a personal or oligarchical dictatorship, for instance the dictatorship of a conscious revolutionary minority over the politically unconscious majority, even though this might claim to be in the interests of the whole people. Revolutionary social democracy is unalterably opposed to such a notion of revolutionary dictatorship, which is contrary to the basic socialist tenet that the working class can only be liberated by itself and that the working masses must not be a mere object of social experimentation. Any tendency to establish a minority dictatorship, in open or covert form, is regarded by Social Democrats as a grave threat to the revolutionary development of the working class and the achievements of the social revolution. Consequently the Social Democratic party rejects any policy of using terrorism as an instrument of revolutionary dictatorship, signifying inescapably as it does the attempt of a minority to maintain and consolidate power which the toiling majority has not yet freely granted it.

11 A dictatorship exercised by the proletariat as a class, far from conflicting with democratic principles, offers for the first time an opportunity of putting them fully into effect. For the establishment of a dictatorship by the proletariat (without the creation of dictators who are superior to the working class in authority) is only possible in so far as the true will of the proletariat is fashioned by the free expression of the will of each of its component parts; and that free expression cannot take place in a capitalist democracy, with all its

many factors tending systematically to prevent or distort the self-determination of the masses. The essential marks of democracy, inseparable from the notion of a socialist dictatorship of the working class, are these: A genuinely popular authority must be consistently exercised from above; officials must be elected and responsible to the masses and enjoy a minimum of privilege. There should be the greatest possible degree of self-government, and the least possible development of a civil and military bureaucracy distinct from the agents of production. Finally, there should be the widest possible scope for ideological combat and propaganda.

12 Every democracy in history has been confined to certain social groups within which democratic principles have been applied. Bourgeois democracy, for instance, is a democracy of property-owners who are equal before the law, and it will only concede political rights, in greater or smaller measure, to the proletariat – a class outside the magic circle – under revolutionary pressure from the latter. The free American republic came into being as a democracy of the white race. In the same way, the new working-class democracy which is arising from the ruins of capitalist society is a democracy of those engaged in socially productive work. There is no contradiction in principle, therefore, between the essentially democratic nature of class dictatorship and the fact that it may deny or limit the civil rights of social groups that do not belong to the democracy of socially productive work. It is untenable to deny that the working classes possess the right to treat other groups in this way, or to argue against the exercise of this right by appealing to a supposed ideal of abstract democracy. In deciding the limits within which the new workers' democracy should be confined, however, the socialist proletariat must be guided by its objective of carrying out a social transformation whereby the whole of society will be involved in collective labour. This will be achieved not by exterminating the unproductive classes of the old society or turning them into an exploited class, as happened in former revolutions, but by drawing them into workers' associations. The tendency of a working-class democracy, therefore, is not to limit but to enlarge itself. To prevent members of the vanquished classes from exercising civil or political rights is contrary to the tendency of working-class democracy to establish a universal democracy, an objective that was unthinkable as long as the exploiting classes were in control.

13 The limitation of democracy by suppressing or curtailing the rights of unproductive groups (e.g., the right to vote, freedom of association and the press, etc.) is not, either historically or logically, an inevitable feature of the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat.

Nevertheless such a limitation may be imposed by the proletariat when the latter first conquers political power during a prolonged civil war, as a temporary and lawful expedient of revolutionary self-defence. The measures in question reflect, more than anything, a temporary weakness and uncertainty on the part of the dictatorship, which is not yet sufficiently accepted by a majority of the population as their own national government. The more such measures are forced on the socialist proletariat by the circumstances of civil war, the more certain it is that either the socio-economic prerequisites for a radical socialist transformation are not sufficiently developed in the country concerned, or else the working masses are subjectively not yet fully equal to the historical task imposed by their own revolutionary movement. The necessity for the socialist proletariat to defend itself in the transitional period by measures involving the limitation of democracy points, therefore, to the need for especial caution and a gradual approach to the work of destroying old social forms and building new ones. . . .

Wherever it has occurred, therefore, in the course of the Revolution that state power has fallen into the hands of an active minority of the working class, and that this minority, in a vain attempt to overcome the objective contradictions of its own situation, has strayed into courses of economic Utopianism and political terrorism, the policy of revolutionary Marxist social democracy is as follows. On the one hand, it supports the minority unconditionally in its fight against counter-revolution and in defending the principles of workers' power and the socialist organization of production. At the same time, it endeavours to bring about a modification of economic policy to conform to the level of social development; it aims at the democratization of the forms of state power created by the Revolution and the abolition of terrorist methods of government, in order to save the proletariat of the country in question, and the whole international workers' movement, from what would otherwise be a grave setback; and it seeks to transform the Utopian and terroristic minority dictatorship into a genuine regime of the toiling majority. It rejects as pernicious to the cause of proletarian liberation, and as tending to pervert the consciousness of the masses, any suggestion that, because there is not yet a majority for socialism, part of the proletariat should combine with bourgeois groups, and that in the name of democratic principles this combination should be regarded as an authentic expression of the national will. If a bloc of this kind is opposed to the revolutionary aspirations towards socialism, impulsive though they may be, of the more active section of the proletariat, the effect will be

to create a gulf that is difficult to bridge between this section and the rest of the toiling masses.

Resolutions of the Party Conference of March–April 1920: *Sotsial-demokratii i revoliutsiia. Sbornik dokumentov* (Odessa, 1920), pp. 24–5, 27–9, 31–2.

34 Resolution on the International

The Second International was dealt a fatal blow from within when, at the crucial moment of the outbreak of war, its main constituent parties abandoned the class struggle and espoused the policy of a social truce. More recently, the Second International has been finally destroyed by the fact that some of these parties, despite the manifest failure of that policy, persist in clinging to it instead of reverting to their revolutionary positions in the class war, so that it is impossible to form a union of parties and elements which have correctly understood the revolutionary character of the present era. As far back as May 1919, the Central Committee took note of the historical bankruptcy of the Second International and condemned attempts to reconstitute it by the mechanical and purely external association of heterogeneous, disunited elements. . . .

Owing to the extreme weakness and fragmentation of the Communist parties in most of Western Europe and America, the Third International is not linked with any mass organizations of the proletariat in these countries. It is endeavouring, however, to exploit the mighty political structure of Russia and the great prestige of the Russian Revolution among the West European masses in order to impose upon the world revolutionary proletariat a deceptive panacea in the shape of its own tactics, developed in the unique conditions of Russian life and consisting in a terrorist minority dictatorship and a civil war splitting the ranks of the working class. One can only describe as Utopian and sectarian the idea of making the whole European and world proletariat adopt the same tactics and the same forms for the establishment of its dictatorship, and the policy of setting up an international directing centre on these lines, which is inherent in the foundation of the Third International. . . .

Up to the present, then, there is no united international directing centre possessing the authority and capacity to represent all the revolutionary elements of the working class in the situation created by the manifest failure of the Second International. This fact has a harmful and retarding effect on the whole international revolutionary movement, and it behoves Marxist elements to create without delay a

new association of all revolutionary elements of the European working class, which shall be free from opportunism on the one hand and communist sectarianism on the other. . . .

This association should be closer and more effective than any that has existed up to the present, and should reflect the adherence of socialist parties throughout the world to certain common principles of action. These should involve recognition that socialist revolution is the next historical task of the era that has just begun; that the revolution should take place by means of a working-class dictatorship but without the terrorist dictatorship of a minority; and that the dictatorship may take different forms, equally legitimate and valid in themselves, according to the historical circumstances of a particular country.

The RSDWP welcomes the suggestion of the independent German and French socialists that a conference of revolutionary socialist parties be held to organize an international centre on these lines, and is prepared to take a fully active part in such a conference and in preparing for it.

Resolution on the International, 12 March 1920:
Sotsial-demokratiia i revoliutsiia. Sbornik dokumentov
(Odessa, 1920), pp. 37–8.

35 Dictatorship and Democracy L. MARTOV

The interrelation of the dictatorship and democracy is one of the most important tactical questions confronting the proletariat at this profoundly revolutionary moment of world history. West European Marxist literature, as well as our own, is already beginning to consider it as a problem concerning the world revolution and not only the revolution in Russia. . . .

It became clear that the Communist minority could not govern the state on the basis of a mass democracy with a will and intentions of its own. Not only the democracy of universal suffrage, but also that of the soviets stands athwart the purposes of the Communist minority. . . .

The revolutionary dictatorship, in the specific form that it was bound to assume in given historical circumstances, is seen objectively as the surgeon's knife with which history, with profuse expenditure of blood and energy, has extracted our present bourgeois society from the entrails of the old monarchy based on class.

Be it what it may, however, the revolutionary dictatorship is a fact, and the length of its duration proves that, given the existing

relationship of social forces, it is a phase through which the Revolution had to pass. Although brought about by the forces of bourgeois revolution, the dictatorship has developed under the socialist banner and presents itself in this guise in the international arena. It has thus naturally become a centre of attraction for all revolutionary movements in foreign countries and a prime object of hatred to all conservative elements. As a result, the revolutionary proletariat throughout the world stands ready to protect the Russian Revolution in the form of our Soviet republic, and to defend it against the attacks of world counter-revolution; moreover, large sections of this proletariat are disposed to model their own incipient revolutionary movement on the political forms, methods and slogans adopted by the Bolsheviks in our country. The Russian Communists are already entitled to speak of 'world Bolshevism' not only as an alternative name for the spectre of social revolution which is beginning to haunt the propertied classes of Europe, but as a strong and specific tendency within the working-class movement in many countries.

Bolshevism is undoubtedly making an impression on a great many West European socialists not only as an historical aspect of a victorious revolution, but as a system of forms and methods of the class struggle which has already proved its efficiency. . . . Does this mean, as many are inclined to think, that 'the road to world development does not lead via democracy', and that backward Russia has, with the intuition of genius, discovered the very forms through which the social liberation of the world proletariat is destined to take place?

However different the social structure of Russia may be from that of the chief capitalist countries, there are important points of resemblance between the situation in which the Russian Revolution broke out and that which now prevails in those countries and contains the seeds of a revolutionary outbreak. We have already mentioned these factors: extreme economic exhaustion, the drawing off of large quantities of labour to form a non-productive consumer group (the army), and the intake into industry of new masses who have not been through the school of class combat. It is more than likely that an active role will be played in the revolutionary movements of Western countries by the rank and file of disintegrating armies, forming a mass without the unity of a single class interest, and in that case it is very probable that the revolutionary process will exhibit forms and tendencies resembling in many ways those that have occurred in Russia. . . .

The world development involves passage through democracy as a precondition of socialism, although intermediate revolutionary

stages may have to be gone through before democracy is reached. The duty of Marxists, as we know from our teachers, is to defend the interests of the proletarian movement as a whole at every stage of its development. We must, if necessary, defend its future against its present, and by so doing bring the future nearer. We must explain to the proletariat the basic conditions of its liberation, which include the achievement of unlimited democracy as the surest way of crushing its class enemies and consolidating the new system of production. We shall thus fulfil our duty of helping to shorten the process of painful experiment through which the revolutionized masses will come to discover the forms and methods that are most advantageous to their struggle.

From this point of view the political dispute in Russia concerning our revolutionary dictatorship is of the first importance to the budding revolutionary movements in the West. The duty of combating the revival of Utopian socialism, Jacobinical and anarcho-communist tendencies falls on Russian Marxists by virtue of their international solidarity with the socialist vanguard of the West European proletariat. But this battle must be fought in the name and spirit of revolutionary Marxism, with the object of leading the proletariat onward from Bolshevism towards true socialism. It must not deviate into social-reformist reaction against anarchic and unruly tendencies; it must not resort to an opportunistic 'truce among classes' as a remedy to Utopian deformations of the class war; and it must not turn its back on the world revolutionary process reflected, as by a distorting mirror, in the wild and incongruous phenomena of the Russian Revolution.

L. Martov, 'Diktatura i demokratiia', *Za god: Sbornik statei* (Petrograd, 1919), pp. 19, 27, 34-6, 37-8.

36 *Speech at the International Socialist Conference at Bern* P. AXELROD

We feel that it is our right and duty to insist that the conference should address itself to discovering the truth about the Bolshevik regime. The best way to enable the International to form an independent judgment of the situation in Russia is, in our opinion, to send an internationally organized commission representing all shades of socialist thought which can make thorough investigations and observations on the spot and so form a clear, reliable picture of Bolshevik practice and the condition, mood and aims of the Russian

working masses. All that the Russian delegation asks of the conference is that it should appoint such a commission.

We are perfectly aware that we cannot expect you to take sides against the Bolsheviks merely on the strength of what we tell you, but equally we must maintain our right to appear before you as their accusers. Our proposal to send a commission would otherwise not be justified, and it is our main purpose here to explain and defend that proposal. Moreover, it is our sacred duty to use this rostrum to bring to the notice of the international proletariat the complaints, charges and protests of the Russian workers and socialist parties against the Bolsheviks and their regime. With very few exceptions, the press of our brother parties in the West is closed to all reports from Russia that could in any way cast doubt on their uncritical support of the Bolsheviks and the legend of Bolshevism as it is presented to the world. . . .

The bourgeois press and politicians brand with the stigma of Bolshevism every act of revolution, and every strong expression of will, by the proletarian masses in the West; and the blame for this lies first and foremost with the Western comrades who extol Bolshevism as the most revolutionary and consistent form of Marxism and acclaim the Bolshevik tyranny as a Communist dictatorship of the proletariat. None of these comrades have taken the trouble to analyse Bolshevism on the basis of actual facts, or to inform themselves and others from unimpeachable sources of the nature and consequences of the Bolshevik dictatorship. They have no conception that Bolshevism is in fact nothing but a savage and pernicious throwback to Bakuninism,¹ Nechaevism² and Blanquism,³ in other words to revolutionary ideologies that belong to the earliest and most immature period of the workers' movement. The admirers of Bolshevism have done their best, with their panegyrics, to help these retrograde doctrines to prevail, and by so doing they have made it easier for international reaction and capitalist governments to use the Bolshevik experience as a weapon against the revolutionary movement of the world proletariat. The best way to prevent them from exploiting Bolshevism in this fashion, or at least to make it a

¹ Bakuninism refers to the doctrines of Michael Bakunin (1814–76), the revolutionary anarchist who contended that the very act of violence was liberating and creative.

² On Nechaevism see footnote 1, p. 73.

³ Russian Blanquism derived its ideas from the French radical thinker Auguste Blanqui (1805–81). It held that in view of the political apathy of the masses the intellectual elite was obliged to create a tightly centralized, conspiratorial organization for the violent overthrow of the existing order.

great deal more difficult, is not to hush up the truth about what the Bolsheviks are doing but to expose it without mercy. I repeat here what I have already told our British and French comrades in London and Paris: it is a sad, disturbing fact for Social Democrats, a source of shame and an ill omen, that the truth of what is going on in Russia is reported for the most part not by the Social-Democratic press but by that of the bourgeoisie. . . .

The question of dictatorship and democracy ought really not to be debated at this conference, but should have been discussed for months beforehand at party meetings and in the press. The idea that there is an unbridgeable gulf between democracy and proletarian dictatorship is in fact quite a recent one. It used to be taken for granted in avowedly Marxist circles that proletarian rule presupposes a democratic regime in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism: that it can only consolidate itself on the basis of such a regime, and that proletarian rule certainly does not require the violent destruction of democracy. It was only when the Bolsheviks won their victory over the whole of Russian democracy, and had succeeded in disseminating the legend that their seizure of power meant that the Russian proletariat was now supreme – only since then has there been this craze to revise our ideas about the relationship between democracy and proletarian dictatorship. But in reality the proletariat is *not* supreme in Bolshevik Russia: it is the servant and not the master, and its Bolshevik rulers and their pretorian guards oppress it and trample on its rights in a way it has never experienced before. The Bolshevik regime, in fact, is the precise opposite of a dictatorship of the proletariat; but the only way our Western comrades will be brought to see this is if they appoint an international commission to go to Russia and investigate conditions on the spot. . . .

The International could save Russia from [the] danger [of having the masses abandon democracy in favour of reaction] if, instead of merely opposing military intervention, it took the positive course of itself intervening as a saviour and liberator to protect the vital interests of the Russian Revolution and the working masses of our country. If the brother parties merely protest against Entente intervention they run the risk of acting as blind, unconscious tools and helping to prepare the ground psychologically for a complete victory of the bourgeois counter-revolutionary powers over Russian democracy as a whole. In that event the International would share the blame for the final defeat of the Russian Revolution, with all the fateful consequences that would have for the international proletariat.

The investigation by an international socialist commission of conditions in Russia, as proposed by the Russian delegation, would

make the Western comrades aware of this danger and show them where their duty lies vis-à-vis the Russian and international proletariat. The disclosure of the truth about the situation in Russia by such a commission is necessary not only in the interests of the Russian proletariat and Russian democracy, but in those of the International itself.

P. Axelrod, 'Rede auf der internationalen sozialistischen Konferenz in Bern (1919)', in I. Tsereteli and W. Woytinsky (eds.), *Die russische Revolution und die sozialistische Internationale: Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von Paul Axelrod* (Jena, 1932), pp. 168–72, 176.

37 Comrade Axelrod on the Struggle against Bolshevism: Letter to L. Martov

Your estimate of the Bolshevik revolution and dictatorship coincides completely with O. Bauer's,¹ the only difference being that in his mind it serves as a theoretical basis for sanctioning the Bolshevik regime in Russia for the benefit of the West, but rejecting it in Western countries. You for your part accept the necessity and the duty for us to fight Asiatic Bolshevism to the utmost. There seems to me, however, to be a great discrepancy, indeed an essential contradiction, between your estimate in principle of the historical importance of Bolshevism and, on the other hand, our party's war against it. This contradiction is bound, in one way or another, to have a harmful effect on the party's political practice and to lead the weak-willed and weak-spirited into temptation or error. You refer to the example of the great French Revolution and in particular the Jacobins [in 1792–3 [*sic*]]. This example was invoked by Mehring² – and indeed not only by socialists but by a number of radically-minded bourgeois writers, politicians and ordinary 'Philistines', all actuated by various motives – who used it immediately after October to sanctify the Bolshevik *coup* and the savagery and violence of the ensuing dictatorship. When the example of the French Revolution was brandished in this manner, my reply was that there certainly were external points of resemblance between the Jacobins and the

¹ Otto Bauer (1881–1938) was a leading theorist of the Austrian Socialist party.

² Franz Mehring (1840–1919) was a historian of German socialism and a prominent publicist.

Bolsheviks, but they amounted to hardly more than the resemblance between an original and a clever parody, or between a grandiose, elemental occurrence and an attempt to stage a repetition of it.

The great majority of Western socialists, on the other hand, went so far in idealizing the October Revolution as to see in it a revival of the Paris Commune, or rather an incomparably greater version of the Commune and practically an event of world-wide significance in itself. To this I replied that, in view of the immediate causes and historical circumstances of the Commune, its composition and indeed its whole character, both it and the revolution which led to it were so different from the Bolshevik *coup* and subsequent dictatorship that to celebrate the latter as a resurrection of the Commune was a blasphemy against socialism and the whole idea of a dictatorship of the proletariat. . . .

The behaviour of Lenin and his group at the first London congress of our party [in summer 1903], and the split which they then brought about, seemed to me at the time symptomatic of nascent Jacobinical tendencies and petty-bourgeois revolutionism within the Russian Social Democratic party. Immediately after the Congress, while we were still in London, I expressed to our comrades my opinion of the inner meaning and success of Lenin's campaign, in the spirit of Nechaev and Bonaparte, against all who did not share his views. At the same time I recalled in *Iskra* Marx's words about events occurring twice in history, first as tragedy and then as farce.

But history's farces are of different kinds. The Jacobinism of the Bolsheviks is a tragic parody of its original, grounded psychologically in Herostratism¹ and the amorality of the *Übermensch*. The Jacobins gained power as a result of the elemental course of the great French Revolution, and there are two important points to be remembered here. The first is that their practical aims and policies were not in complete and irreconcilable conflict, as a matter of principle and theory, with their philosophy of life and history, as is the case with the Bolsheviks who call themselves Marxists. The second point is that Jacobin rule did not signify the seizure of power by a single group or fraction, ousting or suppressing by violence all the other groups standing for revolutionary democracy; on the contrary, the Jacobin party comprised all the leading elements of that democracy. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, made themselves dictators by usurpation and by violently excluding from power the whole of the Social Democratic movement.

¹ *Herostratism*: the ruthless attempt to achieve glory regardless of cost.

The Bolsheviks practised acting in this way over a period of almost fifteen years before the Revolution, by their *coups* within the party and by the Bonapartist or Nechaevist methods whereby Lenin and his friends became absolute dictators over the Russian Social Democratic movement. During the many years' struggle for power within the party, the Leninists perfected the demagogic skills and methods which they used from the very first days of the March Revolution to carry on a war to the death with the whole Social Democratic party, with the deliberate intention of exploiting its difficulties in order to seize exclusive political power for themselves – all this under the banner of Marxism, which they had betrayed at every step even before the Revolution began.

But the greatest betrayal of all from the standpoint of the international proletariat is the Bolshevik dictatorship aimed at establishing Communism in economically backward Russia at a time when capitalism is still supreme in the most advanced countries. I need not remind you that from the first moment when Marxism was implanted in Russia it took issue with every variety of Utopian socialism which maintained that Russia was historically destined to jump from feudalism and semi-primitive capitalism to full-blown socialism. Lenin and his fellow-warriors of the pen took an active part in that battle also. Consequently, by perpetuating the October Revolution they committed an act of thorough-paced treachery, a criminal adventure in the style of Herostratus, which stands in a direct causal relationship to their terroristic regime and all their other crimes.

It was not in a mere outburst of polemical ardour, but from deep conviction that I described the Leninists ten years ago as a Black Hundred gang of double-dyed criminals within the Social Democratic party. This description essentially fits the methods by which they have now seized power and are retaining it. No doubt it would behove the rest of us to put up with these methods and with the present regime if it were the case that the Bolsheviks, like the French Jacobins, were the only group consistently striving to fulfil the historic task imposed by the Revolution. If the Bolsheviks were endowed with the same kind of historical legitimacy as the Jacobins in 1792–3 [*sic*] then our party would be playing a Gironde-like¹ part in opposing them. But the Girondists (though of course their motives were not mercenary and they were not consciously allied with capitalism) were representatives of a different class than that for which the Jacobins stood; whereas we are opposed to the Bolsheviks because

¹ The Girondins were the moderates (as compared to the Jacobins) in the revolutionary movement in France in 1792.

we are wholly devoted to the interests of the proletariat, defending it and upholding the honour of its international banner against the Asiatic despotism which claims to fight under its colours.

If it were true that the Bolsheviks and they alone are properly carrying out the historic mission of the Revolution in Russia, as the Jacobins once did in France, then our fight against them would be essentially counter-revolutionary: it would be our plain duty to join their ranks and, if we acted in any way as an opposition, to do so in a cautious, loyal and constructive manner.

[After expressing agreement with the Central Committee in rejecting the idea of a rebellion against the Soviet regime, the letter continues.]

Certainly I am opposed to the idea of concentrating the forces of the socialist opposition and discontented elements among the democratic masses for the purpose of preparing and organizing an armed uprising. But this is not at all because I consider that such a rising would necessarily be illegitimate, anti-socialist or anti-revolutionary vis-à-vis that authority which purports to represent the same class as the whole Social Democratic party and the whole socialist opposition. In the first place, I deny that the Bolsheviks today represent – in reality, as opposed to issuing decrees and holding ceremonial ‘congresses’ – the mass of the Russian proletariat and peasantry. As I said two years ago and repeated at the Bern conference, I am convinced that the Bolshevik regime is not a dictatorship of the proletariat but a dictatorship *over* the proletariat (and peasantry). My conviction is even stronger than at Bern, in view of the degeneration of so-called soviet power that we have witnessed since. You say that Bolshevism cannot be dismissed as a regime of ‘riff-raff and sadists’. But you and other friends in Russia must remember that directly after the London congress of 1903 I was far from sharing the widespread, facile view of the Bolshevik movement, then in its infancy, and later I gave a clear and reasoned account of its historical essence and background. To Kautsky I expressed my view in the words: ‘Whatever one may think of Bolshevism, it is an important phenomenon in world history and cannot be judged lightly or casually.’ I added at once, however: ‘To explain and understand it is one thing, but to endorse or justify it is quite another,’ and so on. One can think of other phenomena – a pestilential marsh, an earthquake obliterating whole towns and districts – the Great War, the invasions of the Huns and Mongols – which are important and impressive in their causes and consequences, but which we do not feel bound to regard with admiration as well as awe. When we find individuals and groups destroying the foundations of human culture and progress and reviving the

barbarism and cruelty of long-past ages, it is our duty to brand these acts with the reprobation they deserve.

The historical significance of Bolshevism, and the specific reasons that we brought it to the forefront, do not in my estimation make any difference to the fact that the Bolsheviks have gained power by a crude and bare-faced deception of the masses of the proletariat and the army, by criminal means and by unheard-of demagogy. Now that they are in power, they hold on to it by turning a section of the people into their pretorian guard, while corrupting others and forming them into a privileged class which is as much bound up with the Bolshevik dictatorship as the old landowners, civil service and officer class were with the tsarist regime. In addition to this, the Bolsheviks are guilty of terror, acts of a highly arbitrary nature and the inhuman suppression of the slightest manifestation of discontent on the part of the great mass of the people and the socialist opposition. I am quite ready to believe that in the past three years of Bolshevik rule, the riff-raff on whom they originally based their power have all, or for the most part, turned into a respectable class of 'convinced' supporters and guardians of the regime. But on the other hand, during those three years a large number of genuine or half-convinced Bolsheviks have themselves turned into a horde of riff-raff, occupying military, civil and police posts at all levels and constituting the new army of 'Soviet power'. I do not know how many sadists there may be in that army or among its commanders. But I well believe that Uritsky¹ of unpleasant memory was a sadist, that Dzerzhinsky² is a psychopath of the first order and that in the innumerable Chekas there are plenty of similar characters of both sexes. I admit, on the other hand, that there may be a very few Bolsheviks left who still believe that the present regime is necessary and beneficial.

It is true that the Black Hundred gangs of Denikin, Wrangel and others have treated the population of areas conquered by them no less barbarously, and in places even more so, than the most rabid left-wing Bolsheviks. These facts, and the Polish offensive, have been used by the authorities to paralyse or weaken sections of the anti-Bolshevik opposition. It may even be the case by now – I cannot judge from here – that a kind of pro-Bolshevik patriotism is taking root in some tiny sections of the population other than the privileged elements. But after all, under the tsarist regime ninety per cent or more of the workers and peasants were devoted body and soul to the Tsar and

¹ M. S. Uritsky (1873–1918), a Left Communist, was head of the Petrograd Cheka. On 30 August 1918 he was assassinated by terrorists.

² Felix Dzerzhinsky (1877–1926) was the first head of the Cheka.

were stout defenders of a system that oppressed and enslaved them, while amongst the nobility and the officer class and the civil service there were plenty of honest and sincere supporters of the semi-feudal order of society. Nevertheless, it would never have occurred to any revolutionary or even liberal of those days to call the order of society a 'national' one, or to describe the absolutism or 'dictatorship' of the Tsardom and its bureaucracy as a dictatorship representing the people or even a 'minority' of it – on the contrary, their aim was to enable the people to throw off the dictatorship. Much the same applies to any attempt to call the Bolshevik autocracy in Soviet Russia a 'dictatorship' of any part of the proletariat. The revolutionary appearance and socialist past of our present autocrats, and the revolutionary trappings and ritual with which they deceive the world, make it the more incumbent on us to expose them for the criminals and charlatans they are, and to proclaim the true nature of their dictatorship. This is in fact the despotic rule of a group that has demoralized hundreds of thousands of people who, yesterday or the day before, were honest workers, peasants, soldiers and petty-bourgeois of all kinds, and has organized them into a new ruling class on which the regime relies to support its dictatorship over a nation of a hundred and fifty millions, including what is left of our proletariat. . . .

Our moral and political right to combat the Bolsheviks by all methods, including armed force, still seems to me evident in view of the fact that 'Soviet' power is no more capable than tsarism, and perhaps less so, of voluntarily putting an end to its own despotism, and is therefore, like its predecessor, destined to be overthrown by violence. But, whereas the movement to overthrow the tsarist-bureaucratic autocracy could not be anything but revolutionary in character, the anti-Bolshevik forces include reactionary elements as well. Under tsarism, it is true, the enemies of the regime were divided between the camps of socialism and the bourgeoisie; but, far removed as the bourgeois opposition was from the socialist party, it was nevertheless progressive and was, in a broad historical sense, revolutionary. Consequently it was legitimate, within certain limits and in certain cases, for Social Democrats to support the bourgeois opposition. In practice, however, what happened was the reverse: the bourgeois opposition, willy-nilly, supported the socialists, both generally and in preparing the proletariat to play a dominant part in the Revolution.

At the present time the anti-Bolshevik bourgeois opposition is on the side of reaction and aims to use the overthrow of the Bolsheviks to install a counter-revolutionary dictatorship and crush democracy

altogether. The only force that can prevent this is a broad national movement of independence which would set out to destroy the Bolshevik dictatorship, if necessary by an attack on 'Soviet' power similar to that which overthrew tsarism. But the Bolsheviks have created conditions which make it infinitely harder than it was in tsarist times for the masses and the socialist opposition to develop a broadly based independence movement and prepare it for a victorious attack on the regime. The bourgeois opposition, on the other hand, is in a much stronger position to combat the regime than it was before the Revolution, and is better placed to secure a dominating role in any revolt such as would enable it, if successful, to destroy democracy altogether.

If the socialist opposition concentrates all or most of its forces on the organization of armed rebellion, military conspiracies, etc., a victorious anti-Bolshevik movement is bound to lead to the result I have just described. (To avoid misunderstanding I would emphasize that you [Martov] and I have always been fully agreed on this point.) But if liberation from the 'Soviet' dictatorship is impossible without a fresh democratic revolution, and if it is virtually impossible to plan such a revolution owing to the subjection of the proletariat and the Socialist party to the Soviet regime, how do we escape from this impasse? One answer to this question was the idea of an international socialist intervention to put an end to the Bolshevik policy of suppressing by terror even the most peaceable forms of proletarian and democratic opposition, and to restore the political conquests of the February–March Revolution. Unfortunately, the illusion that the Bolshevik dictatorship constitutes a proletarian and Communist regime was so widespread in all countries that any such intervention in Soviet Russia's internal affairs was out of the question; and the problem therefore was how to free the socialist masses in the West from this dangerous misconception. This was how the proposal arose that the socialist parties, and of course the trade unions, should jointly organize and despatch to Russia a large international commission which could make a thorough study from all angles of the character, operation and consequences of the Soviet regime, and inform the Western proletariat of the situation and the state of mind of the broad masses of the Russian people.

'Тов. П. В. Аксельрод о бол'шевизме и бор'бе с ним',
Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, no. 6, 20 April 1921, pp. 3–7,
no. 7, 4 May 1921, pp. 4–5.

Notes to the Introduction

1 *Vtoroi s'ezd RSDRP: Protokoly* (Moscow, 1959), p. 275.

2 Translation taken from J. L. H. Keep, *The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia* (Oxford, 1963), p. 89.

3 Israel Getzler, *Martov: A Political Biography of a Russian Social Democrat* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 77–8.

4 P. A. Garvi, 'P. B. Aksel'rod i men'shevizm', *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*, no 15/16 (18 August 1925), p. 11.

5 Nikolay Valentinov, *Encounters with Lenin*, tr. Paul Rosta and Brian Pearce (London, 1968), pp. 115, 120.

6 V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniia* (3rd ed., Moscow, 1926–37), XXVIII, p. 320.

7 These statistics are taken from Israel Getzler, 'The Mensheviks', *Problems of Communism*, XVI (November–December 1967), p. 20. For a detailed analysis of the evidence available on the social composition of the two groups see David Lane, *The Roots of Russian Communism: A Social and Historical Study of Russian Social-Democracy 1898–1907* (Assen, 1969), esp. pp. 11–51.

8 Richard Pipes, *Struve: Liberal on the Left, 1870–1905* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), p. 369.

9 V. I. Lenin, *op. cit.*, VII, pp. 5–20.

10 The Soviet, or Council, was composed of workers' deputies, each one of whom was chosen by five hundred workers. Although initially intended to serve as a strike committee, the Soviet quickly transformed itself into a political institution: it not only exercised leadership over the revolutionary movement but also acted as an organ of self-government of the proletariat. By 1917 the Bolsheviks

looked upon the soviets, which emerged throughout the country, as organs of state power.

11 For details see I. Getzler, *Martov*, pp. 105–9.

12 F. Dan to Karl Kautsky, 9 November 1905, Kautsky Archive, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam; F. Dan to Victor Adler, 25 November 1905, Friedrich and Victor Adler Archive, Verein für Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung, Vienna.

13 'P. B. Aksel'rod o zadachakh sotsialdemokratii', *Tovarishch*, no. 153 (31 December 1906–13 January 1907).

14 For a discussion of these figures see Keep, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

15 On the weakness of Menshevik local organizations see L. Martov, 'Sotsialdemokratiia 1905–1907 gg.', L. Martov, P. Maslov, A. Potresov (eds.), *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v Rossii v nachale XX-go veka* (St Petersburg, 1914), III, pp. 569–70.

16 V. I. Lenin, 'Dve taktiki sotsialdemokratii v demokraticheskoi revoliutsii', in *Sochineniia*, VIII, pp. 3–126.

17 *Chetvertyi (ob'edinitel'nyi) s'ezd RSDRP: Protokoly* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 282–5.

18 L. Kamenev (ed.), *Leninskii sbornik* (Moscow, 1924–38), V, pp. 386–9; V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, XXX, p. 179.

19 Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (London, 1960), pp. 95–6.

20 *Piatyi (Londonskii) s'ezd RSDRP: Protokoly* (Moscow, 1963), p. 612.

21 L. Martov to P. B. Axelrod, 26 June 1907, *Pis'ma P. B. Aksel'roda i lu.*

- O. Martova, 1901–1916, ed. F. Dan, B. I. Nicolaevsky and L. Tserderbaum-Dan (Berlin, 1924), p. 163.
- 22 L. Martov, *Geschichte der russischen Sozialdemokratie: Mit einem Nachtrag von Th. Dan: Die Sozialdemokratie Russlands nach dem Jahre 1918* (Berlin, 1926), p. 231.
- 23 P. B. Axelrod to L. Martov, 7 December 1907, *Pis'ma Aksel'roda i Martova*, p. 175.
- 24 Valentinov, *Encounters with Lenin*, p. 182.
- 25 On Lenin's characterizations of the liquidators see his *Sochineniia*, XIV, pp. 93, 104–10, 130–35, 165, 341; XV, p. 205; XVI, pp. 35–44, 70; XVII, p. 483.
- 26 The statistics and interpretation in this and the next paragraph are taken from Leopold Haimson, 'The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905–1917', *Slavic Review*, XXIII (December 1964), pp. 630–37.
- 27 Leonard Schapiro, *op. cit.*, pp. 137–40.
- 28 Rex A. Wade, 'Irakli Tsereteli and Siberian Zimmerwaldism', *Journal of Modern History*, XXXIX (December 1967), pp. 425–31.
- 29 Quoted in Joel Carmichael, *A Short History of the Russian Revolution* (New York, 1964), p. 31.
- 30 V. V. Shulgin, *Days*, in F. A. Golder (ed.), *Documents of Russian History, 1914–1917* (New York, 1927), p. 258.
- 31 Oskar Anweiler, *Die Rätebewegung in Russland 1905–1921* (Leiden, 1958), pp. 125–6; see also J. Carmichael, *op. cit.*, pp. 49–56.
- 32 Oskar Anweiler, *op. cit.*, p. 136.
- 33 William Henry Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1917–1921* (5th printing, New York, 1960), I, pp. 166–77.
- 34 Quoted in I. Getzler, 'The Mensheviks', p. 26.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- 36 These statistics are taken from Raf. Grigor'ev, 'Razval Men'shinstva', *Novaia zhizn'*, no. 140 (134), 29 September–12 October 1917 and I. Getzler, 'The Mensheviks', p. 24.
- 37 I. Getzler, 'The Mensheviks', p. 27.
- 38 P. B. Axelrod to K. Kautsky, n.d., but some time early in 1918, uncatalogued, International Institute for Social History.
- 39 L. Martov to P. B. Axelrod, 1 December 1917, Nicolaevsky Collection, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford, California.
- 40 Quoted in E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917–1923* (New York, 1951–61), I, 114.
- 41 F. Dan to P. B. Axelrod, 31 January 1920, Nicolaevsky Collection, Hoover Institution.
- 42 Leon Trotsky, *My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography* (New York, 1931), p. 342; V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, XXII, p. 322.
- 43 Iu. Martov, 'Po povodu pis'ma tov, P. B. Aksel'roda', *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*, no. 8 (20 May 1921), pp. 3–6. General Wrangel was a commander of anti-Bolshevik troops; Peter Struve was a leading figure in the liberal movement and served as Minister of Foreign Affairs in General Wrangel's government in the Crimea during the Civil War; Lloyd George was Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1916 until 1922; Foch was a French general who became Supreme Allied Commander in 1918.
- 44 Leonard Schapiro, *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy* (London, 1955), p. 204.
- 45 L. O. and F. I. Dan to P. B. Axelrod, 16 February 1922, Nicolaevsky Collection, Hoover Institution.
- 46 P. A. Garvi to K. Kautsky, 25 May 1925, Kautsky Archive, International Institute for Social History.
- 47 Theodore Dan, *The Origins of Bolshevism*, ed. and tr. Joel Carmichael (New York, 1964), p. 438.

48 *Partiinoe Soveshchanie RSDRP, 27 dekabria 1918 g.-1 ianvaria 1919 g. (Rezoliutsii)* (Moscow, 1919), p. 27.

49 My survey of Georgian Menshevism is based heavily on the excellent discussion in Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism 1917-1923* (rev. ed., Cambridge, Mass., 1964), pp. 17-18, 210-14, 227-28, 234-41. See also Gregory Uratadze, *Vospominaniia gruzinskogo sotsial-demokrata* (Stanford, 1968); W. S. Woytinsky,

La Démocratie géorgienne (Paris, 1921); K. Zalevskii, 'Natsional'nyiia dvizheniia', *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v Rossii v nachale XX veka*, IV, part 2 (St Petersburg, 1911), pp. 222-7; Noah Zhordania, *Moia zhizn'* (Stanford, 1968).

50 Quoted in Chamberlin, *op. cit.*, II, p. 409.

51 Quoted in Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, p. 228.

52 P. A. Garvi, *Vospominaniia: Peterburg - 1906* (New York, 1961), p. 110.

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The Inter-University Project on the History of the Menshevik Movement, under the direction of Professor Leopold Haimson, has published, in multilith form, a series of studies of Menshevism as well as a number of memoirs by prominent Mensheviks. These very useful works are in Russian, as is the large amount of documentary material on Menshevism on deposit at the Project, located at Columbia University in New York City.

Readers who know Russian will find the most extensive list of relevant works in Bourguina's work cited above.

Chronology

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|--|
| 1903 | 17 July–10 August | Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' party (RSDWP); birth of Menshevism |
| 1904 | 8 February | Outbreak of Russo-Japanese War |
| | November | <i>Zemstvo</i> campaign |
| 1905 | 22 January | 'Bloody Sunday' |
| | April–May | Menshevik Conference |
| | 27 May | Russian defeat in the Straits of Tsushima |
| | 5 September | End of Russo-Japanese War |
| | 23 October | Railway strike becomes general strike |
| | 30 October | Issuance of October Manifesto |
| | November– December | <i>Nachalo</i> published in Petersburg |
| | 20–31 December | Moscow Uprising |
| 1906 | 18–30 March | Elections to First <i>Duma</i> |
| | April–May | Fourth (Unification) Congress of the RSDWP; Mensheviks dominant in Russian Social Democracy |
| 1907 | April–May | Fifth Congress of the RSDWP |
| | 16 June | Stolypin's <i>coup d'état</i> |
| 1908 | February | <i>Golos Sotsialdemokrata</i> founded in Geneva |
| 1909 | January | Lenin launches campaign against 'liquidationists' |
| 1912 | January | Lenin has Mensheviks expelled from RSDWP |
| 1914 | 16 and 17 July | Unsuccessful attempt by Second International to reunite Mensheviks and Bolsheviks |
| | 1 August | Outbreak of World War I |
| 1914–17 | | Differences between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks over attitude towards war |
| 1917 | March | March Revolution |

| | | |
|----------------|--|--|
| | <i>March</i> | Abdication of Tsar: formation of Provisional Government; formation of soviets <i>Rabochaia gazeta</i> founded in Petersburg |
| | <i>March–September</i> | Mensheviks' prominent role in soviets |
| | <i>16 April</i> | Lenin's arrival in Russia |
| | <i>22 May</i> | Axelrod's and Martov's arrival in Russia |
| | <i>16–18 July</i> | 'July Days' |
| | <i>9–14 September</i> | Kornilov affair |
| | <i>7 November</i> | Bolshevik Revolution |
| | <i>November</i> | Martov's group assumes leadership of Menshevism Menshevik attempt to form all-socialist government |
| 1918 | <i>19 January</i> | Dissolution of Constituent Assembly |
| | <i>3 March</i> | Treaty of Brest-Litovsk |
| | <i>5 March</i> | Beginning of foreign intervention |
| | <i>Summer</i> | Introduction of War Communism |
| | <i>9–10 November</i> | German Revolution |
| | <i>27 December– 1 January 1919</i> | Conference of Menshevik party in Russia |
| 1919 | <i>February</i> | International Socialist Conference in Bern |
| 1920 | <i>March–April</i> | Menshevik Party Conference issues 'April Theses' |
| | <i>21 September</i> | Martov leaves Russia for West |
| 1921 | <i>1 February</i> | <i>Sotsialisticheskii vestnik</i> founded in Berlin |
| | <i>March</i> | Introduction of New Economic Policy Arrest of hundreds of prominent Mensheviks; Menshevik party reduced to impotence |
| 1922 | | Ten Menshevik leaders permitted to leave Russia |
| 1923 | <i>4 April</i> | Death of Martov; Dan assumes leadership of Menshevism in exile |
| 1928 | <i>16 April</i> | Death of Axelrod |
| 1933 | | <i>Sotsialisticheskii vestnik</i> published in Paris |
| 1940–65 | | <i>Sotsialisticheskii vestnik</i> published in New York |
| 1947 | | Death of Dan |

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