

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Europe, Great Britain > Russia & Eastern Europe > USSR, Soviet Bloc, Russian Empire (history) > History (Russian Empire, USSR) > Russian Revolution > **On the Russian Revolution: The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old (...)**

# **On the Russian Revolution: The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Régime - I - Intro to chapter two**

From the February Revolution to the July Days, 1917

Monday 1 March 2010, by [MANDEL David](#) (Date first published: 1 June 1983).

An electronic edition realised for the collection “Les classiques des sciences sociales” (Cégep, Chicoutimi) from David Mandel’s *The Petrograd workers and the Fall of the Old Régime. From the February Revolution to the July Days, 1917*. London: MACMILLAN, Macmillan Academic and Professional Ltd., in association with the Centre for Russian and East European Studies University of Birmingham. 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1983. Reprinted, 1990, 220 pp. + 10 pp.

Due to the length of this study, it is published here in several parts. Below is the first part with presentation, the introduction (chapter 1) and chapters 2. See:

Second part: [\*\*On the Russian Revolution: The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Régime - II - Chapter Three\*\*](#)

Third part: [\*\*On the Russian Revolution: The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Régime - III - Chapter Four\*\*](#)

Fourth Part: [\*\*On the Russian Revolution : The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Régime - IV - Chapter Five\*\*](#)

Fifth Part: [\*\*On the Russian Revolution : The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Régime - V - Chapter Six\*\*](#)

Sixth Part: [\*\*On the Russian Revolution : The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Régime - VI - Chapters Seven & Eight\*\*](#)

Seventh Part: [\*\*On the Russian Revolution : The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Régime - VII - Conclusion & Bibliography\*\*](#)

Contents

- [Chapter 1: Introduction](#)
  - [Chapter 2: Types of Political](#)
-

This is a study of the first months of the Russian Revolution as seen from the factory districts of Petrograd, the 'red capital'. Starting from a description of political culture in the different strata of the working class, the author proceeds to analyse the workers' conception of the revolution both in the Russian state and in the factory system. Making systematic use of the vast published and archival material now available, he shows that the workers greeted February as a national democratic revolution, albeit one with certain social goals that alone made political freedom meaningful. But these social demands posed no direct threat to capitalism, nor were they intended to. In this light, the radicalisation that followed, culminating in the July demonstrations aimed at forcing the moderate Soviet leaders to take power, appears as an essentially defensive reaction based upon the growing realisation by the workers that the propertied classes and their liberal representatives in the coalition were hostile to their aspirations and had turned against the revolution.

An attempt at understanding the revolution 'from below', this book is intended to fill a gap in the Western literature that has paradoxically focused mainly on institutions, parties and leaders in a period marked precisely by the active participation of the broadest layers of society, and the workers in particular, in shaping their own collective fate. Basing himself as far as possible on primary sources emanating directly from the workers, the author questions the prevailing view of the workers as essentially unconscious, manipulated actors, anarchistically-inclined prey of unscrupulous demagogues. He concludes that the workers were certainly no less conscious politically than the more educated members of society and that they constituted a vital, creative and dynamic force in the Russian revolutionary process.

**David Mandel**  
**1983**

---

For I. K. N. and R. J.

This book was sponsored by the  
Russian Institute of Columbia University  
in the City of New York

## **Contents**

List of Tables and Map

Glossary

Acknowledgements

1 INTRODUCTION

2 TYPES OF POLITICAL CULTURE IN THE INDUSTRIAL WORKING CLASS OF PETROGRAD

The Skilled Workers

The Unskilled Workers

The 'Worker Aristocracy'

The Generational Factor

3 THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKING CLASS OF PETROGRAD AND ITS

## DISTRICTS

The Geographical Factor – Social Composition of the Districts of Petrograd

## 4 THE HONEYMOON PERIOD – FROM THE FEBRUARY TO THE APRIL DAYS

Background to February – The Labour Movement during the War

The February Revolution – The Birth of Dual Power

The Workers' Attitudes on State Power and Their Relationship to Census Society

Dual Power in the light of pre-February Attitudes

Why Dual Power in February?

## 5 THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION IN THE FACTORIES

The Eight-hour Day

Wages

The Press Campaign against 'Worker Egotism'

Worker – Management Relations – The Democratisation of Factory Life

## 6 FROM THE APRIL TO THE JULY DAYS

The April Days

The First Coalition

The Break with Census Society

Underlying Causes of the Shift to Soviet Power

## 7 THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER IN THE FACTORIES IN APRIL-JUNE

## 8 THE JULY DAYS

The Workers and the Soviet Majority

The Demonstrations of 3-4 July

The Aftermath

## CONCLUSION: FOUR MONTHS OF REVOLUTION-RESULTS AND PROSPECTS

Selected Bibliography

Index

### ***List of Tables and Map***

2.1 Literacy of industrial workers in European Russia by type of industry, August 1918

2.2 Average monthly wage of Petrograd workers by industry, in rubles, 1913 and 1916

2.3 Literacy of women textile workers, metalworkers and all industrial workers, by age, August 1918

2.4 Participants in economic and political strikes in 1914 in European Russia in metalworking and textiles

2.5 Literacy of Petrograd metalworkers by age and sex, early 1918

3.1 Distribution and average concentration of Petrograd workers by industry, 1 January 1917

3.2 Changes in number of workers employed in Petrograd by industry, 1 January 1914-1 January 1917

- 3.3 Changes in number of industrial workers in Petrograd, by age and sex, 1914-17
  - 3.4 Distribution of industrial workers and metalworkers by district, 1 January 1917
  - 3.5 Industrial workers employed in districts as percentage of total district population
  - 3.6 Social background of identified Bolshevik district committee members, March -June 1917
  - 6.1 Petrograd district дума election returns
- Map The Districts of Petrograd in 1917 [not reproduced here]
- 

## ***Glossary***

All dates are given according to the Julian calendar, thirteen days behind the Western Gregorian calendar in the twentieth century.

census society: the propertied classes and those members of the Intelligentsia that identified with them

*chernorabochii*: literally, black worker; unskilled labourer

conciliator: contemptuous term applied to the moderate socialists who argued that an alliance between the workers and peasants and census society was necessary for the survival of the revolution

defencist: after February 1917, those socialists who argued that as a result of the revolution the war on Russia's part had ceased to be imperialist and that the people had a duty to support the military efforts of the Provisional Government to defend the revolution

duma: elected municipal government

intelligent: one earning (or looking forward to earning) a living in an occupation recruited chiefly from among those with a higher or at least secondary education; worker-intelligent – a self-taught worker with the educational equivalent of an intelligent

internationalist: after February 1917, those socialists who argued that the war being waged by the Provisional Government continued to be imperialist and should be opposed; included Bolsheviks, Menshevik-Internationalists and Left SRs

Kadet: Constitutional Democrat, member of Russia's liberal party

*nizy*: literally, those on the bottom; the lower classes, the poor

revolutionary democracy (or democracy): the workers, peasants and soldiers and those members of the intelligentsia that identified with them

SR: Social Revolutionary, member of Russia's peasant-oriented socialist party, successor to the nineteenth-century populists; in the autumn of 1917 the Left SRs (internationalists) officially formed a separate party

State Duma: Russian 'parliament, won as a result of the 1905 revolution; its powers were narrow and the franchise upon which it was elected even more so, especially after the June 1907 coup d'état

TsIK: All-Russian Central Executive Committee of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, elected at the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets in May-June 1917

*verkhny*: literally, those on top; the wealthy and privileged

---

## ***Acknowledgments***

In the writing of this book I have many and large debts to acknowledge. My deepest debt is to Leopold Haimson, without whose help this study might never have been realised. His profound grasp of pre-revolutionary Russian society and his intellectual honesty have been an inspiration. Special thanks also to Robert Davies, editor of this series and Director of the Centre for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Birmingham during my truly enjoyable year there in 1978-9, for his valuable critical and editorial comments. Many other colleagues have read versions and parts of the manuscript and offered useful criticisms that influenced its ultimate form. Among these were Seweryn Bialer, Alexander Erlich, Ziva Galilee y Garcia, Ursula Nienhaus, Janet Rabinowitch and Ron Suny.

I am also grateful for the support given me by the Russian Institute of Columbia University, both during my graduate studies and as Senior Research Fellow in 1977-8.

Sincere thanks also to the people who typed various parts of the manuscript and especially to Beverley Colquhoun for a splendid job on the final draft.

Finally, I have a deep personal debt to my family and friends, whose contribution was indirect but whose support and kindness nevertheless played an integral role in the completion of this work.

*Montréal*  
DAVID MANDEL

---

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

No historical event arouses political passions as much as revolution, and no statement about the upheaval of 1917 provokes more controversy than the assertion that it was a proletarian revolution, a view which one scholar recently consigned in less than a paragraph to 'the realm of revolutionary mythology'. [1] And yet, a systematic study of working-class attitudes and activity in Petrograd, the heart of the revolution, leads one inexorably to the conclusion that this was indeed a workers' revolution. It was, of course, not only that; so complex and multi-faceted an event cannot be reduced to any simple formula. The Russian Revolution was, among other things, a soldiers' mutiny, a peasant rebellion, a movement of national minorities. Moreover, the autocracy's demise in February was facilitated by the *krizis verkhov*, the disaffection of the upper classes that had ripened towards

the end of 1916, embracing even the most conservative elements of society, the landowners organised in the United Nobility, as well as significant strata of the bureaucracy and officer staff, who, if not quite of a revolutionary turn of mind, were still little inclined to join battle to save the discredited regime. Nevertheless, in the struggle for state power that culminated in the Bolshevik-led Soviet seizure of power in Petrograd, it was the working class that led the way, providing the mass movement with direction, organisation and a vastly disproportionate part of the active revolutionary forces.

This book is the first part of a study of a largely uncharted area of the Russian Revolution. Its aim is to offer a coherent account and analysis of the attitudes and behaviour of Petrograd's industrial workers relative to three issues of the revolution that were uppermost in their minds: the war, economic regulation, and the question that eventually subsumed all others – state power.

Until recently Western scholarly work on this period has focused largely on leaders and institutions. Although in the past few years writers have begun to turn their attention to the lower strata of society, studies of the working class that systematically utilise the extensive primary sources now available are still few and far between. [2]

This paucity of monographs on the workers in the Western literature on the revolution invites reflection on some of the assumptions that have predominated in the historiography. To the extent that the urban masses have entered the picture in past studies, they have appeared principally as an elemental, basically anarchistic force which the ultimate victors of the battle at the summits of power were able to harness and manipulate to their ends. Rarely is anything approaching political consciousness attributed to the workers, and even more rarely to the great man of workers that supported the Bolsheviks and soviet power.

Unfortunately, the view of popular involvement in revolutions as essentially irrational is still widely held in the social sciences. One writer has argued that it differs little from the acts of lunatics and criminals. [3] Historians of the Russian Revolution have similarly explained the workers' radicalism in terms of 'instinctive distrust of authority in any form', 'apocalyptic hopes', [4] 'visions of a proletarian paradise', [5] 'blind embracing of maximalist slogans', [6] and the like. Little or no attempt has been made to investigate the relationship between the workers' day-to-day experience in the factories and in the larger society and the goals they pursued. Even less has the assumption that these goals originated exclusively from outside the working class been subjected to empirical scrutiny.

A corollary of this is the oft-made claim that it was the most recent immigrants from the countryside, uprooted, disoriented and unschooled in political struggle, who were most susceptible to Bolshevik propaganda. [7] A more general formulation of this thesis – that socially unintegrated, 'anomic' individuals, and especially such marginal urban populations as recent immigrants from the village to the factory, are the tinder of revolution – has long been part of the sociological folklore of revolution and has only recently come under fire as a result of the growing number of studies of popular participation in revolutions. [8]

Not surprisingly, Soviet students of the revolution have written far more extensively on the working class and especially since the 1950s (though much less in the past five years) have produced a number of impressive monographs based upon a wealth of hitherto unavailable materials. Yet, they have not been immune from at least one of the aforementioned assumptions. For all their eulogising of the working class as the leading force of the revolution, in the last analysis they too portray the workers basically as objects, if not of their elemental drives and instincts, then of the leadership provided by the Bolshevik party. True, the workers follow this leadership as a result of conscious decisions based upon their increasingly 'correct' understanding of the objective situation. But this

process of radicalisation is generally conceived in such lineal, unproblematic and inevitable terms that in the end we are left with very little understanding of its underlying dynamics. Thus, the overwhelming support of the Petrograd workers for the moderate socialists and dual power in the early part of the revolution is dismissed as essentially 'unconscious', the product of the 'petty bourgeois wave' that swept the working class during the war. [9] The possibility that this position may have, in fact, been quite reasonable from the workers' point of view in the post-February period is hardly entertained.

It is these as well as other assumptions examined in this study that have left the immediate experience of the workers, and especially their capacity to interpret and act upon this experience, at the margins of history. It is my hope that this book will contribute towards the correction of this imbalance.

A systematic investigation of the evidence has confirmed me in the view that the workers' participation in the revolution was fundamentally a response to their own experience both in the factory and in the broader societal setting. Even – or rather, especially – the least politically aware and experienced workers, the women and the recent rural immigrants, were not moved by even the most eloquent 'agitation' unless they were able to see a correspondence between the analysis and goals put forward and their own immediate experience.

The growth of support in the working class for the Bolsheviks was, thus, not the result of the party's successful tapping of the workers' irrational impulses but rather an expression of the growing correspondence between the latter's aspirations and the party's programme and strategy. The progressive radicalisation of the Petrograd workers in 1917 was not an elemental drive toward utopia, not a chiliastic movement, but a cautious and often painful development of consciousness. This was an essentially rational process in the basic sense that it involved much realistic mulling over of means and ends.

This is not to argue that the revolution was a coldly calculating affair on the workers' part. Culture, as a sort of lens moulded by historical experience through which the workers interpreted and responded to their immediate experiences, is a non-rational factor that must be an integral part of any analysis of working-class politics. Moreover, the revolution of 1917 did not lack its share of idealism. Affective elements such as class honour, rage, as well as the workers' long-term socialist ideals played no small role. The point is, however, that these factors alone would hardly have proven sufficient to move the rank-and-file worker, struggling at his or her lathe to eke out a living, to support, let alone participate in, so uncertain and perilous a venture as the seizure of state power.

The evolution of working-class attitudes between February and October must be viewed fundamentally in terms of the workers' desire to safeguard the gains of the February Revolution as they conceived it – a democratic republic, an active search for a just peace, and a decent standard of living – in the face of a perceived counterrevolutionary threat from the propertied classes. The demands embodied in the October Insurrection – peace, workers' control and national regulation of the economy, and a firm policy towards the counterrevolution – were first and foremost solutions to concrete problems rooted in the objective conditions of the workers' lives, just as the seizure of power itself was perceived as a defensive response forced upon the workers by the imminent threat of political defeat and economic ruin.

It follows from this that if the evolution of working-class politics in 1917 is to be fully understood it must be viewed within the framework of the shifting relations between classes. This, in fact, is the basis for the periodisation of this study.

The period from the February Revolution to the April crisis marked the so-called 'honeymoon' of the

revolution when a certain sense of national unity prevailed, and the workers, though distrustful of the propertied classes, supported the dual power system of soviet control and conditional support for the census government. ('Census society' in contemporary usage referred to the propertied classes and the non-socialist intelligentsia. 'Democracy' or 'revolutionary democracy', on the other hand, referred to the *nizy* (the lower classes – workers, soldiers, peasants and the 'democratic' intelligentsia). In Russia, all of democracy adhered to one or another brand of socialism.

During the second period, from the April crisis to the July Days, the polarisation that had characterised pre-revolutionary urban society again broke through the veneer of national unity. A majority of Petrograd's workers, suspecting the entrepreneurs of sabotage, alarmed at the growing outspokenness of the census leaders against the soviets, and dissatisfied with the government's foreign policy, began to demand the transfer of power to the soviets – in effect, a dictatorship of 'revolutionary democracy'. But the situation took a bad turn when the moderate socialist leadership of the soviets, as a party to the coalition government, responded with repression to the workers' pressure on it to take power. The soviets, until now vehicles for the realisation of the workers' aspirations, had become obstacles (though the soviets as such, as institutions, were never abandoned). The workers suddenly found themselves isolated by an alliance of the propertied classes and that part of democracy still supporting the Soviet leadership – the intelligentsia, most of the peasantry, and a part of the workers and soldiers, especially outside the capital. It was a political cul-de-sac. To move forward would have meant a split in democracy and civil war.

The July Days and their aftermath, therefore, forced the workers to confront new and frightening issues; if the revolution was not to go down in defeat, could civil war be avoided? And could they go it alone and hope to succeed under such unfavourable odds? The Bolsheviks' winning over of the soviets in the major urban centres during the autumn, representing a certain 'unity from below', reduced the fears of isolation but did not eliminate them. Attachment to the idea of unity within the socialist camp was still strong among broad strata of workers, and the prospect of a split filled them with foreboding. The intelligentsia would certainly be hostile to a soviet regime, and the peasantry was only beginning to become disillusioned in the coalition. The workers hesitated.

But the political and economic situation had become so unbearable that it required only the initiative of the more decisive elements of the working class for the rest to follow and rally to the new soviet government. Many workers still hoped that democratic unity could be restored and civil war avoided, but this hope was abandoned once it became evident that the moderate socialists, arguing that Russia was not ripe for working-class hegemony and the socialist experiments that were bound to follow, would have no part in a soviet dictatorship. Moreover, the entrance of the Left SRs (Social Revolutionaries) into the government, signifying an alliance between the workers and at least part of the peasantry, moderated this sense of isolation. October had finally torn Russian society apart, pitting the *nizy* against the wealthy and educated *verkh*i (upper classes) and setting the stage for a bitter and protracted civil war.

The present volume traces these developments to the July Days, a crucial watershed in the revolution that dramatically revealed the split that had developed within the socialist camp, placing in doubt the essentially peaceful perspectives hitherto dominant among the workers. A second volume to follow will examine the process of reorientation among the workers in the new and perplexing post-July situation, culminating in the October Revolution and the outbreak of full-scale civil war in the spring of 1918.

In my use of sources, in matters pertaining directly to the workers' consciousness and activity, I have relied as far as possible on materials emanating from the workers. I have tried to let the workers speak for themselves in order to allow the reader to enter the atmosphere of the period and the minds of the actors and to make his or her own interpretation of the evidence and draw

conclusions. In this way I also hope to lend credence to the contention that the workers were not only no less conscious actors than educated society, but the level of political sophistication among certain elements compared very favourably with that of even the most 'cultured' members of the society, and that the working class as a whole was a crucial creative factor in the development of the revolution. Apart from this methodological concern, these working-class sources, almost all untranslated and not easily accessible to the reader, add life to what otherwise might be a rather dry account of one of the most dramatic episodes of modern history.

The most valuable type of data in this respect are the direct statements of workers 'at the bench' or in their capacity as elected representatives. These can be found in letters to the press, meeting and conference protocols, newspaper reports and memoirs. In the case of elected delegates and published letters, we are often dealing with a more literate stratum of workers. Nevertheless, these people were in close daily contact with the factories and subject to immediate recall by simple majority vote. Even letters were often collectively written and put to the vote of the factory meeting. Election results to factory committees, district and central soviets, dumas (city government), unions and the Constituent Assembly, constitute another important direct source.

One of the more abundant types of data are the resolutions of workers' meetings, the use of which requires special comment. The fact that key parts and even entire resolutions often followed closely upon the wording of central party organs obviously limits their value as original formulations of workers' attitudes. However, a number of circumstances must be kept in mind. First, this was a time of very broad political freedom and, except for a few periods of doldrums, one of great popular interest in the 'burning questions' of the day. Published protocols of factory meetings and archival material show that the typical factory assembly began with a report on a specific issue or on the 'current moment', presented by one or more of the factory's delegates to the Petrograd or district soviet or by special outside speakers. After this, representatives of the various party fractions in the factory were heard. Then followed the debate or *preniya*, often described as 'lengthy and heated', during which workers from the floor could express their views and ask questions. Unfortunately, the secretaries apparently did not feel the need to record these debates, but the very fact that they took place is evidence that the rank-and-file workers had at least a basic sense of the issues. At the conclusion of the meeting, each fraction or bloc would present its resolution. The one receiving a majority of hands was then sent to the press or the Soviet. In this way, even a centrally prepared resolution was at the least an indication of which of the main political positions the majority of workers found most attractive.

Other resolutions, however, were written by local party workers from the factory or district, and though usually based upon central party policy, did reflect more closely local issues, attitudes and moods. Thus, resolutions from specific factories tended to show a strong element of consistency in the nature of their concerns and the degree of militancy. One must also bear in mind that in 1917 the relationship between leadership and rank-and-file was by no means one-sided. Local leaders not only had to take the mass mood into account but they themselves were often infected by it, at times even to the detriment of central party policy. A notable example of this is the behaviour of local Bolshevik leaders in the July Days and their less than enthusiastic abandonment of the popular slogan 'All power to the soviets', despite official party policy. The Menshevik - Internationalists and Left SRs had similar cause to complain after October when they found the Bolshevik demand for a government responsible exclusively to the soviets tacked onto supposedly internationalist resolutions for an all-socialist coalition.

It is not clear how often resolutions were amended from the floor, but this did occur. In some cases, entire resolutions were offered from the floor and accepted over the opposition of the leadership. The fact resolutions were usually written in more literary style (the flowery that language of many resolutions betrays the style of the self-taught worker-*intelligent* (roughly - intellectual)) should not

of itself be taken to mean that they did not express actual attitudes held by workers, if, perhaps, on a less articulate level. Buzinov, a Petrograd worker and SR, described the relationship between the worker agitators and the 'masses' in the following terms:

*"The 'self-made' agitator said what was in the head of each person but for which the others, less developed, could not find expression in words. After each of his words, the workers could only exclaim: That's it! That's exactly what I wanted to say."* [10]

These resolutions, moreover, were taken quite seriously by contemporaries familiar with the labour situation. In October, for example, *Izvestiya*, the organ of the Soviet, and the Left SR *Znamya truda* published an analysis of 169 local resolutions on the issue of state power in an attempt to show the mass attitude. [11] A. L. Popov, a Menshevik-Internationalist, published a collection of documents on the October Revolution in 1918 that consisted almost exclusively of these resolutions. He did not even bother to question their validity as expressions of the workers' positions, even though some of the issues he dealt with were quite subtle. [12]

At least, then, the resolutions can show which political tendency the workers preferred and what issues were in the air. At the most, where this is justified, they can be used as expressions of more specific attitudes and moods.

Another source of information on the workers are political intelligence reports, *doklady s mest*, presented by local delegates at various conferences and party meetings. These were often somewhat coloured by the delegates' personal inclinations, but in the end there was no one to fool but oneself. Press reports, including correspondence sent in by workers from the factories, are another contemporary source.

Leaving the contemporary materials, one comes to the memoirs, the most valuable, of course, being those of workers written as close as possible to the events described. Of the memoirs of non-workers, those of Sukhanov, an editor of the Menshevik-Internationalist *Novaya zhizn'* are undoubtedly the most enlightening, though his acquaintance with the higher circles of Soviet leadership in 1917 was far deeper than his knowledge of the factory masses.

In the late 1920s under the sponsorship of Gorky, a series of factory histories was commissioned. This was soon terminated under Stalin's rule but was resumed in the late 1950s. These works, which utilise archival and memoir material inaccessible to Western scholars, are of very uneven value but, used in conjunction with more reliable sources, take on a certain significance.

I am well aware of the often limited and partisan nature of my sources, a problem for any social scientist but especially serious for a student of a revolution that tore society asunder. I have made allowance for this, frequently pointing out the particular bias to the reader. I have also not relied on any single type of source in making a major point.

I did not set out to prove a theory and have not selected evidence with that in mind. My purpose was to shed light on the nature of working-class participation in the revolution – to describe and explain how the workers acted and what thoughts lay behind these actions. I have sought to do this on the basis of all the evidence available to me.

It is impossible to write about important historical events, especially one so controversial and deeply political as the Russian Revolution, without having one's own point of view. I have not tried to conceal my sympathy for the workers of Petrograd and their struggles. But this should not be misconstrued as evidence of a *parti pris*. A study that employs the terms 'proletarian' and 'capitalist' is not necessarily less objective than one that uses 'worker' and 'entrepreneur', though it may violate

the sometimes superficial canons of scholarly neutrality.

---

## **Chapter 2: Types of Political Culture in the Industrial Working Class of Petrograd**

All too often, students of the revolution have approached the workers as a homogeneous mass, only to find themselves confronted with a confused and contradictory picture of working-class politics. Among the workers of Petrograd one can discern three basic types of political culture that coincide roughly with three groups of workers: the majority of the skilled workers and especially those engaged in private industry; the unskilled labourers; and a sub-group of skilled workers drawn largely from among the printers, elements in state factories, and the settled, small property-owning stratum in the outlying suburbs. Since the cultural traits and dispositions brought by each of these groups into 1917 served to filter perceptions and shape responses to events, it follows that an analysis of the different types of political culture is a necessary point of departure for any attempt to understand political consciousness as manifested in the revolution itself.

### **The Skilled Workers [\[13\]](#)**

John Reed referred to the Vyborg District as the 'Faubourg St-Antoine of Petrograd'. Such was its reputation, won during the 1912-14 upsurge in labour militancy, that I. K. Naumov, recalling his arrival from Tula in 1915 as a young worker militant, was moved to write: 'To work in Piter - that is happiness. To work on the Vyborg Side - that is my longstanding dream. [\[14\]](#)

Statistics on the social and industrial composition of the district offer some insight into the sources of this radicalism. Not only did this predominantly proletarian district have the largest concentration of factory workers (18 per cent of the capital's industrial labour force) but fully 84 per cent of these were employed in the metal industry. In fact, the number of metalworkers alone in the Vyborg District exceeded the total for all industrial workers of any other of Petrograd's districts. [\[15\]](#)

There were basically two types of metal industry: machine construction, involving much skilled and complex work, and the more simple types of production of the metalworking (metaloobrabatyvayushchie) factories, such as metallurgy, founding, pipe and wire making, munitions, etc. In the Vyborg District, machine construction accounted for 15 of the 21 large plants. Other districts where the metal industry predominated were typically dominated by one or two giant factories of a mixed type of production. Characterising the vast Putilov Works, the journal of the Metalworkers' Union wrote: This factory is a universal one, where metallurgy and machine construction are combined.... It is a plant with a high proportion of unskilled labourers.... Metallurgy in comparison with machine construction has an extraordinary percentage of unskilled labour'. [\[16\]](#)

A 1924 sociological study of Moscow factory workers under the direction of E. Kabo concluded: 'In the worker milieu, skill, literacy and interest in socio-political questions go hand in hand. The greater the skill, the more frequent the attendance of lectures, circles, especially political ones, the greater the number of newspapers read'. [\[17\]](#) The 1918 industrial census, though based on a population smaller than that of 1917, confirms that the highest literacy rates were found in printing and machine construction, the most skilled industries, while conversely, the rate among cotton workers, the least skilled (and predominantly female), was the lowest (see Table 2.1).

The cultural differences that set off the skilled workers from the unskilled were striking. On starting work as an adolescent in the forging shop of the Nevskii Ship and Machine-construction Factory, one of the large mixed production plants, A. Buzinov was first struck by the vast cultural abyss between the metalworkers and the workers of the nearby textile mills. But he soon became aware that even within his own factory

the workers of the engineering shop, the machinists and turners, looked at me from above. I realised the humble position of the hot departments: the founding, rolling and forging shops. Here I saw people of an uncouth and oafish nature, both in their bearing and speech. Through the robust ruddiness one could clearly distinguish in each individual face the coarse features which said that force, not agility of mind, predominates in their work. I saw clearly that beside an experienced founder even a shabby machinist seemed an educated, thinking person. The machinist held his head higher, was more accurate and forceful in his speech. He was able to insert a dozen words, including a stinging bit of irony, where the founder had time for only one, and even that of a rather simple type. With the machinist you automatically felt like talking about something general and not just wages. In short, the worker of the engineering shop was no longer the semi-raw material of the founding and forging shops. Indeed, he seemed himself to have passed through the shaping action of the lathes and tools. [18]

**TABLE 2.1**  
**Literacy of industrial workers in European Russia**  
**by type of industry, August 1918**

Industry	Per cent literate workers
Printing	94.7
Machine-construction	83.6
Metalworking	76.5
Clothing	74.9
Chemicals	70.0
Woodworking	69.6
Paper	68.1
Food	66.0
Leather and fur	64.1
Cotton	52.2
<b>All industry</b>	<b>64.0</b>

Source: Based upon A. G. Rashin, *Formirovanie rabocheho klassa Rossi* (M., 1958) p. 601.

Various contemporary observers noted these differences: a generally higher level of culture, greater facility with words and complex ideas, a keener interest in broader socio-political issues, and a stronger sense of personal dignity. [See, for example, V. S. Voitinskii, *Gody pobed i porazhenii* (Berlin, 1923) p.283]]

In part, as Buzinov indicated, these traits were related to the nature of skilled work itself, which was lighter, less mechanical and more thought-demanding. The July 1917 wage agreement in the Petrograd metal industry described the highest skill category as 'independently executing complex and exact work according to drawings and utilising exact measuring instruments'. Workers in category II did work of a 'relatively less exact and complex nature, but requiring a sufficiently

lengthy period of training and the ability to work with drawings'. Category III did 'various uncomplicated but responsible work, including exact work of mass production'. Workers in category IV attended simple machines – lathes, presses, ovens, etc. (This would include most work in production of ordnance.) The final category, labourers (*chernorabochie* – literally, blackworkers) involved heavy unskilled work, such as carrying, washing, loading, sorting. [19] A. Shapovalov, a skilled Petersburg metalworker, recalled that 'work on a turning lathe quite often demands high intelligence [intelligennost', implying also education, culture], an understanding of technical drawings and knowledge of arithmetic. Some jobs, for example, the turning of cones, also required a certain familiarity with geometry, algebra, and trigonometry. [20]

The following is a description of the machinist's trade before the introduction of Taylorism, which eliminated much of the mental component of skilled factory labour:

*"The machinist of Taylor's day started with the shop drawing and turned, milled, bored, drilled, planed etc. and otherwise machine-and-hand-processed the proper stock to the desired shape as specified in the drawing. The range of decisions to be made in the course of this process... is enormous... Taylor himself worked with twelve variables, including hardness of the metal, the material of the cutting tool, thickness of the shaving, shape of the cutting tool, use of a coolant... etc. Each of these variables is subject to a large number of choices.... But upon these decisions of the machinist depended not just the accuracy of the product, but also the pace of production."* [21]

It is true that Russian machine building stood on a generally lower technological level than that of the industrialised West. But on the other hand, the relatively weak and fluctuating nature of the demand for machinery in Russia made the introduction of batch production and a developed division of labour difficult. This in turn placed special demands on the workers to exhibit qualities of resourcefulness and independence. A Soviet student of the pre-revolutionary machine-construction industry found that 'the basic type of machine builder was not the worker-operator but the so-called broad profile worker'. [22]

In sum, skilled metalworking involved a high proportion of non-routine tasks requiring decisions based upon relatively complex calculations involving many variables. Executed according to technical drawings, this work fostered the capacity for independent thought and the ability to move with ease between the abstract and the concrete.

Skilled work required a certain amount of formal education beyond elementary literacy. Shapovalov, for example, decided to attend evening technical school to acquire the knowledge required of a skilled worker. [23] Moreover, since the acquisition of a skill involved several years of apprenticeship, the typical skilled worker, even though often raised in the village, having entered the factory at 14-16 years of age, had already spent a sufficient number of years in the factory to become assimilated into the urban working-class culture.

With skill came a sense of personal dignity, fostered by pride of craft and relative material security. After a few years at the Workshops of the North-West Railroad, the young Shapovalov was advised by an older worker to

*"go to a factory where they build new machines and don't just repair locomotives.. Quit the Varshavka, Sashka, you'll learn how to work, you'll gain more experience, become a skilled worker, learn to be bold. You'll stop fearing the foremen, forge freedom for yourself. You'll scorn the danger of finding yourself without work. You'll get a broader outlook of life."* [24]

S-skii, a liberal journalist, called the Petersburg workers in general 'the salt of the conscious working people' and proceeded to characterise the skilled metalworkers:

*"Workers in machine production are always in the forefront of every movement. They are the aristocrats, the progressivists. Turners, founders, blacksmiths, mechanics and machinists – all of these are developed people with a well formed sense of individuality and rather good wages... At any rate, this group of workers is able to live without especially burning need, given, of course, continuous employment. They are able to rent a flat, a cheap one, but nevertheless a flat, if they are married ... there is a hearth, something of which many worker groups are deprived."*

"I was never a worker myself, but it seems to me that work in machine-construction factories, despite its burdensome nature, must develop in a man the urge toward individuality. Here there must be room for creativity. The worker must think a great deal, reason in the very process of work. And, therefore, the very essence of his work gives him a push toward self-determination. I personally have had the occasion to talk at my home with many workers for hours on various subjects. In the form of their conversation and even their language, they are almost indistinguishable from our intellectuals. In my opinion, they are more interesting because their judgments are fresher, and their convictions, once taken, are very firm."

The author then describes a change of shift at a machine-construction factory:

*"A group of workers comes out of the gates. They are wearing work clothes, not exactly in the freshest state, but undoubtedly well-sewn and of durable quality. Their facial expressions are very serious and concentrated. Through the layer of soot, one can see sullen thought at work. They walk unhurriedly and solidly. They talk among themselves – and about matters that generally have nothing in common with the factory they have just left. Over there – one life, the working life. Here – another, the public, with its sharp socio-political interests. On the way they buy newspapers, mainly of the liberal trend. [Under Tsarism, the socialist press was severely persecuted.] On arriving home, the worker will read his newspaper in his spare time and will, perhaps, disagree with much in it, as liberalism is for the upper classes (barskii), and they, the workers, are essentially different."* [25]

A. Shlyapnikov, a skilled metalworker and prominent Bolshevik who worked in the factories of the Vyborg District during the war, also drew a connection between militancy and a better material situation. Referring to the Vyborg District, he wrote:

*"In pre-war years, with large war orders, there was a crying need for working hands; and so employers paid higher wages to attract skilled workers. This contributed to the concentration of the most advanced elements in this district. The better working conditions and the fighting spirit gave the district a certain revolutionary reputation, and the Vyborzhtsy maintained it with pride."* [26]

In fact, metalworking, which predominated in the Vyborg District, was the highest paid industry, the printers having lost their leading position during the wartime decline in their industry (see Table 2.2).

In the Russian context, the emergence of these new cultural needs, the sense of individuality and human dignity and the aspiration towards self-determination, served to intensify the workers' hostility to the existing order. As these needs grew, so too did the tension between them and the system that stubbornly prevented their fulfilment. And if the less developed workers were concerned primarily with economic issues, their skilled colleagues, as Buzinov noted, wanted 'to talk about something general and not just wages'. For the skilled worker, the struggle had to be conducted on many levels, the economic often taking a secondary place.

## **TABLE 2.2**

**Average monthly wage of Petrograd workers by industry, in rubles, 1913 and 1916**

Industry	1913	1916
Metalworking	42.0	51.0
Printing	56.4	38.0
Chemicals	30.0	33.8
Woodworking	41.0	31.3
Leather	36.0	30.7
Minerals	30.7	24.5
Food	28.2	24.5
Textiles	26.0	24.7

Source: P. Loiberov, 'Petrogradskii proletariat v gody pervoi mirovoi voyny', in *Istoriya rabochikh Leningrada*, vol. I, p. 470.

In both work and public life, Tsarist society constantly frustrated these new aspirations. The Russian factory regime was a corrupt and degrading despotism, where rights had to be wrested by force, only to be rescinded by management at the first opportunity. From 1905 onward (with a certain pause during the reaction of 1907-11), demands for the recognition of the human dignity of workers, for polite address (especially the second person plural), an end to searches, decent treatment of women, and the like, became dominant issues in the labour movement. [27] Shapovalov recalled how keenly he experienced this clash between his emergent sense of dignity and desire for autonomy, on the one hand, and his subservient, dependent position vis-à-vis the boss on the other.

*"From my first days in the workshop of Olivier I felt a peculiar duality. I, a revolutionary and Marxist, hating the capitalist system, having set as my goal its total destruction, recognised that capital was pressing me and subordinating me to the win of the boss to such an extent that I was lowering my eyes under his severe gaze, that I was stooping over my machinist's lathe more intensely than I had to when he looked at me. Alas, I had to admit that it was as if two men were living inside of me: one who for the sake of the struggle for a better future for the workers was not afraid of sitting in the Peter-Paul Fortress and in Siberian exile; and another who had not fully liberated himself from the feeling of dependence and even fear. Nevertheless, catching myself on these slavish feelings, I came to hate capitalism and my boss Olivier even more intensely."* [28]

The oppression in the factories, however, was but a microcosm of the workers' social and political condition in Tsarist society at large, which was characterised by a despotic paternalism that stifled all attempts at self-expression. Here, too, in the broader social context, the movement did not limit itself to economics, to the struggle for legalisation of trade unions and the like, but fought also for recognition of the workers as full-fledged citizens with their own economic, cultural and political organisations run by and for workers.

The emergence of these needs [29] generated a new type of Militant – the 'Conscious worker'. 'Behind the Nevskii Gates', wrote Buzinov,

*"One now [1906-7] heard the word 'conscious', and the appearance of the conscious worker clearly implied that his opposite was also present – the unconscious worker. There were few socialist workers [i.e. party members] and they were supported by the conscious workers. The latter were ten times as numerous as the socialists... Each was, in a way, a 'juridically reasoning individual (yuridicheski myslyashchaya lichnost') capable of understanding all that surrounded him. They all, to a greater or lesser degree, understood the situation of the workers and their relations with the factory owners. Life itself transformed them into the vanguard of the worker masses. Their native*

*keen wit and worker sensitivity did not fail them when they exposed the hidden ends behind this or that manoeuvre, of management. And they were no longer silent. Somehow in their midst, a special type of agitator was created, a man always hammering away at the same point – I would say – of class isolation from the exploiters. In the persons of these agitators life had hammered a wedge between workers and owners that no party agitator, not so closely tied to the masses as they, could have done... This self-made agitator spoke of that which each worker had in his head but, being less developed, was unable to verbalise. After each of his words, the workers would exclaim: 'That's it! That's just what I wanted to say!' He would seize upon a subject that could not claim a very wide scope, but rather one of the simplest kind.... It would have to do with a screw and its thread. But the confrontation of a whole series of such details, among which a worker passes his whole life, gave this speech a special persuasiveness. For each worker, be he as benighted as the dark night, it became clear that under his very nose amazing things were going on, and this in itself posed the question: 'And after that, what else is going on that he, like a mole, does not see?'" [30]*

Buzinov emphasises here what 'class consciousness' has traditionally signified: a grasp of the workers' oppressed economic and political situation in society. But in the Russian labour movement, the term 'conscious worker' was actually a much broader concept embracing an entire code of conduct that included such varied aspects of social life as relations with women, attitudes towards the use of alcohol, theft, relations with management, etc. The 'conscious worker' was not only a fighter for the economic and political rights of the working class: he was also an *intelligentnyi* person in the broad Russian sense of the term. A. Babytsyn, a skilled locksmith at the New Parviainen Machine-construction Factory in the Vyborg District, recalled how some of the workers on payday would go directly to the taverns to drink or play billiards amidst the whine of the gramophones.

*"But the conscious part of the workers spent their leisure in a different manner: many went to the People's House, attended performances at the 'Komediya' theatre, visited museums. But they did not spend their wages only on distractions. One day, Nikolai Mukhin, a worker in our shop, approached me and with the caution characteristic of the underground activist asked if I could aid arrested workers who were suffering for the interests of the working class."* [31]

Another worker expounding on the nature of interpersonal relations among workers, wrote: 'Only a conscious working person can truly respect a human individual, women, cherish a tender child's soul. We will not learn from anyone but ourselves. We, the conscious working people, have no right to be like the bourgeois'. [32] In the autumn of 1917, the committee of the Izhorskii Factory passed a rule that anyone involved in theft of factory property be fired. The union would be notified of the grounds for dismissal: 'for theft, which disgraces the conscious proletariat. [33]

Buzinov noted that the 'conscious workers' 'were no longer silent', that this consciousness had an active bent. And yet, these 'self-made agitators' were not party people; they were acting solely upon an inner compulsion to raise their fellow workers to their own level. In the worker, wrote a contemporary observer of the labour scene, L M. Kleinbort:

*"the spiritual process is an active one. Once the voice of the individual has begun to speak in the worker, he can neither sit under a bush... nor limit himself to words... The strength of this process is in its dynamism: the upper strata of the proletariat raise up the backward strata to their own level."* [34]

This active orientation was crucial to the ability of a comparatively small stratum of workers to exert its influence over the entire class and also helps to explain the relatively swift assimilation of large numbers of peasant newcomers into the labour movement.

It is interesting that even the Ministry of Trade and Industry, headed by one of Russia's biggest bankers and staffed largely by former Tsarist officials, referred to the skilled workers as the more 'conscious' element. In a March 1917 survey of Petrograd's factories it reported that

*"In a whole series of cases the [factory] committees are able to introduce a certain order and discipline into the worker masses, and it is generally observed that the influence of the committees and their significance are greater the more conscious the workers. Therefore, their authority is rather significant, for example, in the metalworking factories. And the opposite is true: very insignificant where the majority of workers are relatively uncultured."* [35]

Thus, metalworking, consciousness, [36] culture, discipline and organisation are linked in this report. Indeed, although the Vyborg District metalworkers were the most active and radical element of the working class, they were the farthest from being the anarchistic masses that later Western historiography has often made them out to be. In fact, they especially prided themselves on their discipline and organisational abilities, as the following report on the 18 June 1917 demonstration makes clear: 'The Vyborzhtsy arrived in strict formation on the Plains of Mars. "What district is this?", shouted a voice from the crowd. "Why, can't you see? Exemplary order! That means it's Vyborg," proudly replied the leader of the column'. [37] Malakhovskii, commander of the Vyborg District Red Guards, wrote of the local workers:

*"And the people we had there in the Vyborg District were the pick of the crop - each one a fine lad. Whomever you poked, he would not make you blush. And, in truth, we never had reason to... Such gratifying soil as the workers of the Vyborg District allowed us to organise the Red Guards such that all to the last man were utilised... While the Red Guards of the other districts also numbered in the thousands, they showed themselves to be much weaker in action. On the day of the uprising, they came from various districts and even from Kronstadt to learn from us how to organise the Red Guards."* [38]

One of the most important characteristics of the political culture of the skilled metalworkers was what Buzinov termed 'class isolation from the exploiters'. The essence of the 'conscious worker's' agitation was 'to hammer a wedge between workers and owners. In strikingly parallel fashion, S-skii observed that the workers would disagree with much that they found in the liberal press because 'liberalism is for the upper classes, and they, the workers, are essentially different'.

This aspiration towards 'class isolation' from census society was more than the desire for self-determination. It stemmed also from a deeply held sense of the irreconcilability of the interests of worker and the propertied classes, a position that expressed itself in the desire to keep all workers' organisations under the sole control of workers and, where this was not feasible, to gain at least an equal footing with representatives of census society. Thus, a police survey of the labour movement during November 1915 in Petrograd observed that the most discussed issue of the period had been consumer cooperatives and that at meetings on this, worker orators 'expressed the desire to do without any material aid from the industrialists, who were gladly offering material support in the founding of co-operatives'. Similar attitudes were expressed in the factories in regard to the cooperative opened by the Petrograd Society of Factory and Mill Owners (PSFMO). At Erikson, for example,

*"the majority pointed out that the Society is totally dependent upon the factory owners, and since co-operation is one of the forms of the general workers' movement, it is necessary to think along lines of our own worker societies, independent of the owners."*

The report also noted that interest in insurance and sickness funds was growing:

*"However, one observes of late in the worker population the tendency towards isolation of their activities from any sort of pressure from the authorities or the entrepreneurs. Here too, one feels the shift towards pure autonomy... This tendency... can be observed at all workers' meetings without exception."* [39]

And the same attitude prevailed in the sphere of worker-management relations within the factories, where all forms of toadying or even socialising (often referred to as 'fraternisation') were frowned upon. The ideal was a clean separation.

On the political level, this irreconcilability manifested itself above all in the almost universal rejection of liberalism. The Constitutional Democrats (Kadets), the liberal party, proved incapable of winning even the smallest working-class following. Indeed, the stratum of workers in question tended to reject the liberal bourgeoisie even as potential political allies. This was one of the major reasons the Mensheviks enjoyed relatively little support among them, especially in periods of labour offensive. Buzinov recalled that even after the revolutionary mood of 1905 had subsided and the sobered workers grew more reform-minded, at their meetings, 'from each word spoken... a sharp line separating the workers from the ruling class emerged. One could sense the spiritual growth of the workers during the past two years'. [40] Even Buzinov, though an SR, as a 'conscious worker', took the sentiment for 'class isolation' as a sign of spiritual growth.

The other side of this irreconcilability was the very keen sense of class honour that played such an important role in the workers' tenacity in struggle, turning strikes for economic and legal demands into questions of honour to be won regardless of the price. [41] It was this sense of class honour that moved the 48-year-old Putilov worker, Skorinko, to lash out at his son for 'allowing himself' to be beaten by officers for speaking in defence of the Bolsheviks:

*"And you stood for it, you wretch?! You should have given him one in the mug. With an inkwell, a revolver, a chair. A worker should not endure a blow from a bourgeois. You hit me? - There, take one back? Ekh, you zasranets [shithead]!"*

[42]

It was class honour that inspired such statements in 1917 as 'Better to fall a pile of bones than to live like slaves' or 'We will still fight, and if we perish, it will be in an honest battle and we will not retreat from the struggle'. [43]

While a full analysis of the sources of this irreconcilable outlook is not possible here, some elements readily present themselves. First, Russia on the eve of the revolution still bore many traits of a society based upon juridically defined estates. Elections to the State Duma, for example, were held by curia defined by a mixture of estate and property (class) qualifications. This in itself naturally fostered attitudes of separateness among classes. Secondly, the reality of the Russian social situation was such that the interests of the propertied classes, as they conceived them, were, in fact, quite opposed to the aspirations of the workers. Even the 'Workers' Group' of the War-Industry Committee, one of the more conservative elements in Russian Social Democracy during the war, whose chief goal was to effect a political alliance between the workers and bourgeoisie, could not ignore this. In a letter to the workers of Petrograd in December 1916, it stated:

*"The propertied classes have always feared the people, but now, having lost faith in their own forces, they turn to the popular movement and especially to an active demonstration by the working class."*

Of course, they would like this intervention to take place on their own terms, for their own interests - to get the most for themselves and give as little democracy as possible to the workers. But the working class is conscious enough not to let this happen. The bourgeoisie wants political reform, a

liberal regime; we will secure our goal – the maximum democratisation of the country. The bourgeoisie wants a government responsible to the Duma [elected by a very unequal suffrage weighted toward the propertied classes]; we – a provisional government resting not on the Duma but on the organised people. The bourgeoisie will try to maintain the current forms of cruel exploitation; the working class will demand a series of social reforms that will facilitate their struggle against exploitation and the exploiters. The bourgeoisie wants to give freedom to its annexationist appetites; the proletariat and democracy will protest decisively against all military coercion and will strive for a peace acceptable to the workers of all countries." [44]

There was also a third, more psychological element. Shapovalov, for example, recalled how deeply disturbed and galled he was as a conscious revolutionary worker to observe in himself feelings of dependence and timidity towards his boss. And precisely because of these feelings, he came to hate the entire system even more intensely. But the same sentiments also gave rise to fear among the 'conscious workers' that if they lowered their defences and failed to maintain total separation, they might ultimately yield to these impulses and be dominated, in a sense swallowed up, by the owners. Thus, the anger and the fear, originating from a common source, fed the same intense striving for 'class separateness'.

The other side of 'class separateness' was the equally strong desire for class unity among workers. These workers typically referred to themselves as a 'worker family' or 'one whole harmonious proletarian family', [45] and felt that they should not fight among themselves, that there should be agreement on strategy and tactics since, after all, they shared common interests and a common enemy. More than once they showed their impatience with what they termed factionalism and misplaced pride in the party leadership. As the Menshevik, Lev Lande, wrote:

*"The wish for unity had run strong in the labour movement through out the February period, and it did not die easily even after October. At bottom, it sprang from the belief that the working class had to remain united if it were to fulfil its historical role. Therefore, though it increasingly dashed with reality, all parts of Russian social democracy in 1917 paid some lip service to the masses' yearning for a single, united labour party."* [46]

Lande is clear that the yearning for unity came 'from below' and that the leadership was forced to take it into account. But at the same time, this position was always a principled one: the workers would not compromise basic programmatic goals even for the sake of this unity. Nevertheless, the desire for unity played an important role throughout the labour movement, causing the workers to hesitate before actions that might divide their ranks.

Of course, in the absence of other political and economic resources except their numbers, a premium was naturally placed upon solidarity. But unity also filled a deeply psychological need: just as the avoidance of close contact with census society was a means of dealing with servile tendencies in face of authority, so too the support of the 'collective' aided in overcoming these inclinations. Shlyapnikov noted a duality in the metalworkers of the Vyborg District that is strikingly reminiscent of the conflict that Shapovalov experienced. According to Shlyapnikov, during the war, wage differentials were often quite large within the same shop and even among workers performing the same tasks:

*"It... occurred quite often because our metalworkers were accustomed to collective struggle, while demands for simple wages and much else in factory life called for a certain amount of personal restraint, persistence and the ability to stand up for oneself, each person alone, sometimes without the common support."* [47]

A. Buiko, a Petrograd worker raised in the village, recalled the tremendous feeling of strength he

drew from the sense of belonging to the collective:

*"In the first years before I outgrew my still peasant attitudes, I felt myself alone and constantly experienced fear before other people. But once I grew close to my comrades, I began to feel unshakeable ground beneath my feet. Confidence and assurance appeared: 'I am not alone - there are many of us. We are all as one!'" The consciousness of this imparted so much energy that it lasted for the entire ensuing struggle.*" [48]

In the factories the social pressure towards unanimity was very great and this expressed itself in 1917 in a tendency to pass resolutions unanimously, or with abstentions only. Similarly, an important tool for enforcing labour discipline was to have the recalcitrant worker answer publicly before the general assembly. [49]

One final trait that should be mentioned was the fundamental internationalism of this stratum of workers, both in relation to ethnic groups within Russia and towards the war and the struggles of the oppressed peoples abroad. Though the Petrograd working class was overwhelmingly Russian, there were significant minority groups. [50] Yet, if ethnic antagonism existed, it played no visible role in the labour movement. One of the most famous strikes of 1912-14, the 102-day strike at the Lessner Machine-construction Factory, was sparked by the suicide of a Jewish worker driven to despair by the taunts of a foreman. In 1917 itself, candidates with such obviously Jewish names as Izrailevich or Kogan were prominent among elected delegates in mass working-class organisations. [51]

The workers' internationalism on the war issue was forcefully demonstrated in 1917. 'Down with the war was a key slogan of the February Revolution. Even the initial patriotic wave that swept up broad strata of workers throughout Russia found only a weak and relatively short-lived echo in Petrograd, and, according to the police, little remained of it by the autumn of 1915. [52] N. I. Potresov, a right-wing Menshevik and a defencist (even prior to the February Revolution) bitterly lamented in 1915 the fact that the 'German invasion' had 'aroused even the most stagnant elements of bourgeois society', while it 'awakened nothing in the proletarian masses', no response worthy of the 'most revolutionary class of today's society'. [53] In the summer of 1917, the Putilov workers donated 5000 rubles for a banner with the inscription: 'We swear to achieve the brotherhood of all peoples. Long live the Russian Revolution as the prologue to the Social Revolution in Europe'. This was presented to the Pavlov Regiment in an elaborate ceremony on the Plains of Mars. It hardly seems likely that the workers would spend their money on slogans they disapproved of. Similarly, it is unlikely that the workers would pass resolutions condemning Kerenskii's closing of the Finnish Parliament for its vote for internal autonomy had they, like the Kadets, nurtured 'greater Russia' sentiments. One should also bear in mind that the Petrograd workers did not have far to look to see the international character of capital. The textile industry was largely British owned, and the metalworking factories bore such world-famous names as Siemens, Erikson and Nobel. In addition, much of the administrative and technical personnel was of foreign origin.

## **The Unskilled Workers**

The unskilled workers were the least active element of Petrograd's working class. In labour circles they were often referred to as the *malosoznatel'nye massy* (literally - masses with low consciousness) and sometimes merely *boloto* (the swamp).

By far the largest single group in this category were the women. V. Perazich, a Petrograd union activist, wrote of the textile workers: 'Our masses in general at that time [early 1917] were still totally benighted... Only very few had managed to become conscious proletarians'. He explained this by the composition of the work force: during the war the mills had lost their activist skilled male

cadres to the front and the war-related industries. 'It reached a point where women appeared even on the mules where they had never worked before, and among the women at this time there were still too few conscious workers'. [54]

Women were almost invariably employed at menial unskilled and semi-skilled work. In textiles, food-processing, chemicals and shoemaking, women were typically to be found in the largely unskilled production jobs, while the men did the skilled work in maintenance, setting up the machines and supervising the women. [55] Even in the more skilled industries, such as metalworking and printing, women almost always did unskilled tasks. [56]

If skilled labour fostered analytical thought and other intellectual qualities, unskilled work deadened the mind. 'The weaver and spinner', wrote S-skii,

*"are of a totally different type [than the skilled metalworkers]. They are the slaves of the machine. The machine has devoured them with all their essence. It is stubbornly mechanical work.... Here the people are numbers. Here, on the faces is written that which is most terrible in a work atmosphere: the hopelessness of labour. People grow dull, go to seed... [There is a total] absence of demand for individual creativity."* [57]

Women's jobs in metalworking were essentially the same. A woman who assembled hand-grenades in an exclusively female shop of the Optical Factory left this account:

*"I am sitting on a stool, bending my head over a protective glass. On the other side of the table lies a sheet of cardboard with tiny slits. From a tiny box lined with khaki I take 40 capsules instead of the regulation 20 and insert them into the slits. I dip the brush into a bottle and cover the detonator with glue. With the point of a wooden stick, I put on it a tiny golf leaf circle and press it down with a small hammer. My hand repeats these movements learned by rote, and my body is locked in motionlessness."*

At that moment, the foreman Yanikeev appeared behind my back. 'You're breaking the rules, sweetie! Haven't I explained it to you? Or aren't you Russian?... I've had it fooling around with you rule breakers. Collect your pay in two weeks'.

We tried to prove to him that there was no defective output nor had there been. We could not deny the fact of breaking the rules ... Masha and I were saved from dismissal by the revolutionary events of February 1917.

In this uncomplicated work of less than five operations, there was no room for independent thought. Initiative, in fact, was discouraged even, as in this case, when it raised productivity." [58]

Women were the lowest paid workers: the average wage in textile was less than half of that for metalworking in 1916 (see Table 2.2). And women were doubly exploited. Not only did their wages fail to secure anything close to a decent standard of life, but they were totally under the thumb of unscrupulous administrators and foremen who often showed no qualms about exploiting their weaknesses both economically and sexually. [59] The 'decent public' looked upon them as little better than prostitutes.

**TABLE 2.3**  
**Literacy of women textile workers, metalworkers,**  
**and all industrial workers, by age, August 1918**

Age	Per cent of literate workers
-----	------------------------------

	<b>Women textile workers</b>	<b>Metalworkers</b>	<b>All industrial workers</b>
To 14	70.0	93.6	80.6
15-19	62.8	92.1	77.1
20-24	51.7	88.6	68.2
25-29	38.6	87.2	66.2
30-34	28.6	86.7	64.2
35-39	19.9	81.1	59.2
40-44	15.1	79.9	58.2
45-49	10.7	72.6	51.9
50 +	7.9 *	62.8	42.3
All	37.5	82.6	64.0

\* 50-54 only.

Source: Based upon Rashin, *Formirovanie rabocheho klassa Rossi* p. 602.

Literacy among women workers was low, though the gap between male and female literacy narrowed considerably in the lower age groups (see Table 2.3). Indeed, except for the few skilled male workers, it was typically from among the youth of the textile mills that militants were recruited. [60]

But perhaps even more than the mechanical nature of their work and the low level of literacy, it was the women's entire mode of life that militated against their being drawn into public life. The woman worker typically began to earn a wage at the age of 9-11 or even earlier, serving unlimited hours as a nanny, at work in a peasant's garden or tending the local noble's cattle. Later, she would leave the village to work in the city as a seamstress, mill hand or salesgirl. Mill work and childbirth, concluded Kabo, 'lead to the early destruction of the organism, leaving no energy or time for acquiring elementary literacy. As a result, almost all of the textile workers, who average 33 years of age [in this sample of Moscow workers] are physically exhausted and intellectually semi-literate or completely illiterate'. [61]

The woman worker's life was a closed one, an almost unbroken passage between home and mill that kept her isolated from the larger society, outside of the dynamic influence of the labour movement. Her intellectual horizons went scarcely beyond family and shop. 'Working beside a man at the factory', wrote the Bolshevik women's paper *Rabotnitsa*,

*"at the mills for 11-12 hours, and receiving for her work a significantly lower wage, miserable pennies, is not the woman, whose organism is weaker, also burdened with necessary and heavy housework? Is it easy for her after the endless grinding work at the mill, when the man can relax, partake in public life, read and converse with comrades about what he has read, instead of all this, forgetting herself, to give each free minute to the care of the children? They have to do the washing, and mend the linen, and feed them. And with what will you feed them when goods grow continually dearer and the earnings are so small? ... In this sort of calculation, in these cares and worries about the household, passes all the free time of the woman worker with a family, and she hardly has any time for rest, for her personal life. Exhausted, sick from unhealthy, endless mill work, knowing no peace at home, from morning to night, day in and day out, month after month, the worker mother drudges and knows only need, only worry and grief. Her life passes in gloom, without light. She ages quickly: she is also broken, has suffered her fill in the very years when a person should enjoy the full*

*blossoming of her forces. And she dies having known no happiness in life; she perishes like a broken young tree."* [62]

A tendency towards passivity, the absence of initiative and perseverance in struggle, a general indifference to public life, along with a weakly developed sense of class solidarity and low political literacy – these were some of the characteristics of the political culture of the unskilled women worker. 'How many times', asked another article,

*"have we heard that a strike in this or that enterprise failed... because 'among the workers there were many women'; that several factories did not support their comrades at work 'because' among the workers employed there are many women; that a strike ended prematurely and was consequently lost 'because' among the workers are many women?... Why, women are the least conscious group.... They sign up less in the unions than men, they go less frequently to clubs and lectures."* [63]

'We have never adhered to the collective actions of the proletariat', wrote a woman from the Kenig Thread Mill (2500 women and 80 men).

*"And if women workers in some departments, do declare a strike, the workers in the other shops do not come to the aid of the first. This, Kenigtsy, is what our isolation and lack of organisation have led to: they exploit our benightedness. And so it will be until we stop regarding our boss as a benefactor and ourselves as slaves.... The majority of the women workers, including our mill, drag behind at the tail end of the labour movement. There is not the intensity, the energy required in the struggle against capital."* [64]

Kabo found that among her 30 women respondents, the overwhelming majority showed a complete ignorance in all questions of 'political and artistic life'. Only nine had read newspapers before the revolution. 'The great majority of women', she concluded, 'do not interest themselves in matters of politics and culture, have no reading habits and cannot remember what they read or when'. [65]

One of the reasons for their reluctance to participate in public life was fear. 'They hold more firmly to the present', wrote *Rabotnitsa*, 'fear risk more acutely, for themselves, for their children. And it is harder to arouse them to strike, to convince them of the need to carry it to the conclusion'. [66] In part, this stemmed from their sense of family responsibility and the insecurity of their material situation. But it was also a question of upbringing and social background. Even young women often feared activism. For example, when elections to the directorate of the health insurance fund were held at the Laferme Tobacco Factory in 1914,

*"The older women said: What do we need a fund for? They'll dock us and we'll get no aid. Anyway, we're too old to give birth. But even among the young workers many were frightened by the elections. Some even cried when they were elected: And what if we get into trouble because of this? What if they arrest us? [These were legal organisations.] One young worker even said: Thank God! when she learned that she was too young."* [67]

Women often exerted a restraining influence on the activist tendencies of their husbands. One woman, recalling her relationship with her late husband, noted:

*"In those days I would often get angry at my husband when he went off to some meeting or as he rather often sat reading a newspaper. 'Is that any business of ours to read newspapers? It is fine for gentlemen to indulge in that, but what can we get out of reading it?'"* [68]

Although the discussion to this point has been limited to women workers, it must be emphasised that it was not sex but the level of skill and the social characteristics associated with it in Russia that

were the primary determinants of political culture. Thus, women engaged in the needle trades, the only skilled industry with a significant proportion of women [69] and which typically required two to three years of trade school or apprenticeship, were quite unlike their unskilled sisters. The three seamstresses interviewed in Kabo's study were all literate, two with two years of formal schooling and one with six. The overall literacy rate for women in the needle trades was 68.2 per cent as compared with 37.9 per cent in cotton. [70] Of the remaining 27 women in Kabo's study, only three had any formal schooling. All three seamstresses were urban bred, daughters of workers. In contrast, seven of the eight textile workers interviewed were raised in the village in peasant families. Kabo's interviewers described these as 'downtrodden', 'uncultured', 'underdeveloped', 'uninterested in public life'; while the seamstresses were perceived as 'energetic', 'intelligent', 'capable', and two of them were actively involved in public affairs. [71]

Indeed, the relatively few skilled women workers bore a far greater resemblance to their skilled male counterparts than to the unskilled women. And the converse is also true: the unskilled men, the *chernorabochie*, were very similar to the unskilled women in both social background and political culture. And like the women, they were referred to by Mensheviks and Bolsheviks alike as 'undeveloped', 'backward', 'of low consciousness'. [72] Referring to the 1912-14 upsurge, Kleinbort wrote that 'it was indeed the arrival of the *chernorabochii*, coarse, uncultured, illiterate... that complicated more than ever the struggle of the working class for its human dignity'. [73] Also like the women, they were engaged in exhausting, repetitive work, received a bare subsistence wage at best (though more than the women), [74] and tended to stand aside from the labour movement.

Unskilled labour in general, and especially during the war, was drawn heavily from the countryside. T. Shatilova, a Bolshevik who was active in efforts to organise the chemical industry in Petrograd before the revolution, observed that 'in the chemical plants the majority of workers directly involved in production were *chernorabochie*... with weak ties to the city and weakly imbued with proletarian attitudes'. [75] S-skii also wrote of a 'huge mass of unskilled *chernorabochie* the majority of which were *prishlye*' [76] (literally - arrivals; the term could refer to any immigrants but was most often used for peasants), and the Menshevik-Internationalist, Bazarov described them as 'casual elements, *prishlye* turned into workers during the war'. [77]

The chief objective difference between male and female unskilled labour was that women, regardless of the length of their industrial employment, tended to remain at unskilled work; the unskilled men, however, gradually moved into semi-skilled or skilled work as they acquired experience. For men, unskilled work and recent arrival from the village tended to go hand in hand; not so for the women.

From the point of view of political culture also there was a difference, in the histories of men and women unskilled workers. The longer the men remained in the urban factory setting, the more they gradually shed their peasant ways of life and thinking, the more they became 'proletarianised'. On the other hand, as Kabo concluded, 'the milieu from which a woman came and the nature of her activity left a more significant imprint on her [than on the man]'. And the reasons are clear: 'Here, all the basic characteristics inherited from the recent past which we have described are tied in the tight knot of a closed family life and have maintained intact the wretched culture of the urban and rural poor. Life has somehow passed these people by, giving them small and infrequent joys and leaving as their lot an abundance of deprivation and trouble'. [78]

Since the recent arrivals tended to see their stay in the factory as temporary, or at least had not yet developed a sense of identification with the urban working class, their commitment to the collective goals of the labour movement was at best weak, their chief interests being land and personal economic betterment. A journalist in the Menshevik-Internationalist paper *Novaya zhizn*, comparing the Putilov workers to those of the Trekhgornaya Textile Mill in Moscow, wrote that 'in the first, there is a clear understanding of class interest; in the second, the fundamental issue is land'. [79]

Strike statistics show that unskilled workers responded more readily to short-term economic goals than to the longer-term, especially political, aims of the labour movement. In the first half of 1914, a period of particularly intense labour militancy and class conflict, the textile workers not only took a less active part in the strike movement as a whole (despite their numerical preponderance in Russia) when compared to the metalworkers, but they were still heavily involved in economic actions at a time when the metalworkers were almost entirely absorbed in the political movement (see Table 2.4).

**TABLE 2.4**  
**Participants in economic and political strikes in 1914**  
**in European Russia in metalworking and textiles**

	<b>Economic strikes</b>	<b>Political strikes</b>
Metalworking	87 773	661 426
Textiles	115 532	160 336

Source: M. Balabanov, *Rabochee dvizhenie v Rossii v pod"ema 1912-14* (M., 1927) p. 62.

But apart from the issues of interest and class identity there were also more purely cultural traits influencing the unskilled workers' mode of participation in the labour movement, traits in many ways reminiscent of the mentality of the Russian peasantry. One of the most crucial characteristics that distinguished the skilled urbanised workers from their rustic unskilled colleagues was the ability to generalise in social life, to orient themselves in the more abstract, remote public issues that had no concrete referent in the workers' immediate personal life. This quality is akin to what C. Wright Mills termed the 'sociological imagination', the capacity 'to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two in society'. [80] The extent to which this ability developed depended on many factors, including the level of literacy and education, the nature of work and the like. But many students of peasant culture have noted the peasants' inability to see past the confines of the farm or village, an inability conditioned by the limited nature of the relations between peasants and the world outside. [81] A Petrograd Soviet agitator working among the peasants of the Yamburg Uezd in the summer of 1917 reported back that all the social questions were raised at the meetings he had managed to organise, but 'matters of state-wide significance were very little examined due to the peasants' lack of preparation, their failure to grasp their importance'. [82]

If the peasants lived in a largely natural world where the primary relationship was between family and nature, the world of the urban factory workers was predominantly a social one in which the satisfaction of all vital needs underlined their dependence upon the rest of society: the employers for livelihood, landlords for shelter, peasantry for food, fellow workers in production and struggle, etc. The different social situations of the workers and peasants were reflected in their reading habits, as summarised by Kleinbort:

*"The peasant 'who loves to read' ... conducts his economy 'more rationally' ... 'is more open to innovation' ... What is most valuable in a book is that which is 'useful', which can be used here and now in the economy, at the village assembly, in relations outside the village. If beside this practicality the village discovers some understanding of the book in the sense of general development, it is a very rare book indeed that devours the reader, swallows him up to such an extent that he forgets his manure, his cattle, the fuss around his home and person.... He is passive, analyses little, looks for sermons, lectures. ... [But] least of all do we find calm in the worker reader. Reading a book, he reacts strongly to this or that part of it, even more strongly than one might have expected. Accordingly, the book for him is not a sermon or a lecture. Living at the factory, he sees and experiences much. Therefore, the book is the same as life for him. That this is so is shown by the*

*indifference to utilitarian knowledge and the increase in reading of social books – the opposite of what is undoubtedly taking place in the village.” [83]*

Not that the workers were impractical dreamers. For they read newspapers the most, and next to belles-lettres, preferred books on the ‘workers’ question, in the same way that peasant readers demand books “on land”. [84] However, technical literature that would have aided them to raise their skill levels interested them little. As one worker stated: ‘When you put in 12 or 15 hours in a row, it makes you sick to even remember your trade, let alone read about it’. [85]

The unskilled workers, like the peasants, also displayed a rather narrow and concrete circle of interests. If Buzinov recalled that with the machinist one felt like talking about something general, not just wages, and S-skii observed that the skilled metalworkers, upon leaving the factory, discussed broad socio-political issues, the woman worker who read newspapers preferred to read ‘only about our factory... accidents and trials... or something my husband points out’. [86] The unskilled workers, thus, related to public life, and to politics specifically, through their concrete everyday needs and experiences and one should be careful about attributing their tendency to concentrate on economic issues solely to lack of interest in specifically working-class goals, especially since in 1917 peasants and workers shared many of the same political interests, standing together in opposition to census society which favoured continuation of an annexationist war, opposed state regulation of the economy and was less than enthusiastic about transferring land to the peasants.

Similarly, the inertia of the unskilled workers, their low level of participation in the labour movement in general, also had parallels in the peasants’ oft-noted fatalism and passivity, which some have connected with the uncertainties that pervaded peasants’ agricultural pursuits subject to the whims of nature. [87] However, ‘passivity’ is not quite an accurate characterisation of the Russian peasantry, which showed itself capable of periodic outbursts of extremely militant collective action that tended, however, to peter out quickly in the absence of concrete results, only to be followed once more by long periods of relative quiescence. Moreover, these outbursts were not generated spontaneously from within peasant society, but almost always occurred in response to changes outside the village system that somehow challenged the legitimacy of the established order. [88] Lacking any systematic conception of the working and dynamics of society, they exploited opportunities sent them in much the same way as they made use of favourable climactic conditions. Once, however, the opportunity appeared to have passed, there was no turning to organisational work, no concern for consolidating forces, but rather a retreat to old patterns and preoccupation with local issues and solutions.

The unskilled workers showed a strikingly similar pattern of participation in the labour movement. Buzinov recalled how the ‘lower stratum of the working class’ fell into a state of lethargy as the revolutionary wave of 1905-6 receded. ‘A kind of indifference to everything existing and to the future took hold of it’. [89] B. Ivanov, a Moscow baker, wrote of the ‘mass workers’ who were ‘tied to the land’ and ‘undeveloped’ (*malosoznatel’nye*): ‘In moments when his spontaneous energy drives him to battle... he goes forward with hot decisiveness. But if some obstacle arises in his path, his strength is immediately smashed at the first decisive rebuff of capital’. [90] In 1907 the bakers had conducted two successful strikes and the ‘mass workers’ were demanding a third, against the opposition of the ‘conscious bakers’, the ‘proletarianised’ elements free from ties to the village. The latter preferred to postpone the strike in order first to gather forces and resolve organisational problems that required attention. But the ‘mass worker... took circumstances very little into consideration. His field of vision was limited to the union and he did not consider the state of the entire movement in the country as a whole’. When the strike failed, the union lost credit in the eyes of these workers, but the other group, which had received the least, stuck with it. [91] Similarly, during the reaction of 1907-11, it was the skilled metalworkers who constituted the great majority of

the union membership in Petrograd. In 1907 and 1908, of 8459 members, only 16 per cent were unskilled. Of the workers who joined in 1909 and 1911, only 10 and 5 per cent respectively were unskilled. [92]

Yet another characteristic of the unskilled workers which had a counterpart in the peasantry was their heavy dependence upon outside leadership. As the Petrograd Soviet agitator cited above noted, 'The peasants still do not understand what happened and believe someone will issue them an order "from above" to which they will submit. And when the matter is explained to them, they reply: "He is an anarchist".' [93] While Buzinov wrote of self-made agitators appearing from the midst of the metalworker masses, Perazich explained the 'backwardness' of the textile workers by the departure of skilled male leadership during the war. Yet, despite constant repressions that purged thousands of militants during the war, the Petrograd metalworkers were able continually to put forward new leaders and to intensify their economic and political activism.

But not all elements of the peasant's political culture retained by the unskilled workers were inimical to the political consciousness of the skilled workers. For example, the desire to maintain closed ranks was at least as strong among the peasants, whose *skhody* (assemblies) were famous for unanimous decisions. And as for 'class separateness', it was a rare peasant, indeed, who would allow his- or herself to be represented by a member of the nobility.

However, these traits could not contribute to the radicalisation of the recently arrived peasant until the initial uprootedness and sense of alienation from the working class were overcome. To cite Buiko again: 'In the first years before I outgrew my peasant attitudes, I felt myself alone and continually experienced fear before other people'. It is true, on the other hand, that in periods of dynamism in the labour movement, this initial transition could be quite swift.

Nor can one say that the skilled workers had 'outgrown' all the deeper peasant attitudes. For unconscious traces remained that could take root and develop under the right conditions. One cannot help but feel that the impatience and often outright scorn that skilled workers showed for the 'village' were to some degree a reaction to remnants of peasant traits they were still fighting in themselves. This was certainly true of the peasants' tendency to kowtow before authorities, a tendency in himself which infuriated Shapovalov, for one.

F. N. Samoilov, a dedicated Bolshevik activist and deputy to the Third Duma from the workers' curia in Ivanovo-Voznesensk, recalled how he was forced to move to an almost rural suburb of the town when his wife fell ill in 1909. Although he had been born in the village, as a skilled textile worker he had behind him 17 years of uninterrupted factory work and no economic ties to the land. Nevertheless, the surrounding woods and fields had a definite effect on him.

*"Behind the cottage was a large level piece of land overgrown with thick grass that seemed like a convenient place to work. When I looked at it, my hands begged for work. At first, I restrained myself but soon I could no longer hold back. The peasant in me finally awoke and the blood of my ancestors, father, grandfathers and great-grandfathers began to boil wildly in my veins. The land attracted me irresistibly to itself... In the course of many days, I spent all my free hours from work at the mill on the plot... I experienced the inexpressible pleasure of the muzhik-ploughman who ploughs his strip with the greatest love and care."* [94]

This idyll was cut short by Samoilov's brief arrest in connection with his past activity in the now defunct textile workers' union. When he returned he found the crop destroyed by stray cattle and promised himself 'never again to yield to petty property-owning peasant moods'. But he did yield again when he moved to a new working-class district on the edge of town where he was again eventually arrested. Of course, this was a period of dark reaction when labour activism was difficult

and unfruitful, and after this second lapse Samoilov never did give in to 'peasant moods'. Nevertheless, he considered himself a 'conscious worker', and his tone, while somewhat amused, is also clearly apologetic.

### **The 'Worker Aristocracy' [95]**

If, despite the above qualifications, the two types of workers described can be viewed as opposite poles on a series of continua of related social and cultural characteristics, the 'aristocracy' was a group quite apart, sharing many traits with the other skilled workers, but differing fundamentally in other crucial ways. For these were also skilled workers (though only a small stratum of this category) and to a significant degree 'conscious proletarians' – politically literate, 'cultured', active, with a developed sense of class consciousness. [96] However, they did not share the skilled metalworkers' irreconcilability towards census society.

In this category, which drew its members from among the printers, [97] skilled workers in state factories, and the settled, small property-owning stratum of workers, the printers formed the largest and most important sub-group. Their union had traditionally been Menshevik and remained so, except for a brief period following the October Revolution, into 1920. [98] As skilled workers, the printers were urbanised and almost 100 per cent literate; their work required the exercise of considerable intellectual skills, and their wages were on a par with metalworking. It was not a privileged material situation [99] but rather the specific nature of the printing industry, its structure and traditions, that not only muted the antagonism towards census society that characterised the skilled metalworkers but actually gave rise to a certain positive sense of kinship with the intelligentsia and through it with liberal society as a whole. The printers had a real sense of belonging to what the Mensheviks termed 'the vital forces of society'.

And there was, in fact, an intellectual aspect to the work of the typesetter, who in this period, when manuscripts were often untyped, required at least a basic understanding of the text to work with sufficient speed and accuracy. In addition, continuous exposure to materials at best of a liberal orientation, and at worst reactionary, could not but leave traces in the workers' minds. [100] There was also more direct contact with educated society. According to one early history of the Petersburg union, 'type-setters, especially those working on periodical publications, were in direct contact with journalists who, while visiting the composing room, never refused a request by a printer for clarification...' [101]

The printers also tended to set themselves somewhat above the mass of workers. Before 1905 they referred to themselves not as 'workers' (*rabochie*), but by the more genteel 'toilers' (*truzheniki*), or 'free artists of the graphic arts', 'literary smithies' and even 'commanders of the leaden army', and their printing plants were 'temples of art'. [102] As the printers were drawn more into the general movement, these attitudes were attenuated but they never fully disappeared.

There is also evidence that printers were recruited from the higher social strata to a greater extent than other workers. The above cited history of the printers' union claimed that while metalworkers almost invariably came from working-class or peasant families, typesetters in Petrograd 'came from all strata, including often very intellectual type-setters from strata that were foreign to the working class, scions of the bourgeoisie'. [103] This is supported by Kabo's study in which of the nineteen printers, six were from 'employee' (*sluzhashchie*, denoting white-collar, non-manual salaried occupations, including administrative and technical positions) families, six from working-class families and another six from the peasantry. In contrast, only two of the seventeen metalworkers were of 'employee' origin, with six of working-class background and eight peasant. This can perhaps be taken as an indication of the higher status attributed in society to the printing trade – it was not so much a 'step-down' for an administrative employee, for example, to set his son up as a printer's

apprentice.

In contrast to metalworking, textiles, chemicals, etc., printing still retained many features of a craft industry. To a large extent, this was a question of the relatively small size of printing establishments where the average work force was only 121, as compared to the city-wide industrial average of 409. [104] As in all small plants, relations between owners and administration, on the one hand, and workers, on the other, tended to be of a more personal and paternalistic nature. [105] The direct and informal character of these relations worked against attitudes of 'class isolation' and irreconcilability. Moreover, the small size of the work force and the economic instability that characterised small enterprises placed the workers in a weaker position vis-à-vis the owners and made control by the latter, who knew the workers individually, often by name, relatively easy. In March 1917, the Factory Inspectorate reported:

*"It is very important to note that work in the small and medium sized enterprises of Petrograd is proceeding in a relatively normal manner. Work is being done in shifts longer than eight hours, and although the workers demand higher wages, these claims are very moderate. The reason for this lies in the fact that the workers are less organised and also in the **closeness of the owners to the workers, thanks to which they have great influence over the workers.**"* [106]

The workers of small enterprises also lacked the sense of power that their colleagues in the large factories derived from membership in large collectives.

In addition, among the small owners in the printing industry one could find former workers who still had acquaintances at the presses, and, according to Tikhanov, a Petrograd printer, informing and toadying were still quite prevalent during the war:

*"An extremely popular expression of the slavish sentiments toward the 'father-benefactors' were the anniversary and name-day celebrations, for which the workers would give money and then celebrate together with the boss... Of course, the administration valued this and encouraged it with sops."* [107]

Another element in the structure of the printing industry that weakened class identity and solidarity was the institution of the *kompaniya*, an exclusive cartel-like association of skilled printers who took on quantities of work at higher rates in return for swift execution. The *kompanii* were self-regulating, with an elected 'elder', who enforced conditions and discipline established by the *kompaniya*. Although outsiders were rarely admitted, they were taken on at lower wages when the *kompaniya* had more work than it could handle by itself. [108] In this way, some of the printers themselves became employers.

Many of these characteristics of the printing trade fostered a sense of superiority towards the less 'cultured' elements of the working class, something that was evident in the printers' early reluctance to be called workers. The 'conscious' metalworkers, as noted, also shared a certain scorn for the 'village', but this was to a large degree sublimated and even overcome in efforts to raise up the unskilled masses to their level, to unify the working class around their own standards and goals. Given their insistence on 'class isolation' from census society and their fears of being dominated and coopted if they cooperated with it, this was the only path open for the struggle to improve their collective lot. The printers, on the other hand, were much less in a position to follow this, since not only did they have no fear of cooperation with liberal society, but they believed it an indispensable condition of success. Moreover, the unskilled masses, once aroused to political life, tended most often towards the skilled metalworkers' position of irreconcilability.

One of the political expressions of the printers' identification with the 'vital forces of society' was

their defensiveness during the war, much stronger here than in other industries. Basing himself on personal recollections and the contemporary press, Tikhanov noted that 'the poison of patriotism was especially potent among the printers, who were in direct contact with it through the press and books'. The Printers' Union paper came out against Karl Liebknecht, the only Social Democratic deputy in the German Reichstag to vote against war credits, and published Plekhanov's letter to the Duma deputy Buryanov advising him to vote for war credits. [109] Kudelli similarly wrote that 'the broad masses of Petrograd, ... although affected by the chauvinist frenzy, were not so for long. The greatest tribute to chauvinism was paid by the printers, the workers of the Arsenal Factory, the railroad depot of the Putilov Works and certain others'. [110] Tikhanov also recalled printers being involved in such 'bourgeois' organisations as liberal philanthropies and the city duma in efforts to ameliorate the workers' economic situation – clear violations of the norms of 'class isolation'. [111]

The printers, thus, found the Menshevik concept of 'vital forces', i.e. a coalition of the workers, intelligentsia and liberal census elements as the instrument of revolutionary change, quite compatible with their own outlook on society. They felt more comfortable with such an alliance than with the Bolsheviks' democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants', in which, as they saw it, the *stikhiya*, the elemental, anarchistic masses of peasants and 'unconscious' workers, would set the tone. At the same time, the Mensheviks, as a *bona fide* 'workers' party' (in contrast to the peasant emphasis of SR populism) with a more intellectual accent and composition than the Bolsheviks, appealed to their self-image as 'worker-intelligentsy'.

The other elements of the 'worker aristocracy' were characterised by a similar absence of irreconcilability and an affinity to liberal society. In the state factories, as in the printing enterprises, this was fostered by the more paternalistic nature of worker – management relations. But unlike the printers, at least a part of these skilled state workers did enjoy a privileged material position that bound them more closely to the existing order and the upper strata of society. A. Anotonov, a worker of the state-owned Obukhovskii Steel Mill, wrote of a stratum of 'highly skilled workers, whom the administration tried to neutralise by giving them apartments in small houses with truck gardens and other small sops'. [112] At the state Factory of Military-Medical Preparations, there was also a 'handful of highly skilled workers who lived in state apartments and received relatively high wages and medals'. Many of these had refused to strike in 1905-6. [113] According to Tikhanov the system of sops

*"in the state enterprises reached the point of awarding medals and even gold ones and hereditary titles. For example, after Easter the workers return to work. Suddenly, in full uniform, with crosses and stars, the director appears. He walks up to the nearest worker, greets him with a handshake, pronounces 'Christ has arisen!', and kisses him three times. So he does with all the others."* [114]

Such scenes of 'fraternisation' were almost unthinkable in private metalworking factories after the revolution of 1905 and especially after 1912. One should also bear in mind that workers in state factories were a part of the state bureaucracy and that long-time skilled workers could not but be affected by the bureaucratic ethos of state service that pervaded the administration and which also worked against any clean separation of workers from Management.

There is also evidence that in at least some state enterprises wages and conditions were better on the average than in private industry. This was the case, for example, at Obukhovskii where positions were especially coveted and could be obtained only upon recommendation from old-timers. Shotman, who had worked at this factory, cites this as one of the reasons it was so difficult to conduct revolutionary agitation there. [115] At the Government Paper Printing Plant the work day had been only eight hours even before the 1905 revolution, and the workers had their own elected elders. [116]

In an article on the state Patronnyi (Cartridge) Factory, a defencist stronghold in the red Vyborg District, *Izvestiya* offered three reasons for its 'backwardness'. First, it was a state enterprise and had been subject to the 'barracks regime' that had prevailed in state plants before the February Revolution, making revolutionary agitation and collective actions very difficult. As a result, the workers were not 'propagandised' and had little tradition of participation in the labour movement. Secondly, the labour force was 55 per cent female, a fact that was apparently intended to speak for itself. In general, state metalworking factories, even more than private industry, were heavily involved in unskilled ordnance production, employing great numbers of unskilled workers. Finally, this was an 'unusual case' in that the skilled workers were defencists - unusual because in the private factories the skilled workers were typically the most radical element, the natural leaders that pulled the unskilled masses after them. [117] By contrast, in the state plants any spontaneous radical tendencies among the unskilled masses had first to overcome the moderating influence of the local leadership cadres. For this reason, even the women of the textile mills were 'Bolshevised' on the whole weeks and even months before most of the state factories, since they did not have to overcome the influence of local defencist skilled workers who enjoyed special prestige as workers of the same factory. (Although the foremen in the textile mills were also defencist, even Kadet sympathisers, they were not trusted by the workers, who saw them as representatives of the management.)

One outstanding exception to the conservatism of the state enterprises was the Sestroretsk Arms Factory, located in a resort town outside the capital, just three miles from the Finnish border. The work force here, producing rifles for the army, was skilled - it was not, as in most other state metalworking factories, the case of a small stratum of privileged skilled workers in an unskilled mass. This factory also had more than its share of revolutionary agitators, as it served as a haven for Petersburg activists who were finding the capital a bit too hot. It also was used as a way-station for smuggling illegal literature and even arms into Russia. [118]

Owning property, especially land, even on a small scale, had a definite, conservative influence on the politics of workers. Nowhere was this more evident than in the semi-rural suburban Nevskii District of Petrograd, which remained an SR stronghold for most of 1917 only to become the centre of anti-soviet worker sentiment in 1918. Shotman recalled that

*"The main mass of workers consisted of a settled element that had worked at the factory continuously for several years. There were, for example, some who had worked 20 or even 30 years consecutively... Many workers had their own small houses; there were even those who had several houses which they rented out. Naturally, among this category of worker it was useless to conduct any sort of agitation for the overthrow of the existing order... Only the youth, and even so, not the sons of the old-timers, but the outsiders, were more or less receptive to agitation..."* [119]

In times of crisis, such semi-rural factory settings were often the scene of conflict between the long-time local residents and the workers who had come from the outside, since 'the local worker, owning his home, cow, truck, garden and pasture-land, in critical moments for the factory has the possibility of working for lower wages than the worker from outside whose entire well-being depends upon the factory wage. The worker from among the local residents, owning private property, is also a sort of patriot of his factory and very sensitive to its fate.' [120]

The ownership and cultivation of a plot of land drew workers away from participation in public life. As Samoilov noted:

*"The greatest part of my time away from the factory [was spent] working in the garden... This new situation... began to affect me in a very soporific manner, strongly distracting me from questions of politics... The whole arrangement created the illusion of peace and calm and a certain sense of*

*contentment with one's lot."* [121]

Not surprisingly, this type of worker found the SRs' populism, with its emphasis on 'the people' and on land, more to his liking than working-class social democracy.

As Shotman hinted, there was a certain generational element involved here. Kleinbort described the 'old-timers' (*starichki*) as 'workers who had served 12-15 years in one place. They are aloof, closed groups that have their privileges. Of course, they fear politics, any issues or aspirations. They live in the past; dream of their little home. They say: We lived better before'. [122] This was not, however, a characterisation of all older workers, though age and family responsibilities did foster a more cautious approach to life. It was rather the specific stratum of settled workers, who by virtue of long, continuous and faithful service in one factory had received certain privileges, amassed a little property and developed a sense of loyalty to the administration. The younger, militant elements, of course, looked on this with scorn and disgust. 'Try, try old-timers', wrote a worker of the Russko-Baltiiskii Wagon Factory. 'Soon, for your 25 years of service you will receive a watch and 25 rubles. But remember that if you get sick, they will kick you out like a worthless, squeezed-out lemon, like an old rag'. [123]

### **The Generational Factor**

This typology is not a rigid set of categories into which all manifestations of working-class consciousness neatly fall. Rather it represents basic tendencies within the working class, tendencies which were attenuated, strengthened or otherwise modified, depending on a host of more specific, local factors. Some of these will be treated in the following chapter, while others will be dealt with as they appear in the course of the study. But one that requires further development at the outset because of the exceptional role it played is that of age.

While there appears little basis for the assertion that generational conflict was a major factor underlying political differences in the working class, there can be no doubt that the younger workers, regardless of the industry in question or the level of skill, were among the most militant and radical elements while the older workers tended to be more cautious, reluctant to take risks. The reputation of the younger workers was such that a conference of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and representatives of the Petrograd Council of Metal Entrepreneurs decided in 1910 that workers under 21 could not take part in the general assemblies of the union. Bulkin, who was the union's secretary explained: 'The aim was to remove from union affairs the most fervent and active elements'. [124] The important role of the factory youth in February and October 1917 is also well documented. [125] 'As always', recalled one worker of the October period, 'the youth was in the front, cheerful, content'. [126] In the less skilled industries, such as textiles and chemicals, and also in the state factories, it was the youth that formed the militant nucleus and who were most attracted to the Bolsheviks. [127]

The youthfulness of the Bolshevik Petrograd organisation (with 28 000 workers in October 1917 - two thirds of the city's membership [128]) is striking. In L. V. Golovanova's incomplete, but representative, listing of Bolshevik district committee members in the first half of 1917, over one-third were under 27 years of age, 60 per cent were under 32 and only 18 percent were over 37: 74.1 percent of these were workers. [129] Since these were quite responsible, mostly elected positions, one can assume that the average age in the organisation as a whole was even lower. A. F. Smorodkina, a worker at the Optical Factory, recalled that

*"at that time there was still no Komsomol and not even a hint of the youth organisations that appeared later, such as 'Labour and Light'. Youths who had barely turned twenty were, at times, hardened fighters for the revolution. They joined the party at 17-18 or even 16 years, conducted*

*illegal underground activity, often sat out time in jail and exile. They had experience in political work among the masses.”* [[*Vogne revolyutsionnykh boev*, vol. II, p.37.]]

Naumov, a worker at the New Parviainen Machine-construction Factory was only 22 in 1917, yet had already been to jail and was a member of the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee, the Vyborg District Committee (both even before the February Revolution), a delegate to all three city party conferences in 1917, a factory delegate to the Petrograd Soviet and a member of the Central Soviet of Factory Committees.

The high level of literacy among young workers, a product of the development of the Russian elementary school system towards the end of the nineteenth century, was clearly a crucial factor in this activism. For the young generation of Petrograd workers was almost completely literate (see Table 2.5).

**TABLE 2.5**  
**Literacy of Petrograd metalworkers, by age and sex early 1918**

Age	Percent of literate workers		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>All</i>
Up to 20	98	81	94
21-30	95	70	89
31-40	90	47	85
41-50	84	48	82
50 +	51	21	74
<b>All</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>88</b>

Note: this table is based on a sample of 10 196 workers.

Source: *Metallist*, no. 6 (18 June 1918) p. 10.

The youth were avid readers, and what they read shaped much of their outlook on life. [130] Kleinbort found that over one half of the members of workers’ educational societies before the war were under 23. ‘You see old-timers only in exceptional cases’. [131] Similarly, membership in workers’ clubs was overwhelmingly under 25 years of age. [132]

The younger workers, of course, were less likely to be married and burdened with family responsibilities. And it was almost axiomatic in the Russian labour movement that married life discouraged activism. [133]

Over the ages, youth has been characterised by enthusiasm, rebelliousness and militancy; and the Russian working-class youth was not an exception. However, the direction these qualities took was by no means ‘innate’ or ‘instinctual’ but was determined by the youth’s socio-economic situation. Not only among the workers, but in all classes and strata the youth were at the forefront. A report from Revel in October 1917 stated that the movement to establish soviets of landless peasants was sluggish ‘because the youth, which is the most active element, has been called away into the army’. [134] In the peasant movement of 1906-7, it was also the younger generation that led the way. [135] The same was true of census society, where the youth of the Junker schools of Petrograd was really the only element prepared actively to take up arms against the soviets in October 1917.

To a large extent, the rise of the younger workers like Naumov to positions of responsibility was

facilitated by the departure of older activists from the movement. Of course, many members of the old guard remained. Shlyapnikov and Gvozdev were only the most prominent of them. But even among those who stayed, a substantial part preferred more moderate positions which did not correspond to the militant mood of the youth. The older activists were a different type of worker-*intelligent* than the generation that reached maturity after the revolution of 1905-7. The former, despite serious tensions, had developed under the guidance of the intelligentsia and in an atmosphere of sympathy (even if paternalistic), not only on the part of the intelligentsia, but of all liberal society. These workers learned from the intelligentsia, modelled themselves after it. After the 1905 revolution, however, society grew increasingly polarised along class lines, and the intelligentsia began to lose its enthusiasm for the workers. It 'ran headlong', wrote Kleinbort, 'and the working class found itself left to its own resources'. [136] This 'flight of the intelligentsia', as the workers saw it, produced a deep sense of betrayal. [137]

Thus, the new generation matured in conditions of relative isolation from society. Unlike their 'fathers', they could not feel that they were part of an all-national liberation movement. It was these conditions that fostered the 'conscious' metalworkers' irreconcilability towards liberal society. Only the printers, partly because they enjoyed a special relationship with the intelligentsia by virtue of the nature of their profession, retained something of the self-image of the old worker-*intelligent* as a part of the 'vital forces' of society.

Whether it was fatigue that came with age and the burdens of family life, the experiences of the abortive revolution of 1905 and the deep reaction that followed it, or apprehension at a movement developing more and more in isolation from the rest of society, the older workers, though not inactive, tended to take a back seat after 1907. Shlyapnikov, recalling an encounter with old comrades who had left the movement and were 'weighed down by life', wrote of the 'transfer of the red banner from the older to the more energetic generation of workers'. [138] In 1912, the Siemens and Shukert Electrotechnical Factory opened a new branch in the Moscow District of Petrograd. 'It is interesting', wrote Bulkin

*"that the to-called 'old' factory... where long-time settled, and highly skilled workers, predominated, followed the lead of and was continually pushed forward by, the now factory... where there were predominantly non-local, less skilled and younger workers. At the 'new factory', the workers were both more mobile and more active."* [139]

The Siemens Factory was but a microcosm of the shift in the centres of workers activism in Petrograd after 1905-7 from the old factory districts such as Nevskii and Petergof to the relatively newer machine-construction factories of the Vyborg District.

Clearly, the Petrograd working class was not all sewn of the same cloth. Though sharing a common socio-economic situation as factory wage-labourers, they were divided culturally in significant ways, the result of the differing natures of their work and social backgrounds. And yet, unity, that longed-for and elusive prize, was achieved at the crucial junctures of 1917 - in February and October. To explain how this came about requires a detailed study of the interaction between these cultural elements and the objective conditions and events of 1917. This is the task of the following chapters.

**Daive Mandel**

*To be continued...*

---

**P.S.**

\* Dans le cadre de la collection : "Les classiques des sciences sociales"

dirigée et fondée par Jean-Marie Tremblay,  
professeur de sociologie au Cégep de Chicoutimi  
Site web : <http://bibliotheque.uqac.ca/>

Une collection développée en collaboration avec la Bibliothèque  
Paul-Émile-Boulet de l'Université du Québec à Chicoutimi  
Site web: <http://classiques.uqac.ca>

Un document produit en version numérique par Mme Marcelle Bergeron, bénévole,  
professeure à la retraite de l'École Dominique-Racine de Chicoutimi, Québec  
courriel : <mailto:mabergeon@videotron.ca>

Édition complétée le 17 juillet, 2007 à Chicoutimi, Ville de Saguenay, Québec.

Autorisation accordée par l'auteur le 13 décembre 2006 de diffuser ce livre dans Les Classiques des sciences sociales.

Lien ultérieurement envoyé pour reproduction par l'auteur à ESSF. The footnotes have been renumbered.

\* David Mandel was born in Toronto in 1947. He took his BA at the Hebrew University and PhD at Columbia University, where he was appointed Senior Research Fellow in the Russian Institute (1977-8). In the course of his research for this book he spent a year in Leningrad as a Canada-USSR Exchange Scholar (1975). He has taught at the Centre for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Birmingham, the Departments of Political Science at McGill University and l'Université du Québec à Montréal, and the Department of Sociology at l'Université de Montréal. He is the author of several articles on the Russian revolutionary period and labour movement.

© M. David Mandel 1983

David Mandel. Courriels : [mandel.mark-david@uqam.ca](mailto:mandel.mark-david@uqam.ca) ou [dmandel.web.net](http://dmandel.web.net).

---

## Footnotes

[1] J. Keep, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1976) p. xiv.

[2] For an insightful critical review of the most recent work on the social history of the revolution, see R. Suny, 'Toward a Social History of the October Revolution', *American Historical Review*, vol. 88, no 1 (1983), pp. 31-52.

[3] C. Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1966) p.152.

[4] Keep, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 77 and 68.

[5] P. Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973) p.142.

[6] In L. H. Haimson (ed.), *The Mensheviks* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975) p. 7.

[7] See, for example, S. P. Melgunov, *The Bolshevik Seizure of Power* (Santa Barbara: ABC:CAO, 1972) pp. 22-3.

[8] See, for example, Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, and S. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

[9] See, for example G. L. Sobolev, *Revolutsionnoe soznanie rabochikh i soldat Petrograda v 1917g. Period dvoevlasdya* (M.-L., 1973) p. 182.

[10] A. Buzinov, *Za Nevskoi zastavoi* (M.-L.. 1930) p. 103.

[11] *Izvestiya* (3 Oct 1917); *Znamya truda* (4 October 1917).

[12] A. L. Popov, *Oktyabr'skii perevorot* (Petrograd, 1919).

[13] This section deals mainly with the metalworkers, who in 1917 accounted for 60 per cent of the industrial work force and the great majority of the skilled cadres. Apart from the printers (who are treated below in the section on the 'aristocracy'), the only other group with a relatively high skill profile were the woodworkers, who accounted for only 1.7 per cent of the industrial work force (see Table 3. 1).

[14] I. K. Naumov, *Zapiski vyborzhitsa* (L., 1933) p. 5.

[15] See Table 3.4.

[16] *Metallist*, no. 3 (1917) p. 3. The relationship between skill and type of production is confirmed by a comparison of the sex ratios of the work force. In 1917, in the 31 European provinces of Russia, there were on average 28.4 women workers for every 100 males in metalworking, but only 17.4 per 100 in machine construction. Female labour was almost universally unskilled. A survey of the Petrograd metalworking industry found the average skill level among males to be 54.2 (on a scale of 1-100) and among females 12.1. *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Rossii nakunune Velikoi Oktyabr'skoi Satsialisticheskoi revolyutsii* (henceforth cited as Ek. Pol.) (M.-L., 1957) vol. I, pp. 43-4; D. A. Chugaev (ed.), *Rabochii klass sovetskoi Rossii v pervyi god diktatury proletariata* (M., 1967) p.255.

[17] E. A. Kabo, *Ocherki rabochego byta* (M., 1928) p. 19.

[18] Buzinov, *Za. Nevskoi zastavoi*, pp. 27-8.

[19] *Metallist*, nos. 1-2 (1917).

[20] A. S. Shapovalov, *V bor'be za sotsializm* (M., 1934) p. 37.

[21] H. Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1974) pp. 110-11.

[22] Ya. S. Rozenfel'd and K. I. Klimenko, *Istoriya mashinostroeniya SSR* (M., 1961) p. 54.

[23] Shapovalov, *V bor'be za sotsializm*, p. 57.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 74. 'Varshavka' - in workers' parlance, the Workshops of the N.W. Railroad linking Petrograd and Warsaw.

[25] N. S-skii, *Psikhologiya russkogo robochego voprosa* (St Petersburg, 1911) pp. 12-14.

[26] A. Shlyapnikov, *Kanun semnadtsatogo goda* (M.-Petrograd, 1923) p. 5.

[27] H. L. Haimson, mimeographed copy of paper delivered at meeting of the American Historical Association (1973), entitled 'The Workers' Movement on the Eve of the First World War', p. 36.

[28] Shapovalov, *V bor'be za sotsializm*, p. 618.

[29] This topic can only be touched upon here. However, the memoirs of Shapovalov offer a moving and vivid illustration of the process of the gradual awakening of new needs, and with them, a growing commitment to the revolutionary struggle. Buzinov, too, gives a good account of the awakening that occurred in the Nevskii District during the revolution of 1905-7. See also, B. Ivanov, *Zapiski proshlogo* (M., 1919) and L. M. Kleinbort, *Ocherki rabochei intelligentsii* (Petrograd, 1923).

[30] Buzinov, *Za Nevskoi zastavoi* pp.101-3.

[31] *Vogne revolyutsionnykh boev*, vol. I (M., 1967) p. 95.

[32] Kleinbort, *Ocherki rabochei intelligentsii*, p. 16.

[33] *Rabochii kontrol'i natsionalizatsiya promyshlennyykh predpriyatii Petrograda v 1917-1919 gg.*, vol. I (L., 1949) p. 226 (henceforth cited as Rab. Kon.).

[34] Ibid., pp. 100-1.

[35] Cited in Sobolev, *Revolutsionnoe soznanie*, p. 65.

[36] Although I have tried to avoid the use of the term 'conscious' in my own writing on the workers because of the apparent value judgement it entails, one should note the strong consensus within the Russian labour movement, and, indeed, in society at large (S-skii also called the Petersburg workers 'the salt of the conscious working people' and singled out the skilled metalworkers for special mention) about which workers were the 'conscious' ones. Buzinov, an SR, contrasted the 'backward' unskilled textile and metalworkers to the 'conscious' skilled metalworkers. *Novaya zhizn*, the Menshevik-Internationalist paper, referred to the metalworkers as 'the most class conscious mass of Petrograd', and the Menshevik economist Bazarov noted that the unskilled labourers, as compared to the skilled workers, were not 'conscious or cultivated [intelligentnye]'. *Novaya zhizn* (8 and 9 Dec 1917)

[37] *Izvesdya* (20 June 1917).

[38] V. Malakhovskii, *Iz istorii krasnoi gvardii* (L., 1925) p. 25.

[39] M. G. Fleer, *Raboochee dvizhenie v gody voiny* (M.-L., 1925) pp. 222-3.

[40] Buzinov, *Za Nevskoi zastavoi* p. 126.

[41] P. V. Volobuev, *Proletariat i burzhuaziya Rossii v 1917 g.* (M., 1964) p. 238.

- [42] I. Skorinko, 'Vospominanie rabocheho ob Oktyabre', *Krasnaya letopis'*, no. 6 (1923) p. 145.
- [43] *Oktyabr'skaya revolyutsiya i fabzavkomy*, vol. I (M., 1927) p. 208 (henceforth cited as FZK).
- [44] E. Maevskii, *Kanun revolyutsii* (Petrograd, 1918) pp. 96-7.
- [45] *Rab. Kon.*, pp. 152-3; *Velikaya Okeyabr'skaya sotsialisticheskaya revolyutsiya. Dokumenty i materialy. Nakanune Okiyabr'skogo vooruzhennogo vosstaniya 1-24 oktyabrya 1917 g.* (M., 1962) p. 311 (henceforth cited as Dok. Nak.).
- [46] Haimson (ed.), *The Mensheviks*, p. 13.
- [47] Shlyapnikov, *Kanun semnadtsatogo*, p. 11.
- [48] A. Buiko, *Put' rabocheho* (M., 1934) pp. 94-5.
- [49] Z. V. Stepanov, *Rabochie Petrograda v period podgotovki i provedeniya Okiyabr'skogo vooruzhennogo vosstaniya* (L., 1973) p. 129.
- [50] According to the industrial census of August 1918, 84.2 per cent of the industrial working class of Petrograd was Russian. Poles constituted 5.8 per cent, Lithuanians and Letts 2.6 per cent, Finns 2.3 per cent, Germans 0.5 per cent and Jews 0.3 per cent. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- [51] Izrail' Moiseevich Kogan, for example, was elected by the workers of the Skorokhod Shoe Factory to the Petrograd Soviet on 17 December 1917. *Leningradskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Oktyabr'skoi revolyutsii i sotsialisticheskogo stroitel'stva, fond 7384, opis' 7, delo 21, list 80* (henceforth cited as LGAORSS).
- [52] Fleer, *Rabochee dvizhenie*, p. 209. In Moscow, by contrast, workers participated in a strike against firms with German ties. Shlyapnikov, *Kanun semnadtsatogo*, p. 184.
- [53] N. I. Potresov, *Posmertnyi sbornik proizvedenii*, pp. 230-42, cited in Haimson, *The Mensheviks*, p. 13.
- [54] V. Perazich, *Tekstily Leningrada v 1917g.* (L., 1927) pp. 81-2, 86.
- [55] See, for example, T. Shatilova, *Ocherk istorii Leningradskogo soyuza khimikov 1907-1918* (L., 1927) p. 10.
- [56] *Istoriya Leningradskogo soyuza poligraficheskogo proizvodstva*, vol. 1 (L., 1925) p. 48.
- [57] S-skii, *Psikhologiya russkogo*, p. 14.
- [58] *Vogne revolyutsionnykh boev* vol. II (M., 1971) pp. 34-5.
- [59] See, for example, A. E. Suknovalov et al., *Fabrika 'Krasnoe znamya'* (L., 1968) pp. 98 -9; *Rabotnitsa* is replete with such accounts.
- [60] Suknovalov, *Fabrika*, pp. 58-80 *passim*.

[61] Kabo, *Ocherki rabocheho byta*, p. 127.

[62] *Rabotnitsa* (19 April 1914).

[63] Ibid. (16 March 1914), p. 2.

[64] Ibid. (4 May 1914), pp. 12-13.

[65] Kabo, *o cherki rabocheho byta*, p. 132.

[66] *Rabotnitsa* (16 March 1914).

[67] Ibid. (16 March 1914) p. 10.

[68] Ibid. (19 April 1914).

[69] About one-half of Petrograd's 30 000-40 000 needleworkers worked in small workshops sewing underwear and uniforms for the army. The others worked at home in a putting-out system. See Table 3.2 and *Velikaya oktyabr'skaya sotsialisticheskaya revolyutsiya. Dokumenty i materialy. Okiyabr'skoe vooruzhennoe vosstanie v Petrograde* (M., 1957; p. 122 (henceforth cited as Dok. Okt.).

[70] Rashin, *Formirovanie rabocheho*, p. 601.

[71] Kabo, *Ocherki rabocheho byta*, pp. 30, 36, 39 and passim.

[72] See, for example, K. Shelavin, *Ocherki russkoi revolyutsii 1917 g.*, part I (Petrograd, 1923) p. 60 and *Novaya zhizn'* (8 Dec 1917), editorial by Bazarov.

[73] Kleinbort, *Ocherki rabochei intelligentsii*, p. 84.

[74] At the 20 March session of the Workers' Section of the Petrograd Soviet, one of the delegates from the Petrograd District stated: "You know that there are two categories of workers at the factories: the lower-labourers and women, and the skilled workers, who receive rather decent remuneration corresponding to the high cost of living. It is not a question of those workers who receive a good wage; they are secure. But at yesterday's district meeting it turned out that at many plants they receive from 1.20 rubles to 1.30 rubles a day. In such conditions it is totally impossible to live in any human fashion." (LGAORSS, f.1000, op. 73, d.12, 1.15.)

[75] Shatilova, *Ocherk istorii* p. 10.

[76] S-skii, *Psikhologiya russkogo*, p. 41.

[77] *Novaya zhizn'* (8 Dec 1917).

[78] Kabo, *Ocherki rabocheho byta*, pp. 132 and 223.

[79] *Novaya zhizn'* (1 Aug 1917). See also ibid. (8 Dec 1917) for Bazarov's complaint that the unskilled masses, the war-time workers, failed to see the necessity of raising productivity, in contrast to the skilled workers, the 'genuine proletariat'. According to the August 1918 industrial

census, 31.1 per cent of all factory workers in European Russia had owned land before the October revolution, with 20.9 per cent actually working it through members of their family in the village. In the more skilled printing and machine-construction industries, these figures were 17.4 and 9.8 and 24.1 and 13.9 respectively. In needlework too, they were relatively low – 23.8 and 17.1. In contrast, 29.3 per cent in metalworking owned land, with 19.6 working it. In cotton, the figures were even higher – 33.6 and 20.4 respectively. Rashin, *Formirovanie rabachego*, p. 573.

[80] C. W. Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970) p. 6.

[81] See, for example E. J. Hobsbawm, 'Peasants and Politics', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. I (1973) p. 13; and B. Galeskii, *Mopi i zavod relnika* (Warsaw, 1963) p. 49, cited in T. Shanin (ed.), *Peasants and Peasant Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971) p. 254. Galeskii has observed: 'Because the farmer's produce is essential and, at the lowest level, sufficient for human existence, the labour of the farmer is necessary for the existence of the society as a whole; but the existence of society is not to the same extent necessary for the existence of the farmer'. Ibid.

[82] *Izvestiya* (3 Aug 1917).

[83] Kleinbort, *Ocherki rabochei intelligentsii* pp. 64, 67.

[84] Ibid., p. 70.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Kabo, *Ocherki rabochego byta*, p. 222.

[87] Sutti Ortiz, 'Reflections on the Concept of "Peasant Culture" and "Peasant Cognitive System"', in Shanin, *Peasants and Peasant Society*, p. 330.

[88] According to one student of the Russian peasantry, periods of peasant unrest in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries clustered around such external events as the tentative agrarian reforms of the late 1840s, the Crimean War, the Russo-Turkish War and the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. R. H. Scott, 'The Russian Peasantry in the First and Second Dumas', mimeographed seminar paper, Russian Institute, Columbia University (1973) pp. 10- 11.

[89] Buzinov, *Za Nevskoi zastavoi*, pp. 104-5.

[90] Ivanov, *Zapiski proshlogo* p.63.

[91] Ibid.

[92] F. A. Bulkin, *Na zare profdvizheniya* (1924) p. 309.

[93] *Izvestiya* (3 Aug 1917).

[94] F. N. Samoilov, *Vospominaniya ob ivanovo-vozhnesenskom rabochem dvizhenii* part II (M., 1924) pp. 65-88 passim.

[95] Like the term 'conscious worker', 'worker aristocracy' was used by Bolsheviks and Mensheviks alike to denote the same type of worker. For example, the Menshevik-Internationalist, Osokin, referring to part of the printers, wrote of 'the worker aristocracy, to a

significant degree detached from the masses, [that] has remained in the ranks of Menshevism'. *Novaya zhizn'* (7 Dec 1917).

[96] This is especially true of the printer element of the 'aristocracy' which in Petrograd in 1912-14 was second only to the machine-construction workers in level of participation in the economic and political strike movement. See for example, *Byulleten' Obshchestva zavodchikov i fabrikantov Moskovskogo promyshlennogo raiona, Rabochee dvizhenie yanvar'-mai 1912*, pp. 13, 15, 22.

[97] The printers were in fact not a homogeneous group, neither in terms of their material situation nor their political culture. For the present purposes 'printer' is used more or less synonymously with 'typesetters' (one-third of all Petrograd printing workers in 1905), as the numerically and ideologically dominant group that set the tone in the printing plants. *Istoriya Leningradskogo soyuza rabochikh poligraficheskogo proizvodstva*. (L., 1925) p. 13.

[98] T. Shatilova, *Krasnaya letopis'*, no. 2 (1927) p. 187 and *Istoriya rabochikh Leningrada*, vol. I (L., 1972) p. 444.

[99] In fact, by the start of the war, unemployment among printers reached 20-25 per cent, and between 1 Jan 1914 and 1 Jan 1917 their numbers in Petrograd declined from 23 000 to 19 000, while the proportion of women in the industry rose from 15.1 per cent to 33.7 per cent, indicating a serious decline in the overall level of skills. A. Tikhanov, 'Rabochie pechatniki v Petrograde (1904 -1914)', in *Materialy po istorii professional'nogo dvizheniya v Rossii*, vol. III (M., 1925) p. 114, and Rashin, *Formirovanie rabochego*, p. 83.

[100] *Istoriya Leningradskogo soyuza rabochikh poligraf*, p. 14.

[101] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[102] *Istoriya Leningradskogo soyuza rabochikh poligraf*, p. 13.

[103] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[104] *Materialy po statistike truda Severnoi oblasti*, vyp. I, p. 10. In fact two-thirds of all Petrograd industrial workers were employed in only 38 factories of over 2000 workers each. Stepanov, *Rabochie Petrograda*, p. 32.

[105] *Istoriya Leningradskogo soyuza rabochikh poligraf*, p. 34.

[106] Most larger factories in early March were in turmoil, the workers trying to win new economic demands. The eight-hour day, which was the major economic demand of the February revolution, had been instituted in the larger factories on the workers' own initiative as they returned following the general strike (see below, Chapter 4). Cited in R. J. Devlin, 'Petrograd Workers and Workers' Factory Committees 1917' (PhD Dissertation, SUNY Binghamton, 1976, mimeographed draft), Ch. II p. 9 (emphasis my own).

[107] Tikhanov, 'Rabochie pechatniki', p. 121.

[108] *Istoriya Leningradskogo soyuza rabochikh poligraf*, p. 28; Tikhanov, 'Rabochie pechatniki', p. 117.

[109] Tikhanov, *ibid.* pp. 113,131

[110] *Pervyi legal'nyi Peterbugskii komitet RSDRP (b) v 1917g.* (M.-L., 1927) p. 111 (henceforth cited as Peka).

[111] Tikhanov, 'Rabochie pechatniki' pp. 115, 131-2.

[112] *Doneseniya komissarov Petrogradskogo Voенno-revol'yutsionnogo komiteta* (M., 1957) p. 205. Shotman similarly recalled a large number of workers at the Obukhovskii Factory living in state apartments with two rooms and a kitchen. A. Shotman, *Kak iz iskry vozgorelos' plamya* (L., 1935) p. 14. See also L. S. Ganichev, *Na Aptekarskom ostrove* (L., 1967) p.143.

[113] Ganichev, *Na Aptekarshom*, p. 128.

[114] Tikhanov, 'Rabochie pechatnild', p. 122.

[115] Shotman, *Kak iz iskry*, p. 14.

[116] A. Buntilov, *Za pechatnym stolom* (M., 1923) pp. 8-9, 15. See also Stepanov, *Rabochie Petrograda*, p. 31, and *Rossitiskii proletariat. Oblik, bor'ba gegemoniya* (M., 1970) pp. 14-15, note 21.

[117] *Izvestiya* (27 Oct 1917).

[118] V. Kukushkin, *Sestroretskaya dinastiya* (L., 1959); and 'Na Sestroretskom zavode', in *Batsiony revolyutsii*, vol. I (L., 1967).

[119] Shotman, *Kak iz iskry*, p. 14.

[120] *Novaya zhizn'* (15 Dec 1917).

[121] Samoilov, *Vospominaniya*, pp. 66, 89, 90.

[122] Kleinbort, *Ocherki rabochei intelligentsii* p. 81.

[123] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

[124] Bulkin, *Na zareprofdvizheniya*, p. 238.

[125] See, for example, E. N. Burdzhlov, *Vtoraya russkaya revolyutsiya* (M., 1967) and A. Startsev, 'K voprosu o sostave rabochei krasnoi gvardii Petrograda', *Istoriya SSSR*, no. 1 (1962) p. 141.

[126] P. F. Kudelli (ed.), *Leningradskie rabochie v bor'be za vlast'sovetov v 1917g.* (L., 1924) p. 112.

[127] See, for example, Suknovalov, *Fabrika 'Krasnoe znamya*, pp. 63, 77, 85; S. Alliluev, 'V dni Oktyabrya na Elektricheskoi stantsii imeni 1886', *Krasnaya letopie*, no. 6 (1923) p. 327; T. Shatilova, *Ocherk istorii soyuza khimikov 1909-1918* (L., 1927) p. 28; Perazich, *Tekstily Leningrada*, p. 91.

[128] Stepanov, *Rabochie Petrograda*, p. 46.

[129] L. V. Golovanova, 'Raionnye komitety RSDRP(b) Petrograda v 1917 g.' (Candidate's dissertation, Leningrad State University, 1974) Appendix, Table 7.

[130] Haimson, mimeographed draft of forthcoming study on Russian labour, first of four volume series, *Russian Society and Politics on the Eve of the First World War* (to be published by W. W. Norton), Ch. III. See also *Rech'* (3 May 1912), and *Pravda* (31 Aug 1912), cited in *ibid.*, pp. 18 and 39.

[131] Kleinbort, *Ocherki rabochei intelligentsii*, p. 30.

[132] I. D. Levin, 'Rabochie kluby v Petrograde (1907-1914)', *Materialy po istorii professional'nogo dvizheniya v Rossii, sbornik III* (M., 1925) pp. 100-2.

[133] Shapovalov, *V borbe za sotsializm*, p. 121; A. K. Tsvetkov-Prosveshchenskii, *Mezhdue dvumya revolyutsiyami* (M.-L., 1933) p. 87.

[134] Dok. Nak., p. 306.

[135] Scott, 'The Russian Peasantry', p. 20.

[136] Kleinbort, *Ocherki rabochei intelligentsii*, p. 127.

[137] D. Mandel, 'The Intelligentsia and the Working Class in 1917', *Critique*, no. 14 (1981), pp. 68-70.

[138] Shlyapnikov, *Kanun semnadtsatogo*, p. 188.

[139] Bulkin, *Na zare profdvizheniya*, p. 248.