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At the end of 1917, the Bolsheviks appeared to enjoy considerable social support. They were perceived as the proponents of soviet power; support for the Bolshevik party meant support for soviet power. The majority of workers (especially those in large industrial centers) identified with the Bolsheviks because they promoted greater workers' control at the workplace. The Bolsheviks were perceived as uncompromising defenders of workers' interests. For the peasants, the Bolsheviks represented a party of black repartition, that is a party that encouraged peasant land seizures. For the soldiers, the Bolsheviks were a party that promised to stop the war. For the Kronstadt sailors, the Bolsheviks exemplified direct rule from below, the rule of soviets. All of these diverse constituencies converged in their support for the Bolshevik party at the end of 1917, each for a different reason. As Leopold Haimson put it, what united them all was a movement against superordinate authority, the rule of propertied and educated classes in Russian society.¹ This voluntary support for the Bolshevik program did not, and could not, reflect popular attitudes to the Bolshevik rule, which was just beginning. Social, political, and economic conditions in the country continued to change and the relationship between the Bolshevik party and its October constituency reflected these changes.

By February 1921 large segments of workers, peasants, soldiers, and sailors are believed to have ceased supporting the Bolsheviks as evidenced by the strikes in Moscow, Petrograd, Khar'kov, and other cities in that month, and by the Kronstadt uprising.² How did the relationship between the Bolsheviks and their October supporters develop between October 1917 and February 1921? Israel Getzler's study has shown that the Kronstadt sailors had maintained their commitment to what he calls "anchor square democracy." They were still for soviet power but not for Bolshevik dictatorship; hence their slogan was "Za Sovety bez Bolshevikov!" The sailors' change of attitude to the Bolsheviks did not occur overnight. The first acts of defiance occurred in May 1918, followed by an attempted rebellion in October 1918, rebellions in summer 1919, and mounting unrest in 1920 leading up to the explosion in February 1921. Other studies have pointed to a similar pattern: Bolshevik attempts to replace popular rule (based on free elections in 1917) with dictatorial state authority led to popular protests and uprisings, such as the uprising in the metal industry towns of Izhevsk and Votkinsk in August 1918, peasant uprisings of Makhno and Grigoriev in the Ukraine in spring and summer of 1919 and into 1921, and, of course, uprisings in the Tambov

1. For the Bolsheviks as defenders of the workers' interest, see David Mandel, *The Petrograd Workers and the Soviet Seizure of Power: From the July Days 1917 to July 1918* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984) and S. A. Smith, *Red Petrograd: Revolution in the Factories, 1917-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Analysis of the encouragement of land seizures is in Marc Ferro, *La Revolution de 1917: Octobre, naissance d'une société* (Aubier: Montaigne, 1976), and analyses of soldiers are in Allan K. Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Old Army and the Soldiers' Revolt* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), and Leopold Haimson, "The Problem of Social Identities in Early Twentieth Century Russia," *Slavic Review* 47 (Spring, 1988), 1-21, here 8.

2. Evan Mawdsley believes that the Kronstadt uprising was triggered by the strikes in Petrograd; see idem, *The Russian Civil War* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 245.

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area, which started in the summer of 1919 and also went on well into 1921.³ Other studies point out support for the Bolsheviks among many workers and peasants during the height of the civil war, popular unrest in the Urals, the Ukraine, Kronstadt, and Tambov notwithstanding. Large strata of workers and peasants still chose to support the Bolsheviks in 1919 during the height of the civil war with the Whites.⁴ Some categories of workers did side with Reds or Whites; Red Guard workers' detachments fought in the war, but the Izhevsk workers sided with the Whites. The overall situation was very complex. Much of the political behavior of the period does not clearly fit into neatly conceptualized categories. This article will examine the circumstantial evidence regarding workers' political protest in 1919 and will interpret behavior patterns in the interaction between the Communist authorities and the workers.

The October coalition did not last long. As has been recently pointed out, the army—by far the largest component of Bolshevik supporters—disintegrated in the first months of 1918. Once in their native villages, demobilized soldiers were absorbed into the village community and began to identify with the economic interests of the countryside. Grain requisitioning generated an escalating number of peasant rebellions in the summer and fall of 1918.⁵ The Bolshevik honeymoon with the workers likewise did not endure. Nationalization of the banks and disruption of credit, transport, and management all brought the Russian economy and industry to a severe crisis. Dissatisfaction among the workers was compounded by the Bolsheviks' attempts to control them.

Most protest resolutions in the spring of 1918 demanded free elections to the soviets and free trade unions, independent from the government. Workers perceived the Bolsheviks as having departed from the principles of popular self-rule. The Bolshevik bans on strikes, independent unions, and on non-Bolshevik workers' organizations amounted to the establishment of the one party dictatorship. Labor unrest in 1918 included large segments of the working class.⁶ Mensheviks and SRs tried to organize and lead these protest movements. They won city soviet elections in Tula, Iaroslavl', Kostroma, Sormovo, Briansk, Izhevsk, and other industrial centers—in the majority of provincial capitals of European Russia where soviet power actually existed. The Bolsheviks disbanded all of these newly elected soviets by force.⁷ The most persistent and radically anti-Bolshevik protests in 1918 involved armaments and locomotive and

3. Israel Getzler, *Kronstadt: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). On the events in Izhevsk and the Urals, see Mikhail Bernshtam, ed., *Ural i prikam'e, noiabr' 1917–ianvar' 1919: Dokumenty i materialy* (Paris: YMCA, 1982). For the other uprisings see Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Oliver H. Radkey, *The Unknown Civil War in Soviet Russia: A Study of the Green Movement in the Tambov Region, 1920–1921* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1976).

4. Sheila Fitzpatrick wrote of "active support of urban working class" for the Bolsheviks in her *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 70; see also Thomas F. Remington, *Building Socialism in Bolshevik Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1984), 101. On the other hand, William Chase acknowledged that "mass worker unrest" took place in Moscow but mistakenly saw it as beginning only at the end of 1920, after the victory over the Whites; William J. Chase, *Workers, Society, and the Soviet State: Labor and Life in Moscow 1918–1929* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 11.

5. Haimson, "The Problem of Social Identities," 13, discusses the reabsorption of the soldiers. Martyn Latsis counted 245 peasant uprisings in 1918 and 99 in 1919 in his *Dva goda bor'by na vnutrennem fronte* (Moscow, 1920), 75.

6. William Rosenberg, "Russian Labor and Bolshevik Power after October," *Slavic Review* 44 (Summer 1985): 213–239.

7. Vladimir Brovkin, *The Mensheviks after October: Socialist Opposition and the Rise of the Bolshevik Dictatorship* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), 126–160.

rail industries across the central industrial region (Petrograd, Sormovo, Tula, and Bryansk). In these same centers the majority of workers had voted for the Bolsheviks in 1917. In most cases the pattern of workers' political behavior was the same as it had been in 1917. Political struggle was organized and led by party activists and grievances were expressed in political resolutions. Protests varied in intensity from petitions to demands and escalated to strikes, and in some cases to uprisings.

By 1919 the political situation in the country had changed profoundly. Whites consolidated their forces and launched offensives led by Admiral Kolchak in the east and in the south by General Denikin. In this period of profound polarization, workers' relationship with the Bolsheviks and the opposition socialist parties entered a new stage. First, Bolshevik ideology required that the party demonstrate workers' political support. After all, the party was acting in the name of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Second, the all-out civil war required even further centralization of the state apparatus. Third, the Bolshevik government needed to mobilize and recruit as many supporters as possible. Enhancement of workers' political involvement went along with the strengthening of centralized apparatus.⁸ On the one hand, the Bolsheviks sought to enhance worker participation; on the other, they imposed dictatorial control over them. This combination of participation and control was the essence of the mobilizing nature of the Bolshevik regime. The Bolsheviks relied on neither all the workers nor workers as a class, but rather on workers as a social milieu from which administrative personnel could be recruited. Worker activists at the factories and plants were turned into transmission belts implementing party policy.⁹ As elections in 1918 showed, these activists were a well-placed minority with real power over other workers.

The study of workers' political attitudes during the civil war is a difficult undertaking. Workers seldom recorded their views systematically; and, when they did, these views seldom became known. After July 1918 and except for a short period from January to April 1919, no opposition press existed. Workers' political preferences published in the Communist press should be treated with caution since party cells systematically portrayed their own resolutions, prepared in advance, as genuine workers' views.¹⁰ Political aspirations cannot be easily deduced from the voting record in the soviets either, because the latter were packed with representatives of government-controlled agencies. The share of delegates elected by popular vote was so small in most cases that their voices could not be heard. Elections to local bodies, like factory committees and trade union boards, are a better barometer of popular attitudes, but data on such elections are sporadic and inconclusive. The paucity of information was acknowledged by the international Labour Office: "Difficult as it is to obtain information on labor disputes after the Communist revolution, it is still more so, if not well nigh impossible to find out anything about strikes."¹¹

8. This thesis is put forward by Theda Skocpol, "Social Revolutions and Mass Military Mobilization," *World Politics* 40 (January 1988): 149.

9. John Keep describes this process in great detail in *The Russian Revolution: A Study in Mass Mobilization* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), 337, 152, 471.

10. *Pravda* editors were concerned that workers were censored by local party bosses. They cited numerous examples of workers' not daring to write to *Pravda* without authorization from the local party cells. This concern led to the title of the article: "Mogut li rabochie sotrudnicat' v Pravde," *Pravda*, 4 February 1919, 2. Unless otherwise indicated, all Russian-language periodicals cited in this article were published in Moscow.

11. International Labour Office, *The Trade Union Movement in Soviet Russia*, Studies and Reports, series A; Industrial Relations, no. 26 (Geneva: ILO, 1927), 168.

Workers expressed their views in a variety of ways. They wrote letters describing conditions at their factories to the Bolshevik and opposition press. They drafted their own resolutions at meetings summoned by Communist propagandists, petitioned local authorities to address specific grievances, and they went on strike. As a last resort, they took up arms and participated in uprisings. Workers' petitions, strikes, and riots can be seen as the three successive stages. We can survey available circumstantial evidence to find information about the dates, places, and types of workers involved in strikes; grievances and demands presented; the role of the army and the local population; the role of the socialist opposition parties; and, last, the Bolshevik response. Our information focuses on European Russia—the area the Bolsheviks claimed to have controlled.¹²

Recent studies on the social composition of the labor force show a dramatic decline in the big cities.¹³ Industry had begun to fall apart in 1917. This decomposition reached truly catastrophic proportions during the winter of 1918–1919. Shortages of electricity, raw materials, food, and skilled workers plagued industry and brought it to a virtual standstill. Two main groups left the city: the semi-urban, unskilled workers, recent arrivals from the countryside, who went back, and the young, mostly single, politically active, skilled workers who went into the Red Army and Bolshevik administration. The core of the remaining workers were family men, long-time residents of Moscow. Diane Koenker concludes that the social characteristics of these workers made them less likely to support the Bolsheviks. These workers had nowhere to go; they had been in the cities in 1917 and 1918 and were “veteran urban proletarians,” the skilled workers of Moscow.¹⁴

The workers who remained at the factories in 1919 were also those who for one reason or another had not moved upward under the conditions set by the Bolshevik party and the civil war. Division between those who did and those who did not move up was one of the main sources of discontent in 1919. Most reports in both the Bolshevik and Menshevik press convey the atmosphere of discontent among the Moscow workers in early 1919. A Communist worker, writing in *Izvestiia*, saw the cause of dissatisfaction in privileges for the Communists; the author described the workers as a “gray and embittered mass.”¹⁵ Other Communists were alarmed that workers did not understand or support Communist objectives. “It is bitter to hear how workers abuse Soviet authorities. . . . They say it was better under the Tsar.”¹⁶ Another Communist claimed that his factory had always been and still was a refuge for the Mensheviks. A worker from the Duks factory complained that “the majority of workers had counterrevolutionary views.” A Communist printer wrote that the printers were siding with the “counterrevolution,” by which he meant with the Mensheviks.¹⁷

Such assessments from below of workers' attitudes by Communist activists find

12. I have not included the Ukraine since such an investigation would have necessitated discussing other forces: the Whites, the Ukrainian independence forces, Cossacks, Jews, Russian settlers, Bolsheviks, and an array of independent peasant formations, like that of Nestor Makhno, that dominated political struggle in the Ukraine in 1919.

13. Rosenberg, “Russian Labor and Bolshevik Power after October,” 213–239.

14. Diane Koenker discusses the composition of Moscow workers as a social group in “Urbanization and Deurbanization in the Russian Revolution and Civil War,” *Journal of Modern History* 57 (September, 1985): 442, 437, and 443.

15. “Rabochaia zhizn' pora opomnitsia,” *Izvestiia*, 5 April 1919, 4, and “O vystuplenii Spiridonovoi,” *Pravda*, 6 February 1919, 4.

16. “Privykli chuzhimi rukami zhar zagrebat': Presnenskii mekhanicheskii zavod,” *Pravda*, 18 February 1919, 4.

17. The Menshevik refusal is in “Na zavode Gracheva,” *Izvestiia*, 16 April 1919, 4; on the Duks

their counterpart in assessments from above. Grigorii Zinoviev was explicit in his speech at the Eighth Party Congress in March 1919: "Truly we cannot hide from ourselves the fact that in some places the word *commissar* has become a swear word. A man in a leather jacket [i.e. a Chekist] has become hateful, as they say now in Perm'. To hide this would be laughable. We must face the truth."¹⁸ A curious and rather revealing episode took place at one Petrograd rally. Anatolii Lunacharskii spoke for the Bolsheviks. Suddenly, someone shouted from the floor, "take off your fur coat!" Apparently it was cold in the hall and Lunacharskii was comfortable with his fur coat on. Lunacharskii was whistled at in derision and was forced to leave.¹⁹ *Pravda* acknowledged that the speeches of Mariia Spiridonova, the leader of the Left SRs who had been just released from prison in late 1918, and of Fedor Dan, a Menshevik leader, met with the approval of workers.²⁰ At workers' rallies opposition speakers who condemned privileges for the commissars were applauded. In a private letter, a Menshevik leader, B. O. Bogdanov, who in 1918 was one of the founders of the *uponomochennye* movement, described his impressions of workers' attitudes after the Mensheviks were legalized in January 1919:

Since yesterday we have finally begun party work . . . I shall still have to attend meetings as in the good old times. In fact I have already begun doing so and I must confess, very successfully. I have never had such a triumph. Of course this is due not so much to my oratorical talents as to the mood of the workers. There is great animosity towards the Bolsheviks. As soon as a Bolshevik mounts the platform, cries: "Clear out!" greet him, but when a Menshevik appears, before he has time to open his mouth, the audience begins to applaud.²¹

Similarly, the SR paper reported that at a workers' rally of Riazan' railway line a "forest of hands was raised for the SR-sponsored resolution" and only ten voted for the Bolshevik. Reporting on elections to the factory committee of the Guzhon plant in Moscow, *Izvestiia* said that workers there did not let the Communists speak and elected a factory committee consisting of "saboteurs," that is, members of opposition parties.²²

Since the summer of 1918, the Mensheviks, SRs, and Left SRs had not been able openly to address workers' rallies. They had been expelled from the soviets and many of their leaders had been arrested. Under the short-lived period of free speech in January 1919 they presented their critique of the Bolshevik authorities. Workers did not seem to distinguish the nuances between the positions of the opposition parties and

factory see "Rabochaia zhizn'," *Pravda*, 5 July 1919, 4; on the printers, "Belogvardeiskie vykhodki," *Pravda*, 16 March 1919, 4.

18. *Vos'moi s'ezd RKP(b) stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1959), 220.

19. "Bol'shoi miting v narodnom dome," *Petrogradskaia pravda*, 14 March 1919, 2.

20. "O vystuplenii Marii Spiridonovoi," and "K vystupleniiu Dana na fabrike Dement," *Pravda*, 4 February 1919, 4.

21. This letter was seized by the Cheka when it raided the office of the Menshevik paper *Vsegda vpered* and it was published in "Tupomiie ili prestupnaia demagogiia," *Petrogradskaia pravda*, 4 March 1919, 1. A translation was published as "Workmen against Bolsheviks" in *Bulletins of the Russian Liberation Committee*, no. 7, 5 April 1919. The Russian Liberation Committee was a group of Russian exiles in London who published some reprints from the press of the Soviet Union, as well as their own political opinions. Their views appeared to be close to those of the Kadet party.

22. "V perovskikh masterskikh," *Delo naroda*, no. 9, 29 March 1919; "Rabochaia zhizn' sabotazhnyi zavkom," *Izvestiia*, 22 June 1919, 4; and "Moskovskii metallicheskii zavod, byvshii Guzhona," *Izvestiia*, 1 July 1919, 4.

applauded all opposition speakers with equal enthusiasm. Spiridonova seems to have enjoyed a particularly enthusiastic reception. Her fiery speeches and uncompromising condemnation of Cheka atrocities during the Red Terror drew enormous crowds.²³ Communists reported that workers referred to Spiridonova as *bogoroditsa* or simply *matushka*. The main themes of her speeches were well reflected in an underground Left SR leaflet that circulated in Petrograd in early 1919: "Where is the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the working peasantry? It has been supplanted by the dictatorship of the Bolshevik CC governing with the assistance of Extraordinary Commissions and punitive detachments." The leaflet went on to say that the soviets were no longer elected in Soviet Russia:

Where are the promised rights of elections? At the factories and plants, at the ships and railroads the self-appointed Bolshevik commissars are sitting! What has become of freedom of speech and of the press. . . . The laboring classes are not allowed to congregate. . . . They may not utter a word against the Bolsheviks under penalty of being arrested and shot.²⁴

In *Pravda* Communists wrote that the masses' lack of political consciousness made it necessary "to shut the mouth" of Spiridonova and others. They labeled her speeches White Guardist propaganda and treason. Mensheviks, Left SRs, and SRs were called traitors, social Kolchakovites, Black Hundreds, and monarchists.²⁵

The power of city and provincial leaders was well protected by 1919, but party functionaries were still often defeated at elections to factory committees. Oppositionists often provoked the insecurity and anger of these local functionaries. One Bolshevik factory committee member, for example, related in *Pravda* that a Menshevik worker had incited other workers to elect a new committee. While such a course of action was not illegal, the author presented the very campaign to elect a new committee as tantamount to an anti-Soviet conspiracy.²⁶ Clearly, the Bolshevik authorities would rather have dealt with a loyal Communist in charge than with an opposition-led factory committee. Just as the newly elected soviets were disbanded in the spring of 1918, so the newly elected opposition-led factory committees were being disbanded in the spring of 1919. A new campaign against the opposition parties began to unfold as workers' protests gained momentum in the spring of 1919.

Workers' own resolutions and actions provide a more comprehensive picture of their political preferences. As with most of the strikes, the one at the Aleksandrovskii railway workshops at the end of February broke out spontaneously. The immediate cause for the strike was that workers had not been paid 40 percent of their February wages. The rally drew 3,000 workers.²⁷ They did not let the representative of the au-

23. For the Bolshevik commentary on Spiridonova's speeches, see "Aresty sredi Levykh Eserov," *Pravda*, 13 February 1919, 3.

24. "Indictment of Bolshevism. Russian Socialists' Proclamation," *Times* (London) 10 April 1919, 12.

25. E. Iaroslavskii, "Chego khotiat Levye Esery," *Pravda*, 6 February 1919; Tverdovskii, "Snova avantiura," *Pravda*, 13 February 1919, 1; "Eshche o zavode, byvshii Guzhona," *Izvestiia*, 1 July 1919, 4. The Mensheviks are referred to as the Black Hundreds and the SRs are likened to the White Guards in "Rabochnaia zhizn'," *Pravda*, 16 March 1919, 4. Kolchakovites were supporters of Admiral Kolchak.

26. S. Petropavlovskii, "Prekrasnaia taktika," *Pravda*, 11 March 1919, 4.

27. "Iz professional'nogo i rabocheho dvizheniia," *Rabochii internacional*, no. 1, 11 March 1919. This paper was published by the Menshevik Central Committee; this first issue was the only one that came out. The paper was immediately shut down by the authorities, and was the last issue of a legally published Menshevik newspaper in Moscow.

thorities speak and demanded immediate pay and food rations equal to that of the Red Army soldiers. The Bolsheviks agreed to this demand. The workers were ready to resume work and it looked as if the matter had been settled. On that same night, however, the Cheka had arrested the leaders of the proposed strike. Workers struck again and demanded immediate release of their comrades. What had begun as an economic protest turned into a political strike. An official investigation into the causes of the strike showed that some representatives of Soviet authorities had distributed food and apartments unlawfully. *Pravda* held that this had made workers angry and enemies were using these actions to incite strikes.²⁸ The situation was aggravated by the elections to the Moscow Soviet at the end of March—the Aleksandrovskii railway workshops elected only Mensheviks and SRs; Bolshevik candidates were defeated. At the end of March, the Bolsheviks occupied the Aleksandrovskii workshops, evicted strikers by force, and temporarily closed the workshops. All workers were fired and an announcement that new workers were to be hired was published in *Pravda*. The account in *Izvestiia* spoke of the possibility of bloodshed. According to opposition sources, some workers actually were killed. In the workshops “Kontr-revoliutsionnye elementy,” socialists, were purged, regardless of whether they had been in the strike. The Revolutionary Tribunal, chaired by the Cheka functionary, Iakov Peters, tried twelve workers. The strikers were charged with “podgotovka zabastovki vooruzhennogo vosstaniia protiv sovetskoi vlasti.” All twelve were workers of long standing, some of them members of the Social Democratic or Socialist Revolutionary parties. All workers’ meetings henceforth had to be reported to the Cheka in advance and its representatives had to be present. Minutes of the proceedings were to be submitted to the Cheka.²⁹

The most active Moscow strikers in the spring of 1919 were railway workers, tram workers, and metal workers.³⁰ Repressive measures were effective for a short time, until some new issue ignited workers’ protest. On 24 June workers again went on strike at

28. “Sudebnyi otel. Delo o zabastovke na Aleksandrovskoi zheleznoi doroge,” *Pravda*, 23 May 1919, 4; “Iz professional’nogo i rabocheho dvizheniia,” *Rabochii internatsional*, no. 1, 11 March 1919; “K zakrytiu masterskikh Aleksandrovskoi zheleznoi dorogi,” *Pravda*, 1 April 1919, 4. “Sud nad Aleksandrovtsami,” *Pravda*, 29 May 1919, 1, and also a report to the State Department by the consul in Vyborg, Finland, give details of the official investigations. Of all reports on file in the United States Department of State for 1919 to 1920, those of Imbrie are consistently the most thorough and well documented, especially on the situation in Petrograd. His and all other dispatches are numbered in decimal files. Hereafter the number of the file will be cited; the place of origin, the date, the author, and title will be given when applicable. All dispatches cited are in Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Russia and the Soviet Union, Washington, D.C., National Archives. The relevant source here is Imbrie, “Excerpts from Soviet Newspapers,” 22 May 1919, Vyborg, dispatch no. 861 00 4566-4567.

29. “Vybory v Moskovskii Sovet,” *Delo naroda*, No. 8, 28 March 1919, 2; “Raboचाia zhizn’. V Aleksandrovskikh masterskikh,” *Pravda*, 1 April 1919, 4 (the same information is in Imbrie, 7 April 1919, Vyborg, dispatch no. 861 00 4227); “Chrezvychainoe zasiedanie Mossoвета,” *Izvestiia*, 5 April 1919, 3; and “Sredi zheleznodorozhnikov,” *Pravda*, 12 April 1919, 4; “Sobytiia na Aleksandrovskikh masterskikh,” *Severnaia kommuna* (Petrograd), 9 April 1919, 3, and Imbrie, “Excerpts from Soviet Newspapers,” 22 May 1919, Vyborg, dispatch no. 861 00 4566-4567; “Sudebnyi otel. Delo o zabastovke na Aleksandrovskoi zheleznoi doroge,” *Pravda*, 23 May 1919, 4; “Liubopytnyi dokument,” *Delo naroda*, no. 8, 28 March 1919, 2. In this last article, the SRs published an ordinance by the Cheka section of the Aleksandrovskii railway workshops to all employees, outlining these regulations.

30. For information on the strike at the Bogatyr’ factory in Moscow, see “Profsoiuzy kak karatel’nye organy,” *Vsegda vpered*, no. 9, 18 February 1919, and on the strike at the Sokol’niki trampoline park, see *Bulletins of the Russian Liberation Committee*, no. 5, 24 March 1919, 2. On the Aleksandrovskii railway workers’ strike, see also Peter Scheibert, *Lenin an der Macht: Das russische Volk in der Revolution 1918–1922* (Weinheim: Acta Humaniora, 1984), 319.

the Aleksandrovskii railway workshops. This time workers of several major lines—the Northern, Moscow-Kazan', Kiev-Voronezh, and Kursk—joined them. This protest was triggered by a decree ordering the mobilization of some workers into the Red Army. General Denikin's offensive was gaining momentum and the Bolshevik government had to throw all available resources into battle. At the workers' rallies, Bolshevik speakers tried to get the workers to vote for their resolution and expressed enthusiasm for the heroic fight of the Red Army. Instead, workers whistled at Bolshevik speakers and chased them from the podium. The Aleksandrovskii railway workshops resolution read

the authorities must restore freedom of the press and assembly; must abolish death penalty and open the doors of prisons. . . . Until this is done, we regard Denikin's, Kolchak's, and the Communists' authority as equally shameful, because this authority is not the authority of the soviets, because nobody other than the Communists can be elected there, and if he is elected, he would wind up not in the soviet but in the Butyrki jail.³¹

The Communist press also spoke of heightened opposition from the railway workers. The workers' instruction to their delegates to the June 1919 railway workers' conference reiterated their main concerns: opposition to mobilization into the Red Army, a right to elect their own representatives, and freedom to purchase food. One of the demands read "down with the civil war!"³²

Available evidence on Moscow workers' attitudes suggests that railway workers in particular, as well as a segment of metal workers, were dissatisfied with Bolshevik economic policies and with the dictatorship of those who spoke in the workers' name but without their consent. These workers seem to have opposed Bolshevik policies, because their economic position induced them to articulate their demands, not because of their social characteristics. Their opposition seems to have been directed against Communist policies and not against Communist rule as such. Strikes in Moscow were on a relatively small scale; in Petrograd the protest was much more radical.

Petrograd was the scene of a powerful workers' protest movement in 1918. The independent Workers' Assembly of Upolnomochennye led several strikes in May and June 1918. Workers protested against trade restrictions, grain requisitioning, and new election rules that guaranteed a Bolshevik victory in the Petrograd Soviet. In Petrograd the Bolsheviks locked out striking workers for the first time. The Obukhov plant was shut down in June 1918, and all of the workers were fired. During the summer and fall, workers continued to leave Petrograd. In June 1918 150,000 workers were in the city; at the end of 1918 136,000 were. The workers' economic situation continued to deteriorate. S. Strumilin has calculated that workers' food rations had reached a level inadequate to provide nourishment enabling one to work. Furthermore, wages were almost always one or two months late. Workers were well aware that the Communist functionaries received a more generous food ration. According to Strumilin, during the elections to the Petrograd Soviet in December 1918, voters' rights were often violated. At some plants bosses elected themselves to the soviet or falsified figures on the number of

31. Quoted here from a report by a participant: "Rabochee dvizhenie v Moskve," *Listok dela naroda*, no. 2, 4, no date indicated. An underground SR publication, *Listok dela naroda* can be found in the Amsterdam Institute for Social History, PSR archive, file no. 2003.

32. For the Bolshevik assessment of this *nakaz*, see "Zheleznodorozhniki i revoliutsiia," and "Konferentsiia zheleznodorozhnikov," *Izvestiia*, 22 June 1919, 4.

employed workers to obtain more seats.³³ Different political parties could not campaign as they had in June 1918. The rigged elections, combined with the economic trends and social inequality, created among workers a new bitterness that exploded in a rash of strikes in March 1919.

As often happens when a dictatorship is somewhat loosened and freedoms are granted that have been previously suppressed, the avalanche of protests could no longer be contained and Petrograd reached this point in February and March 1919. Leaders of the Upolnomochennye were released from prisons; the Menshevik, the Left SR, and the SR parties were partially legalized; Spiridonova began a series of impassioned speeches at Petrograd plants; and workers' grumbling and bitterness increased. The Bolsheviks granted their political opponents freedom of speech and then, scared by the consequences, decided to withdraw it. Left SR party leaders in most industrial cities, as well as Spiridonova in Moscow, were suddenly arrested at the end of February. The Revolutionary Tribunal charged Spiridonova with slandering Soviet power by referring to it as a "Commissarautocracy." She was consigned to one year of isolation in a so-called hospital.³⁴ The mass arrests of the Left SRs sparked the protest movement in Petrograd.

Trouble started at the Erikson factory on 2 March, where workers evicted Zinoviev by force when he tried to address them. As on earlier occasions, the Putilov workers played the leading role. At a protest rally on 10 March, the Putilov plant resolution was passed with only twenty negative votes:

We, the workmen of the Putilov works and the wharf, declare before the laboring classes of Russia and the world, that the Bolshevik government has betrayed the high ideals of the October Revolution, and thus betrayed and deceived the workmen and peasants of Russia; that the Bolshevik government, acting in our name, is not the authority of the proletariat and peasants, but the authority of the dictatorship of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, self-governing with the aid of Extraordinary Commissions, Communists and police.

We protest against the compulsion of workmen to remain at factories and works, and attempts to deprive them of all elementary rights: freedom of the press, speech, meetings, and inviolability of person.

We demand:

1. Immediate transfer of authority to freely elected Workers' and Peasants' soviets.
2. Immediate reestablishment of freedom of elections at factories and plants, barracks, ships, railways, everywhere.
3. Transfer of entire management to the released workers of the trade unions.

33. For a detailed discussion of the Upolnomochennye strikes, Vladimir Brovkin, *Mensheviks after October*, chap. 8, "The Mensheviks under Attack," 220–256. S. Strumilin documents the flight of workers in "Petrogradskaia promyshlennost' na pervoe ianvaria 1919 goda," *Statistika truda*, no. 8–10, April 1919, 17. Strumilin's calculations of food rations are in "Arbeitslohn und Arbeitsproduktivität in der russischen Industrie," *Lebensbedingungen staedischer Bevolkerung von 1917–1921* in "Arbeitsverfassung und Arbeiterschaft in der Sowjet Union zwischen den Kriegen," ed. Horst Temen, Bremen, 1984. This unpublished collection of documents contains this information on 28–48. S. Strumilin, "Vyborny v Petrogradskii Sovdep v dekabre 1918 goda," *Statistika truda*, no. 8–10, April 1919, 27.

34. "Delo Spiridonovoi," *Vsegda vpered*, 25 February 1919, 2. Data on the arrests of the Left SRs, city by city, are in the Menshevik source "Opiat' krasnyi terror," *Vsegda vpered*, no. 16, 14 February 1919, 1, and a Bolshevik source "Deiatel'nost' chrezvychainykh kommissii," *Petrogradskaia pravda*, 28 February 1919, 3, and "Aresty sredi Levykh Eserov," *Pravda*, 13 February 1919, 3.

4. Transfer of food supply to workers' and peasants' cooperative societies.
5. General arming of workers and peasants.
6. Immediate release of members of the original revolutionary peasants' party of Left Socialist Revolutionaries.
7. Immediate release of Mariia Spiridonova.³⁵

According to Strumilin, the Putilov workers also demanded that limits on the amount of food allowed to be brought to Petrograd be removed. They also demanded an increase in their food rations but not at the expense of other groups of the population.³⁶

The Mensheviks, the SRs, and the Left SRs all would have wholeheartedly supported these demands. The differences among the socialist opposition parties had become blurred, at least for the time being. Only the positive reference to the October Revolution and the explicit reference to Spiridonova indicates a strong Left SR influence on these demands. Exactly as had happened in 1918, workers' delegations were sent to other factories and plants. Such organizations as the Skorokhod rubber factory, the Baltic shipbuilding plant, and the trampark soon joined the strike.³⁷

At Siemens-Schuckert, protests broke out when the workers found out that the factory committee had "elected" the plant's representatives to the trust of electrical enterprises without informing the plant's general meeting. Workers at the Rechkin railcar plant went on strike on 13 March to protest the transfer of some workers into a lower food-rationing category. According to Strumilin, the strike spread to fifteen enterprises employing 34,000 workers, of whom 90 percent went on strike. The affected enterprises came from all major branches of industry and the largest plants in Petrograd.³⁸ The strike included 50 percent of the Petrograd labor force.

The Bolsheviks were so alarmed that Lenin himself came to Petrograd on 12 March and gave a speech the next day at a huge rally at the People's House. He adopted a conciliatory approach and promised to increase food rations. Workers were not appeased and demanded his resignation. When Zinoviev tried to address the workers he was greeted with the shouts: "down with the Jew!" Lunacharskii had great difficulty in getting workers to listen to him and finally promised that the Bolshevik government would resign if the majority of workers wished it to. The workers demanded that the

35. Cited here from "Putilof Meeting," the *Times* (London), 4 April 1919, 10. The editors dated this report 21 March 1919.

36. S. Strumilin, "Zabastovki v Petrograde," *Statistika truda*, no. 8–10 (April 1919): 37–38. One and a half pud was the limit on food that had been established by the authorities. This limit was a major concession made to workers during the protests in May 1918. The demand that ration increases not come at the expense of other parts of the population was a verbatim repetition of the Workers' Assembly demand in May 1918, when the Bolsheviks raised workers' rations at the expense of "nonproletarian" groups (*ibid.*). See also Remington, *Building Socialism in Bolshevik Russia*, 108 (but he cites only the demands listed by Strumilin); and A. V. Gogolevskii, *Petrogradskii Sovet v gody grazhdanskoi voiny* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1982), 175.

37. "Putilof Meeting," *Times* (London), 4 April 1919, 10, and "Russian Documents," *Struggling Russia* (London), 28 June 1919, 230.

38. Gogolevskii, *Petrogradskii Sovet*, 176, on the Siemens-Schuckert protests, and "Russian Documents," *Struggling Russia* (London), 28 June 1919, 230, for the Rechkin strike. Strumilin, "Zabastovki v Petrograde," 37. This estimate is conservative. A British parliamentary report cites an "intercepted Bolshevik wireless message, which states that 60,000 workmen are on strike in Petrograd, demanding an end to fratricidal war and an institution of free trade" (Document no. 54, "Summary of a Report on the Internal Situation in Russia," in *A Collection of Reports on Bolshevism in Russia*, abridged ed. Parliamentary Paper: Russia no. 1 [London: HMSO, 1919], 60).

Putilov plant resolution be published in the Communist party paper *Severnaia kommuna*. Street rioting broke out in some places, and Bolshevik speakers trying to address the protesters were mobbed. The situation was becoming precarious for the Petrograd Bolsheviks. On 14 March the extraordinary session of the Petrograd Soviet debated the crisis. The measures adopted were much harder than they had been in a similar situation in June 1918. The Bolshevik speakers determined that the strike was a result of "subversive Left SR activity," demanded that the Left SRs be treated as insurrectionists, and applied the decree on Red Terror. This decree provided for execution for an attempted insurrection. The soviet resolved to "clear the Putilov plant of the White Guardists and bagmen."³⁹

These protests called forth such terms because not just bread rations, but also Bolshevik legitimacy, were at stake. The proletariat was in power and, therefore, could not protest against its own government; the strikers must, therefore, be the agents of the bourgeoisie in the ranks of the proletariat. The soviet resolution of 14 March declared that all those who did not want to work were to be fired without compensation. The Left SRs were denounced as the "last detachment of the bourgeoisie," which had to be smashed. Meetings and rallies were banned. Anyone with a copy of the Putilov resolution was arrested immediately. Workers who refused to resume work were evicted from their dwellings and their food ration cards were taken away. At the Putilov plant, the Treugolnik rubber factory, and at the Rozhdestvenskii trampark the strike was suppressed by armed force.⁴⁰

The city authorities had intended to deploy Baltic sailors, but they refused to participate and voted at their meeting to join the workers instead. These sailors, of course, had expressed their solidarity with the Petrograd strikers in June 1918, staged their own abortive uprising in October 1918, and were widely known to support the Left SR party. The Petrograd authorities hurriedly brought additional forces into the city. According to an American intelligence report, 18,000 men and 250 machine guns were brought in. Strikers barricaded themselves at the Putilov plant, which was stormed and occupied. Those in possession of firearms were executed on the spot. According to the *Times* of London, 300 were arrested during the week after 16 March and suspected ring leaders were shot. According to A. G. Gogolevskii, 225 Left SRs were arrested in March, 75 of them at the Putilov plant. The exact number of those shot is not known. Bolshevik newspapers published the names of 15 Left SRs who were executed. Some western reports said 12. A letter from Petrograd, published in the west, simply stated: "A score or so of workmen were shot at the works." The United States consul's figure

39. For the dates on Lenin's presence in Petrograd, see editor's note to V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 55 vols. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1974) 38: 520, for the text of his speech, 31–38. For a more detailed account, see "Bol'shoi miting v narodnom dome," *Petrogradskaia pravda*, 14 March 1919, 2. Soviet sources failed to note a negative reaction of the audience to Lenin's speech. See also western reports "Strike against Bolsheviks," *Times* (London), 2 April 1919, 12. Another source on workers' demand that Lenin resign is the United States military attaché, Switzerland, "Summary of the Bolshevik Situation . . . during Week Ending 5 April 1919," dispatch no. 861 00 4510, 4. On reaction to Zinoviev see "Putilof Meeting," *Times* (London), 4 April 1919, 10. See also Imbrie, "Telegram to Department of State," 19 March 1919, Vyborg, dispatch no. 861 00 4105; Gogolevskii, *Petrogradskii Sovet*, 176.

40. Gogolevskii, *Petrogradskii Sovet*, 177; "Strike against Bolsheviks," *Times* (London), 2 April 1919, 12; "Petrograd Revolt against Soviet," *Times* (London), 3 April 1919, 14; the suppression at the three plants is found in Gogolevskii, *Petrogradskii Sovet*, 178; "O novom prestuplenii Levykh Eserov v Petrograde," *Izvestiia*, 18 March 1919, 5; Imbrie, dispatch no. 861 00 4147, and "Petrograd Revolt against Soviet," 14.

was the highest: In April, he reported, 200 workers were shot on orders from Zinoviev.⁴¹ The findings in a recent study make this figure quite plausible:

The strike was suppressed and the Cheka went to work, holding summary trials. Many executions followed, taking place in a remote locality called Irinovka, near the fortress of Schlussemburg. The procedure was to line up the victims against the wall, blindfolded, and to shoot them down in batches by machine gun fire.⁴²

Bolshevik authorities publicly declared that the arrested socialists would be held hostage and that their fate would depend on the political behavior of the opposition parties.⁴³

All of these measures—lockouts, plant occupation, arrests, shootings, executions, and taking of hostages—had been practiced in 1918 as well. New to these strikes was that the workers were forced to say that they had been led astray by provocateurs and counterrevolutionaries.⁴⁴ Thus a new ritual, which was to become notorious in the 1930s, was established in 1919. The Bolsheviks now defined the role of the management in a new way: The task became “sozdat’ deistvitel’no diktatorskii organ” that would approach the workers as pupils. The party would teach the workers what they were permitted to do.

Despite the severity of repressions, sporadic outbursts of workers’ protests continued throughout 1919. As had happened in Moscow, the new wave of strikes came in June and July in response to drafting into the Red Army. An eyewitness reported from Petrograd that “there were strikes on a large scale at the Putilov and Obukhov works. During the last strike known to me, on 11 July, at the Nikolaev [railway] engine workshops, there were six strikers killed and nineteen wounded.”⁴⁵ The Cheka boss, Iakov Peters, admitted that armed force was used at the Nikolaev Railroad. What appeared to be extraordinary emergency measures were practiced more often by mid-1919. Plants of nonmilitary production were simply temporarily shut down when a strike occurred.⁴⁶

41. “Petrograd Revolt against Soviet,” 14. “Strikes in Petrograd,” *Bulletins of the Russian Liberation Committee* (London), 24 May 1919, 4. On the Baltic sailors see I. Flerovskii, “Miatezh mobilizovannykh matrosov 14 oktiabria 1918 goda,” *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 8, 55 (1926): 237. The author was a Baltic fleet commissar in 1918. As he stated in this article, this abortive rebellion remained largely unknown. Imbrie reported on the forces brought into Petrograd in dispatch no. 861 00 4330, dated 20 April 1919, Vyborg. See also “Strike against Bolsheviks,” *Times* (London), 2 April 1919, 12; “Putilof Meeting,” *Times* (London), 4 April 1919, 10; Gogolevskii, *Petrogradskii Sovet*, 178; “Les Ouvriers chez les Bolcheviks,” *Bulletin Russe* (Lausanne), 15 June 1919, 3; “V Chrezvychainoi Komissii,” *Petrogradskaia Pravda*, 13 April 1919, 3; “Soviet Russia: A Letter from Petrograd,” *Bulletins of the Russian Liberation Committee* (London), 3 May 1919, 3–4. Imbrie reported on the workers shot on Zinoviev’s orders in dispatch no. 861 00 4323, dated 18 April 1919, Vyborg.

42. George Leggett, *The Cheka: Lenin’s Political Police* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 313.

43. Data on workers’ being forced to work are in the report of the United States Military Attaché, Switzerland, “Summary of the Bolshevik Situation . . . during Week Ending 5 April 1919,” dispatch no. 861 00 4510, 4; on taking hostages, see “Na belyi terror otvetim krasnym,” *Petrogradskaia Pravda*, 9 April 1919, and “Strikes in Petrograd,” *Bulletins of the Russian Liberation Committee* (London), 24 May 1919, 4.

44. Remington, *Building Socialism in Bolshevik Russia*, 110.

45. “Labour Disadvantages,” *Times* (London), 12 August 1919, 11–12.

46. “Strike Movement in Petrograd,” *Bulletins of the Russian Liberation Committee* (London), 18 August 1919, 3. For an estimate of casualties in Petrograd in May and June 1919, see “Latest News from Petrograd,” *Bulletins of the Russian Liberation Committee* (London), 19 July 1919, 4. Imbrie, “Report on Conditions in Petrograd by an Agent Acting on Office Instructions,” 20 July 1919, Vyborg, dispatch no. 861 00 5111.

Striking workers were either dismissed or drafted into the Red Army. A protester would become a soldier and would have to obey orders or face the prospect of being shot. At plants producing war matériel, workers were forced to work, as the United States consul explained, "up to 6 July, workers' districts of Obukhov, Aleksandrovskii, and Putilov plants were under surveillance of enforced detachments of Red police, and in recent days, due to a strike at Putilov plant, Red police were introduced inside the plant."⁴⁷ Underground reports from the factories said that the workers were afraid to speak freely, that Communist cells were spying on everyone and trying to identify counterrevolutionaries, and that elections could not be called anything dimly resembling free elections. Any objections were regarded with suspicion; any attempts to resort to a more energetic protest resulted in the use of armed force and new casualties. The Bolsheviks were getting used to applying military solutions to social and political problems. A workers' strike was now perceived as a breakthrough of the enemy forces. Workers' political behavior remained remarkably consistent with the pattern of 1917 and 1918. Petrograd workers firmly believed in the power of workers' organized action. As had been true in Moscow, their protest was against government policies. As Haimson has pointed out, popular behavioral patterns were borrowed from the past. In the capitals the traditional form of workers' protest was petitioning and organized demand articulation; in the provinces more primitive forms of popular discontent were prevalent.⁴⁸

In spring 1919 serious disturbances broke out in the provinces: Strikes and general strikes took place in Tula at the armament and cartridge plants, Sormovo (locomotive plant), Briansk (metallurgical plants), and Tver' (textile and metal industry plants).⁴⁹ Red Army mutinies and rebellions that coincided with the workers' strikes broke out in Orel, Briansk, Smolensk, Gomel, and Astrakhan'. What distinguished them from the unrest in the capitals was that not just workers, but soldiers, sailors, and peasants took part, and Bolshevik suppression was much more severe.

Events in Tula are reconstructed here on the basis of three sources. The first source, presented in Soviet history books, can be called the official version. It is very short. While acknowledging that strikes did take place in Tula and Briansk, this version holds that they were instigated by Menshevik and Left SR provocateurs who plotted to weaken Soviet power and to render help to the advancing troops of Kolchak. The trouble was so serious, according to this version, that Lenin found it necessary to dispatch Felix E. Dzerzhinskii to Tula on 3 April to "liquidate" the strike.⁵⁰ What is conspicuously missing from this account is any explanation of why the strike broke out and what Dzerzhinskii did to "liquidate" it.

The second account, by the Tula Bolsheviks themselves, somewhat contradicts the

47. Imbrie, "Report on Conditions in Petrograd by an Agent Acting on Office Instructions," 20 July 1919, Vyborg, dispatch no. 861 00 5111.

48. Ibid.; "Labour Disadvantages," 11–12; Haimson, "The Problem of Social Identities in Early Twentieth Century Russia," 5.

49. For a brief discussion of strikes in Petrograd, Tula, and Astrakhan' see Remington, *Building Socialism in Bolshevik Russia*, 108–110; for more detail see Scheibert, *Lenin an der Macht*, 319–321.

50. L. M. Spirin, *Klassy i Partii v Grazhdanskoi voine v Rossii* (Moscow: Mysl', 1968), 308–310; Martyn Latsis, "K zagovoru Levykh Eserov," *Izvestiia*, 21 March 1919, 1; Iakov Peters, "Komu oni pomogaiut," *Izvestiia*, 12 April 1919; "Rasporiazhenie Lenina sekretariu, 3 Aprelia 1919 goda" in Belov, *Iz istorii Vecheke*, 270; and Leggett, *The Cheka*, 319.

official version. The strikes broke out in early March over the arrest of the Mensheviks and SRs.⁵¹ "The masses were following the Mensheviks." The Communist party was very weak among the Tula workers. Out of several thousand workers, only 228 in the entire city organization were Communists. Those who were officially listed as Communist sympathizers were in fact "very unstable." The Tula Communists criticized themselves for not being able to "knock the ground from under the Mensheviks," but they pointed to extenuating circumstances:

The social milieu in Tula was not favorable for Communist construction: The fact that the Tula workers follow any opposition, in this particular case the Mensheviks, so readily can be explained by their social origin: A worker at the armaments or cartridge plants here is not a pure proletarian. He is firmly connected with the village.

Apparently in order to combat this petit bourgeois consciousness, the Tula Bolsheviks prohibited workers from owning plots of land in the surrounding countryside; thus they severely undermined the workers' ability to supplement their poor food rations. The Tula Bolsheviks described workers' oppositional attitudes frankly but withheld from the Central Committee information on the workers' deteriorating economic conditions—the main cause of the strike—and said virtually nothing about the extent of repression. They were well informed though, because, on 22 February 1919, they heard a report from the labor statistics department on the workers' economic situation.⁵² The report compared the absolute minimum of food necessary for a worker with what the Tula workers had actually received in the preceding months. The trend was alarming. The cost of a food ration for a single worker in November 1918 had been 14 rubles and 42 kopeks a day; in December it climbed to 16.47 and in January 1919 to 23.56. The wages of the lowest paid single worker covered 42 percent of his bare minimum needs, and the wages of a worker providing for two or three family members covered 30 percent of their needs in November 1918 and 18 percent in January 1919.

The most complete account of what happened in Tula was given by a participant in the strike, a Tula worker.⁵³ His report fills in important details neglected by the local Communists. The Tula workers also complained that the Communists, the Red Army soldiers, and the Cheka were well supplied with food. In the beginning of February those who had been complaining were arrested as provocateurs and the first wave of strikes broke out. The Bolsheviks shut down the plant and a great many workers were fired. Several days later rehiring began. "Provocateurs" and "troublemakers" were kept out. In contrast to the official version, the Tula worker reported that the more experienced worker oppositionists warned other workers against further strikes, which they held would be fruitless. *Pravda* likewise admitted that the Mensheviks had urged the workers not to strike. In mid-March, however, the strikes resumed. This time the strikers' main demand was that the food rations take into account workers' families. At

51. This account appeared several months after the strike in an official report of the provincial Communist party Committee to the Central Committee in an internal party publication: "Iz otcheta deiatel'nosti Tul'skoi gubernskoi organizatsii za mart i aprel' 1919 goda," *Izvestiia TsKa RKP(b)*, no. 3 (4 July 1919), 4.

52. "Prozhitochnyi minimum v gorode Tule. Doklad tovarishcha Berlina, zaveduiushchego podotdelom statistiki, Tul'skogo otdela truda," *Statistika truda*, no. 5–7 (March 1919): 35–36.

53. This unique document was published in a Siberian newspaper in White territory after the author was taken prisoner of war at the front ("Chto delaetsia v Tule," *Nasha zaria* [Omsk], no. 185 [26 August 1919]).

a large workers' rally, workers demanded that the city soviet chairman, Grigorii Kaminskii, give an account on the food supply situation. He was forced to arrive at the rally and to listen to workers' bitter speeches about privileges for the commissars and the plight of workers' hungry children. Some speakers called for reconvoation of the Constituent Assembly. Shouts were heard: "Doloi Komissarov! Doloi Sovety!" Kaminskii promised to improve the situation but that same night the Cheka arrested two hundred worker activists.⁵⁴ These arrests understandably ignited more protests and clashes; it was at that point that Lenin dispatched Dzerzhinskii to "liquidate" the strike.

The general strike was suppressed harshly. Military discipline was established at the plants and, as usual, screening of the workers' ranks and purges of socialists were carried out. Some workers fled to the nearby villages. Even though order was restored outwardly, many workers were reported to be wondering whether the victory of the Whites would really be worse. Communist authorities blacked out news of these events and condemned the "new counterrevolutionary conspiracy." Censors prohibited the SR paper *Delo naroda* from publishing an account of the Tula strikes at the end of March, and the paper published blank columns under the title "Sobytiia v Tule."⁵⁵

Like the armaments plants in Tula, the locomotive plant in Sormovo (Nizhnii Novgorod province) had been a hotbed of opposition to the Bolsheviks throughout 1918. The leading role was played by the SRs. The strikes in the spring of 1919 were almost identical to what had occurred in Tula, Petrograd, and Moscow. Workers' resolutions demanded a cessation of the civil war, fair elections, abolition of privileges for the Communists, and a convocation of the Constituent Assembly. The plant was shut down and thirty worker activists were arrested. The authorities deducted from the strikers' rations food rations for every strike day and openly announced that only those supporting the Soviet power would receive food rations.⁵⁶ This method of dealing with the strike demonstrated only too well the workers' vulnerability to economic sanctions.

The June 1919 strikes in Tver' turned into a general strike: the textile mills, the rail car plant, the tram lines, the printing shops, and all city services went on strike—a total of twenty-nine enterprises. Strikes began in June to protest an order that 10 percent of the labor force be mobilized into the Red Army. The workers also demanded that a low bread ration—three-quarters of a pound a day—be increased and that fair elections to the soviet be held. These and other workers' demands are known only because a special commissar V. I. Nevskii, dispatched from Moscow to "liquidate" the strike reported them to the Bolshevik Central Committee. He admitted that workers' complaints about unfair food distribution were justified, as was their demand to hold new elections. He characterized workers' economic demands as SR in nature and recommended that restrictions on trade be lifted and grain requisitioning in the countryside be stopped. Most importantly, Nevskii reported that workers demanded that the

54. "O Men'shevikakh," *Pravda*, 6 April 1919. The Tula Menshevik committee tried to prevent the strike; they feared it would lead to severe repressions and bloodshed ("Pis'mo v redaktsiiu," *Delo naroda*, no. 10 [30 March 1919], 3). "Chto delaetsia v Tule," *Nasha zaria* (Omsk), no. 185, 26 August 1919. According to Peters, the Cheka functionary, the secret police arrested forty (Peters, "Komu oni pomagaiut").

55. Dzerzhinskii, Latsis, and Peters, the Cheka bosses, mentioned troubles in Tula and Briansk in several articles, and nothing else was said in the official Bolshevik press (Latsis, "K zagovoru Levykh Eserov," *Izvestiia*, 21 March 1919, 1. See "Belye polosy," *Delo naroda*, no. 2 (21 March 1919), 1.

56. This is reported by a worker who participated in the strike: "Iz nastroenii rabochikh, Nizhegorodskaia guberniia," *Listok dela naroda*, no. 2, 4 [no date], PSR archive, file no. 2003.

one-party dictatorship be ended. The local commissars exercised party dictatorship but they were detached from the masses and the workers did not trust them. He felt that some workers' demands could be fulfilled but that the strike had to stop immediately and unconditionally.⁵⁷ The Tver' workers, on the other hand, wanted their demands to be fulfilled first and then to negotiate about ending the strike.

On 18 June all twenty-nine enterprises were on strike. The Tver' workers elected a council of *upolnomochennye* of 150 representatives from the factories and plants and entrusted it to negotiate with the authorities. The council contacted the Red Army soldiers who promised not to take part in suppressing the strike. Nevskii's main concern when he arrived in Tver' was to prevent a huge workers' demonstration and rally in the center of the city. The strikers, who had printed the announcement of the rally, were arrested. Nevskii met with the strikers' representatives and presented them with an ultimatum. Unfortunately, he did not report exactly what the conditions of the ultimatum were but only that he threatened to resort to decisive measures. The council of *upolnomochennye* debated this ultimatum all night long and finally decided to accept a 10 percent mobilization of the labor force to the Red Army and to stop the strike immediately, but they failed to convince the rank and file to accept this decision. The representative of the Tver' Menshevik party committee, Leikart, also declared that he was against the strike and urged the workers to go back to work.⁵⁸ Nevskii admitted that the Tver' workers were more radical than the council of *upolnomochennye*. He did not explain in his report what the decisive measures to suppress the strike had been but did say that "not a single shot was fired."

Organized political parties lost leadership of the Tver' strike. Moscow's envoy in Tver' also admitted that workers' grievances were legitimate. Like the Tula worker, Nevskii saw local officials as new masters who surrounded themselves with privileges. What is remarkable about the Tver' strikes is that the authorities negotiated with the strikers, that the workers organized and elected their own representatives, and that they established contact with the Red Army soldiers. In the southern cities, such contact developed into a joint action.

Patterns of interaction between the Bolsheviks and the masses in the south were different from those in the industrial cities. Kursk, Tambov, Voronezh, and Orel provinces were hotbeds of peasant rebellion throughout the civil war years. Even more than workers in the northern industrial cities, workers and peasants in the black earth provinces perceived Bolshevik authorities as the new masters. Moscow Bolsheviks often complained that the cultural level of provincial Communists was very low. These new masters came out of the same milieu as the rest of the local population. Their job was to implement a dictatorship of the proletariat, and, since they considered themselves proletarians, that task meant their own dictatorship. In some *uezd* towns, this sort of proletarian dictatorship meant rule of a clique of relatives and friends. They settled their own scores and enriched themselves at the expense of the unfortunate peasants. At the Congress of Soviets of the Briansk *uezd* (Orel province) in February 1919, some speakers quoted peasants as saying that the collection of the extraordinary food tax

57. "Likvidatsiia zabastovki v Tveri," *Izvestiia petrogradskogo soveta*, 28 June 1919, 2. It is curious that the Bolsheviks published such an embarrassing fact as that a strike had been called against the draft. V. I. Nevskii, "Tverskaia zabastovka," *Izvestiia*, 1 July 1919, 1; "Tverskie sobytiia, Beseda s tovarishchem V. I. Nevskim," *Izvestiia*, 28 June 1919.

58. "Tverskie sobytiia, Beseda s tovarishchem V. I. Nevskim; "Vseobshchaia zabastovka," *Listok dela naroda* no. 2, 8 [no date], PSR archive, file 2003.

amounted to robbery. The monies collected were used, it was thought, to support the local Bolsheviks in styles that imitated those of the old *barin*. They often had lavish parties, settled in the best houses in the village, and confiscated such items as furniture and samovars for personal use. Orel Communists had to admit to the Bolshevik CC that drunkenness was rampant among the local Communists.⁵⁹ Local autocrats seem to have been intent on showing who the real master was and in their cruelty, often surpassed the old masters. Orel *Izvestiia* wrote that "there were cases when peasants who had not paid their tax, were kept naked outside in the snow. . . . Some were kept in cold and damp basements for several hours, and then they were beaten by rifle butts on their naked bodies."⁶⁰ The journal of the commissariat of internal affairs wrote that Bolshevism in Orel was maintained in power "by armed force alone."⁶¹

The last thing these local despots wanted was public scrutiny of their rule; for this reason Orel Communists objected strenuously when Moscow issued a circular on the relegalization of the Menshevik party. They responded that it was dangerous to relegalize the opposition parties because in a city like Orel, a petit bourgeois city without plants or workers, no social base for Communists existed. The local Cheka arrested the Orel correspondent of the Menshevik newspaper, which was still appearing legally in Moscow.⁶² The Orel *Izvestiia* reprinted a decision of one *uezd* Communist party cell: "Karachevskii *uezd*. Communist party of the Bolsheviks condemns citizen Moisei Makarovich Zelenko to death for evil actions designed to undermine the authority of the party and of the authorities. Execution of the verdict is declared to be a duty of any Communist who would meet Zelenko anywhere."⁶³

In the city of Briansk, the metallurgical center, the situation was certainly not as bad as it was in Karachevskii *uezd*. The Menshevik and Left SR parties existed legally and were represented in the local city soviet. The Moscow Bolsheviks admitted that the opposition socialist parties had had an overwhelming preponderance in Briansk area "until very recently."⁶⁴ As in other cities, the opposition parties campaigned for the abolition of the Cheka, free elections to the Soviets, and cessation of grain requisitioning. These resolutions were later construed as a call for armed insurrection.

Pravda saw the immediate cause of the March and April rebellions in Orel province not in Menshevik agitation, but in the failures of the local authorities. The supply of heating fuel stopped almost completely in Orel even though local authorities had locomotives and rail cars at their disposal. The Red Army soldiers did not receive even a third of the food rations due to them because of negligence of the Province Military Committee. Distribution of bread rations at the Briansk plant stopped altogether. The soldiers mutinied and workers went on strike. Attempts to set up collective farming

59. According to a recent Soviet analyst, peasant rebels remained an independent third force in the struggle between the Reds and the Whites; see Vasilii Seliunin, "Istoki," *Novyi mir*, no. 5 (1988), 166. On attitudes toward the food tax see A. Fomichev: "S'ezd sovetov Brianskogo uezda," *Vsegda vpered*, no. 8, 16 February 1919. Drunkenness was admitted in a letter of the Orel Communist party City Committee to the Central Committee (received 4 February 1919), *Perepiska Sekretariata TsKa RKP(b)* 6, 226.

60. *Izvestiia orlovskogo soveta*, 31 January 1919, reprinted in "Zverinym obychaem (po telefonu ot sobstvennogo korrespondenta)" *Vsegda vpered*, no. 3, 6 February 1919.

61. Iu. Mikhailov, "Orlovskii Gorodskoi Sovet," *Vlast' sovetov*, no. 2, 30 January 1919, 20.

62. "Orlovskomu Gubernskomu Komitetu RKP(b)," *Perepiska sekretariata TsKa RKP(b)* 6: 100–101 (26 February 1919), 6: 311 (18 February 1919). "Protest TsKa RSDRP," *Vsegda vpered*, no. 13, 22 February 1919. Also see "Protiv Menshevikov," *Vsegda vpered*, no. 9, 18 February 1919.

63. "Smertnyi prigovor kommunistam," *Vsegda vpered*, no. 5, 12 February 1919.

64. On the numerical strength of opposition parties in the Soviet see *Vsegda vpered*, no. 4, 11 February 1919, 4, and G. Kirev, "Volki v ovech'ei shkure," *Izvestiia*, no. 103, 18 May 1919, 1.

provoked peasant rebellions, which by mid-March had spread to all except two of the *uezdy* of the province. These rebellions were led by peasant deserters hiding in the forests—the Greens—who “incited peasants to rise.” The province was declared to be in a state of siege and this empowered the Cheka to conduct executions and to seize hostages as specified in the Decree on the Red Terror. Orel province was certainly not an exception. As Imbrie reported to the United States State Department: “Peasant uprisings are now so numerous and universal, that it is impractical to report them any longer.”⁶⁵

A special operations headquarters was set up to suppress the simultaneous action of workers, soldiers, and peasants. The local Cheka took eight hostages from among the socialists. Two were the Mensheviks Glukhov and Kogan. Fighting must have been heavy since Peters wrote in *Izvestiia* that “reinforcements designated for the front line are used up for the liquidation of the uprising.”⁶⁶ In Briansk some units refused to fight the workers and instead joined them. Despite heavy reinforcements from the front, the Bolsheviks needed at least a month—from mid-March to mid-April—to suppress the movement. Communist sources do not say anything about casualties. According to an SR source, 152 workers were arrested at the Briansk plant and transferred to the Butyrki jail in Moscow. Casualties incurred during the fighting against mutinied soldiers and peasant rebels were estimated to have reached several thousand.⁶⁷

Local Communists almost always reported to Moscow that strikes and rebellions were the work of Menshevik, Left SR, or SR provocateurs and agitators. The Moscow emissaries were sometimes reluctant to accept such an easy explanation and tried to investigate to see if local Communists were guilty of any misdeeds, as Nevskii had done in Tver'. While both Moscow Communists and the local autocrats found it convenient to blame the agitators, sometimes high ranking Communists admitted that the real cause of rebellions was the misdeeds of local Communists. N. Ossinskii openly stated at the Eighth Party Congress in March 1919: “Rebellions that are going on are not White Guardist, they take place because our Commissars behave disgracefully.”⁶⁸ If we apply Haimson's typology of popular behavioral patterns to workers', peasants', and deserters' actions in the black earth region in 1919, we see that they appear to have

65. “Besporiadki v Orle i Brianske,” *Pravda*, 21 March 1919, 1; “Prodoval'stvie mashinostroitel'nykh zavodov,” *Izvestiia*, 20 February 1919, 4. “Ot Orlovskogo Gubernskogo Komiteta.” (18 May 1919) “Doklad o rabote Orlovskogo Gubernskogo Komiteta RKP(b) za april' i pervuiu polovinu maia,” *Perepiska sekretariata TsKa RKP(b)* 6: 416; 415–416. Imbrie, 26 May 1919 Vyborg dispatch no. 861 00 4587.

66. “K sobytiim v Brianske,” *Delo naroda*, no. 3, 22 March 1919, 2; “Besporiadki v Orle i Brianske,” *Pravda*, 21 March 1919, 1. On taking hostages, also see the editorial in *Delo naroda*, no. 2, 21 March 1919; Ia. Miakotin, “K sobytiim v Brianske,” *Delo naroda*, no. 9, 29 March 1919; Peters, “Komu oni pomogaiut,” *Izvestiia*, 12 April 1919.

67. “Chto delaetsia v Tule,” *Nasha zaria* (Omsk), no. 185, 26 August 1919; “Ot Orlovskogo Gubernskogo Komiteta,” “Doklad o rabote Orlovskogo Gubernskogo Komiteta RKP(b) za april' i pervuiu polovinu maia,” *Perepiska sekretariata TsKa RKP(b)* 6: 416 (18 May 1919). “V Moskovskoi Butyrskoi tiur'me,” *Volia rossii* (18 December 1920); Imbrie, “Intelligence report,” 26 May 1919, Vyborg, dispatch no. 861 00 4587.

68. Of the numerous reports in this category, several stand out: a report by the special emissaries of the NKVD to Tambov in March 1918 reported by Shanukhin, Shirokov, and Butugin, “Doklad emissarov Kommissariata Vnutrennikh Del,” *Vestnik Kommissariata Vnutrennikh Del*, no. 9, April 1918; a report on the newly elected soviet in Sormovo in “Doklad v Kremle o sobytiakh v Sormovo,” *Vecherniaia zvezda*, no. 71, 21 May 1918, 3; and a report by a political commissar on his measures against the Greens in the summer of 1919 in Smolensk province—B. Ardaev, “Donesenie Roslavl'skomu Uezdvoenkomu,” Smolensk Archive, Harvard University, Cambridge, file 119, 6 August 1919. Roslavl'. N. Ossinskii's speech is in *Vos'moi S'ezd RKP(b) stenograficheskii otchet*, 309.

taken the familiar old Russian form of a *bunt* against the superordinate authority. Events in the Orel province in spring 1919 can only be described as civil war, even though no White forces were there. The war was between local autocrats who called themselves Communists and peasants, deserters, and workers—a war on the internal front, as Martyn Latsis put it.⁶⁹ The closer the rebellious area was to the White forces, the more brutal was the suppression on the internal front.

Located in the steppes of lower Volga, between the lands of the Don and Orenburg Cossacks, Astrakhan' was a provincial fishing town on the periphery of European Russia that had acquired great strategic importance in the spring of 1919. It lay in an area where the forces of Admiral Kolchak, advancing to the Volga from the Urals, and General Denikin, whose forces were just beginning to launch their historic offensive from the northern Caucasus, could meet. The Communist high command decided that Astrakhan' had to be held at whatever cost to prevent the link-up of the White armies. Perhaps that is why the workers' strike and soldiers' mutiny there in March 1919 were suppressed with such exceptional brutality.

To this day, the tragedy in Astrakhan' remains largely unknown. The authorities imposed a complete news blackout, and the Communist press in the capitals did not even mention that anything had happened. Soviet histories do acknowledge that what they call a White Guardist rebellion took place and that the enemies attracted "backward elements of workers." The rebels are said to have disarmed a part of the Forty-Fifth Regiment, seized the building of the local party committee, and installed machine guns in some towers. For two days "intense machine gun fire" occurred in the city.⁷⁰ Nothing is said about what had caused the insurgency, who the enemies were, and how many were killed.

Fortunately, accounts by the Astrakhan' Communists themselves and by the local SRs shed some light on the course of events in Astrakhan'. Three causes of worker discontent can be ascertained: Workers' food rations were lower than those of sailors, the newly drafted soldiers had no desire to be sent to the front, and some vociferous protestors were arrested. In the first days of March, work stopped at several metal plants. According to the Astrakhan' Communists' report, at rallies workers would not let the Communists open their mouths: "Everybody was waiting for an insurrection of the internal enemy—of the masses who lacked political consciousness."⁷¹ As in Tver', elected representatives presented workers' demands to the authorities. They called it an ultimatum: Food rations were to be increased, food was to be freely purchased, and arrested workers were to be released. At the session of the trade unions' council sailors' representatives announced that they would not go against the workers. The combination of striking workers, anti-Soviet recruits, and neutral sailors must have made local Communists insecure; and this insecurity must have led to their resolute actions once clashes broke out on 10 March. As the Astrakhan' Communists explained,

69. Haimson, "Problem of Social Identities in Early Twentieth Century Russia," 13 and 16; Latsis, *Dva goda bor'by na vnutrennem fronte*.

70. "Ot Astrakhanskogo Gubernskogo Komiteta RKP(b)," *Perepiska Sekretariata TsKa RKP(b)* 7: 371–373 (May 1919, Astrakhan).

71. Viktor Chernov, "Krovavoe delo" [a newspaper clipping], Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, California, Nikolaevsky Collection no. 7 PSR, folder 64. The SR paper in Moscow reprinted the explicit report of the Astrakhan' Communists from the newspaper *Kommunist*, 16 March 1919, that had been published in Astrakhan'. Moscow Communists not only did not reprint it but did not even mention its existence: "Vosstanie v Astrakhani" *Delo naroda* no. 10, a reprint from *Kommunist* (Astrakhan'), 16 March 1919.

On 10 March 1919, at 10 in the morning, workers at Vulkan, Etna, Kavkaz, and Merkurii plants stopped work upon hearing the emergency siren, and began a rally. The workers rejected the demand of the representatives of the authorities to disperse and continued instead. Then we fulfilled our duty and applied force of arms.⁷²

What is questionable in this version of events is the reference to insurrection. Workers began rallies and speeches not an insurrection. The Astrakhan' Communists probably accused the workers of insurrection to justify their use of force. When the workers refused to disperse, loyal Communist troops had tried to break up the rallies by force. They locked the gates of some workshops to prevent protesters from joining mutinous soldiers outside. The workers tried to break out, and, at this point, the loyal troops applied "force of arms." As the Astrakhan' Communists put it, "since the crowds went on a rampage, the troops opened fire on the crowds." The report went on:

At this time, the crowd consisted of deserters from the Forty-Fifth Regiment, who had been recently drafted from among the street scum and other suspect persons. This crowd attacked the sentries of the Forty-Fifth Regiment at the Elling [a part of town], seized weapons, and moved towards the Tartar market shouting: "Down with the Communists! Beat the Commissars!"

Then the crowd attacked the district Communist party committee, and the Communists had to flee in "view of their small number." The rebels, continued the report, went to the church square and installed machine guns in the bell tower. Loyal troops thus "were compelled to open machine gun and artillery fire," in response.

Even though this report is much more explicit than the official Soviet history, it fails to mention the number of casualties from machine gun and artillery fire and describes the crowds as consisting of deserters rather than workers. Either the loyal troops managed to prevent the workers from joining the crowds in the initial stage by locking the gates of the workshops or the workers joined the rebellious soldiers but the local Communists did not want to refer to workers as targets of machine gun and artillery fire. An eyewitness account confirms that the workers did join the rebellious soldiers.⁷³ According to this version, violence started when the workers began fighting pro-Bolshevik sailors. Workers were shouting "Beat the sailors! Beat the Communists!" This eyewitness account reported what neither the Astrakhan' Communists' report nor the SR party report mentioned: "The workers began to seize individual Communists and to kill them." The Astrakhan' Communists probably referred to this action by the words "the crowd went on a rampage." The SR party account probably omitted this piece of evidence because it suggested that the workers started the killings.

The eyewitness report confirms that soldiers and workers attacked the party committee and installed machine guns in some locations. Heavy fighting went on for two days. Scores of rebels were seized on the streets. There were so many prisoners that the authorities could not house them all in one location. Many were placed in barges on the river. On 12 March executions started. Horrifying scenes are depicted in several documents.⁷⁴ Most executions were carried out at the Cheka headquarters. On some barges,

72. *Kommunist* (Astrakhan'), 16 March 1919.

73. Handwritten document, "Astrakhan'" PSR archive, folder no. 2046.

74. P. Silin, "Astrakhanskii rasstrely" in *Cheka* (Berlin: PSR, 1922), 248–255; S. P. Mel'gunov, *Krasnyi Terror v Rossii* (New York: Brandy, 1979), 50–51.

prisoners were simply drowned by being thrown overboard with stones tied to their bodies. On 15 March the authorities added the element of class struggle to the uprising by seizing merchants, house owners, and others commonly referred to as *bourgeoisie*. Either it was a convenient moment to settle old scores or local Communists felt that they had to report disturbances to Moscow as the work of the bourgeoisie. Some women of bourgeois origin were raped and murdered. Houses of the bourgeoisie were pillaged. Those taken away were not charged with anything; they were simply executed. The entire operation was very much along the lines of the class vengeance most widely practiced during the official Red Terror in the fall of 1918.

During the insurrection, forty-seven Communists were killed, and several hundred rebels were executed. How many were killed in street clashes and the vengeance campaign is not known. The conservative estimate was two thousand; other sources quoted a figure of four thousand casualties. The Communists did not blame the socialists for the riots but, rather, White Guardists or "backward masses." The SRs said no SR organization was left in the city by that date since during the Red Terror the entire fifteen-member local SR committee had been executed.⁷⁵ The Mensheviks, too, were bypassed by events. The workers were much more radically anti-Bolshevik than the Mensheviks. In Astrakhan' the Communists crushed the movement of backward masses before the White Army could exploit the situation. In the Urals and the Ukraine, widespread rebellions of peasants, deserters, and, in some places, workers made it possible for the Whites to pour into areas, which had already been up in arms against the Bolsheviks.

Data on one strike in one city may be dismissed as incidental. When, however, evidence is available from various sources on simultaneous independent strikes in different cities an overall picture begins to emerge. All strikes developed along a similar timetable: February, brewing discontent; March and April, peak of strikes; May, slackening in strikes; and June and July, a new wave of strikes. March was the month when Kolchak's offensive reached its high point, and July was the month of Denikin's most successful breakthroughs. The peaks of strike activity therefore coincided with the peaks of the White offensives. For the Bolsheviks this fact only confirmed that internal conspirators and agitators were helping the Whites. In fact, strikes, mutinies, and peasant rebellions can be seen as barometers of popular discontent. They reflected the weakness of the Bolshevik regime, which the Whites were able to exploit. This weakness can be seen in the types of workers who took part in the unrest, the grievances and demands they presented, the role of the army in the discontent, the role of the opposition socialist parties, and the Bolshevik response to the disorder.

Workers' unrest took place in Russia's biggest and most important industrial centers: Moscow, Petrograd, Tver', Tula, Briansk, and Sormovo. Strikes affected the largest industries, primarily those involving metal: metallurgical, locomotive, and armaments plants. The idea that metal workers were the backbone of Bolshevik support during the civil war has to be cast aside. Metal workers were active in anti-Bolshevik strikes, as were railway workers and printers. In some cities—Petrograd, Tver', and Nizhnii Novgorod—textile workers and other workers were active protesters as well. In at least five cities—Petrograd, Tver', Tula, Briansk, and Astrakhan'—the protests resembled general strikes.

Workers' demands reflected their grievances, and even though there is a profound

75. V. Miakotin, "Zhutkaia kniga," *Na chuzhoi storone* no. 7 (1924), 266; Chernov, "Krovavoe delo."

homogeneity among them, local differences should not be overlooked either. All workers demanded higher food rations and fair distribution of food. The demands of the Putilov workers were more specific; no privileges for the Communists and rations were to be equal to those of the Red Army soldiers and were not to be at the expense of the rest of the population. Everywhere the demand that workers be allowed to purchase food in the countryside without any restrictions was prominent, and the Tula workers wanted to keep their own land plots. The demand to release political prisoners, strike leaders, and socialists was at the top of the list everywhere as well. These arrests had triggered the strikes in Moscow, Petrograd, Tula, and Sormovo.

The greatest diversity was in workers' explicitly political demands or expressions of political opinion. On the one hand, all workers' resolutions demanded free and fair elections to the soviets and, in fact, all socialist opposition parties agreed on this demand. On the other hand, some workers (railworkers in Moscow, metal workers in Petrograd and Sormovo) demanded that the Constituent Assembly based on universal suffrage be reconvened. In Moscow, Tula, Orel', and Astrakhan' some workers went even further and condemned Bolshevik rule as such, without any concrete alternative program. In at least four cities—Moscow, Tver', Sormovo, and Astrakhan'—workers' demands reflected their unwillingness to fight in the civil war. This attitude was even more widespread among the peasants in Orel province who deserted en masse once drafted into the Red Army.

The strikes of 1919 have remained a blank in Soviet history. Within the larger historical context, they fill an important gap as one stage in the development of the popular movement between October 1917 and February 1921. On the one hand, they should be seen as antecedents of similar strikes in February 1921, which forced the Communists to abandon war communism. In the capitals, workers, just as the Kronstadt sailors had, still wanted fairly elected soviets and not a party dictatorship. On the other hand, the strikes continued the protests that had begun in the summer of 1918. The variety of behavioral patterns displayed during the strikes points to a profound continuity. In the capitals, organized and articulated forms of protests were still in practice, but in the provinces they were spontaneous, more destructive, and more uncontrollable as they had been in 1917 and earlier. The attacks of deserters and peasants on landlords in the summer of 1917 and on local autocrats in the summer of 1919 should be seen as expressions of the same psychological and behavioral phenomena.

While it is generally acknowledged that the Kronstadt sailors joined the Petrograd workers on strike in February 1921, other instances of workers' and soldiers' joint political actions against the Bolsheviks—such as the strikes in May of 1918 in Petrograd and Red Army mutinies and rebellions against the Bolsheviks in Saratov, the Urals, and Kronstadt in the same year—have remained largely unknown.⁷⁶ During the period considered in this survey sailors refused to suppress the workers' strike in Petrograd, soldiers assured workers they would not act against them in Tver', sailors gave a similar promise in Astrakhan', and soldiers in Briansk went over to the side of the strikers. Draft rebellions broke out at the same time as the strike in Astrakhan' and mutiny in Orel. The Red Army appears to have been much less reliable than observers have assumed. Moreover, the Greens, deserters from the Red Army, posed a serious military threat to Bolshevik rule in several provinces for considerable periods of time.

According to Bolshevik sources, all strikes, except those in Astrakhan', were led by the socialists—the Mensheviks, the SRs and the Left SRs. In Tver', however, they

76. Brovkin, *The Mensheviks after October*, 183 and 260–261.

were said to have lost leadership. In Briansk, Tula, Sormovo, Tver', and Astrakhan' the socialists themselves claimed to have opposed the strikes. What was the role of the socialists? The Left SRs appear to have been the most radical and "revolutionary" party; they opposed the Bolsheviks for betraying the workers' self-rule principles of the October Revolution. The SRs at this juncture were in the midst of an intense party debate over whether the Bolsheviks or the Whites were the worse enemy. They seem to have regarded strikes as a legitimate weapon in the struggle for workers' rights, but they were preoccupied much more with the idea of a peasant movement directed against both the Whites and the Reds. The spread of the Green movement demonstrated that their ideas were not illusory. Of all the opposition parties, the Social Democrats were the most cautious. In several cities they called on workers to stop the strikes and go back to work. Partly this policy can be explained by their desire to preserve the legal status of the party, partly by their belief that strikes would hinder the war effort against the Whites, and partly by their own experience that strikes seldom led to satisfaction of workers' demands. An almost automatic arrest of socialists after every strike naturally made them wary of the usefulness of strikes. As a result, events overtook them in several cities. A clear pattern in Tver', Astrakhan', and Orel would be repeated in various parts of the country in 1919 and 1920: The mass movements could not be controlled by the leadership of any political party. In spring 1919 totally unknown common workers, members of the SD, SR, or Left SR parties, came forth as leaders of strikes. Unfortunately, only a few of their names are known. They considered themselves members of one of the three opposition parties, yet they acted on their own. The rank and file themselves became leaders of the protest movement, and the role of the official party leaders was considerably diminished.

In all known cases the Bolsheviks' initial response to strikes was to ban public meetings and rallies; this occurred in Moscow, Petrograd, Tver', Tula, Briansk, Sormovo, and Astrakhan'. In several cities (Petrograd, Sormovo, and Tula) the authorities confiscated strikers' food ration cards in order to suppress the strike. In at least five cities—Moscow, Petrograd, Tula, Briansk, and Astrakhan'—the Bolsheviks occupied the striking plant and dismissed the strikers en masse: In Orel and Briansk, the Bolsheviks took hostages from among the socialists during the disturbances. In all known cases the Bolsheviks arrested strikers: In Petrograd, 225; in Moscow, 12(?); in Tula, 200; in Tver', number unknown; in Briansk, 152; in Nizhnii Novgorod (including Sormovo), 115; in Astrakhan', several hundred (at least). In Petrograd, Briansk, and Astrakhan' the Bolsheviks executed striking workers. Data on the overall number of those killed or executed during the fighting are sketchy. They certainly do not include those killed in battles between the Greens and the Bolshevik forces or those killed in street clashes. Yet a few examples are available. According to Latsis, during an anti-Bolshevik rebellion in Smolensk in March 1919 one hundred people were killed. In Petrograd, Orel, Briansk, and Astrakhan' the estimate of those killed or executed reached several thousand. The United States consul wrote to the state department: "Reports from Moscow estimate the number of executions by order of the Extraordinary Commission as 7000 for the first quarter of 1919."⁷⁷

In discussing the patterns of the Bolshevik response we must remember the differ-

77. Latsis, "K zagovoru Levykh Eserov," 1. The United States State Department reacted to this information by responding, "what is the source of information regarding executions first quarter 1919?" (861 00 6346). Imbrie replied, "our agent [in] Smolny reported regarding Moscow executions. His statement being based on report of Moscow Executive Committee." 16 February 1920, Vyborg, dispatch no. 861 00 6362.

ence between the Bolsheviks in the capitals and in the provinces. Although their repressive actions were similar, their underlying motivations may have been different. Those in the capitals treated the workers in a pattern consistent with the Bolshevik tradition. The workers had to be guided; proletarian consciousness had to be brought in from above. Left to themselves, the workers would never rise above trade union consciousness. Workers' protests, therefore, were, for the Moscow Bolsheviks, expressions of petit bourgeois consciousness that had to be combated. Although provincial Bolsheviks also used similar rhetoric, their actions regarding the workers, peasants, and soldiers clearly demonstrated their desire to use their power, to show that they were the new masters. As Moscow Bolsheviks themselves admitted, dictatorial rule of these local autocrats was one of the main reasons for protest actions. Nevertheless, support of these upstarts in every town and in every *uezd* mattered much more for the eventual Bolshevik victory in the civil war against the Whites than the support of workers who had remained at the factory floor. The local cadres were indispensable for war effort. They were bad but no alternative existed.

The new element in the Bolshevik response to strikes, in contrast to the events of 1918, was the use of labeling. A strike was seldom referred to as a strike; it acquired a coded label: a Menshevik provocation or counterrevolutionary sabotage or White Guardist conspiracy. The Bolsheviks acquired a habit of perceiving and defining social reality in simplistic terms of class struggle: pure proletarians and petit bourgeois proletarians, class enemies and spies. Hidden enemies, saboteurs, enemies of the people—these terms are usually associated with a later period in Soviet history; yet they appeared in the political vocabulary during the civil war. It is not surprising that the Bolsheviks tried to stop the strikes and mutinies, especially since the White armies were launching successful offensives. What is remarkable is that the Bolsheviks treated the strikers as simply another group of enemies in the civil war—enemies on the internal front, as Latsis put it.⁷⁸ Attempts to fulfill workers' demands were few. Suppression of strikes was conducted like military operations in the civil war: occupation of plants, arrests, executions, and systematic purges. The Bolshevik response to workers' protest reveals the triumph of a new mentality. The Communist party now perceived its task to be fighting on all fronts: the civil war front, transportation front, ideological front, production front, and many others. The rise of a militaristic approach to politics, and the consequent substitution of bargaining and compromise by surveillance of not only workers' actions but also their political views, represents the ominous ingredients of a system later called Stalinism.

78. Latsis, *Dva goda bor'by na vnutrennem fronte*.