

How they did it!

How Did the Old Bolsheviks Work and Live?

How Did They Build the Bolshevik Party?

How Did They Prepare for the October Revolution?

Volume 1: Bolshevik History Library

Table of Contents

The Bolsheviks on Trial	5
PREFACE	6
I. UNDER ARREST	6
II. GIVING EVIDENCE.....	8
POLICE SOCIALISM.	8
DANGERS OF GIVING EVIDENCE.	10
TORTURE.....	12
"TRIAL"	13
SHADOWING	13
III. FAMOUS SPEECHES.....	14
MISHKIN.....	15
ALEXEYEV	17
ATTACK AT TRIAL	18
GOLDMAN	19
KNUNYANTZ.....	21
USES OF LAWYERS	23
Letter from Lenin to E. L. Stasova and to the Comrades in, Moscow Prison 19th January, 1905.	24
Unable to find: Book Publishing under Tsarism	29
Unable to find: PROVOCATEURS I HAVE KNOWN.....	30
The strike of the Dredging Fleet, 1905.....	31
Preface	32
I GO TO KERCH, CRIMEA.....	32
THE LIFE OF THE DOCKERS.....	32
I AM HIRED	33
BESPALOV IS AN OLD HAND	33
GETTING CONTACTS.....	34
WORK AMONG THE YOUTH	34
FORMING A GROUP	35
SOME NAIVE IDEAS.....	36
DISPUTE TERROR METHODS.....	37
WORK OUT DETAILED PLAN	38
OUT FOR THE NINEHOUR WORKING DAY	39

FINISH WORK AT 4 O'CLOCK	40
ORGANTZATION OF THE ILLEGAL TRADE UNION.....	40
SURVEY IS PLANNED.....	41
"BLANQUIST METHODS!"	42
ORDERED TO LEAVE.....	44
POLICE DISCOVER MEETING PLACE	44
PLANS OF STRIKE COMMITTEE	46
BEFORE THE SUPERINTENDENT	47
WE DECIDE TO TAKE ACTION	49
THE WORKERS COMMITTEE	51
A BOLSHEVIK VICTORY	52
The revolt on the armored cruiser "Potemkin"	53
Introduction.....	54
The revolt on the armored cruiser "Potemkin"	55
The "Potemkin" at Odessa	59
The cruiser "George the Conqueror" joins the "Potemkin"	64
The desertion of the "George the Conqueror" and the end of the revolt	68
The lessons of the mutiny of the "Potemkin"	69
From the February Revolution to the October Revolution 1917	74
AUTHORS PREFACE	1
BEFORE THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION	1
THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION.....	3
MY JOURNEY TO HELSINGFORS	12
MILITARY ORGANISATON OF THE R.S.D.L.P (BOLSHEVIKS) AND THE " <i>Soldiers' Pravda.</i> "	26
THE JULY DAYS	35
ON THE EVE OF OCTOBER	45
THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION	59
Bolshevik Smugglers	79
Petrol Starts on Its Voyage	80
Amusements on Land and Sea	82
A Mysterious Cruiser.....	85
In the Camp of the White Guards	86
We Become "Honest Tradesmen"	88
With the Secret Service and Revolutionaries.....	89

I Become Barkhudayants	91
Through the White Army to Red Moscow	93
A Man Under the Straw	95
A Very Brief Epilogue	97

The Bolsheviks on Trial

By

S. Tchernomordik

PREFACE

Before it became the dominant party, the Russian Bolshevik Party traversed the long and tedious road of underground work. The October victory was not easily gained. For decades the Party carried on a bitter struggle against the Tsarist autocracy

for the liberation of the working class. On the basis of different theoretical principles (the teachings of Marx and Engels) and on a changed social basis (developing capitalism and the growing labor movement) the Bolshevik Party continued the work of the earlier Russian revolutionary movement and utilized its experiences in its struggle with Tsarism. In this prolonged conflict with the brutal enemy of the toiling masses, our Party suffered not a few casualties. Many fighters did not live to witness the triumph of the proletariat. They perished gloriously on the battlefield in open combat, or on the gallows, in penal servitude, in prisons; from tortures, and manhandling, from the hard conditions of underground work.

But despite the great number of victims, the fierce blows of the Tsarist regime, and the temporary setbacks, our Party did not lay down its arms for a moment. After temporary defeats it reformed its ranks, so that it might continue the struggle under new conditions. It pushed onward continually towards victory. The basic organisational experience, which has facilitated the work of our Party in the struggle for the building of Socialism in our country, was gained in the period of underground work. The richness of this experience depended in many ways on the organisational methods used in the struggle against Tsarism. The complexity of these methods demanded from the Bolsheviks flexibility, initiative, persistency and a constant search for new organisational forms for the more advantageous use of the revolutionary forces.

I. UNDER ARREST

The Russian Bolsheviks learned much from the many rich experiences gained by the previous revolutionary generation in the struggle with Tsarism. While in the realm of theory, program and tactics the Bolsheviks rejected the ideological inheritance left by the movement of the Narodniki (populists) and of the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) of the '70's, and took up their position entirely on the basis of proletarian revolutionary Socialism, based on the teachings of Marx and Engels, they utilized the experiences of their predecessors, especially those of the members of the People's Will, however, in the field of underground activities, and in their conduct during trial. For several decades preceding the October Revolution, the conditions for underground work for the revolutionary parties in Russia remained almost unchanged. The methods employed by the organs of Tsarism in its struggle with the revolutionary movement were, in general, the same, varying only in accordance with local conditions and with the ideas of particular heads of the Secret Police.

We know from the evidence of the Tsarist Secret Service (Okhrana), and the Police Administration, at present in our possession, that there was scarcely a single Bolshevik, engaged in underground work, who had not been systematically shadowed by the agents of the Okhrana. The reports of these agents go into such great detail, that we are convinced that the agent of the Okhrana

followed his victim's every step. However, "outside observation" did not play the chief role in the Okhrana's activities. Commencing with the end of the '70's, the Tsarist government commenced to employ agent-provocateurs in its fight against the revolutionary movement. As the proletarian revolutionary movement grew the Police Department began to apply these methods on a large scale. For the "internal observation" of the organisation, and the discovery of its most active members, the Okhrana began to introduce its members into the directing organs of the Party, or terrorized members of the Party into becoming spies.

The archives of the Tsarist Okhrana indicate that these agents-provocateurs, who appear in the records under pseudonyms (most of them, after careful investigation, have been identified) gave fairly complete information as to the activities of the organisation. Moreover, in order to safeguard the secrecy of the Okhrana's work, they reported on their own work and activities within the organisation, under their Party pseudonyms. This mass provocation was a powerful weapon in the hands of Tsarism in its fight against the revolutionary movement. It complicated our struggle, in that we suffered many defeats, and made it difficult for us to carry on mass work. It compelled us to work in an extremely conspiratorial fashion, and to withdraw into the narrow shell of a secret organisation. However, neither the information gathered by the outside

agents of the Okhrana, nor the information obtained by the agents-provocateurs could provide sufficient material for the complete discovery of the organisation, or, even under the barbarian and bloody regime of the Tsarist autocracy, provide grounds for prosecution, or if they did, give them the possibility of formulating charges involving long terms of imprisonment or exile. The laws governing the Okhrana (which were in force up to the February Revolution) gave the latter power to arrest all active members of the organisation at sight, to keep them in prison without trial for long periods, and to deport them; but they could not place revolutionists on trial or sentence them to penal servitude or death. That was the function of the court.

A revolutionist of the seventies, Mishkin, once said that "A Tsarist court was no better than a brothel" (Mishkin's speech at his trial). Nevertheless, even the Tsarist court was obliged to have some legal basis for passing the sentence that the government desired. The reports of the detectives and agents-provocateurs were not treated as legal evidence. Firstly, because the reports were not direct evidence, and hence could be easily refuted at the trial, and secondly, because the agents-provocateurs could not be produced at the trial, since the Okhrana was interested in concealing their identity. Again, neither the detectives nor the agents-provocateurs could give a complete picture of the activities of the organisation, since the system under which the Party organized its secret activities only enabled them to become familiar with single episodes and aspects of the work.

For this reason, the Department of State Defense (Okhrana) and the Police Administration could only begin to collect materials that could be produced at the trial after the arrests, after the organisations had been raided. They tried to get information about the whole organisation on the basis of evidence obtained by questioning the prisoners. If they failed to get that information, they kept the prisoners under preliminary arrest or deported them to other districts. Sometimes they were

obliged to liberate the prisoners owing to lack of evidence. This latter course was very distasteful to the authorities, because they felt that all their efforts had been wasted.

That is why the authorities relied so much on the preliminary investigations which sometimes dragged on for years. The police officers and the examining magistrates did everything they could, during the examination of the prisoners, to induce them to give evidence that would help to betray the organisation completely and provide material for the trial.

A revolutionist under arrest and examination, had a great responsibility thrust upon him. It was not an easy matter to fight against the unseen forces of the secret police, and now, under arrest, the revolutionist was face to face with the cunning, experienced agent of the Okhrana for the first time, who strove in every conceivable way to trap his victim. It must be said that, owing to lack of experience of the revolutionist, or because he failed to understand the full consequences of his conduct under examination for the organisation, the Okhrana sometimes succeeded in procuring the material they sought.

II. GIVING EVIDENCE.

As a result of many years' experiences during the Tsarist regime, the Bolsheviks came to the conclusion that the best policy was to refuse to answer any questions whatever. These tactics were dictated by the methods which the Okhrana employed in trying to unearth the movement.

The revolutionist who fell into the enemies' hands was cut off from the outside world, and kept in solitary confinement for a month or two. No questions were asked, he was just left alone with his thoughts. This was, so to speak, the psychological preparation for the examination. During this period the Okhrana searched their archives to discover the exact identity of the prisoner. Frequently, the prisoner's parents came to the Okhrana asking for permission to visit him. The Okhrana officers would enter into conversation with them, and thus learn details of the prisoner's family life. They would warn them of the "terrible fate" awaiting their son, brother, or sister, as the case may be, and thus tried to work upon the feelings of the relatives in order to persuade them to advise the prisoner to make a "frank confession," because only "in this way," the Okhrana agent would say, "will he be able to escape the fate that awaits him."

POLICE SOCIALISM

After a month or two it depended on the speed with which they gathered in the material the prisoner is finally summoned for examination. The type of examination conducted by the Okhrana magistrate was determined by the social position and the personality of the prisoner. If he was a worker, the nature of the examination was very primitive. In keeping with the brutal customs of Tsarist Russia and with the attitude of the ruling classes towards the workers as towards beings of an inferior breed, the Okhrana officials tried to terrorize the prisoners at once. "If you don't confess, you son of a bitch, I will have you rot in prison, you will not leave here alive," was the classical threat of the Okhrana. If the worker was a revolutionist of long standing, the attitude of the Okhrana agent

was "milder." In such a case they treated him as a professional revolutionist, for they knew that these crude tricks would not work.

The treatment accorded to these professional revolutionists was more "subtle." Opposite the prisoner there were seated, not ferocious enemies, not brutes, ready to tear him to pieces, or a jeering malignant enemy, gloating over his victim, but a "humane" gentleman who sympathized with his "misfortune." The "conversation" begins, the tone is extraordinarily polite, the face of the Okhrana agent reveals deep concern for the fate of the prisoner. The latter is treated to expensive cigarettes (the prisoner had not smoked for a long time), tea and biscuits are brought in, and sometimes a good meal from the nearest restaurant.

"You are still young; your whole life is still before you; a single false step may ruin your whole career. It is very difficult for me to help you in spite of my warm regard for you, because there is too much evidence against you. All the material in our possession speaks against you. A very cruel fate awaits you. Only a frank confession can save you. If you make it, then perhaps, we may succeed in liberating you entirely. A few days ago, your mother called. Have you no pity for the old lady? She is overwhelmed with sorrow, and your revolutionary enthusiasm is the cause of it all. If you should be sent to the gallows, your mother will never survive it."

Such is the introduction. If this proves of no avail, the official starts a "friendly" conversation with the prisoner on all sorts of topics, hoping to put him off his guard. If he is lucky, he learns the political views of the prisoner and so determines which political party he belongs to. For interviews of this kind the most skilled Okhrana agents were employed, those who were fairly well equipped with knowledge on political questions. Certainly, their knowledge was very superficial, but it was quite sufficient for their "narrow specialties." Since they were often able to get hold of illegal literature, they were sometimes even better acquainted with it than the revolutionist they were examining. In this respect the chief of the Moscow Okhrana, Zubatov ¹, distinguished himself by creating a whole school of "educated Okhrana agents." Quite a number of revolutionists with limited experience, won over by this feigned "sincerity," were caught in the trap. From these "discussions"

¹ Zubatov, one time Chief of the Moscow Department of the Okhrana, initiator and founder of "Police Socialism," called "Zubatovschina" after him. Supported by the Tsarist government and the organisational machine of the Okhrana, Zubatov in 1890 and subsequent years, established a series of workers' organisations, directed by agents of the Okhrana, for the purpose of combating the revolutionary labor movement, which was developing on a large scale at that time. The "platform" of this organisation, which attracted the politically backward, those who had not yet severed their connections with the village, consisted of the following: the intelligentsia requires Revolution and all kinds of "freedoms," but the workers need only to have their material position improved, and the latter may be accomplished within the framework of the autocracy, which is ready to protect the interests of the workers. In order to strengthen the popularity of this organisation among the masses, Zubatov was compelled to go the length of calling strikes, so as to bring about conflicts with the bourgeoisie, who did not want to bear the burden of these police experiments. In these clashes the Zubatov movement experienced its first defeats. The final collapse of Zubatovschina came before the first Revolution, when it became obvious that the framework of the Zubatov organisations was too weak to hold back the revolutionary class movement of the proletariat and that these organisations were objectively beginning to serve the interests of the revolution. The Gapon movement was the swan song of Zubatovschina. After January 9, 1905, when the priest. Father Gapon, led the workers to the Winter Palace to petition the Tsar and when they were ruthlessly shot down by the Tsar's troops, all illusions concerning "Police Socialism" were dissipated.

Zubatov tried very hard to plant the seeds of his "teachings" among the revolutionary prisoners who fell into his hands.

with the arrested revolutionists the Okhrana agents obtained valuable material which enabled them to study the personnel of the revolutionary organisation.

After these "free and easy" conversations, the agent of the Okhrana passes to "real business." The examination begins. If the prisoner had allowed himself to be drawn into the "conversation" with the Okhrana agent before the examination, half the work was done. The prisoner, without realizing it himself, continues the conversation. The agent tries to astonish the prisoner with the exactness of the information in his possession. "On such and such a date, at such and such an hour you were at such and such a place; you carried such and such a parcel, tied up in a newspaper. You stayed there such and such a time and from there left in the company of so and so, at such and such an hour, and went to such and such a place." The prisoner is astounded. "On such and such a date you were at such and such a meeting; there were such and such persons present, and you said so and so." He is even more astonished. "Your denials are of no use, we know everything. We have learned it all from your comrades."

Crushed by this evidence, the prisoner, already caught in the toils of the Okhrana, is forced to give evidence. Either he begins to give full testimony, sparing neither himself nor his friends, and in this way unwillingly becomes a traitor, or he tries to invent evidence in order to disprove the agent's evidence, and in this way becomes entangled in contradictions, thus strengthening the authenticity of the Okhrana's evidence. In both cases the agent is able to obtain fresh material for unearthing the organisation, and for the trial.

Frank testimonies and attempts to "disprove" the evidence of the agents produced unfortunate results. It helped the Okhrana to unravel the complicated knot of the "case," and gave them clues for additional arrests and for the complete destruction of the organisation. It led to the betrayal of comrades, and in cases of imaginary evidence, to contradictions and to hints as to the part played by the prisoners in the revolutionary organisation.

DANGERS OF GIVING EVIDENCE

Frank testimony by a revolutionist was often the beginning of his political death. The Okhrana utilized this frank testimony to compromise him in the eyes of his organisation or to invite him to become an agent of the Okhrana. "You maintain that you don't know so and so, and never met him," says the Okhrana agent, "but here your colleague 'N' denies the truth of your statement in this matter. Here, would you like to glance over this testimony?" and he gives him a statement alleged to have been written by "N." Returning to the prison cell, the prisoner denounces "N," and hastens to tell all the political prisoners: "N is betraying us, beware of him." And "N," through his lack of caution, having been caught in the net of the Okhrana, drifts away from the revolutionary movement and is branded as a traitor all his life. It also happened that the prisoner, forced to the wall by the evidence given by the weaker comrade in his "frank confession," is compelled to admit the correctness of the evidence or give contradictory evidence, which of course got him more entangled. Often, with the best of intentions, a prisoner would take the whole blame upon himself and try to keep his comrades out of the business. But no good came of this, it was all grist to the Okhrana mill. The comrade did

not succeed in saving anybody, but either got himself entangled in contradictions, which confirmed the evidence of traitors, ran the risk of becoming a traitor himself, or at least of compromising himself in the eyes of the Party.

There was a case in Kharkov of a worker, named Voikov, who was very popular among the workers and who had been deported for the active part he took in the May Day demonstrations. He was brought back to Kharkov to give evidence on the work of the Kharkov Social-Democratic Party. He gave testimony, repented and admitted his sins. As a reward he was liberated from prison and his deportation was cancelled.

And then one of the prisoners in this case decided that since Voikov had betrayed everything, there was no sense in refusing to give testimony, and he too gave evidence at his own risk, partly affirming and partly denying the evidence of Voikov for the purpose of deceiving the gendarmes, and of exculpating his comrades. The result was that he supplied the Okhrana with valuable material and himself nearly became an accomplice of Voikov and barely escaped being branded as a traitor. Only when this case was cleared up was, he saved from shame and public disgrace.

But there were not a few cases when frank confessions led to a direct betrayal of the revolutionary cause. The Okhrana resorted to blackmail. "Although your testimony is frank and even if the court should find extenuating circumstances, it cannot give you a favorable verdict. Severe punishment awaits you. On the other hand, when your comrades hear that you have frankly confessed (and the court cannot conceal it) you will be compromised in the eyes of the revolutionists and they will try to take revenge on you, perhaps kill you. Yes, you are in a bad fix. But there is a way out. Come and work with us. We don't demand much from you. You can remain in the organisation, continue to carry on your work and keep us informed. If you agree, we are ready to keep your testimony secret, set you free, and thus save you from your dismal fate."

This reminds us of the proverb: "Give the devil a finger and he will take the whole hand." Many inexperienced young revolutionists were caught in the net of the cunning, hypocritical agent of the Okhrana under such circumstances. They made the mistake of believing that the ferocious enemy was "human"; they were deceived by the suave manners of the agent and allowed themselves to be drawn into discussions. For a moment the flame of hatred and contempt for the enemy was extinguished. That sealed their fate. It was the first step in the moral collapse of the revolutionist.

Most often (even in the case of experienced revolutionists) evidence was given with the best of intentions. The revolutionist often gave testimony, not in order to try to clear himself, but, as he thought, in the interest of the revolutionary organisations. Some revolutionists took the entire blame upon themselves so as to clear the more responsible leaders of the organisation. But these tactics gave positive results only in those cases where they were employed by experienced revolutionists. Generally speaking, the Okhrana knew very well who its most dangerous enemy was and it had sufficient means at its disposal to keep its hold on him; it was not deceived by the evasions of the prisoner, but the prisoner's evidence was of immense value to the Okhrana, because it provided clues

for completely unearthing the revolutionary organisation, provided material for the prosecution and for the liquidation of the organisation on "legal grounds."

For these reasons the Bolshevik Party, during the Tsarist regime, advised its members to refuse to give evidence of any kind during examination. In this the Party was not only guided by its own experience but also by that of the preceding generation. It remembered the testament of that outstanding revolutionary organizer and conspirator of the end of the '70's, a member of the "People's Will" Party, Alexander Mikhailov, who said: "I ordain you, brothers, to employ a uniform method of giving evidence prior to the trial; furthermore, I recommend that you refuse to make any statement under examination, no matter how clear the denunciation, or the reports of the Secret Service appear to be. This will save you from many mistakes."

It must be borne in mind that the refusal to give evidence carried with it heavy penalties, particularly for the Bolshevik revolutionists. Generally speaking, it was not easy to be an active Bolshevik under illegal or semi-legal conditions, but it was doubly hard for the Bolshevik when he fell into the hands of his enemies. But they had to be prepared to take the consequences of these tactics.

TORTURE

As was said above, the Tsarist Okhrana strove to obtain evidence from the arrested revolutionist by every conceivable means. But they did not always employ "humane" tactics and "refined" manners. The Okhrana usually employed those tactics during the first stages of the examination in the hope of luring the prisoners into its net. But long experience taught the Bolshevik to defeat these tactics. Fewer and fewer victims were caught on the hook of the Okhrana. Then the agents of the Okhrana showed their true colors. After the Revolution of 1905 there were very few "friendly discussions" with arrested Bolsheviks on the teachings of Marx, or the tactics of the Bolshevik and Menshevik Parties, and on general political questions.

After the pogroms that were organized by the Police Department and its agents all over the country on the eve of, and during the first revolution, after the brutal suppression of the 1905 Revolution, by the Tsarist government, the Okhrana could catch or deceive hardly anybody, not even the most inexperienced, with its hypocritical tactics at preliminary examinations. The Zubatov movement suffered complete collapse. Zubatov himself was released from his duties and sent out of Moscow. The cards were exposed and the Okhrana appeared openly as the bitter enemy of the revolutionary movement.

The Okhrana agents abandoned the practice of "conversations" and "persuasion" and adopted the tactics of terror. The enemy was triumphant and strove to consolidate its victory by means of terrorism.

During this period of the Russian Revolution, the Okhrana mostly resorted to physical force against arrested revolutionists under examination in order to compel them to give evidence. Torture was applied systematically during the examination: suspension by their fingertips, twisting of the

hands and legs, pouring of large volumes of water mixed with oil into the mouth, mutilation, flogging, these were the methods employed by the Okhrana to compel political prisoners to give evidence. Many Bolsheviks, who fell into the hands of the Okhrana still bear the marks of the torture inflicted on them.

"TRIAL"

The more stubborn the Bolsheviks were in refusing to give evidence the more this system of torture was employed. The tactics of refusing to give evidence were dictated by the political conditions prevailing at that time. For the purpose of liquidating the Bolshevik movement more rapidly, the Tsarist government began to hand over the cases of the Bolsheviks to the military courts and to the circuit courts, on charges which, according to the Criminal Code, carried penalties of death and penal servitude. The practice of administrative exile without trial to remote parts of Eastern Siberia which prevailed until that time, did not attain its end, because the Bolsheviks did not stay in exile long and very often escaped, sometimes even while on the way to the place of exile. The Tsarist government therefore decided to put the active Bolsheviks thoroughly out of commission.

Under these conditions every careless word uttered during the examination might cause irretrievable harm, not only to the entire organisation, but also to the person under examination. The attempts of some weak spirits to clear themselves by giving open testimony did not accomplish the purpose; long terms of imprisonment penal servitude awaited even them.

The tactics of refusing give evidence involved immeasurable suffering for the Bolsheviks. But this was only suffering of the body. The torments and torture of the hangmen threw no blemish on the revolutionary honor of the Bolsheviks. On the contrary, the refusal to give evidence under torture expressed the courage of the revolutionist and his contempt for the enemy. By his refusal to give evidence during examination, the Bolshevik signified his determined refusal to take any part whatsoever in "Exposing the work." Of course, the agents of the Tsarist government had sufficient means at their disposal to punish the defenseless Bolsheviks who fell into their clutches. They could shoot them on the pretext that they "attempted to escape"; they could simply strangle them or shoot them in the back while in prison. But the Tsarist government tried to punish the Bolsheviks in a "legal" manner, by putting them on trial.

The Russian Bolsheviks refused to be parties to this "judicial farce," and to the last the defenseless Bolshevik expressed his revolutionary determination; he refused to give evidence and, utilizing the right to the final speech in defense, held aloft the banner of the revolution and hurled his defiance at his enemies.

SHADOWING

The shadowing of the Bolshevik did not cease with his arrest. The Okhrana tried to exploit the life and conduct of the Bolshevik while in prison, for the purpose of collecting material for the trial. For this purpose, the Okhrana, placed its agent in the same cell as the Bolshevik, if he was put in a common cell, or in the next cell, if he was in solitary confinement. They counted on the inexperience

of the novice, on his indiscretion, or his dropping the rules of secrecy whilst in prison. The agent of the Okhrana in the cell tried to gain his confidence, to befriend him, and discover the details of the work. Sometimes, after a lengthy stay together in the same cell, if the agent were experienced and did not arouse suspicion by his conduct, this maneuver succeeded. The desire for social intercourse on the part of the imprisoned revolutionist often led him into unguarded discussions with his fellow prisoners, made him forget the need for discretion even while in prison. The new and inexperienced revolutionist particularly, sometimes thought the rules of secrecy were not required behind prison bars. The agents of the Okhrana were able to play on this. They even tried to obtain incriminating documents from the Bolshevik.

They tried to persuade him to send letters "outside" which were intercepted by the Okhrana and produced at the trial as evidence against him. But, if the Bolshevik did not become intimate with him, the agent limited himself to watching his victim. He listened to the conversation carried on by the Bolsheviks among themselves; made note of the tapping of signals between the Bolsheviks incarcerated in different cells, and thus, in one way or another, obtained good material for reports to the Okhrana.

More frequently, when the Bolshevik was in solitary confinement, the agent of the Okhrana occupied the neighboring cell. As soon as the arrested Bolshevik arrived in this cell a tapping was heard in the political prisoners' code, asking: "What is your name? In what case? Under what conditions were you arrested? Who else was arrested with you?" The novice, insufficiently experienced in conspiratorial work, thought this "correspondent" was a comrade and so swallowed the bait. Sometimes the new prisoner was warned in time by his comrades: "Comrade, be careful, so and so, in such and such a cell, is a police agent." If this was not done, the agent succeeded in gaining his confidence, induced him to write letters, which of course, would be handed over to the Okhrana.

Not only were agents of the Okhrana placed in cells with the prisoners, but the prison guards, the prison warden and his assistants closely watched the arrested Bolsheviks and reported what they saw to the Okhrana. For this reason, the general rule was established that a Bolshevik must observe the rules of secrecy in prison as strictly as "outside."

III. FAMOUS SPEECHES

The whole conduct of the Bolshevik under arrest was dictated by the interests of the revolution, the interests of the working class and of his Party. During the examination he refused to give evidence in the interest of the Party and at the trial used the prisoner's dock as the tribune from which to denounce his class enemies, and to proclaim to the broad masses the programme and tactics of his Party. Although the cases of "political criminals" were heard behind closed doors, and the court consisted of Tsarist officials, representatives of the nobility and the bourgeoisie (the so-called "representatives of the estates"), and although these trials were not reported in the press, nevertheless, the speeches of the revolutionists were made public. They were reported in the illegal press, and thus circulated amongst the broad masses. These speeches served as excellent agitation material, and for a whole generation revolutionists were educated by them.

Both at the examination and at the trial, the Bolsheviks took into consideration the experiences of the preceding revolutionary organisations. In the 70's and '80's the Tsarist government had not yet adopted the simpler method of dealing with the revolutionists. Administrative exile (i.e. without trial) to places "not so distant" and "distant" ² began to be applied later. At that time the Tsarist government gave the political prisoners the semblance of a trial. Their unfortunate experience in giving Vera Zasulich, who attempted to assassinate General Trepov, trial by jury is well known. Vera Zasulich was found not guilty. After this, the Tsarist government gave up such "experiments." "Political" cases began to be transferred to military courts or to courts composed of the "representatives of estates," i.e., the most bitter enemies of the working masses.

In order to show what a fund of experience the Bolsheviks obtained from the revolutionists of the 70's regarding court tactics, we will quote excerpts from the brilliant and biting 24

speeches delivered by two revolutionists of that time: the plebian intellectual Ippolit Mishkin, and the weaver Peter Alexeyev.

MISHKIN

Mishkin was one of several hundred revolutionists arrested for propaganda work among the peasants, which was being carried on in the middle of the '70's in many Russian districts. In many parts of the country the Tsarist government arrested hundreds of agitators and put them on trial in order to smash the revolutionary movement of that time. Altogether 193 revolutionists were brought to trial and it became known as the "Trial of the 193." This was the first great political trial held in Russia. To many of the accused it was their revolutionary baptism, which helped them later on to play a great role in the revolutionary movement. However, the participants

did not constitute a single organisation, directed by a single centre. Under the influence of the ideas of Bakunin, which prevailed at that time, the young intellectuals abandoned their studies and their families, gave up their previous ways of life, and "went to the people" in the villages and supported themselves there by such work as they could find (as teachers, physicians, handicraftsmen and so on) so as to be nearer to the peasantry, and to rouse them to political consciousness. But this was not an organized movement in the sense that we understand it today. It was a movement united by the common ideas that swayed the revolutionary intelligentsia at that time.

For this reason, the trial of the 193, artificially instigated by the government, revealed not an organisation, but the revolutionary ideas of that time. At the trial, Mishkin appeared as the brilliant exponent of these ideas and of revolutionary implacability towards the enemies of the people.

Almost half century has elapsed since then, and in spite of the events of worldwide importance which have occurred since, one cannot but feel enraptured by the revolutionary heroism and passion displayed by Mishkin at the trial. He was not the "accused," but a terrible judge, pouring

² The formal wording of the order of exile. Ed.

forth his wrath on the "judges." In spite of the continuous interruptions of the President of the Senate (the case was heard at a special session of the Senate), Mishkin succeeded in voicing his ideas.

The President of the court wanted to restrict Mishkin to the specific charges on which he was being tried, and not allow him to say anything that might condemn the Tsarist government, and that would reveal the condition of the country and the peasantry. Mishkin, however, insisted on speaking to the country from the dock, to explain the ideas of the revolutionary

movement, to expose the policies of the autocratic government and to present a picture of the people's suffering. A bitter struggle ensued between the President and Mishkin which only ended with the forcible removal of Mishkin from the court room and the closing of the session by the perplexed Senator.

This struggle commenced at the very beginning of Mishkin's examination. To the customary formula of the President, "Accused Mishkin, you are charged with belonging to an illegal society, the object of which is, in the more or less distant future, to overthrow and change the system of government," Mishkin answered, "I admit that I belong, not to a society, but to the Social Revolutionary Party." And he went on to say: "We represent an infinitesimal part of the now large Russian Social Revolutionary Party, understanding by this term the whole mass of persons who hold similar opinions to ours, similar in general of course, but not in particular, the union between whom is mainly inward, but which nevertheless is sufficiently real and is determined by a unity of purpose and similarity more or less in methods of practical activity." Further, ignoring the interruptions of the President who tried to keep him to the definite charges in the indictment, Mishkin described the poverty-stricken conditions of the people, their exploitation, their political repression, the history of the people's movement, and proved that the programme and tactics of the "Social Revolutionary Party" is in complete accordance with the hopes and aspirations of the people.

In the usual stereotyped form, the indictment charged the accused with undermining religion, and repudiating science. Mishkin indignantly denied these charges. "In the ideal social structure for the realization of which I am striving, and the establishment of which is the aim of my activities, there will be no criminal penalties for spreading pernicious ideas, including religious ideas, for heresy, for observing or failing to observe certain rites prescribed by any particular church, etc. In one word, there will be no place for violence against the ideas and conscience of men. According to our ideal, there should be no power to compel one to lie and be hypocritical under threat of punishment. President: "But nobody compels you to lie and simulate, now.

I request you not to make such insinuations." Mishkin: "According to your laws I am liable to criminal punishment. I cannot leave the Orthodox Church and adopt another faith, consequently the law compels me to be hypocritical."

And the President could not find anything better to say than to declare that the accused had no right to criticize the existing laws. It became perfectly clear from the behavior of the President, who grew more and more furious as the trial proceeded, and who interrupted Mishkin at every sentence, that further words were useless. All that could be said, had been said. This became particularly

obvious when Mishkin protested against the torture to which he was subjected while under examination. The President said that this protestation was unsupported by evidence, and when Mishkin stated that he had made a written protest to the Public Prosecutor, the President answered that this was a matter for the Prosecutor, who was not a subordinate of the court.

Then Mishkin made his last speech, which the gendarmes prevented him finishing by gagging him. Here is the speech:

"In that case, after the numerous interruptions to which I have been subjected by the President, there is only one thing left for me to do and that is to make what perhaps is my last declaration. I am quite convinced now that the opinion expressed by my comrades who refused to make any statement at the trial was quite right, namely that in spite of the absence of publicity, I would not be given the opportunity of making clear the real character of the case. Now, it is obvious to everybody, that here at every frank word uttered the accused is gagged. Now I can say, and I have every right to say it, that this is not a trial, but an empty farce, or something even worse, hideous, shameful, more shameful ." At this point the gendarmes seized Mishkin and gagged him; but in a stifled voice he managed to finish the sentence: "... than a brothel; there women sell their bodies because they are in want, but here the judges are rascals and lickspittles; for the sake of rank and fat salaries they trade in others' lives and sell truth and justice and all that is dearest to humanity."

Mishkin is forcibly dragged out. In the gallery women fall into hysterics, noise and confusion reign. The session is closed, and the court room is cleared.

ALEXEYEV

The speech delivered by the weaver Peter Alexeyev, at the "Trial of the 50" was fully imbued with class consciousness. He was not an intellectual commoner "going to the people" to rouse them to rebellion, not merely an avenger of the people's suffering, but a true proletarian, who understood the interests and the problems of his CLASS. In spite of the Narodniki teachings which he imbibed in the circle organized by Sophie Bardin, his class instinct triumphed over all the Narodniki dogmas, and for the first time in the history of the revolutionary movement a class-conscious proletarian, who bore the marks of the terrible exploitation of Russian capitalism and the political oppression of Tsarism spoke out in court. He faced the Tsarist. judges not as a "poor working man," crushed by exploitation, but as a revolutionary proletarian, submitting a bill of charges against his class enemy. In the simplest manner imaginable, he described the conditions of the workers. They work 17 hours a day for a wage of 40 kopecks a day, and from their meagre wages fines are deducted for every trifle. He described the ignorance and degradation in which the workers lived, the insults and torments they suffered at the hands of the capitalists.

"Under present conditions," he said, "the workers cannot satisfy the most elementary human needs. Have we any leisure for study? Do we, the poor, receive any education in our childhood? Are useful books published for the workingman? Where, and what may they study? Look at the Russian popular literature. Nothing can better illustrate this case than such

books as Bava the Crown Prince,' 'Yerusan Lazarevitch,' Vanka Kain, The Bride is in the Ink and the Bridegroom in the Soup, etc. That is why the popular opinion about books is that: Some are amusing, others are religious. This is reality. In vain does the government think that the workers don't understand this reality.

"Do you think we do not see that all around us people are enriching themselves and making merry at our expense? Do you think we do not understand why we are valued so cheaply and where the fruits of our intolerable labor go? Why are the others able to live luxuriously, without toil? Whence come their riches? The working people, although living in primitive conditions and until now without education, regard this as a temporary evil; and they think the same about political power which has been temporarily usurped by force."

What was the way out? P. Alexeyev declared that first of all it was necessary to overthrow the autocracy, which was on the side of the capitalists. Considering that the ideas of Bakunin, who repudiated the struggle for political liberties, predominated at that time, the idea expressed by Alexeyev was a bold innovation.

"The Russian working people," he said in conclusion, "can rely only upon itself; it can expect help from no one except the young intellectuals (the President interrupts "Be silent"). Only they are willing to march inseparably with us until the muscular arms of millions of working people are raised. (the President shouts: "Be silent!") Alexeyev, raising his voice: and the yoke of despotism which is upheld by soldiers. Bayonets, will be reduced to dust."

According to a lawyer who was present at the trial, Alexeyev's speech produced such a powerful impression on the public and even on his guards that they were all dumbfounded. "If," said the attorney, "Alexeyev had faced about and left the dock, nobody would have stopped him, so astonished were they all."

Peter Alexeyev's speech for many decades was circulated in thousands of copies as a fine agitational pamphlet.

ATTACK AT TRIAL

From the revolutionists of the '70's the Bolsheviks inherited revolutionary courage and determination. Like them, the Bolsheviks, when on trial, did not "defend" themselves, but attacked. But in addition, they introduced something new, that reflected the complicated conditions of the political life of Russia of the twentieth century. It was insufficient to hurl biting criticism against the political regime and the exploitation of Russian capitalism. It was essential at the trial to unfold the programme and tactics of the Bolsheviks, and to distinguish them from the program and tactics of the other illegal revolutionary parties. The Public Prosecutor in his indictment swept all parties into one heap from the point of view of the statutes of the criminal code which provided penalties for "those who strive to overthrow, in the more or less distant future, the existing order." From the point of view of the prosecutor, the Bolsheviks, the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks were all "criminals," some more dangerous, others less, the difference being only in degree, so to speak. Under

these circumstances the Bolshevik's task in court was a complicated one. His speech at the trial had to be a political speech, in which he had to trace very clearly the programme, the tactics and current political tasks of the Party. The Bolshevik on trial was not so much expected to make a fine oration as to formulate the Party position.

This is precisely the main trait revealed by the Bolsheviks who had to stand trial on the eve of the first revolution. As an example, we will quote excerpts from two speeches, which most clearly illustrate these traits; the speech of Leon Goldman, who was arrested in connection with the Kishenev illegal printing plant of the newspaper *Iskra*, and the speech of Bogdan Kenyantz, arrested in connection with the work of the Moscow Committee of the Bolsheviks (1904).

GOLDMAN

In 1901, in Kishenev, the Okhrana seized the underground printing plant of the Social-Democratic group *Iskra*, from the left wing of which later developed the Bolshevik Party. In connection with this raid a group of Social-Democrats, under the leadership of Leon Goldman, were arrested. After two years of preliminary investigation, during which the accused were kept in solitary confinement, the case was brought up in the circuit court (with the "representatives of the estates," of course) behind closed doors.

In the old stereotyped form, the indictment charged the "criminals" with "incitement to riot against the supreme powers," and it was from this point of view that all the printed matter seized during the raid on the printing plant was regarded. The stupid agents of the inept Tsarist government were not so much concerned about analyzing the revolutionary movements as in fitting the "cases" into the statutes of the law which provides a penalty of a long term of imprisonment, or exile to remote places in Eastern Siberia. It goes without saying that all the various trends in the revolutionary movement in Russia were tarred with the same brush in the opinion of the prosecution, with some slight difference in shade, determined, not by the character of the revolutionary party the accused belonged to, but by the degree of "criminality" of the accused. The task of the revolutionary Social-Democrats on trial under these circumstances was to make the trial one of principle, and to let the country know the true character of the Party, to familiarize it with its programme and policies. In short, the Bolshevik had to do at the trial what he did while at "liberty" propagate the ideas and programme of his Party, and to call the masses to fight for the demands inscribed on its banner.

It was with this task in mind that Leon Goldman began his speech. He said:

"I admit that I took part in the work of the secret press in Kishenev, which printed Social-Democratic literature. But I was very much surprised when I learned from the indictment that I am accused of inciting to riot. I absolutely deny the charge of inciting to riot. Social-Democracy has nothing in common with rioting. I am a Social-Democrat and I belong to the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party." Goldman then proceeded to explain the programme and tactics of the Social-Democratic Party.

It must be stated that Goldman's position at this trial was more favorable than that of the revolutionists of the '70s and '80s. The revolutionary wing of Social Democracy which was united in the "Iskra" group, in which Lenin played the leading role, had emerged victoriously from its struggle with the opportunist elements (the "economists") in the Social-Democratic movement. In this struggle the chief elements of the programme and tactics of the revolutionary Social-Democracy were crystallized. Parallel with this internal struggle, an external process of dissociation from the neo-Narodniki (the Socialist-Revolutionary Party) and from the Liberal movement, was taking place.

This process was accompanied by a bitter struggle, directed by the "Iskra" group, led by Lenin. In this struggle on many fronts, revolutionary Social-Democracy acquired its ideological into Bolshevism. form and laid the basis of the movement which later developed

Goldman was thus able to come forward at the trial with the full programme of "Iskra" and to show that the question at issue was not a mere riot, but revolution, under the hegemony of the proletariat and led by Social-Democracy.

There is another aspect of Goldman's speech which distinguished it from the speeches delivered at their trial by the revolutionists of the '70s and '80s. His was the speech of a revolutionist of the epoch tinged with the red dawn of the approaching revolution. He said:

"We stand in the dock before this court, but we are not criminals. We are prisoners of war, and the government itself proves this by its conduct towards us. The government snatched us from the ranks of the fighting revolutionary army, kept us in prison for two years and now, in handing us over to the court, wants to make us responsible for the revolutionary conflagration that is sweeping over all Russia. But where is the logic of this? By establishing a secret printing press, and publishing manifestoes and leaflets, we protested against the enforced silence to which the government condemned the country. By these means we sought to meet the growing demand of the people for freedom of lutenists speech, the need of which, during this period, has been felt by the widest strata of the people and society. And, if from the point of view of the autocratic government we have committed crimes, then the responsibility for this rests not only on us but on an enormous part of the population of Russia, whose will we carried out. But an entire people cannot commit a crime. The will of the people is law. And when the time arrives when the people will judge the government, it will mean that the time has arrived when the people will put the government in the dock. The government itself, by placing almost the whole of Russia under martial law, thereby proclaimed that all her citizens are politically unreliable. And all the politically unreliable, i.e., those in whom slavish submission has given way to the sense of civic duty, should unite with the revolutionary movement and take their places in the ranks of the fighters for the liberation of Russia from the power of the bureaucracy, which builds its wellbeing on rivers of the people's blood. I, as a true citizen of the fatherland, did this. I joined the ranks of these fighters. I gave the great cause all my strength, all my abilities."

This is the manner in which the representative of a Party for which the path and perspectives of the revolution were clear, of the Party which led the proletarian masses to struggles and victories, could speak.

KNUNYANTZ

The remarkably simple and profound speech delivered by the Bolshevik, Bogdan Knunyantz expressed the spirit of the oncoming revolution.

His trial took place on March 30th (old style) 1905, after the events of "Bloody Sunday," January 9th.

At the arrest of Knunyantz the manuscript of the manifesto signed by the "Moscow Committee R.S.D.L.P." was discovered. This was the only piece of "legal" evidence against him. If Knunyantz had desired to defend himself on legal grounds it would not have been difficult for him to refute the charge of belonging to the Moscow Committee and clear himself, particularly in view of the consternation that reigned among the agents of the Tsarist government after January 9th. But he did not choose to do this. As a revolutionist, as a Bolshevik, he decided to utilize the trial for the cause of his Party.

When the President of the court read the order of the Minister of Justice to hold the trial behind closed doors, Knunyantz asked whether the court could reverse this order. The reply was in the negative, upon which Bogdan Knunyantz made the following declaration:

"In view of the fact that the trial is to be held behind closed doors, which renders it impossible for public opinion to control this litigation between the revolutionists and the government, I think it is quite useless for me to take part in the court enquiry, and I warn you that I shall not answer any questions. With this I reserve for myself the right to the final speech, as I consider it my revolutionary duty to utilize every opportunity for propagating my ideas."

The experience of the revolutionary movement had not passed without leaving traces also on the Tsarist public prosecutors. At the trial of Knunyantz, the public prosecutor made a more or less politically literate speech. He characterized the political position of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, referred to the international character of the Party, the identity of its ideas, both as to programs and theories, with those of the Western European Socialist Parties, and its Socialistic aims that could only be attained by means of social revolution. But, he said, Russian Social-Democracy was unlike Social-Democracy in Western Europe in that the latter engaged in the peaceful agitation and propaganda of its ideas, whereas Russian Social-Democracy incited the workers to rioting and mass violence. It was, he said, a second Pugatshev movement.³

³ Pugatshev. Leader of the peasant rebellion on the Volga in 1773/75.37

Developing the characteristics of Social-Democracy mentioned by the prosecutor, Knunyantz in his speech said:

"He (the prosecutor) was right, of course, in pointing out the international character of our programme and our whole theoretical viewpoint which is based on that of the teachers of international Socialism, Marx, and Engels. He correctly pointed out our fundamental aim is socialism, and the only road to it, the social revolution, toward which, we are profoundly convinced, the whole development of our economic life is leading. We are certain that the proletariat will achieve socialism, not by way of social reforms, not by palliatives under the capitalist system, but by irreconcilable struggle against the very basis of that system, private ownership of the means of production and that only with the transfer of the latter into the hands of the whole people will an end be put to the exploitation of one section of the people by another. The indispensable condition for this must be the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the conquest of political power by the proletariat."

At the time of the Knunyantz trial Russia was seething with political life. The defeats suffered by Tsarism in the Russo-Japanese War, the growth of the labor movement after the events of January 9th, the growth of the peasant movement, the revival of the liberal bourgeois movement all this disorganized the autocratic government, and the ground was shaking under its feet. Tsarism's former confidence in its own strength was shattered; the revolution was reaching for its throat and was ready to strangle it.

This picture of the epoch was reflected in Knunyantz's speech. He said:

"Mr. Prosecutor laid special emphasis on the last lines of the manifesto, ending with the exclamation Down with the Autocracy! But who, now, does not cry out 'Down with the Autocracy'? Is there a single honest man in our country who does not understand that only the overthrow of the autocracy will extricate our country from the deadlock into which the rapacious policies of the bureaucrats have driven it; that only the overthrow of the autocracy will give an impetus to the further development of its cultural forces. After the heroic demonstration of the St. Petersburg proletariat, after the revolutionary strikes that have broken out all over Russia, after the united protest after the strikes of the university students, after the ceaseless agrarian unrest, finally, after the movement which has now spread among the hitherto inert strata of educated society, it is no secret to anyone, that the days of the autocracy are numbered. Within a month or so, the terrible wave of the people's revolution will completely wipe out this relic of our barbaric past. And what does all this mean to this court? Really, to carry things to their logical conclusion, you should put the entire Russian people in the dock. But the great question will then arise as to who will be the accused and who the judges.

"... Your court is not certain that the verdicts it pronounces can be carried out, and that all its work may not have been a waste of time. Take even my case. On a strict interpretation of articles 126 and 129 under which the prosecutor charges me, I should be sent to penal

servitude up to eight years, or sent into lifelong exile. But is it not absurd, Messrs. Judges, to talk about such verdicts now? Is there one among us who seriously thinks that the autocracy will live for another eight years, or even one or two years? Does not the demand of the law for lifelong exile at a time when none of us can be sure of the morrow sound like cruel irony? All Russia is seething. Very soon nothing will remain of the government and the rubbish of court orders and verdicts; and those who are now on trial will be among the most energetic leaders of young Russia. How then, Messrs. Judges, can you seriously think of passing paper resolutions?"

Perhaps the judges realized the awkward position they were in, for in spite of the slashing speech he made, Knunyantz received a sentence of only four months imprisonment.

USES OF LAWYERS

Only a few words remain to be said about the role of counsel at the trials of Bolsheviks. Some may ask if the Bolsheviks did not "defend" themselves in court why was it necessary to engage counsel? Was that

not inconsistent? It was very useful, however, to have counsel at political trials. In the first place, through him the revolutionary prisoner, who was cut off for a long time from society, was able to establish contact with the "outside" world and with the representatives of his party. The lawyers sympathetic to the revolutionary movement did not refuse to act in this capacity. This contact was made easier by the fact that the lawyer was able to visit the prisoner alone in his cell both before as well as during the trial. A person sitting in solitary confinement knows the importance of connections with the outside world; it keeps up the spirit of the comrade who is torn away from the active revolutionary ranks, it often enables him to continue to work for the movement by correspondence and literary activity. Connection with the "outside" world was often essential for the revolutionary prisoner in preparing his escape from prison. Secondly, it was important that the revolutionist on trial, whose punishment the government was preparing behind closed doors, should have in the court room a man who had the right to interfere in the case, to speak and compel the court to adhere to the rules of court procedure formulated by the government itself, but which were systematically violated by the agents of the court when revolutionists were involved. Very often these rules of procedure, with which usually the revolutionist was not familiar, made it easier for him to expose the crimes of Tsarism and put the position of his Party.

Finally, in view of the absence of public control at the trial, since political cases were tried behind closed doors, counsel for the defense acted, as it were, as the representative of the public, who informed the latter about everything that took place at the trial. The government did not succeed in keeping the truth from the public, it did not succeed in keeping the secrets of the "court" torture chamber and all the circumstances and details of the case. Through the lawyer, they became public property.

However, while inviting the services of the lawyer the Bolshevik restricted his sphere of activity. The lawyer had to concern himself only with the juridical aspects of the case. He was not to

engage in the political Bolshevik Party for the purpose of shielding his client and defense of the accused or to analyses the viewpoints of the gating the penalty. His task was more modest. During the evidence of the police officials and spies and show up the trial he had to weaken the evidence juridically, refute the flimsiness of the charges. In his speech for the defense, he had to make an estimation of the case from the legal point of view, to compromise it juridically. Of course, he had to bring forward all the juridical arguments at his command in order to try to secure an acquittal, or at least a light sentence for his Regarding the political aspects of the case he was permitted client. by his client to sketch in his speech the political conditions of the country, against the background of which the case may have arisen, but under no circumstances to touch upon the viewpoint of the Bolshevik Party. The Bolshevik could not entrust a nonparty lawyer, or one belonging to another party, with the task of speaking in the name of the Party. This task the accused Bolshevik took upon himself. The degree to which the role of counsel for the defense was restricted by the Bolsheviks is strikingly illustrated by the four arrested Moscow Bolsheviks, in reply to their question as to the lowing letter written by Lenin to Comrade Stasova and the line of conduct, they were to pursue during the examination and at the trial.

Letter from Lenin to E. L. Stasova and to the Comrades in, Moscow Prison 19th January, 1905.

Dear Friends,

I have received your inquiry as to tactics at the trial (from the letter of Absoluta and from a note, "passed on literally" through an unknown person). Absoluta writes of two points of view. In the note three groups are spoken of, perhaps the three following shades are being contemplated, which I will try to formulate.

1. Repudiate the trial and directly boycott it.
2. Repudiate the trial and not take part in the court investigation. To invite counsel only on condition that he speaks exclusively on the incompetency of the court from the point of view of abstract law. In the final speech to expound our credo and demand that the case be tried by jury.
3. Concerning the final speech, the same. To utilize the trial as an agitational medium and for this reason to take part in the court investigation with the help of counsel. To point out the illegality of the trial and even to call witnesses to prove an alibi.

Further question. Should you merely state that you are Social-Democrats by conviction or admit that you are members of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party?

You write that it is necessary to have a pamphlet on this question. I am of the opinion that it is not expedient now, without experience, to issue a pamphlet. Perhaps we will deal with it in the newspaper, when occasion offers. Maybe some one of the arrested wills write a short article on the subject for the newspaper (about a thousand words). This will be the best perhaps as the beginning of a discussion.

Personally, I have not yet arrived at a definite opinion, and I would prefer, before speaking definitely, to discuss the matter thoroughly with the comrades awaiting trial or who have been on trial. I will formulate my ideas in order to start such a discussion. Much depends on what the trial will be like, i.e., whether there will be any opportunity of utilizing it for purposes of agitation or not. If the first will be the case, then tactics No. 1. are unsuitable. If the second, then they will be useful but only after an open, specific and energetic protest and declaration. If, however, there is an opportunity to utilize the trial for agitational purposes, then tactics No. 3. are desirable. A speech explaining the credo is very desirable in general, very useful, in my opinion and in the majority of cases might play an agitational role. Particularly in beginning to utilize the Tsarist court, a Social-Democrat should in his speech, deal with the Social-Democratic programme and tactics. It is argued that it is not expedient to confess membership of the Party, of a specific organisation, that it is better to limit oneself to the statement: "I am a Social-Democrat by conviction." It seems to me that organisational relationships should not be mentioned in the speech, i.e., to say: "for obvious reasons, I shall not speak about my organisational relationships, but I am a Social-Democrat and I shall speak about our Party." Such an attitude would have two advantages: it will be precisely and definitely stated that it is forbidden to speak about organisational relationships (i.e., whether I am a member of an organisation, what organisation, etc.), and at the same time reference will be made to OUR Party. This is necessary in order that the Social-Democratic speeches in court shall be Party speeches and declarations, so that the propaganda shall serve the purpose of the Party. In other words: formally I will not discuss my organisational relationships, I shall remain silent about them; formally, I shall not speak in the name of any organisation whatsoever, but as a Social-Democrat, I shall speak to you about Our Party and ask you to accept my declaration as an attempt to expound precisely the Social-Democratic opinions that have been expressed in the whole of our Social-Democratic literature, in such and such pamphlets, leaflets and newspapers.

Concerning the lawyer, you must keep a tight hold on him. Put him in a "state of siege," because these intellectual rascals often play dirty tricks. They should be warned in advance: "If, you son of a bitch, you play any dirty trick or commit any political OPPORTUNISM, if you speak about the immaturity, or about the incorrectness of Socialism, about being carried away with enthusiasm, about Social-Democrats repudiating violence, about the peaceful character of their teachings and of their movement, or anything like that, then, I, the accused will immediately interrupt you publicly, call you a scamp, and announce that I reject such a defense, etc."; and carry out this threat.

Only a clever lawyer should be engaged; others are no use. They must be told in advance to confine themselves exclusively to criticizing and tripping up the witnesses and the prosecutor on questions regarding the facts and the wording of the indictment, exclusively to concern themselves with discrediting the weak points of the court. Even the clever liberal lawyer is very much inclined to say or to hint at the peaceful nature of the Social-Democratic movement, at the recognition of its cultural role even by men like Attorney Wagner, etc. All such inclinations should be scotched at their roots. As, Bebel I believe, said, lawyers are the most reactionary people. Every man in his place. Be only a lawyer, ridicule the witnesses for the prosecution and the prosecutor. The most you may do is to compare the trial with a trial by jury in a free country, but don't touch on the convictions of the

accused, don't dare say a word about what you think about these convictions; because you liberals, so far fail to understand those convictions, that even when you praise them, you cannot refrain from uttering banalities. Of course, this can be explained to the lawyers politely, mildly, compliantly, flexibly and cautiously. But the best thing is to fear the lawyers and not to trust them, especially when they say that they are Social-Democrats and members of the party (according to our Paragraph 1.) ⁴

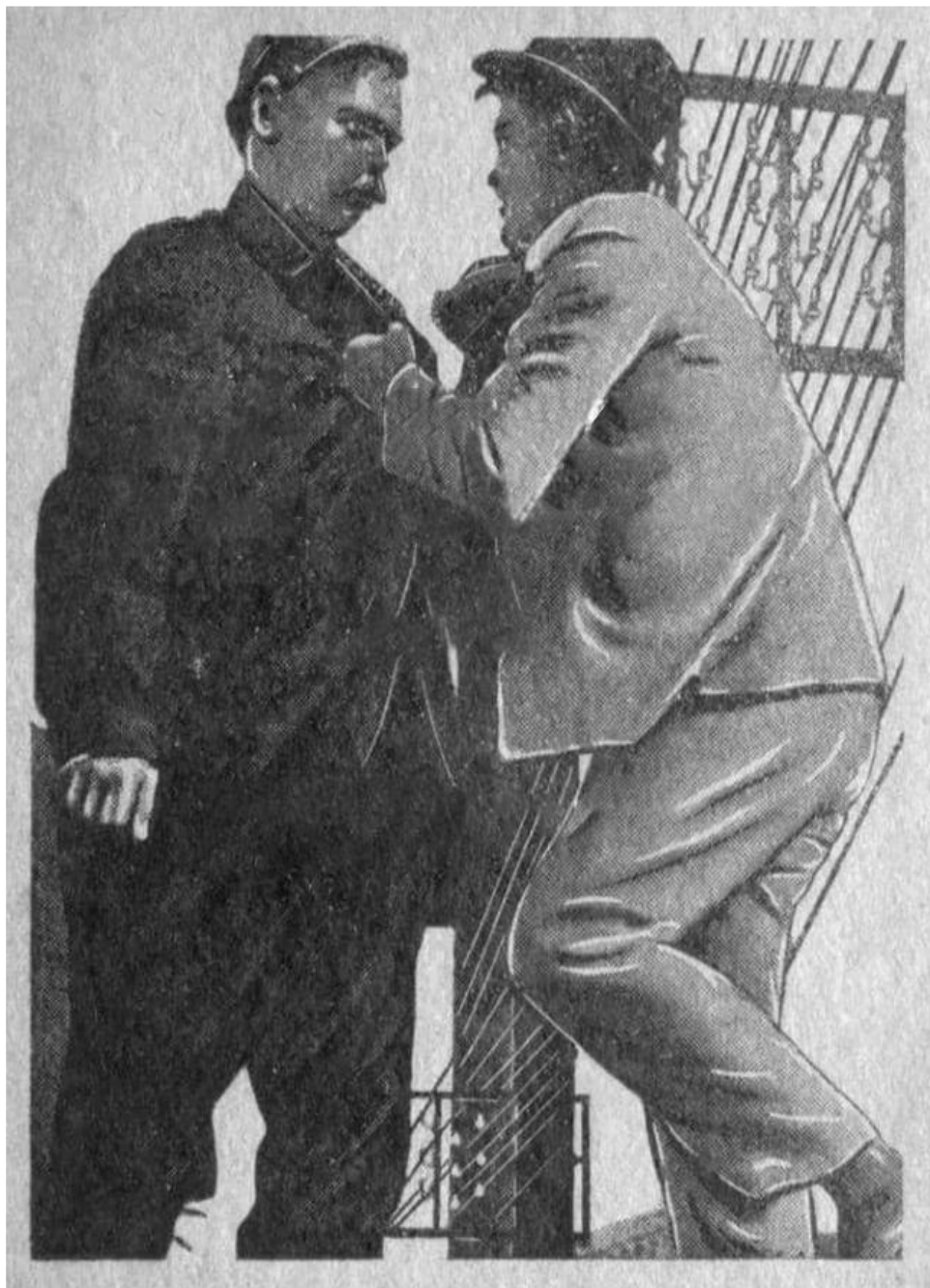
The question of taking part in a court investigation is determined, it seems to me, by the questions of the lawyer. Having a lawyer means to take part in the court investigation. Why not take part for the purpose of tripping up the witness and for agitation against the court? Of course, one must be very careful, that need hardly be said. It would be best of all to announce at once, before the court investigation starts, in reply to the first question put by the President: "I am a Social-Democrat and in my speech, I shall tell you what this means.

⁴ At the time Lenin wrote, this paragraph 1. of the Party Rules permitted membership to the Party to all those who declared their agreement with the Party programme and paid Party dues. The rule did not insist on the member performing active party work. The Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, fought against this rule on the ground that it opened the door of the party to all sorts of opportunist elements. A few months after this letter was written the Bolsheviks secured a majority and altered par. 1 in such a way as to restrict membership of the Party only to those who took an active part in its work.

Unable to find: Book Publishing under Tsarism

Unable to find: PROVOCATEURS I HAVE KNOWN

The strike of the Dredging Fleet, 1905



By

Peter Nikiforov

1931

Preface

The first half of 1906 in the south of Russia was marked by a mighty wave of Strikes. The blow struck at the Tsarist government by the proletariat of St. Petersburg and Moscow at the end of 1905 resounded throughout the land during the whole of 1906.

There was nothing but one strike after another in the iron and steel mills in the South and in the Urals; a powerful movement broke out among the seamen of the Black Sea mercantile marine and in the Black Sea ports; a new wave of revolution was gathering among the sailors in the navy, in the Black Sea and Baltic fleets. The situation demanded continuous, resolute work. The Social-Democratic organizations were trying to mobilize all their forces to bring the growing movement under its influence and take the leadership into its own hands.

I GO TO KERCH, CRIMEA

The Crimean Committee proposed that I should immediately depart for Kerch to help our organization there. In the situation that had arisen Kerch was of great importance. For it was through the Kerch Straits, and through them alone that a colossal amount of grain was exported from the Rostov, Taganrog and Mariupol ports. The stoppage of sea traffic in the Kerch Straits paralyzed the work of the Azov Sea ports and held up exports. Intensive work had to be done among the dredge workers and the dockers in the Kerch port.

The Kerch organization was Menshevik throughout and was supported in its work by two small metal works, where fairly strong Menshevik workers' groups were to be found; the dredge workers and the dockers had not come under the influence of the Mensheviks, the Social Revolutionaries and the anarchists were not particularly strong and held only a few groups among the Kerch petty bourgeois.

At the decision of the Kerch Committee, I was sent to work among the dredge workers and dockers. I took up the work given to me with enthusiasm.

Whole days I hung around first the dredge workers, then the dockers. I saw the life of the latter, listened to their talks, and soon began to understand their troubles, and to pick out those of their complaints around which I should be able to agitate them.

THE LIFE OF THE DOCKERS

All the loading and unloading at the docks was carried on in those days by contractors who played in with the port and steamship administrations and who cruelly exploited the disunited mass of dockers. They turned the dockers into drunkards with vodka and then cheated them over their wages. Payday among the workers was always a time of strong dissatisfaction against the contractors. I learned all this in detail and remembered it for my future work.

I could have become a docker, but I decided to get in with the dredge workers.

The dredgers were being overhauled, and only a small section of the fleet was in action, cleaning up the Kerch Straits. I fell into talking with the workers and with their help, as an unemployed worker got myself a job on one of the dredgers – "Victor Shumsky" – as a laborer at 75 kopeks a day.

I AM HIRED

I was hired by the boatswain, a sailor who had served his time in the Imperial Navy. Because of his enormous capacity for work and his endurance, he kept the ship's crew well in hand, was the captain's right hand, and drank to the scuppers. When I appeared before him, he looked me over searchingly; my unenviable clothing and my strong physique satisfied him

What can you do?"

"I can do any unskilled work."

"Where did you work last?"

"In the depot at Chelyabinsk,"

I answered, hoping he would not make enquiries about my work there.

"Why were you sacked?"

"For drinking," said I, embarrassed.

"Right, go and work; if I see you drunk, you'll get the sack. Hey Bepalov, here's your assistant, take him along."

Bepalov looked at me ungraciously, he was bent and gloomy, as though carrying a heavy weight. In this respect all the old metalworkers, who had been put through the training of the 14-16-hour day, were very much alike, they had, as it were, all been cast to the same mold.

BESPALOV IS AN OLD HAND

Bepalov set up and repaired, the piping system on the ships, along with his son. Bepalov had worked many years in the fleet, having taken over the work from his father. He was gloomy and silent, obviously drank considerably; he was dogged at his work, his homy hands seized objects like pincers, and fixed them deftly in their proper places; he did his work well, and accurately.

I also knew something about pipefitting and consequently turned out to be a handy assistant, which immediately brought the old man round in my favor. I considered this circumstance of especial importance, for the good feeling of the old worker would be a support in my work, even if he had no desire of interfering in politics.

All the unskilled, heavy work fell to my lot; I dragged piping, handed up the heavy gas pipe wrenches, cleared the way for laying the pipes, and so on.

GETTING CONTACTS

My first days on the dredger revealed no signs of any sort of group on which I could lay hold for my work. Bespalov was silent and not willing to answer any sort of questions outside his actual work. All the same, I decided to sound out the old man and began a conversation with him about the State Duma

"Well soon have the elections to the Duma, what shall we do about

"It's no work for our brains: if you think too much, you'll get left without a head..."

"But why? The papers are writing that the workers will vote, too," I persisted.

"It is one thing to read what's written, another to act on it ..." said he, significantly. Our talk on politics ended there.

The wisdom shown by Bespalov when he said that "by thinking you can lose your head" showed that the old man felt strongly and understood well the policy of the Tsarist government and that Bespalov knew more than he was inclined to tell.

WORK AMONG THE YOUTH

The old workers on the fleet held themselves aloof from political conversations, and work in this direction was not promising. But talks about wages always met with a lively response from them.

As I became more and more acquainted with the setup of the workers, with their outlook and economic position, I came to the conclusion that the work must be begun with the youth who were not tied down by families. The main workers in the dredging-fleet had worked for several years on end: many of them linked up their whole fate with the work from early years and worked till old age overtook them; many had little houses and were tied up in domestic affairs. The administration had created a complicated gradation of advancement, up the stairway of which the obedient file of workers climbed. Whole families with their children, brothers, nephews, grew up to this work and lived their narrow lives. The old workers were particularly severe about any sort of "freethinking" and kept the youth, strictly to hand. The administration of the port and the fleet endeavored to behave towards the mass in a family way, and even invited the more respected workers to give advice on various questions of a technical nature or on the arrangement of the work. It was clear that there could be no question of starting work among the older workers. The young workers had to be drawn bit by bit away from the influence of the older ones, and brought into the circle of political interests. This is where I began.

Bespalov's son, Andrew was studying at some technical school or other and dreaming of becoming a ship's mechanic; I soon made friends with him. Often, we sat for hours on the shore and chatted on various subjects, and I, cautiously introduced him to politics. My talks about the revolution which had recently taken place led to ask why "underground parties" existed, why they were against the Tsar, and so on in his father's presence I talked in a milder tone; the old man put in a

word now and again, as for instance, "some from hunger, others from surfeit, enter the revolution; for us ... so long as there's work; then they say the yids are to blame..."

I cautiously mentioned the mass strikes of workers in the towns, the strikes in the postal telegraph system and on the railways. The old man stubbornly argued with me and the son listened and helped me. At the end of these arguments, I always added for the old man: "You and I, old man aren't going to make a revolution, but a man ought to know what's going on." This precaution was not superfluous.

The stoker on the ship began to take part in our arguments; the old man nicknamed him "Danilo" Danilo was a Ukrainian, and a good-humored chap; he had finished his term of service in the army and immediately taken up work as a stoker on the dredger. Cheerful, straight out-and-out, he was extremely quick and imaginative and lapped up all the domantic elements of revolution. Having returned from the Japanese War, he himself had been seized up in the great revolutionary wave and thrown on to the shores of the Black Sea. He was always pleased with our talks and introduced an element of liveliness into them, and the old man consequently disliked him; a "loudspeaker" he snarlingly called him.

FORMING A GROUP

Gradually the youth gathered round us. We read the papers during lunch, we commented on events, the echo of which had not yet died down. Then we began to argue after work on the shore, and the youth gradually became interested in politics. From general questions I worked round to questions of life on the fleet.

We worked eleven and a half hours a day on the dredgers, and I chose this point for discussion with the young workers, linking it up with the main struggle of the working-class, with the necessity for becoming politically educated. I told them how the capitalists with the help of the gendarmerie and the police were waging a bitter fight against the workers and persecuting them for the least sign of open dissatisfaction.

These talks in particular called forth many questions and heightened the interest of the young men in the revolution; a certain element of romance and mystery in the fight with the government and the police met with lively response in the hearts of the young workers.

In this way a group formed imperceptibly around me. I began to call meetings of the group on shore and had long discussions. Just about this time the press was full of the "Duma questions." in this connection I was able to get into close contact with the old workers as well; true, not with all of them. I explained to them what, the Duma was, why the tsarist Government was calling it, and so on. In a word, I became the regular person, even among the old men, for explaining political questions bound up with the Duma. My work made considerable progress but still had not yet come to the notice of the administration Lulled by the subservience of their workers, they failed to notice what was going on under their very noses. They did not notice me in my guise of unskilled laborer, the

more so, since the arguments with the old men I kept still, and even sometimes agreed with them, when the youth became more than usually insistent.

The young workers unconsciously became imbued with revolutionary ideas the inspiring examples of the seamen's uprisings and the barricade fights in the towns fired their imagination. When I told them that in many big factories the workers had won the nine-hour day by unanimous strikes, they were very excited; Danilo rubbed his hands together with glee and then clenching his fists said:

"If only our men would stir a bit!"

"You can't move them so easily." The sagacious Andrew cooled Danilo down a bit. "Look at my old man. . .

"Why the old man? It's not the old chaps... we must get a move on."

The thought of getting a "move on" themselves caught the interest of the young fellows, and they stuck to this idea .

My first experience of my work among the youth showed that this form of political work was right and that I could boldly rely on the young men and work through them. I decided to develop my activities in such a way as to keep as much as possible in the shade myself and not to attract too soon the attention of the political gendarmerie and police to my person.

SOME NAIVE IDEAS

With the permission of the Party Committee, I brought some of the young workers into a party circle. Their entry into this circle gave wings to their ambition; they looked upon their participation in the circle with an exaggerated idea of its conspirative nature that was quite naive; they proudly considered themselves members of a secret revolutionary party, waging war on the Tzar, his government and all its supporters. Their heads were in a whirl.

We were now faced with the questions to how to bring in the young workers from other ships:

"We must get them together on shore after work and talk it over with them," suggested Danilo.

"What a fool!" Andrew retorted.

You think everybody's a fool clever boy!" Danilo snapped, offended.

"Not everybody, only you; you're a fool; collect everybody together and they'll shout it all over the town the same day."

"Quite right, that's not the way," said I, backing up Andrew "We'll have time to get pinched by the police, so we needn't hurry; we must get the boys in gradually, one at a time, choosing the steady not the gasbags; we must get a strong circle and, then we'll see what's next."

"That's right; slow and steady, we must get our own man on each boat and through them bring the rest into our cause." Andrew was quite carried away, as though the cause had been his for years, very near to his heart.

The boys took up the task agitating among the youth and recruiting them from the other boats. They decided to form a special circle and to put in Andrew as its responsible organizer; they decided not to link me up with the new recruits.

"You sit in a corner, comrade and show us how and what, and we'll do the rest," said Danilo with great conviction.

Thus, we added one link more to the chain of our great political work;

At my suggestion the committee decided to arrange a May Day mass demonstration, including the largest possible number of dredge workers and dockers. I instructed Danilo to mobilize the workers, all of the members of our circle. The lads did their best; over a hundred workers from the dredging-fleet turned up. The outpost, the chain of bodyguards, the secret passwords all made a deep impression on the workers.

Some Social Revolutionaries also found their way to the mass meeting, though we always had sharp arguments with them. The Kerch Social Revolutionaries were somewhat weak theoretically, and the Social-Democrats always tried to make terror the main point of their argument, which was easier ground for them. However, they failed to take possession of the demonstration and quieted down. The meeting lasted a long time; we explained in detail the need for celebrating May Day and how we should do it; why the autocratic government and the capitalists were hostile to the May Day celebrations and so on.

The meeting finished at dawn. We all marched from it together. The police knew that the meeting was taking place, but were afraid to leave the town and come out on the steppe; they were afraid of the bodyguard of whom they had also been informed, very much overestimating its military significance; they decided therefore to await the return of the demonstrators at the outskirts of the town and then make arrests. But our scouts marched the workers in a roundabout way across the hills to the opposite side of the town. Over three hundred workers with songs and much noise came down the hillside and through the main street of the town; the police on duty whirled the alarm, the police ambush which had been deceived, rushed to the place, but found nobody. The network of dark side turnings had swallowed the demonstrators who all scattered safely to their homes.

DISPUTE TERROR METHODS

Dispute concerning terror were especially violent; the romance attached to the terroristic method of struggle turned out to be extremely attractive and wonderful . . . dangerous spirit of adventure.

Andrew put up the question to me of the need for explaining the question of terror in our circle. He was extremely afraid that this dangerous question might cause trouble in our circle and smash up our work. And after a long, detailed talk in the circle on the meaning of the mass

proletarian struggle, in which inspiring examples of mass armed uprisings of the seamen and the rebellion of the workers in Moscow were put forth, after we had talked about individual terror as a harmful method of struggle deflecting the attention of the workers from the mass political struggles the young workers began to take a cooler attitude towards this difficult question. We pointed out the colossal significance of preparing the mass labor movement to serve as a threat and conquering force, and the boys were convinced and brought back from the individualistic romanticism of terror on the high road of the class struggle

Our ties with the other boats had become so strong that we could begin to think of intensifying the work of our organized youth.

I decided to put before them the question of a concrete plan of work in the struggle for shorter hours. The task was pretty difficult; they all doubted the possibility of bringing the workers out on strike; the work was new to them and the youth alone could not decide the question, the old men had also to be brought in. I also thought that nothing would come of the strike, that much more intensive and prolonged work had to be done

I suggested they try to cut down their working hours themselves, without a strike. At first, they could not understand this way of looking at things, then began to think it over, and it turned out that they thought after all they could give it a try. Andrew and I took over the working out of the plan, and the rest were instructed to begin strong agitation for shorter hours. We decided to leave the questions of increased wages alone for the time being.

WORK OUT DETAILED PLAN

Andrew and I worked out the plan in detail, and it amounted on the whole to the following: "The workers on the dredging fleet were to cut down their working day secretly from 11¼ to 9 hours. The secrecy lay in the fact that on a definite day, known only to the workers themselves, the caravan would set out to work not at 6 but at 7 o'clock; the workers would take half an hour for dinner, and leave work at 5:30 pm. As soon as the workers were ripe for action, we would appoint the day for carrying out our plan. Further, it was decided that on the preceding night, before leaving work, the men would chalk up on all the portholes and all the boats' funnels, in large letters, the time to start and the time to finish work on the following day. A committee was appointed the "Victor Shumsky," where I was working Andrew was appointed the responsible organizer of the campaign and president of the committee.

The "Victor Shumsky" from that moment began to find itself in the centre of the growing movement in the whole fleet.

When I reported my plan for the campaign to the party committee, the whole of the membership protested, declaring that we must limit ourselves to study circle work and not to take active work. I told the committee that the tactic of organized militant activities would give bigger political results than educational circle work alone. In view of my categorical declaration, the committee was compelled to agree to my plan and allowed me to begin the campaign.

The young workers began to act firmly; they began to agitate openly for shorter hours. The administration, accustomed to their quiet security, did not sense the danger and paid little attention to the "wild talk" of the young fellows.

OUT FOR THE NINEHOUR WORKING DAY

The preparations for winning the nine-hour working day went apace. Not only a considerable section of the youth, but also the older workers were brought into the work. The estimate taken showed that there was a small active group strongly backing the nine-hour day slogan on every ship. The crews were seriously interested in the affair and were prepared to "try it out." But we were up against the older man, who stubbornly declared:

"We're making no strikes!"

"But we don't, want strikes either," insisted the youth, "We simply want to work nine hours, without any sort of strike."

The older men stuck to it, still some gave way:

"All right, only no strikes: and if you are thinking of starting something . . . we won't help!"

The young fellows urge the older men not to funk

"We don't funk it. what's it to us? Only no politics."

We decided to start the campaign in two days. The boys began to get fidgety; I also was worried, fearing our whole scheme might fall through, if the affair developed into an unforeseen strike.

On the eve of our campaign on all the boats. the broadsides and funnels were chalked with the words: "Tomorrow come to work at 7 o'clock" The administration took it all for some mischief, and the boatswains swore and made the men clean the chalked funnels and broadsides.

The next morning the shore was covered with people there was nobody on board but the administration. The bells were ringing on all the ships summoning the men to work; but nobody went. They all hung silently around the quay.

One young fellow came to me and began to relate elatedly "They all came down to the shore at 6:30 a.m. and were afraid to go on board; the bells have been ringing all the time and we have been sitting here and not stirring. The captain of the 'Shumsky' came and asked: 'Why don't you start work?' and we answered him from the crowd: 'Well start at 7 o'clock.' He went back emptyhanded."

The administration kept looking at the crowd gathered together and wondering what was wrong. At 7 o'clock the 'Shumsky' whistle blew and we all rushed on the board and started work.

FINISH WORK AT 4 O'CLOCK

Before finishing work, all the funnels of the ships were again chalked with the words "Finish work at 4 o'clock" The young workers were the first to leave work, and the older men followed them. The next day the same thing occurred.

The administration lost its head and couldn't decide what to do. The next day the gendarmes visited the ships, but everyone was working so, they went away again.

So, it turned out that there was no strike, and the working day was shortened This unusual method was apparently so unexpected that the administration failed to take any steps and so the nine-hour day came to stay Afterwards the mechanics and captains quite approved of our action for their working day was shortened too

Thus, we successfully carried thru our first attack.

ORGANTZATION OF THE ILLEGAL TRADE UNION

The "bloodless" victory of the 9-hour day not only gave wings to the dreams of the youth, but livened up the older men. They began to pay more attention to political arguments. My authority also rose considerably among all the workers on the dredging-fleet . My political talks took a semi-legal mass character although I continued to express my ideas in a mild form. I think my mildness was what impressed the older men. Our talks took place during the dinner break, and sometimes in the evening.

The state of mind created by our victory urged me on to the idea of organizing an illegal trade union. The workers met this idea with approval. It was impossible at that time to organize a legal trade-union, and I was not so keen on legalizing it, reckoning that I would not be able to work long, that the gendarmes would interfere one way or another, and I was afraid that a legalized union might be left without the necessary leadership and fall into the hands of the reactionaries, who had melted away for the time being.

We dedicated a few meetings to the question of the tasks of to trade-unions; we called an illegal organisation meeting of workers from among the more promising fellows. We elected a board of directors whom we instructed to work out the rules, obtain a stamp and generally get hold of all that was necessary for an illegal trade union.

Despite all our precautions, fifty persons entered the trade union. Considerable means, about 100 rubles, were collected, which there was really no need to spend. Thus the trade-union began to function. But since every trade-union has to do something, naturally our new born union began to think of how it could recommend itself to the workers and the members of the union began to press me for an answer.

It should be mentioned that together with this system of drawing in of workers to work on the dredging-fleet together with all their relatives and offspring, there was a complicated gradation of wages. When I worked out the wages of a worker of the lower

categories, I discovered that with all extras it did not earn eighteen rubles a month. Moreover, the conditions of work were extremely hard and unhygienic; even the stokers, whose work was looked upon as hard labor, had no overalls or working gloves; There was no sanitary or medical assistance whatever. These were the questions for the young trade-union to tackle. At one of the meetings of the trade-union I made a detailed report on the economic position of the workers on the dredgers and pointed out that the position of the workers could be improved economically only by a determined and organized struggle.

SURVEY IS PLANNED

The meeting instructed the board of the trade-union to make a careful, secret investigation into the economic conditions of the workers on the fleet, and also to prepare a plan of action in order to carry out the measures which would be worked out by the board.

At the same time in Odessa a strike of the sailors of the Volunteer Fleet had been called.

Our union quickly responded to this strike, gathered a fund for the strikers from among the workers and sent about 400 rubles to support them.

I shall dwell a moment on the various grades of the workers in the dredging-fleet. They were divided into four groups, according to trades. The first group consisted of metalworkers, locksmiths and fitters from the workshop; the second of machinists, their assistants, oilers and stokers; the third of workers on the wherries and the mud pumps; and the fourth of the sailors themselves.

The strongest numerically and the most rebellious were the last two groups, and in our very first struggle they had played the decisive role in our fight. The first two groups were small in number and held themselves somewhat aloof. So long as the fleet was being overhauled during the winter, the last two groups would have the last word on the course of the struggle; but it was quite a different matter when the fleet was working dredging the Straits; the outcome of the struggle then depended entirely on the first two groups, since they had the technical work of the fleet in their hands.

After carefully examining our active forces, we saw that should a strike be necessary the metalworkers and stokers would have to act as vanguard, and that we must therefore begin working on them seriously.

It was characteristic that as soon as there was any talk of an organized union among the workers, the metalworkers woke up and scented their own organization in the air; they kept knocking at the doors of the union and without loss of words began to demand to be admitted. It was as easy to get them into the trade-union as it had been difficult to awaken them to political life. In three months', time a quarter of the metal workers and stokers were already in the trade-union.

“BLANQUIST METHODS!”

When I informed the Party committee of our organizing an illegal, trade-union, I was greeted very coldly: “Blanquist methods! Who ever heard of underground trade-unions, what will it do, and how will it defend the workers' interests?”

I replied that this trade-union was not so much a trade-union organization as a militant political organization of workers.

I was blamed for not having previously gotten the committee's agreement.

When I told them that very likely in May a strike would break out on the fleet, and that the trade-union was now working out a list of demands, they became very excited — such an event was extraordinary in Kerch.

"The devil! We are told things like this by way of information. Why do you do all this without the committee?"

"What do you mean, without the committee? I'm telling you about it now. You sent me to work on the fleet, and I'm working there."

"The question must be discussed as to whether a strike is permissible just now, and whether the workers are sufficiently prepared for it"

"The trade-union itself has raised the question of a strike, and it must be taken for granted that a strike will take place."

After a long confab they declared that should the strike be a failure, the committee would take no responsibility for it.

I left the committee somewhat depressed; even the workers in the committee had not supported me. I was alone. I shrugged my shoulders and decided to go ahead alone. Not being used to factional struggle. I could not feel confident and strong with the existing attitude of the Party committee towards me; I was afraid that perhaps I might take the wrong road; yet there was nothing to be done but to go on.

The trade-union board, having made its investigation, reported to the union and prepared a draft of demands to improve the economic condition of the workers; there were thirty-two points to the draft, which covered all the material and professional needs of the workers. The trade-union approved the draft and decided to present these demands to the administration on May 5, and to prepare the workers for a strike. They decided to call a May Day strike on May 1st in order to test the influence of the union and see whether the workers were prepared to fight. They also decided to make known their demands in advance to all the workers in the union.

Three days before May Day I called the young workers together and instructed them to begin their agitation work among all the workers for calling a strike on May Day.

The boys did their work energetically but not very cautiously, and their agitation alarmed the administration, which, under the presidency of the Port Superintendent, called a meeting to discuss. They decided to persuade a section of the workers not to leave their work, and the same time to inform the Chief of Police of the turn affairs had taken. On the eve of May Day, the Kerch organization distributed leaflets on all the ships, as well as the trade-union's manifesto, which I had printed on the hectograph. It was decided not to hold meetings in the evening, but to hold them in the morning as soon as work began. On the morning of May First all the workers turned up at work; some began to work, but the trade-union members calmly smoked on deck. At 9 o'clock the siren sounded on the "Victor Shumsky," followed by sirens on the other ships. The administration fled in alarm, and the workers with cries of "To the meeting! To the meeting!" began to land. Those who tried to remain at work were dragged away and driven to the shore. A meeting was in progress on the shore. I and several other workers made short speeches, and then resolved to go and call out the men in the artisans' workshops, from the flourmills, and also the dockers. The whole mass divided into groups and went to the place indicated. I set out with a dozen men for the flourmills. The workers from one of tile mills quickly joined us, but at another we had to call a meeting.

The meeting took place on the top floor of the mill. While it was on, a patrol of gendarmes and police surrounded the mill. The policemen would have rushed upstairs, but the workers began to throw sacks of flour at them; several policemen were thrown from the stairway, and they retreated to wait below till the meeting finished. After the meeting the flourmill workers decided to stop work, and at the same time they presented demands for increased wages. Work was carried on at the mill in two shifts of twelve hours each.

At the mill I was accompanied by a sailor, Michael who had deserted from the cruiser "Ochakov," a fine healthy youngster. He decided to accompany me through the mill. When we went downstairs, we were immediately arrested and taken to the police station, convoyed by the military patrol.

We were interrogated by inspector Gvozdev of Station No. 2. After a couple questions, the inspector gave orders for Michael's discharge and for me to put into a cell. In the evening, I was again summoned to the inspector, who invited me to sit down and ordered tea to be brought in.

"Well, Malakanov, you are a member of the Social-Democratic Party, aren't you?"

I looked at Gvozdev and made no reply

"We have nothing to against the Social-Democrats, because they don't preach the murder of officials, and limit themselves to propaganda...."

I listened to the pompous phrases of the inspector and continued to remain silent, waiting for him to begin talking in his usual police language.

"I repeat, we would have nothing against you, if you would only not disturb the peaceful life of our town. . . . We consider your behavior today to be a violation of the public peace; the removal of

the workers from the flourmills, forced stoppage of the workshops in the town — all this makes it necessary for us to pay attention to you."

ORDERED TO LEAVE

Here the inspector took up a sheet of paper and went on: "I have received instructions from the Chief of Police to advise you to leave town within the next twenty-four hours."

"I won't go," I replied shortly. "We strongly advise you to go."

"I am working here, and for that reason will not leave the town." "That is no business of mine," answered the inspector irritably. "If you refuse to leave town, well make you; I think the Chief of Police is very lenient with you."

He gave me the order to sign and let me off with the words

"I advise you to submit to the order of the Chief of Police."

The inspector did not invite me to drink any tea, although two glasses were standing on his desk

And I nevertheless determined not to leave town until I had fulfilled my task.

The Mav Day strike had gone off extremely well; detachments of the young workers had spread throughout the town and called the handicraft artisans, cabinetmakers, boatmen, sailmakers and others to stop work; they had brought out the women from the tobacco factory 'Misaxudl' The machine shops went on strike in organized fashion.

Many of the young workers got off harder than we; fifteen of them were taken off to Station No. 1. to Inspector Golbach, who gave them a strict examination and most likely released them the next day only thanks to the order of the Chief of Police.

In the night a big mass meeting was held on the cliffs farthest from the town. Over a thousand gathered there. More than half the woovers of the dredging fleet were there; there were many of the older workers, and the dockers turned out well.

POLICE DISCOVER MEETING PLACE

The police discovered the meeting place and decided to disperse the crowd. A detachment of police headed by Inspector Golbach moved towards the cliffs. Our bodyguard and some of the armed sailors were skillfully placed in a ring around the mass meeting. The police advanced from three sides; they passed the first outposts of our guard, hidden among the rocks, and as soon as they approached the chain of hidden guards, the latter opened rapid fire from their revolvers. The police, at a loss in the darkness, scattered in a panic. The guards with shouts of hurrah! sprang out of ambush and increased their panic by shooting. The police in their flight fell into the arms of the secret outposts, who also opened fire on them. A few policemen were disarmed; one of the Inspector's

assistants lost his revolver and sword, the latter being broken on the spot. The police were routed entirely and the mass meeting went on exceedingly well.

At the close of the meeting, we decided to enter the town en masse. The guard went off by paths of its own, and like a heavy cloud we moved down the hill along the broad Vorontsev Prospect. The police were waiting for us, meaning to attack; but seeing the enormous crowd of people they changed their minds and in silent wonder watched the noisy flood of people pawing by. The timidity of the police was not so much due to the numerical strength of the crowd, as to the fact that they were almost all workers, with whom it was dangerous to fight. The May Day movement was a great success, and the Kerch organization was very proud of it.

The next day the board of the trade-union met to hear the report on preparations for the strike.

The board presented a list of the members of the Strike Committee, and a list of delegates who were to be legal leaders of the strike, to hand the demands to the administration and in the name of the Strike Committee to carry on all the negotiations with the administration. The Strike Committee decided to keep the names of its members secret even from the workers, only the trade-union board was to know its composition. The political demands were the "right to celebrate May Day" and "the eight-hour working day." There was considerable argument as to whether they should put forward the demand for the constituent assembly, and the decision was made to put forward as few unfulfillable slogans as possible for the beginning. Both the First of May and the eight-hour day were points of political principle. We considered two sufficient for the beginning and put forward the following economic demands; the creation of a workers committee, with the right to control the dismissal of workers and an increase in wages of from 30 to 40 per cent. The most stubborn and stalwart of the older workers were chosen to make up the delegation in case the delegates had need of support during the negotiations. A special guard of young workers was formed to watch the police and gendarmerie, and to keep in touch with the garrison. Michael was placed at their head and instructed to keep the headstrong youth well in hand.

On the evening of May 4. on finishing work each member of the crews of the ships was handed a copy of the demands which the delegation had announced to the port, administration.

On handing the demands to the Superintendent of the Port, the delegation declared that "tomorrow at 12 o'clock an answer must be given; if these demands are not fulfilled, the workers will leave their work." The Port Superintendent went up in the air: "How can this be... without any warning...! and you know that foreign ships will arrive in the Straits within a week, and we are holding up the dredging. You think they'll thank us in Petersburg...."

"That all depends on you," answered the president of the delegation. "If you satisfy all our demands. the workers will stay on the job and the foreign ships will not be held up in the Straits."

The delegation took leave of the Superintendent and went away.

That night there was a meeting of all the workers, at which I pointed out the difficulties that must be overcome in the struggle. I told them that concessions were possible on the part of the

administration, but that they would try afterwards to clear out those workers who had taken an active part in the affair, and that therefore we must at all events try to get the Workers' Committee. Several of the older men declared: "It was hard to get us out on a thing like this, but now we're out. we must hold tight; you worked hard with us to get us to move; we've shortened our working day, and we'll get some more improvements ..."

Next morning the ship's commander summoned me to his cabin and said: "By order of the Port Superintendent I have to dismiss you; take your pay." I said I would not be paid off until I was told of the grounds for my dismissal.

It was quite clear that the administration considered me to be the organizer of the whole business and had decided to get rid of me quickly and try to smash the strike that was coming to a head. The commander declared that he would report my refusal to be paid off to the Port Superintendent

The "revelation" made by the Superintendent that foreign ships would soon arrive in the Straits, I decided to use to the utmost. On arriving in the Straits, the foreigners would doubtless demand to be allowed to pass through the Straits, or to be compensated for the loss caused by delay. And many ships were expected, because the wheat export season had begun for Rostov.

PLANS OF STRIKE COMMITTEE

I explained all this to the Strike Committee and the members of the delegation, and we decided to draw the attention of the workers to the pressure that might be brought because of the foreigners in further negotiations with the administration. The delegation decided to use this circumstance to the full.

Just before 12 o'clock Engineer Buiko, sent by the Port Superintendent, came on board the "Shumsky" and declared that the Superintendent would examine the "petition" and satisfy all acceptable demands; the workers were ordered to resume work.

The workers, grouped around the engineers, burst out all together:

"Tell him to come across with everything written down in the demands — we want no promises; we don't believe words, tell him to sign it."

"Hi! Stop work there's nothing there worth listening to; let him talk with the delegates "

Quickly the white chalking appeared again on the funnels and decks, the "Shumsky" siren sounded and was answered by the siren on all other boats. At 12 o'clock on May 5 all the workers on the entire fleet, with the exception of all administrative personnel and the boatswains, left their work. Buiko, aghast at the reply of the workers and the turn affairs had taken understood nothing of what the workers were doing around him since they had never let drop in his presence a word of any sort of dissatisfaction and he had always considered them tame and obedient. He aimlessly wrung his hands and muttered hoarsely: "What's up, what's the matter?"

I was standing not far from the engineer and also watching, only with extreme, joy, how the workers swarmed in little groups over the gangplanks from the boats, and streamed off from the shore down the side streets; I had not expected such a solid turnout. "The first victory, Mr. Buiko, is ours. Report this to the Port Superintendent."

Buiko swung round abruptly towards me and glared into my eyes: "And who are you?"

"That's a fitter, Malakanov," hurriedly answered the captain. "Malakanov? Why hasn't he been dismissed?"

"He refused to be paid off, and demands to know the legal grounds."

"Dismiss him immediately...."

"There's plenty of time, Mr. Buiko; we'll settle accounts after the strike. And meanwhile, here's to your very good health, sir!" I raised my dirty old cap, bowed slightly to him, and we went off in a crowd to the shore.

I was walking as if on air. I was filled with the joy of victory, and yet with alarm for the outcome of the strike.

BEFORE THE SUPERINTENDENT

Two days later the delegation presented itself before the Port Superintendent and asked what he had to say to their demands. The Chief himself did not come out, but Engineer Bulko appeared, and declared that the Port Superintendent considered it unnecessary to answer such impertinent demands. We went away. The next day we heard from the telegraph operator, a friend of Andrew's, that a telegram had been received from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry asking why work had been discontinued and saying that the work of dredging the Straits should be resumed immediately. On the fifth day of the strike, we were informed that the Superintendent was inviting delegates from the workers to see him. We thought out the matter together and decided to send one of our delegates to find out why the Superintendent was inviting us. Our envoy returned and reported that he wanted to talk over our demands.

We went to see him, and he said that he was prepared to satisfy half, our demands, but the other half had to be considered further. I answered him at once: "Consider the matter further, and we'll go on waiting a bit longer." Flushing with embarrassment the Superintendent quietly asked the name of my ship and my own name. I said my name was Malakanov; the Superintendent jumped up from the table and shouted: "You have been dismissed and I have no wish to talk to you." But the rest of the delegates declared that Malakanov had not been paid off, and moreover had been chosen as delegate by all the workers on the fleet, and that if the Superintendent refused to negotiate with him, then the negotiations would be broken off altogether. Buiko, standing at his elbow, burst out: "The yids have brought them all over." His attitude so infuriated me that I hurled myself at him with clenched fists; he jumped in fright over the table and hid behind the Superintendent. I seized the

paperweight and almost let it fly at the coward. The Superintendent lost his nerve; he raised both his arms and waved them about, gabbing: "Gentlemen, gentlemen, calm yourselves. let us begin..."

The vile appearance of the intimidated engineer and the comical sight of the Superintendent cooled me down, and I dropped my arm with the paperweight. After this scene, the Superintendent dropped the question regarding my right to be a delegate; we were seated around the table and the engineer was sent away.

The Superintendent declared that part of our demands he was prepared to satisfy at once; the delegation informed him that the workers insisted on his satisfying not only the secondary, demands but also the main ones. The Superintendent was making an effort to be very courteous, and tried to draw us into a discussion. But we refused to discuss matters, and repeating our demands again, we left him. As we left, we heard the engineer say with dissatisfaction:

"How can you want to talk with that swine?"

"You spoil everything with your fiery temper"

"They need a dose of the Cossacks..."

We left the office.

"Did you hear about the Cossacks?"

"They're not here yet," quietly answered the president of the delegation.

"But we'd better remember that threat. There are no Cossacks in the town, but there are soldiers. They might try some provocation; you can see that Buiko is a low swine, and hates us"

Our scouts informed us that the Superintendent had made a request to the Chief of Police to interfere and stop the strike; but the latter had replied that so far there was no disorder, and that he didn't want to cause any by interfering. We then realized why the police were not disturbing us. The Chief of Police, apparently, knew of our demands, although we could not say what his attitude to them was.

It turned out further that the Port Superintendent had applied to the Chief of the Garrison, who had also refused, saying that he had enough trouble of his own.

We informed the workers of all this and warned them at the same time against possible attempts at provocation on the part of the police.

All the dredgers and wherries were lined up along the shore; there was no life on them. One worker was on duty on each ship. His duty was to inform us of what the administration was doing on board We were very much worried about one dredger which was lying at its place of work in the Straits. The crew, although they had informed us that the "Lisovsky" (their ship) was sticking with us, nevertheless had not come ashore. We were afraid that they might begin to work nights.

WE DECIDE TO TAKE ACTION

The delegation decided to go out to the "Lisovsky" and bring it along shore. The Port Superintendent had a steam-cutter which always stood at the quay with steam up. We decided to make use of it. When we came down to it, we found Engineer Buiko on board who, hearing that we wanted to go out on it to the "Lisovsky," refused to allow us to take it. We decided to use force.

"Take the boat, you chaps, don't stand looking at it," shouted Michael, and jumped on board. Buiko turned the rubber tubing on him and let the steam off. Michael tumbled overboard. The machinist at the same moment set the engine going and the boat left the shore.

We cursed the engineer, who was watching us with malignant joy.

One of the delegates stepped into a rowboat with oars lying handy.

We got into the rowboat and the three pairs of oars quickly brought us towards the "Lisovsky." Buiko saw that we had made up our minds to get on board the Lisovsky, urged the motorboat towards her and then turned sharply towards the military guard-ship that was lying in the roads. This maneuver alarmed us; if Buiko managed to get around the guardship commander, he could prevent our taking the "Lisovsky." I told the delegates this.

"Make for the guardship." The rowboat heeled around and we came alongside on Buiko's heels. Two other delegates and I climbed the rope ladder; the commander came forward. He stood and laughed.

"What strange visitors we have this morning!" said he cheerily, greeting us.

"We are a little alarmed that the Port Engineer is paying you a visit. You see, for economic reasons we are on strike. One dredger is standing in the Straits, and, fearing that it might be harmed by a storm, we decided to moor it to the quay, but the engineer wants to hinder us. We fear he wants to persuade you to interfere with our removing the 'Lisovsky' from the Straits."

"Quite so," said the captain, "he asked me to interfere; but I haven't the right to without an order from my chief. I can interfere only if you use force on the "Lisovsky."

There is no question of force. The 'Lisovsky is on strike anyway: the only thing is that in the Straits it risks running aground or getting stuck in the mud, and we cannot allow that."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Buiko," said he, turning to the engineer, "but I cannot interfere with your business."

We dropped down into our boat and rowed to the "Lisovsky." Having spoken to the sailors and the captain, we weighed anchor and brought it to the quay. The workers on the shore met the arrival of the ship with shouts of delight.

The meeting broke up. We did our best to let the Superintendent hear that the general meeting had passed a resolution to continue the strike. The seventeenth day arrived. In the evening the Superintendent of the Port invited the delegation to his office. "Well, you've won; we agree."

"What do you mean, agree?" I asked.

"We agree to the committee, damn you."

"And the eight-hour day for stokers?"

"Also granted. Start work tomorrow

"No; you must sign the agreement."

"What agreement?"

"Our list of demands. Sign it in two copies" I took out the two I had prepared and put them before him on the table.

"Why, you don't take my word for it?"

"We believe you. But we prefer your signature to our demands. It will be stronger, and we'll sign too."

The Port Superintendent took the list of demands, carefully read through one copy and, turning to me, asked.

"You were quite sure you'd win the strike?"

"Yes; from the moment the foreigners arrived we had no doubt of our winning. The last decision of our meeting to continue the strike proves this."

"And which of you will sign?"

"The president of the workers' committee."

"The president? You have already elected your committee?"

"Yes, already."

The Superintendent signed both copies and handed me the pen.

"Vasyukov, sign it" said I, turning to one of the delegates.

Vasyukov took the pen in his horny hand, which shook disgracefully, and signed both copies I took one copy and gave the other to the Port Superintendent,

I would ask you to note," said I turning to the Superintendent, "questions concerning the conditions accepted today must be taken up with the president of the workers' committee, Vasyukov. Kindly listen attentively to the point about the workers' committee." I began to read the third point of our demands.

THE WORKERS COMMITTEE

The workers of the fleet elected a workers' committee, with the right to control the dismissal of workers from the boats of the fleet and the port. Should the committee object, the Administration cannot dismiss a worker, should the committee find it necessary to dismiss one of the workers, the Administration is obliged to agree with the proposal of the committee. The committee sees to it that all agreements between the workers and the administration, signed as a result of the strike, are put into effect."

"Remember, Superintendent, that the general meeting of the workers, had given the committee full powers, in the event of the Administration refusing to carry out the conditions agreed upon today, to call a strike again at any moment."

The Superintendent looked at the paper and nodded his head in silence.

"Well, good-bye, Tomorrow the sirens will sound, and incidentally, our Odessa guests will return home."

"I trust, Mr. Malakanov, that you do not come under the signed agreement; we proposed your dismissal before the strike," said the Superintendent, turning to me.

"I don't insist particularly since I promised to be paid off after the strike."

Superintendent smiled wryly and we left.

"Gee, you handled him slick! Made him sign, and who'd have thought it."

"They sign when the foreigners are waiting out there. Without his signature the strike wouldn't be won. Promises, brother, mean nothing, they're broken in a jiffy."

"And weren't you smart with the workers' committee, making Vasyukov president! After all, we haven't elected a committee."

"We'll elect it. And Vasyukov is a fine, whole-souled chap. Well make him president. Hold on to the committee now, as the priest does his censer, and the devil himself won't move you."

That evening, we met on the shore. The Strike Committee gave a full report of the agreement arrived at. Everybody was shown the Superintendent's signature. The people loudly approved certain parts of our conversation with the Superintendent. I gave an account of the whole of the strike and the conditions under which it was carried on; the meaning of the solidarity of the Odessa fleet and the financial assistance given. Some of the Odessa men spoke. They praised us highly and were enthusiastic about the staunchness and organizational capacity of the Kerch proletarians. That night the membership of the trade-union was doubled.

The Strike Committee resigned its powers. The meeting unanimously renamed it the Workers Committee and Vasyukov was confirmed as president. A decision was passed: "Should the points in the signed agreement concerning the Workers' Committee be broken by the Administration, the

Committee shall immediately call a strike, and the order of the Committee must be obeyed by everyone." Having by this decision fixed the powers and strength of the Workers Committee, the last strike meeting of the happy, victorious workers came to an end.

A BOLSHEVIK VICTORY

In the morning, I went to sign off. Everything was humming on the boats; the fleet had come to life after three weeks stoppage. The dredger "Lisovsky" slowly turned and crawled out into the Straits; her wherries dragged out behind. There was a great fuss on the Odessa caravan, the anchor chains were being raised noisily; the crew was being distributed and the Odessa ships set out on their journey home. The red sun caressed the sunburnt faces of the workers. Labor greedily came into its own.

I was paid off quickly, having taken leave of my friends, I went over the gang-plank and ashore. Some of the workers from among our scout ran over to me.

"Make for the steppes, the gendarmes are looking for you."

I went out on to the steppes. I felt light-hearted, and walked on air, as though an enormous weight had dropped from me. All the worry and alarm of the last few days concerning the success of the strike had left me. And why should I not feel light-hearted, when the work that had fallen to my lot on one sector of the great militant proletarian front had just ended in the form of an important Bolshevik victory; for even these partial victories gave us strength in those days to carry the struggle further for the October Victory in 1917.

THE END.

The revolt on the armored cruiser "Potemkin"



Introduction

The revolt on the armored cruiser "Potemkin" was but one of the links in the long chain of the development of the first Russian Revolution – the Revolution of 1905. This revolution was the first lesson, and a tremendous object lesson it was, in the study of the struggle, for the broad masses of workers and peasants.

The Revolution of 1905 brought face to face the struggling classes of capitalists and workers, landlords and peasants, the Tsarist monarchy with its powerful apparatus of oppression, and the revolutionary masses of the people as a whole. It compelled various social classes, parties and groups to state openly for the first time – in the Press, at meetings – what was their attitude to the Tsarist monarchy, on whose side they would fight, and whom they would support in this struggle. In a brief period, this revolution taught even the most backward masses of the workers that they could not improve their lot, or remedy their oppression by means of requests and prayers. It opened the eyes of the masses to the fact that the chief enemy of the workers and peasants was the Tsarist Government together with the landlords and the capitalists, and that this enemy could only be overthrown by violence, by armed struggle.

Before January 9th, 1905, great masses of the workers, even in St. Petersburg, with the exception of the class-conscious minority, still had a blind faith in the Tsar and hoped that they would be able, by peaceful means to beg concessions from him, which would improve their difficult material and legal position. They marched in a great mass of 200,000 people to the Tsar's palace under the leadership of the priest Gapon, intending to speak to the Tsar himself and present their demands in the form of a petition. However, as we know, the Tsar did not show himself to the workers, but gave orders that soldiers should be stationed to prevent all access to him. When the workers attempted to make their way to the palace, the soldiers opened fire on them, and over a thousand people were killed and injured. Such was the heavy price which the ignorant workers paid for their faith in the Tsar. They now understood as the result of their own experience that the Tsar was their most ferocious enemy, and that they would have to improve their situation not by means of requests but by struggle.

The events in St. Petersburg roused the working masses, and continuous strikes took place all over Russia throughout 1905 – not only in the big works and factories, but also in the small handicraft workshops, where the workers were ignorant and uncultured and where their situation was particularly unbearable.

In 1904 the Tsarist Government, for the purpose of enriching itself and also for the purpose of lulling the impending revolutionary storm, engaged in war with Japan. The war demanded ever-increasing sacrifices from the peasants and the workers, and at the same time exposed the utter rottenness and imbecility of the Tsarist Government. The embezzlers of the Government funds, the plunderers of the national wealth – the officials and the generals – brought the army and the fleet to such a state that the Tsarist Army met defeat after defeat and the newly-built navy was sunk in a single day by the Japanese, in the battle of Tsushima.

The war became hateful not only to the workers and peasants, but even the bourgeoisie raised loud shrieks about the embezzlements in the Government, and the incapacity of the rulers.

In industry, stagnation and crisis; accentuated by the war, made the atmosphere even tenser. The cost of living rose from day to day. The discontent among the masses grew greater each day. The broad masses of the people unanimously hoped for the defeat of the Tsarist Army, and demanded the rapid ending of the war. This tense situation in the country was bound to have its effect on the army and navy, which consisted principally of peasants and workers. They began to be infected with the growing discontent of the masses, and everywhere there was a ferment amongst the troops. A revolutionary movement grew up amongst those advanced regiments which had most contact with revolutionary propaganda and agitation.

The tremendous wave of strikes which broke out in the towns was joined by the peasant agrarian movement in the villages, and this shook the stability of the firmest and the last bulwark of Tsarism – the Tsarist Army.

In the army and the navy, a period of military revolts commenced. One of the most prominent of these and the one that is best known in the history of the 1905 Revolution, was the mutiny on the armored cruiser "Potemkin" of the Black Sea Fleet.

Our Party was in contact with the sailors of the Black Sea Fleet and made preparations for a general mutiny in the navy somewhat later, timing it to take place at the time of the naval maneuvers. However, the incredibly hard and oppressive conditions of life, and the inhuman and humiliating treatment of the sailors by the naval officers, caused the revolt to take place on the "Potemkin" somewhat before the expected date. We give below a picture of this revolt as described by one of its leaders, Afansy Matushenko, the torpedo quartermaster.

The revolt on the armored cruiser "Potemkin"

In June, the squadron was awaiting orders to be sent out of Sevastopol for practice manoeuvres. On June 13th, the "Potemkin," an armored cruiser of the squadron, which had just been refitted, was ordered to proceed to Tender Island for gun tests and target firing. This isolation of the "Potemkin" served as the indirect cause which upset the appointed plan of revolt.

On the day when the "Potemkin" arrived at Tender Strait (June 13th), Torpedo-boat No. 267, which accompanied it, was sent to Odessa for provisions, and on the evening of the same day returned with supplies which were duly transhipped to the cruiser. The meat for the soup was hung up on hooks on the spar deck. Early in the morning of June 14th (old style), during the usual cleaning up of the ship, one of the sailors noticed that there were maggots on the meat. The discovery was soon made known to the whole crew. Groups of sailors began to gather round the meat, and muttered curses and threats were heard:

"Those scoundrels of officers don't want to pay attention to the sailors' food."

"Show it to the doctor, and let him have it thrown overboard."

Hearing of the unrest among the crew, the captain of the "Potemkin," Golikov, sent the senior surgeon of the ship, Honorable Counsellor Smirnov, to examine the meat. He approached the meat, put on his pince-nez so as to see the maggots better, twisted it round in front of his face, sniffed and said that the meat was very good, that the crew was merely faddy and therefore did not want to eat it. All that was necessary was to wash off the maggots with water, and the meat would be excellent. After this decision by the senior surgeon, captain Golikov ordered a sentry to be stationed by the meat, and supplied him with a pencil and paper. The sentry was instructed to write down the names of all who came to look at the meat and afterwards to report them to the captain.

The crew knew well the habits and views of the captain, and were afraid to approach the meat. The captain ordered dinner to be prepared, but the excitement among the sailors did not die down.

"How can we serve in the navy now? How can we fight, when the prisoners in Japan are better treated than we are?" was heard among the crew.

At the usual hour the call to "dine and wine" was sounded, but one part of the call remained unanswered. Every sailor took a piece of bread and a mug of water, dipped the bread in the water and let this serve as his dinner. The cauldrons of soup which had been put out in the caboose (the ship's kitchen) were left untouched. This was reported to the captain, and soon Chief Officer Giliarovsky, followed later by captain Golikov, arrived to restore order. In reply to the question of the senior officer as to why the crew did not eat their dinner, the cook replied that they did not want the soup and asked for tea to be made and butter issued. The captain had by that time arrived, and when he heard from the Chief Officer what the trouble was, he turned to the sailors with the question:

"Why don't you eat the soup?"

From the crowd of sailors was heard the reply:

"Eat it yourself, and we will eat bread and water."

The officers decided to put down the opposition. Golikov ordered all hands-on deck and had the whole crew drawn up in front of him, addressing himself to them as follows:

"I have repeatedly said that such disorder is inadmissible on a warship of the navy. For such things your kind can be strung up there," (pointing to the yardarm). "Now, men, whoever is willing to eat the soup, step forward."

Only the "long service men," the bosuns and some of the petty officers responded, while the mass of the sailors remained motionless. Golikov gave another command:

"Turn out the guard," and in a minute the guard, armed with rifles, were drawn up before the parade of sailors. The next moment, the sailors, expecting arrest and possible shooting, ran to the gun tower in a disorderly crowd. Chief Officer Giliarovsky, seeing this and wishing to catch some of the "guilty" persons, shouted "Halt," and together with the officer of the watch, barred the path of those sailors who had not had time to join their comrades (thirty in all). He ordered the guard to surround them.

The crew stood there, pale and terribly worked up, when they saw their comrades surrounded by the guard. Amid the deathly silence was heard the order of the Chief Officer: "Bosun, hand out the tarpaulin."

The order given to the bosun meant that these comrades would be covered with a tarpaulin, and, in this helpless situation, volleys would be fired into them. This infamous order decided the matter. Matushenko stepped out in front of the sailors, and appealed to the guard with the words:

"Comrades, don't forget your oath — don't shoot at our own men."

The muzzles of the rifles dropped to the deck — they had refused to shoot at their comrades. Next minute there was a shout:

"Comrades, look what they are doing to our fellows! Grab rifles and cartridges, shoot them down, the swine."

This was the same Matushenko, and his call served as a signal for revolt. As if they had been waiting for the command, all the sailors rushed to the gun deck, seized rifles, loaded them, and ran out to their comrades who stood surrounded by the guard.

The sailors who were running with loaded rifles to liberate the prisoners were met with threats and curses by the captain and the Chief Officer. But in reply to this, a loud "Hurrah" ran through the "Potemkin," and shouts of "Long live freedom! Down with the war! Down with the Tsar!"

Captain Golikov threw himself on Matushenko with the order:

"Drop your weapons," and in reply heard: "I will drop my weapons when I am no longer a living being but a corpse. Get off the ship. This is the people's ship and not yours."

The captain fled. The revolt spread like wildfire, and shots and volleys could be heard.

The mighty force of the spontaneous outburst can be understood from the fact that even the religious sectarian sailors took part in the shooting, though up to that time, in the frequent discussions with the Commandant of the "Potemkin," they had been stubbornly against the permissibility of "shooting at their fellow men."

Chief Artillery Officer Neopkoev, who was in company with the captain, fell under the bullets of the rebels, and immediately afterwards, Chief Officer Giliarovsky was killed. The latter was found by Matushenko with a rifle in his hands at a gun-tower standing by the corpse of the sailor Vakulinchuk, who had been killed by him, and who had been among those who had been sentenced to be shot. Giliarovsky shot at Matushenko but missed him. He turned to flee, but Matushenko's bullet finished him. The bodies of the officers who had been killed were thrown overboard.

It was a terrible but a triumphant picture. Eight hundred men were shouting: "Death to the tyrants! Long live freedom!" and shots rattled in the direction of the officers who were trying to save themselves by swimming to the Torpedo-boat 267.

A torpedo officer, Lieutenant Ton, came towards the sailors. The crew, recognizing an officer who had been brutal to them, shouted: "Overboard with him!" But Ton came up to Matushenko and said: "I want to speak to you." Matushenko asked the sailors to stand on one side and went with Ton into the gun-turret.

Ton at that moment pulled out his revolver and shot at the man who had trusted him. His bullet wounded a sailor who was standing nearby in the arm. The next moment the officer fell under a hail of bullets.

Then came the turn of the captain. First of all, he hid in the Admiral's cabin, but seeing the hopelessness of the situation, he came on deck to express his belated repentance. Evidently looking on Matushenko as the leader of the revolt, the captain of the "Potemkin" rushed to him, threw his arms round his knees, and cried:

"I am greatly to blame for my attitude to the crew. Forgive me, comrade."

"Personally, I have nothing against you, it depends on the crew."

"Hang him on the yardarm," shouted the crew. "He threatened us with the yardarm!"

"Don't waste time," voices were heard. "Shoot him."

The tyrant captain was led away, a volley was heard, and the corpse of Golikov was thrown overboard. He was the last.

Meanwhile, the officers who had swum to Torpedo-boat No. 267 were hastening to escape. They had already raised the anchor so as to steam to Sevastopol, but shots from the 47mm and 75mm guns of the cruiser made them stop, and at the command of the "Potemkin," Torpedo-boat No. 267 came alongside the mutinous cruiser. The captain and two other officers were taken from the Torpedo-boat, but the demands of part of the crew to throw them overboard was not supported by the majority.

"Overboard with them all!" cried the sailors, indignant at their attempts to escape on the Torpedo-boat. But other voices were heard: "There has been enough bloodshed. The ship is now in our hands and these creatures are not dangerous to us. Let us wash the decks down." The crew obeyed. They limited themselves to arresting the officers from the Torpedo-boat and locking them in a cabin. Soon they were joined by several others from the "quarterdeck" who had hidden themselves in any place they could find in their fright at the moment of the revolt. Twelve persons were arrested in all, and their fate was to be decided later.

After the officers and those of the petty officers who were not thoroughly trusted had been arrested and the sailors had become the masters of the powerful cruiser, the Torpedo-boat crew began to raise steam and prepare to sail, while the fighting crew cleared the ship for action, in expectation of the meeting with the squadron which had remained in Sevastopol.

From the "Potemkin" the Red Flag fluttered victoriously.

It sailed to Odessa.

The "Potemkin" at Odessa

Having risen and seized power in their own hands, the sailors of the cruiser "Potemkin" elected a Ship's Committee consisting of twelve men who henceforth directed the ship.

The first decision of the Committee was to sail for Odessa, to get into contact with the workers, and after receiving reinforcements to take further action.

At the time when the events already described were taking place on the "Potemkin," there was taking place in Odessa a fierce struggle between the workers and the capitalists, first in the form of a general strike and from this spontaneously passing over into armed rebellion.

Owing to the poor preparations of the proletariat in Odessa, the events took place spontaneously. This was inevitable, owing to the fact that most of the industry in Odessa consisted of small plants. The following organisations existed there, each of them claiming the leading role: (1) The committee of the RSDLP (the majority fraction); (2) the group under the CCRSDLP (minority fraction); (3) the Bund Committee; (4) the committee of the Socialist Revolutionary Party; (5) a group of Anarchist-Communists; and (6) the Poale Zion group. All these organisations were hostile to each other and struggled for the supremacy.

The Bolsheviks were organized worst of all. They advocated an armed insurrection, while the Mensheviks were trying to direct the movement along peaceful lines. However, the Bolsheviks were not strong enough to get the movement into their hands. For several days there had been clashes between the workers, the troops and police. Several workers had been killed by the sabers of the Cossacks, and the bullets of the gendarmes. Exasperation had reached a tremendous height. The workers demanded arms, but there were none. The situation was becoming hopeless. Naturally the course of events in Odessa changed radically with the arrival of the "Potemkin." The feeling of the workers became bold and confident.

The workers welcomed the arrival of the "Potemkin" with tremendous enthusiasm when they heard of the events which had taken place. The Ship's Committee of the "Potemkin" decided: (1) to send parties on shore early in the morning to buy provisions; (2) to get the necessary amount of coal; (3) to send the body of Vakulinchuk on shore with a manifesto to the population; (4) to draw up a detailed statement of the events at Tender and to examine all the officers; (5) to draw up an appeal to the population of Odessa, to the Cossacks and to the French Consul, and (6) to get into contact with the Social-Democratic Parties. A decision was also made to put on shore those officers who would not agree to support the "cause of the people." Only a few officers, who agreed to help the revolutionary cause, remained on the cruiser. The engineer, Kovolenko, Lieutenant Kaluzhny and Doctor Galenko, who deliberately joined the rebels so as to betray them later, were set free. Midshipman Alexeyev, who had been set free earlier, was appointed as captain of the ship under the observation of the crew; he also became a provocateur to save his own skin.

Early in the morning on June 15th (old style) three sailors went on shore for the provisions. They carried out their tasks without difficulty. The body of Vakulinchuk was carried ashore and put into a tent made of sails. On his breast, over his crossed hands, was put the appeal to the population of Odessa.

A. P. Brzhezovsky, one of the participants in the "Potemkin" revolt, describes the events of June 15th (28th) around the body of Vakulinchuk, in his book *Eleven Days on the "Potemkin"* as follows:

"A tremendous crowd gathered, so that it was impossible to move. Everyone wanted to look at the dead man. Many people approached, took off their hats, crossed themselves and bowed down to the earth before the victim of savagery and tyranny. Women wept and kissed the hand of the dead warrior of the people. Sobs were heard, and there were tears in the eyes of many men. Near the tent, on a heap of barrels and on every available platform, orators were speaking on behalf of the various revolutionary groups. Fierce and passionate speeches poured forth to the tremendous gathering of people. Merciless exposures of the barbarity and the bloodshed caused by the Government were drowned from time to time by thunderous applause and revolutionary shouts: 'We have waited long enough! Death to the tyrants! We will die for freedom!' mingled with the deafening shouts of the excited crowds of workers who surrounded the platform. Their faces were bright with earnestness, indignation burned in their breasts, and all around could be felt a determined feeling of readiness to march immediately to the fight. Involuntarily I gave way to the general excitement and rushed to the platform.

"'Comrades,' I shouted. 'There are thousands of us here, and we cannot bear the slavery and oppression of the Government any longer. Let us withdraw the workers from the ships and all the port-workers, and let us march altogether into the town. With arms in our hands and under the protection of the sailors and their guns, we shall win our freedom, we shall win a better life.'

"A deafening roar arose before I could finish. The whole crowd moved as one man through the port, past the ships and the steamers. The sailors were withdrawn from their work on the ships. Hundreds of whistles were sounding wildly, deafening everyone. The crowd flowed like a wave from side to side, attracting everyone into their ranks as they moved along."

When the Ship's Committee heard of the shootings which had taken place by the Cossacks on the previous day during a demonstration in the streets, it sent the following proclamation to the Cossacks and the soldiers, on behalf of the crew of the "Potemkin":

"The sailors of the 'Potemkin' appeal to you, soldiers and Cossacks, to put down your weapons and to let us win freedom for the people. We request the peaceful citizens of Odessa to leave the town, because in case of any violence being attempted against us, we will reduce Odessa to a heap of ruins."

The commander of the troops in Odessa, General Kokhanov, did not trust the troops and applied for reinforcements—from Tiraspol, the 15th Artillery Brigade, the Voznesensk Dragoon

Regiment from Belets, and several infantry regiments from Vender and Ekaterinoslav. Martial law was declared in Odessa. The Government attempted to seize the body of Vakulinchuk and to drive off the guard, but the crew of the "Potemkin" would not allow it.

In order to work out a general plan of action, the Ship's Committee got into contact with the Social-Democratic organisations of Odessa and asked them to send representatives on board the cruiser. At this time, a preliminary meeting of representatives of three organisations – Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and the Bund – prepared a plan which they intended to submit to the sailors of the "Potemkin."

In this plan, it was decided to land a strong party of sailors, who would march at the head of a demonstration of thousands of workers through the main square of the town to bury their dead comrade. At the first clash with the troops, the sailors would call on the soldiers to fraternize with them and to come over to the side of the people. In addition to getting the soldiers on to our side, one of the main tasks was to disorganize all the resources which the Government possessed to crush the rebellion – destruction of telegraph and the telephone wires, tearing up the railway lines, the arrest of all Government representatives, the liberation of prisoners from the prisons, etc. The cruiser would remain as a threat to the town all the time and would fire warning shots. If the plan failed to the slightest extent, it would begin to bombard the town. Then four representatives were chosen to go to the cruiser and inform the sailors of this plan, but in view of the fact that the circumstances were changing every minute, they were given powers to change the plan of action to suit the new conditions.

When they arrived at the cruiser, it was made clear at the meeting of the Ship's Committee that this plan was not advisable. Firstly, the sailors were opposed to an armed descent on the town. They said that the crew of the ship should not be split, because there would not be sufficient men left to serve the ship and keep it ready for action. Secondly, if they were separated and the boldest and the most reliable sent on shore, then those who were left on the ship would not act with sufficient determination at the critical moment. They were strong only if they remained united.

Many Social-Democratic workers came with the representatives of the organisations, and related the events in the town. The more backward section of the sailors, under the provocation of the petty officer who had been liberated from arrest, began to show their dissatisfaction at the presence of "strangers" on the ship, saying that the events on the "Potemkin" only applied to the sailors. As a result, the session of the commission was broken up and it was decided to leave only a few comrades on the cruiser while the remainder should leave for the time being.

On the evening of June 15th, the "Potemkin" captured a small war vessel, the "Vekka," which was bound from Nikolayev to Odessa. It was converted into a hospital ship, while the captain and the officers were arrested. Soon the officers were put on shore without arms, while the crew joined the sailors of the "Potemkin."

On the same day, a delegation from two regiments, the "Ismail" and the "Danube" regiments, arrived at the ship, and on behalf of the organized part of their comrades in the regiments, they stated that they were prepared to join the crew of the "Potemkin" as soon as the latter took decisive action.

"We, comrades, will support you on the shore. No longer are we prepared to kill peasants or workers, and we shall not fire at you if you come to occupy the town," said one of the delegates. (Kirill, *Eleven Days on the "Potemkin."*)

Besides these friendly visits, the gendarmes and the police made attempts to get on to the "Potemkin," but at the orders of the sailors, they were compelled to throw their swords into the water and beat a shameful retreat.

Meanwhile, bloody events were taking place in the town and the port. The soldiers and the police lost their heads at first, but when they saw the inaction of the "Potemkin," they began to rally their forces and to prepare for a new slaughter. As darkness fell, attempts were made to start a Jewish pogrom, but without success. One of the speakers who was calling for the pogrom was badly beaten up, and another was killed by a shot from the crowd. Then the provocateurs turned all their energy to the port. The police got cases of vodka ready to make the hoodlums drunk so as to get them to participate later in the pogrom. After the end of the meeting near the body of Vakulinchuk, the crowd at the port consisted mostly of curious middle-class elements and hoodlums. There were very few workers and all their attempts to hold back these people or to interfere with them were hopeless. The drunken crowd went to the liquor stores, and after a speech from some unknown person with a direct appeal to plunder, they began to break up and burn everything which came under their hands. A big fire commenced in the port and a panic started. The fire brigade arrived, but the police compelled it to turn back. The wild and drink-maddened crowd were at the mercy of the flames. The soldiers who were at hand, began to shoot right and left at everyone in the port. Here is how one of the eye-witnesses describes the events of that night:

"Volley after volley was fired at the thousands of people who were looting the storehouses. The soldiers fired with rifles and machineguns. They fired on all sides...the cannonade continued through the whole night. Horror followed on horror..."

The police discovered a crowd of workers who were trying to make their way through the town. They sent the soldiers against them, describing them as looters, and many were killed as the result of the shooting. At the same time, in a Jewish settlement of Odessa — Moldavanka — the police openly commenced a Jewish pogrom.

About 2,000 persons were killed by the shooting or as the result of the fire.

The morning did not bring a return of quiet. The fire in the port had not yet died down, the corpses had not been removed from the sea-front, and Cossack patrols were shooting people who went to the smoking ruins to seek for their dead relatives.

The funeral of Gregory Vakulinchuk took place on the same morning. In spite of the fact that martial law had been declared in the town, in spite of the bloody events of the preceding night, the

commander of the troops permitted the funeral procession to pass through the whole town, insisting only on the delegation from the "Potemkin" being restricted to twelve sailors (the sailors had demanded that one hundred of them should take part in the funeral procession), and that they should be unarmed. But the safety and freedom of the delegates was guaranteed, so great was the fear of the authorities before the "Potemkin."

Matushenko describes the funeral of Vakulinchuk as follows:

"I have never seen such a solemn sight as the funeral of our dear comrade, or so many genuine tears as were shed over the body of a sailor, hitherto unknown to them. When we left the boat and went on shore near the body of Vakulinchuk, there was a mass of people, just as on the previous day. Immediately several persons lifted up the stretcher with the body and the long procession marched through the town in the direction of the cemetery. In the streets new masses of people joined us. On the balconies, in the windows and on the roofs of the houses, there were crowds of people. Shouts could be heard: 'All honor to the dead hero!' 'Down with the tyrants!' 'Long live the "Potemkin"!'"

This continued along the whole route, until the procession had passed through the town and arrived at the cemetery.

"After the funeral we drove back to the port, but on the way, we were stopped by a company of soldiers which blocked the road. We were in a hurry and continued our journey on foot. But as soon as we drew level with the soldiers, a signal was given and they opened fire on us. We were unarmed, and could do nothing but run. I was behind the others, and saw that no one had been killed, although bullets pierced my trousers. I think that the soldiers deliberately fired wildly. However, when we arrived at the landing stage, there were only nine of us. I do not know what happened to the other three."

In the evening of the same day, the "Potemkin" began to bombard the town.

It has not been discovered exactly why this bombardment was commenced. One of the participants in the rebellion, Kovalenko, explains it by saying that the crew of the "Potemkin" wished to help the workers of Odessa who were being threatened with shooting at the orders of the Military Council which was sitting at that time in the town theatre, headed by the commander of the troops. It was expected that the shells would be fired chiefly at the Military Council.

Five shots in all were fired from the guns of the cruiser "Potemkin" – three blank shots and two 6-inch shells. The firing was supposed to be aimed at the Town Theatre where the Military Council was in session. But the shells did not reach their target owing to the deliberately incorrect aim of the spy and traitor, Signaler Bedermeyer.

In spite of the fact that the shells did not reach their mark, they roused tremendous enthusiasm among the working masses of Odessa, giving them hopes of victory.

The cruiser "George the Conqueror" joins the "Potemkin"

Early in the morning of June 17th, a cypher telegram was intercepted, showing that the Black Sea squadron was drawing near to the "Potemkin." At the orders of the Ship's Committee, the emergency steamer "Smely" was seized for scouting purposes. The whole of the crew was taken from the ship and replaced by sailors from the "Potemkin," and the steamer itself was sent to scout in the direction of the Tender Strait. On returning, the scout gave information that the squadron was in sight not far from Tender. It was evident that the squadron had been sent from Sevastopol to quell the mutiny on the "Potemkin." In order to give an accurate description of the events and the details of the preparations which were made to quell the mutinous "Potemkin," we will quote the words of one of the sailors of the cruiser "Rostislav," who fled abroad:

"On June 21st (old style) the squadron was to have proceeded to Tender Island to join the "Potemkin" for instructional manoeuvres. On June 15th, a signal was raised, unexpectedly for all, from the flagship 'Rostislav': 'The Admiral requests all the captains to come to the flagship,' and a second signal to the cruisers 'Holy Trinity,' 'Twelve Apostles,' 'George the Conqueror,' 'Catherine II,' to get up steam and prepare to sail.

"The sailors were astonished at this, because everyone knew that we were due to go to Tender Island on the 21st. Some of them began to guess that something wrong had happened on the 'Potemkin,' while others said that this was merely a practice maneuver and nothing else. In short, the fore-castle split into several groups. The crew began to make various comments on the proposed cruise.

"Meanwhile, the captains gathered together. Their meeting lasted two hours. We do not know what was said, but after the meeting another signal was raised: 'The "Catherine" is not to leave port.' We afterwards learned the reason for this from the comrades on the 'Catherine.' On the previous day, i.e., the evening of June 14th, the crew of the 'Catherine II,' having sung prayers 'Our Father' and 'Hail, Mary,' in a half-hearted way, they absolutely refused to sing 'God Save the Tsar,' and when five or six singers nevertheless started to chant the prayer, the others began to whistle and howl. When the captain (Senior captain Drijenko) appeared, the crew made demands of a purely economic character. He laughed at them and hurried into his cabin. For this reason, the 'Catherine II' did not go with the squadron.

"At 11 o'clock at night, the three cruisers 'Holy Trinity,' 'George the Conqueror,' and the 'Twelve Apostles,' together with the light cruiser 'Kazarsky' and four Torpedo-boats left under the command of Vice-Admiral Vishnevsky. The next day, i.e., June 16th, at about 11 o'clock in the morning, a signal was raised: '"The Rotislav" and the "Sinop" to get up steam and prepare to sail.' They began to prepare. They took provisions for three days and weighed anchor soon after 6 o'clock.

"All this time the officers were terribly uneasy, walking about in a dispirited manner and whispering together. The class-conscious sailors, of whom there were only about ten on the 'Rotislav,' guessed that we were going against the 'Potemkin,' and began to agitate openly, for

which they fell into the hands of the authorities. I was one of them, but I afterwards escaped. The agitation was not very successful. The majority did not believe that the 'Potemkin' had gone over to the side of the people, but at last we managed to convince many of the sailors of this, and they replied: 'If it is true that we are going against the "Potemkin," we will refuse to fire on it, because they are our brothers.'

"Shortly after 9 o'clock in the morning we approached Tender Island to join the squadron which had left before us, but it was not there. On the horizon, in the direction of Odessa, several lines of smoke could be seen. It was our squadron. We followed it and joined it at 11 o'clock. The captains of all the ships gathered for a meeting on the flagship 'Rotislav.' We heard from the sailors who rowed the captain to the flagship, that the 'Potemkin' was in Odessa, and when they had tried to approach Odessa, the 'Potemkin' had raised the signal: 'Surrender or we will fire.' They hurriedly retreated.

"The meeting of captains lasted not more than half-an-hour. Then the squadron drew up in battle line and set out for Odessa at a speed of 10 knots. Soon after 1 o'clock, the shore came in sight, and the smoke from the 'Potemkin' could be seen." (*Iskra*, no. 105)

The meeting of the "Potemkin" with the squadron is described by Kovalenko as follows:

"Every minute they drew nearer. Soon they were so near that we could distinguish the ships. The cruisers 'Rotislav' and 'Sinop' had just joined the squadron. All the ships were steaming towards us, drawn up in two columns. In front were the armored cruisers and the light cruiser, and behind were the Torpedo-boat destroyers. The 'Potemkin' accompanied by the Torpedo-boat, which kept close alongside all the time, drove straight at the middle of the first column. Soon it was possible to distinguish that the ships of the squadron, like the 'Potemkin' were cleared for action. The boat davits had been taken down and the guns were pointing out over the sides. But when the squadron was 100-150 fathoms away from the 'Potemkin,' a movement could be observed on the 'George the Conqueror', the 'Twelve Apostles' and the 'Sinop.'

"Crowds of them rushed up through the hatchways and soon the decks of these cruisers were covered with sailors. We had already drawn level with the squadron and the 'Potemkin' cut through the middle of it. The guns of the 'Potemkin' were slowly directed towards the passing ships. The 'Rotislav' and the 'Holy Trinity' in dead silence, replied in the same manner, but on the decks of the remaining cruisers the crew could be seen in obvious disorder. Suddenly from the upper deck of the 'Potemkin' rang out the cry: 'Long live freedom! Hurrah!' In answer to this, a mighty 'Hurrah' burst like thunder from the three cruisers."

Fearing that the mutiny would spread through the whole squadron, Admiral Krieger ordered the squadron to steer at full speed through the open sea to Sevastopol.

The "Potemkin" once more cut through the lines of the squadron and turned sharply in chase.

One of the cruisers suddenly separated from the squadron, turned round and steered straight at the "Potemkin." The signaler of the Potemkin distinguished the name by means of his telescope. It

was the "George the Conqueror," the same ship whose crew had refused to take part in the unrest in the naval barracks at Sevastopol in November, 1904, owing to which there had been bad blood between the crews of the "George the Conqueror" and the "Potemkin" which had taken part in this affair.

Naturally the crew of the "Potemkin" had no reason to trust the "George the Conqueror" or to believe that its intentions were peaceful. Not wishing to allow the ship to approach too close, the "Potemkin" signaled to it to cast anchor.

The "George the Conqueror" stopped and began to signal by semaphore. "The crew of the 'George the Conqueror' requests the 'Potemkin' to send some comrades on board." Not knowing the real intentions of the "George the Conqueror," the crew of the "Potemkin" replied by semaphore: "Arrest your officers and send delegates to us." To these demands, the signaler replied: "Things are going badly here. We are not all agreed. We cannot manage ourselves. Send help quickly."

Then the members of the Ship's Committee of the "Potemkin," armed with rifles and revolvers, went over on the Torpedo-boat to the "George the Conqueror." Owing to the determination and boldness of the detachment from the "Potemkin," the officers of the "George the Conqueror" were arrested and put ashore. After this the "George the Conqueror," joined the "Potemkin." While carrying out this operation of clearing out the counter-revolutionary officers, a tremendous mistake was made that afterwards destroyed the whole revolt which had commenced so brilliantly.

Some of the Potemkinites were so incautious as to believe the assurances of the good-natured sailors of "George the Conqueror" that the petty officers on their ship were reliable. Therefore, these hypocrites were not put on shore together with the officers and were not even arrested, but were left at complete liberty to carry on quiet counter-revolutionary agitation.

The tremendous victory of the cruiser "Potemkin" increased its strength and at the same time raised the spirits of the crew and gave them the hope of successfully completing the mutiny which had commenced so well. This victory not only brought joy to the crew of the "Potemkin," but also to the workers in Odessa, whose spirits rose once more and who once more hoped for a favorable conclusion to their struggle. One of the participants in the mutiny of the "Potemkin", Kirill, describes the feelings of the "Potemkin" after it had been joined by the "George the Conqueror" in the following words:

"Our minds were at ease, and the constant nightmare of fear that the business would fail was replaced by a complete confidence in a rapid victory over our ancient enemy and the apostles of darkness and violence.

"Now we had our own revolutionary squadron – two cruisers with six 12-inch guns, a Torpedo-boat and the "Vekha." Under such conditions, the idea of establishing political freedom for all South Russia and extending it over the whole of Russia seemed perfectly feasible at that moment, and in our thoughts, we were already living in the new kingdom of liberty.

"Tomorrow we shall go to Odessa and take it, establish a free Government, join the free soldiers, organize a people's army, march on Kiev, Kharkov and other towns, join the peasant masses in the villages, and then we shall march to the Caucasus along the shores of the Black Sea and everywhere announce independence and freedom from the old chains of slavery! Then to Moscow and St. Petersburg!"

But unfortunately, all these were mere dreams, fantasy, having no connection with reality. Our people argued, discussed, raved, expressed the most florid dreams, but they very slightly understood the real state of affairs, what should be done, how to fight against the enemy, how to act so as to overcome this great enemy.

The enemies — the servants of the Tsarist monarchy — had not the feelings of victors. Feelings of depression reigned among them. But, nevertheless, in most cases the servants of the Tsar were men of action, practical men, and therefore they energetically organized resistance to the mutinous sailors who were preparing to defeat them.

General Kakhanov describes the events at Odessa as follows:

"During June 16th and 17th, I was visited by the Consuls of France, Germany, Great Britain, Austria and Italy. They expressed anxiety for the safety of the consulates and for their nationals, and also demanded various explanations. I told the Consuls that they should apply for explanations to Yurenev, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to whom I should send information of the state of affairs in Odessa. To guard the consulates, I appointed two infantry soldiers to each of the eighteen consulates in Odessa.

"When it was found in the evening that the crew of the "George the Conqueror" had also mutinied and that the squadron had returned to Sevastopol without crushing the crew of the "Potemkin" and even reinforcing them by a cruiser, I had to reckon without the help of the Admiralty in my further actions, and to fight against the two cruisers by my own forces alone. Owing to this, I ordered the second battalion of sappers to be brought from camp to erect a battery on the Jevaka Hill for eight 9-inch mortars. The commander of the fortification stores in Odessa directed this battery to be armed with the guns in the stores, ordering shells to be brought for these guns from Ochakov, and also bringing the commander of the engineer battalion from that fort to decide whether it was possible to blow up the mutinous cruisers by means of the equipment at Ochakov. Finally, a telegram was sent to the War Minister, requesting long-range guns to be sent from internal storehouses."

As the reader will see, though the enemy did not feel himself to be in good shape, nevertheless, preparations for the forthcoming struggle were carried on in a businesslike and well-thought-out manner. Comrade Lenin has repeatedly pointed out in his numerous articles on the preparations for an armed rebellion, that we have much to learn from our enemies, because it is only by learning and adapting the methods and means of planned preparations for war and planned warfare with our enemy, the monarchy, that we can defeat it and overcome it.

The desertion of the "George the Conqueror" and the end of the revolt

July 18th was the culminating point in the history of the revolt on the cruiser "Potemkin" and at the same time, this day marks the turn of the tide in the direction of the downfall and disintegration of this revolt. During the night, the position of the "George the Conqueror" had changed considerably, for the worse. As was to be expected, the hypocritical counter-revolutionary petty officers who had been left at liberty, openly commenced to urge the crew to return to Sevastopol. They succeeded in splitting the crew into two sections, one of which was openly hostile to the "Potemkin," and the other which was undecided and hesitating. The Ship's Committee of the "Potemkin", hearing of the state of affairs, decided to send a deputation of several sailors to the "George" with an armed guard to arrest the petty officers and bring them to the "Potemkin."

Unfortunately for the deputation, two sailors who were almost unknown, and Doctor Galenko, accompanied it. From the very beginning, they had been planning treachery.

Matushenko and Kirill were unable to go with this deputation, because they had completely lost their voices owing to addressing so many meetings. As for the other energetic representatives, Doctor Galenko, though not objecting to them coming, nevertheless arranged matters in such a way that they were not included in the delegation.

When the delegation from the "Potemkin" arrived at the "George," Doctor Galenko suddenly announced impudently to the sailors that the crew of the "Potemkin" had decided to surrender, and to ask the crew of the "George" to go with them to Sevastopol; that only a few men who kept the whole crew in their hands wished to fight any longer, but that in a day or two the sailors would overthrow their power and return to Sevastopol.

Such a speech from the accredited representative of the "Potemkin" produced a disastrous effect on the crew and irretrievably decided the whole matter. Doctor Galenko was energetically assisted in his treachery and provocation by the petty officers and by the bosun Kuzmin.

After this, it was decided to return immediately to Sevastopol. Steam was raised on the "George the Conqueror," and it steamed out into the open sea. The "Potemkin" began to hoist threatening signals but the "George" continued to steam ahead. Then the "Potemkin" hoisted its battle-flag and the "George the Conqueror" turned sharply around, steamed to the harbor and ran on to a shoal.

Naturally, the "Potemkin" should have immediately sent the Torpedo-boat to the "George the Conqueror," to arrest the petty officers, to put the guards at the guns and then compel one of the steamers in the harbor to tow the cruiser off the shoal and not allow the soldiers to join with it. But the ruling power – the Ship's Committee – did nothing. Their feelings had fallen catastrophically. A pitiful confusion reigned.

Suddenly a shout was heard "Sail to Romania," and in a minute or two almost all the crew, shaken by the treachery of the "George the Conqueror" was repeating these words. Even Matushenko gave way to these feelings of despair and began to repeat these ominous words: "To Romania."

The order was given to raise steam, and as soon as the deputation returned from the "George the Conqueror," without the provocateur, Doctor Galenko, of course, the "Potemkin" set out in the direction of Romania. The cruiser "Potemkin" which had lost its faith in the favorable outcome of the revolt, had hardly departed for Romania, when, a few hours later, a small training ship, the "Prut," arrived at Odessa to join the "Potemkin." The quality of the crew of the "Prut" from the point of view of revolutionary preparation, was fairly high, and therefore as soon as they heard of the mutiny off the "Potemkin," they rose under the leadership of the most active sailors, and arrested the officers, of whom two were killed. The Red Flag was raised and the ship set out in search of the "Potemkin."

It was a great tragedy for the crew of the "Prut" when they arrived at Odessa and found that the "Potemkin" had left for Romania to disarm. Most of the command began to hesitate, feeling uncertain of their strength and of the result. After long arguments and discussions, the minority gave way to the majority, the Red Flag was hauled down, the officers were liberated, and the "Prut" set out to Sevastopol.

The defeated minority still held to slight hopes that they would be able to cause a revolt in the whole squadron on arriving at Sevastopol. But alas, these hopes were fated to disappointment. On its way, the "Prut" was met by two Torpedo-boats and taken under control. On arriving at Sevastopol, the crew of the "Prut" on the demand of Admiral Chukhnin, handed over forty-two of the "ringleaders" who were sent for trial by court-martial.

The Tsarist Court meted out stern justice. Four were sentenced to death and thirty-eight to penal servitude. Although the defense and the court applied for mercy, Nikolai II handed over the whole matter to the discretion of Admiral Chukhnin, who confirmed the sentences completely.

When the "Potemkin" had left, the police, the gendarmes, the Tsarist generals and capitalists felt themselves to be masters of the situation, and carried out a devilish revenge on the revolting workers, repaying them for the terror and excitement through which they had lived.

We will not go into details as to the further fate of the cruiser "Potemkin" or describe its double journey to Romania and its disarmament at Constance, but will conclude its tragedy of struggle, with the words of Lenin:

"The passage of the 'Potemkin' to the side of the rebellion was the first step in converting the Russian Revolution into an international force, bringing it face-to-face with the European countries."

The lessons of the mutiny of the "Potemkin"

There were many causes for the defeat of the revolt on the cruiser "Potemkin." But the chief and most fundamental reasons were as follows:

Firstly, the masses of soldiers and sailors were not class-conscious, were ignorant and had no experience whatever of revolutionary struggle. They were easily roused to hatred and anger against their oppressors, and were easily roused to spontaneous protests and mutinies. They were easily

fired by the flames of revolt, but they had no revolutionary solidity, firmness, reliability and determination, no planned preparations. In short, they had none of those qualities which are given by a long political revolt in the process of the revolutionary class struggle and which are so necessary for a victorious armed rebellion.

Secondly, the leadership of this revolt was weak and incapable, not understanding the seriousness of the situation.

Without wasting valuable time, they should have immediately used their arms to catch the enemy unprepared and disorganize them. But the leaders did not make a unanimous decision on a single question. The Social-Democratic organisation of Odessa, consisting of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, was not prepared and did not show sufficient activity and determination. It did not even set up a leading military centre. At the moment when rapidity, decision and boldness were necessary, as one of the contemporaries, bitterly states, in reality there was only a foolish, helpless and mistaken attitude of waiting for "something."

In general, neither the leaders of the workers' organisations, nor the leaders of the sailors held in the slightest degree to the golden rule which had been pointed out by Marx long before, as to how a victorious armed revolt ought to be organized.

"Revolt, like war, is a science," said he, "and therefore we should never 'play at rebelling,' but once we have commenced, we should know thoroughly that we have to carry it through to the end.

"It is necessary to collect a great superiority of forces at the decisive spot, at the decisive moment, otherwise the enemy, who has better organisation, will destroy the rebels.

"Once the rebellion has commenced, it is necessary to act with the greatest determination and immediately take up the offensive. Defense is the death-blow to an armed rebellion.

"We must try to catch the enemy unawares. Every day some successes, however small, must be obtained, so as to maintain the moral superiority at all costs."

Comrade Lenin, throughout the whole course of his revolutionary activity, untiringly urged these golden rules of Marx, on our Bolshevik comrades. Therefore, it is not to be wondered at that we conquered in October, 1917, under his talented leadership.

On the other hand, in all the events which took place in Odessa, there can clearly be seen the imprint of Menshevik tactics, according to which a revolt is a process. They tried to utilize the revolt of the cruiser for agitation, for arousing the masses against the monarchy, but they did not wish to take the responsibility of organizing a revolt, of making technical preparations for it, or giving it the necessary correct direction.

The Bolshevik organisation as well was evidently weak and could not take charge of the rebellion.

Comrade Shapovalov, who was in Odessa at the time of the "Potemkin" mutiny, gives the following account of the situation in the Social-Democratic organisations:

"The united commission (composed of representatives of the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks and the Bund) committed an inexcusable mistake when they decided to direct the activity of the cruiser from the shore. On the first day they lost six hours of valuable time in quarrels as to what to call it. The Bund and the General Workers' Union on the first day proposed that the sailors should bombard the town and then send a landing party. The representatives of the organisations were against the bombardment, on the grounds that it was too harsh. Then the sailors refused, very sensibly, to leave the ship before the arrival of the rest of the squadron. Then for two or three days, the commission and the representatives babbled irresolutely, and for humanitarian reasons set the officers free on the shore. During all this time the meetings were systematically broken up by the conciliators. They only gathered when one cruiser had gone and the other had surrendered. The workers of Odessa were waiting for the bombardment like manna from heaven, but the Social-Democrats, together with the bourgeoisie, were against the bombardment of the aristocratic sections of the sea-front. Now the reaction will set in, because it can be seen that the organisation is weak. Oh, now it will be harder to drive out the intelligentsia, the conciliators, the traitors to the workers."

This characterization of the events, given by a Bolshevik worker, contains many hard phrases, under the influence of a natural irritation against the opportunist actions of the organisations. But on the whole, it is undoubtedly correct.

Comrade Lenin was abroad in exile, and followed the development of events in Odessa with the greatest intensity and interest, and even took steps to send the best Bolshevik comrades to lead the revolt, giving them instructions and directions.

It is true that before these comrades who had been sent by Lenin (Vassiliev, Yuzhin) could arrive the struggle was already over.

In an article in the Bolshevik organ, *Proletary*, Comrade Lenin gave the following estimate of the events at Odessa:

"The tremendous significance of the recent events at Odessa lies in the fact that for the first time a large part of the military forces of tsarism – a whole armored cruiser – came over openly to the side of the revolution.

"There was much in the movement which was undeveloped, and in the events at Odessa there were many of the features of the old mutinies. But it signifies that the first waves of the flood have already flowed up to the very threshold of the monarchist stronghold."

In analyzing these events further, Comrade Lenin draws the following instructive lessons in the same article:

"From the troops themselves, detachments of the revolutionary army are formed. The business of these detachments is to declare a rebellion, to give *military leadership* to the masses, which is necessary for civil war as for every other war, to form base points for an open struggle throughout the country, to transfer the revolt to neighboring districts, to assure complete political freedom—even if only on a small part of the territory of the country at first—to commence the revolutionary reconstruction of the decayed system of the monarchy, to develop the creative efforts of the rank and file to the full.

"A revolutionary army is necessary because great historical questions can only be settled by force," Lenin teaches us further in the same article: "but the organisation of force in a modern struggle is a military organisation."

These quotations from an article written by Lenin twenty-five years ago are so modern and so obviously applicable, that when we read them, they might have been written yesterday with regard to the heroic struggle of the Red Army in China, or in any other country where the great struggle of the toilers for their freedom is going on.

More than ten years after these events, in one of his speeches abroad, Lenin again returned to the question of the methods of armed struggle by the rebellious revolutionary troops against the Tsarist Government. As an example, Comrade Lenin again gives the episode from the revolt of the Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol:

"Permit me to relate to you in detail one little episode in the mutiny of the Black Sea Fleet, in order to give you a concrete picture of events at the apex of their development.

"Gatherings of revolutionary workers and sailors were being organized more and more frequently. Since men in the armed forces were not permitted to attend workers' meetings, the workers began in masses to visit the military meetings. They gathered in thousands. The idea of joint action found a lively response. The most class-conscious companies elected deputies.

"Then the military authorities decided to take action. The attempts of some of the officers to deliver 'patriotic' speeches at the meetings had failed miserably: the seamen, who were accustomed to debating, put their officers to shameful flight. After these efforts had failed, it was decided to prohibit meetings altogether. In the morning of November 24th, 1905, a company of soldiers, in full war kit, was posted at the gate of the naval barracks. Rear-Admiral Pisarevsky, in a loud voice, gave the order: 'Permit no one to leave the barracks! In case of disobedience, shoot!' A sailor, named Petrov, stepped forth from the ranks of the company that received that order, loaded his rifle in everybody's view, and with one shot killed Lieutenant-Colonel Stein of the Brest-Litovsk Regiment, and with another wounded Rear-Admiral Pisarevsky. The command was given: 'Arrest him!' Nobody budged. Petrov threw his rifle to the ground and exclaimed: 'Why don't you move? Take me!' He was arrested. The seamen, who rushed from every side, angrily demanded his release, and declared that they vouched for him. Excitement ran high.

"Petrov, the shot was an accident, wasn't it?" asked one of the officers, trying to find a way out of the situation.

"What do you mean, an accident? I stepped forward, loaded and took aim. Is that an accident?"

"They demand your release..."

"And Petrov was released. The seamen, however, were not content with that; all officers on duty were arrested, disarmed, and taken to company headquarters...Seamen, delegates, forty in number, conferred throughout the whole night. The decision was to release the officers, but never to permit them to enter the barracks again.

"This little incident shows you clearly how events developed in the majority of the mutinies. The revolutionary ferment among the people could not but spread to the armed forces. It is characteristic that the leaders of the movement came from those elements in the navy and the army which had been recruited mainly from among the industrial workers and possessed most technical training, for instance, the sappers. The broad masses, however, were still too naive, their mood was too passive, too good-natured, too Christian. They flared up very quickly; any case of injustice, excessively harsh conduct on the part of the officers, bad food, etc., was enough to call forth a revolt. But there was no persistence in their protest; they lacked a clear perception of aim; they lacked a clear understanding of the fact that only the most vigorous continuation of the armed struggle, only a victory over all the military and civil authorities, only the overthrow of the Government and the seizure of power throughout the whole State could guarantee the success of the revolution.

"The broad masses of the seamen and soldiers light-heartedly rose in revolt. But with equal light-heartedness they foolishly released the arrested officers. They allowed themselves to be pacified by promises and persuasion on the part of their officers; in this way the officers gained precious time, obtained reinforcements, broke the power of the rebels, and then the most brutal suppression of the movement and the execution of the leaders followed." (Lenin, *The 1905 Revolution*)

The revolt on the cruiser "Potemkin" in 1905 was one of the object lessons of the revolutionary struggle, in which the broad masses of workers and peasants and particularly the sailors and soldiers, learned the lesson of revolutionary struggle and the concrete tactics of armed revolt. The Bolsheviks generalized these concrete lessons and drew the necessary conclusions with regard to the further preparations for the overthrow of tsarism.

The victory of the workers and peasants in October, 1917, was not only due to the favorable international and internal political circumstances, but chiefly to the fact that they were led by our Communist Party, with Comrade Lenin at its head, which had gathered tremendous experience in the struggle against the monarchist Government during the 1905 Revolution, in the years of reaction and retreat, and especially during the time of the conciliatory bourgeois Government of Kerensky.

From the February Revolution to the October Revolution 1917

By
A.F. Ilyin-Genevsky

AUTHORS PREFACE

The year 1917 is the greatest in the history of the world. It was in that year that technically backward, dark and desolate Russia set out to do what the best minds of mankind had hitherto only dared to dream of. The working class conquered state power and proceeded to build up the socialist order of society.

Centuries may come and go but millions of people will always be fascinated by the narrative of the events of that glorious year. Every minute detail, every scintilla of evidence bearing upon it will be studied with devoted attention by posterity.

Ours is the most fortunate of all generations, past or future. Countless legions have lived before us and will follow after us, but we alone were privileged to live through and experience the joys and sorrows of this epoch-making year that definitely broke with the past. But these fond recollections of events personally witnessed or experienced entail a serious obligation. It is the duty of those of us who lived in the year 1917, especially if we took an active part in affairs, to supply future generations with the necessary material to work upon. We must describe conscientiously and in detail those events which we observed and in which we were active participants. No circumstance, however trivial, should be ignored. Everything that breathes the spirit of 1917 will be of absorbing interest to those who follow us. Of course, no single individual can do justice to this gigantic task. But if we unite our forces, our joint labors, mutually corrected and supplemented, will gradually piece together bit by bit the glorious panorama of those grand revolutionary days. This is a noble task which is its own reward.

A. Ilyin-Genevsky

Readers should, perhaps, be reminded that Finland, like other border states, was under the iron heel of Russian Tsardom before the Bolshivik revolution freed them.

BEFORE THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

On the eve of February 1917, it was not necessary to be a prophet to see that the inevitable revolution was not far off. As a matter of fact, the revolution had really commenced in July 1914. It was only owing to the unexpected international complications and the declaration of war which immediately followed that the fall of the Romanov monarchy was postponed for three years.

I well remember the stirring times of July 1914. I had just come on vacation to Petrograd from Geneva, where I had been forced to go after my arrest and expulsion from the Gymnasium in 1912. I was already a full-fledged student of Geneva University. Conversations with the Party comrades whom I met showed me that the period of black reaction of 1907-8 was left behind for good and all, that we were on the brink of a new wave of revolution. I had not long to wait for a proof of this.

I remember that in carrying out some small Party duty given to me by my friends in Geneva, I walked the Vyborg side of the river. Through one of the side streets, I saw a huge crowd marching along the Sampsonovsky Embankment, carrying red flags and singing revolutionary songs. This

unexpected picture, recalling so vividly the demonstrations of 1912 in which I had participated, filled me with joy and expectation that the inevitable must shortly take place. And as a matter of fact, the next day Petrograd was without a tramway service. Crowds of workers attacked the tramcars and turned out the passengers. They then thrust levers under the cars and soon had them lying on their sides. This took place, of course, only in the workers districts, but the tram drivers and conductors seized the excuse to refuse to continue the service throughout the city, and hastened to run their cars back to the car depot, before anything worse happened. In some places, barricades began to spring up around these overturned cars. The movement continued to grow.

Just as was the case later, during the February Revolution, groups of people began to gather at street corners, heatedly discussing the events which were taking place and bitterly condemning the monarchy and the government. These impoverished meetings could be held without fear of repression, as the police had become cowed and could not find the courage to take energetic steps.

However, the clouds on the western horizon continued to darken, and suddenly, without warning, war broke out. In an instant, all was changed.

Soon after the events I have mentioned, I remember seeing a tremendous crowd on the Liteyny Prospekt singing and marching in the direction of the Nevsky Prospekt. The appearance of a demonstration in such an unusual place astounded me. My heart began to thump, and the happy thought flashed through my mind: "It is the Revolution!" Alas! A bitter disappointment awaited me. I caught the words of the song, "Bring terror to the hearth of the enemy," and I understood that they were singing the national anthem "God Save the Tsar." As I approached, I saw that national flags and portraits of the Tsar were being carried before the procession. It is impossible to describe the revulsion of feeling which I experienced on seeing this spectacle.

The revolution which was commencing ended as rapidly as it had begun. Later, some of the bourgeois papers had the effrontery to state that the disorder among the workers had been organized with the aid of German money for the purpose of hindering the mobilization of the army. This vile and despicable lie was even immortalized in a special film of the "Golden Russian" series, which afterwards went the rounds of many of the Petrograd cinemas.

Mobilization commenced. In December, I was forced to share the general fate and was conscripted into the army. As a student, I was soon sent to a military school, and on graduating as a subaltern, I was appointed to an infantry unit at the front. However, my soldiering days did not last long. On May 30th, 1915, I was gassed. I had hardly recovered and returned to my regiment when I received a severe shell shock on June 9, which deprived me of the power to move my arms and legs, and I even lost my hearing and memory. For the rest of 1915 and halfway through 1916, I lay in various hospitals, and here I came into contact with a new phenomenon – the rapid revolutionizing of the army.

It may be noted that the hospitals were extremely convenient places for this purpose. After all the bloody horrors of war, people who found themselves in the peaceful quiet of the hospitals involuntarily began to think over the cause of all this bloodshed and sacrifice. The contrast between

life at the front and the life in the rear was indeed stupendous. At the front, men seemed K to forget that somewhere in the rear there was a quiet and peaceful life; here it literally burst on their attention and aroused hate and rage among the wounded soldiers.

Conversation between them usually began with this startling contrast between the front and the rear. "There we sit and suffer damp and filthy trenches, hearing the whizzing of bullets and whistling of shells, while here healthy idiots sit and drink tea, make love, go to parties and aren't troubled about anything." From these concrete facts of injustice, the conversation usually passed on to more general subjects in which the government came in for severe and fully deserved criticism.

As an officers, I lay in the special officers department of the hospital. But some oppositional feelings ruled here also. Frequently the question was brought up of what to do if a disturbance of workers were to break out and if some of us officers were sent to quell the disturbance. The unanimous opinion always arrived at, was that these were not times when an officer could order troops to fire on an unarmed crowd. Of course, it should be said that most of the officers in the hospitals were young lieutenants or reserve officers. But the mood was shared by most of the regular officers.

I remember how one lieutenant of the regular army openly stated, amid general approval, that in his opinion the dynasty had grown old and feeble, and was unable to rule the country any longer. Before the war, it would have been impossible for a statement like this to have been made by an officer in the company of other officers. In July 1916, I had more or less recovered from my injuries, and the medical board at the Petrograd evacuation point certified me as fit for service but not in the combatant forces. I was appointed to the reserve Chemical Battalion in Petrograd.

THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

On the historical night of February 26-27, I was on duty. I noticed tremendous crowds of workers moving from the Vyborg side along Nevsky Prospekt towards the centre of the city. There was a strong cordon of foot and mounted police at the Liteini Bridge, and groups which seemed in the least degree suspicious were not allowed to pass. But it was winter, when bridges were not so important. Groups of workers, in full view of the police, crossed the river on the ice and continued their march to the centre. The movement was a spontaneous one. All the paths across the ice were crowded with people, and many passed over without using any path, wading through the snow and risking falling into crevices or stepping on thin ice.

No trams were to be seen. I started out on foot to my battalion, which was stationed on the Petrograd Side near the Tuchkov Bridge. In Archbishop Street, I saw a crowded tramcar and quickly boarded it. However, it did not get very far. We had hardly reached the Bolshoy Prospekt, when a group of working-class youths jumped on the drivers platform and demanded the driving lever. The driver handed over the lever at once without the slightest resistance, and the youths disappeared. The passengers got out of the car, some in silence and some with curses.

The Bolshoy Prospekt was an unusual sight vividly recalling 1914. Enormous crowds filled the pavements. Some were moving along apparently on business, and many were simply standing and observing the excitement around them or gathering in groups to discuss the events which were taking place before their eyes. On arriving at my battalion headquarters, I was met by a telephone operator with the exclamation: "Do you know, your excellency, there is shooting going on in the Nevsky Prospekt? There are masses of soldiers and police, and the people have mutinied." The soldiers of the battalion, although they did not know me as a Party worker, nevertheless regarded me as a friendly and liberal officer. They therefore fearlessly shared with me their impressions and proposals. Soldier after soldier rushed into my room and exultantly informed me of the latest events on the Nevsky Prospekt.

Things were evidently getting serious. We began to hear of individual units passing over to the side of the people.

I was very uncertain what to-do. On the one hand I wanted to be on the spot where the rebellion against the Tsarist monarchy was taking place and where blood was flowing. On the other hand, I felt I was responsible to the soldiers of the battalion whose attitude to me was so cordial and trustful. I decided that I had no right to leave them. At any moment there might arrive an order or the battalion to march with flamethrowers and poison gas for the suppression of the rebellion. I passed the whole night in this state of vacillation and excitement. Sleep was naturally out of the question.

The next day I could scarcely contain myself till the arrival of the officer who came to relieve me. I made up my mind to go to L. N. Stark and discuss with him the manner in which we could take part in the revolution. It would have been much more difficult to see my brother, as he was in the Marines and lived in the Marine School. However, after I had turned over everything to the new officer and gone out into the street, I saw that it was impossible for me to reach the centre of the city.

A regular battle was going on in the streets. On all sides rifle and machinegun fire could be heard. Individual pedestrians crept along in a frightened manner close to the walls of the houses, and on meeting anyone enquired fearfully as to the possibility of passing through such and such a street without risk. On the Bolshoy Prospekt on the Petersburg Side I saw two armed soldiers accost an officer who was passing and demand his sword. Without the slightest protest he handed it over to them. This sight made me decide to go home and put on civilian clothes, as an officers uniform was evidently not at all suited to revolutionary times.

Judging by the heavy firing on all sides, it looked as if I would not be able to get to my house, but, nevertheless, I passed successfully through street after street. The most dangerous place was the Sampsonievsky Bridge where I had to cross the Lesser Neva. On the Vyborg bank of the river, concealed by the half-broken beams of the old Sampsonievsky Bridge, a group of soldiers were keeping up a hot fire across the Neva to my side. I had no means of ascertaining if these were mutineers or soldiers who were still loyal to the government. Not far behind me was a detachment under the command of an officer. After some hesitation I decided to cross the bridge to the

Sampsonievsky Embankment. On the Vyborg side there was much less fighting, and I reached my house without difficulty. I was lucky, as my sword and revolver were still in my possession.

On reaching home after the excitement of the day and the sleepless night, I felt terribly weak. It was only here, in the quiet of the house, that I realized how tired I was. The nervous tension passed away, giving place to sleepiness, and I could not fight against it. I lay on the sofa and fell into a troubled sleep.

I was awakened by the sound of excited voices in the next room. My eyes heavy with sleep and my head confused, I opened the door and saw my brother. It seems that the officers of the Marine School, where my brother was studying, had sent all the Marines to their homes. They were forced to do so by the seamen of the 2nd Baltic Squadron, who had come to the school in a tremendous crowd. My brother was very merry, and related vividly the scenes which he had witnessed on his way. Officers had been disarmed completely. More and more military units were passing over to the side of the people.

We began to discuss what to do. It was already too late to go anywhere. We decided simply to go into the street and scout round a bit. I left my revolver and sword at home, to avoid being subjected to the humiliation of being disarmed. In the street it was quite dark. At this time the streets were usually lighted, but today everything was topsy turvy and nobody had troubled to light the lamps. The firing had quietened down, and only occasional shots were heard.

We passed on to Nizhegorodsky Street, walking cautiously so as not to bump into anyone. Here a devastating sight met our eyes. Across the Iron Bridge, the District Court was on fire. Huge tongues of flame reared into the sky and illuminated the surroundings with an ominous red glare. By this light we could see groups of soldiers and workers rushing pell-mell from the direction of the Iron Bridge. These were no longer the soldiers whom we had grown accustomed to see during the war. With greatcoats unbuttoned, with excited faces, they moved along, gesticulating and animatedly discussing some exciting question.

Some of them had their rifles slung over their shoulders, and others simply held the barrel ends and dragged them behind along the pavement. The breath of the revolution could be felt. After wandering a little further along the streets, we returned home.

The next day, February 28, my brother went to L. N. Stark, and I went to my Chemical Battalion. On entering the room of the officer on duty, I found several officers discussing the revolution and giving various estimates of it. Some of them pooh-poohed revolution in general, but the majority of them, while recognizing that the revolution, as such, was a good thing. Considered that it was untimely at the present moment, as it might adversely affect the situation at the front.

The conversation was unexpectedly interrupted by a young, elegantly dressed, civilian who entered the room rapidly and greeted us in the name of the victorious revolution. He described himself as the representative of the Provisional Committee of the Duma, and urged use to join the

movement which had overthrown the governments and to march with him to the Taurida Palace. It was afterwards said that this was some count or prince.

When he had finished, there was an awkward silence. The officers looked at him sullenly without uttering a word. Even those who had approved of the revolution in words shortly before, now kept in the background, evidently fearing to take the responsibility upon themselves.

I was the first to break the silence. I said that I would willingly go with him to the Duma. The well-dressed gentleman, who had been abashed by the silence of the officers, immediately brightened up and urged me to hurry. We went out and were soon walking along the banks of the River Zhdanovka. A few minutes later we were overtaken by one of the senior officers of our battalion, Lieutenant Rickman, who said that he would go with us. The gentleman was overjoyed. I afterwards discovered that after my departure, it occurred to the officers that I might speak at the Duma in the name of the battalion, and they appointed Rickman to accompany me and to make the necessary corrections to what I said, if this should become necessary.

In the Bolshoy Prospekt, we met the deputy commander of the battalion, Lieutenant Nadezhdin. When he heard where we were going, he informed us that the commander himself, Colonel Martyushev, had gone to the Duma to join the revolution, and that therefore there was no need for us to go.

The gentleman who was with us thanked the battalion through us for joining the revolution, and quickly disappeared after bidding us farewell.

On leaving us, Nadezhdin told me that a general meeting of the officers of the battalion would take place in the next day at 10 am. in the Staff headquarters.

I decided to reach Stark at all costs.

As I went along the Bolshoy Prospekt on the Petrograd side, I could not help noticing the changed scene. The streets had an entirely different appearance from that of the previous day. Rebellion was in full evidence. The pavements were filled with excited and happy people. Everybody was wearing red badges and ribbons. Here and there automobiles and trucks filled with armed soldiers passed by. The people on the pavements welcomed them with cheers and the waving of hats. The soldiers answered in the same way.

At first it seemed as if the soldiers were merely riding round in the automobiles to greet the public. But they were not. They were carrying out the important and responsible duty of preserving revolutionary order in the city, although in an unorganized manner.

I soon obtained convincing proof of this. In one of the central streets, firing suddenly broke out. The city police were shooting from attics. One of the automobiles immediately drove up to the house and the soldiers rapidly disappeared in the doorway. In two minutes, the firing ceased. The police had evidently got what they deserved.

The police, in their loyalty to the dying monarchy, behaved in a ridiculous manner. Now, when passions have died down somewhat, we can state impartially that the Petersburg police during these days displayed rare, though utterly futile heroism. Locked in their attics, they did not leave their posts until they were driven out by force. Even on the second and third day of the revolution, when the streets were full of rebels or sympathizers, when it was obvious that the old regime had crashed irretrievably, these pitiful groups of police continued their silly and usually harmless shooting from somewhere up above. From their lofty position, they could of course see what was going on in the streets. If they had scattered quietly and peacefully, if they had changed their clothes, or hidden somewhere, they would have had good chances not only of keeping themselves safe but of remaining at liberty. But instead of that, they opened fire, the only result of which was to disclose their hiding place.

In this way, to the accompaniment of occasional shooting and the joyful shouts of the people, I reached Leshtukov Street, where L. N. Stark lived at that time. In the house I found not only my brother but also Dashkevitch, who had put on civilian clothes on hearing of the revolution and had come there from Peterhof.

They were preparing to go out to observe the situation, and at the same time to go to a small meeting which was being organized by a group of our Party comrades. I went along with them. The streets were the same as before. The automobiles filled with soldiers had now begun to take on a more or less uniform appearance. Along the sides of the automobiles, on the mudguards there were always soldiers lying with rifles pointed forward. This gave the automobiles a martial appearance.

When we had walked along the streets and cheered till we were hoarse, we went to the house where the meeting was to take place.

It was a barrack like hall, with boarded walls and an unpolished floor, furnished with a number of benches on which about a hundred persons were already sitting. The audience was a very mixed one which listened to the speakers with the closest attention. The day before, it had been impossible to hear such things, but now revolutionary speeches flowed forth in a rushing stream like a river in spring after the melting of the snow. It was noticeable that the hotter and the more excited the speaker, the better was the response from the audience. My brother also spoke on the necessity of granting suffrage to women.

I was eager to speak, but at the last moment, I lost my nerve. I had never spoken at such a large meeting, and I was afraid that I would start to speak, and then break down through excitement. This fear is the common experience of everyone unaccustomed to public speaking. Later, when I had spoken, at many meetings, I found that before and during a speech it is unnecessary to think how to speak and how the audience is listening. Attention must be concentrated on the subject of the speech. Then no confusion arises and the words come by themselves. "Not the externals but the substance" should be the motto for every propagandist who takes the platform for the first time.

At this meeting I met Kirill Orlov for the first time. He was afterwards my comrade in the work at Helsingfors ⁵ and Kronstadt. He delivered a short speech of greeting from the Petersburg Committee. His speech was extremely passionate, and naturally got the noisiest reception from the audience. When we left, Stark, who had also heard Kirill for the first time, jokingly remarked: "That last speaker is a smart chap. He is a regular demagogue." As was always the case with Stark, it was difficult to say whether he was sincerely praising the speaker or whether he was giving way to his usual good-natured sarcasm.

We left Stark and went home. The firing increased, from time-to time to such a degree that my brother and I got into the nearest doorway and waited until it stopped. At the corner of Sergievsky and Liteyny Prospekt we saw a barricade. The whole of Liteyny had been blocked with empty boxes, from behind which projected the barrels of two six-inch guns, pointed in the direction of the Nevsky Prospekt. This was a barricade of the so-called "internal defense," in case troops loyal to the Tsarist government should be brought into the Nikolayevsky, Tsarskoye Selo or Warsaw railway stations. I observed these guns for several days. Each day they were covered deeper and deeper with snow until at last, about a week after the overthrow of the government, they were taken back to their original stations.

The next morning, I hurried to my battalion headquarters where the general meeting of officers was to take place. There was a lively exchange of opinion regarding the events which were taking place. From time to time the perplexed faces of the two orderlies appeared at the door. They evidently did not know how to conduct themselves in the old way, as orderlies of the old army, or in accordance with the new situation.

From conversations with the officers, I discovered what had happened in our battalion on February 27 after I had handed over my duties and left them. It seems that the revolutionary wave had burst into our quiet retreat and forced the soldiers to take part, if not in the overthrow of the old regime, at any rate in its liquidation.

The firing in the streets had given the soldiers the idea of arming themselves. There were rifles in the battalion, but they were locked in the armory. As the chief of the armory was not there, the soldiers showed their revolutionary will by beginning to break, into the armory.

The officer on duty behaved in a silly fashion. Not being able to compel the soldiers to obey him, he followed them everywhere, argued with them and almost with tears in his eyes begged them to leave the armory alone and return to the barracks. His appeals were in vain. The soldiers broke open the armory, armed themselves, and soon separate groups went out into the streets and took part in the shooting against the police ambushed in the attics.

However, to return to the meeting. It was opened by the deputy commander of the battalion, Nadezhdin. The commander himself was not there for some reason or other.

⁵ Today Helsinki—Ed

I should mention that in our battalion, as a special unit which had only recently been formed owing to the latest advances of military science, there were practically no old regular officers. Most of the officers had had university open educations. They were in military uniform only because of the demands of war time.

This determined the course of our meeting to a considerable extent. Not a voice was raised in defense of the fallen monarchy. Along with the speaker Nadezhdin, they unanimously approved of the overthrow of the monarchy, but at the same time, they decided with equal unanimity that it was necessary to "keep the revolution within definite limits," and chiefly to restore obedience among the soldiers. It was decided that, in order to preserve the prestige of the officers, all should go to the barracks immediately and organize meetings of the various companies. It was, of course, a new and unpleasant business for the officers, but all considered it necessary to take such a step, so as to "keep the movement in hand" as far as possible.

All the officers of the battalion – there were about thirty of them – went in a body along the Bolshoy Prospekt in the direction of the River Zhdanovka, where the barracks of our battalion were situated. I decided to go with them. We naturally attracted attention as we went long, and everyone looked at us with interest, wondering where such a large group of officers could be going. A young man of educated appearance who met us in the street cried, "Well, comrades, can we congratulate you? Are you with us?" But the officers passed by in silence, most of them sullen and dissatisfied. The old habits of officers, to hold themselves apart and to look down on all other people, was strong in our battalion. Besides this, perhaps many of them were somewhat afraid of the approaching meeting with the soldiers "as equals."

But the company meetings went off better than could have been expected. Most of the soldiers were genuinely pleased that the officers had come to speak with them of the events which were taking place, and naively believed every word that was said to them. The events had not yet taught them to distinguish between friend and foe.

To their untutored minds the revolution seemed to be a "revolution of the people," taking in all classes of society. I had noticed the same thing as at the meeting of the day before – the audience was not so much interested in the things said as in the enthusiasm of the speaker. I remembered how one of the elderly officers astonished us all by declaring himself to be a "Christian socialist," and commenced his speech by taking off his hat and shouting in a hysterical voice: "Long live freedom! Long live the great Russian Revolution! Hurrah!" All the soldiers sprang from their seats and cheered excitedly with him; he received more applause than anyone.

It was rather amusing to listen to some of the officers who tried to prove that the soldiers' distrust of the officers was due to a misunderstanding, that the officers were body and soul devoted to the interests of the soldiers, etc. Some of them recalled events of the past when they were students, and tried to depict themselves almost as old revolutionaries.

The soldiers believed everything, and applauded everyone.

During the meeting, a group of soldiers called me to one side and one of them said to me, "Your excellency, you are going about without a sword, and we soldiers have decided to present you with one which was taken from another officer in the street." And with these words he gave me a beautiful cavalry sword. I was deeply moved at this mark of attention and confidence on the part of the soldiers. Although my sword had not been taken away, but was lying quietly at home, I accepted the present with gratitude.

At the end of the meeting, I remained in the barracks for some time to talk to the soldiers. Among other things I noticed in one place about fifteen machine guns guarded by a sentry. I asked where they had obtained the machine guns, and the soldiers answered with pride that they were trophies won from the police in the fight.

After conversing for some time, I left the barracks and went to see L. N. Stark, with whom I had arranged to hold a Party meeting of workers in the Central district. I again found my brother there. Both he and Stark were very excited. It had just been discovered that Chernomazov was a secret agent of the Okhrana.⁶

I may mention that Chernomazov had long been suspected of being an *agent-provocateur*, but a group of Party comrades, headed by Stark, had taken him under their protection. When the first documents revealing Chernomazov true character were brought to Stark, he and another comrade, Lukich, I think, went to question him and arrest him. Here the last doubt disappeared. Chernomazov admitted that he worked in the secret police.

It is not quite certain what the fate of this *agent-provocateur* was. Some say that he died of heart failure before his trial, just before the October Revolution. Another version is that he took poison. Stark also suffered on account of this person. He was removed from all work and only an official application to the Central Committee of the Party and the insistence of a group of comrades including Zhemchugin, my brother and I, who knew Stark well and could vouch for his honesty, made it possible for him to be reinstated fully.

As we talked about Chernomazov, the time approached for us to go out. The meeting of the group of Bolshevik Party workers of the Central district took place in a private house. There were present at this meeting about fifteen persons. There was one main question on the agenda – what work to commence immediately under the new circumstances of the overthrow of the Tsar.

There was a variety of opinions. The comrade who had called the meeting proposed that we concentrate exclusively on building up the Party ranks and the organisation of a district committee. However, the majority of those present, while recognizing of course, that this work was extremely important and urgent, decided that in addition it was necessary to form, at once, the very next day, if possible, a base for the Petrograd Soviet in our district. If such bases were organized in all districts, the Petrograd Soviet would gain considerable strength. The latter opinion was adopted, and the base

⁶ Tsarist secret police.

was formed two days later (March 5) in a shop on Bolshoy Moskovsky Street, not far from the Vladimir Cathedral.

The opening of the base coincided with the appearance of the first number of the *Pravda*. As one of the tasks of the base was to sell all kinds of agitational literature, we applied ourselves energetically to the sale of the first number of our Party paper. I remember how, with several other young comrades who worked at the base, I went out into the street and at the very doorways shouted in a ringing voice, emphasizing every syllable, "*Pravda*, Organ of the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party."

The novelty of the circumstances took our breath away. Somehow, we could not believe that we were openly selling our Central Party organ, and calling out its full name. It seemed as if we were in a dream. I was in officers uniform, but this did not disturb me in the slightest degree. On the contrary it made the situation more interesting and piquant.

When it became dark, we went home, each one taking a parcel of papers with him so as to continue the sale all the way home. I followed the general example, and my voice was heard for a long time in the street—respectable neighborhood of Liteyny Prospekt, dying away in the direction of the Vyborg side. The paper was bought eagerly. I remember how in one place a worker heard my shouts and joyfully exclaimed, "At last it has come out, our dear old paper," and bought two copies.

At home I had a long job, turning out my pockets to collect all the small change, counting up and putting all in order. The base which we formed for the Petrograd Soviet did not last long. After a few days, when it became clear that the revolution had finally conquered and also that the Petrograd Soviet was not an expression of the views and opinions of our Party, it was decided to liquidate the base and to transfer all the comrades who were working in it to the building up of the Party organisation in the Central district.

Similar work had already been commenced in all districts. Little by little the Party emerged from underground, worked legally and was built up under new conditions. A Petrograd Committee was also organized, and occupied a small and uncomfortable building in the Kronwerk Prospekt on the Petrograd Side, in the building opposite the Peoples House, where the Labor Exchange is now situated. To get there, it was necessary to climb up to the second or third story by means of a dark and dirty staircase.

The Petrograd Committees office was always crowded to suffocation. Here the chief of the agitation committee, Comrade Andreev, gave his instructions to the agitators, sending them to various meetings.

I went to the office of the Petrograd Committee for the first time to obtain a Party membership card, which naturally, none of us had possessed when the Party was illegal. The Petrograd Committee sent me with a suitable document to the newly legalized Vyborg District Committee. I handed the paper from the Petrograd Committee to the girl sitting at the table and immediately

obtained a Party card. As you see, the method of procedure to obtain a Party card at that time was not at all complicated.

I did not obtain from the girl any information as to the work to be given to me by the Vyborg Party Committee. I left the office with the intention of obtaining a definite task from the Petrograd Committee. I soon had an opportunity to make a start on active revolutionary work.

MY JOURNEY TO HELSINGFORS

In March 1917 a group of comrades from Petrograd and Kronstadt decided to go to Helsingfors to commence revolutionary work there and to found a Bolshevik organisation. Helsingfors was of tremendous importance as the base of practically the whole Baltic fleet.

I, too, wanted to take part in this journey, but this was not so simple. To take part in Party work here in Petrograd was one thing, but to leave my unit without the permission of the military authorities and travel to another town would have meant running a definite risk.

However, I did not hesitate long. The revolution had cleared the ground for tremendous work. It was necessary to strike the iron while it was hot. Accordingly, I dropped all formalities and joined the group of comrades who were leaving for Helsingfors.

In the group, besides myself, there were Boris Zhemchugin (Dmitry), who was at that time a member of the Petrograd Committee, Simeon Pelikhov, Feodor Dingelstedt and the soldier Zinchenko; five in all. They were all fine fellows, and energetic and reliable workers. Alas! Two of them are now dead. Zhemchugin was the first to die. He worked in Helsingfors till May 1918, when he was seized by the Whites and shot when they occupied the town. The second was Pelikhov. In 1921, when a student at Sverdlov University, he volunteered to join the troops that were sent to suppress the Kronstadt mutiny, and was killed.

Before we left, Zhemchugin went to the Petrograd Committee to see Podvoisky to ask whether there were any special instructions for us. Podvoisky was not very well disposed towards our journey. He said that a member of the Petrograd Committee had arrived recently from Helsingfors and had stated that the Mensheviks were in the majority there, and that it would be extremely difficult to organize any work there. "It isn't youngsters like you who should go there," said he, "but some members of the Central Committee." But his statement only increased our interest. You may frighten Bolsheviks with some things, but not by describing work as difficult. I remember how Zhemchugin, his face all aglow with excitement, cried "All right! Wont it make the Party generals look small if we establish an organisation in Helsingfors and publish a paper!" He was attracted by the sporting side of the work.

It must be admitted that we had no resources except confidence in our success. We had no contacts, no money and were strangers in Helsingfors. We spent the last money we had on tickets and a little food, and, taking our places in the clean little cars of the Finnish Railway, we set out, as carefree as the birds in heaven, and in the best of spirits. We were so convinced that we would

overcome all difficulties that we began to write articles, right there in the train, for our future paper, so as not to waste time.

In the car I became more closely acquainted with the most interesting and picturesque figure in our small group--the sailor S. Pelikhov. Before the revolution, Pelikhov had worked in organisations of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, had been tried and sentenced to penal servitude as a member of that Party, and had been set free by the February Revolution. But being a confirmed internationalist, he decided to break away from his old party friends who had supported the imperialist war. If the treacherous role of the S.R.s was mentioned, he burned with indignation and dissatisfaction. He could find no words strong enough to brand his late party friends. We afterwards always used Pelikhov to attack the S.R.s. He was always a fine speaker, but under such circumstances he was transformed. His fiery temperament and his knowledge of the S.R. ideology assured him the victory on every occasion.

We slept on the hard seats of the railway car, and on the next day arrived at Helsingfors. We at once went to the Executive Committee of the Helsingfors Soviet.

While walking through the town, we noticed that some of the sailors and civilians whom we met had a small round badge on a red background in their buttonholes. As we entered the Soviet building, we were literally surrounded by such badges on all sides, interspersed with still larger badges almost as large as plates. We asked a sailor what these badges meant, and he told us that the small buttons were marks of ordinary members of the Soviet and the large ones indicated members of the Executive Committee. I remember that the wearing of distinguishing signs by the members of the Soviet greatly disturbed us. It smacked of-something aliens to the revolution, indicating the rise of new ranks of officials. This small detail showed us that the conditions of work here were not at all like those in Kronstadt, and that we should encounter many difficulties.

These gloomy forebodings were confirmed at every step we took. The leader of the Soviet, Lieutenant Brilliantov, and a number of foppishly dressed sailors examined our documents, and when they discovered that we were representatives of the Kronstadt Soviet, they at first welcomed us. But when they discovered that we had come to stay for a long time and that we intended to establish a Bolshevik paper, they were very much disturbed. All their politeness disappeared. Nevertheless, after lengthy negotiations they agreed to give us a room and promised to assist our work. Of course, these promises were not sincere. We understood that we could not expect any great help from them.

The room turned out to be a fairly large one in Visokogorny Street, in the headquarters of the late police administration. There were some beds and a table in the room so that the furniture suited us perfectly. But though we were tired after the journey, there was no time for rest. In Petrograd we had promised to publish a paper in Helsingfors within three days, and our promise had to be carried out. Without spending any time in useless conversation, we split into two groups, each with a definite task. Zhemchugin and I went out to look for a suitable printing plant for the paper, while

Dingelstedt, Pelikhov and Zinchenko went off to organize meetings on the ships and at the same time to take steps to get financial aid.

For the remainder of the day, Zhemchugin and I wandered through the town, seeking out and looking over printing plants, until at last we decided on one, the Gorshkov plant, which seemed more suitable than the others. We were not embarrassed by the fact that we had not a kopek in our pockets, but commenced to negotiate with the owner, bargaining for every kopek, and obtained comparatively favorable terms. Returning home, tired and footsore, by the light of the street lamps, we exchanged our impressions of the events of the day. We already had a printing plant, and could immediately start to publish the paper if it were not for the lack of funds. Should we be able to get these funds quickly.

However, when we reached the door of our room, we were greeted with loud hurrahs. Our excited and happy comrades rushed out to meet us and told us of their first successful meeting on the *Emperor Paul I*. The sailors had not only passed the Bolshevik resolution unanimously, but had decided to vote 1,000 rubles from their mess fund for the organisation of a Bolshevik paper. Thus, the last obstacle to the publication of the paper had been overcome. Zhemchugin and I could breathe freely. Together with our comrades, we began earnestly to discuss the immediate steps to be taken in view of the rosy prospects which opened up before us.

The next morning, sailors began to come to us. They had heard of the speeches our comrades had delivered on the *Paul I*. Among them were some old members of the Bolshevik Party, including the sailor Khorvin, who had been tried shortly before the revolution for forming a Bolshevik sailors organisation. They informed us of the political situation in Helsingfors. It seems that in addition to the Socialist-Revolutionary Party and similar organisations, there was in the town another organisation calling itself Social-Democratic. It was led by the President of the Helsingfors Soviet, Sergi Alexandrovich Garin, an Ex-officer. This organisation was politically indefinite, probably Menshevik, and the majority of members were mere hangers – on. The organisation had been formed from above, and had no contact with the rank and file, still less with the crews of the ships.

When we heard this, we decided to form a Party organisation from below, absolutely ignoring the existing organisation in the town. When we had succeeded in organizing a number of groups in the ships and in the army units, we would call a conference for the whole town and elect a Party Committee. The existing organisation, being without any foundations, would collapse anyway, sooner or later.

The sailors who conversed with us shared our point of view and approved of our plans. Then we began to discuss the question of the paper which was to appear next day. It was desirable to publish it in the name of some organisation, even if only a small one, and we decided to issue it in the name of the group of sailors present at our meeting. We chose the name *Wave* as the most suitable.

The paper was to be distributed in the simplest way. The sailors who were Party members would go to the printing plant at a certain hour, take a hundred copies each and then sell them on the

streets and on the ships at three kopeks a copy. The prospect of carrying out extensive work excited us all. The sailors thanked us for coming and stirring up the sleepy morass of Helsingfors.

Suddenly the conversation turned to our personal comfort. They began to ask how we slept, how we ate. Here things were not so good. We had slept somehow in the room which had been assigned to us, but there had literally been no time to think about food. The previous day we had eaten whatever had chanced to come our way, and it was not at all clear whether we would get anything to eat at all the following day.

The sailors invited us to their ships. We agreed to go that day to the military transport *Shcha*, which was moored alongside the harbor wall, and there they promised to feed us and provide us with beds. This freed us from all household cares, and we warmly thanked the hospitable comrades who were taking such pains on our behalf. We were preparing to separate, when a sailor rushed panting into the room and informed us that we were immediately required to attend a meeting of the Helsingfors Soviet.

As we had to get on with our work without losing time, we decided to appoint our agitators, Pelikhov, Dingelstedt and Zinchenko to attend the meeting, while Zhemchugin and I went to the printing plant to see the paper printed. We said goodbye and went in our various directions.

In the printing works, all was ready for the issue of the paper, and we handed in the articles which we had written in the train. Gradually before our very eyes our child began to take shape – the Helsingfors Bolshevik newspaper. It is difficult to express in words the joy and excitement with which we were filled. But the more we desired to see our paper in its finished form, the more clearly, we saw that we had chosen a badly equipped printing plant. There were no typesetting machines at all, and the printing machines were old and clumsy. However, our reconnaissance of the previous day had shown us that there were no better plants in Helsingfors, with the exception of the plant of the Finnish Senate, where the Finnish newspapers were printed. We spent the whole day printing the paper. It was evening before we saw a printed copy. Our joy was unbounded.

From the point of view of our present newspaper standards the paper was a poor thing. It is sufficient to say that there was practically nothing in it except political articles. But all our Party papers at that time were of that type, and in reality, these articles were of the greatest importance for the broad masses who were not yet in a position to understand the events which were taking place.

Soon our sailor amateur newsboys arrived and they took all copies printed. They were also overjoyed to see the paper. We went along with them, happy and contented.

On the way to the transport *Shcha*, where we had agreed to go, we called at our own room on Visokogomy Street, and there we found our "agitators" in a state of great animation. It seems that the day had been a very stormy one for them.

I have already mentioned that on the first day of our arrival the Soviet had been very suspicious and unfriendly towards our intention to carry on work here. But at that time, the work was not definite, and the leaders of the Soviet imagined that nothing would come of our efforts.

However, on the next day they became convinced that they could not afford to ignore us. The frightened officers of the *Emperor Paul I.* hastened to report to the Soviet that we had held a successful meeting on their ship, and described the nature of the speeches that were delivered in the most terrible colors. Then the Soviet received information that we had commenced to issue a paper. This was the last straw.

At first, they decided to arrest us, but thought better of it and called us to a plenary meeting of the Soviet. Here our “agitators” had to fight a regular battle. Indignation, catcalls, curses, threats of arrest showered on them from all sides. However, our comrades kept their heads, quietly waited till the hostile shouts had died down, and then began to explain who we were and why we had come.

Gradually the meeting began to quiet down, and some of the rank-and-file members of the Soviet even expressed their sympathy towards us. As a result, the leaders of the Soviet, though with wry faces, were compelled to let our representatives go in peace, giving them permission to continue the work. “Alls well that ends well.” We did not spend much time discussing this event, but went to the *Shcha*, where the sailors were awaiting us with supper, and we received a very hearty welcome from them. We sat talking to them till late in the evening, and then lay down comfortably in the sailors beds, where we slept soundly.

The next morning, Zhemchugin first thought was to take advantage of some opportunity to send the first number of the *Wave* to Petrograd. “Imagine,” said he happily, “how our Petrograd generals will stare when they see that we really issued the paper on the third day as we promised.” An opportunity occurred that very day, and the first number of the *Wave*, accompanied by a letter, was triumphantly sent to Petrograd. Before we left our hospitable hosts, I photographed them all with Comrade Zhemchugin on the deck. Unfortunately, the other comrades at the moment were not there, so that only Zhemchugin out of the five comrades appeared on the picture.

We arranged the work in the same way as on the previous day. Zhemchugin and I issued the second number of the *Wave*, while our agitators went round the ships to hold meetings, distribute the paper and collect funds. In the evening, for the first time, we made the acquaintance of the leader of the local Social-Democratic organization, Khilyani. He welcomed us very heartily, and invited us to speak at a big meeting in the Alexandrovsky Theatre. We agreed-and went along with him. As we walked along, we talked earnestly with him and discovered his real character. He started out by announcing that he did not consider himself to be either a Bolshevik or a Menshevik, and that he did not recognize the division into these categories but when we began to probe into his point of view on current events, we found that he was an out and out bigoted Menshevik jingo. He was skeptical of our intention to form an organisation from below, in proof of which he pointed to his own unsuccessful experiments in 1905, when, he said, the workers threw him through the window into the street.

As we listened, we merely smiled. Such a “comrade” was clearly not travelling along our path.

We discovered that at the meeting, in addition to Khilyani and ourselves, Alexandra Mikhailovna Kollontai, who was staying in Helsingfors on the way from Sweden to Petrograd, was to

speak. In view of this, we decided to cut down our speakers, and only put forward Dingelstedt and Pelikhov.

The first speaker was Khilyani. His speech was remarkably "watery" and indefinite. Right up to the end, it was impossible to determine what he wanted. But when he had finished, he warned us in a whisper not to raise the question of the war too sharply, as the sailors in the hall might become indignant and beat us up or even kill us. However, his statement was absolutely unfounded; when Dingelstedt cautiously touched on the question of the necessity of carrying on an energetic struggle for the cessation of the war and a democratic peace, the whole hall applauded him. The speech of Kollontai was equally successful. She spoke eloquently and with great enthusiasm.

When we returned from the meeting and began to exchange impressions, we came to the unanimous conclusion that it was inadmissible to leave the existing organisation in the town with such a leader as Khilyani. It was necessary to use every effort to hasten the unification of the Bolshevik elements in the navy, the army and among the workers, and then either simply destroy the organisation from within or expose its Menshevist character to all. It was virgin soil, the work was going on well, and we only needed to strengthen our small group by new skilled workers. We decided to call in some of our friends to help.

The next morning, when all my comrades had separated on various business and I was alone, sorting and preparing material for the next number, two civilians entered the room and asked to see the editor of the *Wave*. I told him that I was the editor. "Well, you see," commenced one of them, the taller of the two, "we are representatives of the left wing of the Finnish Social-Democratic Labor Party. When we read your paper, we saw that it stands on the platform of Bolshevism. That is our position. We have come to you, firstly to establish contact with you, and second, to let you know that if you require any support, you can rely on us absolutely."

I was almost overcome with joy and astonishment. Here was a real living example of the International. The representatives of the Finnish revolutionary workers had come and stretched out their hands to us for a joint struggle against the common enemy. One was Vasten, afterwards the commander of the Finnish Red Guard which in 1918 fought against the hordes of Mannerheim, and the other was Siderov, a Russian worker, now secretary of one of our Gubernia Committees. After the first handshakes and greetings, we passed on to the practical discussion of the situation in Helsingfors and the immediate prospects of work. Once more I heard the most unfavorable estimate of the Social Democratic organisation in the town.

When I told my guests that we had already organized Bolshevik groups in the ships and that the organisation of a Helsingfors Committee was on the agenda, they gladly welcomed the news. We passed on to the question of the paper. I complained that we had a poorly equipped printing plant. "Why don't you try to use the Senate printing plant?" asked Vasten. "But it is a Finnish plant," I replied, "There will be no Russian type there. And besides, will the Finnish senators allow us to print our paper there?" However, Vasten assured me that the printing plant had Russian type, and as for permission, it would be given without a doubt, as the majority of the Senate consisted of Social

Democrats, who would not object to the printing of our paper. "We can use pressure, if necessary," he concluded with a smile. We parted great friends, and agreed to keep up the contacts we had established.

Zhemchugin was as pleased as I when I met him in the printing shop and told him all. He listened with special interest to my statement of the possibility of using the more modern plant of the Senate for printing the paper. We agreed to go to the Senate next morning to see how things were.

However, our intention to go next morning to settle the question of the printing plant was upset unexpectedly. When we were already in bed, the door of our room opened and at the entrance appeared the merry and animated face of Kirill Orlov. He had received a letter from one of us, and had come here from Kronstadt to assist us in our work. Need I describe the happy and excited cries of welcoming which greeted him? We had received reinforcements. Now let the enemy look out.

I did not immediately recognize Kirill, and it was only after some time that I remembered that I had seen him in Petrograd at the first meeting, at the time of the overthrow of the Tsar in February. Then commenced endless questioning and recounting of reminiscences, which took up the whole morning.

Zhemchugin and I suddenly discovered that it was one o'clock and that if we wanted to talk to the Senate, we should have to hurry. We began to get ready. Kirill was also burning with desire to start to work as soon as possible, and went along with our agitators to a meeting on the ships.

Our first visit to the Senate, to Vice-president Tokoi, was not successful. We were afraid of spoiling the whole business, and did not say that the paper which we wished to publish at the Senate printing plant was a Social-Democratic paper. Tokoi, noticing that I was wearing an officer uniform and that Zhemchugin had on a badly worn coat, was suspicious of us and would not give a definite answer, saying that he would speak to his colleagues. Thus, we went out without obtaining anything. We were already despairing of doing anything in the matter when our Finnish comrade, Vasten, came to our assistance. He told us that Tokoi was a Social-Democrat, and therefore we could talk openly to him. He told Tokoi who we were.

When we came back to Tokoi a few days later, we soon came to an agreement. When we got to know the Senate printing plant, we found it was even better than we had expected. The enormous staff of workers, the existence of typesetting machines and modern presses, showed us what advantages it offered. I transferred to the printing premises not only the setting up and printing of the paper, but also the editorial work.

As for this editorial work, my position was hard enough. At first, Zhemchugin had helped me in the editing, but after the issue of the first number, he began little by little to drift away from newspaper work, and then had to leave for Petrograd on business. Soon, Dingelstedt went back as well. I was left as sole editor and staff, publisher and proofreader. One of the chief difficulties was to obtain the necessary material for the paper. Some of the material had necessarily to be copied from the central Party press. The resolutions of the sailors and soldiers and letters took up part of the

space, but I had to fill almost half the paper with my own articles, written under various pseudonyms. This was my greatest worry.

I had to write a tremendous amount every day, and I had no convenient place to work. Our only room, which we occupied together and which served as our dining room, bedroom, business premises and club at one and the same time, resembled a public yard, where there was always a mass of people talking without cessation, shouting and smoking till it was impossible to breathe in the room. At first, I heroically tried to write under these circumstances, but at last I had to give it up. I began to take up my position anywhere—in the corridor, on the staircase, at the entrance—anywhere to get away from the noise and chatter. Finally, I found a fairly light, but perfectly quiet and secluded place for my work. This was the toilet. I locked myself in here and though I had few comforts, at least there was peace and quiet to write my articles.

When we transferred to the Senate printing press, I could work there. Later, I wrote my articles there in the printing plant, and they were immediately set up in type.

Soon the work of organizing Bolshevik nuclei in the ships was so well advanced that we decided to make a start on the formation of the Helsingfors Committee of the R.S.D.L.P. We instructed the biggest groups to delegate their representatives to us, and at the beginning of April we formed the Helsingfors Committee. The committee included Pelikhov, Orlov, Zhemchugin (though he was not in the town then), and the sailors Khervin, Marusov and several others from the ship nuclei. The secretary of the committee was the worker Siderov whom I have mentioned. From that moment the *Wave* became the organ of the Helsingfors Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.

Our committee was soon endorsed by the C.C. of the Party. For this purpose, it was necessary to have recommendations from two existing committees of the Party, and these were given by Petrograd and Kronstadt. When Siderov took up his work, he ordered several thousand Party cards to be printed at the printing plant. When they were ready, we began to register the member! of our organisation, giving them membership cards.

We all understood that our committee was only temporary, and therefore took steps to call a Party conference of the whole town, for the purpose of establishing a regular and fully powered Party Committee.

Our work was unexpectedly interrupted. The Helsingfors Soviet declared April 4 to be a revolutionary holiday.

A triumphant procession was organized through the town, with red flags, placards and bands. We all took an active part in the demonstration. What took place confirmed our impression of the lamentable but nevertheless ridiculous state of affairs that existed in Helsingfors. Everything was arranged and ordered by officers. Even on the platform, the gold of the officers epaulettes glittered in the bright spring sunshine. The Socialist Revolutionaries could find no better spokesman to represent them than an imposing and solid general. Here I had the opportunity of seeing another of the active

workers of the committee of the local Social-Democratic organisation – its treasurer, who was a second-grade captain, with red nose and drink sodden face.

All this ruffraff, with big red sashes and badges as members of the Soviet and the Executive Committee, marched in front of the silent columns of soldiers and sailors, as “leaders of the Revolution.” As I looked at them, I thought, “Real life will soon show you up for what you are, and will prove that you and the revolution are two irreconcilable enemies.”

I did not expect, however, that my prophecy would come true the very next day. On April 5, the working masses heard that in Petrograd the Central Trade Union Council had compelled the Provisional Government to decree the 8-hour day, while in Finland everything remained as of old. This excited the working masses and brought them out onto the streets. The very next day after the official triumphant demonstration, there was another demonstration, fired by direct concrete and genuinely revolutionary demands. And what happened? Exactly what might have been expected. In the streets only masses of workers were seen. All the brilliant officers who had proudly marched on the previous day in front of the demonstration now cravenly kept out of leadership of the delegation. Finding the room where the meeting of employers was taking place, they burst in almost by force and, brandishing their revolvers, they demanded the immediate introduction of the Seven-hour day throughout all Finland. If this was not granted, they threatened to confiscate all the works and factories.

The impression on the peaceful bourgeois, quietly sitting in their soft armchairs in the seclusion of the office, can be imagined. To strengthen the effect of their words, from the street could be heard the roar of the crowd which had by now arrived from the Palace of Labor. Naturally, the employers took fright and capitulated. The 8-hour day was won.

When the crowd heard of this, their exaltation and delight knew no bounds. The sailors and the Finnish workers embraced each other.

The demonstration through all the streets of Helsingfors lasted all the evening till late at night. When I returned home from the printing works by the light of the stars and the street lamps, I seemed to be in Naples on the day of the Carnival. Everywhere joyous songs resounded. Here and there people were dancing. Every now and then I met groups of Finnish workers and Russian sailors half drunk and with their arms round each other's necks.

The next day, the Finnish bourgeois newspapers tried to create a sensation over the fact that the Russians had interfered in the internal affairs of Finland. However, it was too late. The die was cast, and after some grumbling, they had to quiet down and hold their peace.

But in any case, our active participation in winning the 8-hour day for the Finnish workers raised our prestige, and proved to all that we represented a real force. One result of this was that the Social-Democratic organisation which had existed in the town before our arrival suddenly decided to enter into business negotiations with us.

We received an invitation to send our representatives to the house of the chairman of the old organisation, S. A. Garin, who was at the same time president of the Helsingfors Soviet. Kirill Orlov and I were appointed, and at the specified time we arrived at the house. There we found, in addition to the householder, another prominent figure in the organisation – Trofimov. Garin at once informed us that he was an old Bolshevik, and therefore completely sympathized with the line of our paper and the work of our organisation. Trofimov also stated that, although he was by conviction a Menshevik, he had constantly worked in Bolshevik organisations and therefore he now considered it necessary to find common ground with us.

We all agreed that the existence of two Social-Democratic organisations in the town was inadvisable. Only one organisation should exist. But to obtain this result – opinions differed on this point. The representatives of the old organisation proposed simply to amalgamate. On our part, we pointed out the incorrect organisational principles of the old organisation and the fact that ideologically undesirable elements (Khilyani and others) belonged to it, and we insisted on its dissolution, in which case its members would be taken into our organisation on their personal merits, after a strict selection. After a short discussion, Carin and Trofimov gave way, and it was decided in a few days' time to call a general meeting of the members of the old organisation, and put the question of dissolution on the agenda.

This meeting was held in the palace of the late Governor General on the second or third day after our conversation. Once more, Kirill Orlov and I appeared to represent the Helsingfors Committee. The meeting was opened by the speech of Garin, who stated that their organisation had been constructed on an incorrect basis and had been very inactive. Now, he continued, experienced organizers had come to Helsingfors and had built up another organisation which was based on the rank and file and headed by the Helsingfors Committee of the R.S.D.L.P. (Bolsheviks). As it was inadvisable for two organisations of the Social-Democrats to exist in one town, he proposed to liquidate the organisation and instruct all members who desired to join the ranks of those who were led by the Helsingfors Committee. His speech was not greeted with unanimous feelings by the meeting. There was a discussion. Some of the speakers were clearly perplexed as to why they should suddenly break up their organisation. Then Kirill Orlov began to speak, and with great heat he began to attack the compromising tactics of the Mensheviks, which had to be combated. He called on all to unite under the revolutionary banner of the Bolsheviks and of their local organisation – the Helsingfors Committee of the R.S.D.L.P. After some hesitation, the majority of the meeting decided to liquidate the organisation. It was plain that the intelligentsia and the officers voted for Garin's resolution with great unwillingness. They felt that they would not be admitted into the new organisation, and that therefore their political career was ended.

Thus, the old organisation terminated its existence. Kirill and I happily returned to our room and reported on the work performed to the Helsingfors Committee.

However, we did not obtain a single active worker from the old organisation. Khilyani was not accepted, Trofimov disappeared somewhere or other, and Garin limited himself to sending one or two articles for the paper.

But for all that, our ranks grew rapidly, the number of nuclei increased and new workers for the centre arrived.

The first was Comrade "Anatoli" Antipov. I met him here for the first time. He was a fine fellow and a good agitator. His arrival greatly stirred us up. One of the first things in which he took an active part was the organisation of a tremendous meeting on the subject of the land, in Senate Square.

At this time, we began to receive information that the Provisional Government was taking all possible steps, to the point of armed force, to prevent the Russian peasants seizing the land, and that it was justifying this by the necessity for delaying the decision on the land question until the Constituent Assembly was convened. The conciliating parties, the Mensheviks and S.R.s also took the same position, and sometimes assisted the government to carry out the cruelest repression of the revolutionary peasants.

This information roused not only us but also the masses of the sailors. I remember how a group of sailors from the armored cruiser *Slava*, overwrought with excitement, burst into our office and with the most frightful oaths swore that they would not allow the bourgeoisie in the Provisional Government to crush the peasant land committees. "We can't wait," they cried. "We want to call a big meeting of all the sailors and declare to all Russia that the land must be handed over immediately to the peasants."

Naturally, such initiative was very pleasing to us, especially as it came from the rank and file. We decided to organize the meeting, appointed a day and hour, and sent the sailors from the *Slava* to the other ships to call in the other sailors to the meeting.

The meeting was very successful. Evidently the sailors, soldiers and workers were deeply interested in the land question. Nearly half of the Helsingfors turned up at Senate Square. First Kirill Orlov spoke, and then Antipov. Many speeches were also delivered by rank and file sailors.

The general feeling was unanimous. All the speakers, amidst general approval, advocated the immediate handing over of the estates of the landlords to the peasants without waiting for the Constitutional Assembly. A resolution was drawn up in this spirit and was passed unanimously and sent the same day to Petrograd to the Provisional Government and to the Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies.

Unfortunately, the meeting was marred by a very unpleasant incident. When the meeting was half through, the person whom we most disliked, the deputy chairman of the Helsingfors Soviet, Lieutenant Brilliantov, came on to the platform.

I have already mentioned the campaign carried on against us by this gentleman when we first came to Helsingfors. He had never had anything serious to do with revolution, and had chanced to come to the top of the revolutionary wave during the confusion of the first days of the February Revolution. He was now trying with all his might to hold to his "high" place, and to achieve "popularity" and "general recognition." Naturally he could not miss an event like our meeting.

Dramatically leaping on to the platform in his officers uniform, he spoke as follows: "Dear comrades, I have come here specially to state that I am with you with all my heart in your demand for land! (Loud applause.) The land must belong to the peasants! (Loud applause.) And as soon as we have defeated the accursed Germans (the last words in a hysterical falsetto) we shall at once start to solve the land problem in a proper way."

Having finished his speech, he turned away to leave the platform making straight for the crowd. Immediately a living corridor was formed through which he marched like a victor, accompanied by loud cheers.

We could have wept with disappointment, to think that the masses were still so little educated politically. They had just listened with unanimous approval to the speeches of our orators which were permeated with the spirit of internationalism, and yet when a fellow" came along who was only in the revolution by mere chance, an obvious demagogue, and came out with vile and disgusting phrases about the "accursed Germans," the crowd acclaimed him and greeted him like a conqueror. And why? Merely because he, an officer had been gracious enough to "solve" such an urgent question for the peasants as the land question. No, the masses would have to go through much revolutionary training before they could distinguish the wolves from the sheep.

The meeting ended and the resolution was passed. The masses began slowly to disperse. We went home with heavy hearts.

Soon after Antipov, the young agitator Samuel Brodsky arrived from Petrograd. He did not stay long. He went round the "ships, carried on some agitation, and in two days left Helsingfors.

Time was passing, and the long-awaited day was approaching – the day of the District Party Conference. We had to hurry in calling the conference, as the All-Russian Party Conference was to take place in Petrograd in the middle of April, and we wanted to send our representatives there.

The day before the conference, we arranged a meeting of the active workers of the Helsingfors Committee, at which we decided on the general plan for conducting the conference and also on the agenda. It was decided to propose S. A. Garin as chairman of the conference, as he was the most prominent and best known figure in Helsingfors. But as Garin could not be present at the conference all the time, it was decided to put the general guidance of the conference in my hands by electing me as deputy chairman.

In the Committee, there were two points of View on the question of the political situation, one more moderate, approaching the point of view of Comrade Kamenev at that time, and the other more revolutionary, based, on the famous thesis published by Lenin immediately on his arrival from abroad. The representative of the first point of view was Kirill Orlov, and of the second, Antipov. In order to deal with all sides of this most important point of the agenda, it was decided to have both points of view advocated, and let these two speakers deal with the question.

The conference opened next day in the hall of the house of the Governor-General. A large number of delegates was present. There were representatives from almost every ship stationed in

Helsingfors. There were also many guests among whom was the figure now well known to me – the notorious Khilyani. However, this time he discreetly kept in the background.

The conference was opened by Kirill Orlov, who, after a short speech, proposed the presidium which we had decided on the previous day. The meeting unanimously approved the list, and since Garin, as we had expected, was not there, I took up the duties of chairman.

As usual, there were first various greetings. Vasten greeted the conference in the name of the left wing of the Finnish Social – Democratic Labor Party. Antipov on behalf of the Petrograd Committee and I from the editorial board of the *Wave*. There were other greetings, but I do not remember them. Then there were the report and the discussion on the political situation. Very many took part in the discussion.

Here I saw for the first time the interesting and striking revolutionary figure of the sailor Berg. Short and stocky, thick set, he seemed to be cut from granite. He gave the impression of unusual strength and power. His features perfectly harmonized with his bare muscular chest and his low but fierce and passionate voice. Waving his enormous hands, he thundered through the hall, denouncing the treacherous bourgeoisie and calling on the sailors and soldiers to stand in defense of their achievements – the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Sailors' Deputies.

Later, after the October Revolution, I met him several times. He was always the same fiery, passionate and infatigable revolutionary. Alas! . He is no longer alive. In 1918, he fell sick, and in a fit of despair he committed suicide. Thus ended the life of this original and interesting fighter from the ranks.

S. A. Garin came to the conference for a short time. He took part in the discussion and in a short but vivid speech he illustrated the treacherous role of the Provisional Government and its hypocritical policy. His speech was a great success.

As the result of the discussion, the meeting adopted a compromise resolution, in which the Provisional Government was recognized to the extent that its actions did not clash with the actions of the Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies. On the other hand, the resolution exposed the bourgeois character of the Provisional Government, and demanded that all power should be handed over to the Workers' and Soldiers' Soviets.

At the evening session, the elections to the Helsingfors Committee took place and almost all the old members were chosen. The delegates to the Party Conference were also elected.

The latter were Kirill Orlov and Antipov. To give the Baltic Fleet a representative, the sailor Nikkolai Alexandrovich Horvin was elected.

To illustrate how little some of those participating in the conference understood things, I may point out that one of the delegates proposed Khilyani as a delegate to the All-Russian Party Conference, on the grounds that he was one of the first Social Democratic workers in Helsingfors. Evidently the comrade did not realize the tremendous difference between our views and the views of

Khilyani. Of course, his candidature was at once rejected. Vasten spoke energetically against it, and I did not even put it to a vote.

On the second or third day after the conference, two new workers arrived. They were Vladimir Zalezhsy and Bon. Their arrival was marked by a comical incident.

It may be mentioned that in spite of the fact that we were working very hard, we had not by any means won over the whole of the Baltic Fleet or the garrison of Helsingfors. From various sources we heard of hostile and even threatening attitudes towards us. There were cases, especially during the first days at Helsingfors, when the sailors who were selling the *Wave* were chased off some of the ships and even beaten up. We received letters full of abuse and demands that we "go back to Germany." Even the date of our departure was indicated, after which we were to be declared outlaws and our lives forfeit. Such letters usually caused hearty laughter among us.

However, on the day these two comrades arrived from Petrograd, these threats were almost carried out.

Zalezhsy and Bon had hardly had time to rest a little and inform us of the situation in Petrograd when an extremely excited group of sailors burst into our room with the most aggressive intentions.

Their plan had evidently been to start at once to smash up the furniture and beat up the people present, but when they saw that there were too many of us here, some of them unknown to them", they stopped and wavered. They began to shout, accusing us of all possible "crimes." It was with the greatest difficulty that we succeeded in calming them down sufficiently to let one of them speak for the purpose of formulating their accusation. I cannot now remember all the charges he made against us, but two of them impressed themselves on my memory with especial force. These two charges may serve to judge of . the others.

Firstly, he stated that we had no authorization to call our paper, the *Wave*, the organ of the Sveaborg sailors collective. "You could give such a title to your paper only if all the Sveaborg sailors took part in its publication," said he.

Of course, this was a sheer misunderstanding. It was very easy for us to explain that the word "collective" (body of men) did not mean a formal association to which all the sailors belonged, but that it was nothing but a group, i.e., a number of persons who in actual fact took part in the publication of the paper.

The other accusation was still more laughable. "What party do you belong to?" he suddenly asked, turning to Kirill Orlov. "I am a Social-Democrat, a Bolshevik," replied Kirill. "Aha," cried the sailor triumphantly and malignantly, "and on our ships you call yourselves revolutionaries." It was all that we could do to refrain from bursting into laughter. In a few short words we explained that the Social-Democrats were also revolutionaries, although they did not belong to the Party of the "Socialist-Revolutionaries."

The sailors were utterly embarrassed and floored. Some of them tried to point out that we call on the soldiers and sailors to leave the front, but their voices were no longer confident and determined. The attack on us was over, and we took up the offensive. In a heated and beautifully drawn up speech, Bon explained to them what the Bolshevik Party was and what its aims were, and Zalezhsy also explained to them, using the example of the Paris Commune, what were our views on the solution of the task which faced us in connection with the war.

The sailors now completely calmed down. Their spokesman was embarrassed, and frankly admitted that he had always supported the Mensheviks, and that he had been angered and forced to act by the fact that the Bolsheviks had gained such wide influence in Helsingfors and had even destroyed the more moderate organisation which previously existed in the town. The others even apologized and thanked us for the explanations which we had given to them. They left us as sincere friends instead of enemies.

After this minor incident, our work went on along its usual channels. We had now in Helsingfors a number of highly skilled workers, while we were expecting every day the arrival of L. N. Stark. I therefore began to think of returning to Petrograd.

As a matter of fact, I was really a deserter, having left my regiment without leave and doing nothing but Party work. The situation had to be regularized, and for this purpose I had to return to Petrograd and, relying on the Party organisation, bring up my case.

The Helsingfors Committee heard my explanations and agreed to release me, appointing as editor of the *Wave* Comrade Zhemchugin, who had recently returned from Petrograd, until the arrival of Stark.

I left Helsingfors on April 16.

MILITARY ORGANISATION OF THE R.S.D.L.P (BOLSHEVIKS) AND THE "*Soldiers' Pravda*."

When I arrived in Petrograd, I first of all reported to my headquarters, the Reserve Chemical Battalion. It turned out that owing to the natural confusion of the first days of the revolution no official action had yet been taken on my absence from the battalion, but nevertheless, the commanders of the battalion were quite ill at ease about it. If I had remained in Helsingfors any longer, they might possibly have instituted a search for me. However, I was here now, and I again reported for duty without delay.

My first thought was to secure a transfer to one of the regiments stationed at Helsingfors, so as to be able to continue the work so successfully commenced there. My brother and I interested L. B. Kamenev in this matter, and he tried to get the executive committee of the Petrograd Soviet to approve my transfer. However, the thing dragged out for some reason or other. On the other hand, I got into contact with two of our military workers, Nikolai Ilyich Podvoisky and V. I. Nevsky, and

together we started to lay the foundations of our future Petrograd military organisation. In consequence of this, I remained in Petrograd.

I well remember the first sessions of the military organisation which was then only in its formative stage. They were held in Kshesinskaya's Palace, the first one in a small hall on the second story. I was highly astonished to find my platoon sergeant Chirkov there; I had been meeting him on duty almost every day for the last year. He was a fine drill master, yet at the same time an intelligent and likable person, so that I genuinely rejoiced at seeing him here.

It was at these meetings that the foundation was laid for those cadres of military workers organisation that bore the brunt of the stormy revolutionary events yet to come. I recall that calm and judicious ensign Ter-Arutyunyants with his great shock of black hair; the fiery second lieutenant Kudelko, and the lieutenant Tarasov – Rodionov, ever vigilant but non-committal; I can see the vivacious image of the gray-haired soldier Beliakov, the gloomy, austere looking Dr. S. M. Nakhimson, round shouldered but always firm and uncompromising⁷ and many others. Many of these are now no longer alive. They have proven their faithfulness to the cause of the revolution by giving up for it their dearest possession – their lives.

A soldier of the Grenadier regiment, Constantine Alexandrovich Mekhonoshin, was chosen secretary of the military organisation. He was a perfect secretary. Quiet, judicious, persevering, he spent many an hour in the room set aside for our military organisation, tirelessly interviewing the numerous delegations from the military units that kept arriving from all parts of the land. I often went to the Kshesinsky Palace, knowing that whoever else might be loafing on the job I was always sure to find Mekhonoshin busy at his desk. In my conversations with him I discovered that he was not simply a "soldier," but an interesting and well-educated young man. He was quite a scientist, and had been to Turkestan shortly before the revolution on a scientific mission.

I was not kept long on organisational work. Prodvolsky decided that it would be much more expedient to use me as a Party writer and newspaper man, and soon thereafter I was appointed a member of the editorial board of the recently formed Party military paper, the *Soldiers' Pravda*. I took up my new duties in the middle of April.

Before speaking of my work on the editorial board of the *Soldiers' Pravda*, I want to say a few words about my service in the Reserve Chemical Battalion, in which I was still a junior staff officer. Here I had a curious experience.

The War Minister of the Provisional Government, Guchkov, requested our battalion, which, being a technical unit, was considered more or less tainted with political unorthodoxy, to send him one of the most radical officers to work in his private office. It was not surprising that the first glance of the commander of our battalion should be in my direction, although of course neither he nor the other officers of the battalion even suspected the full extent of my "left" views. At any rate, I received.

⁷ An old member of the R.C.P. See A. J. Zhenevsky's booklet *M. Nakhimson, a Biography*, published by the "Priboi." Publ. Co., Leningrad, 19

official instructions to report to Moika Street, at the house of the Minister of War, and take up the duties of personal secretary to Guchkov. This happened at the very moment when the Party sent me to work in the editorial work of the *Soldiers' Pravda*. So, it came about that morning, owing to my official duties which I could not possibly refuse, I worked as secretary to Guchkov, and evenings, I, together with Podvoisky and Nevsky, issued the current number of the *Soldiers' Pravda*, which strenuously fought this same Guchkov. For that matter, I was not the only one to occupy a two-faced position. Our military service forced us to do defense work, and consequently to strengthen the system against which we, as Party members, were fighting. But nothing could be done about it. Still, we could make the most of the favorable side of the situation, which I certainly did, although it struck me as rather funny.

The work which was given me at Guchkov's private office was of the following nature. Guchkov, who was evidently seeking popularity, did not want a single telegram of congratulation to go unanswered. It was my duty to answer these telegrams, under the direction of two colonels who had been authorized by Guchkov to sign his name to them. These colonels liked to take it easy, and when they found that I could read and write and was not a monarchist, they signed Guchkov's name to any telegram placed before them without ever reading it.

However, after a few days they smelled a rat. As a matter of fact, my answers sometimes acted as a cold douche on our hot-headed "hurrah-patriots." Thus, in reply to a telegram demanding a fight to a victorious finish, I wired the slogan of peace without annexations or reparations. In answering a telegram calling for the annihilation of the accursed Germans, I spoke of international solidarity, etc. The two colonels began to glance at me one-sidedly. Once or twice, I noticed that the texts of my telegrams had been surreptitiously altered. When Guchkov's cabinet fell and Kerensky became War Minister; I was returned to the Reserve Chemical Battalion.

At the time I joined the editorial board of the *Soldiers' Pravda*, it consisted of Podvoisky, V. I. Nevsky and Z. Lilina. Our central meeting place was formally Kshesinskaya's Palace. There one of our workers was always to be found and all material intended for the editors was addressed there. But in reality, most of the work was done right at the printing plant of the Public Prefecture (the 8th company of the Ismailovsky Regiment ⁸ House No. 20b), where the *Soldiers' Pravda* was printed. Here we had a fairly large room, where we all gathered together, arranged the makeup, did the proofreading of the current number and at the same time distributed the current work among ourselves. Here we wrote articles and prepared for publication the big batches of letters which arrived every day from the soldiers at the front and back home. Work went on very harmoniously. Articles on which we entertained any doubt we read together, and after discussing them the necessary corrections were made. As far as I remember, there was never any serious difference of opinion on the advisability of publishing any particular article.

⁸ Now 8th Red Army Regiment

The chief task with which the *Soldiers' Pravda* had to cope was to win over the masses of the soldiers ideologically, first of all the Petrograd garrison. In this respect the *Soldiers' Pravda* from its very inception was the right hand of our military organisation.

The purposes of our paper determined its character and contents. First of all, the paper had to be made appropriate for an ill-prepared and little educated reading public. Therefore, our articles and paragraphs were written in a very colloquial style, and always started with the ABC of any question that was brought up. Highfalutin words were absolutely taboo. In order to give the articles a form best suited to soldiers, we almost always changed the articles which we had written, to be simplified if need be. Another feature of the paper was its avowed purpose to throw light on the peasant question. We took into account the fact that the overwhelming majority of the army consisted of peasants in soldiers' uniforms. Naturally, questions affecting village life, primarily the land question, were bound to be of interest to the masses of the soldiers.

The correct line maintained by the paper was instrumental in achieving its rapid success. At the very outset, the circulation of the paper amounted to 50,000 copies and everything pointed to a further increase.

The success of the paper was borne out by the enormous number of soldiers letters which we received from every quarter. Their number grew from day to day. Most of them, written in a clumsy, almost indecipherable handwriting by soldier correspondents, described the hardships which the soldiers had to undergo. In blunt, yet convincing and candid words most of them evinced great sympathy for the Party and the *Soldiers' Pravda*, exponent of its aims.

Thanks to my habit of collecting everything I could lay hands on pertaining to the revolution, I have been able to preserve almost intact the complete files of the *Soldiers' Pravda*, and as I write lines, I have before me a number of letters taken from these files which vividly recall this great and stormy epoch. I cannot withstand the temptation to quote from some of them. Here, for example, is a characteristic letter coming from a soldier who had just made the acquaintance of our paper. I give it in full to show its sincere though uncouth style:—

“Comrade Editor,

“I have just chanced to get and read the first few numbers of your paper *Soldiers' Pravda*, for which the whole squadron sends its thanks and also to its chief contributors, Comrades Lenin and Zinoviev.

“Comrade editor, with this letter I am sending five rubles for the paper *Soldiers' Pravda* to be sent to me to the end of the year, and if the money is not enough, we will pay the difference, only please "do not refuse to send your excellent paper which we need very much.

“Comrade editor, also please tell me where I can get literature and what kind I need for propaganda among the soldiers. We are also in great need of this, as we do not know the position of the Party and we are uneducated and the officers are using our ignorance to knock into our heads some kind of “military union” so that the soldiers will join it. We do not understand what it is and

what it stands for, but we figure out that it has only one aim, to get a majority of votes for their party in the Constituent Assembly. Please answer some of the questions in writing if it is not too much trouble, even if you only give a short explanation. My address is 2 Rifle Regiment, 7th Cavalry Division, 2nd "Squadron, V. M. Goroncherov, May 11, 1917."

"Here is another letter: —

"Mr. Editor,

"We are writing to ask you to be good enough to send to the front your esteemed paper *Soldiers' Pravda*, which pours education into the hearts of the masses. We do not want to read the capitalist papers such as the *Novoye Vremya*, the *Stock Exchange Bulletin*, etc. They only disappoint us. Please send the paper to us from July 1st. We are sending money for three months. Address: Staff of 442nd Kashinsky Infantry Regiment, Stepan Melnilzov."

There were hundreds of such letters. They all showed that once the *Soldiers' Pravda* got into the hands of the soldiers, it quickly won their sympathy.

However, we also began to get letters showing that the counter revolutionary officers were doing everything in their power to prevent the *Soldiers' Pravda* from getting into the hands of the soldiers. At first, when the soldiers did not know why the paper frequently did not reach them", we got letters like the following :

"Comrade Editor,

"Please inform us why you do not send us your paper which i we wished to receive and collected our last kopeks to order, and up to now we have not received it.

"Ilia Gusev, 20th Grenadiers Bazardzhin Regiment, Trench Mortar Unit."

Later the soldiers understood what was the matter, and their later letters speak plainly of the wiles of the counterrevolutionary officers. Here is an example: —

"Dear Sir, Mr. Editor,

"The Paper published by you *Soldiers' Pravda* for your obliging subscribers, the defenders of the fatherland, that is, the soldiers, do not get to their destination owing to which we ask you to give us your greatest support, in this case so as to prevent in the future this undesirable conduct on the part of our enemies, the officer gentlemen, who think that the above — mentioned paper will be very useful to us, for which we are here striving. The officer gentlemen hold back the above-mentioned paper for their own purposes, realizing that owing to it the soldiers may cause them harm. From this it follows that we have sent money uselessly. It will have been spent in vain and lost for good. And therefore, on the basis of , the aforementioned, we request you, honored sir, to take strict f V measures to counteract the hostile actions of our opponents. Address: 160 Abkhaz Regiment, Regimental Scouting Unit." Here is another characteristic letter speaking of the same thing:

"Dear Soldier Comrades,

"You ask us and influence us to read and understand what is written in your papers. We are touched by your political truth—it gives us intelligence for the defense of the freedom which is dear to us, but the point is that we do not get the paper. We humbly ask you to try to send us the paper *Soldiers' Pravda* because our own comrades write in it about the life of the soldiers. Another thing we ask you, soldier comrades, about the bourgeoisie, keep them down at every step against our dear freedom. Let them have no rights which will harm our freedom. These bourgeoisie people are prepared to fight to the finish, but you know very well that our comrades and brothers are already weary and have no strength left. Just think we have now been suffering for three years in this damned brutal war, and no end is in sight. How long yet will our brothers suffer at the front without reason. Dear comrades, we ask you to work hard to stop this bloodshed. Dear comrades, write us an answer quickly. We are waiting. Your own comrades Paul Lezhnoba and Nikolai Alexeev, 131 Tiraspol'sky Regiment, 2nd Company.

Almost every letter speaks of the hard lot of the men. Here are some characteristic extracts:—

We soldiers from the trenches are suffering hunger and cold. In the Carpathians we were covered with mud from head to foot and never get any rest. We were driven "into dugouts, 40 to 100 in each. We sat in the trenches without cartridges and often without rifles. They made us tear down barbed wire entanglements with our bare hands, and the artillery did not support us because there were no shells, and the unarmed soldiers, rank after rank, went to the dogs on the entanglements under a hail of shells and bullets from the German trenches." (From a letter of a soldier of the 322nd Soligalichesky Regiment, Kuvarin.)

Or take this one :—

"We, comrades, are soldiers from the 2nd Corps. We are in wet trenches for the second year, and we have no reserves to replace us, so that we could get out into the fresh air and get some good air. All of us, soldiers of the 2nd Corps, are sick because we have not seen the sky all winter. We are in dugouts without any windows, and only one little light burns, it flickers like an eye, and gives hardly any light, only soot, which we breathe in. This makes us sick in the stomach. ." (From a letter signed S. I. Golubov, soldier of the 4th Company of the 13th Siberian Rifle Regiment.)

One more:—

"We cannot believe that there is any freedom in Russia. There sure is none for us in the trenches. We still crouch down in foxholes and expect to die at any minute.

"But our high commanders live the life of lords in the villages and towns. They drink plenty of wine and carry on high, but they have no pity on us." (From a letter of a soldier, V. E. Katz.)

It was natural that the animal-like conditions of life should have evoked the soldiers protest against the continuance of the , war and the procrastination of peace. Every soldier's letter speaks of peace in some way or other. Some simply dream as of some unattainable bliss; others demand peace, and sometimes do not even stop short of threats. Here is a letter typifying this more militant spirit :—

“Why don’t all the workers and soldiers deputies in Petrograd think of peace? All the soldiers are longing for peace. Why? Because all the hungry and barefooted and ragged people are saying “We want peace,” and if it does not come soon, we will make it ourselves, and then there will be peace for everybody. No, there is not one person, not one who thinks of peace, not even the workers and soldiers deputies. And they do not think of their brothers, they probably don’t remember us well. They have probably forgotten all about us far away in the damp and cold trenches. They had better make peace before winter, if they know what’s good for them. Otherwise well take a hand in this thing ourselves.” (From the letter of a senior non-commissioned officer of the 4th Platoon, 1st Company, Special Battalion attached to the 4th Infantry Division.)

I could reproduce an endless string of these letters. They kept us fully informed of the temper of the soldiers at the front and in the rear. These letters enabled us to follow up a very important matter – the rapidity with which their position dawned upon the soldiers, and how quickly revolutionary sentiment in the army began to assert itself. The first letters, some of which I have quoted, exhibited a deep yearning of the soldiers for peace, not yet fully aroused, and still spasmodic. But in the later letters this longing is very plainly to be discerned; it is now clearly and exactly formulated, couched in the spirit of the demands which our Party put forward.

We of the editorial department tried to leave not a single letter unanswered. Some of them were published in the paper after their grammar had been somewhat improved upon; others, which raised some particular question, we tried to answer by mail. Of course this meant extremely hard work. The number of letters constantly increased, and we had not enough hands to get the work done. We had to take on additional help to edit the soldiers letters and reply to them. On this score, we were first helped out by that amiable Comrade Sulimova, and then Nikolai Ilyich brought in a talented writer for children, Comrade Altayeva, a Party member, and finally my wife, Lydia Borisova, engaged in this work, and afterwards became our permanent proof-reader.

We were also actively assisted in our work by an old Party worker, Comrade Dobrokhoto, a man of mature years. An enormous number of soldiers letters passed through his hands. Sometimes he contributed an article or so.

I have already mentioned that the circulation and the influence of the *Soldiers’ Pravda* were continually increasing. By May, a considerable part of the Petrograd garrison endorsed our political platform.

It was natural that our enemies, seeing that they were powerless to fight us ideologically, were bound to make attempts to annihilate us physically somehow or another. Such an attempt took place on Saturday, May 13, 1917. On that day, at 5 o’clock in the morning, two officers and one civilian made their way into our editorial rooms in Kshesinskaya’s Palace. They poured gasoline on bundles of papers lying about on the floor, which had been prepared for dispatch to the front, and set fire to them. Having done their vile work, they jumped into a waiting automobile and disappeared. Luckily our comrades were awakened and the fire was quickly extinguished. About forty thousand copies of

the paper were thus destroyed and the walls and ceiling slightly blackened with soot, but no one was injured.

But the assault of the enemy on the *Soldiers' Pravda* was not to be confined to this. We soon began to experience a number of "technical" difficulties in the publication of our paper, until finally at the beginning of June, the Prefecture printing plant informed us pointblank that "owing to pressure of other work," it could no longer print the *Soldiers' Pravda*.

The situation now became critical. The structure which we had erected with such difficulty was now being threatened with collapse. There was only one thing left to do – appeal to our friends and true defenders, the soldiers and workers. of Petrograd, for assistance. Accordingly, the number of the paper for June 19 carried the following appeal in bold type on the first page:

"Comrades, soldiers, working men and women! The Public Prefecture Printing Works, owing to pressure of other work, cannot publish your paper the *Soldiers' Pravda* any longer. Tomorrow the *Soldiers' Pravda* will not appear. Tomorrow, soldiers and workers, the voice of the *Soldiers' Pravda* will have been silenced.

"Soldiers and workers! Comrades! If you feel the need of a newspaper which will lead you unfalteringly onward to socialism, if you want a paper which devotes more than half of its space to soldiers and workers letters, resolutions and articles; if you desire a paper which will explain to you in plain and simple language what you did not know or understand, we know you will do everything in your power to assure the further existence of your best friend, the *Soldiers' Pravda*. You are only poor soldiers and workers, but you must make the rounds of the barracks and factories, collect money penny by penny and buy a printing plant for your *Soldiers' Pravda*.

"Only by buying your own printing plant can you assure the continued appearance of your paper and increase its size.

"Let every reader of the *Soldiers' Pravda* collect two or three rubles to buy our own printing plant.

"Comrades, do not lose a moment. Immediately after reading this appeal start collecting as much as you can. Even a few kopeks will help.

"Get busy, comrades. The fate of the *Soldiers' Pravda* is in your hands.

THE EDITOR."

The effective help from the soldiers and workers was not long in coming. Already while the appeal was being set up, we received 33 rubles and 50 kopeks, representing a collection taken up by the compositors while setting our paper in type.

This contribution was followed by many others. Some of the soldiers decorated their company transport carts with flags, placarded them with agitational slogans and drove out into the streets of

Petrograd to collect subscriptions for the benefit of the *Soldiers' Pravda*. These two – wheeled carts were of great assistance in the collection of funds. However, for the time being we had to leave the Prefecture Printing plant, and the paper did not appear for several days. Our Organisation now had some hard sailing before it.

Although our capital grew rapidly, we, alone, were not in a position to get together the amount required to buy a printing plant at once. At this juncture our central organ – the newspaper *Pravda* – which also dreamed of owning a plant of its own and was collecting funds for that purpose, came to our assistance. Putting our puny resources together, we were at last able to buy a fairly decent printing plant called “Trud,” situated not far from the Tauride Palace, at 40 Cavaliergrad Street.

Here, our *Soldiers' Pravda* was reborn, to the great joy of the soldiers and workers of Petrograd.

In the middle of June, almost at the same time that we moved to our new premises, an important event in the life of our organisation took place – the All-Russian Conference of our Party military organisations from the front and rear. We had long before prepared for the calling of this conference. We had sent special representatives to the front and to some of the big garrison towns in the rear to locate our Bolsheviks and get them to send a delegate to the Petrograd Conference.

These representatives did a tremendous amount of preparational work. It sometimes happened that on arriving at a town a representative had no addresses whatever to go to. He therefore had to apply to the stall of the unit quartered in the town, and sometimes even to stop soldiers passing by in the street, and ask them where he could find any Bolsheviks. Usually if he did not get the whole organisation, he thus found at least one Bolshevik, through whom he could manage to reach the remainder. In this way we secured 160 delegates from about 500 regiments, representing 26,000 soldiers organized in Communist nuclei. To outward appearances the conference was absolutely successful. Lenin and Zinoviev, whom most of the delegates saw for the first time, spoke amidst great enthusiasm. The resolutions passed by the conference were in full accord with the spirit of the general Party line.

But one wholly unexpected circumstance that made itself felt made us take thought. This was the restive rumbling of intractable mutiny finding an outlet in the speeches of the soldiers from the various localities, which dominated the whole proceedings.

We had not yet raised the question of an armed uprising. We had neither the necessary forces nor funds. Besides, prevailing conditions were not at all favorable. We were as yet only organizing and gathering forces. However, some of the speeches at the conference shrilly clamored to have the question of power immediately decided by force of arms. Some even made concrete proposals to drop the discussion of the questions on the agenda, and convert the conference into an apparatus of armed revolt. The leaders drew the conference away from this dangerous ground, so that the conference could finish the discussion of the questions confronting it in a businesslike way. The conference ended, but the revolutionary seething in the rank-and-file of the soldiers, which had

found partial expression at our conference, would not subside. It was soon to burst forth in a spontaneous and uncontrolled stream into the streets of our big cities.

The famous July days had arrived.

THE JULY DAYS

The approach of the July Days could be sensed everywhere. The dissatisfaction of the broad masses of soldiers with the counter-revolutionary policy of the Provisional Government was growing apace.

Every day the editors of the *Soldiers' Pravda* received great bundles of letters from simple soldiers bearing complaints against those who were blocking the progress of the incipient revolution, and containing threats against the bourgeoisie and the counterrevolutionaries.

I could discern a similar growth of oppositional feelings in my Reserve Chemical Battalion. Almost every day there were lively debates on questions of the day. But this unit still retained a patriotic veneer, and kept the Mensheviks, S.R.s and nonpartisan soldiers of indefinite political complexion in its committees which had been elected at the beginning of the revolution.

On the other hand, everything was at a boiling point in Kronstadt. Shortly before the July Days, "I had occasion to be there for about a week. At that time, my brother, F. F. Raskolnikov, with a delegation from the Kronstadt Soviet, was touring around the coast of the Baltic, and he asked me to edit the Kronstadt paper *Golos Pravdy* (*The Voice of Truth*) in his absence. At the local meetings every now and then people could be heard shouting "Down with the Provisional Government." The hotheads demanded an immediate march on Petrograd with the demand to hand over power immediately to the Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies. The Bolshevik leaders were reproached with being "afraid" and with treading softly as far as the overthrow of the Provisional Government was concerned.

I still have in my possession a small but very characteristic note written hurriedly, at that time on a scrap of paper. It was sent by a sailor named Kondakov, who in those days was secretary of the Kronstadt Committee of our Party. It was addressed to S. G. Roshal, our leader there, who was staying with me in Petrograd. The note ran as follows: "Comrade Simeon, come back at once. There was a meeting yesterday at which the masses were so revolutionized that they drove us off the platform, saying that we were afraid to attack, and they want to go straightway to Petrograd with arms. Get back here as fast as you can. Kondakov." Roshal instantly rushed to Kronstadt, and was able temporarily to stem the tide which threatened to engulf everything.

On the eve of the July 18 demonstration there were lengthy debates in Kronstadt on the question of whether to march with or without arms. The Kronstadt Soviet, correctly fearing provocation, decided to march without arms. The greater part of our Kronstadt following was dissatisfied with this decision, and they refused to have anything to do with the demonstration. In fact, next day there were hardly three thousand from Kronstadt in Petrograd.

All this shows with what elemental fury the storm broke forth during the July Days.

Later the Mensheviks and S.R.s tried to represent the July events as having been a long prepared and deliberately carried out action on the part of the Bolsheviks. This is of course sheer nonsense.

The July events broke as unexpectedly upon many of the responsible workers of our Party, as upon the Mensheviks and S.R.s. In its impetuosity, this hurricane with its rapidly shifting-scenery upset the calculations and exceeded the anticipations of many a wise owl. There was almost a literal repetition- of what I had witnessed in Kronstadt in June. The spontaneous pressure of the masses compelled the leaders to take determined action. Our military organisation was given a great deal of trouble by the 1st Machine Gun Regiment. It excitedly stormed out- into the streets, and while officially a demonstration was being discussed, unofficially the responsible representatives of the regiment declared without a blush that with the enormous number of machine guns in its possession the regiment could easily oust the Provisional Government. Of course, the committee of the military organisation could not countenance any such exploit.

A strange role was played during these negotiations by the only Bolshevik officer in the regiment, Lieutenant Semashko. He enjoyed great influence in the regiment, and without doubt could have held it back if he had wished. As a disciplined member of the Party he was in duty bound to do so. Nevertheless, this regiment was the first to take to the streets. It is noteworthy that on the day when the regiment took action, he was in Kshesinskaya's Palace, and assured us that all was quiet in the Machine Gun Regiment. At the present time, this conduct of Semashko should no longer surprise us. In 1922 he proved himself a real traitor by fleeing from his post as first secretary to our Embassy in Latvia, and hiding somewhere abroad. It is possible that at that time he also had some ulterior motive, unknown to us.

Close upon the heels of the 1st Machine Gunners, the 180th Regiment came out, then the Reserve Grenadiers and many other Petrograd regiments. The movement threatened to become a spontaneous mutiny. Then the Petrograd Committee of our Party decided to take charge of the movement now underway, and named July 4 for a peaceful demonstration under the slogan "All Power to the Soviets."

All that time I was working in the editorial office of the *Soldiers' Pravda* almost without a break. On July 3, I attended a city conference for a short while which was going on at Kshesinskaya's Palace. Most of the district delegates were in a highly excited state of mind. Some of them insisted on the necessity of an immediate armed uprising. "How can there be a peaceful demonstration," shouted a tall lanky delegate, fiercely gesticulating, "there is shooting going on in the streets right now. This is a new revolution coming on."

And indeed, in the centre of the city firing was already to be heard. People hidden in the garrets and on the balconies of the houses of the bourgeoisie, shot at the first groups of demonstrators from the ranks of the Machine Gun and other regiments, which came out that day on their own

initiative. However, the Party centre considered it premature to risk an armed rebellion, and stood firmly for preserving the peaceful character of the movement.

Then came the 4th of July, the day appointed for the demonstration. The weather was perfect. The sun shone brightly. From early dawn, feeling in Kshesinskaya's Palace ran high. From time-to-time military units could be seen marching along the Kamunno-Ostrovsky Prospekt. At Kshesinskaya's Palace they stopped and shouted, "Hurrah!" They were answered from the balconies. Speeches were made. It seemed that all was going well.

With glowing feelings I went to my regiment, the Reserve Chemical Battalion. I was ashamed that my unit should be the last to join the general movement. I had a faint hope that it had already been drawn into the general current of events. I found that it had not. All were in their places. Today there was also a plenary session of all the company committees and courts. The first question on the agenda was the demonstration. I asked for the floor, but I saw by the expression of the faces of the audience that my speech would fall flat. The officers maintained a grim silence, and they comprised almost half of us. The others, simply sluggish country lads, vainly cudgelled their brains and sat in confusion. It was difficult for them, unused to dealing with political questions, to make up their minds as to who was right and who was wrong.

A Menshevik took the floor against me. I remember to this day the hypocritical solicitude with which he opened. "Dear comrades, I am extremely sorry to have to speak against a comrade of my own party. But he is a Bolshevik and I am a Menshevik." Then he dragged in the famous manifesto of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet, the "accredited organ of revolutionary democracy." This decided the day. The majority voted for the resolution, which endorsed the resolution of the C.E.C. of the Soviets. The officers were gloating with satisfaction. Nadezhdin, assistant commander of the battalion, was the most exultant of all. He wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to destroy me utterly. He proposed to inform the C.E.C. that in spite of its decision, I had called on the soldiers to come out into the streets with arms and join the demonstration. The meeting obediently adopted his motion.

I returned to Kshesinskaya's Palace. Here spirits were not at all as ebullient as they had been in the morning. They were talking about the shooting which had taken place again in the centre of the city and about the victims. The Kronstadt sailors suffered considerable casualties, for about five thousand of them had come to the demonstration. Some of the sailors were cut off from the general body and arrested by the Provisional Government. This angered the sailors greatly. They swore that they would not leave Petrograd till their comrades had been released.

Although the demonstration was officially at an end, the Central Committee decided to let the sailors remain in the city, because, according to information received, the Provisional Government was concentrating about itself the regiments which had remained loyal, and no one knew what to expect. I saw these sailors, as some of them came to spend the night in Kshesinskaya's Palace. They had a very warlike appearance. A rifle was slung over the shoulder, a revolver was hung at one side

of the belt, and at the other side a Japanese bayonet protruded menacingly. They carried on as if they were on parade.

July 5. With early morning alarming rumors began to trickle in to the effect that the troops of the Provisional Government were massing on the Dvortsovaya Square, and would be moved at any minute against Kshesinskaya's Palace. Almost all the main bridges had been raised. This gave rise to further disquieting rumors. Kshesinskaya's Palace gradually began to prepare for defense. Everywhere machine guns were being mounted, and close contact was maintained with the Bolshevik units.

Suddenly the business editor of the *Pravda*, Constantin Stepanovich Eremeyev appeared. He stunned us with the announcement that in the morning a gang of cadets and "invalids" had burst into the office of the *Pravda* and had completely wrecked it. Eremeyev himself was arrested, but as he was dressed in soldiers uniform, he was taken for a simple soldier on guard and was soon released.

Someone informed us that four motor trucks filled with sailors of the guards, a very reactionary unit were proceeding from the Dvortsovaya Square in the direction of Kshesinskaya's Palace.

Comrade Podvoisky, president of our military organisation, hastily assigned us our parts. First of all, it was necessary to appoint someone to command all the forces around the Palace. As most of the troops defending Kshesinskaya's Palace were Kronstadt sailors, it was decided to put supreme command in the hands of my brother, who immediately went out to issue the necessary instructions in case of a sudden attack.

He warned all soldiers and sailors not to fire a single shot without his express orders, and gave particularly minute instructions to the machine gunner in the corner summer house of the palace garden. This gunner was stationed at some distance from the others and would have to act independently without waiting for orders. Cartridges were dealt out to all those defending Kshesinskaya's Palace. The necessary number of cartridge belts was given to the machine gunners. All this was done in feverish haste, as the attack by the troops of the Provisional Government was expected any minute.

We were all in a fierce fighting mood. With a view to strengthening the defenses of the palace, my brother sent to the naval artillery park to demand guns, and I with Comrade Bon, an agitator, tried in vain for a whole hour to telephone from his rooms on Bolshoy Dvoryansky Street to Helsingfors, to demand that sympathizing warships be dispatched from there.

It was clear that Kshesinskaya's Palace could only be regarded as an impregnable fortress if the *Fortress of St. Peter and Paul* agreed to support us and direct a flanking fire on the attacking troops; Comrades Roshal, Evdokimov and Antipov were immediately sent there to agitate and organize this support. For that matter, we knew in advance that they would be successful in their mission, as the garrison of the fortress was extremely sympathetic to us.

It was decided to collect the necessary quantity of cartridges. For this purpose, Comrade Podvoisky sent Comrade K. S. Eremeyev and myself to the chief fortifications of the *Fortress of St. Peter and Paul* to demand cartridges.

I vividly remember the perplexed faces of the officers of the fortress with whom we came into contact. They were caught between two fires. On the one hand was the stern will of the revolutionary garrison with which they had to reckon, and on the other hand the rage of their immediate superiors. The chief of the fortifications greeted us very cordially but stated that he . could not issue anything without-the permission of the Artillery Stores Administration on Malaya Dvoryanskaya Street.

As we returned to the automobile to go to the Malaya Dvoryanskaya Street, we saw a comparatively small crowd of people and speakers. This was a meeting called by our comrades mentioned above. Evdokimov was speaking. "Great Heavens!" I overheard a tearful old lady in the crowd exclaim, "Its these Bolsheviks again stirring up trouble. And what's he waving his arms for? Damn that lunatic."

After Evdokimov a Menshevik spoke in a low apologetic voice as if he were not agitating but begging the crowd for forgiveness and repenting for some sin. A soldier standing near me made a gesture of contempt, spat on the ground and walked away.

"This fellow is going to tell us again to wait and wait," he muttered. "Why should we wait? We have waited long enough."

By now we had found our automobile and moved on. In the Artillery Stores we witnessed a comical scene. The officials, not sure whether the Provisional Government still existed or not, were very polite to us and promised everything. But they were afraid to stir their little finger for fear of overstepping their authority. We decided to make the most of their quandary and spoke as if we were in power, threatening them with dire punishment in case of non-compliance. However, they did not give us the order for the cartridges, seeking refuge behind all sorts of formalities. In disgust we returned to Kshesinskaya's Palace and reported to the presidium of the military organisation.

Meanwhile, the bridges stayed up, and the wildest rumors were current. This did not bode any good. In addition, we were deprived of telephone service. The telephone operators were boycotting us.

When I tried to use the telephone to get out the current number of the *Soldiers' Pravda*, a hail of abuse and ridicule was the only response. However, I did not give up, I tried to assure the girls that I must speak on urgent business. The girls, in turn, began to abuse me for "taking German money." Our altercation came to an unexpected end. Some other girl snatched the receiver away from the first and screamed at the top of her voice: "You are probably Lenin himself speaking. You spy! You scoundrel !" With these words she cut me off.

To clarify the situation, I proposed to the presidium of the military council that a delegation to the commander of the troops of the Petrograd Military District be sent. The delegation was to point out to General Polovtsev that we on our part did not intend to take any aggressive action, to find out

why the bridges were raised and what the intentions of General Polovtsev with regard to ourselves were, and to see at the same time what was going on in the Dvortsovaya Square, whether the rumors that the troops concentrated there would be sent against us were true.

The presidium of the military organisation agreed with me and appointed K. S. Eremeyev and myself as delegates to see General Polovtsev. The only available route to the Dvortsovaya Square led us almost all the way round the city, as all the bridges were up with the exception of the Dvortsovoy and Birzhevoy. There, one half of the bridge was raised and on the other half sentries stood while the documents of those who desired to pass were being examined. They wanted a special pass, issued by the district headquarters giving us the right to use an automobile, but when we explained who we were and why we were driving, we were allowed to pass.

The pedestrians in the central part of the town looked at us with interest mingled with apprehension. Our external appearance sufficiently betrayed us. Suffice it to say that the chauffeur and his assistant were Kronstadt sailors — -objects of, hate to an exasperated and terrified bourgeoisie. However, the sailors were not put out in the least by the morbid curiosity which they excited, and quietly looked about in every direction, the ribbons of their sailors caps fluttering gaily in the bright summer sun.

We found that troops were really stationed in the Dvortsovaya Square, but their number was not very large. Here and there we saw rifles stacked in pyramids. But the building of the district headquarters, presented an unusual spectacle. Dozens of soldiers heads kept popping out of the windows. Some of the soldiers had even climbed out of the windows and were standing on the window sills, or sitting down, their legs swinging in the air. Eremeyev burst into laughter when he saw this, and the thought occurred to me that possibly, while we had been preparing for an imagined attack of the enemy, the latter had all the time been afraid that we might attack them. Maybe the bridges had been raised only for purposes of self-defense. This thought gave me courage.

At the District Headquarters we were informed that General Polovtsev was in his room in the same building, but the entrance was through the next gateway. He had not slept for three nights, they told us, and was now probably taking a nap. We went in the direction indicated. We had to wait a short time in the waiting room. The hall porter related to us with terror the terrible events that had taken place here. "They came in a motor truck," he told us, "And began to shoot at the building with a machine gun." "Who are they?" we asked. "The Bolsheviks, of course," replied the porter with assurance. We assured him that this was obviously the work of provocateurs, as none of the Bolsheviks could have shot at the building with a machine gun. At last, the adjutant of General Polovtsev came and invited us into his study. He said that the general had just gone to take a rest, but that he would nevertheless report our arrival to him.

Soon we saw General Polovtsev himself. He slouched in, about two minutes later, yawning and buttoning the Circassian coat he was wearing. He was extremely polite and chose his words carefully.

We asked him the three questions which interested us most: Why the editorial offices of the *Pravda* were raided; why the bridges were raised, and whether it was true that government troops were being concentrated against us?

Polovtsev answered that he had given orders that all armed groups within the limits of the city should be disarmed. As there were armed people in the offices of the *Pravda*, they too had to be disarmed. As for the looting and wrecking, Polovtsev stated that he had himself only recently heard about it, and that he had given orders to return the stolen property immediately and had severely censured the commander of the detachment. He explained that the raising of the bridges was purely a precautionary measure, and categorically assured us that he had no intention of proceeding against the Bolsheviks with armed force. Neither Eremeyev nor I attached much weight to his words, and we were right. The events immediately following showed that Polovtsev was an impudent and shameless liar.

We left him, and at the district headquarters obtained a pass entitling us to travel by automobile. Then we went downstairs and were again struck by the nervous atmosphere pervading the entire building. Among other things, I remember the strutting figure of a student in resplendent students attire, with a rifle over his shoulder. He was a prototype of the future White Guards.

As we came through the door on to the square, we saw a sight which put us on the alert. While we had been talking with General Polovtsev, our automobile with the two sailors had attracted the attention of the people who crowded about the District Headquarters. They began asking the sailors who they as were, and why they had come. The sailors answered very reluctantly. This looked to the public still more suspicious, and they began sidling up to the automobile, in a threatening way, filling the air with curses against the fleet which was "supporting the Bolshevik traitors and spies."

When we saw this state of affairs, we rapidly made our way to the automobile and took our places in it. The crowd now became still more excited, and cries were heard "They want to escape. They are Bolsheviks. Get them!" Someone on the A outer fringe of the mob yelled "Beat them up." It was a ticklish moment. One sailor quickly started the motor and the automobile leaped forward, compelling the people in front to jump to one side. Leaving behind the threatening shouts of the mob, we soon turned into Million Street, where we could breathe more freely.

Before returning to Kshesinskaya's Palace, we decided to cruise through the city to observe whether the troops of the Provisional Government were being concentrated anywhere. We found nothing out of the way in the streets. Few people were about and everything looked peaceful and quiet. The Field of Mars, which had afforded us particular uneasiness, was absolutely empty. On the Liteini Prospekt, in two or three places bodies of Cossack horses lay sprawling, killed by crossfire; idly curious crowds had collected around them.

At a few places we encountered patrols, who required us to show the pass we had obtained at the District Headquarters. Finally, when we had scouted about town sufficiently, we drove to the Moika, to the offices of the *Pravda*, to draw up a statement on the looting which had taken place there.

As we were getting out of the automobile and were entering the offices, our eyes met a terrible sight. In every room were heaps of torn letters and papers; the table drawers had been upset on the floor, their contents scattered; many of them had evidently been kicked in. Everything gave evidence of the wild orgy of fury which had reigned here during the raid. Type writers, smashed by heavy blows, had been hurled into the corners of the room. The telephones were torn off and the receivers had disappeared. Soon the senior militiaman arrived, and at the request of Eremeyev he began to draw up, a statement of what had happened. I returned to Kshesinskaya's Palace, where I turned in a report on everything that I had seen and heard. Comrade Podvoisky informed me that during my absence the Menshevik Liber had come with Comrade Kamenev, and had also assured him that no attack on Kshesinskaya's Palace was contemplated.

As I had to go to the "Trud" Printing works to issue the next number of the *Soldiers' Pravda*, and the bridges were still up, I arranged to cross the Neva together with my brother on a small steamer which had brought him from Kronstadt and which was at his disposal. It was on his way, as he was going to the C.E.C. of the Soviets in the Taurida Palace. About five Kronstadt men who had been appointed leaders by the Kronstadt Soviet went with him. My brother was very much wrought up over the turn things were taking and voiced the opinion of the rest of the group in stating that if the C.E.C. of the Soviets did not comply with his demands, and did not release the arrested sailors, the rest of the sailors would not leave Petrograd. The steamer brought us to the appointed place without incident and we separated.

It was not altogether safe in the printing plant. We had no guard and the crowds surging about beneath were hostile, and any abuse of power might be expected from the Cossack regiments and the cavalry stationed nearby. To be on the safe side we sent a note to the commander of the Tauride Palace asking for a guard for the printing plant.

After a short time, a brilliantly dressed officer with clinking spurs arrived. "I have come from the commander of the Tauride Palace," he announced, saluting. "We will send you a guard of Cossacks. "Why Cossacks?" I asked in astonishment. "Well, you see, the Cossacks have it in for you most, and if some Cossacks unit comes to raid you, it will be sure to stop when it sees you have a Cossack guard." This seemed more than suspicious, but I did not argue with the officer, and even thanked him. He bowed and left. But no guard, Cossack or other, was sent.

When I finished work it was late at night and I started home. "I began to realize that I was facing a difficult situation. How was I to get to the Vyborg side of the river? The bridges were up, and without doubt, the small steamer with my brother on board had long since gone back. I walked along the river bank, hoping for a lucky chance to get across, and was not disappointed. Although it was very late, I found a boat with a man in it. For a small sum he agreed to land me on the other side. We were ready to put off when a belated passenger jumped in—a soldier without a cap, his overcoat unbuttoned. It turned out that he was one of the demonstrators who had lost his unit during the firing. He told us of a regular battle that had taken place in the Field of Mars between his unit and the Cossacks. The Cossacks outnumbered them, and the soldiers were in a tight fix. There, they received

unexpected support from sailors in barges, who opened fire on the Cossacks from the rear with their rifles. The soldier did not remember where he had lost his cap.

I got home safely and found that my brother had not yet returned. He came in with Roshal much later than I. From him I heard that the C.E.C. of the Soviets refused to release the arrested sailors and almost arrested him also. Though my brother was so weary that he could hardly stand up, he nevertheless was anxious to make the rounds of the sailors posted in various parts. We almost had to use force to keep him back.

The next day, July 6, at about 9 o'clock in the morning, Roshal and I went to Kshesinskaya's Palace. If I am not mistaken my brother had again gone to the C.E.C. of the Soviets to insist on the release of the sailors.

When we arrived, devastating news awaited us. Three-quarters of an hour before, the assistant to the Commander-in-Chief of the troops in the Petrograd Military District Staff, Captain Kuzmin, had rung up on the telephone and ordered the detachments in Kshesinskaya's Palace to lay down their arms immediately. "If your arms are not handed over in half an hour," he said, "Kshesinskaya's Palace will be bombarded by artillery." Such was the language used by the Provisional Government when it felt that it had the necessary forces to back it up. Of course, yesterday's assurances and promises were completely forgotten.

Comrade Podvoisky, who spoke with Kuzmin on the telephone, tried to gain time by saying that there was no responsible person present at the moment in the Palace, and that therefore the time limit would have to be extended so that they could be notified.

However, Kuzmin was inflexible. Impromptu meetings were held to discuss the question of how to gain time. Some advised withdraw for the time being to the barracks of the Grenadiers who had always been for us. Others suggested moving into the *Peter and Paul Fortress*. Time was short, the limit set by Kuzmin had already expired, and artillery firing might be expected at any moment. The majority decided to go to the Grenadiers and Roshal and I went there first to apprise the regimental committee, while the others got ready to follow us later.

The room of the Committee of the Grenadiers was jammed with officers. They surrounded us and with stiff politeness began to question us about the latest developments. We satisfied their curiosity very reluctantly.

Time passed but none of our comrades from Kshesinskaya's Palace appeared. Evidently something had happened in our absence. We left the Grenadiers and returned to Kshesinskaya's Palace. On the way we met a comrade, from whom we learned that the decision had been changed at the last moment, and that all had gone to the *Fortress of St. Peter and Paul*. "But don't you go there," he warned us, "the fortress is already surrounded by troops of the Provisional Government, and you will not be able to get in anyway." However, we went on.

The statement of this comrade turned out to be somewhat exaggerated. We successfully passed Kshesinskaya's Palace and were soon at the massive gateway of the Fortress of St. Peter and Paul.

Here I saw Podvoisky hurriedly getting into an automobile. "I am driving to the C.E.C. of the Soviets," he shouted to me as he sped off. "I leave the fortress in the hands of yourself and Maltsev." Comrade Maltsev, a lieutenant and member of the All-Russian Bureau of Military Organisations, stood there. We said goodbye to Podvoisky and went on to give the necessary orders for the defense of the fortress. We had a lot of machine guns and several antiaircraft guns. Some of the machine guns were mounted right on the ramparts of the fort, and attracted immediate attention. We ordered them to be set back somewhat. Others were lying in heaps below. We ordered them to be mounted in appropriate places. The thing to be feared most was provocative shooting, and therefore we gave the strictest orders not to reply to individual shots from the enemy, but to shoot only in case of an out-and-out attack. We stationed observers on the redoubts.

Meanwhile, the ring of troops of the Provisional Government was being drawn more and more tightly round us. We could clearly see armed soldiers running from tree to tree in the Alexandrov Park. Soon Kshesinskaya's Palace was occupied before our eyes without a single shot being fired. It would have been reckless, the act of a madman, for us to resist at all costs. We had only 300 sailors and 200 machine gunners of the First Reserve Machine Gun Regiment at our disposal. The only question was, what did our enemies want from us? If they wanted our lives, we would of course defend ourselves to the last drop of blood.

An envoy came from the besieging troops, proposing that we should send emissaries to Kshesinskaya's Palace to negotiate. A small general meeting was hurriedly called, at which a Kronstadt anarchist named Yarchuk, a sailor whose name I do not know, and I were chosen as envoys. Several officers of the *Peter and Paul* garrison, members of the garrison committee, went with us.

Passing through the lines of the besieging troops, we at last entered Kshesinskaya's Palace. Everything had changed in this short time. Everywhere clinking of spurs and the glittering array of officers uniforms. We saw only one familiar face – a member of the Petrograd Party Committee, Comrade Rakhya. He was sitting at a table not far from the entrance, with a group of soldiers crowding around him. Probably he was under arrest.

At the negotiations the Provisional Government was represented by the Menshevik Bogdanov, of the C.E.C. of Soviets, as he described himself; by the Assistant Commander-in-Chief, Staff Captain Kuzmin, and by Lieutenant Mazurenko, one of the leaders of the crusade against the Bolsheviks. Mazurenko stood with his hand on his black pelt, his face stern and inexorable. When we asked what he desired of us, he answered curtly, "Disarm and surrender."

We returned to the fortress to consult with our comrades and eventually decided to surrender our arms, on condition that we be released. Our condition was accepted and motor trucks arrived at the fortress and collected the arms.

Some time passed, but we were not released. Some of our comrades began to get excited, and expressed the opinion that this was a new piece of treachery. Unexpectedly we were served dinner by the soldiers of the garrison. This considerateness touched us deeply and cheered us up quite a bit.

Finally, about 3 o'clock several military men and civilians arrived on the scene and, setting up a table in the open air, began to take down the names of all those who had been arrested. Each one was released as soon as a record was made of his name.

Bogdanov arrived and proposed to send the sailors to the steamer under convoy, explaining that this would prevent the ugly-tempered mob from taking the law into its own hands. But the sailors categorically refused a convoy.

I expected that, as an officer, I would be held for a longer time and possibly not be set free at all. But to my great astonishment, I was registered like the rest and immediately released.

As I went through the gates of the fort, past the troops of the Provisional Government, I heard one of the soldiers swear loudly: "Hell! They put it over on us today. They told us there were bandits in the Fortress of St. Peter and Paul and now it turns out that they were just our own soldiers and sailors. When I heard this, I saw what tremendous agitational importance these events would have in the further development of the revolution.

ON THE EVE OF OCTOBER

The July offensive of the workers and soldiers was crushed. By throwing in the balance politically ignorant units which had but recently arrived from the front, the Provisional Government contrived to subjugate and disarm the regiments which sought to turn over all power to the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies. The Bolshevik papers *Pravda* and *Soldiers' Pravda* were suppressed. Our Party organisations were driven out of the premises they had occupied and were forced to go underground. In order to prevent us from returning to Kshesinskaya's Palace, the Special Cycle Corps was quartered there. Many of the leaders of our Party were arrested and imprisoned in the "Kresty" prison.⁹

But our enemies were not yet satisfied. They decided to destroy us root and branch. To attain this end, they stooped to the most despicable and revolting means — slander.

I remember how stupefied I was when, on, going out into the street for the first time after the above events, I noticed a small sheet of paper stuck on a wall. There it said plainly that Lenin and Zinoviev were German spies, and purported to quote a document to substantiate this charge. The alleged "document" was signed "Alexinsky." Petrograd was plastered all over with these leaflets. They clearly aimed to stir up a lynching bee against the Bolsheviks.

Counter-revolution had never descended to such infamous depths. I remember how I stood in front of this leaflet for a long time. I was suffocated with rage and impotence. We had no means of

⁹ Literally, the "Crosses" prison—a special prison in Petrograd for political prisoners, where they were kept under severe conditions in solitary confinement.

warding off these poisoned darts, as our press had been raided, and we who were still free might be thrown into prison at any moment. Then a new thought occurred to me. I suddenly realised that all means were fair in the class war. It was useless to expect mercy or decency from our class enemies. Therefore, we too must be cruel and merciless. "You are celebrating your triumph now," I thought, "but some day our turn will come." Of course, at that moment I could not know that the day would arrive so soon.

We had to start our work all over again without losing any time. To our great joy, most of the responsible workers of the military organisation had escaped arrest. Podvoisky literally slipped through the fingers of his captors. Nevsky also managed to escape somehow. But a considerable number of the lower functionaries – Bolshevik officers and active workers in the regimental Party nuclei – were in the guardroom under arrest. Those of us who remained at liberty soon reestablished the broken contacts, and finally arranged a meeting at the house of a member of our organisation, Yagoda. This meeting resembled one of those "underground" meetings in the old prerevolutionary days. I remember how I went to the meeting carefully looking around, according to my old habit, to see if any spy was following me. Only when I had made sure that I was perfectly safe on this score did I risk turning into the doorway of the house I wanted.

How pleasant it was to meet old friends again after all we had gone through! It seemed as if years had elapsed since we had seen each other last, yet it was only a few days. I looked around. What a change! After the spacious rooms of the luxurious palace, after the crowd of soldiers and workers who had always surrounded us, we were once more in a small room seated around a table on which a samovar was singing merrily. The good old days of underground work had returned. But it would have been better if they had not.

Besides my old acquaintances Podvoisky, Nevsky, and Yagoda, I also saw a new face. This was an old Bolshevik, Dr. Kedrov, a relative of Podvoisky. He had been the president of the Soviet in some southeastern province, and had now come to work in Petrograd.

The chief question on the agenda was how to continue our work, legally or illegally. It was obvious that the present Circumstances differed greatly from those which had existed previously. At a time when some of our comrades were in prison and others in hiding; when even two of those attending the present meeting, Podvoisky and Nevsky, were wanted by the police, and I was awaiting trial, it would have been against all common sense to have our entire military organisation work openly. That would be playing into the hands of the Provisional Government. On the other hand, it was not advisable to engage in underground work exclusively. Not all our former positions had been captured. In case anything happened, we could always fall back on the masses of soldiers and workers who were devoted to us and would protect us.

We unanimously came to the conclusion that a combination method would work most satisfactorily. The main apparatus of the organisation would operate secretly, but at the same time we should continue our former mass work. In order to keep the leading ranks of our organisation under cover, we decided to use Party nicknames as we did at the time we were underground. Nevsky took

on the nickname "Spitz," Podvoisky became "Andrei Chervonny" and I was sufficiently concealed under my pseudonym Genevsky, as my documents were made out in the name of Ilyin.

One point we all agreed; to continue the publication of our paper legally. Our-newspaper must be available to the public at all costs. No sacrifice would deter us. Nevsky magnanimously took the risk of being attacked. "Let them break a couple of my ribs," he exclaimed, "they will heal up. But it will get the paper going again." We all agreed. It was decided that I should go out the next day with Podvoisky in search of a printing plant. On leaving, we shook hands for a long time. Who knew if we would ever see each other again?

The next day, Podvoisky and I started to look for a printing plant. There was no use calling at the big plants, as they would guess immediately who we were, and therefore we had to try second-rate plants. In our negotiations, we carefully avoided the word "Bolshevik," simply saying that the paper which we wanted to publish would be Social-Democratic. However, our ruse did not work. Apparently, a Bolshevik could be recognized from his outward appearance. We were found out everywhere, and everywhere received a polite refusal.

In one place, fortune seemed to smile on us. This was on the Vasilyevsky Island, in a dingy little print shop, of which I retain only the faint recollection of a tremendous number of icons hanging in every corner. The owner, unsophisticated when it came to fine points in politics, gave his permission to print the paper there. But when we arrived the next day, happy and exultant, to get out the first number, he abruptly refused. Evidently someone had tipped him off that we were "Bolsheviks." Later we found that in a number of cases, perhaps in this also, the militia had exerted pressure. Be that as it may, we were once more without a printing plant.

However, Bolshevik persistence and perseverance will overcome all difficulties. After many trials and tribulations, we finally secured a printing plant for our paper. This was the printing plant "Narod i Trud" on Gorokhovaya Street. Podvoisky had to conjure up all the tricks of his diplomatic art, in which he excels, in order to hold on to it. How cleverly and obsequiously he played up to the owner! A bystander might have thought that he was in love with him. In order to get in still more with the owner, a special supper party was arranged with plenty of liquor on the table, something very rare at that time. Comrade Nedrov actively assisted Podvoisky in getting up this supper. These efforts softened the heart of the owner, and we received permission to print our paper.

Roles were rapidly distributed. Podvoisky, Nevsky and I took charge of the editorial part of the work, while Kedrov and Yagod attended to the business end. Comrades Anda and Asia ¹⁰, two fine girls, ready for any sacrifice in their devotion to the Party, looked after the dispatch. My wife, Lydia Borisovna, again took on the proof-reading and correction of manuscripts.

A new feature of our editorial board was a fictitious "responsible editor," in imitation of the Bolshevik papers before the revolution. This was V. I. Narchuk, a working man. He did not work on

¹⁰ I later learned that Anda's surname was Dresdenstock; Asia's I never found out. I think she is dead by now.

the paper, but his name was used on every number, so that in case of repression, he alone could be held responsible in court and the real apparatus would be able to carry on its work all the same.

I remember the intense interest and excitement with which we worked on the first number of *the Worker and Soldier*, as we called our paper. Free Bolshevik propaganda reappeared. We recaptured our lost positions by storm. We tasted in advance the pleasure with which the workers and soldiers who sympathized with us, would see their genuine Bolshevik paper once more on sale by newsboys and on the book stalls. We were proudly aware of the fact that we had made a record for speed, getting in ahead of the C.C. and the Petrograd Committee of the Party. We had brought our *Soldiers' Pravda* back to life sooner than they had managed to resume publishing the *Pravda*.

As a matter of precaution, the paper did not show that it was the organ of the military organisation. It simply carried the heading "Russian Social – Democratic Labor Party. Proletarians of All Countries, Unite!" In the text itself, however, we did not conceal that we were Bolsheviks. In this connection, one of the employees of the printing plant prophesied that the next day we would be raided by some Cossack band or other.

The situation was dangerous indeed. The impression left by the July days had not yet died down. Quite recently, a solemn funeral of the Cossack "victims of the Bolshevik July mutiny" had taken place. Slanders, and the most outrageous calumnies of our cause were multiplying rapidly. Alexinsky was no longer satisfied with the detestable leaflets published by him. He began to publish a complete newspaper entitled *Enough Said*, in conjunction with a young writer by the name of Dobronravov. Its only aim was to throw mud at the Bolsheviks, in every number. This paper, for instance, printed some of the political telegrams of Lenin, evidently obtained from the secret service after they had become intermixed with the commercial correspondence of Hanecki and Parvus and called this evidence "convicting the Bolsheviks of espionage." All this had been jumbled together by some expert in this "art," in such a way as to cause the greatest confusion in the credulous minds of the respectable middle class. When a telegram from Hanecki to Parvus, dealing with a consignment of pencils, suddenly popped up among some political correspondence of Lenin with which it had no connection whatever, the simple-minded reader naturally began to reflect whether there was not some secret cipher concealed behind these pencils. This was all done by a very clever provocateur to discredit us.

Under such circumstances, an attack was more than likely. Often during the preparation of the paper, we glanced through the window into the long narrow courtyard leading in from the street, wondering whether some raiding party was not coming. But time passed, and no one came. We succeeded in publishing this and the following numbers of the paper.

Most diversified types of people came to our printing shop on business. Once a week a clergyman whose name, I think, was Galkin, came to publish a weekly called the *Free Church*. It was a strange sight – the wide sleeves of his priestly robes all a flutter amidst type and proofs. There were also Mensheviks who came to have this or that printed. The first time the Mensheviks came, we happened to be publishing Lenin's article on the district attorney's investigation into the events of

July 3-5. A Menshevik casually picked up a proof sheet of our paper and I ran it over with his eyes, but when he saw the signature of Lenin affixed to the article he was dumbfounded.

It must be mentioned here that some sensational newspaper had set the canard going that Lenin had gone "back to Germany," and other papers had joyfully pounced upon this choice bit of news. Many of the middle class and possibly the Mensheviks too believed this silly rumor. And here was this article by Lenin, which clearly showed that he was still in Petrograd watching events closely.

The Menshevik looked at me suspiciously and then said slowly, emphasizing every word, "Wouldn't it be interesting to know where Comrade Lenin is now!" "How pleased you would be if only Lenin were in your hands," thought I. When he had finished his work and went out, this Menshevik again looked at me attentively and once more, emphasizing every word, he said: "I would very much like to know where Comrade Lenin is now." It was clear that the thought of Lenin gave him no rest.

But we did not only meet enemies in the printing plant. A friend of ours, S. M. Uritsky, came once a week to get out his Mezhrayonets periodical called the *Internationalist*. Uritsky at that time was an organizer of the Mezhrayonets.¹¹ I well recall his short stocky figure set on crooked legs, gaining his table with a slight limp, adjusting his pince-nez every minute, his chubby hands clutching a batch of proof-sheets. He would climb on an exceedingly uncomfortable stool near the table. His head would sink between his shoulders and, armed with a pencil, he would begin to read and scrawl on the proofs which lay before him. His whole figure radiated warmth and comfort. Later, when I became better acquainted with him, I learnt to value his happy and frank nature, his simplicity and affability, especially to his comrades at work.

I did not lose contact with my regiment, the Reserve Chemical Battalion, while I worked on the paper, even after the July Days. Someone had seen me in the automobile with Eremeyev and the sailors, another busybody had heard that I was arrested in the Ptropavlov Fort. The officers decided not to drop the matter, but to expend their last efforts in the general campaign now being waged against the Bolsheviks, the more so as the regiment had already proved its unswerving "loyalty" to the Provisional Government. In short, I was put on trial by the officers of the battalion.

I vividly remember the session of the officers committee at which I, now a prisoner, was cross-examined. The faces of the officers were cold and stern. I could hardly believe that these were the same officers with whom I had served, and whom I had often met at officers meetings or at the tea table. The chairman who put the questions to me was the assistant commander of the battalion, Lieutenant. Nadezhdin. The others put questions only rarely. Without concealing anything, I again affirmed my membership in the Bolshevik Party, and related in detail my share in the July events. When I had finished, silence reigned for a while. Then Nadezhdin informed me that I was at liberty

¹¹ Mezhrayon: inter-district. The members of the so-called "Inter-District Organisation of United Social—Democrats," an organisation which was formed in St. Petersburg shortly before the war to unite the former Trotskyists, Plekhanovists, and the Bogdanov-Lunacharsky group. In 1917, this organisation united with the Bolshevik fraction of the R.S.D.L.P

to go, but that next morning at 10 o'clock I should come to him to find out the decision of the officers committee.

At the appointed hour, the decision was handed to me. I have the document to this day. It is torn in places and faded, but can easily be read. This exceedingly curious document, characteristic of the period, reads as follows: —

DECISION

of the Officers Committee of the Reserve Chemical Company, July 17, 1917.

PRESENT: Lieut. Nadezhdin, Staff Captain Voskresensky, Staff Captain Dimo, Sub-Lieut. Mikhailov, Ensign Babich and Lieut. Zhatkin. The examination questioning of Lieut. Ilyin, by the Officers Committee has established that Lieut. Ilyin —

- (1) Is in close Contact with the C.C. of the S.-D. Bolshevik organisation;
- (2) Is a contributor to, and member of, the editorial board, of the *Soldiers' Pravda*.
- (3) That on July 4, he, alleging that he was under the impression that the whole of the Petrograd garrison was taking action, proposed to the company committee, that the company should not trail along at the rear, but should immediately join the movement with arms in hand.
- (4) That Lieutenant Ilyin acted before his company on his own responsibility, because he had no official mandate, though he knew of the decision of the C.C. to assume the leadership of the movement.
- (5) On his own admission, Lieutenant Ilyin was at the head of the armed forces guarding Kshesinskaya's Palace and after wards taking shelter in the *Peter and Paul Fortress*.

In view of the above premises, and taking into consideration the unquestionable participation of Lieutenant Ilyin in an organisation whose work has resulted in the disintegration of the army, disaster at the front, and the death of thousands who had been misled and imposed upon, the Officers Committee instructs Lieutenant Ilyin to give himself up to the proper authorities, and the commander of the company is requested to prevent Lieutenant Ilyin from exerting any direct influence on the soldiers of the company.

(Signed) Adjutant of the Company,

SUB-LIEUT. KOSTYLEV.

When I had read this decision, Nadezhdin said, to me: "Now you have to go to the investigation commission." "Why?" I asked. "To be arrested." I could no longer restrain myself. "No," I said, "If you want to, arrest me and take me there, yourself, but I will not submit voluntarily to being arrested."

Nadezhdin began to assure me that it was in my own interest to go alone to the investigation commission, but I remained firm. We left each other, each sticking to his own opinion. He did not dare to arrest me, apparently fearing the rage of the soldiers. I soon obtained proof that there were

good grounds for this fear, and that the indignation of the soldiers in case of my arrest would have been great. First of all, the committee of the battalion as the elected organ of the soldiers, protested against the decision of the Officers Committee and demanded my return to the battalion. Then my name began to figure frequently on the list of candidates at all kinds of elections. Thus, I was elected president of the battalion court, then vice president of the battalion committee, and finally as member of the Petrograd Soviet for the regulars of the battalion. However, I shall speak of this later, and now return to my account of the events as they took place.

I escaped arrest. Apparently, my case came up at the investigation commission of the Provisional Government in connection with my arrest at the Fortress of St. Peter and Paul, but the circumstances were such that the Provisional Government found no time to deal with me.

However, a number of comrades at work were arrested, as I have already mentioned. Among those arrested were most of the Bolshevik officers. They were detained in the building of the Commandants Administration Building, at the corner of Sadovaya and Engineer Streets. Often as I walked along Engineer Street, I saw familiar faces looking through the grated windows – Dashkevich, Kudelko, Zanko, Ter-Arutyunyants and others. On seeing me they waved their hands and smiled. However, this imprisonment, though in company, was not at all to their liking. Time was passing, still they were all kept there without any definite charge being preferred against them. This at last stirred their wrath, and under the leadership of Nikolai Krylenko, who was arrested along with them, they declared a hunger strike, demanding their immediate release.

The news that our comrades were on hunger strike greatly disturbed us.

At the decision of the presidium of the military organisation, Podvoisky went to the Central Committee of our Party, to discuss together with them what steps could be taken, to lighten the fate of our arrested comrades. I was sent to the Commandants Administration Building, to the hunger strikers, to persuade them in the name of the military organisation to give up the hunger strike.

While in the tramcar, I carefully prepared myself for this extremely delicate mission. I knew that I would find them in a very nervous frame of mind, and would meet with great resistance. However, when I entered the room of the prisoners (the officials admitted me without trouble), I saw that most of the comrades were eating. It seemed that Comrade Ryazanov had been there shortly before me on behalf of the C.C. of the Party. He had persuaded the comrades to give up the hunger strike. Nevertheless, they were all nervous and excited. In my presence, Krylenko struck the table with his fist, and said in an excited tone, that they had been fools to give up the hunger strike. They did not know how long they would still be languishing there. The Provisional Government had not the slightest intention of releasing them.

I tried to calm them as best I could.

Two days later, the hunger strike and pressure on our part, began to bear fruit. The officers were released one by one. Soon there was not a single Bolshevik officer at the corner of Sadovaya and

Engineer Streets. We were of course very pleased. The strength of our organisation increased tremendously.

On July 25 the Sixth Party Congress, the first since the February Revolution, was held. The work of the editorial board was doubled, for our paper was the only paper in Petrograd. Temporarily, it had to assume the functions of central organ of the Party, and consequently at the moment it had to cover the Party Congress, keeping the Party masses informed of its work. The Congress began fairly successfully in the building of the Sampsoniev Brotherhood, on the Vyborg side of the Bolshoy Sampsoniev Prospekt.

There were numerous delegates and many greetings, but the absence of Lenin was felt from the very beginning. The table of the presidium looked orphaned without him. Involuntarily one recalled the recent All-Russian Conference. It seemed as if Lenin were sitting there in his characteristic posture listening to the speech of a delegate. His whole body registered his earnest attention – his head outstretched and slightly bent, his hand held to his ear so as to hear better, all his eyes sparkling with pleasure and shrewdness. But it only seemed so. Lenin was far away in hiding. The chief leaders of the congress were Stalin and Sverdlov. Especially picturesque was the figure of Sverdlov, who filled every corner of the vast hall with his thunderous voice. It was about this time that Demyan Byedny wrote this humorous rhyme, not intended for publication:

Our Yakob has everything,
Both hair and voice.
In his pocket a ready resolution,
“Long live the world revolution.”

At the congress there were representatives of the intersectional organisations, who met jointly with us. Their leaders were elected to the presidium, and Yurenev immediately took his place at the chairman’s table. Trotsky, in prison, was retained on the honorary presidium.

A full description of the work of the congress may be found- in the minutes published in 1919. Here I shall only refer to a few particularly moving scenes at the congress. I remember the wave of enthusiasm which swept the congress, when the chairman announced that one of the leaders of the Menshevik Internationalists, Comrade Larin, wished to greet the congress.

Accompanied by thunders of applause, Larin slowly moved through the ranks of the delegates to the speakers platform, hardly able to use his paralyzed legs, his whole-body twitching. The nearer he came, the louder the applause. When he took his place on the platform it could be seen how pale he was. He was excited and spoke with great spirit. He stated at once that he welcomed the congress on behalf of that wing of the Menshevik-Internationalists which had inscribed on its banner the slogan “Immediate break with the war – mongers.” (Loud applause.) “Further, he said that the time had come, when all internationalists, both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, must unite. “I know,” he

continued, "that soon the leader of the Menshevik-Internationalists, Comrade Martov, will come to your congress and speak officially."

It is difficult to describe the scene at the congress when he had spoken these words. To get an inkling of it, it is necessary to bear in mind, the lies and slanders which were being hurled " against the Party at that time. At such a moment, any expression of sympathy was very welcome.

It looked as if Martov and all that was alive and talented in the ranks of the Menshevik fraction, would come back and form one united Social-Democratic Party. However, our joy was premature. Martov did not come to the congress, but sent a letter of greeting much more subdued in tone than Larins speech. Later on, he did not show any special desire to join with the Bolsheviki. Therefore, Latin and a group of like-minded comrades were compelled later to quit the Menshevik-Internationalist ranks and join us as individual members.

During the first days of the congress the sessions were quite legal. We printed all the announcements of the congress openly in our paper, showing the address to which the delegates must go. But we nevertheless observed some degree of caution. For instance, Podvoisky reported on the work of the military organisation under the name of "Comrade Nikolai." After giving his report, he immediately disappeared from the hall.

Later, it was found advisable to put the whole congress on an illegal footing, and therefore, the last sessions were transferred to Narva Gate, 23 Novosikovskaya Street, the premises of the local Party Committee. There the congress completed its work. Reports on the work of the congress were prepared for newspaper publication by Comrade Stalin, who wrote them out during the sessions on narrow strips of paper and handed them to me for publication.

After the congress, my duty was to keep in contact with Comrade Stalin and the secretary of the Central Committee, as I had done before. At that time the C.C. was functioning in a semi-legal manner in a flat on the second or third story at the corner of Bolshaya Moskovskaya and Rasezheya Street. I went there almost every day for articles for the paper, and often found a peaceful family gathering seated around a table and drinking tea. A huge samovar was comfortably hissing on the table. Comrade V. R. Menzhenzinskaya with a towel over her shoulder was washing glasses, wiping them dry and pouring out tea for the newly arrived comrades. Usually I also yielded to temptation, and on the invitation of the attractive Vera Rudolphovna, I had a glass or two of the hot tea.

When we received articles from the Central Committee of the Party, we passed them through the editorial apparatus, the same as all the other articles. We never forgot for a minute that, although our paper was for special reasons fulfilling the functions of the central organ of the Party, for the time being it was nevertheless a mass soldiers and peasants paper in aim and in circulation. Thus, we continued to cut out of the articles any word or phrase which would not be understood by the soldiers, especially foreign words. This gave rise to occasional friction with individual members of the Central Committee.

At the beginning of August, the Provisional Government forced our paper to suspend because of a particularly incendiary article. Evidently, the owner of the printing works received an unmistakable tip to clear us out, for he told us that to his great regret he could not continue to print our paper, even under another name, as we proposed doing. In addition, our poor "responsible editor," Comrade Narchuk, had to appear before the City Governor to answer for his crime — the publication of seditious matter — while Podvoisky and I set out again in search of a printing plant.

This time, our task was much easier. We soon came to terms with the printing plant of the Vasily Ostrov District Soviet (formerly Schacht) at 17 Tuchkova Road, where our paper was reborn under the name of the *Soldier*.

By the middle of August, our Party printing plant "Trud," which had been wrecked during the July Days, was put in to shape, and the C.C. of the Party, began to publish its own central organ, the *Proletarian*.

At this time, Podvoisky began to come less often to the paper. He was kept busy by the constantly increasing work of the sections, and the military organisation. I had to carry on the paper almost alone. Luckily, this period did not last long, and I received the necessary support. V. R. Mezvinsky, a brother of Vera Rudolphovna, who had just returned from France; a political exile, joined the staff of the paper.

The influence of the paper grew step by step, its circulation rose, and soon we found it advisable to return to our old printing plant "Narod and Trud." We were so strong that the owner of the plant who had recently turned us out, now pleaded to have us come back. For some time, we got up the paper as before at the Vasily Ostrov Soviet printing plant, and used carts to rush the made — up galleys to the "Narod and Trud" shop to be printed. Later we transferred everything to this plant. This period of our papers existence I remember only hazily, as I gradually began to drop newspaper work. I was drawn more and more into the work off Reserve Chemical Battalion.

After my trial by the Officers Committee, I received orders from the commander not to visit the battalion barracks for some time. Once a soldier brought to my house an extract from the minutes of the committee of the unit, protesting against my trial and restricted freedom. Another time, a soldier brought in the result of the election for the battalion court, showing that I was elected president of the court in place of Lieutenant Rickman who had previously held this position, and was now ill. "Tomorrow, you must appear at a session of the court," said the soldier who brought the decision. "And wont the commander arrest me if I come to the battalion in violation of his strict orders?" I asked. I was anxious to see what the soldier would answer. He did not hesitate an instant. "Don't worry about that," he said. "Well know how to protect you." Thus, without warrant and obeying only the desire of the soldiers, I returned to the battalion and set about my work.

In conjunction with my work in the battalion court, I took to giving popular lectures to the soldiers on the history of the revolutionary movement in Russia. These were very, successful.

Gradually our unit became more revolutionary. This may largely be ascribed to the circumstance that the battalion was reinforced by a number of factory workers with a definite Bolshevik outlook. The Kornilov mutiny was the turning point for the soldiers. The officers could not conceal their sympathy with Kornilov, and so they were completely discredited in the eyes of the soldiers, who now saw clearly that they were harboring in their midst, an enemy who was stealthily gathering his forces, ready to act at the first favorable moment to restore the old order.

After the Kornilov mutiny, a new period in the life of our battalion commenced. At the first general meeting called in connection with the Kornilov mutiny, I was elected chairman. In the ensuing discussion, one of the local Menshevik leaders spoke against me. He was a popular demagogue, and had previously enjoyed great influence. Now his speech fell flat. In order to assure the passing of the resolution which I introduced; I purposely drew it up in moderate language. However, the soldiers themselves offered amendments which put teeth into the resolution. In these amendments, the soldiers demanded the release of the arrested Bolsheviks, the cessation of the campaign of slander against Lenin and Zinoviev, the reinstatement of the *Soldiers' Pravda* and many other things. With the greatest of pleasure I put each of these amendments to a vote and they were unanimously passed by the meeting amidst roaring applause. This was the first definitely Bolshevik resolution passed by a general meeting of the soldiers of our battalion.

Such a change in the mood of the soldiers, seriously alarmed the commanders of the battalion. At the next meeting, the assistant commander himself, Nadezhdin, deigned to be present. He was a splendid orator, sly and cunning, and made use of all his powers of persuasion to change the mood of the soldiers to his point of view, but in vain. As on the previous occasion, an out-and-out Bolshevik resolution was passed.

On September 14, the so-called "Democratic Conference" opened in Petrograd. At this conference the question of power was to be raised once more (how many times did this make?). As Petrograd was still represented in the Soviet by a Menshevik S.R. delegation which no longer reflected the opinion of the broad masses, a mass attack on the Democratic Conference by delegations from the Petrograd workshops, factories and military units was organized by our Party, under the leadership of the Central Committee.

In the committee of our battalion a resolution was once more adopted demanding that power be transferred into the hands of the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies; I was elected to move this resolution at the plenum of the Democratic Conference.

I well remember how the vestibule of the Alexandrinsky Theatre was filled to overflowing with delegations of Petrograd workers and soldiers. The air was stifling and filled with tobacco smoke. There was excitement everywhere. We demanded leave to read our resolution at the plenum. The guard would not consent to let us in; we grew more excited and boisterous. At last, there appeared a sort of counter delegation a group of leaders of the Democratic Conference, empowered to talk with us. At its head was the mayor of Moscow, the S.R., Rudnev. He frowned at us, his square forehead thrust forward. It gave the impression that he wanted to crash through a wall, head first.

Endeavoring to speak quietly, he explained to us that we could not be allowed to address the conference, as we were already represented there by the delegation of the Petrograd Soviet. We answered that Chkheidze and the Liber-Dan clique did not represent our point of view, and we demanded that power be placed in the hands of the Soviets. Rudnev could no longer contain himself. His face was flushed, and in an angry voice he repeated that he could not admit us to the conference. He then quickly withdrew together with his staff. We were left outside empty-handed.

An improvised meeting was immediately organized. Comrade Bubnov popped up from somewhere. He told us not to disperse, but to prepare a resolution of protest against the refusal to admit us to the Democratic Conference. His proposition was unanimously adopted.

New speeches were made in connection with the wording of the resolution. I glanced about me. A small group of the recently formed Socialist League of Youth attracted great attention. They were disputing vociferously. The most lively and outspoken of all of them, was a well-shaped, rosy cheeked, blue-eyed girl, Liza Pilayeva, whom I had met by chance in the Vyborg District Party Committee. Unable to control her stormy temperament, she suddenly jumped on to a chair, faced her comrades, and in a ringing girlish voice delivered a speech on behalf of the Socialist League of Young Workers.

Her comrades were evidently taken aback by this sudden outburst, and energetically tugged at her dress. When she got off the chair, they crowded around her from all sides: "You idiot! Poking your nose into everything! We must act in an organized way." "You did not say one tenth of what should have been said." Pilayeva, flushed with excitement, confusedly tried to justify herself. As I looked on this scene, I involuntarily smiled. At last, the resolution was ready. We signed it in the name of our respective regiments and factories, and then departed.

The growth of the Bolshevik spirit in our battalion as well. as in many other Petrograd regiments led to new elections of delegates to the Petrograd Soviet. They began to elect Bolsheviks in the place of the Mensheviks and S.R.s. Soon elections were announced for our battalion. Our Bolshevik nucleus decided to put me up as a candidate.

My task was made easier by the circumstance that the present incumbent, a Menshevik named Usenko, who had been elected during the first days of the February Revolution and had even got into the Executive Committee of the Soviet, had hardly ever appeared before the battalion since then, and had never submitted a report to his electors. He did not even come for the meeting at which the new election was held. On this ground one of his party comrades tried to break up the election, proposing to postpone them to another day. But the Bolsheviks protested strongly and as a result, I was elected to the Soviet by an overwhelming majority.

Next day I went with the minutes of this meeting to the mandate commission of the Petrograd Soviet, sitting at the Smolny Institute. "Are you elected in place of Comrade Usenko?" asked the chairman of the mandate commission. "He is here now. Come along." We went into a room, and there I saw Usenko working at a table near the window. He saw us, and, as if anticipating something unusual, he rose to meet us. "You have been unseated," said the chairman of the mandate

commission regretfully, shaking hands with him, and showing him the minutes of the meeting which I had brought. Comrade Usenko read them in silence. Then without a word he unbuttoned his coat, took out his mandate and presented it to the chairman of the mandate commission. There was one Menshevik less in the Petrograd Soviet.

Work in the Petrograd Soviet piled me up with many new duties. Besides attending the general meetings of the Soviet and its military section, I had to enter the Section Soviet on the Petrograd side, where my unit was stationed. There the chairman of the Soviet, Comrade Skorokhodov, a Bolshevik, initiated me into inside Soviet work. Here, together with Comrade Prokhorov, a Bolshevik worker, I was elected as representative to guide the sectional organisation of the Socialist League of Youth,¹² and also secretary of the disputes commission of the Soviet. The latter work was particularly interesting.

The business of the commission was to decide disputes between workers and their employers in the district. This disputes commission was a genuinely revolutionary organ, enforcing its will without much regard for the technicalities of the law. We were not regularly vested with any authority whatever, but the prestige of the Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Delegates was so great that all our decisions were unhesitatingly accepted not only by the workers but, strange to say, even by the employers.

In every case, the appearance of a representative of our disputes commission settled every dispute. Improperly dismissed servants were taken back, workers who had been cheated on dismissal, received their wages in full, etc. This enhanced the authority of the disputes commission and of the section Soviet still more.

When I, as secretary of the disputes commission, opened the office at a certain hour, I often found myself besieged on all sides by men and women workers seeking relief. By the time the disputes commission met, cases had accumulated, so that when they were allotted, every member had several addresses to which to go.

Though I was working hard in the section and central Soviets, I did not lose contact with the paper, with which I continued to work, nor with my battalion. I strove to maintain especially close contact with the soldiers of the battalion who had elected me to the Soviet. In order to emphasize more clearly the difference between the previous Menshevik delegate and myself, a Bolshevik, I reported in detail to my electors after each session of the Soviet, and I pointed out for which propositions I had voted, together with the Bolshevik fraction of the Soviet. They paid close attention to my reports and displayed great interest in what was going on.

The stormy days of October were now approaching. The Provisional Government had definitely proved its inability to rule the country under present conditions. Cabinet after cabinet was formed, but nothing practical came of them. In the provinces the temper of the crowds was the same before the July Days, but now the masses were more cautious. "We shall not start anything with our

¹² At that time the Socialist League of Youth was still organized according to district soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies.

bare hands as we did then," could be heard here and there. "We must get everything ready in advance. Preparations went on at full speed. Military units and factories were sounded as to their stand. Arms were examined. The preparations went on so openly that even our enemies were fully aware of them. Literally every number of the bourgeois papers shrieked about the Bolshevik preparations for an attack. Even an approximate date was mentioned — October 25. Nevertheless, they could not put a stop to these preparations.

The Northern Congress of Soviets, which took place on October 10 played an important part in organizing the forces of the revolution.

I was among the fifteen Bolsheviks delegated to this congress from the Petrograd Soviet, and I took part in its work to the very end. For the first time, the Bolsheviks dominated a congress without serious opposition.

The congress showed that Petrograd was surrounded by a steel ring of Bolshevik Soviets, which could come to its assistance in case of need. The situation was very favorable for an uprising. This greatly raised our spirits, and gave free rein to our hopes. A member of the C.E.C. of the Mensheviks, Bogdanov, who sounded a solemn warning, was hissed, and laughed off the platform.

At the congress and especially in our fraction at the congress, the seizure of power by, the Soviets in the near future was definitely debated. The principal question was how to carry out this seizure with the least debility and damage. Some of the provincial delegates proposed to carry out the seizure in their localities first, so as to make the revolution in Petrograd more assured. However, no definite decision was reached in this respect. Only a bureau of several comrades, chiefly military men, were designated to prepare and in case of need, to execute the coup état. I remember that this bureau comprised Comrade Krylenko, Antonov, Dybenko, and others, including my brother Raskolnikov, in spite of the fact that he was in prison at that time.

The Bolshevik fraction of the Petrograd Soviet also feverishly prepared for the forthcoming action. I remember a strictly secret meeting of our fraction together with regimental and factory Party representatives under the chairmanship of Comrade Lashevich. In spite of the very cautious and sober estimate given by the representatives of the temper of their units, it was evident that the moment for action had arrived and that the masses were impatiently waiting for it. At the end of the meeting, when the general feeling of the workers and soldiers of Petrograd had been sufficiently portrayed, one of the delegates could not restrain himself, and put the direct question to the chairman, Comrade Lashevich: "On what date will a general move be made?" Comrade Lashevich smiled slightly, allowed a minute to pass in silence, and then replied firmly, emphasizing each word, "You will be informed in good time."

The last days of the month of October drew near. I was wanted everywhere, and managed to attend five or six meetings a day. Podvoisky also practically never came near the newspaper anymore, as he attended those innumerable meetings at Smolny. I could tell by his face that the long-awaited moment was approaching. He glowed with excitement and happiness. "Do you want to be a general?" he suddenly asked me one time with shining eyes. Another time he said to my wife, "Do

you want to die for the revolution? You will transmit orders during the street fighting.” Once he cornered me in passing. It was in the premises of the 1st Sectional Soviet. Drawing me unobserved to one side, he asked who, in my opinion, was suited to be supreme commander of our armed forces, Dsvaltovsky, Krylenko or Rashkolnikov. I answered that in my opinion, Dsvaltovsky was out of question, as we knew him too little. My brother, by an unkind trick of fate, had caught influenza and was home in bed. So there remained only one of the three candidates — Krylenko, in his favor was the additional fact that he was an officer who had seen fighting at the front. Podvoisky agreed with me and we parted.

At last, on October 21; when I was on duty in the Reserve Chemical Battalion, Comrade Anda came to me with the following mandate from Podovoisky: —

Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet of
Workers and Soldiers Deputies.

CERTIFICATE

Military Dept.
October 21, 1917.
No. 1099.

Comrade Lieutenant A. F. Ilyin is hereby
delegated by the Military Revolutionary
Committee of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers
and Soldiers Deputies to be Commissar in the
Chemical Battalion. (per)
Chairman: G SUKHARKOV
Secretary: ANTONOV

Attached to the mandate was the following note:

“Alexander Fyodorovich,

“Nikolai Ilyich has asked that you come at once to the Smolny Institute. I am sending you your mandate in any event. You have been appointed commissar of your company. You can get Nikolai Ilyich on the telephone by calling 148-11; information and contacts are to be sent to Liteini, Smolny Institute.

“With comradely greetings, Anda.

“Please take note.

“Not a single decision is to be made, or order given to the company without your knowledge. Tell the comrades not to make a single movement without the sanction of the Petrograd Soviet. Nikolai Ilyich will tell you more.

Involuntarily I leapt from my seat. I understood that things were about to happen. We were passing from words to deeds.

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

When I had received my mandate, I first of all went to the soldiers to inform them of my appointment, and to give my first orders as commissar. In all companies, I called the soldiers

together, and after a short report on current events, I explained the meaning and purpose of my appointment. I pointed out that the counterrevolution, concentrated around the Provisional Government, was mobilizing all its forces, and therefore the Petrograd Soviet needed the support of the workers and soldiers who had elected it, more than ever before. "The situation is extremely critical," I said. "The question may arise: Who shall rule? Shall it be the Provisional Government or the Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies? Therefore, the regiments of the, Petrograd garrison must be ready to come out at any moment with armed force in defense of their elected assembly."

The soldiers welcomed my words with loud applause, and when, in conclusion, I stated that henceforth not a single order of the commander of the battalion must be obeyed by the soldiers without my sanction, they unanimously agreed to take instructions only from me. The attitude of the soldiers was intelligent and revolutionary. I remember in one company, when I had finished my statement, one of the soldiers gave vent to his genuine delight by shouting: "This is what we needed long ago."

Having thus warned all the companies, and knowing that I had the support of the soldiers, I decided to inform the commander of the battalion of my appointment without losing time, I went to the headquarters of the battalion, which was detached from the barracks in which the soldiers lived. The commander of the battalion, Colonel Martyushov, was not in his office, and I was received by Nadezhdin, his assistant. He listened to my statement and read the mandate. Then fixing his cold steely eyes on me, he replied in an un-ruffled voice: "We recognize orders and appointments only when proceeding from the staff of the Petrograd Military District. You, as an officer, ought to know that."

I flew into a passion. "Very well," said I, "Just try to act without my approval. But remember, not a single order will be obeyed by the soldiers unless I countersign it." Nadezhdin's eyes flashed fire for a moment, but he controlled himself, shrugged his shoulders and said: "All right then, I will report your words to the commander. But I don't mind telling you that you are playing a dangerous game." I bowed and left without answering.

I had to hurry to Smolny, where I was to receive further instructions from Podvoisky. I quickly covered the distance by tramcar, and ran up to the third story, where the military section of the Petrograd Soviet had previously worked in small rooms, and where the Military Revolutionary Committee was now quartered.

Here everything was in a state of turmoil. Every minute, people were coming and going with instructions. Almost at the door, I ran into our Party worker, Lieutenant Tarasov-Rodionov of the Machine Gun Regiment. He went into the room of the Military Revolutionary Committee along with me, and related a very curious story. It seemed that the Petrograd Military District Headquarters, had decided to place a machine gun detachment on the roof for their own defense, and had appointed Tarasov-Rodionov in command of it. Of course, they had no idea that he was a Bolshevik, and an active member of the Bolshevik Party at that. The result was a ludicrous mix-up Bolshevik defending the headquarters of the Petrograd Military District from the Bolshevik danger. Tarasov – Rodionov

had come to the Military Revolutionary Committee, to ask for instructions under the circumstances. Should he decline the appointment, or accept it to turn it to advantage in the interests of the Military Revolutionary Committee? As far as I remember, he was instructed along the lines of the latter alternative, namely, to form a detachment of the most reliable Bolsheviks so that he would be able to strike at the rear of the troops of the Provisional Government when the right moment arrived.

I listened with great interest to the discussion of these instructions, and then went into the next room to look for Podvoisky. I found him talking with some lieutenant whom I did not know. "Ah! Just the man I want," exclaimed Comrade Podvoisky with pleasure when he saw me. "Go to the Grenadier Regiment. We have no commissar there yet." "But I have only just been appointed commissar of the Reserve Chemical Battalion, Nikolai Ilyich," I reminded him. "That doesn't matter. You can run both jobs," he answered.

"Both of these units are stationed on the Petrograd side, not far from one another. Bear in mind that this is a very responsible position. The Grenadiers took a very active part in July and were severely disciplined for this by the Provisional Government. They were in rather low spirits. However, it is very important to keep this regiment lined up on our side." The officer who was talking to Podvoisky before me was now introduced as Lieutenant Nikonov of the Grenadier Regiment, and he also he began to beg of me to accept the appointment. "I myself cannot be the commissar of my regiment," he said, "because, although I am Bolshevik now, I became one not long ago. Before the July Days, I was an active opponent of Bolshevism, and the whole regiment knows it."

I no longer objected to receiving the new appointment, and in a few minutes, Podvoisky handed me the following mandate:

Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet of
Workers and Soldiers Deputies.

CERTIFICATE

Military Dept.
October 22, 1917.
No. 1169.

Comrade Lieutenant Ilyin is hereby appointed
Commissar of the Military Revolutionary
Committee of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers
and Soldiers Deputies in the Regiment of the
Grenadier Guards

President: B. LAZIMIR

For the Secretary: N. PODVOISKY

I received the necessary instructions from Podvoisky, and promised to keep in constant touch with him by telephone. Then, accompanied by Nikonov, I went to the Reserve Grenadier Regiment to take up my duties.

Here I found a peculiar state of affairs. First of all, the commander of the regiment, Colonel Koronev, had been shorn of all authority, and all business was transacted by the regimental committee, which consisted almost entirely of Left S.R.s. The Left S.R. Party had just been formed at

about that time, and although friendly to-us, it was a very dubious asset. So, it was here. The members of the regimental committee received me with exaggerated politeness, and confirmed my appointment at a special meeting of the committee; but I saw how they were hemming and hawing and I realised that I could not rely too much on these "friends." They were friends only up to a certain point.

I received a very different welcome from the soldiers, whom I called together immediately after the committee had confirmed my appointment. Here I submitted a lengthy report on the present political situation, and from the start I could feel mutual bonds of trust and confidence springing up between me and my audience. My speech was often interrupted with shouts of "Quite right!" When I had finished, I offered up a resolution voicing the readiness of the Grenadiers to defend the Petrograd Soviet. A forest of horny hands was raised in support of it.

Being convinced that I would be fully supported by the soldiers of the Grenadier Regiment, I went back to the Reserve Chemical Battalion to inform them of my new appointment. On the way, I thought things over, and decided that it would be most advisable to make the Grenadier Regiment my base of operations, as this was more important as a fighting unit, and at the same time keeping in touch with the Chemical Battalion by telephone and visiting it only time to time.

When I arrived at the battalion, I called a meeting of the leaders of the Bolshevik nucleus, and informed them of the political situation and of my immediate intentions. The comrades welcomed my appointment to the Grenadiers, considering a contact with such a big military unit most useful for our battalion, which was weak in weapons. They also approved of my intention to set up my base with the Grenadiers. It was found expedient to submit to the Battalion Committee the appointment of a special group of three persons who would act as my deputies during my absence from the battalion. When I had made these arrangements, I returned to the Grenadier Regiment.

Together with Nikonov I decided not to leave the regiment, and to put up in the wing of the machine gunners, where we found two spare beds. Before lying down to sleep, we made the round of the barracks, so as to become better acquainted with the soldiers and their disposition. In one place, at the request of the soldiers, we held a sort of informal meeting, telling the soldiers how the Bolshevik Party worked and what it was aiming for. The soldiers met us everywhere in a friendly way. Once more I felt that I could be quite easy about them. It is true that they were not over-anxious to fight, but the impression remained that in case of need, this solid mass of soldiers would support us to a man.

When we went to sleep, we did not dare to undress and merely took off our boots, so that we would be ready for action at the first alarm.

The next day, I rang up Podovoisky early in the morning to find out how things were and if there were any new instructions. He told me that an open clash with the Provisional Government was impending. The Provisional Government had withdrawn its loyal regiments around it and would doubtless make an attempt to disperse the Petrograd Soviet. We must therefore be on the "qui-vive"

all the time and ready for instant action. When I heard this, I immediately sent the following orders to the Reserve Chemical Battalion: —

“To the Battalion Committee and all Company Committees.

“The Petrograd Soviet is in danger. I instruct you to draw up an accurate list, of all those capable of acting in defense of the Petrograd Soviet.

“Commissar of the Reserve Chemical Battalion,

“LIEUTENANT ILYIN.”

In reply to this order, I received the following communication, which I still have in my files: —

“Comrade Commissar,

“From the Reserve Chemical Battalion.

“According to the decision of the Battalion Committee, a temporary central body of three has been elected, Ermakov, Rogatkin, and Chizhevsky. We have already taken the necessary steps. Weapons are in good order; 400 men available. Your orders will be carried out. Nothing more to report. Let us know. what happens.

“Committee Member on duty, Ermakov.”

I gave the same orders to the Grenadier Regiment, and ascertained that its strength was 1,900 soldiers, but 600 of them were non-combatants and 300 were on guard duty, so that if called on, the regiment could muster about 1,000 men. Nevertheless, this was quite an impressive military array. The supply of arms and ammunition was also satisfactory. We had sufficient rifles and cartridges. To make sure I noted the exact figures in my memorandum book.

I had just about finished taking stock when a soldier came running in and reported that the Provisional Government was raising the bridges. I jumped to my feet. Immediately the July Days flashed before my mind, when the Provisional Government had likewise commenced its attack against us, by raising the bridges. This procedure bore all the evidence of the first act in a grand attempt on the part of the Provisional Government to annihilate us. Would the Provisional Government win again? No, the relationship of forces was not the same now. The whole of the Petrograd garrison was with us to a man. We ourselves only needed to be more determined. And the first thing was to countermand the raising of the bridges. I immediately formed two patrols of soldiers and sent one each to the Grenadier Bridge and the Sampsoniev Bridge with strict instructions to have the bridges lowered again, no matter what happened. “If there is any resistance, use your arms,” I said as they left.

A few minutes later, one of the patrols returned, dragging I some heavy objects along the street. “Comrade Commissar,” the man in charge reported to me. “We have lowered the bridge, and to make sure that it will stay down, we brought part of the mechanism for raising and lowering the bridges. Now they can’t raise it.”

The old watchman of the bridge had just caught up to the patrol, panting and cursing, and was grumbling because the soldiers had taken away the instruments entrusted to his care. "Don't worry, old man," I said to him consolingly. "The implements will be quite safe with us. We will put them here in the regimental room, and in two or three days, when all is quiet again, we will give them back to you." "Well, but – all right," muttered the old watchman, and glancing at the implements again, went off. I gave orders to the other patrol to do the same thing with the adjusting mechanism of the second bridge, and soon the room of the regimental committee had one corner full of cumbrous machine parts.

I had hardly stowed away these bridge locks when Podvoisky rang me up. "Are they raising the bridges over there?" he asked. I told him what had happened and what I had done. "Fine," he answered. "Don't let the bridges be raised under any circumstances. I am giving the same instructions to all the regiments. Every bridge will be entrusted to the nearest regiment. The Grenadiers will look after the Sampsoniev Bridge and the Grenadier Bridge, Fortress of *St. Peter and Paul* will attend to the Troitsky Bridge, and the Reserve Chemical Battalion will be responsible for the Tuchkov Bridge. On receiving these instructions, I immediately issued an order to, the Reserve Chemical Battalion to see to it that the Tuchkov Bridge was not raised.

The episode of the bridges is worthy of note as it was the first time that we had acted as an organized military force, opposing the Provisional Government. The Government had given orders, and we, on our own authority, relying on armed force, had cancelled these orders and superimposed our own. This step brought matters to a head and the fight against the Provisional Government was on. We might now expect a counter attack. It was very probable that it would attempt to move those units which were still loyal to it against us. Not to be caught napping, I determined to reconnoiter the Petrograd side. I sent patrols to all the streets nearby with orders to inform me immediately if anything suspicious were observed.

The information which came in from all sides, fully confirmed my apprehensions. The Provisional Government had rallied its loyal regiments around itself. First of all, there were the military academies. We must block their plans at all costs. We must prevent the concentration of troops at the headquarters of the Petrograd Military District. I was now confronted with a perfectly clear and unmistakable duty – to keep a steady eye on the Pavlovsk and Vladimir Military Academies, which happened to be located between the Reserve Chemical Battalion and the Grenadier Regiment. I assigned most of the observation duty to the Chemical Battalion, it being nearer. Observation of the Pavlovsk Military Academy was rendered easier by the fact that besides holding cadets, there was a detachment of soldiers there who were not numerically strong, but were revolutionary in the highest degree. The first thing I did was to establish the closest contact with this detachment, which made it possible for me to know all that was going on inside the walls of the academy.

On the evening of October 23, a soldier from this detachment came rushing to me, all out of breath, and excitedly informed me that the Pavlov Military Academy has received orders from the

Provisional Government to march in full force to Dvortsovaya Square, and that the cadets were preparing to move.

I immediately decided to investigate the situation on the spot., and, taking two members of the regimental committee with me, Lieutenant Gan and another soldier, both Left S.R.s, I went to the Pavlovsk Military Academy.

As we drove up to the academy, I saw groups of soldiers armed to the teeth. At one spot, right in the middle of the street, stood a machine gun. In the darkness of the autumn evening, lighted by the bright gas lamps, the picture was strange and sinister.

When I got very close, I saw that they were the soldiers of the Chemical Battalion. They welcomed me with joy and stated that they were standing guard at the Pavlovsk Academy, ready to fight if the cadets should think of moving to the support of the Provisional Government. Their faces beamed with courage and determination.

My spirits rose as I talked to the soldiers of the Chemical Battalion. I was astonished at their revolutionary initiative and responsiveness. Actually, I had instructed them only to keep an eye on the military academy. I myself had only just heard of the intentions of the Pavlovsk Military Academy, and I had not had time to give the Chemicals any orders. Nevertheless, they themselves understood what they had to do, and with their small forces they heroically besieged the academy, ready to die at their revolutionary posts.

With such soldiers one could venture far.

I left the Chemical Battalion and went to the Pavlovsk Military Academy. In the quarters of the soldiers' detachment there was great excitement. The small room, brightly lit by a small electric lamp suspended from the ceiling, was jammed with soldiers talking loudly to one another. The chairman of the committee, a clever and energetic man, soon posted me on the events which were taking place in the academy.

It seems that on receiving the command of the Provisional Government to march to the Dvortsovaya Square, the cadets were ready to go, but the detachment of soldiers in the academy stated peremptorily, that it would not permit this step, and would offer armed resistance. Together with detachments of the Red Guard of the Ducat factory and the Chemical Battalion, they had surrounded the academy, mounting machine guns, so as to command every exit, and preparing, in spite of their small numbers, to offer the most heroic resistance to the cadets.

The chairman of the committee showed me a plan of the location of the detachments and the machine guns, roughly, sketched on a scrap of paper. Everything attested their good common sense and organizing ability. On the faces of the leaders of this small group of daredevils, who were opposing the whole of the military academy, I could read boldness, courage and determination. "We will not let the cadets march," the soldier chairman of the committee assured me earnestly. "We would all rather die."

I promised him the fullest support both of the Chemical Battalion and of the Grenadiers.

When I heard that a session of the academy committee was in progress at the moment and that the question of whether to march or not was being discussed, I immediately hurried there, accompanied by my two comrades. Our appearance in the hall of the meeting aroused some stir. Everyone looked at us with astonishment, not knowing who we were or why we had come. An officer, a member of the Menshevik Central Executive Committee of the Soviets which was seeing its last days, had been specially sent to address this meeting. He insisted on the immediate execution of the orders of the Provisional Government. But when he saw that the meeting was not at all unanimous in supporting him, he proposed a compromise resolution to the effect that the committee of the Pavlovsk Military Academy considered it inadvisable under the present circumstances for the cadets to take to the streets, but if the Provisional Government insisted and repeated its orders to march, the Pavlovsk Academy would immediately comply.

When he had finished, I asked for the floor. The chairman of the meeting, who had meanwhile enquired and learned that I was representative of the Grenadier Regiment, put the questions to a vote whether I should be allowed to speak or not. Permission was granted.

I was very excited, as I knew that if I could not convince them with words, I would literally have to fight it out with them. I told them this directly and without mincing words as soon as I began to speak. I said that we were now faced with the danger of civil war, and if they matched that would constitute the first open hostile act. The Grenadier Regiment was ready. We could not allow the cadets to go into the streets, and we would not allow it.

My comrades of the Grenadier Regiment spoke after me. They pointed out that the whole Petrograd garrison had definitely decided not to march at the command of the Provisional Government, and the march of the cadets would be a confusing, unfriendly act, and would put the cadets in a class by themselves, opposed to the other units.

After our speeches, the question was almost immediately put to a vote. The result was very characteristic of the vacillation and indecision of the cadets. Three voted for marching, five against, and 18 abstained. An attempt was made to take a new vote, but the result was about the same. It was then decided to consider the vote final.

On closing the meeting, the chairman proposed to welcome the Grenadier comrades on behalf of the Pavlovsk Military Academy. This proposal received only halfhearted support.

On leaving, I advised the soldiers of the detachment at the academy to maintain contact with the adjacent Chemical Battalion, and I instructed the committee of the latter, to keep the academy under constant surveillance and to be in readiness to assist the detachment of soldiers there, if required. This contact was maintained and played its role in the events which followed.

On the next day, October 24, the situation was becoming crystallized. Only an insignificant number of cadets, and soldiers of various units had answered the call of the Provisional Government.

It was as plain as a pikestaff that the whole of the Petrograd garrison was on the side of the Petrograd Soviet.

A tabulation of the information received from all quarters showed the following picture of the troops who had come to the Winter Palace to defend the Provisional Government: (1) Two sections of the Mikhailovsk Military Academy; (2) 700 cadets from the Peterhof School for Ensigns; (3) 300 from the Oranienbaum School for Ensigns; (4) three companies (about 500 men) from the Gatchina School for Ensigns; (5) 200 from the Women's School Battalion; (6) 200 Cossacks. According to my figures there were in all about 2,000 troops. These were the countless legions which the Provisional Government could muster against the Petrograd Soviet. It would have been ridiculous to wait any longer. The Petrograd Soviet now took effective steps to overthrow the Provisional Government and to take power into its own hands.

October 24 was the day set for the armed uprising of the Petrograd Soviet against the Provisional Government.

All this while, I kept in close touch with the Military Revolutionary Committee and watched the development of events and our attack on the Winter Palace. The Grenadier Regiment was not drawn into active operations. The Military Revolutionary Committee decided to hold it in reserve, considering that it had suffered sufficient losses, in the July Days. I remember that it was already growing dark, when the first cannon shots were heard. These were blank shots fired by the "Aurora" as she steamed into the mouth of the Neva. I was walking in the yard at the moment, a soldier in front of me. He started at the unexpected report and muttered a curse. "Damn it! We've got our own war now." After the cannon shot, the rattling of machine guns became audible. Evidently a battle was developing in full force.

I hurried to the regimental committee and sent a soldier to Staff-Captain Dzevaltovsky, who was one of the leaders of our operations at the Winter Palace. Dzevaltovsky, who had recently returned from the front, was also an officer of the Grenadier Regiment, and therefore kept in contact with the regiment, which he considered his own. I instructed the soldier to find out from Dzevaltovsky how things were and if he needed reinforcements. At the same time, I gave orders for half the regiment to stand under arms. The soldiers soon returned and informed me that Dzevaltovsky had said that all was well. The units in the Winter Palace were gradually surrendering and he was sending to us for safekeeping his first trophy – the Women's Shock Battalion.

It was already quite dark when the women soldiers, surrounded by a convoy, entered the premises of the Grenadier Regiment. I had not seen any of these women soldiers before and therefore eyed them with interest. As a whole they made a pitiful impression. With close-cropped heads and simple, coarse sunburnt faces, they might have been taken for young soldiers, were it not for their conspicuously low stature (in comparison with the Grenadiers, they looked like dwarfs). I noticed their small hands and thick looking legs swathed in worn-out wrappings. Three of them, including the commander, fainted immediately on arriving.

We managed to drag them into the room of the regimental committee, placed them on chairs and gave them water. Gradually they came to. "Well, well, you shouldn't be out there fighting," one of the soldiers was heard to exclaim: "How were we to know what was up?" retorted the commander heatedly. "We were tricked into the Dvortsovaya Square. We were ordered to appear there for a parade, and instead we found ourselves tangled up in a war." The members of the regimental committee looked at each other. So, these were the means which Kerensky had to use to support his tottering power!

The Women's Battalion had to be housed somewhere. I counted them, and found that there were 138. The guardroom of the regiment was of course too small for such a number of prisoners. With the chairman of the regimental committee, Comrade Fedorov, I chose some empty isolated barracks and put them in there with a guard at the door. The next day I received orders from the Military Revolutionary Committee to release them and make it possible for them to reach the Finland Railway Station for dispatch to their barracks at Levashovo. I immediately informed them of this. They joyfully set to work to collect their belongings and tidy up, putting on the finishing touches as they moved out. The bourgeois press afterwards reported that the women prisoners were brutally tortured, and some of them violated. This of course is absolutely untrue. When the women were all in the yard, they sent a special delegation to me to thank me for the good and comradely treatment which they had received.

I shook hands with them and wished them a pleasant journey. Soon the small column of grey figures was hidden behind the massive gates of the Grenadiers Barracks.

Thus, the government was overthrown. The ministers of the Provisional Government, with the exception of Kerensky, were arrested. The Petrograd Soviet held the reins of power firmly in its hands. I Fedorov and I decided to call a meeting of the regimental committee to find out what their attitude was to the events taking place.

Fedorov decided to invite the commander of the regiment to this meeting. Oddly enough, from the moment of my arrival, the commander had dropped out of sight as if the earth had swallowed him up. It was I who gave all the orders, posted the guards, held the prisoners, while the real chief of the regiment, its commander, at no time made his presence felt. This may seem strange at first blush, but the cunning commander of the regiment knew what course was best for him. He acted in a predetermined way, and from his own point of view.

As a matter of fact, what could he do? His heart was undoubtedly with the Provisional Government, and it was his duty to obey it. On the other hand, he saw clearly that our side was stronger, and any attempt on his part to oppose me in the regiment, would only result in his being discredited. Therefore, he preferred to retire from the field of action until he could clearly see which way the wind blew, so that he could come out on the winning side.

He came to the meeting of the regimental committee, his dress uniform buttoned tightly, but he was ill at ease, as he did not quite know why he had been invited. During the meeting, while one speaker after another extolled the new revolution which was now an accomplished fact, he sat on

pins and needles and turned over in his mind what to say when called upon. He now understood that the Bolsheviks had won, and if he wished to remain in command of the regiment, he would likewise have to speak in favor of the new government. Yet at the same time, the officer within him revolted against this. No doubt all the time that he had been hiding, he had hoped deep down in his heart that the Provisional Government would still come out on top. Then he would teach some people what it meant to damage his prestige. But what neither he, nor many others of his ilk expected to happen, had happened – the Bolsheviks had won.

Our commander was at last relieved of his suspense when some member of the regimental committee remarked in his peroration, "It would be interesting to know the attitude of our colonel to the revolution which has taken place." The colonel jumped up from his seat like a jack-in-a-box, turned on his heel with the click to be expected of a well – drilled soldier, faced the comrade who had put the question and almost shouted with feigned nonchalance, "what do you suppose my attitude is to this revolution, a genuine people's revolution? Here is what I saw yesterday. At the Winter Palace they were shooting, with cannon, and all the time the tramcars were quietly running over the Troitsky Bridge, and pedestrians going about their business as if something absolutely normal and natural were going on. No, gentlemen, this is a genuine people's revolution, and I welcome it."

I do not think that the conclusions of the commander sounded very convincing to any one there, but they left him alone after that. The important thing was that he had not gone counter to the general sentiment of the regiment, and therefore any flaws in his speech were readily forgiven. The meeting was soon over and the colonel, obviously relieved, left the committee room.

Meanwhile, new events were taking place in Petrograd. G Kerensky, fleeing from the Winter Palace, had cajoled the Cossack general, Krasnov, to move on Petrograd with his troops, to restore the power of the Provisional Government by armed force. I heard of this from the Military Revolutionary Committee and – from General Krasnov himself.

It happened this way: I was sitting in the regimental committee room when a clerk came in from the office and brought me a typewritten sheet of paper. I was anxious to know what it was. It turned out to be the manifesto of General Krasnov, calling on the regiments of the Petrograd garrison to settle accounts with the Bolsheviks, and to join his forces. I jumped up from my seat. Krasnov's appeal was freely circulating in Petrograd and was even filtering into the military units. I immediately rushed into the regimental office to investigate this strange circumstance.

It seems that the manifesto had been transmitted from the headquarters of General Kornilov directly by telegraph or telephone, I forgot which. "What have you done with it?" I demanded. "We received it, made two copies on the typewriter, and sent one to the commander of the regiment, and the other to the committee." "Did you give out any more?" "No, sir." "Well, comrades," said I, "don't accept any more manifestoes from General Krasnov. He has turned traitor to the people, and I shall consider any communications with him treason." but I saw by his face and the faces of all others that I couldn't trust these people. They were well-groomed sons of business men, who had sat snugly in soft jobs in the rear, and had naturally no sympathy with the revolution.

No doubt they had accepted Krasnov's manifesto with full knowledge of its import and passed it on. "This is a fine mess," thought I as I returned to the room of the regimental committee. "General Krasnov is moving his armed forces against us and at the same time is addressing the Petrograd regiments without let or hindrance." I immediately telephoned the Military Revolutionary Committee, informed them of the manifesto which I had received, and called attention to the treasonable activities of the people in charge of communications.

Simultaneously with Krasnov's advance on Petrograd, the counterrevolutionary elements in the capital began to concentrate. No doubt these elements were in close contact with Krasnov's field headquarters. I constantly kept half the regiment under arms. The patrols which I sent out as before, often brought back counterrevolutionary agitators and generally suspicious persons.

One patrol caught a member of the intelligentsia, belonging to the "Death Troops" agitating against the Soviet power. These "Death Troops" were special shock battalions formed by Kerensky for the offensive against Germany and also, undoubtedly, for counterrevolutionary purposes. This person was dressed in black from head to foot, and his cap bore a skull and crossbones. "Why did you say that the Soviet power is about to come to an end?" I asked him. "Evidently I have good grounds for such a statement," he answered impudently, looking me square in the face. I sent him to the guardroom, hoping to make his closer acquaintance in my spare time. But alas! The next day, the sergeant of the guard informed me that the bars of his cell had been sawn through and he had disappeared. I was very sorry that such an interesting bird had slipped through my hands.

I began to keep an especially close watch on the Vladimir and Pavlovsk military academies. Unpleasant surprises might well be expected from these quarters. The Pavlovsk Academy gave me most concern. The Vladimir Academy, according to my information, was more democratic in its composition, both student body and; instructors. However, events disproved this, and the blow came from the "democratic" Vladimir Military Academy. But I must not run ahead of my story.

When General Krasnov occupied Gatchina and began to penetrate further, I asked Podvoisky in one of my telephone conversations whether it was not advisable to move my Grenadier Regiment against Krasnov. Don't worry," he replied, "your regiment will be needed here." Sure enough, the same day I received an order from the Military Revolutionary Committee, to get in contact with the *Fortress of St. Peter and Paul* and to disarm the cadets. On receiving the order, I at once went to the fortress to talk over the best way of carrying out this operation, without incurring unnecessary losses. The commissar of the fort, Comrade Blagonravov, was not there, but I went to his assistant, Ter-Arutyunyants, whom I well knew from our joint work in the military organisation.

Poor Ter-Arutyunyants had so completely changed since the stormy days which had passed, that I scarcely recognized him. He had fallen asleep from sheer weariness sitting on a chair before the table at which he was working. Persons in the room walked on tiptoes and spoke in whispers, fearing to disturb him. I was sorry to wake him up, but the matter could not wait, so I made him shake of his drowsiness.

Together we read the order from the Military Revolutionary Committee, and began to discuss what to do. I stated that in my opinion, the chief danger lay with the Pavlovsk Military Academy, and therefore the disarming process should begin there. However, our task was made easier by the fact that inside the academy we had valuable allies, the soldier detachment, of whose loyalty I had had an opportunity to convince myself. I was in constant touch with this detachment, and therefore proposed to proceed to disarm the cadets at once, relying principally on this detachment. Ter-Arutyunyants approved of my plan, and promised to support me with all the available forces of the fort. Returning to the regiment, I at once began to talk to the detachment of soldiers in the Pavlovsk Military Academy. They welcomed the idea of disarming the cadets, and stated that they could carry it out alone, if I would allow them to use some men of the Chemical Battalion, with whom they were in constant contact.

I was very much worried about the success of this operation; however, it came off very well. The cadets were disarmed, surrounded by a convoy and sent under arrest to me at the Grenadier Guards.

I vividly remember the rainy autumn evening, and the long column of cadets surrounded by the convoy, timidly looking forward to an unknown future. Some of them may even have expected retributive measures from our side. However, I housed them more or less comfortably in the building where the women soldiers had been shortly before. About five days later, conditions were such as to permit the cadets to be released – it is true with a pledge to go to their homes immediately – and again a delegation came to see me, as in the case of the women soldiers, to thank me in the name of the cadets for my good treatment of them.

While I thus disposed of the Pavlovsk Academy, a serious situation arose in the Vladimir Academy. The S.R. agitators persuaded the cadets to revolt in support of General Krasnov, who was advancing on Petrograd. Even lies were resorted to, for the cadets were assured that Krasnov, with his troops was already near the Narvsky Gate.

The evening before this mutiny, the commissar of the academy, Lebedev by name, if I remember rightly, who had been appointed by the Petrograd Soviet, rang me up and said that something was brewing there, and asked me to send a detachment of the Chemical Battalion to provide for any emergency. I immediately gave the necessary orders, the detachment of the Chemical Battalion was actually sent and, as I found out later, received the first blows of the revolting cadets.

I remember that fearful night when the cadets mutinied. I was as usual sleeping with one eye open, and of course fully dressed. I was awakened by the noise of footsteps and quickly jumped from my bed. One of the “Chemicals” ran in and excitedly informed me that the cadets had just now attempted to disarm the detachment of the Chemical Battalion sent by me, but that they had offered resistance and shooting was now going on. A further detachment from the Chemical Battalion drew up to support them, but they were outnumbered and were suffering losses. I immediately roused the half of the regiment which was kept under arms. There were only 200 of them, but I supposed that

this would be sufficient. I put Nikonov in command, as he was the only Bolshevik officer. I was afraid to trust the Left S.R.s at such a critical juncture.

It was just dawning when the detachment started out.

From the reports which reached me, I knew that the detachment joined in the fight with the cadets immediately on arriving at the Vladimir Military Academy.

At first Nikonov wanted to attack the front of the building, but when he saw that this was extremely difficult, he stationed a screening force there, and he himself, with part of the detachment, went round to the other side, and began to strike the cadets in the rear through the neighboring house.

In order to personally to observe the allocation of the fighting forces, I went there together with the chairman of the regimental committee, comrade Fedorov. When I arrived, we already had armored cars on our side which were firing the first shots from their famous guns. This soon forced the cadets to lay down their arms. The commandant of the city, who had been appointed by the Petrograd Soviet, a Left S.R. named Lieutenant Nestorov, was also on the spot. He was a man of small stature with a tremendous head of hair almost reaching down to his shoulders.

When I had made sure of the situation, and knew that no reinforcement would be required immediately, at any rate, I went back to the regimental barracks.

On the way I met someone I little expected, and this encounter made me sad. At the corner of Shamshev Street and Bolshoy Prospekt I saw my old civics teachers from Vedensky High School, a priest called Guryev, buying a newspaper. I bade him good morning, and only then noticed, that he was not alone. Alongside of him stood my former classmate, who had done some illegal work with me, Vladimir Prussak. This was only the second time that I had seen him since I had returned from exile, and I was naturally overjoyed. "Ah! it is Vladimir!" I exclaimed, going towards him and stretching out my hand. Alas! My joy found no echo in his heart. He did not move, and, thrusting his hands into his pockets, he merely scowled at me. "Do you work in Smolny?" he suddenly asked me. "Yes," I answered. "In that case, I cannot give you my hand," said he, and stuck his hands still deeper into his pockets. I gave vent to my disdain of him in a loud curse, and left him without more.

This episode distressed me greatly. Prussak and I had been as thick as thieves. We had worked together in the illegal students organisation, had been arrested together in December, 1912, in the Witmer case,¹³ and only then had our paths separated. I went abroad while he was once more arrested, in connection with the revolutionary union. He was tried and exiled for an indefinite period to Siberia. The revolution brought him back to Petrograd, and now this meeting.

Once more an indisputable fact was brought home to me. During the years of my underground work in 1910 to 1919, among the young St. Petersburg students, especially among the

¹³ Witmer the principal of a St. Petersburg high school, the students of which, among them the author of this book, engineered a minor revolutionary disturbance resulting in numerous arrests among the student body

high school boys and girls, anarchists and similar types of ill defined revolutionary trends were very popular. At first sight, it seemed as if there was very little difference between these tendencies, and us Social-Democrats. In fact, they worked like us, organized the working-class for the struggle against the Tsar and the employers, they were arrested like us, imprisoned and suffered other forms, of persecution. They went so far as to state that they considered themselves even more "left" than we were. But all this only up to a certain point.

As soon as they were subjected to severe tests, such as the war or the revolution, the overwhelming majority of them slid down the ideological slope. The absence of a comprehensive world philosophy made itself felt. Only the Social-Democrat Bolsheviks, armed with the Marxist-Leninist method, were able to grasp the import of current events, keep a clear head, and their Party ranks unimpaired. I was still thinking this over when I arrived at the Grenadiers Barracks.

Meanwhile, the shots from the only piece of artillery possessed by the besiegers had had their influence on the cadets, and they surrendered. The Grenadiers were the first to enter the building of the Vladimir Academy and Lieutenant Nikonov was appointed commandant of the academy.

When I heard that the cadets had surrendered, I drove immediately to the academy, fearing that the prisoners would be lynched by the outraged mob. My fears were well founded.

In the middle of the Bolshoy Prospekt the cadets were marching, surrounded by a convoy, and around them surged an enormous crowd demanding their immediate deaths. The crowd was so vast, that when they reached Tuchkov Bridge it was no longer safe to convoy the prisoners. It was necessary to halt, detour to Petrovsky Park, place a strong guard on the bridge, and wait until the crowd quietened down.

It was only with the greatest difficulty that we got the cadets to their place of confinement.

Simultaneously with the crushing of the revolt of the cadets, a decisive blow was dealt the forces of General Krasnov. Krasnov himself, and his entire staff, were captured by the Soviet troops. Only Kerensky again made his escape. However, Krasnov did not remain under arrest long. When he was brought to Petrograd, the Military Revolutionary-Committee soon released him on his word of honor that he would not take up arms again against the Soviet power.

This was naive in the extreme. How can anyone believe that a code of honor would be respected in a civil war by those who are fighting against the liberation of the working class? As might have been expected, Krasnov, as soon as he was released, rushed south and took a most active part in the organisation and military operations of the white guard armies against the Soviet Government.

For that matter, most of us suffered at that time from excessive high mindedness, and we repeated almost literally, the mistakes of the Paris Commune for which it paid such a bitter price. Was it not a mistake, for instance, to release individual cadets, and even whole academies of cadets, as I have just described? It is a well-known fact that most of these cadets straightway made for the south and there formed the nucleus of the White Guard armies which afterwards operated against us.

And what of the bourgeois newspapers? For a long time, we could not make up our minds to encroach on the "sacred" freedom of the press. Day after day these papers virtually spat in our faces, pouring on us a steady torrent of slander and abuse, openly inciting to armed insurrection against us. We bore everything patiently, and it was only after two months that we realised our mistake and clamped down the lid on this foul sewer in our midst.

In many respects the lessons of the Paris Commune had been completely forgotten by us. Nothing short of a string of disasters – the murder of a number of our leaders and open fighting against us by the White Guard bands could bring us to be stern and merciless.

After the repulse of the Krasnov attack, disputes and arguments arose about the formation of a new government. Our Party formed a purely Bolshevik cabinet, but declared that it would not object to a certain number of Left S.R.s entering it. The Left S.R.s, on the other hand, put forward the slogan of a united socialist cabinet to which also the right "socialist" parties were to be invited. A bitter discussion ensued on the question, which soon spread to our regiment.

On October 31, early in the morning, I received the following note from the secretary of our Bolshevik fraction in the Reserve Chemical Battalion, Comrade Solovyev: –

October 31, 1917.

"Comrade Lieutenant,

"Make it your business to come at 9 am, to a general meeting, as yesterday's meeting resulted in a split and led nowhere. There is a possibility that a patriotic resolution will be passed.

"Secretary, Solovyev."

Of course, I immediately hurried to the meeting, where I was among the first to speak. I spoke for a fairly long time. I told of the up and downs in the struggle against the Provisional Government, informed them of the formation of the workers and peasants government. and dealt in detail with the first decrees of the Soviet Government on peace, land and workers control. In conclusion, I spoke of the crisis which had arisen recently with the Left S.R.s. We were asked to form a bloc with the right socialist parties and to form a united socialist government. In principle we were not opposed to such unity, but the question was on what platform should we unite? We were told that we should first unite and then talk about a platform. We did not agree with this. This was an attempt to divert us from the path of advance along which we were moving. We insisted: first, we must have a platform and then we shall see with whom united action is possible.

Our platform was clear. We had already made a start to carry out the basic demands of the working class, and we did not want to depart from this. However, flattering it might be for us to sit together with the "honorable" Mensheviks and S.R.s, we would not do this at the expense of the working class. Whoever agrees with the general scope of our work, let him work together with us. Whoever does not agree, is welcome to get his hat and coat and go! In such an event any talk of unity was preposterous.

It is difficult to describe the enthusiasm of the soldiers when I finished my speech. My concluding words, "Long live the power of the workers and peasants," were drowned in a vociferous "Hurrah?" Before I knew it, I was seized by scores of brawny soldiers' hands and tossed into the air. No one else spoke at the meeting, and the resolution, welcoming the formation of the new Workers and Peasants Power was passed unanimously. In this way the Reserve Chemical Battalion once more proved its class consciousness. It had taken an active part in the October Revolution and later proved itself to be a firm and reliable defender of the Soviet Government.

Unfortunately, a somewhat different attitude prevailed in the Grenadier Regiment. As I have mentioned, the committee of this unit consisted almost entirely of Left S.R.s. The untrustworthiness of these "allies" was now fully demonstrated. They definitely broke with their policy and were not above using shady tactics against the Bolsheviks.

This is what occurred the same day as the meeting of the of the Chemical Battalion. Early in the morning, when I was ready to go to this meeting I heard by chance that Comrade Fedorov was calling a meeting of the regimental committee at the same time. Up to that time I had been present at all meetings of the committee without fail. "Why are you calling the committee together?" I asked Fedorov. "Well, you see, there are a number of business questions which cannot be postponed," he answered. "Wouldn't it be better to postpone the meeting till I return? I would not like to miss it." "No," he answered with an air of confidence. "You can easily afford to miss this meeting. Nothing but business will be taken up. It will be all right for you to go to the Chemical Battalion."

However, when I returned to the regiment, I looked at the minutes of the meeting and literally tore my hair. Right at the beginning of the minutes was a resolution passed by the committee on current questions. The resolution had a definitely S.R. complexion. It expressed dissatisfaction with the formation of a government of "one party," and expressed the opinion, that the only government which could save the country was one composed of all socialist parties. Beside myself with anger, I rushed to Fedorov and demanded an explanation. At first, he became flustered but then he informed me that the question had come up quite "by chance," but the resolution itself was the well thought out decision of the regimental committees. Of course he was lying shamelessly, but I was powerless to get back at him just then.

On another occasion, this same Fedorov informed me that the regimental committee wished to hold a mass meeting of the regiment and to invite representatives of all socialist parties. Of course I did not object to such a meeting. At the appointed hour, when the soldiers had begun to flow into the riding school where the meeting was to be held, I was eager to learn which parties would be represented by speakers.

To my astonishment I was told that there were four speakers, and all of them S.-Rs! "Why so many S.R.s?" I wondered. "And where are the Mensheviks?" "Evidently they did not take the trouble to come," answered Fedorov. "And do you mean to say that the Bolsheviks also do not want to speak to the Grenadier Regiment?" I asked. "No," he impudently answered, looking me straight in the face. "We did not invite the Bolsheviks. We expected you to speak for the Bolsheviks." This got on my

nerves. "Kindly take note," I said, "that if you invite representatives of all parties, you will also invite the Bolsheviks. It is hard for me to speak against opponents, as I have been up to my neck in regimental business, so that I am not fully up-to-date in my information. I shall therefore refuse to open the meeting without a representative of the Bolsheviks." Fedorov, muttering something to himself, went off to change the arrangements accordingly, while I walked off to the officers meeting to take a look at the S.R. agitators who had arrived.

At the officers meeting a ludicrous incident took place which I cannot relate to this day without smiling. I was surprised to notice among the S.R. speakers my old school friend Lazar Alyansky, all dressed up in sailors uniform. Alyansky participated in the revolutionary movement, but he was a member of the S.R.s and had never been an agitator before the revolution. I was wondering why he wore a sailors uniform. Before the war he was expelled from high school in Petersburg, studied in Paris, and during the war was repeatedly exempted from conscription on account of his health.

I was so dumbfounded when I saw him, especially in such a costume, that I stopped short, and cried "Lazar! What in the world are you doing here?" This address evidently was not to his liking. He slumped down in his seat, thrust his hands into his pockets, and, staring gloomily at me, he said "I don't want to talk to a betrayer of the fatherland and the revolution."

This roused my indignation. I had been insulted in the presence of my soldiers. However, I did not want to take any steps against him myself. Turning to the members of the regimental committee who were present, and particularly addressing Fedorov, I declared: "Comrades, you have heard how the representative of the S.R.s has insulted me, a representative of the Petrograd Soviet. I appeal to you with the request to relieve me of the necessity of listening to such language.

A crow does not peck out another crow's eyes and so Fedorov, also an S.R., did nothing. He merely mumbled something inarticulately and tried to make peace between us, while the other members of the committee did not make a move in my defense. I was disgusted and went over to the room of the regimental committee.

"Very well," thought I, "just wait till the meeting starts, then I will inform the soldiers of this incident. But I did not have to wait that long. It seems that some soldiers sympathetic to the Bolsheviks were present at the scene. They immediately ran across to the riding school, where almost all the regiment had assembled by now, and talked about the insult offered to the commissar of the regiment, and the impermissible conduct of the chairman of the regimental committee. This information evoked a storm of indignation. Cries of "Get out," "Down with them," "We don't want to hear such Scoundrels," could be heard above the bedlam let loose. The regimental committee had to politely inform the "poor" S.R.s that the soldiers did not want to listen to them and that it would be in their own interest to make a speedy exit.

However, the matter did not rest here. The general meeting which thus opened without any formalities, invited Fedorov and me to come to the riding school, and instead of a meeting a veritable trial commenced. Speaker after speaker, attacked the chairman of the regimental committee, for

permitting the commissar appointed by the Petrograd Soviet to be insulted on the premises of the regiment. Feeling ran so high among the assembled soldiers, who resented this insult to their commanding officer, that the air was filled with clamorous demands not only for the removal of Fedorov but even for his arrest.

Pale and excited, Fedorov tried to explain. He said that he had worked all the time in entire accord with the commissar, and in this case had simply not heard(!) me when I appealed to him for protection. Of course, the explanation was absurd on the full face of it. A word from me, and he would have been removed from the post of chairman of the regimental committee. But then I thought whom have we to replace him? Nikonov was still commandant in the Vladimir Academy and apart from him there was no one who was ideologically close to us, and at the same time enjoying authority in the regiment. No, let Fedorov remain. Maybe this lesson would teach him something.

Therefore, I said that the incident in itself was no doubt quite grave, but that it was just possible that Fedorov had really not heard my appeal, and he should get the benefit of the doubt. It was not important enough to remove Fedorov, as we had up to that time always worked hand in hand. Let us be satisfied with what has been said at this meeting, and drop the matter.

When I had finished, I saw that Fedorov was looking at me his eyes overflowing with gratitude. The meeting was still in an ugly mood for some time, but in the end, they accepted my suggestion.

The meeting for the discussion of current topics, took place the next day all the same. I do not know whether the regimental committee wished to please me or whether it was a coincidence, but this time the "representatives of the parties" consisted of one person, a Bolshevik, Nikolai Nikolayevich Kuzmin. He submitted a detailed report and the meeting unanimously adopted the Bolshevik resolution which was proposed. As I sat there listening to the meeting, I did not in the least dream that this would be my last day in the Grenadier Regiment. But such it was.

In the evening things quickly happened which switched my life all along a different track.

I do not remember just what I was doing, when a carters wagon rumbled into the gateway of the Grenadiers barracks. On it was my brother, Raskolnikov. He entered the room of the regimental committee, and seeing that there was no one near, he immediately got down to business. "In Moscow," he said, "there is fighting going on this very minute between the Moscow Soviet and the Provisional Government. They are even using artillery. The Petrograd Soviet is sending a detachment down there to assist our comrades. This group consists of sailors under my command. But unfortunately, there is not a single field officer in the detachment. Will you go with us?"

I thought it over a minute. In Petrograd everything looked quiet. No disturbances need he expected in the near future. But in Moscow, blood was flowing. They needed our help. So, I gave my consent. On the same wagon on which my brother had come we rode to Smolny to arrange for my successor in the Grenadier Regiment and to receive further instructions.

Next day I left for Moscow to take an active part in the uprising there.

Bolshevik Smugglers

By

S. Shaumyan

Petrol Starts on Its Voyage

Every drop of petrol was of great value to the Red Army in 1919. The Transcaucasian party organisation, hiding underground for the time being, resolved to supply Soviet Russia with some quantity of petrol, however small. This could be done only with the aid of sailing vessels, for on land a harrier of White and semi-White republics stood in the way. A sea voyage was also dangerous, for the English and Denikin's fleet maintained regular blockades. In order to deliver a cargo of 10 to 12 tons of petrol, every sailing vessel would have to break through this carefully guarded zone, and some of them at least would be sure to fail.

I was seventeen years old at the time, and a member of the Young Communist League. It cost me a great deal of effort to obtain permission to join one of the sailing vessels; comrades were afraid I would not be able to get out of scrapes as easily as a more experienced worker. Our first effort to organize an expedition from Batum failed, for there were too many spies in the port. The British battleship "Theseus" rolled placidly on the waves – a symbol of English imperialism. Its grim outlines seemed like a warning to smugglers not to have any communication with the Bolsheviks. Our second effort – from Poti – proved successful, however. This was a less important port, and the conditions there were more favorable. After a few days' search we succeeded in getting in touch with a similar expedition undertaken by the local party committee. A merchant named Irakli was registered as the official owner of the cargo, I was registered as his partner. Irakli was not concerned with the political purpose of the expedition, he was merely eager to earn some money. The route of the vessel was to be Poti – Kirassun – Sinop – Kerempe, then a turn northward to the Crimea or Odessa. All the documents were made out for Constantinople. Thus, no suspicions could be aroused by the vessel before it reached Kerempe.

The "Evstrati" put out on May 9. It was an old 25-metre motor boat equipped with a dilapidated two-stroke "Victory" engine. Our captain, Krylov, had very little faith in this engine. The cargo was carried in the holds; only a few cans were left on deck. We could not get any Turkish money before leaving Poti, and all payments on the voyage had to be made in petrol. The "Evstrati" had hardly gone twenty miles when the engine failed, and we were compelled to resort to the sails. In addition to Krylov and the mechanic Grishka, the crew consisted of a boatswain, two sailors and a cook – a young lad. All of us, including the passengers, were lodged on the open deck.

Towards the close of the second day the "Evstrati" approached the Anatolian shore. We caught glimpses of picturesque capes, gulfs, wooded hills steeply running down to the sea; Turkish villages looking very neat and cosy (alas, only from a distance) seemed to be clinging to the rocks. Sounds very much like women's sobs reached us from the shores. Krylov explained that these were jackals howling. A few sailing vessels sailed past; we were on the alert, as piracy was rife. Recently the pirates had plundered a large passenger liner. One rifle and two revolvers were all we had for defense.

Late in the night the "Evstrati" dropped anchor in Kirassun. We decided to go on shore in the morning. Our captain wanted to repair the engine. In his opinion the engine would be particularly

necessary when we were approaching the shores of the Crimean, when we would have to go at greater speed. There was a fairly good repair shop in Kirassun, and he could get the engine repaired there.

At dawn a customs boat, carrying the officials and a doctor, approached the "Evstrati." We were examined and allowed to go on shore. One of the officials objected, but this was a trick to get a bribe. We gave orders to have some of the cans of petrol transferred to their boat, and all obstacles vanished at once. The Anatolian cities appear very beautiful from the sea, but how unattractive they are in reality! The streets are littered with refuse. Ragged urchins scurry back and forth. The Greek women are particularly dirty. Yells jar on unaccustomed ears. It seems all the time that the people are quarreling with each other. But that is not so, we soon discovered, it is merely their manner of talking. A great deal of noise and clatter emerged from the cafeterias with which the port abounds. Everybody is smoking and you can hardly see your neighbor, owing to the dense smoke pervading the air. Waiters are scurrying between the tables, serving strong coffee in miniature cups.

The local shopkeepers told us that the town was greatly disturbed. From time-to-time detachments of irregular troops fall on the city, plunder the merchants and disappear. These detachments consist of former "askers" (soldiers of the Turkish army), who refused to surrender their arms to the British army of occupation. They were mostly peasants, like those who formed the "green" armies in Soviet Russia; later they formed the backbone of the army of Kemal Pasha. The merchants were afraid to keep goods in stock. The Greek shopkeepers suffered most. At that time the English were already training Greece to act as a thug against young Turkey, and the rebel forces vented their hatred on her.

We were struck by the beggarly appearance of the town. A multitude of beggars, pestered the passers-by. Turkish women in yashmaks (veils), bent under the weight of clay water ewers, were to be met with occasionally in the streets. They were followed by their husbands, smoking their pipes and telling their beads. Sometimes one man served as a driver to two loaded wives.

After a two days' stay the "Evstrati" sailed again. The sky was overcast. Great waves showered us with spray. With the approach of twilight, the "Evstrati" began to toss on the waves. We noticed that the porpoises gamboling in the sea, were all moving in one direction, contrary to their usual custom. It was a sign of an approaching storm, which was not long in coming. The "Evstrati" either buried her prow in the waves, her helm bare and her screw furiously churning, or raised her prow above the waves, while her stern was almost entirely submerged in the water.

The engine had to be stopped. Waves were rolling over the deck. It became pitch dark. Lightning flashed overhead. We were terrified lest the vessel should catch fire. We would have been converted into a floating beacon on the furious waves.

The storm grew in intensity. The vessel groaned under the onslaught of the waves. It seemed that any moment she would break in two. The crew was working strenuously. Krylov himself was standing at the helm. The "Evstrati," steered by an experienced helmsman, furiously cut through the waves at right angles, thus avoiding the impact of the waves on her sides. To balance the vessels,

Krylov gave the order to throw 50 tons of petrol overboard. It almost broke our hearts to see this precious cargo, so urgently needed in Soviet Russia, disappear beneath the waves. But in a few moments the cans rose to the surface and floated after the vessel in a long continuous chain.

Fearing that we would be driven to shore in the dark, we took course for the open sea. We were absolutely ignorant of our whereabouts. Krylov reckoned that the “Evstrati” was not far from either Samsoun or Bafra. Late in the night, lights appeared in the distance. The storm began to subside only towards noon of the following day. The sails relaxed and bore the “Evstrati” at a much slower rate than before. The sun appeared from behind the lead-colored clouds. Wet through and through, chilled to the bone, dead tired after a sleepless night and sea-sickness, we keenly enjoyed the caressing rays of the sun. The porpoises once again gamboled in the sea. The shores loomed in the distance, and soon we saw a city ahead. It was Sinop. In the anticipation of rest, hot food and sleep, our spirits revived, and we became ourselves once more.

Around five o’clock the “Evstrati” approached the bay. Another misfortune. A head-wind arose which prevented us from entering the bay under sail, and our engine failed. We were compelled to tack, and the distance, which in normal circumstances could be made in an hour and a half, took us over four hours. At last, we were near enough for boats to come to meet us. We dropped anchor. One of the boats came alongside, bringing a customs official and a surgeon. The surgeon asked whether there were any patients on board, glanced at our faces and said in a strong Turkish accent: “All right.” The officials declared that we were not to sell any petrol otherwise than through the medium of the custom house. But like the official at Kirassun, he left after taking a “peshkesh” (present). The sailors and the boatswain remained on board, but we went on shore and going to an inn, we slept soundly for no less than twenty hours. It was a relief after a week’s voyage to sleep with our clothes off.

Amusements on Land and Sea

Sinop was the last place of our Turkish adventures. We were supposed to take the course to the west from Sinop, then turn northward at the meridian of Kerempe, and steer for Balaklava. We decided to investigate, whether there were any feluccas smuggling goods into the Crimea and to find out from their owners about the rigidity of the blockade. Naturally we had to be very careful in carrying out our investigations, so as not to give ourselves away; the English had plenty of spies in Sinop.

Money-changers were squatting before their small coffers on both sides of the narrow streets. Foreign bank notes and coins were neatly piled under glass covers. Tsarist hundred- and five-hundred-ruble notes were there also. At that time, they still had the same value.

At dinner Krylov told us that the engine and sails needed repairing after the storm. It was impossible to continue our voyage before two or three days. When a passenger boat arrived in port we went to meet her; Krylov advised us to go aboard and learn the news, before anybody came ashore.

Having climbed up the rope gangway, Krylov approached a mechanic he knew, while I started to talk with two officers.

"Will you be so kind as to tell me whether you have any information about the Crimea?"

"Excellent news," said one of the officers. "The Crimea has been completely cleared of the Bolsheviks. General Slashchev is advancing towards Odessa. The whole Ukraine will soon be ours!"

I pretended I was pleased to hear this and thanked him for the information.

The whistle blew, and I had to go ashore. The news received by Krylov and Irakli was approximately the same. Still, we refused to believe it. We thought it was the usual canard of the emigrants.

The next day was a holiday. A wrestling match, the usual holiday amusement, was to take place out of town.

Our crowd went there to attend the match. A large crowd was already assembled there. The local champion was proudly strutting in the arena. He addressed the crowd, challenging volunteers to come out and wrestle, hurling jibes at those who did not dare to accept his challenge. One of our companions, an athlete by the name of Kote, provoked by this boasting, declared his willingness to accept the challenge. A murmur of delight passed through the crowd. It believed its favorite to be invincible.

Kote and his opponent circled the ring. Like wild beasts they crept towards each other, darting aside as one approached the other. While in the French wrestling matches the wrestlers are allowed to touch each other only above the waist line, the Turkish rules do not impose these restrictions and wrestlers may even catch each other by the legs. Often, they resort to tripping each other. The wrestlers crouched very low and appeared to be walking on all fours. Kote had absolutely no experience in the Turkish methods. The exclamations and the noise of the crowd excited both wrestlers. Suddenly Kote deftly caught his opponent with a hold known in French wrestling as a "tour-de-tete," and threw him to the ground, and the Turk, who had not expected such a trick, was knocked unconscious. The crowd went wild. The furious gesticulations under Kote's very nose, and threatening yells, caused us to fear that he would be lynched. We drew nearer to him, keeping our revolvers ready. The customs officials, who knew us, were also very alarmed at what might happen, and tried to pacify the crowd, pointing out that Kote being a guest, his person should not be subject to violence.

The "champion" revived and looked around, greatly embarrassed. It was his first defeat, and this seemed to be a great event in the eyes of the citizens of Sinop.

The next day the repairs on the "Evstrati" were finished. We could continue our voyage the same evening. After Sinop we were destined either to step on Soviet shores, or never to step on any

firm ground at all. For twenty-four hours more we were to remain "honest merchants." After that period any English cruiser meeting us would address us in the language of guns.

The most important part of the voyage was approaching.

A few hours before sailing we met a fat man in our hotel, about 45 years old, apparently a Russian. He was accompanied by a mountaineer armed with a Mauser. To our inquiry about the man, the hotel keeper replied that he was a rich Crimean landowner who had recently escaped from the Bolsheviks. He missed his family, who remained in the Crimea.

He offered to pay 10,000 rubles in gold to any smuggler who would be able to bring his family to Sinop. No volunteers had shown up as yet, the hotel keeper told us.

At dinner the landowner was the first to address us, and repeated the story already known to us. He abused the Bolshevik "monsters" for a time, summoning all the wrath of heaven upon their heads, and vowed to scalp with his own hand the first Bolshevik he laid his hands on. We agreed with him sympathetically and suggested even cruder methods of punishing the Bolsheviks. As the dinner was drawing to a close, the landowner became quite tipsy and was so overcome that he began embracing us all, and asked for our addresses in the Caucasus, promising to visit us when he got there with his family. We reciprocated with a lot of "hot air," giving him fictitious addresses, and after taking a very hearty leave, departed for our vessel. The corpulent old gentleman saluted us with his handkerchief for a long while, wishing us a good voyage.

During the night we sailed at the rate of 6 knots. The following day we were sailing by picturesque green shores. At midnight we spied a light—it was the light-house on Cape Kerempe. We woke up when the sun was already over our heads, and we were on a new course. The mountains were looming on the horizon. We peered into the horizon with apprehension, but were unable to discover anything suspicious. Before us, for scores of miles stretched the mirror-like surface of the sea, broken only by the gamboling porpoises. They swam alongside the "Evstrati," sometimes speeding in front of it, and sometimes remaining behind and catching the pieces of bread we threw them. The sails were half furled; the "Evstrati" was driven by the motor. About noon the motor stopped. Now the motion was hardly noticeable. Sometimes it appeared that we did not budge.

"Tomorrow, if the weather is favorable," said the boatswain, "we may see the Crimean Mountains in the north and the Turkish hills in the south."

I could not believe him: the distance would be 140 miles!

The sun was scorching. The tent was stretched.

We decided to hunt porpoises. One of the sailors brought out the harpoon—a pole about two meters long, with an iron point and two adjustable drifts. A long rope was attached to the harpoon, the free end of which was tied to the hull of the "Evstrati." A sailor stood on a taut chain, attached at one end to the bow of the vessel and at the other to the mast. Standing on the chain he watched the water, awaiting the moment when a porpoise would pass under him, then, seizing the opportunity,

he would throw his harpoon. If the cast was successful, the water was immediately dyed red by the blood. The beast rushed forward, unravelling the rope. The three of us had to use all our strength to draw it up. But as soon as the porpoise was drawn out of the water, it immediately lost all its vigor.

Eight porpoises were killed in two hours.

A Mysterious Cruiser

The night passed without any trouble; the wind which grew stronger, was favorable. We were awakened by the sun in a clear surface of the sea. The porpoises were shooting through the green waves like arrows. We were right in the middle of the Black Sea. The words of the boatswain come true: somewhere, far away, lay the contours of the hills of Asia Minor, behind us, and the Crimean Mountains loomed in front of us.

They looked like clouds which were taking the shape of mountains. I still am not sure that these were really mountains in front of us. By midday the wind had increased. The vessel was moving along at the rate of 6 knots. We were thinking that we might reach our destination on the following evening, provided we had no accidents, for we carried no lights at night. In the morning, we saw the mountains distinctly, apparently quite near, though in reality the distance was not less than 20 miles. We were straining our eyes, peering into the horizon, afraid of seeing the "blockade." The weather was becoming dull. We were glad of this, as it decreased the visibility. Sea-gulls began to appear.

Suddenly somebody spied the hardly visible outline of a cruiser. There could be no doubt A cruiser was coming across the course of the "Evstrati." Blast it! It would be naive to imagine that we could be saved by explanations to the effect that our destination was not a Soviet port. This ruse might succeed somewhere near the Turkish shores, hut here it was too late to deny the real object of our voyage. The cruiser was approaching from behind. Krylov ordered us to get the life-belts ready.

"Would it not be better to throw ourselves overboard right now?" I thought. "There isn't the slightest chance of reaching the shore, but there is no other way out; and it will be too late to jump overboard when the cruiser begins to fire." The "Evstrati," loaded with petrol, will be blown to pieces by the first shell. And if we could not swim away a considerable distance from the vessel, we would be caught by the burning benzene.

The cruiser approached us to a distance of about two miles Then suddenly it reduced its speed and began to turn its poop towards us. What could it mean? We could only suspect that they wanted to fire their poop guns at us. All ready to jump overboard, we anxiously watched the guns, expecting any moment to see them flash. However, the distance between the vessels began gradually to grow.

What had happened?

Was it possible that for training purposes the cruiser was trying to complicate the problem, and to allow a certain distance before firing? The guns remained silent; we were getting jumpier every moment. It seemed ever so much better to be shot at and get it over, for we should at least

escape the terrible uncertainty. At last, two of the flashes, we had been waiting for made their appearance and the shells fell near us, raising columns of water. That was all. Then, silence again.

The cruiser was leaving. It was growing dark ... We could not understand. For some reason the cruiser did not want to sink us.

"It is good that we are arriving at night," said Krylov. "More chance to pass unsuspected, and if we are noticed, it will be difficult to shoot."

A little later, he added:

"I hope we don't strike any blockade at the entrance of Sebastopol Bay. Perhaps it would be better to sail quietly past Sebastopol and to drop anchor in Yevpatoria? It is a small town, and is of no importance as a port. We will attract no attention there."

Everybody agreed. It was quite dark when we left Sebastopol behind. We could now congratulate ourselves on the satisfactory termination of our Odyssey. Four or five more hours of sailing and the anchor would be dropped; all our dangers would be left behind. Late in the night we approached Yevpatoria. We decided to land in the morning; it was quite probable that the city would be under martial law. Sleep was a great temptation after so much excitement and alarm. Full of joy we were congratulating each other. At last, after so many trials we felt ourselves free citizens of Soviet Russia!

In the Camp of the White Guards

It was dawn when I opened my eyes. The sea was covered with a fog which hid the shore. The outlines of tall buildings and churches were hardly visible. Not far from the "Evstrati" and on both sides of it sailing vessels were rolling on the waves. Everybody was up and cheerfully smiling.

A four-oared rowing boat started from the shore and headed for the "Evstrati." Five men armed with rifles were in the boat. This surprised us, but at first, we were happy to see them. However, with every moment a certain involuntary alarm began to get hold of us. We could not understand the reason for the rifles, and our instinct told us that something was wrong. Suddenly the cause of our alarm was quite clear: through the milky mist we noticed the shoulder-straps of the men in the boat! The boat contained Cossacks and an officer . . .

We felt as if a shower of cold water had been thrown over us. Was it possible that all our hopes and chances, our triumph of yesterday, had come to nothing? We had been so glad: we had "broken the blockade" and "arrived among our friends," to "supply the army with petrol," etc. The half-hearted shooting of the cruiser became clear at once. There was no escape for us anyway! I had hardly time to tear up and throw overboard all the party correspondence.

"Where is this vessel from?"

"From Poti, with a cargo of petrol."

The officer came on board the "Evstrati" accompanied by a Cossack.

“Who is the owner?”

“I and my partners,” was the placid reply of Irakli.

“The owners and the skipper will please follow me on shore! The rest are to remain on hoard!”

The officer was polite, but his voice sounded vicious. We climbed down into the boat and set off. The officer enquired whether we had all the necessary documents and warned us that we should probably have to wait a few hours in the office of the Commandant, till the General woke up. We asked him to tell us about the situation in the town, and how far the Bolsheviks were. From his curt replies we gathered that the Reds had been driven from Yevpatoria only four days ago and were retreating northwards. In the office of the Commandant, another officer, who proved to be the Commandant's assistant, began the cross-examination. How could we explain why we were in the Crimea instead of Constantinople? When the “Evstrati” was leaving Sinop, we could have had no precise knowledge about the evacuation of the Crimea by the Bolsheviks. Consequently, the petrol we carried was intended for the supply of the Bolsheviks? The hazardous situation was enhanced by the absence of any preliminary agreement between us as to what answers should be given in such an emergency, so that we simply had to answer at random. Our crossexaminer made it quite clear that our fate fully depended upon his report to General Larionov.

“Your conduct,” a significant glance in our direction, “will reveal what you are.”

We guessed that he was after a bribe. It ended with his suggestion that we should meet him the same evening at the restaurant “Russia.” In his opinion a meeting between us and General Larionov was not “urgent” in the meanwhile, and he made us sign a promise not to leave the city.

We left the office in high spirits and decided to pay well to extricate our heads from the noose. That evening we kept our appointment. In one of the corners of the hotel garden we noticed five officers engaged in a lively conversation. The Commandant's assistant invited us to his table as soon as he spotted us, and introduced us as friends who had just arrived from Georgia. The company was rather tipsy, it was continually growing, and new tables were always being added. Being tipsy our new friends were rather noisy and unconstrained, and soon we found out that among our companions were the head of the local intelligence service, the head of the intelligence service of the third corps, and a lieutenant of Kornilov's regiment, who was in Yevpatoria for medical treatment.

By midnight, very drunk, and hardly able to stand, the officers dispersed to their homes. Irakli paid about 80 gold rubles for the feast. Tired, but happy at the way things had turned out, we were trying to decide how the required bribe should be given.

The next morning the officer solved this problem for us. “Wouldn't it be nice to have a game of cards tonight!”

We understood that he was showing us the means of giving him the money. The very same evening Irakli lost 200 rubles to him. While playing, the officer assured Irakli that his report to

Larionov would be “in the most favorable light,” but that as there was absolutely no petrol in the town, the general would be sure to demand the confiscation of our cargo.

We begged for mercy.

“Don’t ruin us poor honest tradesmen! Please help us to sell the petrol at our own price!”

At first the officer refused, referring to the stubbornness of the Commandant, but finally he promised to “put in a word for us,” giving us a hint about a further bribe. Two days later we received a permit to trade. Our “friend” assured us later that he had had to share the bribe with his chief.

It seemed that the danger was over, but I was afraid that our companions, particularly the sailors, might easily ruin us when drunk. We were anxious to get rid of the crew of the “Evstrati” as soon as possible. Furthermore, every day of its stay was an extra expense.

We Become “Honest Tradesmen”

Irakli and I decided at last to unload our cargo and to discharge the “Evstrati.” We began to look for a suitable storage place in the city.

A week later the cargo was on shore. Our trade was very poor, very few of our sales exceeded 30 to 50 kilograms. We were being delayed, whereas we were anxious to disappear as soon as possible. At the same time, we did not want to affect a final settlement with the crew: it was necessary that they should depend on us all the time that we remained in Yevpatoria. We therefore resolved to purchase salt (the most profitable merchandise at the time) and to send the “Evstrati” back to Batum, where the crew would receive all the payment due them.

Many a time Irakli in his conversations with me mentioned that I must thank my fate for remaining alive. He insisted on my return to the Caucasus, but I decided to make my way to Moscow.

It happened once that one of our companions, Sasha K., came back to the hotel accompanied by a strange man of about 30, of an oriental type. He introduced him as his countryman, an engineer, Pirumov. He had met Pirumov in a restaurant. We could not be too careful under the circumstance, and I mentally reprimanded Sasha for his thoughtlessness. However, we soon became friends with Pirumov, and I even visited him at his home. He lived in the boarding house of a German on Senator Street together with his sister and her friend Nastia. Pirumov told us how they had escaped from Moscow recently, and of the cruelty of the Bolsheviks, bitterly complaining that his relatives remained in “Sovdepia.” We spent all our free time together.

Once, walking in the garden. Pirumov begged me to send him on the “Evstrati” to the Caucasus. I was surprised at his request. What pleasure could he derive from traveling on a sailing felucca, without any passenger accommodations, when he could easily travel by a comfortable passenger liner. Somewhat embarrassed, he explained that he was afraid of mobilization into the army. The steamship companies sell tickets only against the permit of the military authorities. I promised to arrange his voyage on the “Evstrati” and we agreed to keep it secret.

The sailing of the “Evstrati” with the cargo of salt was fixed for the middle of August. Due to my insistence Irakli consented to allow Pirumov on board, while he himself decided to go by passenger steamer. I was compelled to remain a few more days in Yevpatoria, to leave later for the north. I hoped to get to Moscow.

On the day the “Evstrati” was to sail, Pirumov and his sister came to the vessel and went down into the hold. Irakli and I were already on board. Ten minutes before starting, I went down into the hold to say good-bye to Pirumov. Already, several days before, my suspicions had been aroused. It seemed to me that mobilization was not the only thing he feared, for certain of his ways, his manner of turning round in the streets to see that there were no spies following, and other little things made me suspect that he was one of “us.”

Here, in the hold, I had a sudden impulse to take a chance and ask him bluntly.

“Let’s be honest. Even if I am mistaken, I have nothing to fear from you: you will not be allowed on shore again. And should you wish to report me in Batum, it will be too late. All traces of me will disappear from Yevpatoria tomorrow. I am a Bolshevik. I was sent by the Transcaucasian District Committee with a special mission. As you are aware, I landed among the Whites and have contrived so far to remain safe. My name is Shaumyan, not Barkhydarants. Probably you have heard it already. Who are you?”

Pirumov grew pale. He at first thought it was provocation, but my sincere tone and my last words evidently convinced him. With great haste, so as to have time to tell me everything, the anchor chains could already be heard and Krylov was swearing at me for the delay of Pirumov and his sister (later I found out that she was his wife “Mukha”) – he confirmed my suspicions. We shook hands heartily.

“My name is not Pirumov. I am Sergei Babakhan,” he told me, greatly excited. Go to Nastia and tell her of our conversation. She is one of us, and will bring you into contact with our lads. They will help you to get past the front.”

I took leave of them in a hurry and jumped into the boat, when the “Evstrati” was already moving. I found Irakli in the boat but, naturally, told him nothing.

With the Secret Service and Revolutionaries

The next day I went to see Nastia, the friend of Pirumov’s wife and had a long talk with her on different subjects, trying to induce her to speak about politics. I sensed immediately she was on the alert, but she did not take the bait, turning all hints into jokes and in general playing the role of a frivolous “flapper.” Then I told her bluntly about the conversation of the previous day. She was flabbergasted. I felt her struggling between two feelings: joy that I was of their “own” and fear of provocation. At last, all doubts were dissipated and she agreed to introduce me to our comrades that very evening.

In the evening, I called for her and we started. On the outskirts of the city, she knocked at the window of a little one-storied house. The door was opened by a tall brunette of about twenty-eight, who was holding a kerosene lamp. Smiling, Nastia said: "Sonia, here is one of our lads," and we passed into the room, where several persons were present: Alexander, a student, looking rather seedy, his wife Sonia, Alesha Avelev, a youth with bristling hair, who was the brother of the first Sonia, and Andriushka, a lovely child of three, who began to examine me with great interest. My reception was very warm, and for the first time after many months of playing the role of a merchant and cruel foe of Bolshevism, and after so many ambiguous situations, I felt myself in friendly surroundings and secure. I began to visit them every evening. Irakli, of course, knew nothing of my connection with the underground revolutionaries. My frequent absence from home, I explained by telling him I spent my time with Nastia. Nevertheless, I felt that he had begun to suspect something, as he persisted in advising me to return to the Caucasus. Irakli, himself, was ready to leave any day.

At that time the group of revolutionaries had not yet contrived to do anything. As always happens after a debacle, only small groups of Bolsheviks had remained in the Crimea, and they could hardly establish any connections. It was a period when the wounds received in battles were being taken care of. There was a stronger group in Sebastopol, headed by Comrade Haikevich ("Malchishka") and this group did succeed in establishing some connection with the port workers. Our Yevpatoria group was connected with Haikevich. I recall how once a telegram was received from him, reading "Send twenty gross mothers of pearl." It meant he needed two thousand rubles in tsarist notes of 100 rubles each. The Yevpatoria group was afraid to communicate with Sebastopol by rail. Therefore, a vehicle and a team of horses were purchased for the purpose and entrusted to a comrade who was thought to be sympathetic to the Bolshevik movement. He was supposed to use this team for taking the money to Haikevich. However, he proved to be a blackguard and, taking advantage of the situation, appropriated the team and the vehicle. It was lucky he did not betray the whole group.

My own situation was rather ticklish. On one hand, I was a merchant and a boon companion of the officers of the secret service and enjoyed their full confidence. On the other hand, I was a revolutionary, connected with an underground organisation. Irakli, neither White nor Red, knew me quite well. If he were a less honest man, he might betray me at any moment. I was also well known to the crew of the "Evstrati," who might also quite easily betray me when drunk, or even from sheer stupidity.

The confidence of the secret service men was very great. One day one of them came to my room, closed the door, and burst out:

"Do me a favor. A sailing vessel loaded with arms is expected to arrive for the Bolsheviks; the arms will be loaded at the bottom of the boat and concealed by some kind of merchandise. Two Armenians are in charge of the boat. We shall arrange for observation. As soon as the boat arrives, go there, make friends with the Armenians and try to gain their confidence, and promise to provide them with storage for the arms. All right? The reward will be a large one for both of us."

Concealing my excitement, I readily agreed. The man came to see me twice during that week, telling me of the arrival of suspicious sailing boats. I went to the pier to watch the crew. I succeeded in making the acquaintance of one of them, having taken a place at his table in a cafe. Our friendship lasted two days, but all in vain. I found out in the end that he was a Greek and only resembled an Armenian. He had smuggled from Constantinople all kinds of fancy goods and offered to sell me a large parcel of ladies' stockings, scent powder, and two pails of iodine. I told him I was more interested in currency and we parted. Thus, we failed to catch the Bolshevik arms, and were mighty sorry, both of us, but for very different reasons. He was deploring the loss of the money reward, while I was afraid that the transport missed by me might indeed be caught. I found out later that the Northern Caucasus did indeed supply arms to the Crimean "greens," but the arms were delivered to the southern shores of the Crimea and not to Yevpatoria.

I Become Barkhudayants

Irakli left, and I was the only one of the whole expeditions who remained in Yevpatoria. The papers were full of reports about the glorious victories of the "Volunteer Armies" and discussions of the candidates to the throne of the "Russian Empire." It was high time for me to get away. At first, I made a plan to reach Perekop, hoping to get from there to Port Skadovsk, by boat, as the latter place was still in the hands of the Bolsheviks. However, when I found out that the successful operations of the Whites had made this plan impracticable, I made up a new one to reach Aleksandrovsk by rail, from there to cross the Dnieper River somewhere between Aleksandrovsk and Krivoi Rog, thus reaching the country of the Soviets. However, the chances of successfully carrying out this plan were decreasing every day as the whole section of the Red Army which was fighting around Odessa might be cut off from Moscow at any moment. I therefore decided to go first to Kharkov and then further north, expecting to wait somewhere in the front line, till the Reds attacked and occupied it. It was very difficult to get to Moscow, but it was still more difficult to remain in Yevpatoria devising all kinds of plans, which due to the rapid progress of political events had to be changed with the speed of a cinema! It was at all events necessary to start; after that things could look after themselves. One thing was quite clear; nothing could induce me to give up trying.

I did not drop my friendship with the officers, my boon companions, hoping they might yet be of some use to me. We had two or three more parties after Irakli's departure, accompanied by the inevitable cursing of the Bolsheviks and toasts to the health of Generals Denikin, Slashchev, Mai-Mayevsky, Shilling, and others. The tipsy officers, and particularly a young assistant of the chief of the secret service department of the 3rd Corps, used to tell with gusto how they had hanged Bolsheviks, or shot them in bunches. This officer always carried in his pocket a piece of rope on which he had hanged a Bolshevik Commissar in Simferopol. These suppers always ended in debauchery.

Once, when dead drunk, one of our boon companions, the lieutenant of Kornilov's regiment, ordered the band to play "God Save the Czar." It was about 2 A. M. The people in the hall were so drunk that they could hardly understand what was going on. Some of the officers were lying unconscious under the tables, and some of the guests did not rise when it was played. It should also

be pointed out that the music was also quite drunken, as the musicians could not even control their instruments. Suddenly a strong crash and the sound of breaking glass aroused us. In a frenzy of patriotism, the lieutenant had thrown a couple of empty bottles at a neighboring table occupied by a group of civilians. Panic followed; everybody was moving about. The drunken lieutenant was yelling:

“I will not allow the civilian rabble to show their disrespect for His Imperial Majesty! Get out, you blackguards!”

We tried to pacify him in vain. Fortunately, a comparatively sober colonel came over to our table and ordered the lieutenant to leave the restaurant, which he did with great displeasure. Such scenes could be seen daily in the restaurants.

Another time I was present when some tipsy officers made a bet as to who could cut down one of the thick palms which decorated the hall with the smallest number of strokes. In spite of the protests and pleading of the owner and the head waiter, two officers began to strike the expensive trees with their swords, with savage glee. After four of the palms had been destroyed the officers threw to the waiter a hunch of notes and continued drinking. Having added a few more bottles the officers, now absolutely drunk, began to fire their revolvers at the chandeliers, breaking the lamps. As everybody was drunk, nobody noticed the showers of glass which fell on the plates and the heads of the guests. Each successful shot was applauded.

I was happy to observe these scenes: there could be no victory for an army having such commanders.

Once, after one of these suppers, the guests met the police as they were going out of the restaurant garden. It happened to be a raid for deserters. After documents were checked, many were released, while the most suspicious persons were led aside and left in the care of policemen. Unfortunately, I left my passport in the hotel for registration and had no document with me. Protests were of no avail. In company with a score of others, I was led to the police station. I hoped that the constable on duty would telephone to my hotel to verify my statement. It was about 3 o'clock. The officer on duty refused to telephone and yawningly ordered them to take me away — tomorrow everything would be settled. I must admit that I was a bit fuddled, and in such a state calm action is out of the question. Realizing this, I decided to submit, afraid of saying something wrong in my excitement.

I passed the night sitting on a stool in a cellar of which the floor was dirty, covered with spittle and cigarette ends. Several scores of the most disreputable riff-raff were there using a slang quite unintelligible to me. Twice they started to fight, but were stopped by the punches lavishly distributed by the police officer on duty. Sleep was out of the question.

At last day began to break. The time was dragging painfully. About ten o'clock we were summoned one by one for cross-examination. A police officer with a fluffy black mustache, and clad in a smart uniform, majestically presided at a large desk. His gloomy countenance brightened up

after the first few words of our conversation. It happened that before 1917 he had been a police constable in Baku.

“Is Barkhudayants, who owned a wine shop, a relation of yours?”

I knew of the existence of such a firm in Baku, but being afraid that the officer might be well acquainted with the family, whom I did not know, I replied shortly that the owner of the firm was my uncle.

“Ah, what wonderful Matrassinsky wine he had! Many a barrel did he send me every Christmas and Easter; a pleasant city, Baku ...”

Our conversation lasted about half an hour. He asked me when I intended to go back and promised to visit me at my hotel on the following day with letters for his friends in Baku. With this we parted. He came to see me the next day and we discussed the pleasures of Baku, while drinking tea. He gave me three letters addressed to three police officers and asked me to convey his greetings by word of mouth. That evening, I opened the letters, hoping to find out something which would be of service to me. The officer wrote that he was satisfied with his life. It is true that the salary was not too large, only 120 rubles, but thanks to God and the smugglers the income was sometimes as large as 500 rubles a month. He wrote candidly that “His Excellency” Kovalov, the former governor of Baku was now governor in Stavropol and was very kind to his former colleagues from Baku. “Therefore, if you are not satisfied with your government, just go to His Excellency. He will readily give you an appointment.” They were all in this vein. Not long before my departure from Yevpatoria, having met me in the street, the officer “borrowed” 20 rubles from me. I never saw my money again.

Through the White Army to Red Moscow

A special permit from the military authorities was required to go to Kharkov. My “friends” provided me with one. Furthermore, the chief of the local secret service department got me a license to carry a revolver, and got me a fairly good one for 20 rubles. There was no regular railway connection with the north. The trains consisted of freight cars accommodating from 40 to 50 passengers, who were literally packed like sardines.

Three troop-cars were attached to my train, for a hundred Cossacks and their officers. The officers were from Kuban and wore Circassian national coats. They all drank throughout the journey. At some stations they leaped out of the cars, formed a circle and executed a wild dance to the sounds of an accordion. A crowd would rapidly accumulate. Vainly did the station master beg them to get back into the train.

The officers would threaten him with their swords, and yell:

“Don’t you dare to start the train, you bitch, while the Kubans are dancing! We’ll tell you when we are tired!”

Due to their dancing the train several times remained for 2 or 3 hours at a station. A little north of Melitopol, we were startled by rifle shooting. The train stopped. We had happened to be passing a

pleasant meadow and the officers had decided to use it for their dancing. For a long while they tried to attract the engine-driver's attention with handkerchiefs and whistling, but he did not notice their signals. It was then that they decided to resort to shooting and thus stop the train. In this way they succeeded, and the dancing began. Drunk, red in the face, hardly able to stand on their legs, they executed a wild Caucasian dance thirty paces from the track, inspiring terror in the souls of the other passengers by their savage appearance. Finally, after a whole hour, they were so tired that the Cossacks had to carry them to their cars, and the engine driver was permitted to continue the journey. Notwithstanding all the troubles connected with their presence, they were in one way useful to us. Without them we would have been compelled to remain for hours at the stations awaiting locomotives, as these were given to passenger trains only when needed for no other work. Our officers burst into the offices of the station masters and with threats compelled them to give us a fresh engine at once. We therefore proceeded at double speed. At the stations of Synelnykove and Lozovaya our cars were attacked by the officers of another regiment together with gendarmes who demanded the delivery of all Jews into their hands. The day before in Synelnykove 5 Jews had been dragged out of the train and shot. Their blood was still visible on the platform.

At last, the train arrived at Kharkov. I decided to spend the night at the station. It was necessary to get a ticket to Belgorod early in the morning. All ordinary mortals were forbidden to go there. The tickets were sold only upon presentation of a special permit from the local military authorities. There was no chance of any official assistance. I was helped by one of the red-capped porters who were crowding in the station. He booked me a ticket for a train leaving in two hours and asked 10 rubles for it. The proximity of the front was keenly felt. A majority of the shops had not yet had time to begin work. A great number of portraits of Denikin, Mai-Mayevsky, Wrangel, Pokrovsky, Kornilov and others were displayed in the show-windows. Here were also illiterate poems ridiculing the Bolsheviks and the Jews. The "creations" of the Osvag,¹⁴ crude and devoid of humor, were lavishly exhibited in the streets. The Red Army prisoners, emaciated, starving, clad in rags, were walking the streets in crowds; they had entirely lost their human appearance and were begging for alms in order to obtain a bare subsistence. The Whites, after taking them prisoners, took their clothes and footwear, and then let them free to go and do what they liked. The mortality from starvation and typhus among these prisoners was appalling. After two days in the streets, squares, and stations of Kharkov, I moved on.

The train arrived at Belgorod late at night. I had no clear plan for future action. The station was crowded with wounded officers and soldiers from Kornilov's army, and with nurses and officers from the armored train which was standing in the station.

I was trying to be as inconspicuous as possible and was afraid to speak to anybody. From fragments of talk here and there I was able to make out that the White Army was advancing without encountering any great resistance. Nobody except soldiers were allowed to go to the front.

¹⁴ Information Bureau, officially controlling the press and public information; actually, an auxiliary organ of the secret service.

In the morning, I bought lieutenant's shoulder straps in the nearest shop, and immediately attached them to my coat. I had no luggage with me, only a thermos flask and a pistol. All this was fairly typical for an officer and my appearance could hardly arouse any suspicions. The only objection was my too youthful appearance. But after the Crimea I had purposely stopped shaving, and therefore looked about 20 or 21 years old. The station master told me that a train with commissary cargo was leaving at 4 o'clock for Rzhava. Beyond that station the track had been destroyed by the retreating Red Armies. I jumped onto the footboard of one of the carriages when the train was already moving, and thus continued my journey.

When we approached a station, I jumped down, walked round it, and then hoarded when the train was on the move again. Thus, I avoided all possible meetings and conversations. This was absolutely necessary, as the most innocent question, for instance, to which regiment did I belong? or, where was it located? would be sufficient to give me away at once. It was getting dark when the train approached Rzhava. The immediate proximity of the front was in the air. A Cossacks' detachment was near; military baggage trains and sanitary carts were in evidence. Soldiers and officers were scurrying about on the platform. Many of them were in Kornilov's uniform, with a skull and cross-bones embroidered on their sleeves. I decided to make use of the darkness to get away as far as possible from the station. I spent one night in a ditch, under a bush.

A Man Under the Straw

Early in the morning I was aroused by the sun-beams. I directed my steps towards a village located several kilometers from the station. The distant roar of artillery could be distinctly heard. The front was quite nearby. Occasionally a peasant could be seen working in the fields. Before I had gone two kilometers a column of dense dust was raised by a shell. The sound of the explosion stimulated me. If the shells reach here, evidently the Red artillery is not further than 7 or 8 kilometers away. The first shell was followed by several more, each one of them nearer the station. It was evident that the battery was aiming at the station of Rzhava. The peasants, surrounded by the falling shells, took no notice of them, and continued their work. Not far from the place where I spent the night, I tripped over a telephone wire. Looking round and seeing that nobody was in sight I rapidly cut it with my knife: At least for a time the connection between the troops would be severed.

I felt hungry and went to the village to get some bread. The peasants everywhere refused to sell any. They probably suspected me of being a forager, investigating whether they had any foodstuffs which could be requisitioned. After a long search an old woman took pity on me and sold me a loaf of bread and a cup of milk. She was a long time in selecting a note from the "Don" and Ukrainian money offered by me. She saw this money for the first time — the Red troops retreated only two days ago. I did not want to remain in the village, and went further, examining the road and anxiously thinking of the possibility of meeting a patrol. A peasant woman on a cart overtook me on the road. To my question where she was going, she stopped the horse and pointed to a village to the right:

"To Kolbasovka."

"But aren't the Bolsheviks there?"

"The Bolsheviks are in Kolbasovka, but there are none in Dvoyeluchnaya. The villages merge into each other."

She told me that the fields of her neighbors were now occupied by the Whites, while the fields of the Dvoyeluchnaya peasants were occupied by the Reds. Neither the Whites nor the Reds interfered with the harvesting work of the peasants. Thus, the villages are in permanent communication. A plan quickly matured in my head.

"I shall go with you, hiding under the straw. I shall go and make investigations in Kolbasovka. And tomorrow you can take me back."

She hesitated:

"And what if the Bolsheviks kill you? My life won't be worth a kopek: they will say I gave you away."

I did not listen to her, but climbed into the cart and covered myself with straw. "Well, if I am found, I'll hang on the first birch!" While riding, I instructed the woman not to stop in Dvoyeluchnaya, but that as soon as she arrived in Kolbasovka she should immediately ride into a garden or a yard, see if anybody was around and then tell me if everything was all right. Should we meet any detachment, she was not to mention that an officer was hiding in the straw. We were riding for an hour and a half. Suddenly through the thick straw I heard the tramp of hoofs and the talk of Cossacks. It proved that a detachment was indeed riding alongside the cart for some time, but later turned into a side road. We soon stopped. I heard the groaning of a gate and understood that we were at the end of our journey. Then I heard:

"Get out! Nobody's around!"

Afraid to believe that at last I was back again in Soviet territory, looking around me, I got out of the cart. I could hear my heart beating.

"Where are the headquarters?"

"In the priest's house," said the peasant woman. Astounded, she watched me running in the direction she indicated. I had hardly gone 20 steps when I was stopped by a shrill exclamation:

"Stop!"

Several Reds with their rifles atilt, appeared in front of me. My feelings at this moment are difficult to imagine; I was borne as if on wings to my headquarters, to the Red headquarters. I was leaving my troubles behind; so many times, I had been within an ace of death, and now, just at the very moment when everything was already over, I was stopped by a Soviet bayonet! I was ready to embrace the very soldier who was fiercely glaring at me. Only then did I understand that the Reds were confused by my officer's appearance; the shoulder-straps, the revolver and the thermos, which

they probably took for a hand grenade. I tore off the shoulder straps, and asked to be taken to the Commissar.

What a stupid finale it would have been, if in the circumstances the Reds had emptied their rifles into me, I thought.

The Commissar heard my story, and after some consideration, said:

“I am willing to believe you, comrade, but I am compelled to send you to the headquarters of the brigade.”

There the same thing happened again. I was “willingly believed” and sent with a convoy to the headquarters of the division. Only there the Commissar of the ninth division set me free, provided me with a railway pass and food, and sent me in an armored train which was leaving for Kursk for repairs. Several days later I was telling my friends in Moscow of all my adventures on the journey which began in Poti on the ninth of May and ended on the sixteenth of September in Moscow.

A Very Brief Epilogue

Some years later, when the necessity for crossing the front in order to reach Moscow from the Crimea no longer existed, and the entire “united and undivided” was concentrated in the slums of Constantinople; when the red banner of the victorious Proletariat was fluttering over the remotest parts of one-sixth of the globe, I found out that our Crimean organisations had been destroyed soon after I left Yevpatoria. All the Yevpatoria comrades fell into the hands of the secret service department. Alexander and a number of comrades were shot; Alesha, Sonia and others spent a long time in prison. Our little revolutionary Andriushka, imprisoned together with his mother, could not endure the difficult prison regime, fell ill and died....

All this happened in the year one thousand nine hundred and nineteen.