

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 2: Brief Biography Series Part 1

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IVAN BABUSHKIN



A Short Biography

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1932

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This Pamphlet is prepared under the supervision of the Society of Old Bolsheviks, Moscow.

In this series is also published "The Stride of the Dredging Fleet, 1905," by Peter Nikiforov; "Unemployed Councils in St. Petersburg in 1906," by Sergei Malyshev.

"From the February Revolution to the October Revolution," by A. F. Ilyin-Genevsky, and "The Revolt in the Battle Cruiser Potemkin" also deal with aspects of Russian revolutionary history.

"Bolsheviks on Trial" by S. Tchernomordik, and "The Zerno Publishing House" by M. S. Kedrov.

INTRODUCTION

“When its leading representatives (of the working class. -C.B.) grasp the idea of scientific socialism, the idea of the historical role of the working class; when these ideas become widely circulated, and working class organisations are established, which can transform the present scattered economic battles of the workers into a conscious class struggle, then the Russian workers, assuming the leadership of the democratic elements, will overthrow absolutism and lead the Russian proletariat (together with the world proletariat) along the straight road of open political struggle to the victorious Communist revolution.”¹

This is how Lenin clearly and distinctly defined the task in 1894, twenty-three years before it was actually accomplished, in October, 1917, after great sacrifices and magnificent struggles by the Russian proletariat, under the leadership of Lenin.

After the October Revolution, Lenin repeatedly emphasized that the brilliant victory had been achieved only because for decades the Bolsheviks had been successfully linking up revolutionary theory with revolutionary practice; because they were able not only to teach the masses but also to learn from them; because they were able organizationally to consolidate their ideological influences on the masses.

Babushkin, the pupil, companion-in-arms, and personal friend of Lenin, and the first Bolshevik worker-correspondent, was a model of the Bolshevik organizer of the masses.

When Lenin learned that Babushkin had fallen a victim to the tsarist executioners, he wrote :

“The people have their heroes – these are people like Babushkin : the men and women who have dedicated themselves to the struggle for the emancipation of the working class, not for just a year or two but for an entire decade before the revolution; the men and women who have not wasted their energies on useless, individual terrorist activity, but have worked persistently and steadfastly among the proletarian masses, developing their class consciousness, their organisations, and their revolutionary initiative. They are the men and women who led the armed mass struggle against the tsarist autocracy when the crisis came, when the revolution broke out; when millions upon millions began to stir. Whatever was won from the tsarist autocracy was won exclusively through the mass struggle, led by people like Babushkin.

“ Without such men and women, the Russian people would have forever remained a nation of slaves, a nation of serfs. With such people to lead them, the Russian people will win for themselves complete emancipation from every kind of exploitation.”

The story of the life and work of Babushkin is briefly outlined in these pages. This story has been compiled from the following sources: an unfinished autobiography which Babushkin wrote at Lenin’s request and which is now kept at the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute in Moscow, Lenin’s articles

¹ V.I. Lenin, *Selected Works Vol. I, II* (International Publishers, 1963).

and correspondence with Babushkin, and the memoirs of Lenin's widow, Comrade Krupskaya and of other Bolsheviks.

CHILDHOOD

Ivan Vasilyevich Babushkin was born in January, 1873, of a poor peasant family in the Vologda province. The land holding of his parents was so small that his father, Vasily Babushkin, had to work at the salt works, where working conditions were terrible, in order to feed the family.

When Babushkin was five years old, his father died. His mother, Ekaterina Babushkin, had such a difficult time with her three children, of whom Vanya (Ivan) was the eldest, that she was compelled to send the youngster out to beg.

Having lost all hope of freeing herself from the grip of starvation and poverty in her native village, Ekaterina Babushkin went to St. Petersburg with her two younger children in search of work. Vanya, then seven years old, was left in the care of relatives who cruelly abused and exploited him. Young Babushkin lived with them for three years until his mother took him to St. Petersburg where she got him a job in a dairy.

He had to work in the dairy even harder than he had had to work for his relatives in the village. He had to carry heavy loads on his head, which caused the blood to rush to his eyes and they became inflamed. In addition to this he was cruelly treated and beaten by his employer. The work was so hard that he was really glad when he was sent to a hospital to have his eyes treated. In his autobiography, Babushkin says that he was glad to be in hospital because "no one scolded me and I could lie all day long in my cot with my eyes closed, and no one interfered with me."

After this hard bringing-up, Babushkin was apprenticed to the Kronstadt torpedo works at 24 kopeks a day. On this princely wage he managed to eke out a livelihood until he completed his apprenticeship at eighteen.

IN THE FACTORY

The main struggle of the St. Petersburg factory workers in the middle of the 'nineties was against the length of the working day. This is shown by the demands raised by the workers themselves at that time, enumerated in their strike leaflets, as follows :

- "1. We want the working day to be from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. instead of from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. as at present
- "2. We want dinner time to last an hour and a half so that the working day will be ten and a half hours instead of thirteen
- "3. We want all work to stop on Saturday at 2 p.m. in all factories."

From these demands it is evident that the sorest spot in the workers' life was the excessively long hours they had to work. At that time the workers' ideal was a twelve-hour day, for they worked

from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., fourteen hours a day. Babushkin describes the factory life in his autobiography as follows:

“During my first year in the factory I did not live ; I only worked. It was piece-work, and we worked day and night. Occasionally I would remain at the factory for days without going home, which was only twenty minutes’ walk from the factory. I remember that once, during a rush, we had to work for sixty hours on end, stopping only to snatch a bite. At such times, dazed from overwork, I would fall asleep on the way home from the factory, bump against a lamp post and wake up, but again fall asleep, and dream that I was rowing on the Neva and the bow of the boat had hit the shore.

“Working so hard, we saw nothing of real life, and our minds were always a blank. All our desires were focused on one thing, the expectation of a holiday. And when the holiday would arrive, we would sleep for half the day, and again there was nothing to see, nothing to hear, and nothing to learn. On the morrow, work again, nothing but deadening, exhausting work, no life, no rest. And with all that work there was no one who would say a word to you, either of praise or blame; no one would suggest a rest. And for whom did we perform this wearisome toil? Only, the capitalists’ for profit and our own stupefaction. Our only salvation was the fact that we did not quite understand the situation and did not realize the horror of this terrific oppression.

“This was our joyless life, and this was the life of the majority of the people. Here I end the description of my life up to the time of my conversion from a mere cipher – a man without any convictions – into a socialist human being.”

The deplorable conditions of work in the Russian factories had aroused the workers to spontaneous strikes even prior to the time described by Babushkin. Later on, individuals and even whole groups of such “socialist human beings” rose from the ranks of the factory workers and became initiators, organizers and leaders in the class struggles which followed. Young Ivan Babushkin got in touch with a group of class-conscious workers in his factory and found that they were connected with the revolutionary intelligentsia.

AWAKENING IN THE FACTORY

Babushkin describes his initiation into the revolutionary movement very picturesquely : we still had about ten to before the whistle, and some looking round, I heard some “ One Saturday when fifteen minutes to go of us were cautiously one say, “ Let’s finish our slaving; there is no end to this job.” It was a machinist. called Kostya, a young man like myself, who spoke. I nodded my head and said : ‘That’s true; only fools love work’.

“‘Tomorrow is Sunday. Is your gang working?’ began Kostya diplomatically, apparently having decided beforehand that I was a suitable subject. ‘What do you do during your spare time at home?’

Why, nothing in particular. We are planning to arrange a dance soon,' I said haltingly, hoping to induce him to join me in a spree.

"Have you any books?"

"I was embarrassed. I had not read a book for a long time, although I possessed a dozen of them. I did not understand them, and they therefore remained untouched on the shelf, the decoration of a young man's room."

On his first free Sunday, Babushkin visited his new acquaintance Kostya, in whose room he found two young workers reading a leaflet. This leaflet was passed on to Babushkin to read, and he says in his autobiography :

"From the very first words, I understood that this was something that I had never seen nor heard of before. The very first words I read aroused a peculiar feeling within me. Involuntarily my thoughts began to run so fast that I read with difficulty. The leaflet spoke against the priests, the Tsar and the government; it was couched in strong language, and as I read, I became more and more convinced that what the leaflet said was true, and that one had to do what the leaflet advised. I could already imagine myself being executed for crimes committed against the powers that be, and I felt that all life was going to rack and ruin. At the same time, I realized with a shock that there is no hereafter and there never was one, that it was all invented to fool the common people.

"I believed everything that was said in the leaflet without any reservation; it had a profound effect on me. I finished reading with difficulty and felt weighed down by the thoughts that the leaflet had aroused. The meaning of the leaflet sank deeply into my brain, and from then on, I became an anti-government element.

"I silently returned the leaflet to Kostya. I understood immediately the purpose of his invitation and decided that for this cause it was worth sacrificing everything, including one's life."

Babushkin's decision — to become an "anti-government element" — changed the course of his entire life. It was not accidental, although it was arrived at after reading a single leaflet. It only showed how far the ground had already been prepared, to what degree the growth of the capitalism in Russia was being accompanied by the growth of its grave-digger, the working-class, which was beginning to create its own leaders.

After the incident with the leaflet Babushkin began to educate himself; he began to read much and to attend the Sunday school for workers, about which he later wrote in his autobiography as follows:

"Autumn was approaching. We were waiting impatiently for the opening of the Sunday school about which *we* had already heard a great deal. Much had been said in praise of this school : that one could learn to understand people there, and especially that one could gain

knowledge there, that all the teachers gave their services free of charge because they wanted to bring knowledge to the people, and that they were ready to suffer oppression and persecution at the hands of the government for the sake of the people.”

These Sunday schools existed legally and were skillfully used by the Marxist revolutionary intelligentsia, who went there as teachers, as a legal cover for their revolutionary propaganda among the factory workers. Instead of the official course of geography, these teachers taught Marxian political economy; instead of the official history which dealt with the heroic exploits of the Tsars, they taught the history of the revolutionary movement, and in a disguised form told how the Russian Tsars played the part of international gendarmes, the suppressors of all emancipation movements, not only in Russia, but in the rest of Europe as well.

Babushkin entered such a school in St. Petersburg where N. K. Krupskaya, and her friend Lydia Knipovich, who later also became a famous Bolshevik, were working. Krupskaya states in her reminiscences that Babushkin did not excel as a conspirator. During one of the lessons in Russian grammar, when he had to give some examples, he wrote on the blackboard : “ There will soon be a strike in our factory.” After the lesson Lydia Knipovich called him aside, chided him for his carelessness, and pointed out to him that one could be a revolutionary without shouting about it. Babushkin blushed and was very much embarrassed, but from that moment very friendly relationships were established between teacher and pupil. Thus, from the very beginning the school taught revolutionary endurance. The work of the Sunday school is an illustration of the manner in which even in the restricted circumstances of that time the Bolsheviks were able to take advantage of legal possibilities for illegal revolutionary work.

BABUSHKIN MEETS LENIN

While studying at the Sunday school, Babushkin began to associate with the St. Petersburg revolutionary Marxist intelligentsia. From the autumn of 1893, this group was led by young Lenin, who came there especially to carry on revolutionary work. Babushkin was fortunate enough to join a circle led by Lenin himself.

The reader will forgive us if we quote at length the part of Babushkin’s autobiography where he describes the work of the study circle and of Lenin as a circle leader.

“A new acquaintance of mine, a worker connected with the intelligentsia, organized a circle. It met in my room, which was most convenient because there were no outsiders there. The circle consisted of six people, the lecturer being the seventh. We began our studies with the study of Marxian political economy. The lecturer presented his subject without the use of a text-book. He encouraged us to raise objections to the points he raised and provoked disputes among the students, encouraging us to defend our points of view against one another. Thus, our studies were always interesting and lively and at the same time effective in training us as speakers. “

“We found this method of study the best way of elucidating problems. We were always very much satisfied with the lectures and deeply impressed by the knowledge displayed by our

lecturer. The standing joke among us was that he was losing his hair because he had too much brains.

“These lectures also trained us for independent research work. We used to receive lists of questions from the lecturer, which demanded the close study and observation of factory life.

Often during work, we used to go into various departments of the factory on various pretexts in order to collect the necessary information through direct observation and whenever possible through conversation with the workers. My tool box was always full of notes. During my lunch hour I used to re-write these notes, which were about the number of days we worked in our factory and about our earnings. The main obstacle to gathering such information was the lack of leisure time, yet we made some progress.

At that time a proper idea of the working conditions in the factories could be obtained only from the materials gathered illegally “in the tool box,” and there was always the danger of falling into the clutches of the gendarmes.

The collection of material about the life of the workers, to be used later in oral and written propaganda in approaching the working masses on the basis of their concrete needs, is the typical Bolshevik method of work which, as we see, was often applied when “firm organisations transforming the present scattered economic struggles into a conscious class struggle” were only just coming into being.

The method of instruction which Lenin used in the Semyannikov circle was no less characteristic — “he encouraged us to raise objections to the points he raised and also provoked disputes among the students, encouraging us to defend our points of view against one another” . . . , thus making the studies “always interesting and lively, and effective in training us as speakers.”

Even at that time Lenin, more than anyone else, realized the significance of the problem of creating a staff of active workers. He realized what part “the leading representatives of the working class who mastered the ideas of scientific socialism” would play in the further development of the revolutionary struggle.

That is why Lenin, occupied though he was with the study of great theoretical problems even at that time, spent much time in personal supervision of the propagandist circles of which, as we know, he conducted several at that time. The members of these circles proved to be worthy pupils of their teacher.

FROM PUPIL TO TEACHER

Babushkin particularly proved this by his brief but rich life as a proletarian revolutionary. He also proved it by his supreme courage when the time came to give his own life for the revolution.

While diligently training himself, studying at the Sunday school and in Lenin’s circle, Babushkin gradually began to occupy himself with practical work. He began to teach others and became an agitator himself.

In the winter of 1894, a spontaneous strike broke out in the Semyannikov factory, during which the factory office was demolished, the factory officials were beaten up, and the factory was set on fire. About the same time another strike broke out in the St. Petersburg port. These events decided the issue in the controversies which were then taking place in Social-Democratic circles. The disputes were about the methods of revolutionary work, that is, whether revolutionary activity should consist only in spreading propaganda among separate circles, or whether the time had already arrived for wide agitation among the workers by spreading literature among them. After the events at the Semyannikov factory and in the port of St. Petersburg, it became obvious that the moment for transferring from circle-leading to mass work had arrived. As the Russian press was completely muffled, the illegal press assumed extreme importance as a means of influencing the working masses through the spreading of leaflets at factories. Babushkin took part in the drawing up of the first leaflet of that type. In his autobiography, when speaking about the method of spreading this leaflet at the Semyannikov factory, he says:

“The occasion was most appropriate (that is, the riot in the factory and its suppression. — C. B.), and therefore it was desirable to try agitation in the factory proper. We composed a long leaflet which was hectographed, folded and made ready for distribution. But the question arose as to how to distribute the leaflets.

“ I was appointed to supervise this affair, but I did not even know how to set about it. To distribute the leaflets by placing them in the tool boxes was not expedient because it would be observed. I decided the best place would be the lavatories. I do not remember whether it was on a Saturday or Monday, when I took the leaflets for distribution; I put some in the lavatories, others I left wherever I could, throwing them into shops through broken windows, open doors, etc. At the other end of the factory the same thing was done : some leaflets were left in the tool boxes, others at the machines where the workers were sitting, and still others dropped wherever possible. In one shop the leaflets happened to fall into the hands of the foreman, who accused one of the oldest workers of distributing them. I was sorry for the old man, but could not interfere because that might have hindered the distribution of leaflets in the future. I decided to talk to the old man about it afterwards. The first distribution seemed to be successful, and later on leaflets were distributed in the workshops of the St. Petersburg port in the same manner. There they had an even greater effect than in the Semyannikov factory.”

Due to his propaganda work in the circles — always maintaining close contact with the masses, organizing them, setting up a circulating library, composing and distributing leaflets in plants and factories, and at the same time improving his own education — Babushkin gradually became one of the most outstanding and active members of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, of which Lenin was the leader.

When Lenin and his group were arrested on December 9, 1895, Babushkin temporarily evaded arrest. Regarding the impression these arrests made on him, he writes:

“The arrests were expected, but not so soon and not on such a scale. Naturally, this made a deep impression on me, but not so deep as it would have made had it happened earlier. I had already become accustomed to arrests and got over them quite easily.”

Writing of himself as an active revolutionary at that time, he says:

“A year ago, my whole idea was to grasp high sounding words, and to learn from the intelligentsia and from the teachers in school. At meetings I was shy and retiring. But now I had to carry on independent work and decide all kinds of questions myself : questions which arose in the educational circles, the factories, and at school. Often, I was aware that I was not altogether competent; still, I spoke, explained, advised, only because the better leaders had been deported. And since I was called upon to be a leader, I could not shirk my duty.”

This duty of being a “ leader” inspired Babushkin to write a splendid leaflet entitled *What Is a Socialist and a Political Offender?*

Three weeks after the arrest of Lenin and his group, Babushkin was given a batch of leaflets for distribution, explaining the significance of the arrest. He felt that he was performing this task for the last time because he himself was threatened with arrest. Detectives were already on his trail. After delivering the leaflets to the workers in certain factories, he took some of them to his comrades in the Obukhov Works, and after urging them to continue the work, he left them, with a strong premonition that he would be arrested that very night. And that is what actually happened. Gendarmes raided his lodgings during the night and made a thorough search, and although they found absolutely nothing, they made him dress and go with them.

“Early in the morning,” he writes, “just when the street lamps were being put out in St. Petersburg, I was taken to the jail. From the very first this immense building inspired me with hatred, but I was to become more closely acquainted with it, in adjusting myself to its rules and regulations, and in going through the many disturbances which took place during the thirteen months I was detained there.

“During all that time, I was unable to exchange a word with a single one of the comrades who were imprisoned along with me, and who, like me, were forced for long months to maintain silence, the silence of the grave.”

FURTHER ADVANCE

During the second half of the 'nineties there was a temporary wave of industrial prosperity in Russia, and simultaneously with this prosperity there was a great growth of the movement, which resulted in the famous St. Petersburg strikes in the summer of 1896. The striking workers in the tsarist capital seriously frightened the government, and as a result, the first Russian labor law was passed, limiting the working day in factories to 11 1/2 hours.

However, this concession, wrung from the government under the pressure of the masses, did not prevent the tsarist gendarmes settling accounts with the most active participants in this struggle.

Hundreds of the best workers were imprisoned or exiled to Siberia, and thousands were deported from the capital.

This “wise” policy of the tsarist rulers proved to be a double-edged sword, for the deported workers, carriers of the revolutionary bacillus, scattered the revolutionary infection throughout the country.

The South of Russia at that time was most susceptible to revolutionary infection. The large metallurgical centre of Ekaterinoslav (now Dnipropetrovsk) was a breeding ground for revolutionary ideas and naturally attracted the deported St. Petersburg strikers, who saw in it a fertile field for work. For that reason, Babushkin made for Ekaterinoslav when the sentence of three-year deportation was passed on him.

Solitary confinement for over a year did not break Babushkin’s spirit nor paralyze his will to fight, even though he was very young at the time. On the contrary, it steeled him for further revolutionary work. On his arrival at Ekaterinoslav he resumed his revolutionary activity and became completely absorbed in it. Revolutionary work now became his profession. He looked for a job in a factory in order to have contact with the workers. It was hard for him to get a job, and, when he finally did get one, he found that during his imprisonment his hands had become very tender and “ genteel,” and they were blistered from the work. The thought that he had become lily fingered during his imprisonment depressed him very much. But he soon got over it.

Knowing that many of the comrades deported from St. Petersburg must also have found their way to Ekaterinoslav, he searched for them. In his autobiography he relates how he made his first contacts :

“One morning, during the second month of my stay in Ekaterinoslav, my landlord came home from the night shift accompanied by another worker from the factory. The newcomer introduced himself as a comrade, and getting me out of my bed, which consisted of a thin blanket spread on the floor, he dragged me over to his house. There I met two other comrades who had landed there under the same circumstances as I.

“One of my new acquaintances was a pattern-maker; the other was a young factory lad of about twenty. The latter (we shall call him Matukha for short) particularly pleased me. A simple fellow, he was a typical representative of the masses; he knew nothing at all except the very elementary things he had learned in the village school. At first, he read with difficulty the leaflets which we distributed at the factories, but later he took an active part in distributing leaflets and in agitating for a strike. When he was arrested his only concern was about the other arrested comrades and the harm it might do to the movement. Matukha was all aflame with enthusiasm over the St. Petersburg strike movement.”

In a few months Babushkin succeeded in establishing firm contact with many deported St. Petersburg strikers, as well as with local revolutionary workers who by that time – 1897 and early 1898 – already had their own organisation, the Ekaterinoslav League of Struggle for the Emancipation

of the Working Class. This organisation was based on groups outside the factories; it had not yet succeeded in penetrating the working masses.

Babushkin directed the work of the organisation into new channels. He was able to put it on a basis of wide mass agitation and propaganda. For instance, early in 1898, the Ekaterinoslav League of Struggle, under the leadership of Babushkin, prepared and distributed eight leaflets, one for each of the eight largest factories in the town, based on definite information about the conditions of the workers in each factory. Besides this, each leaflet linked up the conditions of the workers in each factory with the political exposure of tsarism; it showed that the workers had no rights, pointed the way to liberty, and called upon the workers to take up the organized revolutionary struggle.

How these leaflets were distributed and what impression they made on the workers Babushkin tells us in his autobiography:

“Late at night I went to one of the factories with Matukha. We came to a two-story building, climbed a fence and landed near the building. I lifted Matukha to enable him to open a window, and he threw a batch of leaflets into the shop. In this manner we spread leaflets in three departments. In the morning when the workers came to work, they naturally picked up the leaflets, and in a quarter of an hour everyone was reading them.

“In another factory we had much more difficulty in distributing the leaflets, because it worked twenty-four hours. But Matukha got a job there, and, taking a batch of leaflets with him, he calmly worked through the day and at 7 p.m. when everybody went home, he, too, left the shop, but remained inside the factory gates. He hid himself in a hole where they were digging an artesian well and remained there until midnight.

“When all the machines were stopped for midnight supper, he quietly came out of his hiding-place with his leaflets, and waited for the lights to go out. This was the moment for which he had waited five hours. As soon as the electricity was turned off, he ran into the shop, threw the leaflets about, ran out and jumped over the fence. Five minutes later, when the lights went on, the workers found the leaflets and began reading them. They created a profound impression. All the workers knew about the leaflets, and so did the factory administration, the gendarmerie and the city police, but none of them knew who distributed them. The workers in all the factories were encouraged by this incident; the administration, on the other hand, was forced to loosen its grip.”

All the Ekaterinoslav factories were stirred by the distribution of these leaflets. The activity of the organisation greatly increased, and Babushkin, the guiding spirit of these activities, was naturally overwhelmed with work. The right to hold meetings was completely denied the workers, and agitation by hectographed leaflets became more and more unsatisfactory. There was an urgent need for properly printed leaflets and even for a workers' newspaper. For this it was necessary to equip a secret printing shop, and Babushkin enthusiastically took upon himself this new extremely difficult task. After many tribulations and persistent search, Babushkin finally succeeded in getting some type for his future printing shop. With much difficulty he also succeeded in converting an apartment into

a printing shop. But everything was held up because of the lack of a printing press. The first of May was approaching, and it was necessary to issue a newspaper, or at least a May Day leaflet. Concerning this Babushkin writes:

“As quickly as possible I made a frame for the type in the factory. The foreman often noticed that I was working on something for myself, but exactly what I was doing he could not guess. Because of the tense situation he did not want to make trouble and, said nothing. After I finished the frame, the problem was how to get it out of the factory. I got one of the other workers to take it out for me, which he did, not knowing what it was for. After this it became necessary to make the ink rollers. The composition was made out of ordinary first-class carpenter’s glue and treacle. We had a great deal of trouble with it because it refused to congeal. I went to my comrades and asked them to assist me in making a mold at all costs, even if it were necessary to fight with the factory administration for it. One of the comrades remained at work one whole night, and with no foreman to watch him, the work was begun, and within two hours a well-shaped cylinder was ready to be taken out of the factory.

“I bought three reams of paper and a tin-plate for ink. I went to the apartment, where we set the type for the May Day leaflet. Then we began the printing which consisted in rolling a wooden roller with a linen towel tightly wound around it, over the frame which contained the type. Since the roller was very light, we had to press heavily on it with the whole weight of the body, which was difficult when we tried to work quickly. We worked in this way : one put on the ink and pressed the roller, the other put on and took off the paper, the third spread out the wet and gathered up the dry sheets, the fourth rested or folded the sheets.”

Thus was the “conveyor” system of illegal printing introduced under the tsarist regime. It required great patience to spend day and night at such work, but in the end Babushkin succeeded in putting out 3,000 May Day leaflets.

Babushkin worked in Ekaterinoslav under the Party name of “Tramwayny” up to the beginning of 1900, when the secret police began to shadow him persistently. To avoid arrest, he quietly disappeared from Ekaterinoslav.

“The train was speeding along the Nikolayev railway,” he writes, “approaching St. Petersburg. Soon I was to see familiar streets and well-known faces. A real passport, belonging to a person in good standing, was in my side pocket, and with it I could safely appear anywhere.”

The three years of intense revolutionary work in Ekaterinoslav transformed the 27-year-old Babushkin into a mature, hardened fighter, capable of doing responsible, leading Party work. At that time Lenin was in Pskov negotiating the publication of the newspaper *Iskra*. Babushkin participated in these negotiations. From there Lenin sent him to work at the large industrial centers, Orekhovo-Zuyevo. Babushkin established contacts with the comrades working there, and in turn connected those comrades with others abroad, where Lenin went after the expiration of his exile in Siberia. There Lenin soon managed to establish the Russian Party organ *Iskra*, and organized a central Party

organisation of the same name. Babushkin was the first worker-correspondent for the newspaper and one of the most active members of the Central Organisation.

A WORKER-CORRESPONDENT FOR ISKRA

Here are some samples of Babushkin's correspondence to Iskra from Orekhovo-Zuyevo, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Bogorodsk and other textile centers:

Iskra, No. 4, May, 1901 : "Orekhovo-Zuyevo. Before describing the hospital rules and regulations at Morosov's factory (Morosov was a large textile manufacturer.-- C.B.), it is necessary to say a few words on the local situation. We Orekhovo-Zuyevo workers would like to inform our own fellow-workers, as well as the workers of other cities and other industries, about the awful conditions in our factory, through the columns of the workers' newspaper, *Iskra*. Despite the efforts of notorious priests who work hand in hand with the capitalists and the government to keep us in ignorance by their cunning sophistries, the workers realize their miserable enslaved conditions.

"The population of Orekhovo-Zuyevo is 40,000, living in an area of nine square versts. Due to this congestion, the labor movement is very sluggish and retarded, chiefly as a result of mental starvation. We lack the literature that one is able to obtain in the capitals and large cities, and since workers from those centers do not come here, we do not know where or how the cause is developing."

Following this there is a description of the provoking rules and regulations at Morosov's hospital.

In issue No. 6 of *Iskra*, Babushkin describes the dreadful conditions of the workers in the factories of Ivanovo-Voznesensk. He dwells in detail on the strike that was then going on at the Kalashnik iron works and reports the following fact, which characterizes the proletarian solidarity of that period :

"Ten workers were imported from Moscow. They were not told that they were being employed as strike breakers. They were promised very good wages: from 78 to 80 or more rubles per month. But when the Moscow workers came to Ivanovo Voznesensk and learned what part they were to play in the strike, they declared to the Ivanovo-Voznesensk workers that they had been deceived and that, had they known about the strike, they would not have come. From that time complete solidarity was established between the workers of the two cities. Soon the Moscow workers went to the factory inspector to complain about the conditions in the factory. The employers, fearing complications, discharged them, the Kalashnik foundry workers made a collection for their fare, and the Moscow workers returned home."

From Shum (Ivanovo-Voznesensk district) Babushkin reports

“ Recently night raids and arrests took place here, and the gendarmes have collected a batch of cases. They are arresting people for being in possession of books, even such as are not banned. At the examination the gendarme asks: 'What is this for?' 'I bought it to read,' replies the worker. 'And why did you buy this and not the Bible?' 'And why do you read instead of sleeping?' This gendarme and the manufacturer Pavlov are very thick friends and very often get so dead drunk together that they resemble dirty swine more than human beings. Pavlov orders girls for his use as lightly as if he were ordering fried chicken. These representatives of the police and capital strive to keep the masses in darkness. A worker doesn't dare to walk the streets with a book under his arm for fear the police might take it away and question him about it. This often happens near the reading rooms.”

Babushkin's correspondence to *Iskra* is not merely an expression of his hatred of the tsarist regime, the capitalists, the priests and the gendarmes. His hatred is always fortified by the violence and oppression perpetrated against the workers in the factories and in their homes by these forces of the ruling class. Reading this correspondence, one gets the impression that the worker-correspondent, Babushkin, was in the very thick of life, that he suffered because of its restriction, that he did not describe it merely as an onlooker, but as an active participant who not only wrote but fought energetically against this consuming evil.

Thirty years ago, Babushkin quite clearly understood the task of a worker-correspondent. Lenin wrote about Babushkin's correspondence and his organisation of worker-correspondents as follows : “As long as Ivan Vasilyevich (Babushkin) remains at liberty, the *Iskra* will not lack real workers' correspondence. Almost all the correspondence from Shum, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Orekhovo-Zuyevo and other parts of Central Russia that was published in the first thirty numbers of the *Iskra* passed through the hands of Ivan Vasilyevich, who tried to establish the closest contact between *Iskra* and the workers. Ivan Vasilyevich was the most ardent correspondent of *Iskra* and its warmest adherent.”

To the same Orekhovo-Zuyevo period belongs the very popular illegal pamphlet *In Defense of Ivanovo-Voznesensk Workers*, written by Babushkin. How this came to be written we learn from the memoirs of N. K. Krupskaya and from Lenin's correspondence with the Russian Party organisations during the *Iskra* period. In Ivanovo-Voznesensk there was a factory inspector named Dodonovo, who, “grieving” for the workers, wrote some liberal trash about their lives. His article was published in the journal of the People's Party, *Russkoye Bogatstvo* (*Russian Wealth*). In this article Dodonovo, “commiserating” with the Ivanovo-Voznesensk workers, pictured them as hopeless drunkards and fools who ought to be enlightened through the reading of liberal books.

When Lenin read this article, he was very much perturbed and he asked Babushkin to write a refutation of this liberal inspector. Babushkin's reply to Dodonovo's article, written under the pseudonym of “A Worker for Workers,” was replete with sarcasm :

“Mr. Dodonovo's penetrating insight is truly remarkable. He is not like the hero of the story about the man who visited the Zoo and saw numerous insects, but failed to see the elephant.

Oh, no! Mr. Dodonovo, arriving at the factories of Ivanovo-Voznesensk, immediately noticed a deep abyss, and what an abyss! All the factories were situated in it. Is not Mr. Dodonovo observant? And looking around, a few more things caught his attention, and he began to turn like the arms of a windmill, round and round and up and down, up and down.

“In going around he noticed that ‘drunkenness’ is worked out to a system, and turning again he saw that the workers sleep as closely packed as sardines, one’s head at the other’s feet; further he observed that the workers (all of them) have not the least desire to read nor any aspiration to study, that vodka is consumed in great quantities, and he saw a detective trying to unravel a brawl in which a torn coat was the only circumstantial evidence. He further observes drunken men, singing and dancing in the streets, loafing crowds and empty theatres, and not a book anywhere. Quite right, Mr. Dodonovo, we do have drinking parties occasionally, and not only in Ivanovo-Voznesensk but also in Moscow, St. Petersburg and South Russia. Every cultured worker is carrying on a persistent struggle against this evil. But we cannot agree that this is “one of the worst evils of factory life.

“When a weaver who has just got a job invites ten or fifteen people and buys a gallon of vodka, to celebrate the occasion they are not having a drinking bout, they are innocently having a drink after work to congratulate their fellow worker on having fortunately found a job. And this does not happen every day. Besides, may I, with your permission, ask this question : Why, when his Royal Highness takes a drink for his health and then a toast for the King and another for the Count, time without end, until he gets blind drunk, why, Mr. Donovan (do you not say that this is drinking ‘worked out to a system’) and why is not this ‘ the worst of evils’ in the life of the highly educated classes?”

Babushkin’s activity in the textile region was not limited to his literary work : the *Iskra* correspondence and the above-mentioned pamphlet. His activity as an agitator and organizer of the textile workers were very varied, and in all this work Babushkin invariably followed the instructions of Lenin, with whom he constantly carried on a personal correspondence.

ARREST, IMPRISONMENT, FLIGHT

The intense revolutionary work Babushkin carried on in the textile districts inevitably drew the attention of the authorities, and in December, 1901, the gendarmes raided the local organisation and, among others, arrested Babushkin, who was charged as the “unknown.”

For a long time, the gendarmes tried to learn Babushkin’s identity and finally they discovered that he was the man who had slipped through their hands in Ekaterinoslav. They kept him in the textile district for a little while and then sent him to the south, the scene of his previous “crimes.” There Babushkin languished in jail until June, 1902, when after a file had been smuggled in to him from outside, he broke out of jail and escaped.

IN LONDON WITH LENIN

Not knowing a single word of any language except Russian, Babushkin managed to cross the frontier in September, 1902. He appeared unexpectedly at Lenin's house in London, where the editorial office of the *Iskra* was located at that time.² In her memoirs, N. K. Krupskaya writes about Babushkin's arrival in London as follows:

"At the beginning of September, 1902, Babushkin arrived, after having escaped from Ekaterinoslav prison. His escape from prison and get-away across the frontier was furthered by the assistance of some schoolboys. They dyed his hair, which, after a while, turned crimson and attracted general attention. In Germany he fell into the hands of the commissioners, and only just avoided being deported to America. We fixed him up in the commune, where he lived during the whole of the time of his stay in London. By this time Babushkin had made great strides in his political knowledge. He was now a steeled revolutionary with his own opinions. He had an extensive experience of all kinds of working-class organisations and, being himself a worker, had nothing to learn as to how to approach the workers. When he had first come to the Sunday school some years back, he was quite an inexperienced fellow. I remember one episode. At first, he was in Lydia Mikhailovna Knipovich group. They were learning Russian grammar and going over various examples. Babushkin wrote on the blackboard : 'There will soon be a strike in our factory.' After the lesson, Lydia called him aside and rebuked him : " If you want to be a revolutionist you must not make yourself conspicuous as one, but be able to use self-restraint. . . . ' Babushkin blushed, but afterwards came to regard Lydia as his best friend and often consulted her of our activities.

"It was at that time that Plekhanov arrived in London. A joint meeting with Babushkin was arranged. Russian affairs were discussed. Babushkin had his own opinion, which he defended very firmly. He was so tenacious that he began to impress Plekhanov. Georgi Valentinovich certainly began to look at him more attentively. But Babushkin spoke of his future work in Russia only with Vladimir Ilyich, with whom he was particularly intimate. I remember yet another small but characteristic incident. Two or three days after Babushkin arrived, we were astonished, on entering the commune, to find how clean everything was. All the litter was cleared up, newspapers neatly arranged on the table, and the floor swept. It appeared that Babushkin had been putting things in order. ' The Russian intellectual is always dirty,' said Babushkin. ' He needs a servant as he is himself incapable of tidying up.'"³

About that time, the autumn of 1902, Lenin was very busy enrolling Party workers, professional revolutionaries, for the purpose of sending them throughout Russia as *Iskra* agents. As Lenin wrote later on, *Iskra* fought for the creation of an organisation of professional revolutionaries, and it fought particularly hard in 1901-1902. It finally overcomes the 'economizing' which prevailed at that time and established such an organisation in 1903.

² See footnote on page 75 of Krupskaya's "Memories of Lenin" (Martin Laurence, 2/-).

³ 'Memories of Lenin' by N. Krupskaya. Pages 32-33.

THE ST. PETERSBURG AGENT OF THE ISKRA

Babushkin was soon dispatched to Russia as one of the agents of *Iskra*. He was given a very responsible post in St. Petersburg, where the Party organisation was carrying out the revolutionary policy of Lenin very badly. The inner Party struggle between the revolutionary Social-Democrats, who later became the Bolsheviks, and the economist-revisionists, who later became the Mensheviks, was most intense.

Lenin characterized the St. Petersburg economist-revisionist as being “flabby and uncertain in theoretical questions, narrow minded, pleading the spontaneity of the masses as a justification for his own sluggishness, resembling a trade union secretary rather than a tribune of the people, unable to put forward a broad and bold plan that would inspire even opponents with respect, inexperienced and clumsy in his professional art, shocked at the very idea of fighting the political police. He is not a revolutionary but a wretched amateur.”

The revisionists in the St. Petersburg committee were represented by a person named Tokarev, who threw comrades with *Iskra* sympathies out of the committee, for which he was nicknamed “Vishibalo” (chucker-out) and his followers “Vishibalovtsi.” Very characteristic documentary evidence about Babushkin’s activity in St. Petersburg in the late autumn of 1902 and in the beginning of 1903 is contained in a letter from Lenin to Babushkin (his Party name was then Novitskaya), from which we take the following extract :

“ London, January, 1903. Very glad to hear about the energetic work of Novitskaya : again, we request you to continue in the same spirit, without the slightest hesitation. War on the ‘Vishibalovtsi’ and to the devil with all conciliators, ‘elusive ’ opinions and snivellers. It is better to catch a small fish than a big toad. Two or three energetic, devoted people are better than a dozen dawdlers. Write as often as possible, give us immediately all the contacts you have with workers (and their descriptions) so that in case of arrest we will not be left stranded.”

As the reader can see, “Novitskaya” did not remain idle in St. Petersburg. It is well known that Lenin was not one to waste compliments on his workers, and if he expressed pleasure at the energetic work “ Novitskaya” was doing, we can take it for granted that he was fighting strenuously for Lenin’s line in the St. Petersburg organisation, and that was not an easy matter.

Babushkin lived in St. Petersburg as an insurance agent, registered under a fairly good passport. In spite of that, however, the secret police soon got on his track, and his brief but fruitful activity in the St. Petersburg organisation was put to an end.

THIRD ARREST AND EXILE TO SIBERIA

Towards the end of January, 1903, Babushkin was again arrested. This time he had to spend a year and a half in solitary confinement, and in 1904 he was exiled to the remote Yakutsk district of Siberia.

Despite the difficulties of the long solitary confinement and the hardships of distant Siberian exile, particularly the difficulty of maintaining proper contacts with the Party, Babushkin was not disheartened. He was not that kind of man. Besides, this was not the time to lose heart. In 1904, the stirring breath of the revolution of 1905 could be distinctly felt. Babushkin read a great deal, studied and trained himself, fully conscious that with the further development of the revolutionary events highly qualified workers would be needed, so he diligently equipped himself with theoretical knowledge.

However, after only one year of this strenuous theoretical training, the practical work of the revolution began to call even those tsarist captives who were exiled beyond the Arctic Circle.

THE STRUGGLE OF 1905 AND DEATH AT HIS POST.

In 1905, Siberia, like the rest of boundless Russia, began to stir. The year 1905 had aroused the broad masses to active political struggle. The exiled revolutionaries who were then in Siberia immediately took the lead in the movement. Naturally, a revolutionary like Babushkin would choose a fitting place in the fight as belonging to him by right. We find him at the head of the fighters in the nearest city to his place of exile, the large Siberian centre of Irkutsk.

Sometime later the Siberian Party centre sent him to work in Chita, which at that time was completely in the hands of the rebellious people. Here Babushkin displayed the maximum of revolutionary energy.

But at the end of December, 1905, the armed uprising in Moscow was crushed. The repressive measures of the tsarist government reached all the way to Siberia. During the night of January 1, 1906, the gendarmes of Irkutsk arrested the entire Party committee. In order to re-establish the organisation, help was required from Chita, which was still holding out. Chita sent Babushkin to the assistance of Irkutsk. He went there with five other comrades and a large quantity of arms.

At the Sludyanka station, on the Kruglo-Baikal railroad, Babushkin and his comrades were overtaken by the punitive expedition led by Baron Bellow-Zakomelsky, which was sent by the Tsar to suppress the revolt in Siberia.

The tsarist executioners shot young Babushkin and his comrades on the spot, at the edge of a freshly dug grave. Since Babushkin refused to give his name or to converse with his enemy, he went to his grave unknown.

Regarding this execution Lenin wrote:

“Babushkin fell a victim to the brutal henchmen of the Tsar, but dying, he knew that the cause for which he gave his life will not die, that thousands and millions of other hands will carry on the work, that other comrades will die for the same cause, that they will fight until they conquer.”

In this short sketch of the main periods of Babushkin's life, so rich in revolutionary content, it was not possible to deal with his private life. It is known that Babushkin loved and had compassion

for his hard-working mother, but he could do very little for her, and the imprisonment, exile and persecution he had to endure saddened her and still further clouded her weary, unhappy life.

Babushkin was married to a working woman, Praskovya Ribas, a revolutionary, who lived illegally, was persecuted, and imprisoned. There are documents in the archives of the Lenin Institute which show that Praskovya Ribas often found herself in Tver or some other city with a child on her hands, without money, without a passport and expecting arrest any moment. Her husband, Babushkin, in the meantime was either in prison or on his way to exile in Siberia. Years passed, but these loyal devoted people did not see or hear from each other. No one even knew that Babushkin had been murdered during that terrible period of reaction. It only became known in 1910, and Lenin in an obituary on Babushkin wrote:

“We live under such accursed conditions that it is possible for an important Party worker, the pride of the Party, a comrade who had irrevocably given his whole life to the workers’ cause to disappear and leave no trace. And his nearest and dearest, his *wife* and mother and his nearest comrades may not know for years what has happened to him : whether he is languishing in prison, whether he has perished in exile, or has died the death of a hero in battle with the enemy. The last was the fate of Ivan Vasilyevich. We learned about his death only recently.”⁴

Five whole years passed before the news of Babushkin’s death reached his comrades. It is obvious that it is quite out of place to speak of the private personal life of a man like Babushkin. He who so energetically prepared the road to the great October had no personal life, for he devoted himself entirely, without reserve, to the proletarian revolution, the triumph of which, even if only on one-sixth of the globe, he was not destined to see.

⁴ V.I. Lenin, *Ivan Vasilyevich Babushkin : An Obituary* (1910).

THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE LABOR REPUBLIC



SHORT BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF Y.
M. SVERDLOV

by

C. BOBROVSKAYA

1932

PREFACE

"There are some people, leaders of the proletariat, about whom the press makes no fuss, perhaps because they do not like to make a fuss about themselves, but who are, nevertheless, the life blood and real leaders of the revolutionary movement. Y. M. Sverdlov was one of these." — J. Stalin, *Proletarian Revolution*, Vol. 11 (34), 1924.

Fifteen years have passed since those epoch-making days when the proletariat of former tsarist Russia began with its toil hardened hands, the construction of the first Soviet republic in the world. Since then, the eyes of the workers of all countries have been firmly fixed upon this first proletarian state; yet few people outside the Soviet Union know of the man who became the first president of that first republic of labor.

Proletarians in capitalist countries still know very little of the life and work of Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov who, as Lenin said : " came to the post of first-man in the first Socialist Republic by the path of illegal political circles, underground revolutionary work, and an illegal party." ⁵

In this book we are using all the available material in Russian — both the statements of people who knew Y. M. Sverdlov personally at various periods of his revolutionary work, and the heritage left by our enemies, documents of the former tsarist police department, in which Sverdlov figures as early as 1902 as a dangerous revolutionary, despite his extreme youth (he was only seventeen at the time). On the basis of these materials, we are attempting a short survey of Sverdlov's difficult yet glorious life ; we shall try to show his untiring revolutionary energy, the tremendous scope of his initiative and his brilliant talent as an organizer of the masses.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

Nizhni-Novgorod, where Yakov Sverdlov was born in May, 1885, stands on the banks of the broad river Volga, " Mother Volga," the theme of many an old Russian song, of poems by Nekrasov, of famous Russian paintings such as Repin's " Volga Barge Haulers." Maxim Gorky too found inspiration for some of his earlier work on the Volga banks, and his book *Mother*, which later became universally known, was written in Sverdlov's native town, Nizhni-Novgorod, with the revolutionary atmosphere preceding 1905 as a background.

Yakov was the third child in the family and although his father, a Jewish artisan engraver, did not earn very much, the Sverdlov family was never in acute want, and Yakov's childhood under his mother's affectionate care was tranquil enough.

From his earliest childhood Yakov showed, as one of his biographers ⁶ says,

"Unusual vivacity, a tendency towards the wildest pranks and, at the same time, an extraordinary shrewdness and keenness of mind. Even in his childhood he distinguished

⁵ V. I. Lenin, " Speech in Memory of Sverdlov," Collected Works. Russian edition. Vol. XXIV, p. 81.

⁶ Gaysinsky.

himself among his comrades by the most daring actions, in his pranks he showed the fearlessness so characteristic of the mature Sverdlov – the revolutionary. At the same time, he displayed a staunchness and patience unusual for his age.”

As a child, he showed such an eagerness to learn, such a thirst for knowledge that when he was ten years old, his father, in spite of his limited means, placed him in the Nizhni-Novgorod high school. Needless to say, the state high school of tsarist times with its stifling atmosphere could not satisfy the boy’s searching mind ; his home background at the same time was more favorable to his development.

The Sverdlov family sympathized with the revolutionaries who often came to Nizhni-Novgorod from the capital whence they had been expelled. In the Sverdlov flat on the Pokrovka one could meet old revolutionaries and young Marxists, conceal illegal revolutionary literature, make a business appointment with an illegal Party worker, and so forth.

Such was the background of Sverdlov’s youth. It was at home and in the books which he read so extensively that he found answers to the poignant questions which the state high school could not and did not answer, so that after finishing four classes, Yakov decided to leave high school, a decision not opposed by his father since his impoverished financial position no longer enabled him to keep his son at school. Thus, Yakov was obliged, at the age of fifteen, to earn his own living, and he became an apprentice in a chemist’s shop.

It was at this time that Sverdlov experienced his first personal grief – the death of his mother, with whom he was in very friendly relations. After that the whole atmosphere of his home changed for the worse. The advent of a stepmother only served to hasten Sverdlov’s removal to the chemist’s shop where he now both worked and lived. He used his own home – his father’s workshop – more for the needs of the revolutionary organisation in which he began to take an active part in spite of his extreme youth.

The proximity of Sormovo, a big proletarian centre which even at that time, in 1900-1, had ten thousand skilled metal workers employed in its plants, was an added factor aiding the development of an intense political life in Nizhni-Novgorod. In other proletarian centers in Russia too, a rapid growth of political activity was evident. The workers’ movement had begun to acquire a mass character.

Lenin, in 1901, wrote concerning the ruthless suppression of a workers’ revolt at the Obukhov works in Petersburg, that :

“Apparently, we are now passing through a period in which our labor movement will once again lead precipitously to acute conflicts, which terrify the government and the propertied classes, and rejoice and encourage the socialists. Yes, we are rejoiced and encouraged by these conflicts, notwithstanding the numerous victims that fall by the hand of the military, because the working class is proving by its resistance that it is not reconciled to its position, refusing to

remain in slavery or to suffer violence and tyranny in silence. Even in the most peaceful times, the present system inevitably imposes endless sacrifices on the working class.

“Thousands and tens of thousands of men and women, toiling all their lives to create wealth for others, perish from starvation and constant underfeeding, prematurely die from diseases caused by the horrible conditions under which they work, and the wretched conditions in which they live and overwork.

“He who prefers death in the open struggle against those who defend and protect this horrible system, rather than the lingering death of a crushed, broken-down and submissive wretch, deserves the title of hero a hundred-fold.” ⁷

The first committee of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in Nizhni-Novgorod was formed in the autumn of 1901. Under its guidance the seventeen-year-old Yakov Sverdlov developed great revolutionary activity in propaganda, agitation and in connection with the organisation of a secret printing shop for Party literature.

Barely a year later we find in the report of the governor of Nizhni-Novgorod, dated April 25, 1902, a bitter complaint that all is not well in the province assigned to him, that the persons under surveillance in this town and “ other political persons ” took advantage of the sudden death of Rurikov, a student who had been under surveillance, “ to attempt to organize an administrative disturbance.” It had been noticed that the wreathes placed on Rurikov’s grave bore the following inscriptions on their ribbons : “ You did not spare your honest efforts in the struggle ; we shall not forget your death, comrade!” “ It is vengeance not tears that is needed!” etc. These ribbons afterwards disappeared. Besides wreaths and ribbons, two speeches carrying dangerous messages were made and all those present sang, to the tune of the Marseillaise, a song beginning with the words: “ Arise ye Russian people, arise, our starving brothers. Forward, forward!” etc.

On the way back from the cemetery “ evil-disposed suspects ” even decided to organize a demonstration march through the town. But the end, so usual in Russia at that time and so familiar to the proletarians of capitalist countries nowadays, quickly arrived. “ Thanks to the energetic action of the police detachment which was at hand, the crowd was surrounded and dispersed in the shortest time and complete order was restored ; the demonstrations of the crowd were checked at the entrance to Vsekhsvyatsky Lane, adjacent to the cemetery.” ⁸

Yakov Sverdlov was among those arrested and prosecuted for infringement of the rules decreed by this governor of the town of Nizhni-Novgorod. But the authorities could not impose upon him the governor’s order for two weeks’ confinement to prison, for Yakov Sverdlov had disappeared.

From the proceedings following the above report, however, it is clear that Sverdlov, who had good reasons to avoid the police of Nizhni-Novgorod after Rurikov’s funeral, did not, in the end,

⁷ V. I. Lenin, " Another Massacre," The Iskra Period. Vol. IV, Book I, p. 117. International Publishers, N.Y.

⁸ From the file of the police department.

escape the punishment which his excellency, the governor, had meted out to him and that he had to spend two weeks in prison after all. '

From that time on, that is, from the summer of 1902, the troublesome Sverdlov was watched unceasingly by the police. This "Malish"⁹ (the police had given him this nickname) however, did not lose courage; he dexterously avoided the eye of the authorities and continued his energetic underground work in connection with the formation and reinforcement of the local Party organisation. Since objective conditions were favorable, the workers' movement of 1902 gathered force and culminated in the historic strike of the workers at Rostov-on-Don. This in turn gave considerable momentum to our Party organisation. At that time too, numbers of the *Iskra* containing Lenin's instructions were arriving regularly from abroad.

At the initiative of the Nizhni-Novgorod Committee, the Sormovo Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party was formed in 1902. It held a demonstration on the first of May in which two thousand workers took part under the slogan : " Down with Autocracy!" The active workers of this organisation were arrested after the demonstration and young Sverdlov was sent there from Nizhni-Novgorod to reinforce the organisation.

Another of his biographers, N. Nelidov, writes about this period of Comrade Sverdlov's work, on the basis of data regarding the history of the Nizhni-Novgorod Party organisation : " The arrest of leaders of the organisation forced the Nizhni-Novgorod Committee to give Sormovo their most serious attention and the months of May and June were a period of strenuous organisational work among the workers of Sormovo. It was this difficult work, involving tremendous strain, that Sverdlov came to do."

In spite of his youth, he took a most active part in the restoration and organisation of the ranks of the Sormovo workers, temporarily disrupted. Yakov possessed an immeasurable store of energy, unusual sincerity, belief in and devotion to the cause, and the ability to approach the working masses; he was therefore absolutely invaluable for the work.

With his direct participation the Sormovo organisation developed mass agitation among the workers to a high degree. A month and a half later, Party activity was restored to its normal condition. A series of strikes took place. From July on, meetings of Sormovo workers occurred almost daily. And at these July meetings it was, that Yakov's extraordinary qualities as an orator came to light. The seventeen-year-old agitator, short, thin, hair black as a raven, drew the working masses by the sincerity and conviction in his speeches. He united these workers in a singleness of purpose; he called upon them to struggle mercilessly against tyranny and violence.

When news came to the Nizhni-Novgorod and Sormovo organisations, in 1903, that during its second congress the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party had split into Bolshevik and Menshevik factions, Sverdlov unhesitatingly and unwaveringly adopted Lenin's position, sided firmly with the Bolsheviks and carried on a determined struggle with the Menshevist and conciliatory tendencies

⁹ * Young boy, kid.

which arose in the Nizhni-Novgorod and Sormovo Party organisations. The young Bolshevik Sverdlov was so active, the workers became so accustomed to hear his powerful voice at workers' meetings that his youth was quite forgotten, and Yakov Sverdlov himself, more than anyone else, was deeply conscious of his responsibility for the work entrusted to him by the Party.

Sverdlov's revolutionary activity was temporarily halted by the Tsar's gendarmes who arrested him again at the end of 1903 for " belonging to the criminal society formed in Nizhni-Novgorod and also for having in his possession and spreading anti-government literature."

We cannot discover precisely how long Sverdlov was kept in prison this time, since the exact date of his arrest is unknown, but file No. 2754 (1904) of the police department contains a document relating to " Myeschanin" ¹⁰ Sverdlov who is under the open surveillance of the police of Nizhni-Novgorod I " This document states that Yakov Sverdlov, aged 19, is to be subjected to open police surveillance for two years, from February 11,1904, in accordance with his majesty's orders.

So, by his majesty's orders, Sverdlov was to be restricted in his movements to the town of Nizhni-Novgorod until February, 1906, but he would not stay in Nizhni-Novgorod ; revolutionary energy was surging strongly in him, and his hands would have been tied in that town by the constant surveillance of the police. In order to develop his revolutionary powers freely, he left Nizhni-Novgorod and began his " underground " existence.

ON ILLEGAL WORK

In order to characterize the work and frame of mind of the nineteen-year-old Sverdlov at a moment crucial for every Party member – the period which saw the start of his underground life, we may cite the archives of the police department which have preserved a splendid illustration – a letter written by Sverdlov himself. This letter which was intercepted by the gendarmes was dated November 22, 1904, and addressed abroad, to Friedberg (Hessen), to a comrade who acted as connecting link between him and the Party centre. So characteristic is this document that we take the liberty of quoting the greater part of it.

"As you probably know, I spent one day in Moscow and left with the evening train for my final destination, Yaroslav. But I could stay there only three days, after which I went to Kostroma where I am at present. I took up my abode here as a "professional revolutionary "in accordance with the instructions of the Northern Committee which includes Kostroma. There is a lot of work to be done here and hardly anybody to do it – only three or four people except myself, of whom only one can be taken into account. I feel cheerful enough ; true, sometimes I long for Nizhni-Novgorod, but on the whole, I am glad I left, since I could not spread my wings there (and I think I've got wings) ; I learned to work there and I have come here trained, here – where there is ample field for making use of my powers. There are quite a number of

¹⁰ * Literally, urban dweller: under the tsarist regime the population was divided up into "estates" or " orders" such as nobles, merchants, peasants or urban dwellers, i.e., Myeschanin, etc.

spies here too at present (they were introduced here in great numbers after the big disturbances of 1903), but they are not very clever, as I have already had occasion to remark."

"I could not spread my wings there and I think I've got wings," says young Sverdlov modestly, not knowing that thirteen years later, he was to soar on those wings to the highest peak of revolutionary achievement, that those wings would carry him to "the post of first-man in the first Socialist republic," to the post of first organizer of the wide proletarian masses. "There is a lot of work to be done here — hardly anybody to do it. Only three or four people except myself, of whom only one can be taken into account." In order to grasp the full meaning of these words we must know the circumstances of revolutionary work obtaining in the northern weaving district during that period.

This enormous textile centre, since the split in the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, had supported Bolshevism, had supported Lenin. But at the same time, the tremendous discrepancy between the scope of the labor movement and the scarcity of skilled and experienced members of the Party who could help this movement assume the necessary organized forms, was felt in the Northern area more than anywhere else.

Sverdlov was a born Bolshevik organizer and for that reason he was able to use his powers to the fullest extent here; that is why he wrote : "I learned to work there and I have come here trained, here — where there is ample field for making use of my powers."

Having intercepted and deciphered Sverdlov's letter, the police department became frightened. On December 18, 1904, a letter was sent to the chief of gendarmes in Kostroma under No. 14806 with instructions to "find out through secret channels the identity and actions" of a certain political suspect whose name or surname begins with the letter 'Y' and who arrived recently in Kostroma, evidently from Nizhni-Novgorod, with secret instructions from the Northern Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party ; also to find out, in the same way, the connections of the said revolutionary worker and to report the results."

But Sverdlov had good reason to smile at the gendarmes of Kostroma in his letter : "there are quite a number of spies here at present, but they are not very clever, as I have already had occasion to remark."

The naivete of these gendarmes was truly astounding. On January 12, 1905, they reported that they had searched in vain for the suspect whose name or surname began with a "Y." On February 8, 1905, they reported that a certain Yakov Sverdlov had come to Kostroma from Nizhni-Novgorod, never for a moment suspecting that the two, the mysterious "Y" and the new arrival from Nizhni-Novgorod, Yakov Sverdlov, might be connected. They were, of course, properly reprimanded afterwards by the police department for their dull-wittedness.

However, in spite of the stupidity of the spies whom Sverdlov ridiculed in his letter, he was not able to work long in Kostroma. Yet two to three months was considered a fair period at that time for an illegal Party member to work in one town. In such a length of time a clever and skillful Party member could do quite a bit.

Sometimes in a one-month period of Party work in a town or even in a whole region, a professional Party worker would succeed in righting the local organisation, in guiding the local workers from his experience, in supplying them with instructions, literature, connections with the Bolshevik centre abroad, etc.

Such was the case with Sverdlov during the short period of his work in the Northern committee.

In an article entitled *First Lessons*, written in February, 1905, V. I. Lenin, in reckoning up some of the results of the years directly preceding the 1905 revolution, says: " 1901 is the year when the worker came to the students' assistance. Demonstration movements arose; the proletariat carried its slogan "down with autocracy" into the street.

"After 1902, after the strike at Rostov, the political movement of the proletariat no longer joins with the students' movement – but grows up itself immediately out of the strike.

"The proletariat as a class, for the first time, opposed itself to the other classes and the Tsar's government." In 1903, strikes merged with political demonstrations on an even wider basis. Strikes spread over whole districts ; over a hundred thousand workers participated in them. Mass political meetings occurred in various towns at the same time as strikes, there was a feeling that we were on the 'eve of barricades,' but the eve was prolonged, as if to accustom us to the fact that powerful classes sometimes store up their forces for months and years, as if to test the incredulous intellectuals."

The eve of the barricades found the young Sverdlov a fully developed Bolshevik organizer, agitator and propagandist. He had developed, grown as it were, together with his revolutionary Party, been forged in the fire of class battles, and he did not in the least resemble an incredulous intellectual although he belonged by birth to the petty-bourgeois class. By that time Yakov Sverdlov already possessed the endurance of a real revolutionary. He knew how to wait notwithstanding the fact that " the eve of the barricades was somewhat prolonged."

PERIOD OF THE FIRST RUSSIAN REVOLUTION: 1905-1907

Lenin writes of 1905 that

"In no capitalist country in the world – not even in advanced countries like England, the United States of America, or Germany, has such a tremendous strike movement been witnessed as that which occurred in Russia in 1905... . It shows that in a revolutionary epoch – I say this without exaggeration on the basis of the most accurate data of Russian history – the proletariat can develop fighting energy a *hundred times greater* than in normal, peaceful times.

"It shows that up to 1905, humanity did not yet know what a great, what a tremendous exertion of effort the proletariat is capable of in a fight for really great aims, and when it fights in a real revolutionary manner!

“The history of the Russian Revolution shows that it is the vanguard, the chosen elements of the wage-workers who fought with the greatest tenacity and the greatest self-sacrifice. The larger the enterprises involved, the more stubborn the strikes were and the more often they repeated themselves during that year.”¹¹

In Kazan (now the capital of the Tartar Republic) where Sverdlov went from Kostroma in February, 1905, to continue his revolutionary work, the largest plant was the Alafuzov, with “select elements of hired workers” numbering four thousand. Sverdlov centered a great deal of attention upon this plant, as well as on many other major and minor enterprises. The shooting of the peaceful workers’ demonstration in Petersburg while on its way to the Palace Square, on January 9, 1905, to beg for the favor of Tsar Nicholas, had aroused great indignation among the working masses. Sverdlov explained to these workers of Kazan, who were angered and aroused by the Petersburg events, the necessity for concretely formulating their political as well as their economic demands. At mass meetings Sverdlov’s resounding voice gave out the Bolshevik slogans to which the workers listened eagerly and which the masses took up.

Sverdlov’s stay in Kazan in the winter of 1905 was the more fortunate in that the social-democratic organisation which existed there at that time was a centrist one, adhering neither to the Bolsheviks nor to the Mensheviks. It was Sverdlov’s difficult task therefore to introduce Bolshevik concreteness from an ideological as well as an organisational point of view.

Sverdlov became a member of the Kazan Party committee, its responsible organizer and propagandist, and he succeeded in doing some important revolutionary work in a short time. He inspired the working masses, the soldiers of the local garrison and the students, aroused them to greater efforts to bolshevize the whole Kazan Party organisation.

But Sverdlov’s work in those months was not limited to Kazan. He went, in accordance with instructions from the Central Committee of the Party, to Nizhni-Novgorod, Sormovo, Samara, Saratov, and in July, 1905, he was already in the Urals, as witnessed by a letter from the gendarmes’ office of Nizhni-Novgorod, No. 1058, of July 23, 1905, which says that Yakov Sverdlov, known to the police department under the nickname “Malish,” was seen in Perm by “an agent of this office who happened to be there at the time and who informed the local secret police.”

In the Urals – one of the richest mining centers, among scores of thousands of miners who worked under the worst possible conditions, there was great scope for Sverdlov’s creative initiative. There were tremendous possibilities here of utilizing his talent for organizing the masses.

We read about this period of Sverdlov’s work in the documents of the Urals’ Bolshevik organisation, in an article by Bykov.

“The Revolution of 1905 made it possible to develop agitation to the greatest degree in the districts near Yekaterinburg (now Sverdlovsk) and in other towns in the Urals, the short period of legal existence was used to reinforce the organisations, to establish stable

¹¹ V. I. Lenin, The Revolution of 1905. Little Lenin Library, p. 37. International Publishers, N.Y.

connections with plants and form fighting detachments for defense against the Black Hundreds.

"In all this work Comrade Andrew (Sverdlov's Party name) merits the greatest praise, for he succeeded in a short time in unifying several organisations, in organizing the proper technique and in raising Bolshevik propaganda and agitation to great heights."

In the meantime, the revolutionary movement throughout the enormous country was developing with lightning speed, the frightened Tsar was forced to "grant the people a manifesto" — a pitiful mockery of constitutional guarantees.

In No. 25 of the Bolshevik newspaper *Proletary* of November 3, 1905, V. I. Lenin wrote :

"The denouement approaches. The new political situation is taking shape with the extraordinary speed peculiar to revolutionary epochs only. The government began to make concessions in words and simultaneously commenced to prepare in fact for an attack. The most savage and horrible acts of violence followed upon the promise of a constitution, as if to show the people still more clearly the whole significance of real autocratic power."

A little later in November, when the Soviets of Workers' Deputies had already been formed, Lenin described the situation thus :

"The state in which Russia finds herself at present is often described by the word ' anarchy.' This incorrect and wrong definition in reality expresses the fact that there is no established order in the country. The new, free Russia is waging a war all along the line against the old Russia of serfdom and autocracy. . . .

"The old order is vanquished, but it is not completely destroyed yet and the new, free order exists unrecognized, partly hidden, very often persecuted by the hirelings of the autocratic regime." ¹²

What part did Sverdlov take at that time in the war between " the new free Russia and the old Russia of serfdom and autocracy " ? From the Urals he went to Nizhni-Novgorod and Sormovo where he spoke before the masses, whose revolutionary enthusiasm reached the highest pitch in the three-day fight on the barricades, December 12-15, 1905. Besides this he visited Moscow and spoke at crowded meetings in the Aquarium Theatre in the days directly preceding the revolt. From Moscow Sverdlov returned to the Urals where he found that the heroic attempt at armed fighting on the part of the workers of Perm and Motovilikha of December 9-13, 1905, had been suppressed.

After the suppression of the Moscow revolt, a wave of unprecedented repressions passed over the country, the Tsar's punitive expeditions were responsible for the bloodshed of the best sons of the revolution.

¹² V. I. Lenin, " In the Balance," Collected Works. Russian edition. Vol. VIII, p. 398.

The Urals workers also paid dearly for their revolutionary daring, but no despondency and depression seized those active Party workers, including Sverdlov who had escaped the slaughter. Very active work was begun under Sverdlov's direction to restore the Party organisation under the new and much more difficult conditions. " It was necessary first of all, to restore the disrupted organisations, connections, technique, new workers had to be trained to replace those who were arrested, exiled or in hiding, account had to be taken of existing forces and underground work to be reinforced. " All this complicated and varied work rested almost entirely on the shoulders of the tireless Mikhalych (Sverdlov's Party name at the time), who was at the head of the Perm Bolshevik organisations," says Sverdlov's biographer, Nelidov. B. Ivanov gives the following particulars from personal reminiscences of his joint work with Sverdlov in the Urals in 1906:

"Sverdlov lived in the Urals on ten or twelve rubles ¹³ a month. We did not know when he rested. Short and slight, with a shock of thick, raven black hair, wearing coarse boots, ' Mikhalych' went from meeting to meeting and wherever he appeared he imbued everyone with courage and assurance by his sonorous voice so out of keeping with his height.

"Thanks to his untiring energy and organisational ability he succeeded in uniting around the Urals Bolshevik bureau, the biggest Party organisations of Perm, Yekaterinburg and Ufa. Under the firm and skillful hand of Mikhalych, the recently routed and dispersed organisation was fully restored, acquired strength, compactness and stability ; provincial Party committees were formed, the Urals included a multitude of factory organisations of the Party." ¹⁴

At meetings organized by Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries and Anarchists, the workers invariably elected Sverdlov chairman. "We want Comrade Andrew!" shouted the crowd. The people who had arranged the meeting, embarrassed by this demand, would begin complaining that Sverdlov was their ideological opponent and propose their own candidates for chairman, but the crowd went on shouting : "Andrew, Andrew!" Andrew was searched for, brought to the meeting and his speech flowed smoothly and convincingly out to the crowd ; they would then refuse to hear any speeches from the opponents of bolshevism and would adopt Bolshevik resolutions. In this way Sverdlov broke up many Menshevik, Socialist-Revolutionary and Anarchist meetings.

Although the police dogged his footsteps, Sverdlov succeeded in remaining at liberty for quite a long time by means of various disguises and other tricks. But the gendarmerie, who were becoming more and more active, succeeded in introducing agent provocateurs into the organisation and one of them, a man named Vatinev, gave Sverdlov away by stating that Sverdlov had appointed him to look after the store of arms.

I. Gluchin in his memoirs says that Sverdlov smilingly told his comrades the story of his arrest as follows:

¹³ One rouble = two shillings.

¹⁴ B. Ivanov, Symposium of the Perm Organisation on the History of the Party, 1923, p. 22.

"I was accompanying a woman who was on underground work to the Perm station. We walked along Obkinskaya Street engaged in conversation. Suddenly I came face to face with a police officer of some district of Yekaterinsburg. The officer stopped and looked me in the eye for several seconds. 'Is it really you, Andrew?' said the officer, 'We've been at our wits' ends, looking for you all over Yekaterinsburg, and here you are in Perm.' He blew his police whistle and that is how I happened to come here before you did."

Scores of active workers of the Perm Bolshevik organisation were arrested at the same time as Sverdlov — on June 10, 1906 — including K. T. Novgorodseva, Sverdlov's wife. A sensational case was manufactured, in preparation for which Sverdlov and the rest spent over a year in preliminary confinement, and in September, 1907, the Kazan court sentenced Sverdlov to two years' confinement in the fortress.

During his preliminary confinement and while serving his term in the fortress, as far as was possible under the prison regime, Sverdlov read a great deal, studied revolutionary theory, and never for a moment abandoned the idea of revolutionary work to be done by him on his release from prison.

PERIOD OF REACTION

In his article *What We Must Struggle For*, written in the beginning of 1910, Lenin worded the problems which faced the Bolsheviks at the time, in the following way :

"By means of the struggle of December (1905) the proletariat left the people one of those heritages which can be ideological and political beacons for the work of several generations. And the darker are the gathering clouds of savage reaction, the greater the brutalities of the counter revolutionary tsarist Black Hundreds the more energetically must the workers' Party recall to the people what they must struggle for.

"We must know how to carry on our line of tactics; we must know how to build our organisation in such a way as to take into account the changed situation, not to lessen the tasks of our struggle — not to reduce them, not to belittle the ideological and political substance of even such work which at first sight seems most ordinary, dull and petty. . . .

"Only by placing the tasks, bequeathed to our generation by the year 1905, in all their plenitude, in all their greatness before the masses, will we actually be in a position to extend the basis of the movement, draw large masses into it, inspire them with the feeling for supreme revolutionary struggle which has always led the oppressed classes to victory over their enemies." ¹⁵

Sverdlov could, better than anyone else, build the Bolshevik Party organisation, no matter how difficult were the conditions under which he had to build, and we see that, after three and a half years of prison, without giving himself any time for rest, he came to Moscow illegally, in the capacity

¹⁵ V. I. Lenin, "What we must Fight for," Collected Works. Russian edition. Vol. XIV, pp. 266-267.

of a "fresh man," as it was called then in Bolshevik circles, and began to collect and unite the scattered forces of the Party in Moscow as well as throughout the whole Moscow industrial region which, at that time, included fourteen provinces. Sverdlov tried to restore the Moscow committee and the Moscow regional bureau but Moscow was full of spies and he was not able to work long. He was arrested on December 13, 1909, during a meeting of the Moscow Committee. On being arrested Sverdlov gave a wrong name and presented a passport bearing that name.

In accordance with an order of the Minister of the Interior, Sverdlov was exiled to the Narym region and the chief of police of Moscow was instructed on March 17th to see that the order was carried out.

Sverdlov was very ill at the time, as is witnessed by the certificate of the medical examination signed by a doctor attached to the Arbat police cells, although the prison doctor, Kolesnikov, purposely tried to make as little as possible of his symptoms : " Sverdlov, aged 25, averagely nourished, somewhat irregular of build (narrow chest), complains of cough, night sweat, hemoptysis; an examination of the left lung shows expiration a dry rattle. On the strength of the aforesaid symptoms, I believe that Sverdlov suffers from a chronic catarrh of the top of the left lung, evidently of a tubercular nature." But documents show that, notwithstanding illness and the great distance, Sverdlov succeeded in escaping from exile.

"In their report of October 15th, No. 2277, the authorities of Ketsk informed me (Tomsk district police officer) that Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov, who was under open police surveillance, had disappeared from his place of exile in the Ketsk region on July 27th and that his whereabouts are unknown.

"I have sent instructions to the police officer of the fifth section of Tomsk district, under No. 1892, to search for Sverdlov in the Narym region.

"In case the search within the limits of the said region proves fruitless, the search reports will be presented.

"I hereby report to your Excellency to that effect.

"Original duly signed."

It may thus be precisely established that Sverdlov made his first escape from Narym in July, 1910, and from then on, he undertook a series of escapes, the detailed description of which might serve as vivid data for a special book of adventures. In order to acquaint the reader of this short essay with some of the difficulties attending such an undertaking as escape from tsarist exile, we may note a few of the circumstances of the escape made by Y. M. Sverdlov in the autumn of 1912.

In a confidential note of the Petersburg secret police, addressed to the police department, dated November, 14, 1910, No. 15942, only five months after Sverdlov's first escape from Narym, we read as follows :

"In the latter days of this year, this office has had information of the arrival from abroad of an agent of the Central Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, an individual named Mikhail Georguie, vich Permyakov – Party name " Andrew," from the town of Kungur, Province of Perm, with instructions to restore the local Party organisation."

In view of constant failure in Petersburg, the Central Committee advised " Andrew " not to enter into relations with old Party workers in Petersburg and to be as secretive as possible.

On his arrival in Petersburg, he was indeed very careful and was taken under surveillance only in the beginning of November under the alias of " Makhrovyy."

A confidential note, dated November 19th, of the same year, No. 16143, states that "on being questioned in the police office, Permyakov admitted that he was actually a middle-class citizen of the town of Polotsk, Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov, was prosecuted by the Perm provincial gendarmerie office under article 126, in 1906, was tried and sentenced to two years' imprisonment in the fortress and served his term. In 1909 he was exiled for three years to the Narym region for belonging to the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party and from there disappeared."

What did Sverdlov do in Leningrad, or Petersburg as it was then called, in those short months from the summer to the autumn of 1910 ? He was first of all busy, as he had been in Moscow in 1909, collecting the forces of the illegal Bolshevik organisation, for the reinforcement of which he had to fight hard in the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party which was formally still a single body. He fought the Menshevik liquidators who considered that the time had come when only legal forms of struggle were possible, that illegal organisations in the Party were an anachronism and ought to be liquidated.

While reinforcing the Petersburg illegal organisation in every possible way, Sverdlov also made use of the legal possibilities extensively.

He led the Bolshevik section of the social-democratic faction in the Duma in the speeches made in the Duma and before the workers' electors at factories ; at the same time, he tried to secure Bolshevik leadership in the legal newspaper which the faction proposed to publish.

After spending a month in prison, he was sent back to his place of exile, but the rebellious spirit of " Makhrovyy," alias " Malish," gave no rest even then to the " servants of the Tsar," as the following document will show:

"Reference: In his letter of June 15th, 1912, No. 1826, supplementary to the letter of May 15th last. No. 14J4, the governor of Tomsk informed the police department that in connection with the demonstration made on April 18th of this year by the exiles in Narym, the gendarmerie authorities arrested for state custody in accordance with the rules, Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov and that, in accordance with the statement of the chief of the Tomsk gendarmerie office, on examination of documents found in the possession of the said individual, sufficient reasons will probably be found for formally prosecuting him in accordance with the rules of act 1035, a crime provided for in article 121 of the criminal code."

But no signs of the crime provided for in article 121 were evidently to be found and the authorities were content with making his exile more severe by sending Sverdlov with two guards to an out-of-the-way Ostyak village called “ Maximkin Yar,” where the guards themselves became melancholy. Sverdlov immediately took advantage of their depressed state of mind. He succeeded in convincing them that this kind of life was impossible, they harnessed a horse to a cart and drove their prisoner to town. Having safely reached it, they fell on their knees before the local police officer and insisted that “ Maximkin Yar ” was not a fit place to live in. The police officer relented, at the same time allowing Sverdlov to remain in the town. After many unsuccessful attempts, as we shall see later, he escaped from this town.

PERIOD OF REVOLUTIONARY UPSURGE AND WAR

"The three years from 1908 to 1910 were a period of extreme counterrevolutionary activity of the Black Hundred, of liberal bourgeois apostasy, proletarian dejection and disintegration.

"But a noticeable change became evident in 1910. In 1911 the masses began gradually to prepare for the offensive. There were indications on all sides showing that the fatigue and apathy caused by the triumph of counter revolution were almost over, that the masses were again being drawn towards revolution."

So, V. I. Lenin wrote in June, 1912, and even before that, in January, 1912, a Party conference took place in Prague, at Lenin's initiative and under his leadership, at which a final organisational division from the Mensheviks was declared, a clear Bolshevik line worked out on all questions of Party work in Russia and a Bolshevik central committee of the Party was elected. Two of the leading organizers of the Party, Sverdlov and Stalin, who were then exiled to Siberia, but whose escape was expected soon, were elected to this new Central Committee.

Stalin and Sverdlov were the two Bolsheviks in whom Lenin placed particular confidence with regard to carrying out the most important resolutions of the Prague Conference.

From April and May, 1912, the revolutionary upsurge manifested itself in a series of very big strikes and in demonstrations in all the proletarian centers of Russia. That was the time when, in reply to the shooting of strikers at the Lena gold fields in Siberia, the workers of the Dnieper-Petrovsk plant, situated ten thousand kilometers from that place, issued the following splendid expression of the solidarity of the proletariat : “ It is our breast, the breast of the whole working class, which was shot through in the distant Siberian Forest.”

The development of the movement demanded that the Bolshevik Party exert every effort, strain every nerve, and the forces of Sverdlov and Stalin were, naturally, absolutely necessary at the time ; they escaped from Siberia at about the same time, but by different means.

Sverdlov's first plan of escape was to cross the wide and stormy Ob River in a little canoe, to Novalinsk village, situated at a distance of thirty kilometers from his place of exile, there to board the steamer Tyumen where there were friends in the engine-room, who could conceal him. He undertook this expedition on a cold autumn night ; a storm broke and the canoe was upset by the waves.

Sverdlov and the comrades who were with him were thrown out and had to swim for three kilometers, holding to the sides of the boat until they were seen by some fishermen who saved them.

Despite this mishap, however, having dried his clothes and warmed himself, Sverdlov continued on his way and reached the steamer. After a hundred kilometers journey on board, when he thought himself safe, he was recognized by the authorities, taken off the steamer and brought back to his place of exile.

A short time after this unsuccessful attempt to escape, Sverdlov's wife, K. T. Novgorodseva, came to visit him in exile bringing his little son Andrew.

The police felt sure that with his family beside him Sverdlov would become more settled and not make any more attempts to escape for the time being. They therefore relaxed their vigilance. It never occurred to these policemen that Sverdlov's wife had come to bring him all that was necessary for the planned escape. A week after the arrival of his wife and child, Sverdlov succeeded in escaping.

Even now, twenty years afterward, Comrade Novgorodseva Sverdlova laughs as she remembers how, in 1912, when the police raised the alarm on discovering Sverdlov's disappearance, she had to play the difficult role of a duped wife, whom with her child her husband was supposed to have abandoned to their own devices a week after they had with so much difficulty reached distant Siberia.

Comrade Novgorodseva had no intentions of remaining for any length of time in Siberia mourning for her lost family happiness. She hurried back to Petersburg where her supposedly deceitful husband Sverdlov had arrived before her. There he served as member of the Central Committee, in constant communication with Lenin ; he had already accomplished a great deal of work, especially in connection with the legal Bolshevik daily paper *Pravda*, which was then published in Petersburg.

V. I. Lenin attached particular importance to the *Pravda* as his following words testify:

" By arranging for a daily workers' paper, the Petersburg workers have done a great, and it may be said without exaggeration, a historic thing. . . . The creation of the *Pravda* is an outstanding proof of the class-consciousness, energy and solidarity of the Russian workers." ¹⁶

The *Pravda* on the one hand and the Social-Democratic faction in the fourth Duma on the other, were the two main legal mediums which could be used for carrying on illegal revolutionary Bolshevik work. But at the time Stalin and Sverdlov came to Petersburg, no Bolshevik clarity was evident in the work. Only after Stalin and Sverdlov had come to Petersburg, only with their help was the split of the Social-Democratic parliamentary faction which had first consisted of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, at last accomplished. The Mensheviks stopped using their conciliatory speeches to block the group of Bolsheviks who now acted independently, launching slogans from the parliamentary tribune for the masses. The most popular slogans at the time were the three which the Petersburg

¹⁶ V. I. Lenin, Collected Works. Russian edition. Vol. XII, p. 241.

workers called the three whales ! — the eight-hour working day, confiscation of landlord's estates and a democratic republic.

Both Stalin and Sverdlov spent much labor and exertion setting the *Pravda* along Bolshevik lines; they carried on an active correspondence with V. I. Lenin, who, until their arrival, had constantly and unceasingly reproached the editors of the *Pravda* for vagueness and lack of concreteness on basic questions of struggle.

All this time Sverdlov lived in the apartment of Badayev, a deputy of the Duma, never leaving it day or night, looking through manuscripts, writing extensively himself, instructing the deputies who came to see him, directing their speeches, organizing the struggle against Menshevik liquidators, etc.

But this time too, neither Sverdlov nor Stalin got the chance to work long. As is known, the tsarist police department succeeded in getting one of their agents into the Bolshevik parliamentary faction. Malinovsky was an agent provocateur and he did not hesitate to deliver into the enemy's hands the men who were so necessary to the revolutionary cause — he betrayed Stalin and Sverdlov.

We find interesting details of Sverdlov's and Stalin's arrest in the memoirs of Badayev entitled : *Bolsheviks in the Tsarist Duma* ¹⁷

The house janitor came one day to Badayev's apartment and having described Sverdlov's appearance, asked whether such a person was not staying in the flat. Badayev naturally answered that there were no strangers at all in his flat. But after that it was not safe for Sverdlov to hide in Badayev's flat. It was decided to transfer him to another house that same day. After plans had been made, that night, Badayev and Malinovsky went out into the street to see that everything was safe. There was no one around, so Badayev and Malinovsky lit a cigarette each, this being the signal agreed upon. Sverdlov answered by putting out the light and letting the window down. After waiting for a few minutes, he came out into the yard. Badayev and Malinovsky helped him over the fence, then Sverdlov climbed another fence and came out on the quay, where a cab hired previously was waiting for him.

Sverdlov went to Malinovsky's flat and from there to Petrovsky's flat. There he was arrested that same night. Malinovsky, who had seemed so " anxious " for Sverdlov's safety, gave the secret police the address of the flat where Sverdlov had found refuge.

It was during that time too that Malinovsky betrayed Stalin who was also in hiding and never appeared in the street. A concert was being arranged in the Kalahnikov stock exchange building, the proceeds of which were to be used for the publication of *Pravda* as well as for other revolutionary purposes. The Sympathetic intelligentsia and workers usually came to these concerts in great numbers. Members of the Party who lived legally came also, and even illegal workers were wont to attend, for there they were able to mingle in the crowd and talk with the people they wanted.

¹⁷ Martin Lawrence. Ltd.

Malinovsky knew that Stalin would attend that concert and he informed the police as much. Stalin was arrested by the secret police that very night under his comrades' eyes.

This time Sverdlov was confined to the "Kresty" prison with his wife and son and after a few months they were all sent to the Turukhansk region, whither Stalin also was sent soon after.

This last arrest and exile of Sverdlov occurred in 1913, when the tide of the Russian workers' movement was rising higher and higher, especially in Petersburg. The climax was reached when barricades were erected in the summer of 1914 in the streets of the capital; but war came to overshadow all other things and it temporarily stopped the current of the Russian revolution as well. The struggle and victory of the workers were thus postponed for three years.

Sverdlov's letter to his sister Sarah tells us of the place to which the tsarist's government sent Sverdlov and Stalin after they had fallen into its hands. We quote the whole of it (there is a copy of it in the file). The address on the envelope is St. Petersburg, Ordinarnaya No. 6, Apr. 26, Sarah Nikhailovna Sverdlova, the post-mark – Turukhansk, 13-3-14).

"9-11. Dear Sarah : My next letter will be numbered again. I am writing just a few words now, hastily. Joseph Jugashvili ¹⁸ and I are being transferred a hundred versts further north – eighty versts north of the Polar circle. There will only be the two of us in the village and two guards with us. The surveillance is being increased and we are cut off from the post. The latter comes once a month with a messenger on foot, who is generally late. We will get the post approximately eight or nine times a year and not oftener. Still, it is better than it was in 'Maximkin Yar.' Please send everything to the old address, the comrades will forward it. Jugashvili is deprived of his subsidy for four months because he received some money. We both need money. But it cannot be sent in our name. Let our friends know of this. I have a debt and the money can be sent not to me but directly to my creditors. Let me know their address ; Rom (?) also has an address. Only the coupon must be marked ' on account of Y.M.'s debt I am expecting all I asked for. I shall write now from Kurepka. I am not writing to anyone in Petersburg except yourself, assuming they will learn from you.

"With love,

"Your Yak.

"Write more, and oftener. I ask all friends to do the same. I did write to a few people in Petersburg after all. My address is the same."

The reader will easily understand that all this talk of creditors, debts, etc. is only meant to conceal references to the necessity of getting money, passports and addresses for a new escape. But they had both been sent to such a distant place that all attempts at escape ended in failure, and they both had to stay at the edge of the world until the February revolution.

¹⁸ Stalin

The above letter gives a clear idea of the conditions of life in that distant spot. But Sverdlov as usual, did not lose hope, he had too much to think of, too much to work over theoretically, to prepare himself and others for further struggle in the future. Sverdlov was fond of life, he always remained an optimist, his nature made it impossible for him to lose hope.

Sverdlov was also fond of nature. This may be seen from his description of an early spring in the far north, in one of his letters : “ The ice thaw on such a great river as the Yenissei is worth seeing. The ice breaks with a cracking noise, splits into enormous blocks. The blocks are driven against each other by the water; they strike against the bank while the water rises higher and higher. One is loath to leave the bank. The north wind rises, the waters of the Yenissei swell, become covered with foam, strike against the high bank on which the village stands, washing it away bit by bit, the earth falls with a great thud and is carried away by the waves.”

In another place he says:

“ Since yesterday the sun has stopped setting. It shines the whole twenty-four hours round. There has been no darkness for a long time. White nights . . . the sun is always on the horizon. It is strange and unusual. You cannot tell night from day except by the direction of the sun. It is now eleven p.m. and the sun is right before my window. Only it is blood red and hardly gives any warmth. In contrast to this there is a lot of snow around. It melts and disappears with incredible slowness.”

In spite of the distance, Sverdlov kept in constant touch not only with exiled Bolsheviks scattered all over Siberia, among whom he was a generally recognized authority, but also with V. I. Lenin, with the centre of the Bolshevik Party abroad and through some comrades, with various local Party organisations, so that he was always in touch with current revolutionary events.

The numerous threads which always bound Sverdlov to the working masses, to the life and thought of the Bolshevik Party and to its leader, V. I. Lenin, never broke, wherever he might be, even were it beyond the Polar circle.

That is why, when the war broke out and so many were poisoned by chauvinism, when the Second International fell to pieces, when leaders engaged in open betrayal, Sverdlov who was many thousands of kilometers away from the centre had no difficulty in summing up the situation and never for a minute abandoned Lenin's position. He read several lectures on war to the other exiles, wrote articles on international Social Democracy, and when he received news of the conferences of Zimmerwald and Kienthal on the first unification of internationalists he carried out in his lectures and articles the ideas of the Zimmerwald Lefts : the transformation of imperialist war into class war, and he set forth the tactics and strategy of civil war and dictatorship of the proletariat.

The great year 1917 came. News of the downfall of the autocratic tsarist regime came to Sverdlov in his exile.

FROM THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION TO THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

The great year 1917 came.

The Tsar's throne fell under the impact of the uprisen proletariat, supported by the masses of the soldiers ; but the proletariat had not yet come to power. The most peculiar feature of our revolution which commands the most insistent attention is the duality of power which obtained in the very first days after the victory of the revolution.

This duality of power consisted in the existence of two governments, the main, real and actual government of the bourgeoisie, in the " Provisional Government " of Lvov and Co., which held all the organs of power, and a supplementary " controlling " government of workers represented by the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies which did not hold the organs of state power, but was supported by the recognized majority of the people, by the armed workers and soldiers.

Thousands of kilometers away from the Party centre though he was, Sverdlov still kept a watchful eye on, a " thoughtful attitude " towards the revolutionary situation as it was then.

As soon as the joyful news of the fall of the monarchy reached Sverdlov in exile, he started off – to dive into the vivifying revolutionary waves ; but, to his great disappointment, waves of another kind, occasioned by the Siberian Spring flood, obstructed his passage. He had to hurry to leave Turukhansk, as the spring floods might otherwise cut him off from the centre of revolutionary events for some months.

In danger of being caught in the ice drifts, Sverdlov with a group of exiles travelled two thousand kilometers in sleighs over the ice of the Yenissei which was ready to break at any moment. And so, he came to Krasnoyarsk.

In Krasnoyarsk, which is a large Siberian centre, the local Bolsheviks did not at once grasp the revolutionary situation fully and Sverdlov was the first to make matters quite clear, with a Bolshevik concreteness, in his speech at the meeting of the plenum of the Krasnoyarsk Soviet, where leaders of all parties made speeches.

Such Bolshevik precision does this speech typify; the questions are formulated with such concreteness that we cite the entire contents :

"Step by step," writes Comrade Shumiatsky in his reminiscences about Sverdlov, " Comrade Sverdlov lifted the flimsy decorations and unmasked the squalid pseudo-revolutionary ideology of the speech of the Socialist-Revolutionary Koloskov, saying that the people whose name the Socialist-Revolutionaries like so much to use in vain, had so far gotten nothing from the revolution, except the soft-sounding speeches of men like Kerensky and Koloskov, that the Mensheviks put the workers and soldiers off with promises of to-morrow, thereby lowering the interest of the wide masses of the people in the progress of the revolutionary struggle. The revolution is the most acute moment of class struggle, in the course of which the socially

oppressed classes want the ruling classes to make concessions and if they don't get them they take them by force. If the ruling class is not vanquished, then the revolution will be vanquished. That is why we Bolsheviks are against the slogan of civil peace of the revolutionary democracy, that is why we advance the slogan of irreconcilable class struggle, in the process of which the classes and groups which are interested in the victorious issue of the revolution will join it, while many of those called the best representatives of revolutionary democracy by the speaker for the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries will oppose the revolution.

"Experience shows that soviets constitute the best and only form of organisation for the victorious struggle of the working class and revolutionary peasantry. They are the headquarters of the army of the proletarian revolution, whereas the idea of civil peace, which Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries advocate is an attempt to hinder the successful development of the victorious revolution of the working class and revolutionary peasantry. Every coalition is the expression of this idea of civil peace, and is therefore an attempt to restore the forces of the bourgeoisie by deceit and thereby strengthen them.

"That is why we, Bolsheviks, are against all coalitions and in favor of power passing into the hands of the working class and revolutionary peasantry represented by the soviets."

On returning from Siberia, Sverdlov went off to his beloved Urals and at the very first regional Party Congress, he, who used to be known as Comrade Andrew, collected around him his old Urals comrades with whom he had worked in underground Bolshevik work, and became the central figure of the congress and of the whole Urals regional Party organisation. In April he went to Leningrad as delegate of the Urals region to the All-Russian April Conference at which he was elected member of the Central Committee. The latter body would not allow Sverdlov to return to the Urals, but made him remain in Leningrad to work directly in the secretariat of the Central Committee.

From the time of the publication of the famous April theses of Lenin, Sverdlov centered his entire and tremendous revolutionary energy, his whole and extensive experience as organizer, on the question of winning the masses over and liberating them from the influence of conciliatory ideas.

Factory and works committees were suggested at that time as one of the organisational forms by means of which the masses in the factories might be brought under Bolshevik influence. Sverdlov organized the first Leningrad conference of factory and works committees, was elected to the presidium and directed the work of the conference.

The masses were turning to the Bolsheviks more and more. "Excitement in Petersburg has reached the greatest height, it is sufficient for a single shop in one of the big factories to make a demonstration and the whole population of workers and soldiers in the capital is roused. All we have been doing lately is to quench the rising flames since we do not believe direct action expedient at the present moment."¹⁹

¹⁹ From Sverdlov's correspondence, *The Press and Revolution*, 1924.

When the masses did come out into the streets in the days of July, Sverdlov was the first among them, at their head, although he thought such action premature. It was in those days that the bourgeoisie of all colors gave Sverdlov the nickname of “ Black Devil.”

The campaign which the bourgeoisie organized against the Bolsheviks after the days of July, went to such preposterous lengths that Lenin was declared to be a German spy.

When Lenin had to hide and lead an illegal existence the Bolsheviks were of different minds as to whether he should not go before the Provisional Government to rehabilitate himself. Lenin himself wished to do so. Sverdlov and Stalin saved the situation ; with great difficulty they persuaded Lenin not to do it. Thus, they saved him for the cause of the proletarian revolution, for otherwise the bourgeoisie would have dealt with Lenin as it did with Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg.

In the second half of July, Sverdlov was busy preparing for the VI Congress of the Party, which had to be carried out partly illegally. At the Congress he made a report on organisation on behalf of the Central Committee. The Congress took place in Lenin’s absence and the task of leading the conference and carrying out Lenin’s line fell upon Sverdlov’s and Stalin’s shoulders.

After the VI Congress, Sverdlov gave a great deal of his attention to mass work in the army and the Central Committee appointed him to direct the work of the military organisation.

October was near at hand. On October 8th (old style), Lenin wrote in an article entitled *The Crisis Has Matured* : “ The whole future of the international workers’ revolution for socialism is at stake. The crisis is ripe.” ²⁰

On October 10th, the Central Committee met with Sverdlov as chairman and an armed uprising and seizure of power was voted unanimously by all the members except Kamenev and Zinoviev.

Sverdlov, Stalin, Dzerzhinsky, Bubnov and Uritsky were elected for the practical centre in the organisational direction of the revolt. In the days of the revolution itself Sverdlov worked on liaison service, was a member of the insurrectional commission of the Central Committee, watched the Provisional Government and its decrees, kept in constant communication with the Peter and Paul Fortress, sent coded telegrams, instructions, etc.

Full of revolutionary energy and fearlessness, Yakov Sverdlov brought a cheerful and hopeful feeling everywhere. “ Kerensky will be beaten, we shall meet in the Republic of Soviets,” wrote Sverdlov in his orders and appeals.

The victory was won. Kerensky’s government was destroyed. On November 8th, Sverdlov was elected the chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets.

²⁰ V. I. Lenin, Collected Works. Russian edition. Vol. XXI, p. 239.

AFTER THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

Comrade Stalin describes Sverdlov's work from 1917 to 1918 in the following way :

" The period of 1917-18 was a crucial one for the Party and the State. The Party at that time became for the first time a ruling force. The new power — the power of the Soviets, the power of workers and peasants arose for the first time in the history of mankind. To transfer the Party, which had been until then illegal, to new rails, create the organisational basis of the new proletarian state, find the organisational forms of inter-relations between the Party and the Soviets, secure leadership for the Party and the normal development of the Soviets — these were the complicated organisational problems which then faced the Party.

" No one in the Party would have the courage to deny that Y. M. Sverdlov was one of the first, if not the first, who skillfully solved these organisational problems, essential to the construction of a new Russia.

"The ideologists and agents of the bourgeoisie are fond of repeating trite phrases to the effect that Bolsheviks do not know how to build, that they can only destroy. Y. M. Sverdlov and his whole work are a living refutation of these stories. Y. M. Sverdlov — his work in our Party is not accidental, the Party which has produced such a great builder as Y. M. Sverdlov can safely say that it knows how to build the new as well as destroy the old." ²¹

From March, 1917, when Sverdlov, full of strength and energy, hurried from his exile in Siberia to the centre, up to March, 1919, when, during his last journey from Kharkov to Moscow, he caught a severe cold which caused his death, only two years went by, but such years as those can be compared to decades.

The shortness of this essay does not allow us to give even the most general outline of the varied creative work which Sverdlov did at the time under Lenin's direct guidance, on the reinforcement of the ranks of the Bolshevik Party, creating and reinforcing Soviet Power in the centre and different localities, fighting against inner counter-revolution, organizing the defense of the achievements of the revolution from the interventionists of all denominations, from inner and international white guards.

Sverdlov's activity, such as his historic speech at the Constituent Assembly on January 5, 1918, the whole part he played in the Soviet period, demands special independent research and we shall close our essay with the words of Lenin from his speech over the grave of Y. M. Sverdlov:

"The proletarian revolution is as strong as the strength of its sources. In the place of those people who have given up their lives to the revolution in an act of supreme fidelity and fallen in the struggle, it advances whole ranks of others, perhaps less experienced, less prepared, but people who are connected with the wide masses and who are able to continue their work in place of the great talents which are gone.

²¹ Symposium in Memory of Sverdlov, p. 58.

" In this sense, I firmly believe that the proletarian revolution in Russia and in the whole world will bring forward group after group of people, will bring forward many sections of the proletariat and toiling peasantry, who will give that practical knowledge of life, that both individual and collective talent for organisation without which the vast army of proletarians cannot achieve their victory." ²²

²² Lenin, Collected Works. Russian edition. Vol. XXIV, p. 83.

Kamo The Life of a Great Revolutionist



By

R. Oblenskaya

PREFACE

It is the aim of this pamphlet to acquaint the reader with the heroic figure of Comrade Kamo. His Party work was not only closely bound up with the entire Russian Labor movement – but played a significant role in the revolutionary struggle of the Georgian workers and peasants – a role interwoven with romance and superb enthusiasm.

The beginnings of the victorious struggle of the Soviet working-class go back many decades. The path to victory was both long and fraught with difficulties. The preparations for the ultimate victory were laid by heroic revolutionary fighters who possessed an unusual combination-iron will dauntless bravery – firm purpose – and striking resourcefulness – and above all-undying devotion to their Party. One such fighter was Comrade Kamo.

The materials consulted for this pamphlet were: an article (*Comrade Kamo*) by S. F. Medvedeva which appeared in *The Proletarian Revolution* (3924, Nos. Big) and the book, *For a Quarter of a Century*, written by Comrade Baron and published by the Young Guard Publishing House.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

Comrade Kamo, Semeno Arshakovich Ter-Petrosyan, an Armenian by nationality, was born on May 15, 1882, in the town of Gori, Tiflis Province. His father was a well-to-do contractor.

His mother, considerably younger than his father, had scarcely turned sixteen when Kamo was born.

At the age of eleven the boy was sent to the town school, where he was taught in Russian – to him a strange and alien language. This circumstance as well as the strict school régime method of teaching turned this naturally studious boy from his studies.

His facile, observant mind, not receiving any stimulus, from the school curriculum, turned towards practical interests. Senko appointed himself the carpenter and locksmith of the house and even tried his hand at inventing. He constructed a home-made hand-mill, built a hen roost and fashioned a conduit to carry away the rain water from the courtyard. Inventions, however, only occupied Senko's spare time when he was not participating in boisterous games and daring raids on other people's orchards.

At fourteen, Senko was expelled from school at the instigation of the priest, for bad conduct and audacious free-thought. Bad conduct lay in the fact that Senko liked to ask the priest embarrassing questions. On the occasion that caused his expulsion, he had asked whether Christ was a real person and whether he had actually returned to earth after his death. Under tsarist autocracy one such question was sufficient to take away one's right to an education.

His family loved and spoiled Senko. But the father considered Senko a good-for-nothing, showing particular displeasure at his son's democratic tastes in the choice of friends.

Senko reciprocated his father's dislike. He could not forgive his father's captious manner towards his mother, nor his stinginess towards the family and the poor relations, when he himself was squandering money to entertain his wealthy friends.

Senko frequently jumped to the defense of his mother in the oft-recurring marital quarrels. The father detested the self-reliant streak in his son. He would often say: "Who is master in this house, I or this young tiger?" Once the father decided to give his refractory son a lesson, but Senko picked up an axe and made his father understand that there would be no meek submission on his part. Senko was deeply attached to his mother and she returned his affection with wholehearted love. He tried to brighten his mother's unhappy life in every way. During the long illness that resulted in her death, Senko was at his mother's bedside constantly. By this time the father had lost his fortune and Senko was driven to despondency at his inability to procure the necessary medicines and nourishment for his ailing mother.

After her death, Senko and his sisters went to live with an aunt in Tiflis,

EARLY PARTY WORK

Senko had formerly been to Tiflis and had stayed for a long time with his aunt. There he came under the influence of his fellow townsmen from Gori, Jugashvili (Stalin) and Vardaryants, who acquainted him with the fundamentals of revolutionary Marxism and began to draw him into Party work. Comrade Chadroshvili recalls, that as far back as 1887, Zakro – a friend of his – brought a young fellow of about sixteen or seventeen to his workshop.

"Here, old chap, is one young comrade more, brimming over with energy." During the conversation with Chadroshvili, Senko warmly expressed his desire to work actively in the Party. When he was warned of the danger that constantly menaced revolutionists, he answered, "So long as my head is on my shoulders, I am not afraid."

The very same day he began to transport literature from the outskirts of Tiflis (Nakhalovka, Naulazadevi, revolutionary sections of the region).

At first, Senko busied himself with the performance of various minor errands which he carried out to the letter, displaying unusual courage and resourcefulness. He was soon given more important and complicated work.

The year 1903 found him working at the transport of illegal literature for the Bolshevik United Caucasian Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party and taking part in the organization of underground printing shops. Senko was by this time known to all his friends as Comrade Kamo. The Russian school had not taught Senko the rules of the Russian language, and his comrades often good naturedly teased him about his atrocious pronunciation. Once he had asked "Kamo otnesti" instead of "*Komu* otnesti" (To whom shall I carry it?).

“Oh, you Kamó, Kamó,” laughed Stalin. From that time on he answered to the nickname of Kamó. Many of his comrades who worked with him afterwards in the Caucasus, in Petersburg and abroad knew him only by that name.

Sometimes people would point out to Kamo the difficult material conditions under which his aunt and sisters were living and about which he apparently did not care. He would always reply:

“There are tens of thousands of proletarian girls who are driven to the streets by hunger. Why are my sisters any better than others? It's this damned order that must be destroyed.”

When transporting literature and printing-type, Kamo used to disguise himself with extraordinary ingenuity. His use of make-up was so effective that he easily foiled the vigilance of the police and spies, and escaped recognition even by his closest friends. There runs a *kinto* – (a Tiflis Street peddler). On his head he balances a basket of vegetables. He is pushing his way through a motley, noisy bazaar crowd of Georgians. Shouts, curses, tough jokes follow his advancing figure.

But our *kinto* has a ready retort for every gibe. With an imperturbable air he saunters past spies and policemen. Kamo delivers his literature and type, running every gauntlet successfully. A trim young engineering student, resplendent in his new uniform, enters a second-class railroad carriage. Young girls and older women look interestedly at their attractive fellow passenger. They press closer to make room for him. The time passes quickly in pleasantly trivial conversation. The station is reached. Kamo picks up his grips and walks out under the very eyes of the gendarmes who smile affably as he passes them.

Once on a fête-day afternoon, when the trains were crowded with passengers going back to the city, a disreputable looking peasant clad in rags tried to force his way into a second-class compartment, with a large basket of eggs. The lady passengers were horrified.

“Gracious, what a filthy man! How dare he come in here? Conductor, put him out!” ... “In god's name,” the cringing peasant supplicated, “where are you driving a poor man? In the third class there is such a crush that my eggs will be broken, and then what shall I sell!”

After a lengthy discussion, the kind-hearted conductor allowed him to leave his precious basket on the rear platform. So, Kamo travelled near acquaintances who failed to recognize him, and delivered the “ eggs” to their destination.

His comrades had great faith in Kamo as an experienced conspirator. They constantly consulted with him and entrusted him with the most hazardous undertakings. Kamo was the only man to whom Comrade Baron ²³ (Bibinoshvili) confided the address of a large concentration point for illegal literature belonging to the Kutais Party Committee. Comrade Baron had organized this cache in a soft-drink factory, and during the whole of its existence it was never found out by the police.

²³ A member of the Kutais Party Committee

Conspiratorial work did not however fully occupy Kamo. Sometimes he ceased underground work for a time and took part in open demonstrations.

On April 27, 1903, Kamo took part in the May First demonstration in Tiflis. The Caucasian Social-Democrat Workers' Union fixed the May First demonstration in Baku, Tiflis, and Batum on that day. The militant demonstration passed off with great enthusiasm. At noon the red flag was to be unfurled. Kamo raised it aloft and despite the vicious onslaught of the Cossacks, he succeeded in carrying it and at the same time avoiding arrest.

Soon after, Kamo took an active part in the sending of delegates to the II Congress of the Party.

His part in organizing illegal print shops was immense. The police records show that he was responsible for the organization of eleven printing shops. Kamo participated in the arrangement of the Avlabar printing shop. Kamo unearthed a dilapidated shack in the workers' part of town. In the courtyard there was a large shed, built over a well. Soon a "washerwoman," the revolutionary Comrade Babe was installed there. She took in washing, and dried it in the shed during damp or rainy weather. There was a passage that led through the wall of the well into a room. Here it was that this ingenious print shop was located. It was a very risky affair to excavate and remove the displaced earth. The installation of the printing apparatus was no less hazardous, but in a short time the press was at work.

The "washerwoman" revealed an extraordinary capacity for work. Baskets filled with "laundry" were delivered to her and taken away in record time. She made friends very easily and her courtyard soon became the meeting place for youngsters who made it their playground.

As can be seen, the business was well arranged and the print shop amply justified the high hopes that had been placed in it. Comrade Kamo also played an important part in the organization of the illegal print shop in Kutais, which was tremendously effective in the West Georgian revolutionary movement (1904-1906). This print shop was planted in the house of a land surveyor, one Vaso Gogiladze. Gogiladze wrote an advertisement offering a room for rent and let it to his friend, a barkeeper. On the next day, Comrade Valiko Lezhava came to this barkeeper and asked questions about the room. The latter described it in detail. Valiko took the room at four rubles a month under the name of André Nemsadze and immediately began to work. He was very careless, often leaving the print shop with printers' ink and lead dust on his garments. His comrades categorically demanded that he observe the *strict rules* of conspiracy.

It was decided to remove the print shop to a more secure place. A wall was broken through. Behind this wall, a blind corridor three and a half meters long and one meter wide was tunneled. Taking out the further wall, they adjusted a solid wooden door. This door they camouflaged with bricks and cement, so that all that was to be seen was an ordinary whitewashed wall. The spring latch of the door was opened by a concealed cord which ran to the other end of the passage. When leaving his house, Valiko simply shut the secret door. But in order to get in, he had to find the end of the cord in the dark passage (Valiko was forbidden to use matches). To work in the narrow stuffy room was difficult, especially since intensive production was demanded from the print shop. The ordinary

hand-machine was not capable of coping with the demand, even in a twenty-four-hour working-day. It was decided to install an “Amerikanka,” which had to be brought from Tiflis.

This was a very difficult undertaking. Kamo was given the job.

One fine day, with characteristic skill he descended upon his startled comrades with the coveted “Amerikanka”. The Amerikanka” needed more room. The house had to have a kitchen with an ample cellar. This would enlarge the machine department.

Gogiladze so arranged matters that the workers who were engaged in building the kitchen were not for a second suspicious of the purpose for which it was all being done. All the secret construction details were done exclusively by Vaso and Valiko. Ventilation vents were built. These were very useful for the burning of superfluous paper, etc.

“I shall never forget,” relates Gogiladze, “Valiko's beaming face when he learnt that Kamo was not able to locate the entrance to the print shop. Valiko was overjoyed. If Kamo was not able to find the printing shop, the police never would.”

Valiko was a tireless worker; at night Gogiladze took his place. One of the workers of the printing shop was always on the watch and whenever any carriage drew near, the “Amerikanka” was silenced.

For a long time, money that had been confiscated from the Kavaril treasury was kept in this print shop. Afterwards it was sent abroad for the purchase of arms.

A police hunt for the print shop began. To leave it at the old place was dangerous. Comrade Baron, who had charge of this work, was at that time imprisoned, so he detailed the work to Vaso Lomtadze. When Comrade Baron was released from prison and returned to his flat, he found the printing shop installed in his room and working at top speed. This was an infringement of the most elementary rules of conspiracy.

However, apparently his comrades had no other way out. They concluded that since the owner of the flat was in prison the police would not think of looking there.

At the end of 1903, Kamo was arrested at the Batum railroad station with a suitcase full of illegal literature.

Kamo at once began to concoct a plan of escape. But it was not until nine months had passed that he was able to succeed. During the exercise hour he had often observed a scarcely perceptible projection in the prison wall some three yards high. Using a lucky moment when the sentinel's back was turned, Kamo dashed for the wall-ledge, seized the top of the wall with both hands and vaulted over the top to freedom. It was some time before his absence was noticed. No one imagined that he had escaped over the wall. While a minute search was being made in the prison yard, Kamo covered up his tracks.

Kamo immediately returned to active Party work. Even while in prison, Kamo joined the Bolsheviks as soon as he heard of the split at the II Congress. When the struggle between Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks intensified in connection with the convening of the III Congress, the Mensheviks toured the various organizations for the purpose of severing them from the Bolshevik United Caucasian Committee. Kamo fought the Mensheviks' disruptive work.

At that time, he was managing the illegal print shop of the United Caucasian Committee in Tiflis. When the Tiflis city committee went over to the Mensheviks and wished to take possession of the print shop, Kamo opposed them energetically and succeeded in keeping the shop for the Bolsheviks.

During this period of rapid revolutionary growth throughout the entire country (1904-1905), particularly after the Bloody Sunday of January 9th, and the tsarist defeat in Manchuria, the revolutionary tide in Georgia rose ever higher and higher. It was because of the mass character of the movement that the revolutionary organizations worked in an atmosphere of general sympathy which guaranteed success to the most daring and audacious actions.

The authorities and the police were so terrified that they avoided any sort of conflict with the population and practically ceased to function.

The worker and peasant movement poured forward like a mighty flood. All Georgia was in turmoil.

At the highest point of the 1905 revolution, many districts and counties of Georgia created their own revolutionary governments. Subsequently, during the years of the reaction, the trials which arose from the setting up of the republics of Guria, Senak, Kviril, Sochi, etc., kept the courts busy. The "president" of each of these was the Party committee, the "legislator" the revolutionary people who suddenly awoke to the possibilities of a new and brighter life.

The most significant and singular of all these republics was Guria. Here the revolutionary movement embraced the toiling population, one and all. Political consciousness, organization, revolutionary discipline reached a remarkably high level.

A boycott was declared against the government institutions and the church.

The toiling population supported the organizations by monthly money contributions. The money so collected went for the purchase of arms. The revolutionary people took the arms away from the agents of the old régime, confiscated whatever they needed from the government institutions, and in general prepared themselves for stubborn resistance in every way possible.

The revolutionary staff of the Party committee of Guria directed the disarming of the old régime's agents.

The old tsarist court was replaced by judges elected by the revolutionary people. The municipal government of the chief town of the district was replaced by a new people's municipality. A people's school bureau was formed to manage the schools.

The peasants refused to pay land rent to the landlords whom they boycotted.

The people ruthlessly suppressed spies, provocateurs and thieves. As a result, exemplary order was established in Guria. Thefts and brigand raids ceased. National antagonisms lessened and relations between different national groups of toilers assumed the character of mutual help and confidence.

Guria won for itself such freedom that “political criminals” from Tiflis, Kutais and Batum went, not abroad but to Guria. There they were in perfect safety.

In October, 1905, the revolutionary movement throughout the tsarist empire was united into one single, mighty upsurge – the country was under the sway of a general strike. The Tsar was obliged to make concessions and issued the manifesto of October 17th, which promised constitutional freedom. Nevertheless, the tsarist government despite these promises, soon began the organization of the Black Hundred. National pogroms in the large towns and in the provinces were instigated.

The tsarist viceroy of the Caucasus, Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, found it advisable to assume a liberal role for a short time, so powerful was the revolutionary feeling. He issued six hundred old and imperfect guns to the Tiflis workers so that they could defend themselves against the Black Hundred pogromists whom the worthy count, by the way, supplied with the latest rifles. He evidently thought the gesture a very wise move at that time. No one could accuse such a democratic governor of having instigated pogroms.

But soon the first news of the disruption of the general strike and the failure of the December revolt in Moscow and other cities reached the Caucasus.

Reaction in Georgia raised its head and gradually assumed the offensive. The trans-Caucasian railways, Tiflis and a number of other cities were placed under martial law. The authorities in Tiflis suggested that the workers should disarm and return the rifles that had been given them.

The workers, who were under the leadership of a Bolshevik group (Eliava, Kamo, and others), refused to hand over their arms and organized the defense of Nakhalovka, the proletarian suburb of Tiflis. The revolutionary staff was composed mainly of Bolsheviks (among whom was Kamo) but there were some Mensheviks on it also. The defenders distributed their forces so as to beat off attack on three flanks.

The fourth side, the mountainous one, was considered impregnable. Kamo disapproved and insisted that this side also be guarded. Finally, he occupied the elevation with a hand-full of workers. It was as Kamo had feared. The Cossacks attacked on this poorly defended flank, cutting down the brave but sadly outnumbered defendants, Kamo was wounded and arrested. For hours on end, he was tortured by his captors. They beat him with the gun butts, hung him up by his wrists – trying by every conceivable torture to wring from him the hiding-place of the arms and the names of his comrades. They “permitted” him to dig his own grave in the intervals between the hangings. At last, he was led to prison, through the streets of Tiflis, a blood-covered, half-naked, bruised and mangled body. Passers-by stopped horrified, and shouted out indignantly at his guards.

The city prisons were overcrowded. Without distinction, hundreds were brought from all parts of town. The Russian officials worked furiously writing down the names which to most of them were as familiar as Chinese.

Kamo had against him a long record of revolutionary activity, crowned by an escape from the Batum prison. And, now he was held for armed resistance against the Cossacks. His record was not very promising as far as the judge was concerned. He decided to take advantage of the confusion and exchange names with one of the chance victims of police zeal – a medical student called Shanshiashvili.

Under cross examination Shanshiashvili refused to give evidence and the pretend student appeared to be a talkative, half-witted fellow. When they asked him if he knew Kamo he answered:

“I would be a fool if I did not know. Of course, I know Kamo.”

“Where did you see him?”

“What do you mean where? As often as I want to... in the field.” (Kamo in the Georgian language is the name of a wild flower.)

The naive Shanshiashvili was set free. And so, after having been confined some two and a half months, Kamo walked through the gates of the prison accompanied by the policeman who was to register him with the local police station in the part of the town where the real Shanshiashvili lived. To go there meant certain discovery. They got in a cab. This well-behaved and to all appearances fully respectable young fellow began to ask the policeman not to compromise him in the eyes of the entire neighborhood. People might think that he, Shanshiashvili, was in reality a political criminal or a thief when they saw him in a cab in the custody of a policeman. His pleas were made more effective by a sizeable bribe. The policeman got out of the cab, after instructing the driver to drive straight to the station. The cabman drove away.

When the policeman arrived at the station, he found himself quite alone and with the uncomfortable job of explaining to his angry superior how it had all happened. A harmless student would not object to a short visit in the police station. There was something queer – they became dreadfully worried. Soon the entire truth about their stupid blunder confronted them – but all they could do was rage impotently. The bird had flown.

MILITANT WORK

“Kutais province is virtually in the hands of the revolutionists. Although there are garrisons in Poti, Ozurgety, and Kutais, they are not sufficient to reestablish our authority. Kutais province can only be retaken by the concentration of at least a division of both infantry and artillery who could affect a landing from the sea. The delivery of supplies should be secured by sea. Any action must be

begun before spring, for later the revolutionary movement in this province as well as other regions of this part of the country will grow in intensity.”²⁴

This is how the tsarist viceroy, Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, summed up the situation in Western Georgia.

The extent of the defeat of the revolution was up to then not clear to either side. The authorities had not yet gotten over their panic and were inclined to exaggerate the strength of the enemy.

But as the position became more defined, the viceroy took measures for the “pacification” of Trans-Caucasia, beginning with the districts least affected by the revolutionary movement. A military expedition under the command of general Alikhanov-Avasky was sent to Guria. The viceroy gave him instructions to act ruthlessly and destroy all revolutionary organizations as well as all who offered the least resistance. The reaction soon increased in momentum and began an offensive along the entire front.

The Party organizations, driven underground once again, were reorganizing themselves and working out new tactics suitable to the new conditions resulting from the temporary victory of the counter-revolution.

By this time the Mensheviks were so demoralized by the defeat, that some of them proposed at the united conference of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks at Kutais, to return the 200,000 rubles expropriated by the Bolsheviks from the government treasury at Kavaryl.

This proposal, however, was defeated. The majority at the conference, under the pressure of the Bolsheviks, decided to use this money for the purchase of arms abroad through the Central Committee of the Party.

The troops of General Alikhanov restored “order” by the methods which in 1920 were so vividly described by Valiko Jugeli, with the only difference that at that time they were not known as “democratic” and had not been recommended for general use by Karl Kautsky and the II International.

The skies of Guria were red with the reflection of fires. Not only villages were burnt. They even burnt the district town of Ozurgety.

The “pacifiers” demanded the surrender of arms from the population. They demanded that all agitators and deserters be handed over. They demanded two years taxes and new recruits for the army. But the population handed over no one, surrendered only those arms that were out of order and antiquated. The more daring and younger peasants hid themselves in the hills and from there harassed the government troops by partisan raids.

²⁴ Report of the Adjutant General, Count Vorontsov Dashkov to the Minister of War dated 11, XII, 1905. *Relation of 1905 in Trans-Caucasia* (Chronicle of events, documents and materials, page 144)

Martial law was established. The Cossacks, acting under instructions of the viceroy, killed all suspicious persons on the spot.

The revolutionary and Party organizations were all but annihilated. However, the Bolshevik Party committees suffered considerably less than the others, thanks to the fact that they had preserved their illegal apparatus.

The conditions for Party work became very difficult. Kamo, returning to his work underground as a professional revolutionist, was obliged to carry on with the greatest caution. In the town, armed sentries and patrols stopped all suspicious persons.

Kamo's ability at disguise stood him in good stead. Frequently he threw spies off his tracks on to a false trail, or by some trick led them by the nose. Kamo never lost his head and his reckless bravery often came to his rescue. Once he went to the theatre without disguise. In the corridor he came face to face with the chief warder of the prison, who immediately recognized him. With a childish smile, Kamo went up to him and said, "Yes, it is really I." For one moment the two men looked at each other silently then the chief warder whispered in an undertone, "Get out of here this minute, or I'll arrest you."

Kamo gave up his life to the revolution. Very frequently, Kamo spent the night under the open skies, or under the seats of a third-class car, or else in some filthy den. He starved regularly, and spent endless hours sitting in an attitude of prayer, in dark corners of some Armenian church, where he kept many of his rendezvous. He forgot how to sleep soundly. When he slept, he lay in such a position as if ready to jump up and run at the very first hint of alarm.

At this time, he was successfully engaged in transporting arms and arranging escapes. Among other things, he organized and carried out the escape of thirty-two comrades. It happened in this way. Metekhsky castle (a very old fortress built by Georgian kings) stands on the high bank of the Kara River. Two of its sides (the building was semi-circular in shape) were washed by the river. Along the third side was a street and only on the short fourth side did the houses of the town adjoin. From one of these houses an ingenious tunnel was dug. One night thirty-two men escaped through it to freedom.

Kamo at this time also took active part in preparing for the Stockholm Congress of the Party.

After that he went to St. Petersburg and stayed there several months. Kamo longed to devote himself to the study of the theory of revolution as he felt himself not sufficiently grounded in this.

But the time for study had not yet come. The struggle raged all around him. A fierce battle with autocracy was in progress. There was a shortage of Party workers. Some wanted to detail Kamo to militant revolutionary work in the central industrial region, but the conference of the Caucasian party organizations sent him abroad, in spite of the Mensheviks protests, to buy arms for Trans-Caucasia.

At the head of this business was the special agent of the Central Committee under whose control the group of Caucasian comrades worked. Several thousand rifles and a large amount of ammunition were bought. There were also several dozen machine-guns.

Kamo, in the role of a “good customer,” commanded the respect of the dealers, who were amazed at his knowledge of arms.

The Party for the first time made large purchases of arms. It was intended to load them on a steamship and dispatch them to the Turko-Caucasian shores. Here the steamship was to be met by Caucasian comrades in small sailing boats. The arms would then be transshipped on the high sea. The agent of the Central Committee toured nearly all the ports of Holland, Belgium, France, Italy and Austro-Hungary, but failed to charter a ship whose captain would take the risk of freighting a cargo of contraband arms.

There was also the difficulty of avoiding the vigilance of the customs authorities who kept careful check on the ports of call of every steamer.

By way of exception, it was decided to choose Bulgaria. But here again a difficulty arose.

It was only possible to transport arms from Bulgaria to Russia direct; in this way, the conspiracy was certain to be discovered. A way out was sought. The representatives of the Macedonian revolutionary committee²⁵ undertook to negotiate with the Bulgarian government for the shipment of arms to Varna. It would be explained that these arms were to be used by the Armenians who planned to rise against Turkey the common enemy at that time of all the Balkan states. The permit was obtained, but at Varna it was again impossible to charter a steamer.

They then bought a small yacht which had crossed from America to Europe, for a comparatively low figure – thirty thousand francs. The yacht was repaired and reconditioned for carrying freight. A crew was to come from Russia.

By the end of the summer (1906) all was ready for setting sail, but financial difficulties arose.

Work on the purchase of the arms was begun at the orders of the Bolshevik Central Committee, which regularly financed it. But after the Stockholm congress, the majority in the Central Committee passed into the hands of the Mensheviks, and although the new Central Committee confirmed the old mandate, the dispatch of money was seriously affected.

Letters and telegrams to the Central Committee went unanswered. Requests for money remained like a voice calling in the wilderness. The agent of the Central Committee pointed out that the success of the entire cause depended upon the shipment of arms during the proper season, in good weather, before the beginning of the autumn storms in the Black Sea, etc. The money did not come, nor did the promised crew. It was clear that the whole affair was threatened with failure. The agent of the Central Committee was compelled to start for St. Petersburg, where, not without considerable trouble, he finally received the rest of the Trans-Caucasian money from the Central

²⁵ A petty-bourgeois revolutionary organisation

Committee. This remainder had been considerably diminished. Meanwhile the favourable weather had passed and the ship was loaded in late autumn. Although the crew sent from Odessa did not inspire great confidence, there could be no question of substitution. Moreover, the arms were to be accompanied by trustworthy Party comrades, with such an experienced revolutionist as Kamo among them.

It may have been due to a storm or to the incompetence of the captain, but the steamer went aground not far from the Rumanian coast. The crew deserted and the arms were stolen by Rumanian fishermen. It was not possible to rescue the arms, for as soon as the incident became known to the Russian embassy it immediately took drastic measures.

After that failure, Kamo made his way across the Rumanian frontier. Crossing the frontier was not without adventure. The travelers lost their way and just missed falling into the hands of the tsarist gendarmes. At the end of 1906, Kamo returned to the Caucasus.

In the summer of 1906, military uprisings broke out in Sveaborg and Kronstadt. Peasant unrest grew in intensity and in some places developed into armed uprisings. Throughout the whole country there were armed conflicts and skirmishes between the Black Hundreds of the government and the people. The military courts intensified their activity. Economic and political crises became intensified and in some places the class struggle developed into open civil war, taking the form of partisan warfare against the government.

In October, 1906, Lenin wrote:

“Partisan struggle is an inevitable form of struggle during that period when the mass movement has already reached the point of armed risings and when intervals become more or less great between the big battles in the civil war.”²⁶

In the same work, he went on to explain what role partisan struggle should occupy in the “arsenal” of the proletarian resources, and under what conditions the proletariat could use this weapon in its own interests.

“The party of the proletariat can never look on partisan war as the only or even the principal method of struggle. This method should be subordinate to others, it must be used proportionately with the other principal methods of struggle, and enriched by the educational and organizational influence of socialism. For without this latter condition, all, absolutely all, the methods of struggle in bourgeois society only bring the proletariat near to the various non-proletarian sections of society above and below it, and if they are allowed to go along in their own way they become all worn out, distorted and prostituted.

“In order to avoid such a danger in partisan struggle, when the proletariat nears the déclassé elements, the vagabonds, etc. — the vanguard of the class-conscious proletariat — the Party — must create an organization, capable of directing the masses not only in big battles but also in these smaller

²⁶ V. I Lenin, *Partisan War*. Vol. X.

skirmishes.... The Party must educate and prepare its organizations to the point where they can really act as a *fighting side*, without letting a single opportunity pass of inflicting some defeat upon the forces of the enemy.”²⁷

Thus, the Bolsheviks considered that partisan skirmishes, in order to be permissible and opportune in the given period of struggle with the government, had to be carried out under the control of the Party and with the closest observance of definite ideological and organizational conditions.

Partisan struggle aimed at the destruction of the government thugs and the active Black Hundreds the expropriation of government property for revolutionary needs, and most important of all, it served as the basis for armed uprisings.

On his return to Tiflis, Kamo began work in the underground technical group, whose function it was to increase the material resources of the Party, organize escapes, obtain and secret arms. The first act of the group was the organization of the Kutais expropriation of 1907, which brought fifteen thousand gold rubles into the funds of the Party.

The police, made frantic by the expropriation, would have jumped out of their skins to capture Kamo, but the “Caucasian bandit,” as he was called jokingly by Lenin, was not to be caught. Recalling this period of his life, all his comrades who knew him in those days, were astonished at his scrupulousness regard with to Party money. In spite of the fact that large sums passed through his hands from time to time, he never permitted himself to spend more than fifty kopeks a day for his own needs.

For extending the operations of the group, Kamo did not possess the necessary number of arms and explosives. In order to obtain all that was necessary, Kamo decided to go to Finland. He needed a reliable passport for this trip. This he received from the passport bureau that was organized by the Kutais committee of the Party. This bureau supplied all the trans-Caucasian organizations, and sometimes even the Russian ones, with passports. Thus, practically all the members of the Social-Democratic faction of the State Duma had Kutais passports which they could use “in case of emergency.” This passport bureau remained in existence for four years.

For the journey to Finland, Kamo received the passport of a wealthy landowner and provincial nobleman, one Prince K. Dadiani. Kamo travelled first class, dressed in the uniform of a Cossack officer. In Finland he went to see Lenin and safely returned to Tiflis with the arms and explosives.

Before leaving for St. Petersburg, Kamo, impersonating Prince Dadiani, visited the apartment that the militant group had lately rented. The landlady greeted the well-known Prince Dadiani with the greatest respect for she had heard of him as the representative of one of the best families in Georgia. This visit raised the prestige of the new occupants of the flat and served as a sort of

²⁷ Ibid.

guarantee against the possible suspicion that might otherwise be raised as to their political unreliability.

How should they organize a big expropriation? This question was long discussed in the group. If there was a large sum of money kept in any particular government office, it was certain to be well guarded. The expropriation must take place during the transfer of the money from one place to another. This was agreed upon by the entire group.

The question then to be decided was when and where. Thanks to Kamo's ingenuity, the group began to receive systematic information about the shipments of money and the number of guards detailed.

Soon the three main channels through which large sums of money flowed to Djulfa ²⁸ were ascertained.

Each of these was tried. The first failed on account of Kamo's being wounded by an exploding bomb. His group managed to keep this accident concealed from the police, and a sympathetic doctor succeeded in placing Kamo in a private hospital under an alias. Kamo nearly died from ensuing complications. His left eye was so seriously injured by splinters that for some time the right one was endangered. However, his splendid health carried him through. In a few weeks he was on his feet again. The right eye did not suffer, but his left retained only one-tenth of its power of sight. Hardly had he recovered, then he began to work again.

The second attempt had an auspicious beginning. The expropriation group travelled on the very train which carried the money. But at the last moment, certain unexpected happenings forced them to abandon the project. The guides who were to have led our comrades through the hills by secret paths known only to them, took fright and deserted. The comrades returned to Tiflis very downhearted. All the explosives and money had been spent on this second attempt. On the evening of their return, news reached the group that the post was delivering some 210,000 rubles to the State Bank on the morrow. The decision was quick and this time the undertaking succeeded. On the next day (June 23, 1907, at about 10 a.m.), Kurdumov, the Cashier of the State Bank, in company with the accountant, Golovia, received 250,000 rubles from the post office. Accompanied by two policemen and five Cossacks in two carriages they set out for the Bank.

The first bomb failed to damage the carriage with the money, and the frightened horses bolted away towards Soldatski market. At the end of Erivan Square another bomb was thrown. The carriage was held up. Datiko snatched the bag containing the money and dashed for Velyaminovski Street. Where was Kamo at this time?

Dressed in an officer's uniform, still pale, and just recovering from his many wounds, he had made a round of the square that morning and by many artful ruses removed the pedestrians from the danger zone so as to avoid unnecessary bloodshed. Kamo was in a carriage when the first bomb

²⁸ Today's Julfa, Azerbaijan—Ed

exploded. He was supposed to receive the money from the comrades and convey it to a safe place. When he, according to plan, emerged from Galanovsky Street on to the Square, it seemed to him that the plan had again failed.

But this was no time for misgivings. The other comrades must be helped to escape before the troops came. Standing up on the seat of his carriage he began firing his revolver, cursing all the while like a real army officer. He urged his horse to Velyaminovski Street. Here he accidentally ran across Datiko carrying the bag of money. Kamo took the money to the flat of Miha Bacharidze. From that flat it was later removed to a safe place – the study of the manager of the observatory, and hidden in an upholstered couch.

When the troops surrounded the square, they found nobody. All the participants of the expropriation succeeded in avoiding arrest. Only some indirect assistants, engaged in changing the money abroad, were discovered with small sums on their person. The foreign governments, however, refused to hand them over to the Russian police.

ARREST: (HE SIMULATES INSANITY)

In August, 1907, Kamo arrived in Berlin with the passport of an agent of an insurance company, under the alias of Mirsky. In November of that year, he was arrested by the German police! In his possession a false-bottomed suitcase was found which contained materials for preparing bombs of considerable force. When his room was searched, the police found a box with arms and detonators used for generating explosions from a distance.

Kamo was sure that an agent provocateur was responsible for his arrest, but perhaps it may have been due to carelessness on the part of another comrade who was arrested, and on whom the police found Kamo's address.

Kamo was sent to the Alt Moabit Prison for Criminals.

He did not understand German and pretended that he barely understood Russian which impeded the work of the cross-examination. A lawyer, Oscar Kohn, was allowed to visit him. It was remarkable that after the first interview, both men, although unable to converse, made an excellent impression on each other. Kamo felt complete confidence in Kohn. And Kohn felt that before him was a man much superior to the average. By means of gestures and mimic they understood each other so well that it was practically unnecessary to have an interpreter. This pleased both of them who did not want a third person present at their meetings.

Kamo was accused and indicted as a terrorist-anarchist. On his record there were two escapes and in addition there were certain crimes for which the penalty was death. The impending trial in Berlin threatened him with extradition to Russia.

Kamo, on the advice of L. B. Krassin, who sent him a note through the agency of Kohn, began to simulate violent insanity. The simulation of insanity is the most difficult of all simulations. There

are endless varieties of psychic derangement and each of these has its own well-known symptoms and combinations of symptoms. The majority of those who have to simulate madness usually feign violent insanity, although this requires a tremendous amount of strength. In consequence of this, they soon become completely worn out and are unable to continue their pose. In the history of medicine there were cases when men with expert medical training attempted to feign madness, and yet were unable to carry it through. This is explained by the fact that the environment of the institutions for the insane reacts very depressingly on the nervous system. A constant strain is necessary, and soon one's self-control is utterly exhausted. It usually ends with the simulant either actually going mad or voluntarily giving up the farce. The most dogged and tenacious types rarely succeed in deceiving the doctors. After six weeks – at the most after two months – the simulation is almost always exposed.

But Kamo performed a miracle. He successfully feigned madness for four years. This was only possible because of the unusual qualities that Kamo possessed. He had a colossal reserve of physical strength – his nervous system was very strong and enduring and, most important of all, he possessed an iron strength of will and was charged with an undying, burning hatred for his class enemies, a hatred that inspired him with heroic fortitude in the face of inhuman torture.

On the very first day of his supposed insanity when he began to rave, shout, tear his clothes, throw dishes on the ground and beat the warders, he was put in solitary confinement in a basement cell where the temperature was under zero. Here he was kept stark naked for nine days. In order not to catch a deathly chill, he was forced to keep on his feet every moment. After nine days he was taken back to his former cell and soon was given permission to see Kohn. Kamo, by signs, conveyed to Kohn that he was far from mad.

Kamo, now bearing the classification of a raving maniac, was placed in the ward for mental defectives, for observation. Kohn petitioned to be appointed guardian and this was agreed upon.

Here observation lasted six months. For four months Kamo never lay down. He rested only by standing with his face to the corner and raising each foot alternately. He refused all food. They began to feed him with a feeding-tube. In the ensuing struggles, they broke several of his teeth. Kamo subsequently asserted that this forcible milk diet (they fed him on milk) did him a lot of good.

There was no end to the dodges and tricks that he played with himself. For instance, he plucked one side of his head clean of hair and arranged them in clusters on his bed. When the ranged visiting doctor and the warder saw this, they threw their hands up and cried in chorus – “Shreklich” (Awful). Once he hung himself, being beforehand convinced of the vigilance of the warders. He was cut down in the nick of time. Upon finding a small bone in his soup, he sharpened it at night and cut the blood vessels of his left hand. By the time first aid was applied, he was nearly dead from loss of blood. Later it was found that not only was his bed blood-soaked, but that even the room under his cell was bespattered with blood.

It is probable that the doctors at first believed that they were dealing with a simulant when they fixed the period of observation at six months. But in view of the number of tortures that the subject inflicted upon himself, the experts were forced to conclude: “that the characterizing signs of

his (Kamo's) conduct cannot be simulated during such a lengthy period. It is only a real maniac who could behave in this manner.... We have in this case a real example of mental derangement which should be classed as hyper-hysteria."

In June, 1908, Kamo was transferred to the Buch Home for mental defectives, near Berlin. He remained there until March, 1909. Kamo retained some very grim recollections of his stay in this home, but his sense of humor and cheerful disposition never deserted him.

On his arrival at Buch, he was housed in a ward with ten violent maniacs. They were left to each other's pleasant company with very little supervision. As a result, they choked, beat, scratched and bit each other undisturbedly. In such pleasant, but by no means safe company, Kamo spent some time before he was removed to a more habitable section.

During the whole of his confinement at Buch, Kamo studied and observed all the cases round him. Among them was a doctor, a dope fiend. He had been placed in this asylum by his parents because he spent not only all of his own money for morphinan but also any other money that he could lay his hands on. This doctor frequently talked with the other patients in his lucid moments, analyzing the different forms of mental diseases, their characteristic symptoms and peculiarities. Kamo tried to remember all this.

In March, 1909, the administration of Buch declared that the state of the mentally deficient, terrorist-anarchist Petrosyan was quite satisfactory, that he was very quiet and rational and was even able to perform handicraft and garden work, Kamo was promptly returned to the Alt Moabit prison. Here he was again taken sick this time in accordance with all the rules of science. On the 16th of April he was sent back to Buch. He assumed the chronic mental derangement which created insensibility to epidermal pain.

Kamo, remembering the talks of the doctor, mimicked the expressions of the face, the gait, the movements, in fact all the peculiarities of behavior attached to anesthesia. The doctors were intensely interested, and in order to test the veracity of this symptom, they made some of the most barbarous experiments upon him. For instance, they stuck pins under his nails, burnt his body with red-hot irons, etc. Long years after, Kamo still bore the scars of the deep wounds made by their tortures. All these repeated experiments, Kamo bore with fortitude, without a motion of his eyelids "It was terrible, the way the scorched flesh smoked and smelled" he would often repeat in later years. As the doctors and professors had never come across in either practice or in scientific literature a case where a man with natural sensitiveness was able to undergo such torture, they were obliged, in spite of the treacherous reaction of the pupils, to conclude that the patient was really suffering from the disease he was simulating. (In man and the higher animals, the sensation of pain is connected with the expansion of the pupils and their involuntary reaction cannot be overcome by will power.)

There are a number of documents and records of the asylums where Kamo was kept under observation. Looking at various extracts from these records, we can picture for ourselves a fragment of the maddening conditions under which Kamo fought for life.

February 7, 1908	Raved – Stood in corner made no response.
-	
February 10	Undressed – no response. Refuses food.
-	
February 12	Sighs and moans – Refuses food.
-	
June 4	Walks about singing songs.
-	
June 19	Complains of dizziness – Mutters to himself.
-	
June 23	Tore off part of his moustache – wants to send it as a souvenir to his comrades often cries – Swears at the Berlin police in Russian and in German – Says that Spanish inquisitors are torturing him.
-	
June 29	Removed to Buch.
-	

The director of Buch made the following case notes.

Question: What is your name?

Answer: Semyon Arshakovich Ter-Petrosov.

Question: What is your religious belief?

Answer: I am an Armenian. Our religion does not differ much from the Orthodox Greek Church.

Question: Did any of your family suffer from any mental disease?

Answer: When I was a child, I was a rabid patriot. One of my aunts on my mother's side was very nervous.

Question: What illnesses did you suffer from as a child?

Answer: As a child I liked to drink vinegar and had fits of coughing.

Question: Name one of the Siberian rivers, flowing to the north.

Answer: Amur, Tobol – I have forgotten all. Formerly I could have shown you every river on the map with closed eyes.

Question: How many provinces are there in Russia?

No answer.

Question: Name a town on the Volga?

Answer: Astrakhan.

Question: How many inhabitants are there in Russia?

Answer: Two million (he laughs). I lie, two hundred million.

Question: What do you know of Catherine?

Answer: Of that monster I do not want to speak.

Question: What do you know of Peter the Great?

Answer: He was a Russian.

Question: Did you go to church formerly?

Answer: No. I have my own god, I do not recognize the god of the police. My religion is the Socialist State. I believe in Karl Marx and Engels.

At this time the “Armendirektion”²⁹ (the organization that controlled all the clinics and hospitals of the district) under the pressure of the German police, began to insist on the extradition of Kamo to Russia. They insisted that the support of this foreign invalid could not be paid for by the German people. In spite of all the measures taken by Oscar Kohn and other people to influence the authorities, Kamo was given over to the Russian gendarmes at the station of Vreshen-Strelkovo. He was taken to Tiflis where he was to be tried by a military court. He was immediately imprisoned in Metekhsy fortress.

In order to protect Kamo from the swift and severe penalty the Russian Government intended for him, Kohn wrote an article in the *Vorwärts*. This article was immediately reprinted in all the German liberal papers. In his turn, Hervé of the *Humanité* penned a philippic against the German government accusing them of handing over a sick man to reactionary Russia, to be dealt with as a political criminal.

There was much talk about it in face of which the Russian Government, though desirous of hanging this “dangerous fellow,” had to desist.

So, it came about that the case attracted the attention of the highest officials not so much out of sympathy for the mentally damaged criminal, but in order to avoid a first-rate political scandal in the west. A letter from the Minister of the Interior, P. Stolypin, to the tsar's representative in the Caucasus, Count Vorontsov-Dashka, reveals these apprehensions, as follows:

COUNT ILIATON ILARIONOVICH

DEAR SIR:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a recent letter (dated April 27th of the current year) informed me that for the last days the German democratic press had been discussing with

²⁹ Poor Relief Directorate – Ed

particular heatedness the fate of the Russian subject, Arshakov (alias, Mirsky and Ter-Petrosov), brought to justice in Tiflis in connection with the bandit raid on the Government money transport in 1907.

The radical organs, *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* are attacking the German police in this connection for having allowed the extradition of Mirsky-Arshakov to Russia immediately upon his release from a Berlin city asylum for mental defectives. The attacks of the press will surely increase in the event of Mirsky's being condemned to death. The Ministry of the Interior has apprehensions lest this may not have an undesirable effect on future Russian interests over the question of the extradition of anarchists.

Taking this opportunity of expressing to your highness my greatest respect and sincere devotion,

P. STOLYPIN.

May 7, 1910. No. 91104.

ESCAPE FROM THE LUNATIC ASYLUM

Evidence of Kamo's chronic mental illness was sent to Tiflis, signed by the Berlin experts. The medical experts of the military court were obliged to take them into consideration.

On the day of the trial, the room of the court house and the corridors leading to it were crowded with people. Tiflis was roused. Everyone wanted to see the famous people's hero, the fighter for the working-class. But, alas, the spectacle they beheld was a pitiable one. They saw a ragged individual, in torn hospital clothes, with vacant, roving, large eyes, that failed to recognize anyone, staring out of a livid face, Kamo excited infinite pity. Many wept. They led him into court and placed him in front of the important-looking judges. Not taking notice of anyone, Kamo took Perka, a goldfinch he had tamed in prison, out of his bosom and let it walk about the table. He fed his bird with bread crumbs, then raising his head with an idiotic grin, he offered a crumb to one of the judges. This scene made a very deep impression on the onlookers. His aunt Liza and sisters, who were in the court-room, were convinced that the reason of their beloved Kamo was really impaired.

The accused was led away. The military court was compelled to assent to his further probation in the psychiatric section of the prison hospital at Metekhsky fortress. Here Kamo was under observation for a period of a year and four months.

The records of this period give the following interesting picture:

On December 21, 1910, the patient was brought under guard to the Metekhsky fortress hospital. On his hand sat a goldfinch that he called Perka and from which he refused to be parted. The patient is a man of middle height, fairly well built. There is a foolish expression on his face, He is apathetic – replies disjointedly to all questions. He has no sense of direction, nor any idea of the object of his visit. He was placed in isolation. The goldfinch was taken away.

December 22 – The patient is somber, silent, apathetic. ... Increased anesthesia of the skin. In some places there is complete absence of sensation...

December 24 – Patient walks about his cell all day, sings and whistles. Absolutely nothing interests him; he did ask the guard for a book dealing with war – he was given the book but did not read it. He says that he has four million rubles hidden in the vicinity of Tiflis, somewhere in the mountains. He refuses to say where he has hidden the money. In the evening, he is unable to sleep for a long time – tosses and turns from one side to the other. He declares among other things that he is very unhappy at being deprived of Petka the goldfinch, and asks for his return so that he may have a chat with him on an important matter.

January 5 – The patient, during the morning visit of the doctor, declared that some young people, both men and women, came and looked into his cell, alarming him and disturbing his night's rest. He asked the doctor to take measures to put a stop to this annoyance, otherwise he would have to take matters into his own hands. In the daytime he wanders about his cell- whistles and smokes incessantly. He is absolutely indifferent to the fact that he is in the section for lunatics and that he is chained. He plays with the links of the chains and accompanies his songs. Took food. Did not sleep the whole night.

January 9 – The patient is excited, walks, sings, whistles. He says that he is calling to his birds who understand him perfectly. Falls into brooding silence. Did not sleep all night, as, according to his words, he was busy planning a battle for his army which he had hidden in the woods in the vicinity of Tiflis. No interest in papers, books or pictures.

January 13 – Very depressed, cries, moans – is very abject. Often talks about death – “My detachments are destroyed by those swine who are holding me here. It is not worth while living any more. I should have lived a hundred years, but I am willing to die now.”

January 21 – His mood inconsistent. Melancholy and elated by turns-spends the day in his cell, sings, whistles and talks to himself. Makes animals out of soft bread.

March 2 – The patient is quiet, talkative, tells the doctor that he intends to go to America via Siberia in a ten horsepower motor car. He would cross the frozen Bering Straits. He expressed wonder at the manner in which his name was known. “I heard a woman's voice call my name distinctly.”

After the end of the probation period, Kamo was transferred to the Mikhailovsky asylum. The Tiflis doctors also pronounced him incurable. It was here that Kamo thought out and put his plan of escape into execution. In order to establish contact with the outside world, Kamo made use of a young orderly at the asylum, one Ivan Bragin, who was impressed by Kamo's engaging personality no less than by the romantic story that was attached to his name.

Ivan Bragin for a long time played the role of postman between Kamo and Kote Tsintsadze, who was directing the organization of the escape. He was assisted by Kamo's beloved sister, Givaria.

Gradually, Bragin became a close friend of the family and they enlisted his aid in the planning of the escape. Kamo himself, with his natural straightforwardness, warned Bragin at the outset of the risk he assumed by becoming an accomplice. Bragin was sure to be accused, no matter what the outcome. It was hardly probable that the money (a few hundred rubles) played any decisive role, because, by betraying Kamo, Bragin would have made a fine career for himself.

The psychiatric section of the Mikhailovsky hospital stood on the bank of the river Kura, not far from Berisky bridge. The window of the upper floor lavatory looked out upon the river. This window like all the other windows of the hospital was iron-grilled. It was necessary to saw through the bars of the window. Kamo began his work. The length of time and the frequency with which Kamo went to the lavatory did not cause any of the staff to wonder. Who of those looking after chronic cases of insanity did not know their patients habits of remaining there for hours engaged in some revolting practice? Kamo, having studied the habits of his companions, so arranged matters that he was never caught unawares. Thus, he utilized every free moment to saw through the bars of the window with a thin, sharp hack-saw, that had been brought secretly by Bragin. This work took him three months.

On the day fixed for the escape (in August, 1911), Kote Tsintsadze sent Kamo a pie in which there was a sleeping-powder for drugging the guards. Wearied by the heat, the hospital staff indulged in an after-dinner siesta. Kamo unfastened his shackles which had already been sawn through, dressed himself in civilian clothes brought to him by Bragin, and upon the signal given by Kote from the opposite bank, began to let himself down by a rope. But the rope broke in one place and Kamo fell from a height of about three meters on to a pile of stones. He jumped up and quickly dodged round the arm of the river towards the shallows, then across the shallows under the bridge and on to the opposite bank. Here he was met by Kote and taken to a flat that had been prepared for him.

Several days later, Kamo was taken to another more secluded hiding-place, a small cottage standing on the hills and surrounded by vineyards. The owner of the place, a somewhat eccentric fellow, an elderly official, was absolutely reliable. Apart from himself and his guest there was nobody at the place. There Kamo lived for a month without going out. Before leaving that place, not wishing to compromise his hospitable host, Kamo carefully removed even the slightest traces of his residence there. Happily, his whereabouts were well concealed and the host was not troubled.

The military prosecutor was beside himself with rage when he heard of Kamo's escape and severely reprimanded the senior doctor of the hospital. The latter in his own defense pointed to the extraordinary art of the simulator, who successfully deceived even the Berlin professors. All means possible were put into operation to affect his recapture. The city was completely encircled. Exit from its limits or leaving it by train was placed under very strict and complicated control. However, there is no control that cannot be effectively dodged.

Soon the road leading to the Mtskheta highway became a favorite hang-out for a small group of high school bicycle enthusiasts. The soldiers at their post would enjoy looking at the exercises of

the youngsters. Sometimes one of the cyclists, absorbed in his exercises, would cross the city border till he was stopped by the warning, "Go back – it is forbidden to go outside the city limit." The cyclist procession, repeated daily, grew monotonous. The soldiers no longer paid any attention to the cyclists and once when one of the five who crossed the border disappeared round the bend of the road, no one noticed his absence.

Disguised as a high school student, Kamo proceeded on the cycle to Mtskheta where he was again met by Kote. On that day there was a wedding in town and the tipsy guests were dancing and singing their folk songs in the streets. According to the hospitable customs of the Caucasus, each of the guests is permitted to bring a friend to the celebrations. So, changing his student's uniform for a national costume, Kamo mingled with the drinkers. In the evening the guests left the town and a crowd made their way to the railway station. Kamo safely seated himself in the train and travelled to Batum. There it was necessary to overcome the last obstacle – to board a steamer secretly and get to a foreign port. A group of Batum comrades with the help of some sailors hid Kamo in the hold of a ship in between some bales and boxes.

Kamo made his way to Paris, in order to get in touch with Lenin, and to regain his grasp of the revolutionary situation which had become more complicated during the years that he was in prison.

N. K. Krupskaya, recalling the visit of Kamo, writes:

"Kamo asked me to buy him almonds. He would sit in our Livingroom eating almonds as he had done at home and would tell us about his arrest in Berlin, about the way he had simulated insanity, about the sparrow he tamed in prison, etc. Ilyich would listen and feel extremely sorry for this exceedingly brave, childishly naive, warm-hearted man who was capable of performing feats of heroism, but who now did not know what work to take up. The proposals he made were fantastic. Ilyich did not contradict him, but carefully brought him back to earth, talked to him about the necessity of organizing the transport of literature, etc. Finally, it was decided that Kamo should go to Belgium to have an operation performed on his eyes (he was cross-eyed and this enabled spies to identify him very easily), and then make his way to the south of Russia and from there to the Caucasus. Examining Kamo's coat, Ilyich said: Have you got a warm coat? You will be cold on deck in this one." Whenever Ilyich travelled on a steamer he would incessantly walk up and down the deck. When it turned out that Kamo had no other coat, Ilyich took his soft grey cloak, which his mother had given him as a present while in Stockholm and of which he was very fond, and gave it to Kamo. The talk with Ilyich and Ilyich's kindness soothed Kamo."³⁰

ARREST IN TIFLIS AND PENAL SERVITUDE

Kamo was not able to thrive very long in the conditions of the "peaceful" west. The atmosphere of emigrant life was decidedly enervating to him. Work beckoned! He burned for the

³⁰ Krupskaya, *Reminiscences*. Part II.

struggle he did not consider himself beaten and wanted to continue the struggle with the same weapons.

Within a very few months, as soon as his health was better, Kamo was on his way back to the Caucasus.

He found the revolutionary movement in a new stage. The reaction was not yet completely broken but already a new revolutionary swing upwards was felt. The working-class was re-awakening. General political strikes sent their lightning flashes throughout the land.

The shooting of the workers at the Lena gold fields (April, 1912) roused anger in the hearts of the millions of toilers and set in motion the new mass workers' movement, enriched with the experience of the successes and failures of the past.

The Bolsheviks had by that time strengthened their ranks through an energetic struggle against all shades of conciliators. At the Prague conference (January, 1912), they broke organizationally with the opportunists and became an independent party.

At that time the Party mustered the majority of the working-class under its guidance by following the tactics of combining illegal forms of struggle with the use of all legal means, such as the use of the Duma tribune — the winning over of the trade unions and all the other legal forms of workers' organizations, and finally the establishment of a legal Bolshevik newspaper.

The new forms of struggle brought new fighters from the masses. Yet, although the working-classes provided new cadres for the Bolshevik Party it was very difficult to find people for actual militant work. The mass movement had not as yet crystallized itself to the point of armed uprisings and civil war. Therefore, Kamo had to search for assistants, in the first place from among his old companions. But very few of them remained — some had left revolutionary work, many had died, many were in exile or in prison.

Kamo drew upon some younger comrades who had not yet passed through the practical school of partisan warfare. With them he organized (September, 1912) an attack on a money transport on the Kojorsky ³¹ Highway. It failed.

Kamo was once more imprisoned in Metekhsy fortress and at the trial which took place a short time after, four sentences of death were passed upon him. The first was for participation in the armed uprising of 1905. The second was for the expropriation on Erivan Square. The third death sentence was for escape from Mikhailovsky hospital, and the last for the latest attempt at expropriation on the Kojorsky Highway. Usually, the sentence was carried out a month after being passed. Never before had Kamo been so calm, jolly and careless as during these weeks.

Comrade Tsintsadze, who was also imprisoned with Kamo in Metekhsy fortress, managed to send him a note in a lamp. Kamo replied:

³¹ Modern Kojori, Georgia—Ed

"I guessed, and found your letter. I have made my peace with death. I am quite calm. There should have been grass five meters high over my grave by now. It is impossible to avoid death all the time. One must die sometimes. But I am willing to tempt luck again; anyway, I am with you in any attempt. Perhaps it will be possible to have the laugh on our enemies once more. I am in chains. Do whatever you wish. I agree to any plan."

The plans for escape were unavailing. But salvation came, and of all places, from a quarter least expected.

The celebration of the three hundred years' reign of the Romanov dynasty was drawing near and Kamo's sentence was commuted to twenty years penal servitude.

In 1911 he was transferred to the penal prison at Kharkov. He was placed with criminals. Conditions were terrible. Many hours a day the prisoners sat at forced labor: sewing dresses, underclothes and boots, or making baskets. Kamo spent most of his time in the company of typical representatives of the underworld. In the workshop and in the courtyard terrible scenes frequently occurred evidences of the hardening influences of criminal prisons. Soon the prisoners began to appreciate Kamo in their own way and nicknamed him "Big Ivan." This "title" to a certain degree placed him in a better position.

In order to avoid coming into conflict with the warders for not taking off his cap in their presence and thus lowering his self-respect, Kamo always went without a cap even in the coldest of frosts. On the rare meetings he had with his relatives, in spite of the jolly and hearty appearance which he assumed, his eyes betrayed his anguished spirit. One felt that penal servitude was killing him. It seemed that even his inherent mental clearness and his immense common sense were deserting him. He began to concoct the most fantastic plans for escape. It is unknown where this tormenting existence would have led him, if the advancing revolution had not finally liberated him.

LAST YEARS

The February revolution brought Kamo not only his long-expected freedom but also many uniquely trying experiences. Coming to Moscow and Petrograd, which were seething with the stormy energies of the awakened masses, Kamo first realized how much strength and health prison and penal servitude had taken from him. He felt himself a sick and broken man. It was only the insistence of Lenin that his first care should be the recuperation of his health that finally prevailed upon him to go and get cured.

His stay at one of the mountain resorts of the Caucasus had a salutary effect upon him. His magnificent organism revived under the warmth of the southern sun.

However, the many years of intense underground work on responsible battle sections of the Party front had not permitted Kamo to acquire great stores of theoretical knowledge or to complete his meagre general education. Prison, which served for many of the underground workers as a sort of university, brought him nothing except maddening experiences. But his true revolutionary class instinct and his vigorous mind enabled Kamo to follow the current trend of political events.

Kamo was offered many responsible and high posts but he always refused, partly from extraordinary modesty and partly from an intuitive awareness of his own lack of fitness in the directing of the complicated affairs arising from the development of the proletarian revolution in our country.

Kamo, who had always carried out the Party instructions to the letter with buoyant nonchalance and heroic bravery, seemed to have lost confidence in himself. He found it hard to adapt himself to the new conditions of work and the new methods of fighting.

Even at the front during the civil war, he was unable to find suitable work for himself – work at which he could feel himself in his element – feel himself necessary and indispensable as in former times. He longed for the old forms of militant work. He wanted to adapt the old familiar methods of struggle to the new conditions.

In 1919, during Denikin's offensive on Moscow, Kamo received permission from the Central Committee of the Party to form a militant group working in the white guards' rear. Kamo chose his group of assistants for this dangerous work with extreme care. He got to know each comrade intimately and trained each one in all the fine points of conspiracy of which he was such a supreme master. Finally, he took his group with all the necessary accessories, make-up, costumes, etc., and set out for Baku via Astrakhan.

In Astrakhan the group rigged up a sturdy fishing-boat, loaded it with rifles, machine-guns and ammunition and set sail for the open sea. They ran the risk of meeting Denikin's warships.

The voyage to Baku was accomplished safely. Once there, the comrades were hidden in apartments in the workers' districts, changing their flats from time to time because of the spies roaming about.

Kamo strictly forbade any sort of agitational and propaganda work. He even forbade them to appear in the streets during the day. These precautionary measures were necessary because the majority of them lacked knowledge of local conditions and habits and in that way could endanger the entire venture with a single blunder.

The Red Army had already occupied Rostov and was closing in upon Aravir. The main task of the group was to disorganize Denikin's rear. The White's retreat to Novorossiysk made this unnecessary.

But Kamo did not want to give up his set purpose. He took a small unit of four fellows with him and decided to break through to Novorossiysk via Georgia and the Black Sea.

Kamo went by the name of Prince Tsulukidze. He attired himself in a resplendent Circassian coat, soft Caucasian boots, a dark brown krimmer cap (a *kubanka*).

He wore an imposing false beard that gave severity and impressiveness to his face. At the last minute, the gendarmes delayed the train and detained all the dark-haired men who resembled Kamo,

Prince Tsulukidze, however, remained free from suspicion. The commander of the gendarmes even apologized to him for delaying the train.

But the Menshevik government in Georgia had been informed of his coming. Kamo and his comrades were arrested upon their arrival at the Batum station and imprisoned in the Metekhsy fortress. Kamo knew this prison only too well by now. Here Kamo contracted sciatica because of the dampness of his cell.

After two months they were finally freed upon condition that they quit Georgia within twenty-four hours.

The journey to Novorossiysk failed and Kamo returned to Baku. By this time the continued victories of the Red Army raised the hopes of the workers. The Regional Party committee decided to use Kamo's group for preparing an armed uprising and a Bolshevik coup d'etat. Kamo was entrusted to organize large battle groups in the workers' districts. Kamo appointed his personally trained men as leaders of these groups. Kamo was in his old element. He was everywhere teaching the workers the art of armed uprising. The training went well but arms were not sufficient. They soon surmounted this difficulty by the arrival of several boatloads of ammunition and arms from Astrakhan.

When the Musavatist ³² government issued the manifesto calling upon the "citizens and workers" to defend Baku against the Red Army, the workers began arming themselves. The large battle groups organized by Kamo were the first to arm themselves and the factory workers were not far behind.

On the night of the 28th of April, 1920, the members of the Musavatist government fled to Georgia. At dawn, parliament was taken without a shot and several detachments of hostile troops were disarmed. The red flag was hoisted on the gunboats "Kars" and "Ardogan" (the most powerful ships on the Caspian Sea).

The next day armored trains arrived, and two days later Budenny's cavalry came riding in.

After the "coup" the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party dissolved Kamo's militant group.

Kamo returned to Moscow and decided to realize his long-cherished dream of educating himself. On Lenin's advice he began to prepare himself in the Academy of the General Staff. But this plan was never realized. Kamo died quite suddenly.

Comrade Baron in his reminiscences writes:

"On the fatal day, Comrade Kamo sat in my study for a long time. We talked over old times. Work on the economic front did not satisfy him. He was made for revolutionary storms. He

³² A counter-revolutionary government formed by the pro Turkish, bourgeois Federalist Party. It was this Party which invited the English imperialists to Baku. Later, this government rejected the proposal of the Soviet Government to declare itself against Denikin. The retreating Whites fled from the Red Army across the Azerbaijan frontier.

wanted to participate in preparing revolution in some country in the West or East. It is for such a job that I am taking care of myself,' he said, 'and in justice I should live another hundred years and fight. You see I look after myself. I don't drink, nor do I spend sleepless nights. I am preserving my strength and health to the full. Why shouldn't I live many years more.'

"Who could have thought that this man, so great a hero of the revolution, who endured unbelievable trials and preserved his strength and health through the most trying times would be dead in a few hours from a fatal accident."

On the 14th of July (1922) at eleven o'clock in the evening, Kamo was riding his bicycle down the steep Verasky slope. He heard the hoot of an automobile horn. Kamo saw very badly from one eye, and making a sharp turn he fell from his cycle. In falling he struck his head on a small sharp stone. Two hours later, Kamo died from hemorrhage of the brain. He died without ever regaining consciousness.

The proletariat of Tiflis gave their heroic fighter, so immensely popular and beloved by the entire working-class, a magnificent funeral significant because of its genuine mass character.

Much has been written and will be written about Comrade Kamo. He represented a magnificent type of fighting Party man who possessed unusual degrees of courage and resourcefulness. He was one of the outstanding representatives of the partisan movement of the period of the first revolution.

He enjoyed the greatest influence over the men who worked with him and his detachment was always an exceptionally strong weapon in the hands of the Party.

In Kamo one finds reckless daring, high revolutionary purpose, iron will, striking moral qualities and the remarkable discipline of a well-trying member of the Party – all combined to create an unusual fighter and a truly great man.