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Students Radicals and the Rise of Russian Marxism

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Preface

I began my tenure as a socialist organizer during my undergraduate years at the University of California, Los Angeles, from 2014 to 2018. Although I had a handful of decent political science professors, what inspired me were the progressive and socialist students I fought alongside in campaigns for solidarity with campus workers and graduate students, in the fight to establish an immigrant sanctuary campus after Donald Trump's election, and in efforts to confront the extreme Right on campus.

When I arrived at UCLA, the legacy of the 2009 University of California tuition protests was still held as the model for student organizing, kept alive especially by the handful of graduate students who had participated as undergraduates or as new graduate students. That guiding star for activism faded with each graduating class after 2009, but in its place in 2016 rose the democratic socialism primary election campaign of Vermont senator Bernie Sanders.

As my commitment to student organizing and to the socialist movement grew, I sought guidance for my work in the writings of the great Marxist revolutionaries. I knew that many of the titans of socialist revolution had themselves been university students, but although I explored many leftist histories of student movements, I could not find an overarching Marxist treatment of the role of students in the modern European

socialist movements.

Searching for the *Das Kapital* of student movement histories, I found historical fragments here and there and knit them together loosely in my mind. Eventually I came across Vladimir Lenin's writings on the developments of the Russian student movement. Although I had closely studied the Russian socialist movement and the 1905 and 1917 Russian revolutions, none of the accounts I had read made more than a passing mention of the student movement of pre-revolutionary and revolutionary Russia.

Lenin's writings helped orient me during my campus days, highlighting the serious potential of the student movement in both the fight for worker power and the larger fight for socialist politics. But this recognition of the revolutionary potential of the student movement was at the same time a realization that the current state of the student movement and of socialist organizing on campus was fundamentally insufficient to meet the moment. Realizing the full extent of the problem, my desire for thorough answers to my questions about the role of students in the fight for socialism only grew deeper.

So, in the summer after my graduation, I set out to write this book. Delving deeper into the exploration of Marxist and non-Marxist sources on the Russian student movement, I came to realize that the history of the Russian student movement was a crucial yet mostly untold chapter in the history of Russian Marxism. The more I studied, the more I found that individual students and the Russian student movement as a whole played a crucial role in the early development of Russian Marxism, and that therefore those who held up the Russian Revolution as a model for socialists around the world could not understand the Bolshevik's path to revolution

without considering the importance of university students. Furthermore, as the American socialist movement is in a period of rebirth, its process of development holds strong parallels with the stages of the Russian Marxist movement when university students played the largest role in the development of the movement; sharing the story of the Russian student movement with the new generation of American socialist youth is perhaps one of the best ways to orientate them on the important questions of revolutionary socialism.

After graduation I involved myself deeply in the labor movement and especially in the fight to organize gig workers. My union responsibilities took a front seat, and this work remained a neglected dream in the back of my mind. Now, four years after I started writing it, I present it to you.

Acknowledgement

This work would not be what it was without the support of many loved ones and comrades.

I want to thank Cory Bisbee and Cynthia Gwynne Yaudes for their assistance editing the work. I also want to thank my comrades at UCLA for their unwavering solidarity through four years of struggle, including Gianni, Catharine, Jeny, Alex, Michael, Joseph, Alexia, Parshan, Audrey, Jonathan, Lucia, Spencer, Paul, Juan, Ria, Todd, Minh, and Eric.

Academically, I am in debt to several authors. In the main this work does not bring new primary research to the table, but rather knits together several existing primary and secondary sources into one narrative and analysis. In this respect, the work is especially reliant on Samuel D. Kassow's *Students, Professors, and the State in Tsarist Russia,* Susan K. Morrissey's *Heralds of Revolution*, and the writings of Leon Trotsky and Vladimir Lenin. I want to also thank those at the Marxist Internet Archive who have labored to make available many of the sources in this work.

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Introduction

The Class Struggle on Campus

The reader of this text is likely aware of the student struggles of the last ten years: student walkouts against police brutality, gun violence, and Trumpism; campaigns against sexual violence on campus, tuition hikes, and for a more inclusive university; strikes and union drives by academic student workers, often collaborating with dining-hall workers, custodians, librarians, and technicians; and violent "culture wars" between the far Left and the far Right. As this book goes to press, 40,000 academic workers at the University of California are on strike and graduate student workers at Boston University have just voted to unionize by the largest margin in U.S. history. All these actions have roots in the growing ferment among youth and workers within U.S. capitalism . Political factions and organizations — whether backed by socialists, right-wing billionaires, unions, environmentalists, religious groups, Democrats or Republicans

or third parties or independents — raise their ideologies on university campuses and push to have their world views taught on syllabi across the country.

Since the 2008 financial crisis we have seen an intensification of class struggle on campus. In response to tuition hikes and other austerity measures imposed in the wake of the recession, University of California students launched militant protests in September 2009. Graduate students also played a leading role in the massive 2011 Wisconsin uprising against certain provisions of the state Budget Repair Bill. Although in both cases these movements against austerity were suppressed by intense police brutality, the ideals, strategies, and tactics of the movement — along with the organizers themselves — were a major influence on the Occupy Wall Street protests that swept the world in the fall of 2011, injecting the politics of anti-capitalism into mainstream American discourse.

While the Occupy movement eventually fizzled out, the demonstrations seeded dissent in the consciousness of a generation. In the wake of Occupy Wall Street and through the 2016 and 2020 Bernie Sanders campaigns, the youth of the United States began a process of mass radicalization at a level not seen since the 1960s. Polls show that young people increasingly support socialism over capitalism,[1] [2] and Bernie Sanders received over 50 percent of the youth vote in the 2020 Democratic presidential primaries.[3] Radicalization has led to the proliferation of leftist student groups, most notably Students for Bernie chapters, many of which then transformed into chapters of the Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA). As of summer 2021, almost 150 YDSA chapters were active on American campuses.

Campus pushback against neoliberal administrative policies

has not been restricted to undergraduates. In its 2016 *Columbia* decision, the National Labor Relations Board restored National Labor Relations Act protections for graduate student workers at Columbia University, paving the way for new unionization campaigns at private universities. Since then, graduate workers at major private universities including Harvard, Brown, Columbia, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have secured union recognition, joining the ranks of the handful of existing public-sector graduate worker unions. Non-academic unions on campuses have also been at the forefront of the return to militancy and aggressive union organizing. Combined, the growth of academic and non-academic unions at universities and their affiliated healthcare systems are a sizable share of all new union organizing.

Not just socialists and workers have been active on college campuses. In early 2017, the far-right acolytes of professional provocateurs including Milo Yiannapoulos and Ben Shapiro clashed violently with anti-fascist counter-protestors at Berkeley and across the country. Then in August 2017, far-right demonstrators bearing tiki torches marched through the University of Virginia's campus in Charlottesville for their Unite the Right rally. Although the demonstration had little to do with the university, the forces aligned on either side typified the ongoing culture war that would resonate through campuses around the country and then into the wider political field.

The far Right has also taken a particular interest in the intellectual developments of the academic Left. The far Right seems to latch onto discourses — for example on identity politics, critical race theory, and gender studies — even before left-wing academics have succeeded at pushing them into the mainstream academic discourse.

Although 2017 elevated the campus culture wars to the center of American political discourse, the Right's interest in the campus as a site of political struggle is not new. One of the best known right-wing campus provocateurs is David Horowitz, who first founded the magazine *Heterodoxy* in 1992 to challenge "political correctness" on campus. Since then Horowitz has been one of the pioneers of the right-wing culture war in its university aspect; over the last two decades, his David Horowitz Freedom Center, funded by right-wing billionaires, has carefully tracked and attacked left-leaning professors for their alleged indoctrination of American youth. And in response to the rise in campus protests against Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory, he also launched "Jihad Watch" to organize the harassment of pro-Palestinian campus activists.

But Horowitz and those he inspired were predated by an even earlier set of right-wing political operatives who looked to the campus as a tool in their fight for political power. Since World War II the United States government — in coordination with private actors — has sought to exert influence on the university campus.

Beginning with a focus on foreign policy, the CIA set up the Center for International Studies at MIT in 1950.[4] In 1954 the CIA founded and began subsidizing the Asia Foundation with an annual contribution of $8 million to promote the prominence of pro-American scholars in the international research community.[5] The CIA then began working with Frank Barnett's National Strategy Information Center to run anti-Communist education courses for university professors and high-school teachers. In 1967, an internal audit of CIA activities in the United States found that hundreds of university profes-

sors and administrators on more than a hundred campuses were on the CIA's payroll.[6] The CIA was engulfed in scandal when a 1967 article in *Ramparts* revealed that the agency was subsidizing the National Student Association(NSA) in order to use it as a tool to fight Communist influence in the international student movement. According to one ex-NSA official, the CIA almost totally controlled and funded the international arm of the NSA, while mainly ignoring the largely separate domestic operations of the group.[7]

Beginning in the 1970s a private group of right-wing billionaires, lawyers, businessmen, hawks, military leaders, and political operatives — many of whom were engaged in the earlier work of the intelligence community — launched an even broader and more ambitious campaign to control American universities. From the 1970s to today, they have overseen the growth of an impressive network of nonprofits, astro-turfed membership groups, think tanks, and institutes to execute their political missions on and off campus.

Much more could be said on the right wing's focus on the campus, but suffice it to say that those in search of an understanding of the importance of the university campus as a site of class struggle confront a battleground heavily contested by the Right, the Left, and the center alike.

The Student Question

What is the role of students — as individuals and as a body — in the class struggle and the fight for socialism? This question — "the student question" — has repeatedly been taken up by students and non-students over the last century and a half in what seems a never-ending search for identity, purpose, and

direction. The same question — only reversed — has arisen for the ruling authorities: How can the elite control the dissent that seems to grow perpetually from the universities?

In short, the thesis of this book is that the answer to the student question for socialists is that individual students and the student movement have a profound role to play in the development of a socialist movement. By recognizing the limitations of campus struggle and instead embracing the revolutionary socialist movement and its fight for leadership of the workers movement, individual students are essential recruits for a socialist movement in its early days. And as the youth as a whole increasingly recognize the limitations of capitalism to meet the pressing needs of society, socialist organizations on campus can help to steer student movements towards solidarity with the workers movement and against the political dominance of the capitalist class. But the revolutionary potentiality of individual students and the student movement as a whole is paired with a set of limitations. While students can play a valuable role in the fight to overthrow the capitalist class, it is ultimately the revolutionary workers movement that is decisive; the student movement becomes a true threat to capitalism only to the extent to which it helps to empower the revolutionary proletariat.

Those who seek to understand the role of students in the fight for socialism cannot look to the campus alone. The student question is irrevocably tied to other crucial questions of revolution: How is social progress achieved? How have social improvements been made in the past? What are the fundamental divisions of society? What forces are to blame for our societies' extreme political, social, and economic inequality? How can these forces be understood and overthrown, and

by whom? How should committed revolutionaries organize among themselves, how should they relate to wider forces in society, and how can they win over these forces to their cause? To what degree should shifts in economic, social, and political developments lead us to change our perspectives?

Over the history of the international Marxist movement, these questions have been asked and answered. And often these larger questions have been posed — and the answers advanced — by student revolutionaries or recent graduates who entered the revolutionary movement during their university years. The student question and the larger questions of revolution have, more or less, been answered by the students themselves. Indeed, the first great student Marxists were Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels themselves.

Marx was born to a middle-class west German family in 1818, the son of a lawyer. At age 17, Marx began studying law at the University of Bonn. On campus, Marx joined a radical poet society and also served as co-president of a drinking and discussion club. Forced by his father to transfer to the more serious University of Berlin, Marx began studying the work of Georg Hegel and became involved in a club of Young Hegelians, the progressive thinkers of the day. Marx's doctoral thesis was too controversial for the increasingly conservative professors of the University of Berlin, and he instead submitted it to the University of Jena, receiving his doctorate in 1841. Although Marx seriously considered a career in academics, the government's growing hostility to Young Hegelians and liberals barred his path forward, so he took up work as a journalist.

Engels was likewise born in western Germany in 1820, the son of a wealthy textile industrialist. After high school, instead of university, Engels was sent by his father to apprentice at a

trading house in Bremen, where he began studying Hegel's writing on his own. At 21, he moved to Berlin to fulfill his military service requirement in a Prussian artillery unit. While in the city, Engels began attending lectures at the University of Berlin and associated himself with a circle of Young Hegelians. Engels also began writing for the journals of the Young Germany movement, which, through literature, philosophy, and political writings challenged the conservative regime. To confront the growing influence of Hegel, the Prussian government funded Hegels's former colleague Friedrich Schelling to lecture at the University of Berlin to bolster conservatism in the university. Engels attended the lectures to report on Schelling's attempted refutation of Hegel to the Young Hegelian movement. In Engels's view,

> *Ask anybody in Berlin today on what field the battle for dominion over German public opinion in politics and religion, that is, over Germany itself, is being fought, and if he has any idea of the power of the mind over the world he will reply that this battlefield is the University, in particular Lecture-hall No. 6, where Schelling is giving his lectures.*[8]

More than a century and a half ago, both Engels and the Prussian government recognized the relationship between the ideas of the university and the outlook of the nation.

While neither Marx nor Engels had come to full 'Marxist' conclusions in their early 20s, their time at university and interactions with the Young Hegelians and Young Germans — both a sort of student Left — were important touchstones for the future development of their revolutionary thought.

But crucial to the development of their project was their recognition of the limitations of the Young Hegelian movement and what seemed to be the only weapon available to progressive academics — the endless "critical criticism" of society which only ever amounted to words. Instead, Marx and Engels turned away from the academy and toward the growing workers movement. Their recognition of the revolutionary potential of the proletariat became a key pillar of their movement, and the basis for their future organizing work. To continue on their path, the revolutionary students needed to leave the university behind.

Class, Hegemony, and the Student Question

But if for Marxists the key to the socialist revolution is winning the working-class movement to the cause of societal overhaul, is there still a role for students or other social forces in the fight for a better society?

Some socialists have argued that the socialist movement should focus only on the workers' struggle and not involve itself in other fights. For others, the question was not of abandoning the centrality of the working class, but rather building the workers movement while also convincing other disaffected sections of society that their hope for improvements lay in the victory of a workers' revolution.

The task of building a multi-class alliance under the leadership of one class is known as hegemony. Hegemony already exists, but for the capitalist class. Although the wealthy elite are small in number, they use their resources to win over the various layers of society by buying them off, spreading their ideology, and also using repressive violence when necessary;

through these three measures, the large capitalists win over and enlist other social forces in their political project, especially the police and military, religious leaders, and the middle classes including professionals, administrators, small-business owners, and homeowners. The task of the socialist movement is to build a counter-hegemony in which the working class organizes itself but also wins over as many sympathetic layers of society as possible to its cause.

Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* expands further, clarifying the difference between winning over entire classes to the cause and winning over individuals. While other sections of society can be partially won over to the cause, only the working class, as a class, has in its interest the full completion of a socialist revolution. Individuals, conversely, can be recruited to the revolutionary cause and its organizations, irrespective of their class background as long as they are willing to commit to the proletarian revolution.

Therefore, Lenin writes, the type of socialist party required to lead a workers revolution is not a party of workers. Instead, it is a party of revolutionaries drawn as individuals from various sections of society, "irrespective of whether they have developed from among students or working men."[9] Indeed, historically it has often been the case that revolutionary organizations in their early stages are almost entirely composed of organizers drawn from the intelligentsia; the question is whether these revolutionaries can develop worker-revolutionaries to swell their ranks and organize the working class to take up its vanguard role.

Students, Class, and the Student-Class

But even if the fight for socialism requires cross-class organizing and students as individuals can become revolutionaries, do students as a whole constitute a class?

The word 'class' comes from the proto-Indo-European 'kele'' meaning 'to shout' or 'to call.' Incorporated into early Latin, "classis" initially referred to those in Rome allowed to own weapons — generally adult male citizens — who could be 'called (to arms).' Eventually the Latin 'classis' came to refer to the Roman division of the population into six socio-economic orders, each with distinct tax obligations.

From Roman times to today, the word 'class' has been used to mean different socio-economic groups in society. Colloquially, class is typically defined in the relative terms of "upper class," "middle class," and "lower class." Scientific socialism applies a more specific lens to understand these differentiations, defining classes as sections of society that have a particular relationship to the means of production, play a distinct role in the process of production and reproduction of society, share common interests, and develop a self-awareness. While a feudal land owner, the head of a religious order, and an industrialist would all fall into the "upper class" of a society, their economic interests and political inclinations are hardly identical; the Marxist sense of 'class' leads us to investigate the specifics of each elite in light of their role in society, and consider how their class interests may differ from or even conflict with each other, and also how their interests may overlap, allowing for the forming of a hegemonic coalition.

Students are an interesting case because in some ways they fit the meaning of a class, while in other ways they do not.

In a broad sense, students are part of the intelligentsia, those servants of the bourgeois order who use 'brain work' to administer the capitalist system, but students do not enter the intelligentsia proper until they graduate.

While still on campus, students constitute a class in that they share certain common interests apart from the rest of society, and organize as students to pursue these interests. As students, they have a clear role to play in the reproduction of society, which is specifically that they are studying to enter the future middle and upper ranks of the workforce; but once students graduate, their commonality dissipates as they enter the various industries and agencies of capitalist society. However, just as surely as seniors leave the campuses in May and June, a new crop of freshmen arrive in August and September; so although an individual is only a student temporarily, the student population exists in permanence.

Of course, students are not only students, but also have a past and future. Although colleges were historically the preserve of the elite, there are more and more students from middle-class and working-class backgrounds and from all nationalities and ethnic groups attending American universities; the class backgrounds of students and the continued class existence of their families weighs on students' outlook. And students are not training to be just any workers, but rather educated workers — writ broadly, the intelligentsia — who fulfill the scientific, technical, professional, administrative, and managerial roles of society; the future prospects of the university student puts hope in achieving at least a comfortably middling status in society. In other words, students are preparing to enter the service of the bourgeoisie.

When students graduate and join the workforce, they enter

into new relationships with the means of production and new individual and class interests that work to shape their outlook. But while the adult intelligentsia develop bourgeois tendencies in the experience of carrying out their daily functions, students, while still at school, are caught in a state of transition with ill-defined interests. In his 1910 work *The Intelligentsia and Socialism*, Leon Trotsky finds that

> *Among the workers the difference between "fathers" and "sons" is purely one of age. Among the intelligentsia it is not only a difference of age but also a social difference. The student, in contrast both to the young worker and to his own father, fulfills no social function, does not feel direct dependence on capital or the state, is not bound by any responsibilities, and – at least objectively, if not subjectively – is free in his judgment of right and wrong. At this period everything within him is fermenting, his class prejudices are as formless as his ideological interests, questions of conscience matter very strongly to him, his mind is opening for the first time to great scientific generalizations, the extraordinary is almost a physiological need for him. If collectivism is at all capable of mastering his mind, now is the moment, and it will indeed do it through the nobly scientific character of its basis and the comprehensive cultural content of its aims, not as a prosaic "knife and fork" question.*[10]

Therefore, when it comes to winning individual students to the fight for socialism, Trotsky calls for the socialists to recruit intellectuals while they remain students as, "Only here and only

now, when the young fellow is to a certain extent freed from his family, and when he has not yet become the captive of his position in society, can I count on drawing him into our ranks. It's now or never."

While Trotsky affirms the possibility of winning individual students to socialism, he takes a pessimistic outlook on the revolutionary potential of the intellectuals of society as whole. He finds that the prejudices of an upper- or middle-class upbringing, ties to bourgeois family members, and the opportunity to enter the administering ranks of capitalist society have led to limits to the role the "university people" can play in revolution. He highlights that students played a revolutionary role in the early movements for bourgeois democracy, but later filled the ranks of national-chauvinist movements and even fired upon the workers in the 1848 Paris uprising. And he notes that graduates are tied not only economically to the bourgeois order but also ideologically as "precisely the 'spiritual' nature of the work that the intelligentsia do inevitably forms a spiritual tie between them and the possessing classes." Even artists "not so directly and immediately, but no less inexorably" are weighed on by bourgeois mentality as

> *they offer the public their work or their personalities, they depend on its approval and its money, and so, whether in an open or a hidden way, they subordinate their creative achievement to that "great monster" which they hold in such contempt: the bourgeois mob.*

The economic and contextual facts of life for the university graduate pulls the intellectuals as a class toward subservience to the bourgeois order.

Trotsky also finds that another obstacle is "the organizational apparatus of Social Democracy" which

> *arouses discontent among members of the intelligentsia with socialist sympathies, from whom it demands discipline and self-restraint – sometimes in respect of their "opportunism" and sometimes, contrariwise, in respect of their excessive "radicalism" – and dooms them to the role of querulous lookers-on who vacillate in their sympathies between anarchism and national-liberalism.*

Overall, Trotsky finds that "it is not only Europe's intelligentsia as a whole but its offspring, too, the students, who decidedly don't show any attraction towards socialism."

> *Throughout their entire history – in its best, most heroic moments just as in periods of utter moral decay – the students of Europe have been merely the sensitive barometer of the bourgeois classes. They became ultra-revolutionary, sincerely and honorably fraternizing with the people, when bourgeois society had no way out but revolution.*

Analyzing the student movement in 1910, Trotsky uses a class analysis to show that the intellectual class — and the students as part of that class — have revolutionary potential but ultimately only within the limits of the wider bourgeois class to which they are tied.

But the universities — and the wider social orders — of 1910 and 2022 are hardly identical. Over the last century, the number of middle- and working-class youth attending higher education has dramatically increased, presenting opportunities

for advancement to a larger layer of society. At the same time, the ability of a bachelor's degree to secure a post atop the capitalist hierarchy has diminished; the ever-disruptive tendencies of capitalism throw at least part of the intelligentsia in a downwardly mobile spiral toward the proletariat and impose brutal austerity on the students — including by saddling them with crippling debt in the United States — as they attempt to gain their degrees. These forces impose clear interests of the student population generally, in some ways undermining the co-opting pressures of capital while in other ways reinforcing them.

These changes to the economic landscape do not mean that the bourgeois influences on students and university graduates identified by Trotsky have been eliminated. But the proletarianization of educators, doctors, professors, and other previously secure positions and the increasing ties between the working class and the university do suggest that Trotsky's conclusions on the limits of students and the intelligentsia as a whole are today increasingly challenged — although not necessarily overcome — by tendencies that affirm the revolutionary prospects of students and graduates as a class.

In summation, students are not an independent class in the full sense of the word. Through their class background and their class trajectory they are tied to the intelligentsia and thereby to the bourgeoisie which dominates society outside of the university; the whole purpose of the university in capitalist society is to train the new crop of professionals to operate the bourgeois political, economic, and social order. But nonetheless students as a definite and permanent section of society separate from other sections do in many ways fit the Marxist definition of a class, and for this reason can be roughly

characterized as a "class-lifestage" of the intelligentsia. For socialists, identifying the ways students are and are not a class is crucial for understanding why and how to organize them as individuals and as a body. The conclusion of this analysis is two-fold. First, before they enter the "real world" where they will be subjected to bourgeois pressures, students are relatively free from non-student class pressures, making them open to broad appeals to revolution; on this basis, they can be recruited to the revolutionary movement as individuals. Second, students are a permanent class-like section of society with definite — albeit temporary — common interests, and can be organized with a similar application of the techniques Marxists use to organize other social groups: by first recruiting individuals from the class to the socialist movement, then winning over the leading organizations of the class, and then leading the entire class under a program of concrete reforms within a wider political vision.

The Significance of the Russian Student Movement

The Russian student movement — the *studenchestvo* — played a crucial role in the development of the Russian socialist movement and its overthrow of the Tsar's capitalist regime in October 1917. Ultimately the studenchestvo were instrumental in the formation of the Marxist Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP), the 1905 general strike, and the Saint Petersburg Soviet of Workers' deputies. In the beginning, the student movement was a training ground for individual revolutionaries who performed large parts of the initial intel-

lectual work, both theoretical and organizational, necessary to found the RSDLP. As the student body radicalized, the student movement as a whole undermined the hegemony of the ruling establishment, forced the socialist movement to address relations between the workers' movement and other movements, and provided invaluable assistance to the workers' movement by turning the campus into an organizing center of the workers movement and of the revolution. A thorough study of the Russian student movement and the Revolution of 1905 reveals how individual students and the wider student movement can be mobilized into an auxiliary army in the struggle for workers' power. But the 1905 revolution also reveals the limits of student struggle as the conflict between social classes develops, which poses the question of general strikes and armed insurrection.

In this work, the development of the student movement from 1855 to 1917 is split up into four acts: its development, its midpoint, its climax, and its encore. Here is a brief overview of the acts.

The development of the Russian student movement, covered in Chapter 2, begins with the period of openness around the freeing of the serfs in 1861, and ends with the first national student conference of 1894. The student movement developed traditions of struggle over limited concerns of campus life, but government resistance led some students to recognize the impossibility of reforms within the autocratic system. Revolutionaries drawn from the student movement, including Cheryneshevsky, set a path toward the organization of the Russian peasant masses, and organized the underground Narodnik movement. When the Narodniks early plans for a peasant revolution proved impossible to enact under the Tsarist

regime, some turned to terrorism while others sought a new theoretical basis for their work. Plekhanov and other former students-turned-Narodniks became convinced Marxists while living in exile in Western Europe, and worked to smuggle Marxist translations into Russia, fueling the growth of Marxist ideas on campus. Inspired by the growing worker unrest, students moved toward national organizing and in 1894 held a national organizing conference which sought to organize the students as a body toward a political confrontation with the regime.

The midpoint, covered in Chapter 3, begins with the conference of 1894, rises with the strike of 1899, and continues through the growing radicalization of the student movement through 1905. The conclusions of the 1894 conference initially proved challenging to implement, but following the 1899 strike, the student body began to seriously take up the student question. On campus and among student-exiles, the debate developed division between 'Politicals' and 'Academics' as students questioned whether they could improve their conditions without a larger confrontation with the regime. The revolutionary parties also considered the student question, dividing into 'Politicals' and 'Economists,' with RSDLP leaders including Lenin addressing the student question as part of their larger debate. Several years of increasingly political student unrest unfolded, and the ideology of Student Radicalism — political but vague — gained prominence; but the limitations of Student Radicalism emerged, and the student movement came increasingly to mirror the partisan divides of the wider society. Eventually the Social Democrats won over the majority of the students, convincing them that the student movement is significant only if it is tied with the revolutionary workers

movement.

The climax, covered in Chapter 4, begins with the student strike in reaction to the January 1905 massacre, peaks in September of 1905 when the students open their universities as a springboard to the worker revolution, and comes crashing down with the defeat of the 1905 revolution. In the wake of the January 1905 massacre, a national student strike closed the universities until September. Granted new leniency by the regime and with the police declining to enter the campuses, the students reopened their universities in the Fall of 1905 to use them as "hearths of the revolution." Night-school classes for workers morphed at the end of September into mass meetings, and worker unions and the first Soviet were formed on campuses. The Soviets led a series of general strikes which threatened the very existence of Tsarism, and the third general strike escalated into an insurrection and week-long street battle for control of Moscow.

The encore, covered in Chapter 5, covers the dark years of counter-revolution, the revival of the student movement, and its limited role in the events of 1917. In the wake of the defeated 1905 revolution, the regime launched its counter-revolution. The campuses remained closed until September of 1906 while the revolutionary organizations were suppressed. Reopening the university, the regime first consolidated its position by winning over the professors, and then escalated by rolling back its earlier reforms. Although the students' early attempts at resistance were beaten back, they gradually regained their confidence and organization, and the campuses were engulfed again in several years of rising and falling student unrest. The student movement played a modest role in the February 1917 revolution, but its impact in 1917 was not nearly

as significant as in the fall of 1905. That the climax of the Russian student movement came in 1905 and not in 1917 is not an accident. Rather, it is a reflection of the revolutionary enthusiasm and also the limited revolutionary potential of the student movement; the true climax of the Russian revolution could not be carried through by students, but only by the Russian proletariat.

The conclusion, Chapter 6, summarizes the main lessons of the Russian student movement in relation to the socialist movement, and considers these lessons in light of today's circumstances. Students have a role to play in the revolution as individuals and as a body if their work is tied with the revolutionary workers movement. Although the campus of 21st-century America is not identical to that of Tsarist Russia, it remains a key site of class struggle. But winning the campus for the socialist movement means not only mastering our own movement but also squaring off with the right-wing forces that also set their eye on the universities.

The development of campus movements in this period is the story of the development of class-consciousness among the students through the strengthening of the socialist movement on campus. The major questions facing students were what role they could play as individuals and as a student body to change society; but in the first half-century of the student movement it seemed that student struggle was caught in an endless cycle of unrest and repression. It was only when the revolutionaries — organizing on and off campus — were able to provide a greater degree of historical insight and organizational continuity to the student movement and to inspire it via the growing workers movement that the student movement was able to transcend its decades of repetition and advance toward

a recognition of the need to unite student struggle with the larger movement for political change. The answers students sought could not be found on the isolated campus, but only by conceiving the campus in relation to the underground, the factory, and eventually the barracks.

It is no accident that it is from Russia, where the struggle for revolution on campus and in wider society resulted in the seizure of power in 1917, that the strongest insights and generalizations about the role of students in the fight for social justice are revealed. Science is knowledge about how to change the world, and Marxism is the science of changing the world through socialist revolution. Events of political, social, and economic struggle are the scientific experiments by which revolutionaries can test the validity of their theories. Higher stages of class struggle reveal the potentialities and limitations of various class forces that are not necessarily obvious at earlier stages. Studying a revolutionary movement from its early days to its seizure of power provides the greatest insight into the historical role of the various revolutionary participants, helping the scholar of the student question to neither understate or overstate the role of students in the fight for socialism and to clearly connect the importance of the student movement with its role as an ally to the revolutionary proletariat.

2

The First Half-Century of the Russian Student Movement: 1855-1899

The Birth of the Student Movement

Like other sectors of Russian society, higher education developed later in Russia than its European peers. The first university, Imperial Moscow University, was founded in 1755, 119 years after the founding of Harvard University in Massachusetts. By 1859 the university population for the whole country had only reached 8,750; the student population was only .014 percent out of those aged 20-24. But as the 19th century progressed, the Tsar recognized the need to modernize the empire to keep pace with the great European powers; to modernize, the Tsar would need a new army of scientists, administrators, and educators. To meet this need, the universities were rapidly expanded; between 1865 and 1914 the government founded fourteen new technical institutes and two new universities, with the student population growing to

15,155 by 1880, 30,000 by 1897, and 127,000 by 1914.[11]

Initially, the universities were filled mostly by the sons of the nobility, the merchant class, and state bureaucrats in the military and civil service. For the sons of the elite, a university degree offered a secure path into various professional positions, as well as a place on the Table of Ranks, the monarchy's system for ranking the upper class.[12] Nonetheless, many students were ambivalent about the comfortable but highly conservative system they were about to enter. To the complicity of their parents' bourgeois life, they held up the identity of the *studenchestvo,* an identity they forged out of struggle with the system. As the universities expanded, a "higher-education degree allowed young people from the so-called subject estates (the peasantry and the urban petty-bourgeoisie known as meshchanstvo) to acquire "honorary citizenship," to improve their legal position, and to enter the Table of Ranks."[13] A 1905 census of Moscow University students encompassing half the student body indicated that

> *9.2 percent of the fathers were landowners, 3.1 percent were factory owners, and 12.1 percent were merchants. One in four (24.8 percent) was a member of the civil service or the military, while 11 percent were salaried employees or officials in zemstvos or municipal government. Physicians, lawyers, and high school teachers made up 15.5 percent; priests, 5.8 percent; petty traders and clerks, 6 percent; and college professors, 0.3 percent. Only 3.4 percent of the respondents said that their fathers were agricultural cultivators (khlebopashets), workers, or artisans; and only 1.2 percent said that their fathers worked as primary school teachers. The fathers of*

> *the remaining students represented a wide scattering of occupations or there was no indication of what they did.*[14]

So even as the universities broadened their enrollment, in 1905 the student body remained overwhelmingly drawn from the upper and middle classes of Russian society.

Tsar Nicholas I exercised extreme control over the universities before his death in 1855. Foreign books and student groups were banned, students were monitored by state-appointed inspectors who could expel them for long hair or uniform violations, and enrollment was kept small. The death of Tsar Nicholas I in 1855 led to a relaxing of university policy, including an increase in enrollment, a relaxation on uniforms, and an end to military drill. Universities were also sites of the debate over the abolition of serfdom, which concluded with the freeing of all serfs in 1861.[15]

It was in this atmosphere of opening up between 1855 and 1861 that the Russian student movement first developed, and two major forms of student organization took shape. Many of the students were far from home, and so began to form *zemliachestva*, which were clubs where students from the same home region could support each other, socialize, host cultural events, and organize fundraising balls in their home provinces during the school holidays. Another form of organization was the *kassa*, or student society, where students had their own journals, libraries, disciplinary courts, and credit societies. A major function of the kassa was organizing to assist the needs of the poorer students who had begun to enter the university after 1855. By 1859, the Saint Petersburg University kassa was distributing more financial aid than the university.[16]

Student organizations were in a legal gray area, but at first

the administration did little to stop their growth. All this acted to help develop the idea of *studenchestvo*: students as a unique section of society with their own organizations, needs, ethics, and even publications.

Affected by the wider movement for reform, the newly formed student organizations of the 1850s quickly took on a combative approach to protecting their interests and developed a third form of student organization, the *skhodka* or mass meeting. A Moscow University faculty report from an 1857 incident where students protested in reaction to police brutality catalyzed the growth of the new student consciousness, because the beating

> *caused the students to think of their unity. Until then there had been no common goals, and therefore no skhodki . . . . The students had not thought of themselves as a corporation. . . . The violence against some of their comrades was seen as an attack against all.*[17]

In this early incident, the students' protest was able to demand an investigation into the beating, and were able to win the temporary sympathy of the Tsar.

Initially, it was small offenses such as police harassment or a professor's incompetence which incited student demonstrations.

> *An individual or a group would call for a skhodka to assemble, usually in the university courtyard or in a large auditorium. At first, students had little experience in running such meetings: there was neither a clear agenda nor a presiding officer. Soon the practice of the skhodka*

> *became more refined. Students met and elected a president of the skhodka. The latter then recognized speakers and called for a vote on a given issue.*
>
> *The skhodka was eventually to become the source of legitimacy for all collective student action, the basis of an unwritten student constitution. It implied the supremacy of direct democracy, the notion that the studenchestvo possessed a general will capable of instant response when the need arose.* [18]

The development of the *skhodka* shows how the students' experience grew as they tested their new organizations in struggle.

With the growing development of the *studenchestvo* identity, it was not long before the student movement took on a significance beyond the campus. Reflecting on the recent role of students in Western Europe, one of the most common themes in the student press was the "rejection of the alleged path taken by German students after 1848: the path from *studenchestvo* to bourgeoisie."[19] Indeed, while there was much to disagree about in the student movement, a general ambivalence toward following their parents was a unifying thread.

While the Tsar could sympathize with a few badly beaten students, the government could not allow the universities to exist as free islands within the Russian sea of autocratic, hierarchical society. In 1861 the government tried to regain control of the campus, banning *skhodki*, raising tuition, and introducing a new code of regulations. In response, students held new *skhodka* where they voted to defy the government, and to ostracize any students who signed the new regulations.

Following their *skhodka*, students in Saint Petersburg took on

a new tactic, marching for the first time down the capital's main street, Nevsky Prospect. In response to the student disorder, the government closed the universities for two years.[20]

The government reopened the universities in 1863, this time placing much of the disciplinary authority in the more lenient professors, but student organizations and the *shkodki* were still banned. For the next three decades, students, professors, and the government would be locked in a back-and-forth as students fought to win more rights on campus, better financial aid, and greater accessibility for women and Jewish students, and the government wavered between allowing reforms and cracking down on the student movement. Student protests erupted again in 1869, 1874, 1878-1879, 1880-1881, and 1882.

Going to the People

The student movement in Russia was from its beginning intertwined with the Russian revolutionary movement, although the Marxist trend in the revolutionary movement did not arise until some two decades later. The pre-Marxist revolutionary movement drew heavily from university students and recent graduates, and debates over strategy for students and for the movement as a whole often overlapped.

With their dreams of winning rights on campus halted, or at least forestalled, many students turned away from the campus and toward the countryside as a site of organizing for change. Perhaps the most significant revolutionary of the early revolutionary movement was Nikolay Chernyshevsky. Born the son of a priest in 1828, Chernyshevsky entered the seminary as a teenager, but upon entering Saint Petersburg University,

he came to reject his religious upbringing. Graduating in 1850, he worked for three years as a provincial teacher and recruited his students to the revolutionary cause; returning to Saint Petersburg to complete his masters degree, for the next decade he was active in the underground revolutionary movement in the capital. Editing the magazine *Sovremennik* (The Contemporary), he penned articles including "Critique of Philosophical Prejudices Against Communal Ownership" which laid the foundation for the Narodnik (populist) movement.

In 1862 Chernyshevsky was arrested and held at the Fortress of St. Peter and Paul where he wrote his most famous work *What Is To Be Done*, a fictional account of the revolutionary movement. In the text, a medical student and his wife set up a sewing cooperative, and Chernyshevy uses Aesopian language to hint at their participation in the revolutionary underground. Although Chernyshevsky would remain in prison or exile for the rest of his life, the revolutionary commitment of his student characters — typified by their self-sacrificing dedication to a noble cause, their personal asceticism, and their spirit of camaraderie — was to inspire a new generation.

In the 1860s and 1870s the Narodnik movement spread throughout Russia, partially in response to the conditions of the newly freed serfs. The Narodniks, mostly drawn from the children of the Russian middle and upper classes, saw that the peasants were replacing the shackles of serfdom with the chains of wage-labor, and that the factory owner or large landowner was replacing the feudal lord as the new oppressor. The Narodniks theorized that the peasants were the revolutionary class that could overthrow the Tsar, and the traditional village commune was the embryo for socialism in Russia. In 1874 they

launched the "Going to the People" campaign, where urbanites walked the countryside to convince the peasants of the need to revolt. Many *studenchestvo*, critical of society and not wishing to follow their fathers, were drawn to the romanticism of the rural tramp as outlined by the character Rakhmetov in Chernyshevsky's novel. But despite the efforts of these revolutionary agents, the peasants were mostly unreceptive to the Narodniks. The cultural differences between the two social groups were too severe, and many of the peasants, with a high regard for the Tsar and the Orthodox Church, chased the Narodniks out of their villages.

In 1876 the Narodniks formed the organization *Zemlya I Volya*, or Land and Liberty. The new group published agitational material and organized its members to "settle" in various rural regions. The movement did not go unnoticed by the regime, which began to arrest Narodniks.

Repression by the Tsar led to a split in the organization. While the Narodniks had wanted to build mass support for their movement, they found it impossible to win over the peasantry; some wondered if they would make more impact as daring individuals than as leaders of a larger movement. The majority faction of "politicians" wanted to form the Nardonik movement into a tight-knit organization to lead terrorist attacks on the regime, and launched *Narodnaya Volya*, or the People's Will party, in 1879. Operating through local cells, the members of this organization carried out assassinations of regime targets in the hopes of sparking a wider rebellion. The minority, including the future father of Russian Marxism Georgi Plekanov, launched their own organization at the same time. Named *Chornyi Paradel*, or Black (Universal) Repartition, the organization maintained an orientation to mass struggle,

basing itself on the original tactics of agitation and propaganda among the peasant masses in the villages. Its members were known as "villagers."

As the revolutionaries debated strategies for overthrowing the Tsar, Russia was — slowly but surely — modernizing. In contrast both to the "politicians" and the "villagers," by the 1880s, many students felt that liberal reformism and an individual focus on their professions was the path for improving society, adopting the philosophy of "small deeds."[21] In rejection of the terrorist methods of the People's Will, many of the still-illegal *zemliachestva* of the day were explicitly apolitical; joining an illegal organization for the purpose of companionship was as far as most students proceeded.

Still, over the next decade some students looking to change society were drawn to the terrorist movement. One such student was Alexander Ulyanov, a student at Saint Petersburg University. Joining *Narodnaya Volya*, Alexander and his peers launched a failed attempt to assassinate the Tsar; in 1886 Alexander was hanged for his role in the plot.

A year later, the terrorist activities of the group resulted in the arrest of leading students around the People's Will party. Seeing the university as a breeding ground for revolutionary terrorists, the government launched a new push to ban most student groups. While the majority of students might not have supported their terrorist peers, they were not willing to give up their own autonomy. The student unrest that followed during the Autumn of 1887 led to the closure of almost all universities. Alexander Ulyanov's younger brother Vladimir, a first-year student at Kazan University, quickly rose in the ranks of his *zemliachestva* and helped organize a demonstration against the banning of student groups, leading demonstrations

against the government crackdown which had been launched in part because of his brother's actions.

Accused of being a student ringleader, he was expelled from Kazan University. Because of his father's rank as a minor noble, the Ministry of Internal Affairs allowed him to serve his exile on his family's estate. While in exile, he spent his time reading Narodnik literature and was particularly enraptured by Chernyshevsky's 1863 *What Is To Be Done*. Eventually, the government allowed him to return to Kazan city, but not to Kazan University. Instead, he joined a revolutionary circle, where he was first exposed to Marx's *Das Kapital* and the writings of Plekhanov. He also took on a new surname: Lenin.

The First Marxist Students

While the student movement was mostly confined within the limits of minor student unrest and intense government crackdown, the development of Russian society and especially Russian capitalism moved forward. Despite the efforts of the Nardoniks, capitalist development was continuing to disrupt traditional Russia, leading to an ever-increasing proletariat; in fact, late-developing Russia was importing the latest techniques of capitalist production, leading to the construction of some of the largest factories in the world. The Narodnik theory that Russia could avoid capitalism altogether through a socialist peasant revolution was challenged as the potential role of the peasantry was being eclipsed with every new factory built. A new theory and a new movement were required.

The first cell of Russian Marxists, the Emancipation of Labor group, was founded by Plekhanov and other Russian emigres in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1883, the year of Marx's death.

Plekhanov had come to the revolutionary movement as a student at the Saint Petersburg Metallurgical Institute, enrolling in the Narodnik *Zemlya i Volya*, or Land and Liberty*;* in 1876 he spoke at a political demonstration in Saint Petersburg, defending the ideas of Chernyshevsky, and was thereafter forced to abandon his university studies and head underground. He went twice "among the people" to spread revolutionary ideas, but also developed connections among the growing movement of the urban workers. He was briefly arrested twice in 1877 and 1878 for his revolutionary activity, and engaged in the debate within the Narodnik movement which stemmed from the mass arrests of the Narodniks; remaining committed to mass work and rejecting individual terrorism, he founded the Narodnik splinter group Black Repartition in 1879, but the group was not successful.[22]

In 1880 he set out for Western Europe where he became exposed to the social-democratic movement and became a committed Marxist, forming the Emancipation of Labor group with like-minded emigre veterans of the Narodnik movement. Crucial to the development of the Marxist movement, the Emancipation of Labor emigres took up the task of translating Marxist works into Russian and smuggling the texts into Russia, where they were discussed by youngsters like Vladimir Lenin.

In 1883, the Emancipation of Labor group issued its draft program, laying out a Marxist vision which differed strongly from the Narodnik model. Speaking at the founding conference of the Second International, held in Paris during the summer of 1889, Plekhanov noted that the Marxist movement remained a movement of ideologists and student youth, and needed to win the support of the Russian proletariat.[23] Also in 1889, Plekhanov argued that the revolutionary movement should

concern itself with the conditions on campus, including the admissions standards and the police supervision in which students are handed over to "sergeant-majors in lieu of Voltaires." He also noted that "the student youth everywhere have taken a most active part in the fight for political freedom," that the northern and eastern exile regions in Russia are largely populated by revolutionary students, and that "parents who let their sons enter a higher educational establishment consider them already almost lost."[24]

In 1895 some 20 Marxist study circles which formed around this literature — largely composed of students and recent graduates — were united in the Saint Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. The group focused on agitating among the factory workers of Saint Petersburg and distributing socialist leaflets among them. It also formed the receiving end of the smuggling operation of the Emancipation of Labor emigres, helping smuggle literature through Sweden and Finland. The groups' attempt to publish its own newspaper was halted in utero, with police arresting Lenin and others at the end of 1895. But even with many of the leaders in jail, the group helped organize a major textile strike in May 1896, which spread to twenty factories over three weeks, the largest strike in Russian history up to that point. In 1898 this local group eventually united with other Russian forces and also the emigre group to form the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party.

During the second half of the 1890s the Marxists were engaged in a heated debate with the Narodniks. As the government saw the Narodnik terrorists as a greater threat, they allowed some Marxist criticisms of Narodnism through the censors; the government was also seeking to promote the

development of capitalism in Russia, and so some Marxist economic works which acknowledged the necessity and benefit of capitalist development in Russia were allowed as well. This collection of work came to be known as 'legal Marxism.' Lenin recalls that

> *In a country ruled by an autocracy, with a completely enslaved press, in a period of desperate political reaction in which even the tiniest outgrowth of political discontent and protest is persecuted, the theory of revolutionary Marxism suddenly forces its way into the censored literature and, though expounded in Aesopian language, is understood by all the 'interested.' The government had accustomed itself to regarding only the theory of the (revolutionary) Narodnaya Volya as dangerous, without, as is usual, observing its internal evolution, and rejoicing at any criticism levelled against it. Quite a considerable time elapsed (by our Russian standards) before the government realised what had happened and the unwieldy army of censors and gendarmes discovered the new enemy and flung itself upon him. Meanwhile, Marxist books were published one after another, Marxist journals and newspapers were founded, nearly everyone became a Marxist, Marxists were flattered, Marxists were courted, and the book publishers rejoiced at the extraordinary, ready sale of Marxist literature.*[25]

Although Marxist critiques of Narodnism and Marxist economic works were for a time allowed to pass the censor, explicitly revolutionary literature or political critiques of the Russian system remained confined to the underground. This

division of Marxist literature into legal and illegal was to have a profound impact on the development of the movement. Lenin notes how widespread was the penetration of Marxist literature in the second half of the 1890s, writing in *What Is To Be Done?*

> *We have noted that the entire student youth of the period was absorbed in Marxism. Of course, these students were not only, or even not so much, interested in Marxism as a theory; they were interested in it as an answer to the question, "What is to be done?", as a call to take the field against the enemy. These new warriors marched to battle with astonishingly primitive equipment and training.*

Although Marxist ideas spread rapidly, this did not mean that the students had become fully-fledged Marxists. Students and academics were more easily exposed to the legal writings, while only the committed revolutionaries were steeped in the full Marxist account. Ironically it was long periods in the Tsarist jails or in Siberian exile which was particularly conducive to the theoretical development of the underground revolutionaries. By the 1907 conference of the RSDLP, the combined 140 delegates had spent 138 years, 3 ½ months in jail and another 148 years, 6 ½ months in exile, roughly one third of their combined 942 years tenure in the Social Democratic movement.[26]

The Growing Debate on Campus

By the 1890s, the Russian student movement had begun to recover from the repression that followed the revolts of 1887, and was attempting to define for itself the role of students in the movement against autocracy. In wider society an ongoing debate was raging between the liberals, Narodniks, and Marxists, and similarly on campus a multi-faceted debate for clarity broke out among the students. Revolutionaries considered the importance of students, and students sought out the illegal writings of the revolutionary underground.

In the debates of the 1890s, student activists disagreed as to whether to limit their movement to narrow university reforms, or whether these reforms were only possible with wider political reforms. The students began to divide themselves into "Academics" and "Politicals" on this basis.

The *zemliachestva* of each university were orchestrated through United Councils, with each *zemliachestva* electing delegates to the council to serve as a sort of representative student government. In 1894 the Moscow University United Council organized a national conference to discuss the way forward. Delegates joined the conference from Saint Petersburg, Kazan, Odessa, Kiev, and Kharkov.[27] The conference developed a populist line which placed a strong emphasis on the student movement, affirming that the studenchestvo "was an integral part of the revolutionary intelligentsia and a natural vanguard of the popular movement… It should not confine itself to narrow academic interests… the academic structure was just a part of the general system."[28] Holding up the political significance of the student movement, the conference also warned against spontaneous student disorders

on issues which would not find sympathy among the wider public. The conference differed from the Marxist line, in that it sought political salvation in the intelligentsia rather than the organized working class; but it did definitely embrace the 'Political' view of the importance of students engaging in wider political struggle.

In the wake of the successful 1894 conference, the student leadership sought to move forward the *studenchestvo* movement along this new populist line. The United Council in Moscow sought to focus student protest toward issues which would have mass appeal; but the United Council faced a crisis of legitimacy from the *zemliachestva* which it represented, which felt it was acting too independently. When the Moscow student leaders sought to organize a demonstration in November 1896, the entire leadership group was arrested by the Okhrana, the Tsar's secret police.[29] Caught between the Okhrana's repression and the student body's lukewarm support, those organizing on the platform of the 1894 conference struggled to discipline the student movement into a powerful political force. Embracing the need for political struggle and carrying it out were two different things.

It was not long after the foundation of the Russian Marxist movement that the early Marxists and Marxist-influenced students began to grapple with the issue of student movements, and at first their methods were not entirely dissimilar from the early Narodniks. Based on Marx's analysis that the working class was the leading revolutionary class under capitalism, the Marxist intelligentsia attempted to establish contacts with the workers, as the Narodniks had "gone to the people." In the mid-1890s, some Marxist-influenced students began to question the continued validity of the student movement. Victor Chernov,

future founder of the Socialist Revolutionary party, recalled that these students saw the increasingly militant working class as replacing the student movement as the political barometer of the country. Arguing that the middle-class interests of student life were a distraction from the priority of organizing the ever-growing proletariat, they eschewed student protest and sought connections with workers off campus.[30] Campuses could be a recruiting ground of individual revolutionaries, and no more.

In the Autumn of 1896, a young Lev Bronstein began attending mathematics lectures at the University of Odessa while considering whether to enroll.[31] [32] Even in his senior year of high school in Nikolayev (now Mykolaiv), Bronstein had already become involved in a radical commune, at first embracing the Narodnik movement before eventually embracing Marxism. He recalled the wave of revolutionary enthusiasm which swept the country in response to the textile strike.

> *In 1896, the famous weavers' strikes broke out in Saint Petersburg. This put new life into the intelligentsia. The students gained courage, sensing the awakening of the heavy reserves. In the summer, at Christmas, and at Easter, dozens of students came down to Nikolayev, bringing with them tales of the upheaval in Saint Petersburg, Moscow, and Kiev. Some of them had been expelled from university, boys just out of the gymnasium [preparatory high school] returning with the haloes of heroes.*

Only a few weeks into his freshman year and still not yet officially enrolled, Bronstein abandoned his studies and returned from Odessa to Nikolayev. Inspired by the events in Saint Petersburg, he led the organization of the Southern

Russian Workers Union, named after a group that had been suppressed the decade prior. The clandestine organization published agitational material among the port workers, and was eventually rounded up, with Lev sent to prison and eventually Siberian exile.

Like some other student Marxists of the mid-1890s, Lev abandoned the university as a site of class struggle, inspired by the growing Marxist movement to turn toward underground work focused on the industrial proletariat. And like other student radicals of this period, the harsh detention of the Tsarist regime gave him time to focus on his theoretical development, and to meet other detained revolutionaries. But two years in prison and two more in Siberia removed him, like other arrested radical youth, from participating directly in the struggles of both students and factory workers for several years; he was not to step foot on a Russian campus again until the stormy events of the fall of 1905. Fleeing Siberian exile along the Trans-Siberian railway in 1902 bound for Western Europe, he made out a fake passport, taking the name of one of his jailers: Trotsky.

Although Trotsky forsook the university for work among the workers, it is not clear that he elevated his own actions to the level of a general policy for all university students. But some Marxists certainly did. The outlook that collective student struggle had no role to play in socialist revolution was a conclusion drawn from a larger trend of Marxism prominent at the time, known as "Economism." The Russian Marxists were split on theoretical grounds. In the mid 1890s the differences were not concretized, but by the late 1890s a faction grouped around the papers The *Rabocheye Delo* (Workers' Cause) and *Rabochaya Mysl* (Workers' Thought) supporting the Economist trend, and around Lenin's Spark (*Iskra)* opposing it. The

Economists accused *Iskra* of over-emphasizing the importance of the conscious organizers and looking for allies outside the working class, while *Iskra* accused the Economists of being incapable of synthesizing correctly the paths of the spontaneous masses and the consciously organized elements, and focusing exclusively on the trade union struggle.[33]

Marxist publications increasingly circulated among the students; in 1899 some 2,400 copies of Lenin's *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* were published and studied by the intellectual, student, and workers circles.[34] The Marxist-influenced students were mostly clustered in the kassa organizations, which served the poorer students. But these Marxist students were caught in an uncertain position; if Marx called for a focus on worker organizing, what did that mean for them as student radicals? They found themselves condemning both the narrow academic outbursts, as well as the conclusions of the 1894 student congress which called for political action by students. They continually urged students against demonstrations or student protest in general. Disillusioned with student protests which always seemed to have the same demands, their own theorists offered no way to lead the student body in struggle, but only to themselves head "underground."

While the Economists wanted to focus on the economic struggle of the workers for higher wages, shorter hours, the right to strike, and the right to form trade unions, Lenin saw the need for the socialists to organize all sections of the masses to bring the other classes under working-class leadership. In 1902, he wrote in *What Is To Be Done?* that the model for a socialist

should not be the trade union secretary, but the tribune of

> *the people, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forthbefore all his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for all and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat.*

But in the mid-1890s the Russian Marxists had yet to clarify themselves, even the adult Marxist circles were only just passing from propaganda to agitation, and the Marxist-influenced students were not able to develop a powerful theory to understand how to relate to and lead student struggle. In fact, the explosion of the student movement would become a major source of tactical and theoretical disagreement within Marxism, which would ultimately lead to increased theoretical clarity. When the student protest movement exploded at the end of the 1890s, all theories would face the test of class struggle.

Conclusion

From the freeing of the serfs in 1855 to the growing radicalization of the 1890s, the Russian student movement and the Russian socialist movement developed side-by-side. Over nearly a half century, students developed the *studenchestvo* culture of independence and defiance; but ultimately the Russian student movement as a whole was locked in a cycle of student unrest and

government repression, with the development of the student movement constantly reset as students graduated and passed into the ranks of the Russian bourgeoisie. While unrest rose and fell on campus, the most radical sections of the student movement were drawn into the underground socialist movement, where they debated strategies of populism, terrorism, and Marxism as they attempted to locate the class which could lead the fight against Tsarism. The revolutionaries turned first towards the peasants and then towards the proletariat, but the universities always remained a crucial site of recruitment, and the role of students in the revolutionary movement a crucial topic of debate. As the 1800s came to a close it was not only through debate on campus or in the underground periodicals, but also through the rapid industrialization of Russia and the resulting increased unrest of the Russian workers, that the revolutionary potential of the Russian proletariat was increasingly recognized. But a central question remained unresolved: what was the correct relationship between the student movement and the workers movement?

3

Toward a Revolutionary Student Movement: 1899-1904

The Student Strike of 1899

Every February 8th, Saint Petersburg students took to the streets of the city to celebrate the founding of Saint Petersburg University, marching, drinking, and dancing on Nevsky Prospect. The raucous partying of the students inevitably brought them into conflict with the administrators and authorities, and the February 8th celebrations grew increasingly "disorderly" and also violent. On February 8, 1895, the students engaged in a large brawl with janitors and police. On February 8h, 1897, 500 students marched to the Winter Palace to engage in public dance before being peacefully dispersed by the police. When the students tried again the next year, dancing quickly devolved into fighting with the cops who tried to disperse them.[35]

As February neared in 1899, the Saint Petersburg University students were already preparing to exert greater self-control

over the festivities, but the Minister of Education still decided to ban street parties and threatened arrest, humiliating the students and undermining their attempts to exert autonomy. His speech at the official February 8th ceremony was met with hisses from the student audience. Following the official celebration, students defiantly began their traditional after-party, but found that police blocked the student demonstrators from reaching central Saint Petersburg. As the students turned around, they were then ambushed by mounted police who unleashed whips upon the students.

Humiliated and badly beaten, over 3,000 students attended a mass meeting the next day to discuss the situation. The *skhodka* called for a student strike and elected an 11-man Organizing Committee to oversee the effort.

> *The skhodka wanted to end the weary pattern of previous student protest—petition and deadlock—and voted a forcible closing of the university until its demands were met. The demands included publication of all circulars and rules governing police procedures for handling crowds, an official investigation of the 8 February beating, and confirmation that the principle of inviolability of person was a basic feature of Russian law.*[36]

The Organizing Committee attempted to expand the political nature of the strike, but met resistance from the Academic students who desired to keep the strike apolitical and did not see the need for a wider movement to win even the basic demands for student reform. Instead, the Academic students wanted to couch the movement as an effort to uphold the law. On the other side, the Organizing Committee also fought to resist the

influence of *Rabocheye Mysl*, which rejected the possibility of an alliance between students and workers, and warned workers from attending student demonstrations.[37]

By February 15, the strike spread to Moscow University and beyond, as the Organizing Committee sent delegations to other campuses to call for support. And as quickly as the movement spread, so too did state repression. Within a week of the strike, 68 were already arrested in Saint Petersburg, including some members of the Organizing Committee. But the students were ready, filling the seats with preselected alternates.

With little support from the workers, the Organizing Committee looked for help from within the Saint Petersburg intelligentsia. After meeting with leading figures of the intellectual left, they received private sympathy, but no public support.[38] The students were too far ahead of the rest of the Russian educated public, and they stood alone.

In late February, the Tsar appointed General Vannovskii to investigate the police beatings, a concession to one of the movements' core demands.[39] In response, the March 1st *skhodka* at Saint Petersburg University voted to end the strike. By now the strike had clearly taken on a wider significance, but the Academic faction refused to endorse a continuation when the students had just won a major concession. To go forward would mean turning the protest from a call for holding police accountable to the law into a protest against the whole legal system.

But while the students at Saint Petersburg University had voted to end their strike, campuses across the country were still closed. Police had been rather lenient to arrested students in Saint Petersburg, but in Kiev and Warsaw the strike had led to mass arrests; when the students in Saint Petersburg voted to

end their strike, many Kiev activists were still imprisoned. This led to taunts from the Kiev students that Saint Petersburg had abandoned the struggle, and meanwhile, many students became disillusioned with Vannovskii's investigation. On March 17, the students at Saint Petersburg voted 825 to 601 to resume their strike.[40]

The police and administration were determined to break the strike. The administrators demanded that students take their oral examinations in late March, and when students from the Academic faction complied, the Politicals tried to disrupt the exams. Brawls between students broke out on the campus courtyard, and on March 31 police encircled and arrested 540 striking students.[41] One-third of the Saint Petersburg University student body was in jail, and the situation was similar for students across the country. In a last effort, students called for a national student conference to meet in late April, but the secret police arrested all the delegates before the conference could even begin. The strike was broken, and students were forced to re-apply for admission; hundreds of students at each university were denied readmission.

Despite eventual defeat, the strike was a powerful demonstration of the students' combativeness and willingness to fight for political considerations, even if this meant merely calling for an enforcement of the law; it forced both the government and the students to reconsider strategy. The government decided to pass reforms allowing for students to have their own organizations, reigned in the hated inspectorate, and announced plans to build more dormitories. But at the same time, the 1899 Temporary Rules released by the government created special committees which could draft unruly students into the army.[42] By ameliorating the concerns of the Academic

faction and simultaneously increasing the threat of repression, the regime was determined to divide the student movement.

The Political Fallout of the 1899 Strike

In the following year, students of the various student factions produced their own analysis of the events of the 1899 student strike. First, many students still rejected the need to extend the strike to take up political causes outside the narrow concerns of student life. This position grew gradually weaker as the government came down hard on even the narrow protests, but the government did what it could to pass small reforms while increasing overall control.

The Marxist kassa leaders, who had been wary of the initial strike, were forced to reckon with the fighting spirit of their student peers; one of their leaders, Mogilianskii, issued a proclamation to square the earlier Marxist strategy with the new reality. In the document, Mogilianskii maintained the Marxist view on the limitations of the student movement, affirming that the student movement was still fundamentally bourgeois, in contradiction of the studenchestvo's traditional view of the students as the idealistic vanguard of the Russian intelligentsia. But Mogilianskii highlighted that, even as a bourgeois movement, students had been willing not only to protest their own conditions but also to raise the larger concerns of the oppressed and openly defy the government. He wrote that

The basic cause of the student movement is the bourgeois

> *struggle for human dignity, dignity that was violated. The ideals of the bourgeoisie always relate to the individual; they are permeated through and through with the concepts of freedom and property. Therefore the positive role of the bourgeoisie is its introduction into public life of the principles of personal inviolability, freedom of speech, and conscience, as well as other variants of the 'natural rights of man.'*

The Marxist students' earlier assumptions about student protest had turned out to be incorrect, as the students had shown they could play a role leading the bourgeoisie against the autocracy. Mogilianskii argued that the Marxist students could not remain aloof from the movement, and should push the students to realize the need for revolution.

Following the 1899 strike, the influence of Marxism on the students was still limited, and not even the Marxist sympathizers in the Kassa had been members of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party during the 1899 strike. Mogilianskii and other kassa leaders also sat on the Organizing Committee, but were in the minority. Most of the Politicals were under the ideological leadership of the liberal-radical wing of the Organizing Committee, which rejected the revolutionary calls of Mogilianskii's manifesto. The mainstream Politicals also rejected being labeled as bourgeois, preferring to see the *studenchestvo* as part of the intelligentsia class which could force change on its own. These students wanted political reforms, but they were not ready to call for a social revolution and ripped up Mogilianskii's manifesto when it was distributed in the Saint Petersburg dining hall.[43]

With hundreds of the most radical students expelled from

the universities, the 1899-1900 school year passed with little incident, but the conversation on the way forward continued. Veterans from the student strike, newly expelled from university, were drawn toward the revolutionary parties; ironically, by closing off respectable careers to a large section of Tsarist Russia's best-educated youth, the Tsarist regime strengthened the ranks of the revolutionary movements. Members of the Organizing Committee who joined the RSDLP contributed to the debate between the Economists and Iskraists,[44] bringing the earlier discussions of the Kassa Marxists on how to orient to the student movement before the wider Marxist movement.

In the fall of 1899, the Kiev University Organizing Committee was leading the ideological development of the liberal wing, drafting an open letter posing questions for students to consider. While still rejecting the bourgeois label of Mogilianskii's manifesto, they adopted many of his tactical conclusions. They accepted the need to build coalitions with other social groups to fight for general political rights, and the need for increased centralization of the student movement.[45]

Early in 1900, leftist students at Moscow University took the next step, electing an Executive Committee to lay the groundwork for a coordinated student movement with a newspaper and central organization. They called the founding national conference for June 16, 1900 in Odessa, but the police were waiting, and arrested all 29 delegates on the first day of the conference.

> *The documents confiscated by the police showed that two major issues preoccupied the conference: what, if any, relationship should there be between the workers' and student movements; and how should left-wing students*

react to the unwillingness of the majority to go beyond corporate or broadly liberal concerns?

Although the Summer conference was a failure, it expressed the growing need for coordination, the rising question of student-worker solidarity, and the self-consciousness of the radical students trying to balance their own revolutionary views with the more limited outlook of their peers. The student movement was evolving fast.

1900-1901: For Student-Worker Solidarity

The 1900-1901 academic year was a return to campus protest, with the familiar pattern of protests sparked by narrow issues leading to wider political fights. Two *skhodki* were called in November at Kiev University in response to minor incidents: two students beat up a cab driver, the lectures of a Professor Eikhelman were not satisfactory, and two other students had stolen a ring. Despite the mild nature of these *skhodki,* two of their organizers were sentenced to stays in the university jail.[46] When the students refused to serve their sentence, they were expelled.

A new *skhodka* was called for December 7, at which Kiev University students demanded the reinstatement of the two students and the abolition of the campus jail. When they refused to disperse, an infantry battalion supported by Cossack cavalry was sent to the university. The students finally dispersed, but the administration noted the names of 406 students. Based on the Temporary Rules of 1899, 183 students were drafted into the army, and 217 faced lighter punishments.[47]

When students across the country returned from Christmas break, they struggled to find a way forward. *Skhodki* at Kiev, Moscow, and Kharkov University called for protest strikes, but most students were too scared by the threat of the draft to comply. At Saint Petersburg University, the Organizing Committee discussed action, but found the *kassa* had reverted to its old stance of condemning student protests in favor of simply joining the revolutionary parties. Not only was the path of the underground revolutionary more effective than student protest, they argued, but was also safer; students were more likely to be arrested participating in a public *skhodki* than in the highly secretive revolutionary cells.[48] When the Saint Petersburg University Organizing Committee finally called for a protest strike on January 25, twenty-eight student leaders were drafted into the army. With calls for a protest strike failing to mobilize a large section of the students, student leaders began to conceive of another option: the student street demonstration. But when they reached out to workers for help organizing the demonstration, they were turned away.

The Kiev students were calling for a general mobilization, and Lenin replied in the newly founded *Iskra* to the students' call for action as well as the Economists' call for workers to avoid student demonstrations. In the second issue of the newspaper, Lenin argued that

> *the only appropriate reply the students can make is to carry out the threat of the Kiev students, to organize a determined general student strike in all higher educational institutions in support of the demand for the repeal of the Provisional Regulations of July 29, 1899.*

But it is not the students alone who must reply to the government... ...The working class constantly suffers immeasurably greater injuries and insults from the police lawlessness with which the students have now come into such sharp conflict. The working class has already begun the struggle for its emancipation. It must remember that this great struggle imposes great obligations upon it, that it cannot emancipate itself without emancipating the whole people from despotism, that it is its duty first and foremost to respond to every political protest and render every support to that protest. The best representatives of our educated classes have proved—and sealed the proof with the blood of thousands of revolutionaries tortured to death by the government—their ability and readiness to shake from their feet the dust of bourgeois society and join the ranks of the socialists. The worker who can look on indifferently while the government sends troops against the student youth is unworthy of the name of socialist. The students came to the assistance of the workers—the workers must come to the aid of the students.[49]

Lenin's position on the students came from centering, not isolating, working-class struggle. Workers' struggle was ultimately more decisive, but in the meantime student protests offered an opportunity to organize large sections of society against a key working class concern, police lawlessness and Tsarist brutality, while helping students transcend the limits of their own narrow struggle and realize the need for socialism. After all, Lenin was himself the personification of the student-protester turned revolutionary organizer.

Lenin's article, written from Germany, quickly began to disrupt the Social-Democratic circles in Saint Petersburg. In February student members of the Economist circle broke ranks, arguing the Marxists should support street demonstrations, and in March two smaller Marxist circles affiliated to *Iskra*, giving it an organized presence in Saint Petersburg for the first time.[50]

On February 16, Saint Petersburg student leaders from all the local universities met for a citywide conference, calling a street demonstration for February 19. Again, the meeting ended with the arrest of the students, but one managed to escape; the resulting protest was poorly attended, with only about 400 students. 244 were arrested, but then released later that day.[51]

Emboldened by public support, the students of Saint Petersburg decided to try again, calling another demonstration on March 4. The protest was specifically called on a Sunday so workers could attend. The students made an effort to draw in larger sections of society. The liberals of the organizing committee turned to the middle classes, while the students in the Marxist circles appealed over the heads of their Economist leaders for the worker-comrades to attend.[52]

Although the appeals for wider support met limited success, the March 4 demonstration was one of the largest in Saint Petersburg's history. Thousands filled Kazan Square, mostly students, and raised banners calling for an end to the Temporary Rules. The police beatings began, and by the end, 775 people were marched to jail. Almost as many women were detained as men, despite the far lower female enrollment at the time.[53] And in response, the whole student body soon voted to strike.

A similar pattern rippled across the country. Radical student leaders, upset by the refusal of their peers to endorse a strike in January, organized street demonstrations. The inevitable police

brutality which followed increased student indignation, and the student movement was spurred on by the logic of action and reaction. By early March 1901, most of the campuses were on strike again.[54] In total, some 30,000 students participated in the Spring 1901 student strikes.[55]

Repeating itself, the government proposed to look into reforming the system of higher education, including the hated Temporary Rules. And again, students as a whole were overly trusting of their government, with an April Saint Petersburg University *skhodka* passing a resolution stating "the studenchestvo trusts the good intentions of the government" by 1,675 to 271.[56] The government did indeed act with leniency, deciding not to severely punish the hundreds of students arrested during the spring 1901 student strike wave; many expelled students were allowed to return to their universities in the fall. The students went into summer recess in high spirits; they had begun the academic year fearful of the temporary rules and without a clear way forward. But a tactical innovation as simple as marching off campus had spurred them on, and even seemed to lay a blow against the Temporary Rules. Still, while many students could be dragged into politics in the heat of events, the April vote in Saint Petersburg proved the lingering faith students held in the regime.

While in the 1900-1901 school year the students came to recognize the power of student-worker demonstrations, most students still saw the struggles as separate, fighting in the name of the studenchestvo not social revolution.

1901-1902: Reform or Revolution?

In the fall of 1901, students felt that they were coming off the heels of a victorious campaign. The street demonstrations of the previous academic year had scared the government into agreeing to reform the conditions of the Russian university campuses. For a while, this bolstered the students who felt that campus reform could be won by the students themselves and without changes to the wider political system. But the government's inflexibility to deliver on the reforms it had promised would soon force even the moderate students to reconsider the question: reform or revolution?

Students had been debating the various limits and strategies of the student movement since its inception, and especially after the 1894 conference. But it was in the 1901-1902 school year that the ideological differences began to crystallize in the various student organizations. The earlier student societies and clubs — the *zemliachestva* and *kassas* — were often associated with particular ideologies, but were not specifically organized around these ideologies. But as the movement evolved from 1894 to 1901, the *zemliachestva* increasingly represented student apathy, with the most political of their participants clustered in the cross-*zemliachestva* United Councils. Meanwhile, the *kassa* leadership remained under the influence of Marxism. Despite the gradual association of political lines with various student groups, politics was not the raison d'être of any of these organizations. And many students were involved in a *zemliachestva*, sat on the United Council, and were also leaders in their *kassa*. But as students continued to explore, debate, and test in practice the different ideologies of the wider political movements, it was inevitable that student politics

would outgrow the old organization forms. Soon, students formed new groups which aligned more directly with political ideology and operated on an exclusive and competitive basis.

At the start of the 1901-1902 school year, Politicals across the country called for new demonstrations to capitalize on the momentum of the last year, demanding the readmission of all the students expelled, an elimination of the quotas limiting Jewish enrollment, opening the major universities to women, and other progressive demands.[57] But the majority of the student body could not be mobilized, holding on to hopes that the government would deliver on its promises to reform the university system; the *skhodka* called at the beginning of the year were poorly attended, seen as a failure of the radical wing of the student movement.

Despite the failure of the early 1901-1902 demonstrations to attract broad student support, the student movement was attacked in the conservative press. One article, written by Prince Meshcherskii, claimed that female students sought co-education only to satisfy their sexual desires; the female students, according to the prince, were physically and morally "sloppy."[58]

As in years past, it was an outside attack which injected energy into the student movement and pushed it by events to new heights, as Prince Meshcherskii's article was met with widespread disdain. With many students still expressing faith in the government, this time students at Saint Petersburg University asked permission from the government to hold a *skhodki*, which was granted providing it only discussed the offending article. At the meeting the students decided to run newspaper ads condemning the article, but the government would not allow the advertisements to be printed.[59]

At Moscow University in November 1901, the faculty decided to launch a faculty-student commission to respond to the article, in order to channel student protest and isolate the Politicals. Professor Vinogradov was appointed to lead the commission of professors and elected students. The dispute over the article was of little importance in itself, but was seen by the students as a measure of the government's willingness to address student concerns. Meeting with the commission, Minister Vannovskii failed to make concessions to the students' concerns. The students' faith in the government's good-will was severely undermined, and Vinogradov decided to take a position at Oxford University.[60] The message seemed clear: academic freedom could be had, but not in Russia.

When the government failed to respond to the concerns raised by the joint commission, the chief of the Moscow secret police saw it as a major blunder. He wrote that

> *the revolutionaries are trying to exploit the student movement for their own purposes. Purely political appeals found little sympathy among the broad masses of students so the revolutionaries shifted their attention to the academic sphere and tried to connect very minor incidents in the university with the Russian political structure. . . . Both the liberals and the conservatives misunderstand the student movement. . . . The conservatives think that the student movement is the work of a small group of agitators. The liberals think that all students are the carriers of their beloved ideals. . . . In reality the students are divided into many groups: moderates, radicals, and the indifferent. . . . We must get the basic control of student life into the hands of the "moderate majority."*

While some of the government's more far-sighted agents saw the benefit of allowing an outlet for some of the students' concerns, the Tsarist regime's own inflexibility prevented such a safety valve from developing. As long as the "moderate majority" could not deliver results for the student movement, students primed by relatively minor incidents would continue to listen to the ideals of the radical Politicals.

Writing in *Iskra's* theoretical journal *Zarya* in December 1901, in the article "Review of Home Affairs," in the section "The Third Element" Lenin comments on the rise of intellectuals — including students and professionals — as a third element independent from both the Tsarist administration and the property-owning class. Reviewing the government's increased attempts to suppress this third element, Lenin writes that

> *It must strengthen our faith in the might of the labor movement we lead; for we see that unrest in the foremost revolutionary class is spreading to other classes and other strata of society, that it has already led, not only to the rousing of the revolutionary spirit among the students to a degree hitherto unparalleled, but to the beginning of the awakening of the countryside, to greater self-confidence and readiness to struggle on the part of social groups that have until now (as groups) not been very responsive.*
>
> *Public unrest is growing among the entire people in Russia, among all classes, and it is our duty as revolutionary Social-Democrats to exert every effort to take advantage of this development, in order to explain to the progressive working-class intellectuals what an ally they have in the peasants, in the students, and in the intellectuals generally,*

> *and to teach them how to take advantage of the flashes of social protest that break out, now in one place, now in another. We shall be able to assume our role of front-rank fighters for freedom only when the working class, led by a militant revolutionary party, while never for a moment forgetting its special condition in modern society and its specific historic task of liberating humanity from economic enslavement, will raise the banner in the struggle for freedom for the whole people and will rally to this banner all those of the most varied social strata whom the Sipyagins, Kondoidis, and the rest of the gang are so wilfully forcing into the ranks of the discontented.*[61]

In a footnote to these paragraphs, Lenin writes that

> *As these lines are written, news comes of fresh and greater unrest among the students, of meetings in Kiev, Saint Petersburg, and other cities, of the formation of revolutionary students' groups in Odessa, etc. Perhaps history will impose upon the students the role of initiators in the decisive struggle. Be that as it may, if victory is to be achieved in this struggle, the masses of the proletariat must be roused and we must accelerate our efforts to make them class-conscious, to inspire and organize them.*

Recognizing the growing dynamism and also political consciousness of the students, Lenin doubled down on the 'Political' line, even admitting the possibility that students could play the role of "initiators" in the upcoming revolution.

The Politicals were organized around the Executive Committees which had sprung up to orchestrate the strikes of the

previous year, as well as in the *kassas*. The Academics launched an organization of their own, Partisans of Academic Freedom (SAS), which issued a proclamation in November 1901 calling students to "struggle for academic freedoms… by academic means."[62]

At Saint Petersburg University, the Politicals were in disagreement about the way forward. Some Politicals had regressed to the earlier 'Marxist' position that student movements for academic reforms were a waste of time. Other Politicals felt they must take up the demands of the moderate students while pushing them to the left, and dissociated themselves from the Politicals. These students left the old *kassa*, setting up the new *Kassa Radikalov*, or the Radical *Kassa*. Mediating between the pessimism of some of the Politicals and the limited outlook of the Academics, the 'Radicals' developed a new synthesis, "Student Radicalism," which argued that even if student protest was limited to academic demands it was of political significance. Regardless of the demands taken up, "the events of 1899 and 1901 had shown that student protest in the urban nerve centers discomfited the government and reminded the middle classes as well as the proletariat that it was possible to fight."[63] Therefore, the task of student radicals was to organize protests with the largest possible student involvement, while using every opportunity to convince the moderate students that their movement was part of a wider political fight against the autocracy. *Kassa Radikalov* swept student elections and quickly became the leading force at Saint Petersburg University.[64] While many of the *Kassa Radikalov* students sympathized with the Social Democrats since the organization's strategy called for the widest mobilizations possible, the *Kassa Radikalov,* in an effort to engage the largest number of students possible,

avoided affiliation with political parties or a coherent political doctrine.

Students of the Moscow University Executive Committee, on the other hand, felt that the time had come for moving beyond a movement for the corporate rights of students. Their proclamation in response to the founding of the Saint Petersburg *Kassa Radikalov* stated that

> *The Saint Petersburg students, quite unjustifiably, are demanding special exemption from the regime of arbitrary police rule that hangs over everybody [not just students]. These demands contradict the self-evident truth that academic freedom is impossible [where political tyranny reigns]. . . . The student movement should be a political movement.*[65]

The Moscow University Executive Committee was further to the left of the *Kassa Radikalov,* and much further to the left of the student body as a whole. Despite their criticism of *Kassa Radikalov,* their critique provided no way of their own to bridge the current consciousness of the student body with the need for a political struggle.

Writing in late December 1901 in the *Iskra* article "Demonstrations Have Begun," Lenin commented on the progression of student consciousness, finding that

> *Last year's experience taught the students a lesson. They realized that only the support of the people, especially of the workers, could guarantee them success, and that in order to obtain that support, they must not restrict themselves to struggling merely for academic (student) freedom, but*

> *for the freedom of the entire people, for political freedom. The Kharkov Joint Council of Students' Organizations definitely expressed this idea in its October manifesto and, judging from their leaflets and manifestos, the students of Saint Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Riga, and Odessa are beginning to understand the "senselessness of the dream" of academic freedom amidst the gloom of enslavement enshrouding the people.*[66]

The government's own intractability was forcing not only the student organizers but the student body as a whole toward a political confrontation with the regime.

The Student Body Turns Political

At the end of 1901, the government issued the long-anticipated decree, the *Provisional Regulations for the Organization of Student Bodies in Higher Educational Institutions under the Ministry of Public Education,* better known as "Temporary Rules on Student Organizations." The new rules allowed certain student groups to meet, but only under strict supervision. Student libraries were subject to strict censorship, and discussion groups would be forced to submit their agendas to administration for approval. This new edict flew in the face of the Academics, who had promised more substantial reforms were just around the corner. Of particular importance for the students was the fight to recognize the student population as a corporate entity with its own rights, rather than the government's earlier policy which saw all students as "individual guests of the university," with no rights to collective representation. Vannovskii's reply to the Vinogradov Commission had demonstrated the

government had no intentions of making significant changes to the university system, and the temporary rules made this undeniably clear.

In response to the temporary rules, at the beginning of 1902, the Moscow Academics expressed their willingness to join with the Moscow Executive Committee in a protest against the new rules. Kiev University students were the first to endorse a strike. On February 2, a *skhodka* at Saint Petersburg University by *Kassa Radikalov* voted 1,063 to 5 in favor of a student strike. Then the *skhodka* issued a proclamation declaring their movement was a political fight for the freedoms of speech, assembly, and the press. The Organizing Committee, elected to lead the strike, stated the students were "beginning a new phase of the student movement…. While the student movement has always been objectively political, only now has this fact penetrated the consciousness of the student masses."[67] By mid-February, most of Russia's higher education institutes were on strike. Students forcibly disrupted classes, and the *Kassa Radikalov* called for street demonstrations to be held on Sunday, March 3, on the Nevsky Prospect. Most of the *kassa's* leadership was sentenced to exile before the demonstration, but nonetheless it was a massive success. The police estimated five thousand participants, while *Iskra* estimated thirty thousand, emphasizing its proletarian makeup. With such massive numbers, less than 100 participants were arrested, and only about 50 of these were students.

Meanwhile in Moscow, the Executive Committee was struggling to square their own views against student protest on limited academic demands with the combative mood of the student masses. Should they stay true to their principles and disregard the strike wave, or call for demonstrations of their

own? On January 29, the Executive Committee grappled with the same tactical questions as *Kassa Radikalov.* How could they mobilize the largest section of students while engaging with wider sections of society. The leaders did not feel confident that a street demonstration would attract significant numbers of students, and their contacts with the Moscow workers were weak. Tseretelli, a student leader later elected as a Menshevik in the Duma, outlined a plan: organize a *skhodka* on Sunday, February 9, and then march out of the university in hopes that workers would rally to the marching students. The Executive Committee expected their plan would end in defeat, but "faced with the choice of doing nothing, leading a corporate student protest, or starting a general political demonstration doomed in advance, the committee chose the third." In the end, their plan was hardly different from the *Kassa Radikalov.*

The Government Cracks Down

The Okhrana seemed to agree with the political conclusions of "student radicalism." Frightened that student demonstrations would lead to increased worker radicalization, they arrested the Moscow Executive Committee on January 31. But the students were prepared with replacements, and the call for the *skhodka* went out the next week. Even the Academics decreed that the tactic of moderation had failed, declaring that the students "can secure our right to legally recognized student organizations only by struggle and illegal organization." Illusions in peaceful conciliations between students and the regime had been shattered by events.

Between the arrests and the Moscow *skhodka,* students were

emboldened by the news that Saint Petersburg University had voted to strike. As the weekend arrived, students streamed into the university while police and troops waited outside. When leaders of the Academics entered the university auditorium, they were met with applause. But as the discussion got underway it was clear that the Politicals and Academics were far from agreement. After a few hours, several hundred of the moderate students left the university, but were immediately arrested by the waiting authorities. With the moderates gone, the *skhodki* adopted the most politically radical student resolution to date, calling for freedom of speech, the right to strike, the eight-hour day, and the lifting of enrollment restrictions on non-Russian nationalities. And since the autocracy had continued to resist such concessions, the students demanded a constituent assembly. Finally, the resolution proclaimed the students would immediately "take our protest into the streets where, together with the cadres of the workers' organizations, we will back up our demands with force."[68] The resolution was a tremendous step toward the student movements' adoption of the Social Democrats' program, answering the questions raised by the failed national student conference of the Summer of 1900. But the Moscow University *skhodka* adopting a radical program in the heat of events, and after the moderate students had removed themselves from the vote, did not necessarily mean that a majority or even a plurality of students had become convinced Social Democrats.

As the students settled in for the night, only 550 students remained. They made tea and cooked food, amusing themselves by singing and telling stories. By midnight most had fallen asleep. But at 2 a.m. the soldiers marched into the university, threatening to shoot if they met resistance. 509 of the students

were rounded up and marched to jail to join their Academic peers.[69]

The government, concerned with the explicitly political turn that the student movement had taken, came down with unprecedented severity. 95 of the Moscow students were sentenced to Siberian exile for terms of 2 to 4 years, while 567 were sentenced to jail terms of between three and six months.

Commenting in February on the growing disillusionment of even the Academic students with the limitations of government reform and the resulting unrest, Lenin's article "Signs of Bankruptcy" relays that

> *To those who last spring expected a "new era" and seriously believed that the tsarist drill sergeant would fulfill but a modicum of the hopes harbored by students and society – in short, to the Russian liberals – it should now be clear how mistaken they were in once again giving credence to the government, how little justification there was for halting the movement for reform which in the spring had begun to assume impressive forms, and for allowing themselves to be lulled by the sweet strains coming from the government sirens. After the promise to reinstate at the universities all last year's victims had been broken, after a series of new reactionary measures had flung a challenge to all those who demanded a real reform of the educational system, after a series of fresh and violent reprisals against demonstrators who demanded that the fraudulent bankrupt should make good his promises–after all this the government of "cordial concern" has published "provisional regulations", for student organizations as means of "pacification", and... instead of "pacification"*

is confronted with a general conflagration of "disorders" again involving all educational institutions...

A considerable majority of the students have refused to recognise the "provisional regulations" and the organizations allowed by them. With greater determination than they usually show, the professors are expressing obvious dissatisfaction with this gift of the government. And, indeed, one does not have to be a revolutionary, one does not have to be a radical, to recognise that this so-called "reform" not only fails to give the students anything resembling freedom, but is also worthless as a means of bringing any tranquility into university life...

...the "right" of assembly and organization granted by the government in the absurd form established by the "provisional regulations" is the maximum that the autocracy can give the students, if it is to remain an autocracy. Any further step in this direction would amount to a suicidal disturbance of the equilibrium on which the government's relations with its "subjects" rest. Reconciling themselves to this maximum that the government can offer, or intensifying the political, revolutionary character of their protest – such is the dilemma the students are facing. The majority are adopting the latter alternative. More clearly than ever before, a revolutionary note rings in the students' appeals and resolutions. The policy of alternating brutal repression with Judas kisses is doing its work and revolutionizing the mass of students...

...whatever that outcome may be, one thing is certain: the

> *recurrence of general student disorders after so brief a lull is a sign of the political bankruptcy of the present system. For three years the universities have been unable to settle down to normal life, studies are conducted by fits and starts, one of the cogs of the state machine is ceasing to function and, after turning uselessly for a time, is again coming to a standstill for a long while.*[70]

For Lenin, the growing disillusionment of the student body was the result of the limited maneuverability of the autocracy. The Tsar's regime could concede only so much without undermining its own position, locking itself into an orientation toward the universities which could not help but antagonize the students and eliminate their hopes of winning reforms under the autocratic system. Reflecting on the disorders of early 1902 a year later, Lenin concluded in his article "The Autocracy is Wavering" that "the government wanted to make concessions on the student question—and made a laughing stock of itself, advancing the revolutionization of the students by seven-league strides."[71]

Student Leaders in Exile

As students awaited sentencing in Moscow's Butyrka prison, spirits were high. Student prisoners received special privileges, being allowed to produce two jail newspapers and to form a choir and a debating society. Students built a tribune out of snow in the courtyard, yelling political speeches to the criminals in the upper stories of the prison. They even performed a census; the arrested students were more likely to be underclassmen and less likely to be from Moscow.[72] These

statistics reveal the impact of bourgeois pressures on students' politics. Students from Moscow generally lived with their parents, meaning they were less integrated into *studenchestvo* culture, while older students who were about to enter the comfortable, if restricted, life of the Russian intelligentsia were far more likely to avoid protest.

Spirits remained high as the "ringleaders" from Moscow were put on a train bound for Siberia. Students sang songs the whole way, and held onto their red flag. Arriving in Alexandrovsk Central Prison at the base of the Ural mountains, they waited to be dispersed among the various Siberian prison settlements. And when the authorities failed to tell them where they would be going, the students chased out the guards, barricaded the prison yard, and raised their red flag. The prison authorities finally told them where they were going, and the students agreed to dissolve the siege. As one group was barged up the Lena river bound for the Iakutiia prison colony, they raised the red flag over the barge.

The exile provided time for the student leaders to reflect on their movement, and to discuss among themselves and with other detained revolutionaries from the various parties. But while *Iskra* commented hopefully that the mass imprisonments and Siberian exile mean the government had begun the "mass production of revolutionaries,"[73] the reality on the ground was that most detained students were not transformed overnight into hardened revolutionaries. Many students had proved unafraid of arrest, but "once in jail they seemed interested only in reading cheap novels, singing songs, playing cards, or flirting with women."[74] Nonetheless, at least in Siberia the mood was more serious, with students using their time to discuss the significance of the student movement. Many

affirmed their synthesis of *Kassa Radikalov,* and some of these found support in Peter Struve's publication, Struve having just abandoned moderate Marxism for liberalism; in a letter written from Siberia, this wing of students declared that the real conflict in Russia was not between classes but between "Europeanization" and Russian aristocratic traditions. Replying to the letter with their own letter to *Iskra*, the Marxist students in Siberian exile relayed the increasing ideological polarization among the student leaders, affirmed the class underpinnings of conflict in Russia, and held up the proletariat as the leading force in the future revolution against the Tsar.[75] Eventually, the government decided to free all exiles, returning them back to live under varying degrees of police supervision and residence restriction.[76]

Although the mass arrest of students and the exile of student leaders crippled the student movement, the government had clearly suffered a defeat. In August 1902, the government issued new rules which put disciplinary responsibility in the hands of the professors rather than the Ministry of Education, and allowed some student organizations while maintaining a ban on *skhodki.*[77]

Debating the Student Question from London to Siberia

In contrast to the previous two academic years, the 1902-1903 and 1903-1904 academic years passed in relative quiet. A handful of campus protests broke out over local issues, but there was no national mobilization. In stark contrast, the rest of Russia was saturated with unrest including pogroms, peasant riots, and a strike in Rostov. The Saint Petersburg Committee of the RSDLP, in an open letter to the *studenchestvo*, demanded to know why when "the peasantry is protesting, the worker is protesting, the timid liberals are raising their heads," but "the Russian *studenchestvo*, the 'barometer of Russian life,' is quiet."[78]

Despite the relative quiet of the wider student movement, debate about the role of student protest continued among the student leaders and in the wider revolutionary groups. Although the *Kassa Radikalov* tendency had enjoyed widespread popularity during the previous year, many student activists drew the conclusion that *Kassa Radikalov's* student radicalism was a dead end. Organizing around academic demands could engage wide sections of the students, but to do so, political clarity and revolutionary aspirations had to be played down. A pamphlet titled *K Aktivnomu Studenchestvo* (*To the Active Students*) questioned whether attracting large groups of students to demonstrations was worth the price. Furthermore, *Kassa Radikalov's* ideology held that student movements would trigger wider societal disruptions, but during the 1902-1903 academic year it was students who were dormant while the rest of society was on the march.[79] Students might be prone to protest when provoked, but the prospects of a cushy future was a serious limitation to perpetual unrest.

An anonymous 1902 manifesto explicitly called on students to join the Social Democratic movement, and *Iskra* supported this call. But some student groups resisted partisan affiliation, and they were supported by the entering of the Socialist Revolutionary party into the debate. The Socialist Revolutionaries, heirs of the Narodnik movement, did not call for the student movement to affiliate to the SRs, but to remain united rather than be divided along partisan lines, and supported the line developed by *Kassa Radikalov.*[80]

During the Second Congress of the RSDLP, held in Brussels and London during the summer of 1903, the off-campus Social Democrats also weighed in again on the student question. The brief "Draft Resolution on the Attitude Towards the Student Youth" stated that the party "welcomes the growing revolutionary initiative among the student youth and calls upon all organizations of the Party to give them every possible assistance in their efforts to organize." The draft resolution also called for the students to escalate the ideological struggle between the various political student groups, highlighting that Social Democratic student groups should focus on educating their members on Marxism and the differences between Marxism, Narodnism, and Liberalism.[81] Speaking at the conference on August 10, Lenin argued that it was crucial to arm the students against "false friends that are trying to persuade the youth that they have no need to distinguish between different trends," doubling down on the goal of raising the ideological struggle.[82] The interest of Lenin and the RSDLP leadership in the developments of student revolutionaries and the wider student movement is further underlined by a list of questions, many asking about students, which was sent out to Social Democratic circles prior to the conference to guide their reports

on local conditions.[83] Immediately following the conference, Lenin began formulating a plan for a series of letters to address the student question.[84]

One interesting 1903 essay drafted by students returned from Siberian exile, "K Molodëzhi," or "To Youth" expressed the ideological searching of the student leaders as they struggled to juggle tactical, partisan, and class considerations. According to the essay, the students were frantically experimenting with various ideologies and tactics,

> *Morally separated from the bourgeoisie and fundamentally distinct from the working class, the [studenchestvo] cannot adopt either the triumphant philistinism [torzhestvuiushchei poshlosti] of the former or the clear consciousness of the latter. . . . Unable to believe that it is an independent force in its own right, the studenchestvo vainly tries to assume foreign identities.*[85]

The authors called on students to collaborate with the Social Democrats without adopting Marxist ideology; according to the authors, unlike the terrorism of the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Social Democrats had the power to carry through the revolution. But still, the authors asserted that the students' demands "for social and political freedom arise not from an analysis of the capitalist system but out of the belief that each individual has the moral right to work out his own fate."[86] Students should collaborate with the workers movement while remaining loyal to the intelligentsia. This confused liberalism showed that some students were advancing by tactical considerations without a larger theory to back up their conclusions.

Grigorii Nestroev, a Kharkov University student who had been arrested during the 1902 movement, founded the journal *Student* in 1903 to address these theoretical questions. The first issue, published in April 1903, advanced Nestroev's idea of "nonparty socialism," which called for the variously affiliated socialist students to cooperate on the campuses. But over the summer *Student's* editorial team published an updated position in Struve's liberal journal, which Struve himself criticized. Lenin, in his first letter on the student question published in *Student* in September 1903, found that the development of the editorial line of *Student* over the summer marked

> *a considerable advance in the editors' views since the appearance of the first issue of Student. Mr. Struve was not mistaken when he hastened to express his disagreement with the views set forth in the statement: those views do indeed differ radically from the trend of opportunism so consistently and zealously maintained by the bourgeois-liberal organ. By recognising that "revolutionary sentiment alone cannot bring about ideological unity among the students", that "this requires a socialist ideal based upon one or another socialist world outlook" and, moreover, "a definite and integral" outlook, the editors of Student have broken in principle with ideological indifference and theoretical opportunism, and have put the question of the way to revolutionize the students on a proper footing.*[87]

Lenin noted that *Student's* advance from a desire to paper over ideological differences toward a desire to adopt one or another definite outlook was a sign of the growing maturity of the student movement.

In the article, Lenin noted that there were six different student political tendencies, "reactionaries, indifferents, academics, liberals, Socialist-Revolutionaries and Social-Democrats,"[88] and asked whether these differentiations were an accidental, temporary alignment in views. Replying in the negative, Lenin expanded on the necessary existence of ideological and political differences between the students, because the students

> *are the most responsive section of the intelligentsia, and the intelligentsia are so called just because they most consciously, most resolutely and most accurately reflect and express the development of class interests and political groupings in society as a whole. The students would not be what they are if their political grouping did not correspond to the political grouping of society as a whole—"correspond" not in the sense of the student groups and the social groups being absolutely proportionate in strength and numbers, but in the sense of the necessary and inevitable existence among the students of the same groups as in society.*[89]

Having established the necessity of the division among the students, Lenin continues arguing that the Social Democratic students

> *can easily cope with the controversial question of what, actually, should be understood by "achieving ideological unity among the students", "revolutionizing" the students, and so on. It even seems very strange at first glance that so simple a question should have proved controversial. If the political grouping of the students corresponds to the*

> *political grouping of society, does it not follow of itself that "achieving ideological unity" among the students can mean only one of two things: either winning over the largest possible number of students to a quite definite set of social and political ideas, or establishing the closest possible bond between the students of a definite political group and the members of that group outside the student body. Is it not self-evident that one can speak of revolutionizing the students only having in mind a perfectly definite content and character of this revolutionizing process? To the Social-Democrat, for example, it means, firstly, spreading Social-Democratic ideas among the students and combating ideas which, though called "Socialist-Revolutionary", have nothing in common with revolutionary socialism; and, secondly, endeavoring to broaden every democratic student movement, the academic kind included, and make it more conscious and determined.*

Writing in the main publication of the rising student movement, Lenin clearly posed the key aspects of the student question, and answered them along the lines set by the Second Congress of the RSDLP.

The 1903 Odessa Conference

Student organized a national conference for November 1903. Delegates arrived in Odessa representing Socialist Revolutionary and Social Democratic student groups, as well as veterans of the Kassa Radikalov. Debate lasted over three days, getting so intense that at some points the conference

forgot to break for meals. Even on the first day it was clear that the Social Democratic sympathizers had the most support, with the students electing G.A. Engel' as conference president. Engel' was almost a personification of the development of the conscious student elements. A veteran of Saint Petersburg University's *Kassa Radikalov,* he had since affiliated with the Social Democratic student group which he was representing at the conference.[90]

The report issued by the conference reflected the Social Democratic line on the student movement. The rise of the workers struggle was eclipsing the relative political importance of the student movement. *Studenchestvo* had a history of corporate traditions and student identity, but the campus was increasingly coming to represent the divisions of society in miniature, not one united student movement. Therefore, the political party was becoming the ideal form of student organization, and the report called for coalitional councils of the various student parties, united on tactical lines, to replace the old *zemliachestva*, United Councils, and Executive Committees. The report also called on students to resist reacting to 'corporate' student issues in favor of saving student energy for major political demonstrations like May 1.[91] With the Odessa conference concluded, the students were moving toward theoretical clarity.

But the decisions of the conference and the conscious student leaders it represented proved more challenging to institute than to draft. Within a month of the conference, students in Moscow and Riga formed new United Councils, rejecting the call to abandon the old organizing forms and holding on the conclusions of "student radicalism."[92] The United Councils even issued proclamations mocking the constant bickering of

the revolutionary factions, and holding up the *studenchestvo* tradition of unity and sense of purpose. The Riga proclamation also denied the Social Democratic assessment that the student body was divided by internal class antagonisms, arguing that "Since it is composed of young people, the *studenchestvo* has a lot of energy. Other social groups are based on mutual rivalry; students are immune from this and are relatively insulated from the corrosive influence of self-interest."[93] The proclamation also rejected the idea that students were in need of outside guidance from revolutionary parties.

The debate was spurred not only by words but by struggle. A November 10 *skhodka* was called at Saint Petersburg University to discuss supporting a strike by female students over an incident where a police officer insulted a female student. Despite their support for feminism, this reactive protest was exactly the kind of disruption the Social Democrats hoped to avoid; but when the administrators called an academic disciplinary court to try 17 students, the Social Democrats were faced with a choice: join the struggle or stand aside. They chose to participate, joining with the "student radicals" as over one hundred students blocked the stairwell to prevent the disciplinary court from convening. In response, seventeen students were suspended for one academic year. After the incident, Engel' called for an escalation of the propaganda struggle against "student radicalism." The radicals may have lacked ideological cohesion, but they held the support of most of the students; an ideological struggle was necessary to break the student masses from the dead end of "student radicalism."

The Russo-Japanese War

In January 1904 war broke out between Russia and Japan over competing imperialist interests in Manchuria and Korea. The war would end in a humiliating defeat for Russia which marked Japan's rise to dominance in East Asia. On campus and in wider society, the onset of war was greeted by a mix of initial patriotic fervor as well as anti-war sentiment, but as Russian defeats continued to accumulate popular dissatisfaction came to threaten the future of the Russian government.

A January 28 *skhodka* at Saint Petersburg University adopted a patriotic statement in support of the war, but quickly devolved into fistfights as anti-war students heckled the crowd.[94] Professors from across the country sent the Tsar patriotic greetings, but some student *skhodka* and women in the higher courses rejected this sentiment. Despite this, the Spring 1904 semester passed with relative quiet. Some coalition councils were formed along the recommendations of the 1903 Odessa conference, but these failed to mobilize wide support. Students took their exams, and returned home for the summer.

Defeats in the Summer of 1904 showed that the Russians would win no quick victory. In September a conference of various Russian opposition parties meeting in Paris led to a tactical alliance which included the liberals. Part of this was the liberals increasing openness toward student unrest; in a sense this constituted a call for the Academics to take up political organizing from their older liberal allies.

Despite the efforts of Social Democrats, Socialist Revolutionaries, and now the liberals to mobilize the students in political protest, students proved difficult to control in the Fall semester of 1904. They were willing to show their opposition to the

regime, but resented being told when and where by various outside political actors.[95] Furthermore, with wide sections of society demonstrating against the war and the autocracy while students were relatively dormant, the ideological position of "Student Radicalism" that students would play a vanguard role was contradicted by events.

At Saint Petersburg University the organization of the Radicals, *Partizany Bor'by*, finally agreed to participate in the coalition councils with the Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries. But in the fall of 1904 the council at Saint Petersburg University still struggled to contain student protest on narrow student issues.[96] The most politically active students continued to move toward the conclusions of the Odessa conference, but they still struggled to mobilize wide sections of the student body; student protest continued to operate on an independent and spontaneous basis.[97]

One problem was that many of the less politically involved students felt excluded by the new organizational form of the coalitional council model. Before, the politically active students in the *zemliachestva* could cluster in the United Council, but the less active students still elected representatives and had a say in the United Council's political decisions. But under the new system, *zemliachestva* were not allowed to participate in the United Council unless they were explicitly political. As a result, many of the less active students were uninformed of the political debates among the student leaders even though a wide section of the student body opposed the government and its war.

Despite a slow start in the fall of 1904, student unrest grew as the semester — and the war — dragged on. In October in Moscow, students organized a *skhodka* in response to the

beating of students at the train station. The Moscow United Council pushed for a student response, but the Socialist Revolutionary and Social Democrat student groups sought to avoid unplanned demonstrations in favor of student participation in wider demonstrations. Frustrated by the constant bickering, the Moscow United Council ceded its leadership and called for the formation of a coalitional council, challenging the revolutionary student parties to take the lead.[98]

In Saint Petersburg, the revolutionary student groups worried that their calls to delay student protest in favor of joint action was leading them to lose legitimacy among the restive students. Tired of waiting for the signal from party leadership, they organized a demonstration on November 28. Lenin recalled that preparation for the rally was hampered by the ongoing divide between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks within the wider party. The result was that the city committee did not succeed in promoting the demonstration among the workers, and the demonstration was mostly limited to students.[99] As a result, only about 150 students attended the demonstration, and were immediately met with police repression.[100]

In response to the beating, massive *skhodka* were held at Saint Petersburg and Moscow University. Now Moscow students took the initiative, deciding on December 7 to strike at least until Christmas. The Moscow students also won the support of the junior faculty for the first time, who agreed to boycott the disciplinary proceedings which sought to punish striking students.[101] On December 11, more than 100 junior faculty members signed a letter which declared that

> *normal academic life is possible only if the whole political structure is reconstructed on the basis of personal invio-*

> *lability, freedom of conscience, freedom of the press, and freedom of speech, all guaranteed by the participation of popular representatives in the legislative process.*[102]

As 1904 concluded, the campus was once again a site of major discontent against the Tsar.

Conclusion

From 1899 through 1904, the Russian student movement posed a direct challenge to the political rule of the Tsarist regime. At first in reaction to perceived attacks on students and then more and more consciously, the Russian students launched student strikes and other forms of protest which called for greater freedom on and off campus. Off campus, the student question was a central feature of debates within the Russian Social Democratic movement, which sought to guide its adherents on campus to unite the student disruptions with the workers movement and the wider fights for political change. As student protest grew, the student bodies of the major Russian institutions of higher education took on increasingly radical political stances, eventually coming under the political leadership of the Social Democratic student organizations.

4

The 1905 Revolution

Bloody Sunday

At the beginning of 1905 during winter vacation, events outside campus drove the country into a revolutionary situation. The struggles of revolutionary student leaders to organize the wider student population were overcome, as confrontations between the government and the masses pushed the student movement in a combative direction.

In 1902, Father Georgi Gapon began to develop a large following with sermons which addressed the destitute conditions of the poor. At the beginning of 1904, Father Gapon began working to develop his religious following into a reformist workers movement, launching the Assembly of Russian Workers of Saint Petersburg in April. He acted with the government's blessing and support. The government hoped that Father Gapon could direct workers' dissatisfaction with their conditions toward moderate economic reform rather than political agitation.

Gapon's government-approved workers' organization

quickly grew to several thousand members, while the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks only had about 300 members each in Saint Petersburg.[103] The Assembly developed cells in various factories throughout the capital, especially the Putilov factory, and had a women's section of over 300 members. Despite efforts to keep radicals out of the assembly, RSDLP leaders Vera Karelina and Alexandra Kollontai joined the Assembly in part because they felt their party was not doing enough to address the needs of women workers.

Others were concerned that Father Gapon's drinking and gambling habits, along with his support from the Ministry of the Interior, made him unfit to lead a worker's organization. Nonetheless, when four Assembly members of the Putilov factory were fired, Father Gapon called on all Putilov Assembly members to strike. Gapon demanded an 8-hour day, improved conditions for workers, elections for a constituent assembly with universal suffrage, freedom of speech, press, association, and religion, and an end to the war with Japan. By January 3, 1905, all 13,000 Putilov workers were on strike, and by the 8th of January the strike had spread to other factories, with 110,000 workers on strike. Gapon launched a petition to Tsar Nicholas II asking for the Tsar's protection from the terrible conditions of working-class life, which quickly gathered over 150,000 signatures.

On January 22, Father Gapon led a march of workers to the Winter Palace to present the petition. The crowd, dressed in their Sunday best, carried religious icons and portraits of the Tsar to emphasize their loyalty. And still, as the various precessions attempted to converge on the Winter Palace they were met with machine gun fire and Cossack charges.

Alexandra Kollontai, discussing the Tsar's responsibility for

the hundreds of slain workers, wrote that "on that day he had killed something even greater, he had killed superstition, and the workers' faith that they could ever achieve justice from him. From then on everything was different and new."[104] The massacre served as a spark which threw the country into months of convulsion, with economic and political strikes, peasant riots, mutinies, assassinations, and an insurrection that came close to overthrowing the Tsar. The revolutionary developments of 1905 would serve as a dress rehearsal for the revolutions of 1917.

The Spring Semester

Expecting student protest in response to the massacre, the Minister of Education debated keeping the universities closed until the labor movement calmed down. But as state institutions, the government felt the universities had to be kept open for reasons of prestige.[105] The Minister could decree the universities would remain open, but the students had other plans in mind.

On February 8, a *skhodka* at Moscow University attended by almost 3,000 students met to respond to the massacre of the previous month. The students voted almost unanimously demanding a constituent assembly and for a student strike to last until September 1, at which point the political situation would be reviewed. Even the populations which had typically rejected student strikes, such as fifth-year medical students, tended to support the strike vote.[106] Similar *skhodki* were held across the country, with nearly identical results. The uniformity of these *skhodka* are remarkable considering there is no evidence of a coordinated campaign by an inter-university group or political party to call for such a student strike. Again,

it was the brutal reality of class struggle which captured student attention and pushed the *studenchestvo* into taking action.

The universities were closed while the students waited for an update on the political situation; and off the campus unrest spread throughout Russian society. One after the other, the institutions of the liberals and the middle classes came over to the opposition, calling for reforms. But most importantly, a strike wave involving approximately one million men and women swept the country in February and March, as workers in the factories, on the railroads, in the cities, and in the rural industrial sites downed their tools. In his history of the 1905 revolution, *1905,* Trotsky recalls how the workers chose to strike not "because the economic struggle has found expression in certain well-defined demands; on the contrary, the demands are chosen and formulated because there has to be a strike" for political purposes. The workers had themselves moved beyond the narrow interests of their working conditions in the local plant, motivated instead by the need to show solidarity with their fellow workers and submit themselves to the will of the revolution.

The tactic of a student strike might be considered to contrast with the strategy laid out in the Odessa conference. By closing the universities, students were suspending the institution that held them together as a transitional section of society. With many students dispersing out of the university neighborhoods, it became difficult to mobilize students in solidarity with the workers movement. Many of the most radical students joined the revolutionary parties during the spring of 1905, but the potential to mobilize the wider sympathetic masses of students was mostly lost. However, during the Spring semester, dorms, libraries, and dining halls — their walls now bearing

revolutionary propaganda — remained open, continuing to serve as sites of discussion. Students gathered daily to read the publications of the various political parties, discussing the disturbances which were spreading across the country.[107] Voitinskii recalls that students were especially fascinated with methods of armed revolution and revolutionary barricades.[108]

Meanwhile, far from the universities or the industrial hubs of European Russia, the Japanese continued to crush the Russians in Manchuria. With the arrival of warmer weather, in February the Japanese army launched a fierce offensive against Russian forces at Mukden, who were badly beaten. Even worse, the Russian Baltic Fleet, sent around the cape of Africa to reinforce the eastern front, was annihilated by the smaller Japanese fleet in late May. Humiliated, the Russians had no choice but to enter peace negotiations, which were held in Portsmouth, Maine, over the summer of 1905.

With the Russian bourgeoisie and the proletariat united against the now-disgraced autocracy, the regime felt no choice but to offer concessions as a means to split its opposition. On August 6, the Tsar announced a consultative legislature, known as the Bulygin Duma, which was originally conceived as a purely advisory body.

As part of the concessions, the Tsar ordered a ministerial conference to address conditions at the universities. The conference enacted new Temporary Rules on August 27, just four days before the date set by the students to reconsider their strike. The new rules returned to the strategy of winning over the professors as a means to enlist them as regime agents on campus; senior faculty gained the right to elect their own rectors and deans, but they were also assigned the task of containing student protest, called on to summon police and

close institutions if student protest became unmanageable. The Temporary Rules also revived another old tactic, remaining vague on issues including admissions standards and the status of the hated 1884 statute, while promising a full evaluation in the near future.[109]

The Tsar's ministers were hardly united in their approach to the universities. The Minister of Education requested that the governor-general of Saint Petersburg ensure police cooperation in enforcing the new temporary rules. But the governor-general declared to the conference that the police would no longer enter the premises of the institutions of higher learning. The governor-general argued that the Ministry of Education needed not police reinforcement but a real solution to the student disorders, and that previous experience had demonstrated that police repression only aggravated student unrest. The division between the ministers meant that the Saint Petersburg campuses would be unpoliced islands in the sea of Russian autocracy, kept in order only by the disciplinary power of the professors themselves.

As the students' self-selected September 1 deadline approached, it was now up to the students to respond to the new Temporary Rules and set their next course.

The Second Moscow Resolution

At the beginning of Fall, the entire movement seemed stalled at a crossroads. Satisfied with the Bulygin Duma, sections of the press and the liberal opposition were calling for a rapprochement with the regime, while the revolutionary parties were calling for a continuation of the revolution. A Menshevik

Iskra article on the 29th of July had encouraged students to end the strike and return to university, calling on them to "systematically violate the rules, drive out inspectors and spies of every type, open the doors of the auditoriums to all citizens who wish to enter them, and transform the universities into centers for popular assembly and political meetings."[110] The leading student groups organized a conference on September 1, which met in Vyborg near the Finnish border to discuss the students' options. Representatives from 23 student organizations participated in the conference, although only six organizations had party affiliations; nonetheless, the conference's conclusions reflected the Social Democratic line: the students should not set up their own central bureau to direct student struggle, but rather should look to the revolutionary parties for leadership. They called for an end to the academic strike to turn the universities into centers of anti-government organizing, and called on students to prepare for an eventual armed uprising against the government.[111]

The student body at Moscow University was the first to decide on the conclusions of the conference. At a September 4 *skhodka,* four resolutions were considered. The first called for the re-opening of the university "solely for revolutionary agitation among the masses;" the second resolution called for reopening the university as a revolutionary base, but also emphasized that there was room in the university for those who wished to study; the third called for a continuation of the student strike, and the fourth called for an opening of the university for academic work and political education. Of the 1,719 votes cast, 1,202 voted for the second resolution, and the so-called "Second Moscow Resolution" became the standard by which other student bodies oriented at the beginning of the

fall semester.

The memoir of Vladimir Voitinskii, a student at Saint Petersburg University, provides a fantastic picture of the pace of the student movement in the fall of 1905. Arriving back from the fall semester, Voitinksii decided to join the Social Democrats. With no knowledge of the factional dispute, he was convinced to join the Bolsheviks, and within two weeks found himself representing the Bolshevik student faction at the September 13 *skhodka* called to decide the fate of the student strike.[112] The Bolshevik and Menshevik student groups had a common line, and Voitinskii's real opponent at the *skhodka* was the Socialist Revolutionary student group as the liberals had almost become a non-entity. The Socialist Revolutionaries called for the students to keep the university closed and to go into the countryside to organize the peasants for revolution. But Voitinskii pointed out that with the opposition divided, the workers now stood on their own. The revolution would not be decided in the countryside, but in the cities, and even though the students might not be a clearly defined socio-economic class, their concentration in the major urban centers gave them a vital role to play in the revolution.

As Voitinskii finished speaking, a young worker named Peter Starostin unexpectedly asked for the floor. He called on the students to support the working class, and emphasized that the universities reopened on a revolutionary basis would allow the students to play an important role in the political struggle. The students had been abstractly discussing student-worker solidarity for years, but here was a worker, in the flesh, calling for their support. His request did not go unanswered; the Social Democratic resolution along the lines of the Second Moscow Resolution was passed 1,702 to 243. With the democratic

mandate of the student body, the proclamation concluded: "May our open university be more dangerous to the autocracy than it was when it was on strike!"

The strength of the Social Democrats' position was its correct attention to the inter-related development of the academic and political struggles, as well as the correct balance between the more dedicated student leaders and the student body. Their position was somewhat in between the perspectives of the liberals and the Socialist Revolutionaries, which from opposite sides rejected the fusion of academic and political demands. The liberals wanted to avoid political demands, focusing on securing the autonomy of the university as a temple of science. This would be like calling on workers to ignore wider politics and only focus on their pay or working conditions. In contrast, the Socialist Revolutionaries' position, which called for all students to leave the university, ignored the various levels of consciousness among the students as well as their collective role in society. This would be like expecting every worker to leave the factory to devote themselves only to political questions, while also ignoring the power of workers to strike collectively. In reality, the university could not secure academic independence without political action, and collective political action by the student body was far more powerful than the individual action of the most dedicated students during the spring semester. It was better for the Social Democrats to keep the leadership of the sympathetic but undisciplined student masses by addressing their academic concerns, than to let them fall out of the revolutionary camp. And besides, the "academic" concerns of 1905 were not those of 1899; the admittance of women and Jews, freedom of speech, and the democratization of university administration were all questions that had a wider

political significance.

The Hearth of the Revolution

After voting to end the strike, students took up their immediate academic demands in the early weeks of September. They raised the slogan of "democratization" across the university, demanded the admission of Jews and women, and the reappointment of politically marginalized scholars. When students went on to boycott conservative professors, the faculty council pushed back arguing that the censorship of conservatives violated the students' desire for academic freedom; the students agreed to delay the boycotts pending further discussion, except that boycotts remained in place against the two most hated professors.[113]

As September progressed, *skhodki* began to take up the question of how to use the newly opened university for the revolution. In the last ten days of September, evening classes — "scientific-political assemblies" — were launched, and workers began to enter the "free universities" in the hearts of Saint Petersburg, Moscow, and other cities across the Russian Empire.[114] Voitinskii was responsible for organizing evening meetings for these visitors, and at first the students were totally unprepared. Describing the first large meeting of workers, Voitinski recalled:

> *We had neither agenda nor speakers. I began with a few words of welcome, suggested that we discuss the current political situation, and turned the meeting over to the floor. The ensuing discussion was utterly chaotic. Some of the*

> *volunteer speakers were wholly inarticulate. The next day we arranged to have a dozen speakers from various leftist organizations on whom we called intermittently, with volunteers from the floor.*

Despite the disorganized start, word of the meetings quickly spread and soon entire factories were showing up at the university after completing their shift. As another student recalled upon attending the first mass-meeting that included a large number of workers, the crowd was not "the 'dark working mass' but people conscious of the tremendous task placed on them by historical destiny."[115] By September 28, the parties were sponsoring mass meetings, the Social Democrats presenting a paper, a Ukrainian group discussing federalism and autonomy, and some 1,500 workers attending a Socialist Revolutionary meeting all on the same evening. By September 30, the crowd at Saint Petersburg University had swelled to 5,000, including 3,000 workers.[116] Soon different classrooms were assigned to the various sections of the working class to discuss the pressing issues facing their different trades.

For many workers, these evening meetings were their first direct exposure to the revolutionary parties, which had previously remained in the shadows. Trotsky recalled how the reactionaries and even the liberal politicians did not even try to speak at the meetings, instead

> *the spokesmen of revolution reigned supreme. Here the social democrats forged indissoluble, vital political bonds to unite innumerable people. Here they translated the great social passions of the masses into the language of*

formulated revolutionary slogans. The crowd which left the university was no longer the crowd that had entered it.[117]

The campus buildings were the same, but now the societal role of the university was reversed. Whereas before the university had been the training ground for the Tsarist regime, now it was being used to educate the revolutionary masses. The students administered the meetings, the revolutionaries presented the lectures, and the workers studiously absorbed every speech; there was nothing for the professors to do but complain and nervously rub their hands.

At Moscow University, the students also attempted to run the university on democratic and revolutionary principles. On September 22, just as the Saint Petersburg students were beginning to open their lecture halls to the working class, the Moscow University faculty council voted to close the university.[118] The professors thought that they would be able to split the student movement by raising the threat that using the university for revolutionary purposes could jeopardize its future, announcing that "the university is not the place for political meetings. It cannot and should not be a public square… …any attempt to turn the university into a popular meeting place will destroy it."[119] The professors hoped that the students would rebuff the Second Moscow Resolution, but when the Moscow University students held a *skhodka* on September 24, every course in the university reiterated its support for the resolution, with 4,300 out of a total 4,700 students voting in a clear rejection of the professors' maneuvers.[120]

Critiquing the professors' closing of the university, Lenin in

an October 4 article reaffirmed that "the radical students, who both in Saint Petersburg and in Moscow adopted the slogans of revolutionary Social-Democracy, are the vanguard of all the democratic forces." In contrast, the professors

> *are the finest representatives of liberalism and the Constitutional-Democratic Party, the most enlightened, the best educated, the most disinterested, the least affected by the direct pressure and the influence of the money-bag. And how do these best people behave? What use did they make of the first authority they obtained, authority they were invested with by election, their authority over the universities? They are already afraid of the revolution, they fear the aggravation and the extension of the movement, they are already trying to extinguish the fire and bring about tranquillity, thereby earning well-merited insults in the form of praise from the Prince Meshchersky.*
>
> *And they were well punished, these philistines of bourgeois science. They closed Moscow University, fearing a shambles on its premises. They merely succeeded in precipitating incomparably greater slaughter in the streets. They wanted to extinguish revolution in the University, but they only kindled it in the streets. They got into a quandary, along with the Trepovs and the Romanovs, whom they now hasten to persuade that freedom of assembly is needed: If you shut the University—you open the way for street fighting. If you open the University—you provide a platform for revolutionary mass meetings which will train new and even more determined champions of*

liberty.[121]

Using the professors as an example, Lenin predicted that the entire liberal movement would cower before the revolution and instead side with the Tsarist regime. But the struggle on the campus was soon to be eclipsed.

The October General Strike

While the university public meetings were valuable for raising workers' class-consciousness and organization, the proletariat itself, and particularly the railway workers, were able to convert words into weapons. On September 20, a conference of the railway workers met at Saint Petersburg University to discuss their pension fund. But in that atmosphere and surrounded by revolutionary organizers, the conference quickly shed this pretext, launching an independent trade union and taking on political demands. The conference decided the way forward was to prepare for a general strike in January, when they expected the anniversary of Bloody Sunday to re-spark mass demonstrations.

Once again, not explicitly laid plans but rather the logic of events escalated the conflict. At Moscow University, due to geographical proximity to the printing industry, the students quickly established relations with the printing workers. The Moscow type-setters had struck on September 19, demanding a shorter work-day and higher wages. By September 24, fifty printing works were on strike, and there was unrest among certain sections of Moscow's rail workers.[122] Sections of the railways joined the strike each day, and on October 9 a delegation in Saint Petersburg formulated the political demands: an

8-hour day, civil liberties, amnesty for arrested protesters, and a constituent assembly. The strike spread along the railways, and from the railways spread to the industrial workers. And on October 13, at a meeting at the Technical Institute in Saint Petersburg, the struggle for socialism took a monumental step forward. Just as the decades-long student struggle had led to students adopting higher forms of organization to match their practical tasks, the developing workers' strike called for coordination among the various sections of the working class. Not more than 30 or 40 delegates, representing the various factories and trade unions, met to unify their forces in a workers' council. They called on workers in Saint Petersburg to declare an immediate political general strike, and to elect delegates to the new body. The Saint Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies was born, and over the next week general strikes were declared in virtually every city. The country came to a standstill.

From a geographical point of view, the campus provided an invaluable center for the evolution of the 1905 struggle in terms of communication and organization, raising its value for the revolution far beyond what students alone could ever hope to contribute. Not only did workers gain a political education, but the campus served as a meeting ground for various sections of the working class to discuss their unique interests. The students' enactment of the Second Moscow Resolution — the culmination of years of debate about the role of students in the revolution — opened an opportunity for the workers' movement to catapult itself forward.

The Government's October Manifesto

On the 17th of October, after the October general strike had crippled the country's economic centers for a full week, the revolution won its first concession from the regime. The government felt itself losing control of the army, rumors from the provinces spoke of uprising after uprising, and the European stock-exchange was punishing Russia's economy with every passing day. The Tsar was forced to issue a manifesto which proclaimed the end of absolute rule in Russia, and to appoint the moderate Count Witte as the new head of the Tsar's government.[123] The October Manifesto broke with the structure of the consultative Bulygin Duma, calling for a new Duma with expanded franchise. It also proclaimed freedom of speech and assembly, and invested the new Duma with full legislative authority.

Awakening to the proclamation on the morning of October 18, students and workers took to celebration. Hearing the news, Trotsky made his way to the Saint Petersburg university district. The crowds grew with each passing minute. The Russian tri-color flags were snatched down from the walls of the courtyard, and the white and blue strips were torn off; the impromptu red flags were raised above the crowd. Thousands gathered under the university balcony to hear speeches, and when Trotsky spoke he issued words of warning, concluding

> *Citizens! Our strength is in ourselves. With sword in hand we must stand guard over our freedom. As for the Tsar's manifesto, look, it's only a scrap of paper. Here it is before you — here it is crumpled in my fist. Today they have issued it, tomorrow they will take it away and tear it*

into pieces, just as I am now tearing up this paper freedom before your eyes![124]

Unfortunately for the revolution, Trotsky was soon to be proved correct.

The jubilant atmosphere was short-lived. Crowds of celebratory workers and students formed in cities throughout Russia, but so too did crowds of the reaction. According to some accounts, the patriotic forces that had clashed with students during the 1904-1905 war had been welded into genuine forces of counter-revolution. Under the signs of the Tsar's portrait, the tricolor, and the vodka bottle, backward peasants, shop-keepers, policemen, soldiers, beggars, and the thieves rampaged through the streets of urban Russia. Although the mass of participants was spontaneous, "the nucleus was always disciplined and organized in para-military style, receiving its slogans and its watchwords from above and deciding the time and scope of every murderous operation."[125] The mobs descending on university districts, Jewish neighborhoods, and intellectual gatherings were known by one name: pogrom.

The pogroms were not underground affairs. Proclamations were distributed in advance, vicious articles appeared in the newspapers identifying one target or another, and sometimes municipal officials called the pogroms in their own name. The police, the anti-semitic Black Hundreds, and even the church officials worked together to unleash the most depraved elements in urban society against the revolution.

In Odessa, over 500 Jews were murdered in pogroms filled mostly with Russia soldiers and sailors. Barricades were thrown up in the university district manned by students and Jewish

workers to defend against the right-wing incursions. Initially successful, the defenses were eventually overrun by the strength of the military.[126] Students and workers organized similarly for armed defense across the country, and in most cases were more successful than the Odessa martyrs at fending off the right-wing pogroms.

In Saint Petersburg no pogrom was organized, but smaller reactionary gangs assaulted Jews and students on the street. Attempts were made on the lives of the Soviet deputies, who quickly took to carrying revolvers. Workers secured arms however they could, and several metal shops began forging pikes, swords, wire whips and knuckle dusters. And in the working-class neighborhoods, the working class organized militias with night watches.

The Soviet had planned a universal funeral demonstration on Sunday, October 23, to honor the lives of all those who had fallen in struggle against the autocratic regime since the start of 1905. It quickly became apparent that the funeral would be the subject of serious attacks; aware that this would spark off larger events at an inopportune time, the funeral was called off by the Soviet at the last minute. The government had to content itself with disarming the workers' militias.

The violence of the week following the October 17 manifesto was an invaluable lesson for the students and workers of urban Russia. The government may have conceded to demands on paper, agreeing to alter the constitutional form of state power. But it still held state power in the real sense: the police, the courts of law, the army, and the civil service hierarchy. Those who sought revolution could not content themselves with the protection of government decrees, but had to rely on the protection of their armed comrades.

A Call to Arms

Even if the Social Democrats had wanted a peaceful revolution, the forces of counter-revolution had precluded this outcome by their violent response to the October Manifesto. In the middle of the October general strike, on October 16, Lenin wrote a letter to the Social Democrats' Saint Petersburg Combat Committee regarding this group's preparations for the armed insurrection. Lenin criticized the bureaucratic and formalist way the organizers were preparing for insurrection, with the conception of a centralized Combat Committee with the right to direct various official combat groups.

> *Schemes, and disputes and discussions about the functions of the Combat Committee and its rights, are of the least value in a matter like this. What is needed is furious energy, and again energy. It horrifies me— I give you my word—it horrifies me to find that there has been talk about bombs for over six months, yet not one has been made! And it is the most learned of people who are doing the talking.... Go to the youth, gentlemen! That is the only remedy!*[127]

Instead of drawing up elaborate plans, what was necessary was for the Combat Committee to call on revolutionary actors to take it upon themselves to organize armed insurrection.

> *Go to the youth. Form fighting squads at once everywhere, among the students, and* especially among the workers, *etc., etc. Let groups be at once organised of three, ten, thirty, etc., persons. Let them arm themselves at once as*

best they can, be it with a revolver, a knife, a rag soaked in kerosene for starting fires, etc...

...You must proceed to propaganda on a wide scale. Let five or ten people make the round of hundreds of workers' and students' study circles in a week, penetrate wherever they can, and everywhere propose a clear, brief, direct, and simple plan: organise combat groups immediately, arm yourselves as best you can, and work with all your might; we will help you in every way we can, but do not wait for our help; act for yourselves....

...The propagandists must supply each group with brief and simple recipes for making bombs, give them an elementary explanation of the type of the work, and then leave it all to them. Squads must at once *begin military training by launching operations immediately, at once. Some may at once undertake to kill a spy or blow up a police station, others to raid a bank to confiscate funds for the insurrection, others again may drill or prepare plans of localities, etc. But the essential thing is to begin at once to learn from actual practice: have no fear of these trial attacks.*

Clearly Lenin was under the impression that the regime was not going to overthrow itself, and that only the conscious organization of violence by the most radical elements, as the tip of the spear of a larger mass uprising, would be enough to defeat the Tsarist regime.

The Soviets Defend the Sailors — November Strike and Lock Out

The October Strike had forced the constitutional manifesto, but it was not long before the workers, now firmly headed by the Soviet, were forced to act again. On October 26 and 27 a mutiny broke out in Kronstadt, a naval fortress which guarded the approach to Saint Petersburg. The mutiny was quickly crushed, and the leading sailors and soldiers then faced execution. At the same time all of Poland was placed under martial law. Mass meetings in Saint Petersburg industrial plants over the following days demanded a show of solidarity with those facing execution, and an organized fight against the militarist maneuvers of the counter-revolution. Meeting on November 1, the Soviet passed the following proclamation calling for a general strike:

> *The government continues to march on corpses. It is court martialing the valiant soldiers and sailors of Kronstadt who rose to the defense of their rights and the people's freedom. It has thrown the noose of martial law around the neck of oppressed Poland.*
>
> *The Soviet of Workers' Deputies calls upon the revolutionary proletariat of Petersburg to manifest its fraternal solidarity with the revolutionary soldiers of Kronstadt and the revolutionary workers of Poland by means of a political general strike, which has already shown its formidable power, and by means of mass protest meetings.*
>
> *Tomorrow, November 2, at 12:00 noon, the workers of Pe-*

> *tersburg will stop work under the following slogans: Down with courts martial! Down with the death penalty! Down with martial law in Poland and throughout Russia!*[128]

The resulting strike, only two weeks after the conclusion of the October strike, marked a significant advance of the Soviet movement.

The large factories shut down at 12:00 noon as instructed, and they were joined by smaller workshops which had not participated in political strikes before. The total participation was greater than either the January or October strike waves, and all the rail lines of Saint Petersburg were shut down except for the Finland railway, although the postal and telegraph services, horse-cab drivers, horse tramways, and the majority of shop assistants did not strike.[129] The only three newspapers which were published were those under the protection of armed forces. The *Government Herald* and the *Petersburg City Governor's Gazette* were published under the protection of the troops, while the Soviet's own *Izvestia* was published under the protection of its armed workers' detachments. And as the strike unfolded, the armed forces organized political meetings throughout Saint Petersburg, and sent delegations to meet with the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and its executive committee.[130]

The strike landed a serious blow to Count Witte's new government and the new October Manifesto, showing the newly-organized workers lack of confidence in the rhetoric of the Tsar's newly appointed leaders. The massive show of force of the Saint Petersburg workers backing clearly articulated political goals forced Witte's regime to issue a reversal on the plan to court-martial the Kronstadt sailors, and to make plans

to lift martial law in Poland.

On the evening of the third day of the November strike, the Soviet's Executive Committee submitted a resolution to end the strike. Making its case to the wider Soviet movement, the leadership expressed that the strike had achieved its goals, not only in reversing the government on two key issues, but more importantly in showing "the awakening army that the working class is on its side." To those who wanted to continue the strike until the sailors were fully freed, the Executive Committee made clear that the strike must be judged as a victorious demonstration of the growing power of the revolutionary workers, and not as a failed attempt by the workers to immediately overthrow the Tsarist regime. The Soviet leadership was conscious that the revolutionary movement still needed time to prepare for a final encounter and must be cautious not to prematurely exhaust its own forces in a drawn out conflict; instead, it called for delaying the insurrection to gain another month or two of preparation under the conditions of open political activity and mass meetings which had begun only two months before when the students opened their universities to the workers.[131] And specifically, it called on the workers to arm themselves and prepare "fighting tens" in every plant and workshop.

The Soviet adopted the resolution, setting the end date of the strike for November 7 at noon. And when the time came, after 120 hours of striking, the striking workers returned to their factories as unified as they had left them. The second general strike in the Autumn of 1905 was successful because it helped to solidify the bond between the workers, the Soviet, and the armed forces, and showed that the workers were ready to go blow for blow with the reaction. It also demonstrated

the Soviet's understanding of the need to mediate the most determined and militant elements of the movement with the stage of development of the movement as a whole, just as the revolutionary students had earlier mediated between their most radical classmates and the student body as a whole.

8 Hours and the November Lockout

Since October, workers at various plants had been taking up the demand for the 8-hour day, showing their determination to challenge not only the monarchists but the capitalists as well. Leading ahead of the Soviet, in late October workers began forcing the 8-hour day on their employers, and on November 1 the Soviet adopted the call for all factories and plants to introduce the 8-hour day by revolutionary means.[132] But the general strike against the military crackdown cut across the momentum of the movement for 8 hours, giving employers time to unify and prepare their resistance.

As the workers attempted to return to work on the conclusion of the strike, at first the workers at the state-owned plants and soon those at the private plants found themselves locked out by management. Thousands of workers were on the streets, and increasingly harassed by the armed forces. In response, the Soviet retreated on its call for universal application of the 8-hour day, "calling for a continuance of the struggle only in those enterprises where there was some hope of success."[133] But this compromise threatened to divide the movement, and when the Soviet called for a total retreat on the question on November 12, the debate was the most divided so far, and some plants continued their fight to reduce the working day, if not fully to 8 hours. Although the majority of the workers of Saint Petersburg

returned to work under the old conditions, there were some additional advances in the movement. The postal and telegraph workers and the railway workers organized a national strike in late November, reacting against a decree which forbade public sector workers from unionizing.

But even as these events unfolded and both administration and commerce were thrown into disarray by the breakdown in communications, the government and the capitalists were preparing to strengthen their reaction.[134] In mid-November, the government decided to begin arresting the leadership of the revolutionary movement, and on November 26 arrested Soviet chairman Krustalev at the premises of the Executive Committee. In response, the Soviet elected Trotsky as its new chairman, and adopted a resolution to prepare for a final confrontation with the government; it also empowered its Executive Committee to continue functioning in its place if the Soviet was closed by the government.

At the end of November, the government began declaring martial law in the provinces to confront the rural disturbances. On December 2, the government began closing down opposition newspapers, and passed a law threatening imprisonment to striking or unionized postal, telegraph, or telephone workers.[135] And on December 3, just as the Soviet's leadership was meeting to set a date for a third general strike, the Saint Petersburg Soviet was surrounded by government forces and its leadership arrested.

The December Confrontation

On December 7, the third general strike began in Moscow, this time intending to "do its best to transform the strike into an armed insurrection."[136] On the 8th it was joined by Saint Petersburg, and additional cities joined the general strike in the following days. Most of the railway men were on strike by the 10th, with red flags raised over railway buildings, but there was a failure to close some of the lines which were kept open by the military.[137]

In Moscow, some 100,000 workers stopped work on the first day, and minor clashes grew throughout the city. Workers raided a gun shop, and police vanished from the streets. Attention was focused on winning over the soldiers. Early on, the crowds succeeded in pacifying the government forces sent out to turn them back, but eventually the shooting began. The *druzhinniki,* the armed detachments of the revolutionary parties, began to disarm police, and issued instructions for fighting detachments to adopt hit-and-run tactics against the forces rather than standing their ground with the crowds or at the barricades as the fighting escalated.

Over 9 days, some 700-800 *druzhiny* from the Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries, and another 900 armed railwaymen, printers, and shop assistants held the city against all the might of the Tsarist military and police forces.

> *How, then, could so small a number of druzhinniki offer battle for a week and a half to a garrison consisting of several thousand men? The answer to this riddle of the revolution lies in the mood of the popular masses. The whole city with its streets, houses, walls, and gates entered*

> *into a conspiracy against the government troops. The million-strong population formed a living wall between the guerrillas and the government troops. There were only a few hundred druzhinniki. But the barricades were built and rebuilt by the masses. The people surrounded the armed revolutionaries with an atmosphere of active sympathy, foiling the government's plans wherever they could. Who were they, these sympathetic hundreds of thousands? The intelligentsia, the petty bourgeoisie and, above all, the workers.*[138]

By December 15, the Moscow garrison was bolstered by troops from surrounding areas and also right-wing militias, and through fierce bombardment began to regain control of the city. The barricaded areas were systematically encircled and stormed by troops, although most of the *druzhiny* were the first to escape. The Soviet voted to end the strike on December 19. The "workers government in embryo" was defeated, and the reprisals began.

Conclusion

From January to December of 1905, the student movements' earlier adoption of a revolutionary outlook and leadership was tested by an acute conflict between the Tsarist regime and the dissident sections of society. In part because of the student leaderships own strategic innovations, and in part because of the division within the Tsar's government, the Social Democrat-led student movement was able to use the Russian universities as barracks for the revolution. For a handful of weeks, the

universities became the center of a mass revolutionary upsurge - the physical manifestation of the unity of the student and workers movements; but the gravity of the revolutionary forces passed rapidly from the student movement to the workers themselves, as the general strikes and then the insurrection took center stage in the revolution against the Tsar.

5

1906-1917

The Revolution in Defeat

With the defeat in September of the Moscow and Saint Petersburg uprisings, the government began unfolding its counter-revolutionary program. Those sentenced for being members of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies were held in prison, but the elections to the first Duma were allowed to continue with suffrage granted to males above 25 years.[139] However, just as the Duma was about to be seated, the Tsar issued Fundamental Laws — the first Russian Constitution — which seriously curtailed the Duma's power. In July the Duma was dissolved, and the Tsar passed electoral reforms which shrank the electorate and strengthened the voting power of the nobility.

The trial of the Soviet leaders began in September. Trotsky writes that the trial of the Soviet of Deputies

made a tremendous impression upon the country. It can be

> *said with confidence that the social-democratic party owed much of its success in the elections to the second Duma to the agitational effect of this trial on the Petersburg proletariat's revolutionary parliament.*[140]

The convicted leaders were kept in prison for more than a year and then 15 were sent into Arctic exile.[141] Over the next three years, thousands would be executed by the Tsarist regime.

Winning Over the Professors

The government did not reopen the universities for the spring semester of 1906. Witte's government, with a more liberal minister of education, attempted to win over the professors. A national conference of faculty councils was held in January of 1906, and professors showed that they were willing to work with the government rather than against it. The conference debated whether professors should be considered civil servants or an autonomous profession, and the conference voted overwhelmingly in favor of retaining the professor's status as a servant of the Tsarist state.[142] The conference also expressed its willingness to allow police and troops on campuses so long as they notified the university rector, accepted government veto over its appointments, and also denied the right of junior faculty to elect delegates to the faculty councils.[143] Although the conferences' proposals were never actually ratified by the government, Witte's education minister and his later predecessors were able to implement many of the policies at their own discretion.

Meeting at the same time, a congress of the junior faculties' Academic Union drafted its own radical view on the role

of the university and its vision of the relationship between professors and the state. The Academic Union's statute gave equal vote to junior faculty, declared against civil service status, and rejected the veto power of the ministry of education over university affairs. Strongly contrasting with the government's official conference, the Academic Union represented the radical professors' continued distrust of the government and its liberal pretensions. But the Academic Union also began to chafe with the wider professional Union of Unions, deciding to disaffiliate to protect the Academic Union's principle of autonomy.

By granting concessions of autonomy to the senior faculty, Witte was able to build a beachhead for government power on the campus. The junior faculty of the Academic Union, caught between the senior faculty-government alliance on one side and the labor movement on the other, between the desire of the academic for independence and the desire of the worker for collective struggle, vacillated after their third conference and eventually withered in the face of the growing reaction.

The Campus Re-Opens

Universities stayed closed until September 1906. When they did finally re-open after more than a year and a half of turmoil, the impact of the revolution was still evident. Enrollment grew tremendously, nearly doubling from 19,563 in 1904 to 35,329 in 1908,[144] barriers to Jews and women were softened, and the curriculum was more flexible than before 1905. These changes were based on the Temporary Rules of August 1905, which had granted the professors jurisdiction over conditions at the university, but as the government continued to regain its footing, it sought to roll back reforms on the lines of the

1884 Statute.[145] At the same time, the implementation of some general political reforms, including the creation of the new Duma and freedom of student elections, dissipated some of the main grievances of the student movement which had previously united its radical and liberal layers. The government decided that it would not interfere or order professors to interfere with student *skhodki*, as long as they did not provide cover to the revolutionary organizations.[146]

The fall semester of 1906 was marked by a serious increase in academic freedom. The universities transitioned toward an elective system, eschewing the previously rigid course selection imposed by the administration.[147] "Science circles" also sprung up on the campuses, in which professors led informal gatherings of students in reading and discussion on a variety of subjects, including the ongoing debate between Marxism and Narodnism. One debate on scientific socialism hosted by the rector of Kiev University had over 1,000 persons in attendance.[148] However, this liberalism had not been codified by the government, and remained on unsecure foundations based on the professors' ability to liberally interpret government regulations.

Upon the return to campus, the student movement had not been entirely crushed, but the fighting spirit of the students was definitely dampened. Perhaps the most lively incarnation of the student movement at this point was the student press, with several student journals being published in the relatively open political climate.[149] The Social Democrats remained for a time with a clear majority in the student governments. At Saint Petersburg University, student elections returned 20 Social Democrats delegates, 4 Kadets, 4 Socialist Revolutionaries, 3 Polish Socialist Party, 2 Trudoviki (SR split), and 2 non-party

delegates. At Moscow University with 60 percent turnout, the Social Democrats received 2,044 votes to the Kadets' 1,462 and the Socialist Revolutionaries' 1,258.[150] But although a large section of the students supported the Social Democrats in elections, most students wanted to return their focus to their studies.

The Social Democrats on campus also remained rather disconnected from their larger party apparatus. When the Social Democratic representatives in the Duma were arrested, the student factions on campus ignored their party's call to launch student strikes in protest.[151] Student social democrats debated between the strategy of engaging directly in politics (political work) versus a focus on propagandizing Marxism throughout all aspects of campus life (cultural work) and decided in favor of the latter.[152] According to one observer, the student socialists were more enamored with the legal academic Marxists including Struve and Tugan-Baranovsky than they were the underground theorists personified by Lenin and Plekhanov.[153]

Among the whole student movement, there was a serious debate as to the nature and purpose of the student movement after the 1905 uprising. Many authors expressed in the student press that the growth in politicization and also overall size of the student body meant there could no longer be one united *studenchestvo*, and looked off campus to the wider opening of elections as the main opportunity for social change.[154] Others expressed the need for a new ideology, "student professionalism," which pushed to orient the student movement toward addressing the material needs of students by expanding student credit associations, consumer cooperatives, organizing financial aid, and regulating the market for student labor.[155]

The Kadet faction, which was achieving success off campus as the largest liberal opposition to the post-1905 government, gradually gained support. Representing the bourgeois-liberal rejection of the collective, the Kadet faction argued that the *skhodka* had outlived its utility, that it favored extremist positions, and should be replaced by secret ballot to decide major issues. A vote at Moscow University in March 1907 defeated the Kadet motion 2,402 to 1,765. Although the motion was defeated, more than 40 percent of the student voters showed that they no longer saw the *skhodka* as their legitimate representative.[156] During 1907-1908, the Kadets increased their delegates in the various student governments, although the Social Democrats generally maintained a plurality.[157]

Students vs. government

Although the revolutionary energy of the Russian student movement was far less sharp in the 1906-1907 academic year than it had been during 1905, the Tsarist regime still saw the students as a major threat. To be fair to the government, the students' *skhodki* did call for a renewal of revolutionary efforts at the appropriate time, even if their deeds failed to live up to their aspirations. Nonetheless, the Tsar's new Prime Minister Stolypin sought to crack down on student organizing, fearful that the universities were being used as secret meeting grounds for the revolutionary parties which had recently been driven underground.[158]

In an effort to exert control over the political direction of the universities, Stolypin increased pressure on university administrators to crack down on student dissent and

skhodki.[159] Although university rectors advised the government at a conference in April 1907 to allow the student movement to depoliticize on its own rather than provoking it through harsh measures, the government decided to press ahead with its crackdown.[160]

In June 1907, Stolypin and the right wing of the Duma launched their efforts to roll back the advances won throughout society by the 1905 revolution in earnest. On June 3, they revised the electoral law to increase the influence of landowners in the Duma. On June 11, the Council of Ministers adopted new rules which curtailed the August 27 (1905) government edict which had devolved enforcement of campus order on university administration. The new rules banned university-wide and cross-institution student governments and prohibited faculty from meeting with them; only meetings with a clear academic character were allowed, to be enforced by police, and all student meetings required the approval of the rector.[161] Imposed during the summer recess, there was no immediate reaction from the students but the question of a conflict was inevitably posed for the start of the 1908 autumn semester.

Come September, the student factions debated whether or not to organize a national student strike against the new rules. At Saint Petersburg University in the first *skhodki* of the year, Socialist Revolutionaries and Bolsheviks pushed for a strike, while Mensheviks and Kadets opposed the motion.[162] The motion before the *skhodki* was defeated, and in the first two months of the school year there was only limited student protest of a localized nature.

Although school-wide student governments had been banned, the student movement exploited a loophole in the new restrictions by electing representatives by department rather than

campus-wide. At the beginning of November, the elected student leaders of Kiev University were arrested, leading to disruptive student protests in reaction. To maintain control, the professors decided to close the university for a week. But Stolypin pushed for further repressive measures, and when students attended a mid-November *skhodka* upon the reopening of campus, 719 students were suspended for a year.[163]

Predictably, the mass-repression of students in Kiev prompted reactions from campuses across the country. A nationwide conference of student leaders was held in January to decide the way forward. The Socialist Revolutionaries wanted to escalate the situation with renewed strikes, while the Social Democrats wanted to wait for an escalation of the workers movement. The Kadet student representatives were totally opposed to a new student strike. The conference dispersed with no clear direction or plan of action, but did agree to meet again in September.[164]

With no nationwide student campaign pushing back on government repression in the spring of 1908, the counter-revolutionary campaign moved forward relatively unchecked. Now three years on from the January 1905 massacre which had launched the 1905 revolution, a harsh stance on the "university question," paired and tied with anti-semitism, had become a central focus of the far right's rhetoric and policy goals.[165] Stolypin's education minister von Kaufmann had shown some leniency on the university question, continuing to allow faculty to recognize and work with student governments even after the June 1907 rule changes. To drive a harder position on campus, Stolypin replaced von Kaufmann with A.N. Schwartz, a former classics professor at Moscow University.[166]

In March 1908, Schwartz put forward a 10-point program

to "defend the state" from the threat posed by the continued dissent coming from the universities. The plan included a return to Russification and the previous enrollment restrictions on women and Jews, elimination of electives, and a stronger crackdown on student life. Schwartz made clear that the government saw the students not as harmless, but as "the only organized force able to keep up systematic mass disorders in order to maintain pressure on the government." He also accused the professors of increasing the enrollment of women and Jews in order to concentrate a young intelligentsia in urban centers which could carry out a revolution.[167] When Schwartz ordered the closing of the Saint Petersburg University student government at the beginning of the Spring 1908 semester, a protest *skhodka* of 5,000 students — the biggest since 1905 and a full three-quarters of the student body — packed the dining hall to protest.[168]

The government was rolling back the hard-fought reforms of the student movement, and eliminating organizations which had been in place for the better part of a decade. The further Stolypin and Schwartz pushed, the greater was the resentment of the entire student body. But still, the student leadership remained divided on the question of returning to mass mobilization and the student strike.

Reaction against Reaction

The fall semester of 1908 was to be a new revival of the militancy of the student movement. The right-wing regulations imposed in the previous school year had not only eliminated student freedoms, but also threatened to remove thousands of students from the university and eliminate the very right

of students to organize. Meeting for a city-wide conference in Saint Petersburg at the beginning of the Fall 1908 term, student leaders from across factions and universities met to consider their options, and called for a nationwide student protest strike.[169]

As part of their call, the students issued an "Appeal to Russian Society" to explain their strategy and goals not only to the national student movement but also to the wider urban middle classes. The document admitted that the only hope for a victory for students was in their ability to arouse the wider Russian public. The student leaders staked their goals as establishing the students' right to organize and the full academic autonomy for professors, and set September 20 as the date of their planned strike.[170] Although the September 13 *skhodka* that met at Saint Petersburg University was initially reluctant, it voted 2,398 to 77 to endorse the strike; the Moscow University *skhodka* on September 19 was slightly less unified, with 2,106 endorsing the strike and 548 opposed. With Saint Petersburg and Moscow launching strikes, the strike wave quickly spread to most other national universities.[171]

The Social Democratic movement on and off campus again took up the question of whether to support a student strike and how to understand its significance. Lenin relays that student Social Democrats wrote to the editorial board of the Bolshevik paper *Proletary* to express their concerns about the strike. The students relayed that they felt

> *The platform of the strike is an academic one, and the meeting even welcomes the 'first steps' of the Moscow and Saint Petersburg Professorial Councils in the struggle for*

> *autonomy. We are puzzled by the academic platform put forward at the Saint Petersburg meeting, and consider it objectionable in present conditions, because it cannot unite the students for an active struggle on a broad front. We envisage student action only as one coordinated with general political action, and in no case apart from it. The elements capable of uniting the students are lacking. In view of this we are against academic action.*[172]

Responding in the October 3, 1908, issue of *Proletary*, the Bolshevik faction agreed in its criticism of the limits of the politics of the student movement in which, "after years of leftist predominance, we now see the students issue an 'Appeal' directed at Mom and Dad promising 'no politics if you'll only give us autonomy.'"

Although agreeing with the characterization of the movement, in the same issue of Proletary, Lenin's article "The Student Movement and the Present Political Situation" criticized the student Social Democrats' political response to the developments. The article is quoted extensively below to show the Bolsheviks' nuanced approach to the strike and the larger student question. Responding to the student Bolshevik's concerns, Lenin writes that

> *The mistake which the authors of the letter are making is of much greater political importance than may appear at first sight, because their argument, strictly speaking, touches upon a theme which is incomparably more broad and important than the question of taking part in this particular strike.*

Such an argument is radically wrong. The revolutionary slogan—to work towards co-ordinated political action of the students and the proletariat, etc.—here ceases to be a live guidance for many-sided militant agitation on a broadening basis and becomes a lifeless dogma, mechanically applied to different stages of different forms of the movement. It is not sufficient merely to proclaim political co-ordinated action, repeating the "last word" in lessons of the revolution. One must be able to agitate for political action, making use of all possibilities, all conditions and, first and foremost, all mass conflicts between advanced elements, whatever they are, and the autocracy. It is not of course a question of us dividing every student movement beforehand into compulsory "stages", and making sure that each stage is properly gone through, out of fear of switching over to "untimely" political actions, etc. Such a view would be the most harmful pedantry, and would lead only to an opportunist policy. But just as harmful is the opposite mistake, when people refuse to reckon with the actual situation that has arisen and the actual conditions of the particular mass movement, because of a slogan misinterpreted as unchangeable. Such an application of a slogan inevitably degenerates into revolutionary phrase-mongering.

Conditions are possible when an academic movement lowers the level of a political movement, or divides it, or distracts from it—and in that case Social-Democratic students' groups would of course be bound to concentrate their agitation against such a movement. But anyone can see that the objective political conditions at the present

time are different. The academic movement is expressing the beginning of a movement among the new "generation" of students, who have more or less become accustomed to a narrow measure of autonomy; and this movement is beginning when other forms of mass struggle are lacking at the present time, when a lull has set in; and the broad mass of the people, still silently, concentratedly and slowly are continuing to digest the experience of the three years of revolution.

In such conditions Social-Democrats would make a big mistake if they declared "against academic action". No, the groups of students belonging to our Party must use every effort to support, utilize and extend the movement. Like every other support of primitive forms of movement by Social-Democracy, the present support, too, should consist most of all in ideological and organizational influence on wider sections who have been roused by the conflict, and to whom this form of conflict, as a general rule, is their first experience of political conflicts. The student youth who have entered the universities during the last two years have lived a life almost completely detached from politics, and have been educated in a spirit of narrow academic autonomism, educated not only by the professors of the Establishment and the government press but also by the liberal professors and the whole Cadet Party. For this youth a strike on a large scale (if that youth is able to organize a large- scale strike: we must do everything to help it in this undertaking, but of course it is not for us socialists to guarantee the success of any bourgeois movement) is the beginning of a political conflict, whether

those engaged in the fight realize it or not. Our job is to explain to the mass of "academic" protesters the objective meaning of the conflict, to try and make it consciously political, to multiply tenfold the agitation carried on by the Social-Democratic groups of students, and to direct all this activity in such a way that revolutionary conclusions will be drawn from the history of the last three years, that the inevitability of a new revolutionary struggle is understood, and that our old—and still quite timely—slogans calling for the overthrow of the autocracy and the convocation of a constituent assembly should once again become a subject of discussion and the touchstone of political concentration for fresh generations of democrats.

Social-Democratic students have no right to shirk such work under any conditions. And however difficult this work may be at the present time, whatever reverses particular agitators may experience in this or that university, students' association, meeting, etc., we shall say: knock, and it will be opened unto you! The work of political agitation is never wasted. Its success is measured not only by whether we have succeeded here and now in winning a majority, or obtaining consent for co-ordinated political action. It is possible that we shall not achieve this all at once. But that is why we are an organised proletarian party—not to lose heart over temporary failures, but stubbornly, unswervingly and consistently to carry on our work, even in the most difficult conditions.

...The beginning of a mass student struggle in the Russia of 1908 is a political symptom, a symptom of the whole

present situation brought about by the counter-revolution. Thousands and millions of threads tie the student youth with the middle and lower bourgeoisie, the petty officials, certain groups of the peasantry, the clergy, etc...

...if in the autumn the mass of youth which is closest of all to the democratic bourgeoisie in Russia is beginning to be disturbed; if the hireling hacks, with malice tenfold, have started howling once more against revolution in the schools; if base liberal professors and Cadet leaders are groaning and wailing at the untimely, dangerous, disastrous strikes which displease those dear Octobrists, which are capable of "repelling" the Octobrists who hold power—that means new powder has begun to accumulate in the powder-flask, it means that not only among students is the reaction against reaction beginning!

And however weak and embryonic this beginning may be, the party of the working class must make use of it and will do so. We were able to work years and decades before the revolution, carrying our revolutionary slogans first into the study circles, then among the masses of the workers, then on to the streets, then on to the barricades. We must be capable, now too, of organizing first and foremost that which constitutes the task of the hour, and without which all talk about co-ordinated political action will be empty words, namely, the task of building a strong proletarian organization, everywhere carrying on political agitation among the masses for its revolutionary watchwords. It is this task of organization in their own student midst, this agitation based on the concrete movement, that our

university groups, too, should tackle.

The proletariat will not be behindhand. It often yields the palm to the bourgeois democrats in speeches at banquets, in legal unions, within the walls of universities, from the rostrum of representative institutions. It never yields the palm, and will not do so, in the serious and great revolutionary struggle of the masses. All the conditions for bringing this struggle to a head are not ripening as quickly and easily as some of us would hope—but those conditions are ripening and gathering head unswervingly. And the little beginning of little academic conflicts is a great beginning, for after it— if not today then tomorrow, if not tomorrow then the day after—will follow big continuations.[173]

Lenin makes clear that it is crucial for the Social Democratic students to make use of every instance of defiance and revolt in the student movement, while maintaining the fight to raise the student movement's politics as a whole toward revolutionary politics. His contribution shows to the student movement that even though the student movement of 1905 had overcome the political limitations of the 'Academic' tendency, the impact of the defeat of the 1905 revolution meant that Marxists must engage with the resurgence of the Academic movement in context, embracing its opportunities and highlighting its limitations.

Although the fall 1908 strike was successful in rallying the student movement toward militancy, it failed to receive widespread public support and quickly waned.[174] In part, this

was because the Tsar's police had learned from experience, keeping a low profile to avoid escalation, and only clamping down with repressive measures when students tried taking to the streets of the urban centers of Russia.[175] Kept bottled up on campus with no prospect of victory, the strike wore itself out and the government went forward with its campaign for increased oversight of the university operations.[176]

Student Unrest 1909-1914

The years between the 1908 strike and the outbreak of World War I saw a slow but sure revival of the student movement, as students shook off the complacency imposed by the counter-revolution and defeat of the 1908 strike and again emerged as a serious force of political opposition.

The student press was suppressed after the 1908 strikes and did not revive until 1910. In 1909 and 1910, a handful of local and short-term student strikes were organized over minor matters of academic life, including the question of declining scholarships and exam schedules.[177] In the publications that did get out during the period, student activists decried the relative inaction of the student movement, identifying that the problem was not a student body divided into different and opposing political factions, but rather an entirely new *studenchestvo* characterized by complacency.[178]

The death of beloved author and critic of the Tsarist regime Leo Tolstoy on November 7, 1910, led to renewed student demonstrations. Spontaneous memorial processions were organized in the days following Tolstoy's death, as students and wider layers of society marched through the urban centers

of Russia and raised the call for the ending of capital punishment.[179]

Although student protests petered out after one week, the right wing and the Tsarist government continued to see the student movement as a serious threat and pushed for harsh reaction. In January, Stolypin issued further repressive measures, announcing a total ban on student meetings and facilitating an increased police presence on Russian campuses.[180]

With their spirits renewed by the November demonstrations, the student movement organized a new strike in the spring of 1911.[181] The Socialist Revolutionaries and Social Democrats called for the student strike to take up political demands and thereby place the student movement at the forefront of the public criticism of the wider bourgeoisie and middle classes against Stolypin's government which had increased since the 1908 escalation of repressive measures.[182] By the first week of February 1911, Russia was again gripped by a nationwide student strike. Operating within a more sympathetic political climate and with the revival of the student press, well-formed political factions throughout the universities, and the lessons of a long history of student organizing kept alive by the revolutionary parties, the 1911 strike posed a far more serious threat than had the 1908 strike.[183]

Again the Social Democrats highlighted the opportunities and limitations of the student strike. At the beginning of February, the Saint Petersburg City Social Democratic Committee adopted a set of "theses" on the student movement which opposed trying to involve workers in the student struggle but still welcomed the student movement. The committee also reminded students the primary duty of student Social Democrats was to overall party work, while the student movement was a

secondary consideration. Trotsky was slightly more optimistic, hoping that the student movement could be a major asset of the Social Democrats if they could find a way to channel student activities into regular party work.[184]

The government was forced to put down the strike with mass arrests. To break the strike, the government was forced to expel a nationwide total of 1,871 students and suspend another 4,406; many were sent to exile.[185]

The moderate Social Democrat Nikolai Iordanskii — himself a leader of the 1899 student strike — reflected on the significance of the 1911 strike. Iordanskii found that the student movement posed a direct challenge to the consciences and beliefs of the liberals who felt that "after 17 October 1905, Russia had crossed the rubicon and begun a course of social development on the European model."[186] Consciously or unconsciously, by forcing the Tsarist regime to resort to mass repression, the student movement revealed the continued authoritarian character of Russian society.

In response to the repression of the strike, three rectors of Moscow University decided to resign from their administrative titles while retaining their academic positions. In response, the government fired them from the university outright for their alleged political demonstration. Escalating the situation, 25 full professors and 75 junior faculty resigned in protest to the firing on February 20; with one-third of the entire teaching faculty resigning, the event came to be known as the "destruction of Moscow University" and pitched one of the flagship universities of the Russian Empire into a serious crisis.[187]

After the strike, the government again moved to strengthen its position on the campuses and weaken the opposition of campus dissidents. The Tsarist regime began funding right-

wing student groups, offering their participants financial aid and promises of lucrative posts upon graduating; in Odessa the university rector even armed them with pistols.[188] The government also began to transfer liberal professors from the central universities out to the provinces, and brought conservative professors from other institutions to Saint Petersburg University and Moscow University. Widely unpopular and faced with student protest, the government's hand-picked professors were often forced to lecture under police guard.[189]

Following the 1911 strike and with the most radical students suspended, expelled, or in exile, the student movement returned to relatively small and sporadic protests from 1911 to 1914. The students responded only modestly to off-campus disputes, for example the April 17, 1912, Lena massacre of striking miners, but showed a continued tendency to respond strongly to provocations against the *studenchestvo*, with more than 100,000 university and school students participating in short strikes in response to a dispute at the military-medical academy.[190] And as student protest ebbed and flowed, the university population continued to grow massively with 1914 enrollment totaling over 100,000.[191] At the start of the war, Saint Petersburg University and Moscow University were some of the largest universities in the world. Despite the massive changes which Russian universities had undergone over the previous decade, there was a surprising endurance of student organizations and the traditions of the student movement.[192]

The Outbreak of World War I

With events quickly escalating following the June 1914 assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the Austrian heir, in Serbia, the whole of Europe was at war by the end of the summer. The liberal and revolutionary concerns of the student movement and wider society were quickly sidelined by the issue of national defense, with students and professors uniting to support the Russian Empire against the German Empire and Austria-Hungary. Although the war did bring an increase in national fervor to the campuses, it was not necessarily paired with a definite rise in right-wing nationalist sentiment, and the newly launched right-wing student groups did not see a major increase in support.[193]

On and off campus, outright political opposition to the war was limited to a tiny minority of Bolsheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, with the majority of the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks backing national defense. According to the Okhrana, most Bolshevik sympathizers abandoned work in the universities to participate in outside political activity, and *skhodki* called to support Bolshevik Duma representatives following their arrest received little support.[194] However, students at Moscow University did launch a one-week strike in September 1915 to protest the proroguing of the Duma.[195]

Just as the previous decade of growth and modernization in Russian society had led to massive growth of the student population, so the onset of war weighed on the campus, leading to a halving of enrollment from the start to the end of 1916.[196] By the end of 1915, some 10 percent of students volunteered for officer training; in the Spring of 1916 the student exemption for conscription was revoked, and conscription began with the

lower classmen.[197] And if students did not volunteer or get drafted into the armed forces, the rising prices in the major cities pushed many to withdraw from their courses and return home.

1917

In the summer of 1915, Tsar Nicholas chose to take command of the military effort. This had two effects which furthered along the crisis of the Romanov dynasty. First, the Tsar took personal responsibility for the failings of the Russian military, and could no longer shield himself from public blame behind the general staff. Second, with the Tsar at the front, the Empress took a lead in the running of the government; Empress Alexandra famously relied on the mystic Rasputin for advice. Unpopular at court, Rasputin was assassinated by a group of nobles in December 1916.

In early 1917 the growing crisis of the Tsar's regime was marked by a quick series of changing government ministers. Nearly 6 million casualties had been accrued since the start of the war, food prices were rising, and millions of refugees fled from the German-occupied parts of Russia, filling the major Russian cities. On February 18, workers at the Putilov factory launched a strike against the regime, and on February 23 were joined by striking women workers, marking International Working Women's Day by showing their dissatisfaction with food rationing. Within days, a quarter of a million Saint Petersburg workers were on strike. The Saint Petersburg Soviet was reformed, the Duma began to defy the Tsar's order for it to

dissolve, and the garrisoned soldiers in Saint Petersburg refused orders to fire on the crowds. By February 27 the revolutionary forces, backed by the mutinous garrisons, were in control of the capital.

The sudden fall of the Romanov dynasty in February 1917 was met with joy on campus. At several universities, *skhodki* voted to temporarily suspend classes so that students could engage in political work.[198] Returning to campus, in the late winter and early spring of 1917, the majority of students favored continuing the war, with their elected representatives repudiating calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities.[199] The new minister of education, appointed by the Provisional Government, ordered the return of the previously fired professors, and the junior professors pushed to revive the Academic Union, convening its 4th congress in Petrograd in June 1917.[200] And the students began to settle scores with the representatives of the old regime on campus, organizing against right-wing professors, seeking the addressment of past grievances, and generally raising claims for an increased role in university governance.[201]

Following the 'July Days,' tension increased between the revolutionary left and reformist center, as the Soviet and the Provisional Government jockeyed for power. In an attempt to shore up support, the Provisional Government called an August State Conference as a preliminary step toward formalizing the new constitutional order and invited the university administrators to send delegates.[202] Still committed to continuing the war, at the start of the semester the government considered canceling the academic year because of the food crisis in Petrograd and Moscow.[203]

In the fall of 1917, the universities opened weeks late and with

only a small number of advanced students in attendance. Disrupted by both war and revolution, the *studenchestvo* movement was basically a non-entity when the Bolsheviks seized power on behalf of the Soviets from the Provisional Government in October. Whereas in 1905 the students had helped to initiate the workers uprisings, in the fall of 1917 the *studenchestvo* had almost no impact on the course of events.

Conclusion

While the student movement was able to regain its strength following the 1905 revolution, it was never again to play such a pivotal role as it had in September of 1905. Although the Social Democrats remained a prominent force on the campus, the concessions made by the Tsarist regime following the 1905 revolution strengthened the influence of the liberal student faction, providing an outlet for students who wanted reforms but were not eager to embrace a full socialist revolution. At the same time, the Tsarist regime developed a more skillful approach to dividing the campus and isolating the influence of its most radical sections. Although students kept up consistent resistance to Tsarism, their role in the February and October revolutions was mostly insignificant.

6

Conclusion

Russia and the Student Question

In its first half-century of existence, the Russian student movement posed for itself and for history the "student question:" what is the role of individual university students, the conscious student movement, and the student body as a whole in the fight for a better world? From the work of individual university students in the underground, through the conference of 1894, the national strike in 1899, and the revolution of 1905, the students answered the questions their forebears had posed, transforming the university from an intellectual barracks for the Tsar's regime into a heart for the revolutionary workers movement.

In the early years, the budding Russian socialist movement found a ready base around the still-small universities, recruiting members from among the official, often-privileged students as well as the many auditors who lived in the university districts. Students who were won over to the revolution

while at university often turned away from their upper- and middle-class peers and toward the various layers of the disposed masses. These early revolutionaries — including Chernyshevsky, Plekhanov, and Lenin — debated which forces the revolutionary intellectuals should turn towards in order to strengthen their revolutionary movement.

Whether organizing on campus or off, the long arm of the Tsarist regime caught up with most early student socialists, including many of the most important leaders of the revolutionary movement. Chernyshevsky's work founding the Narodnik movement in Saint Petersburg was cut short when he was imprisoned by the Tsarist regime, although his spirit lived on in the characters of his novel. Plekhanov was forced to drop out and flee Russia after speaking at a demonstration of students and workers. A freshman at Kazan Imperial University, in the fall of 1887 Vladimir Lenin was elected to represent his *zemlyachestvo* in the student council; partaking in a demonstration that December, he was identified as a ring-leader, expelled from the university, and exiled to his family's country estate. 10 years later, freshman Leon Trotsky dropped out of his mathematics lectures before he had ever formally enrolled; throwing himself into union organizing, he was eventually arrested. The detention of Tsarist prison and exile in place of university courses played an important role in the intellectual development of Lenin, Trotsky, and many other Russian revolutionaries, giving them time to devote for further study in the intricacies of Marxism.

But while individual students were turning toward revolution, the question remained: what of the student body as a whole? In a constant crisis of identity, the students wondered whether students were politically important, were

justified in defending their academic interests, and whether their movement could serve as a catalyst for the mobilization of larger social forces.[204]

Through the mid-1890s student organizers tried to answer this "student question," and the growing militancy of the workers' movement turned the most conscious students toward a confrontation with the Tsarist regime. Struggling initially to win over the student body, in February 1899 the conscious students took advantage of police repression, leading the students of Saint Petersburg to launch the first nationwide student strike. Although the strike was suppressed, it injected life and militancy into the student movement; over the next five years student activists debated and organized, searching for a way forward and refining their answer to "the student question."

Through study and the test of events, in the wake of the 1899 strike the wider student movement came to realize that their narrow demands for academic reform could only be met through a wider political struggle. Gradually, the 'Politicals' won out over the 'Academics,' but the embrace of a political solution only posed another question: which political solution? Student organizing increasingly reflected the wider factional fights between the various revolutionary and liberal parties.

As the student movement grew increasingly militant, the Social Democrats on and off campus clarified for themselves the correct relationship between students and the workers' struggle. The Marxist movement divided along 'Economist' and 'Political' lines in part on the question of the importance of the student movement for the workers' revolution. Lenin took a clear 'Political' stance, arguing within the RSDLP and also in the student press that students had a definite role to play, even

allowing the possibility that the students could temporarily take the lead in the fight against the Tsarist regime. Armed with this synthesis, between 1899 and 1904 the Social Democrats were able to win over the majority of the student body to their position and lead them in a series of fights against the regime in coordination with the rising working class.

The January massacre of 1905 lined up a conflict between the increasingly revolutionary students and the government. During the spring of 1905, the students struck while the workers, peasants, and even the liberals launched critiques in words and deeds against the Tsarist regime. In September 1905, the Russian student movement under the leadership of Marxist students voted to open their university as a barracks of the revolution. Within a few short weeks, their night-school classes for workers grew into a series of general strikes which squared up against the Tsarist regime in a contest for power. In the process, a new form of worker power was built, the Saint Petersburg Soviet of Workers Deputies.

With the defeat of the 1905 December uprising, the Tsarist regime began to roll back the revolutionary forces and re-establish control of the universities. While at first some of the reforms of 1905 were kept in place, as the regime consolidated its position it reinstituted the authoritarian policies on campus. But in the 12 years between 1905 and 1917, the students gradually regained their initiative, demonstrating again and again their ability to disrupt university life and their continued commitment to the larger political revolution.

But in the two revolutions of 1917, the students' role in the revolutionary events was far less prominent than it had been in 1905. The February revolution was largely a workers' uprising. The students did play an important role in movements during

the rule of the Provisional Government, serving as organizers in the various revolutionary and liberal parties and in the soviets, but the real initiative was taken by the soviets, the revolutionary parties, the unions, and the workers' militias, not the student movement as a body.

In the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution, on November 8, 1917 — twelve years and 2 months after the students turned the Russian universities into barracks of the revolution — a *skhodka* at Moscow University voted to condemn the Bolshevik's seizure of power on behalf of the Soviet. The *skhodka* accused Bolsheviks of "betraying the popular masses" and proclaimed that the "*studenchestvo* will dedicate all its strength to defending the rights of the people and to struggling for the ideals of democracy and socialism."[205] This condemnation of the Bolshevik revolution after more than a decade of Social-Democratic political leadership of the student movement presents an interesting contradiction. It is possible that the most revolutionary students had become so engaged in the work of the soviets and the Bolshevik movement that they had totally removed themselves from student life and thus would not have been represented at the *skhodka*. But also likely is that the student movement — ultimately still tied by class interests more to the educated classes than to the working class — was more sympathetic to the softer Menshevik party. The students' rejection of the Bolshevik revolution was a clear mark of the limit of the revolutionary potential of the student movement.

* * *

The Russian experience is particularly crucial as a model for

the study of the student question. During the events of 1905 and 1917 the conflict between the propertied classes and the workers' movement led to a breakthrough in social, political, and economic revolution which had up to that point only been theorized: the establishment of a workers' government. Because of the depth of the advance achieved through the 1905 and the two 1917 revolutions, the student question was posed in Russia to perhaps a uniquely sharp extent.

The first half-century of the Russian student movement shows definitely that students as individuals and as a body can play a crucial role in a revolution to overthrow the bourgeoisie, and that the fight for socialist influence on the universities is a crucial fight. But the student movement by itself cannot win the changes needed to address either the immediate concerns of students or the larger problems of society. Revolutionary students must look to the movement of the organized working class as the central force for revolution, and orient their work on and off campus by its progression. And while the student movement can push the revolution forward, it also remains "tied by a million threads" to bourgeois society, which weighs — sometimes heavier, sometimes lighter — on student consciousness.

The opportunities and limitations of the university students stem from the contradictions inherent in the convoluted class-position of the students. On the one hand, students are an ever-present population within capitalist society, while on the other hand individual students are constantly graduating and re-defining their class relations by entering one or another section of bourgeois society. The commonalities of interest and consciousness which leads the students to live a class-like existence present opportunities for leading them in struggle against the

ruling establishment; but the threads which tie students to the larger society form obstacles to the revolutionary potential of the student body. If the socialist movement can enlist students while they remain relatively free from bourgeois pressures, it can win for itself valuable personnel to support its work among the working class. And if the socialist movement can grow and channel campus fights toward its larger revolutionary project, the socialist movement can turn a pillar of the bourgeois system into a barracks of the revolution.

But even though students have interests in common, the conflicts on campus remain set by the conflicts in general society. Answering the student question by referring to one independent and united student movement is a failure to take into account the antagonistic economic, political, and social forces which underlay material interests and ideological positions within the student body. For socialists, answering the student question does not mean arguing for an independent student movement, but rather for recruiting individual revolutionaries into the student movement, winning over student organizers to socialist strategy, and leading the entire student body in fights for reform and revolution.

The Student Question Today

As a new generation of youth turn toward socialism, the student question remains important today. But to answer the student question in the 21st century requires a recognition of the changes to the university of the last century, not to mention the differences between contemporary American universities and the Tsarist education system.

The Evolving University

Perhaps the most significant macroeconomic development of the last 100 years in the field of education is the massive proliferation of high school and college degrees. The 1953-54 school year was the first in which the U.S. high school graduation rate exceeded 60 percent; now the rate is over 85 percent.[206] In 1950 some 2.2 million Americans were enrolled in institutions of higher education compared to more than 20 million today, with the United States population doubling over those 70 years.[207] This represents a 10-fold increase in the total size of the student body, and a 5-fold increase of the student body as a portion of the total population. In 1960, 45 percent of high school graduates immediately enrolled in college; from 2004 to the onset of the pandemic, the figure hovered between 65 and 70 percent.[208] In summation, over the last half century an overwhelming majority of American students graduate from high school, and a sizable majority of those graduates immediately enroll in higher education, leading to slightly more than half of all students enrolling in higher education.

The massive increase in university enrollment has also meant an increasingly diverse student body drawn, albeit not evenly, from all classes and ethnicities of American society. College is no longer the exclusive preserve of the rich, and the class differentiation is now marked between elite and non-elite schools rather than simply those who do and do not attend university. And even at the most elite schools, students from working class families are able to gain admittance even if they remain in the minority.

Accompanied with the change in the university population

has been a reconsideration of the meaning of a university degree. With an increasing number of students attending universities, a degree no longer guarantees a role in the supervision of the functions of capitalist society. Rather, a bachelor's degree qualifies one only to enter the lowest ranks of the intellectual workers of the bourgeois system, with advanced degrees used to screen upper management and reinforce the class system. In fact, many graduates from middle and working class backgrounds find themselves unable to apply their degrees, and instead take jobs among the proletariat as service workers.

The Proletarianization of the Campus and the Campus Labor Movement

The campus is not only a training school for capitalist society but also a major employer of academic and non-academic faculty. In fact, with the displacement of American manufacturing overseas and the massive expansion of the university system, campuses and their affiliated hospitals are often among the largest employers in urban areas.

In the Russian experience it was mainly undergraduate students — and to a limited extent junior and tenured faculty — who drove struggle forward on campus. While in September 1905 unions formed at Saint Petersburg University they were almost all off-campus unions; in contrast, American universities are today home to a sizable array of national unions which organize campus maintenance, food service and housekeeping, construction, clerical and technical, academic, and healthcare workers. Some of these unions, such as those representing graduate students, tutors, research assistants, post-docs, and

junior faculty, straddle the academic-proletarian divide while others are of a more purely proletarian nature.

The campus worker unions represent an important change of circumstances relative to the Russian experience in which they were mostly absent. Not only do campus unions have a more definite proletarian orientation than undergraduate students, but they also have resources to run campaigns and a longevity which is lacking in the transitory nature of the student body. This makes campus unions a key factor not only in the fight for the wages and working conditions of their own members, but also to the long-term development of the undergraduate student movement. The graduate student unions in particular most closely unite the ideological openness of the student youth with the proletarian concern for collective struggle for the improvement of working conditions.

The Right Wing on Campus

The American right wing has long recognized the key importance of engaging the campus as a site of class warfare. Both the public and private arms of the capitalist class have sought to establish front groups on American campuses in order to further their mission. For the right wing, not only is the goal to defang the campus as a site of left opposition, but also to win over recruits for their political campaigns.

Since the end of World War II, the security state and its boosters in private civil society have worked behind the scenes to shore up support for the political establishment on campuses. Frank Barnett, himself a professor of Shakespeare at Wabash University, was one of the most articulate advocates for using

the campus as a site of class struggle in the early days of the Cold War. Using his connections with right-wing billionaires, Barnett was able to found and operate a growing network of right-wing networks on and off campus. In 1961 Barnett's article *A Proposal on Political Warfare* called for American capitalists to wage an aggressive campaign in all aspects of civil society, including campuses, to beat back communist influence. Around the same time, Barnett worked with CIA director Allen Dulles to develop an anti-communist education for American schools, and began running summer education training seminars for professors and high school teachers.

In 1962, Barnett and his allies launched a network of front groups to push their aggressive stance on the Cold War deeper into civil society. The Center for Strategic and Information Studies was launched at Georgetown University to provide academic legitimacy for their positions,[209] and the National Strategy Information Center was opened to further develop curriculum and continue to "educate the educators."[210]

The campaign to exert right-wing control in the universities and other major institutions of civil society escalated in response to the turmoil — on and off campus — of the 1960s. The right-wing counter-offensive which began in the early 1970s was most famously outlined by Supreme Court Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr.; Powell's *Attack on the American Enterprise System,* written for the Chamber of Commerce the year prior to his judicial appointment, outlines a comprehensive plan for the defenders of capitalism to wage aggressive cultural and political warfare in the press, the courts, think tanks, and the universities. Powell begins his analysis by outlining the forces working against corporate America. He mentions the growth and danger of the radical left, but finds that

> *the most disquieting voices joining the chorus of criticism come from perfectly respectable elements of society: from the college campus, the pulpit, the media, the intellectual and literary journals, the arts and sciences, and from politicians.*

Regarding the universities, he identified the problem that an entire generation was being taught to criticize or despise the system, and that these students then go on to positions of intellectual, administrative, and political power. Therefore, he encouraged the Chamber to identify and engage incumbent conservative professors and to push for the appointment of additional conservative professors; to hire pro-corporate speakers to tour the campuses, alongside a volunteer speakers bureau; to survey the textbooks, pushing them to adopt more pro-corporate viewpoints; to pressure administrators to give more time to conservative voices; and to extend these programs into the highschools as well.

In fact, Powell was an associate of Barnett and involved in his earlier projects; but the right-wing program from the 1970s onward no longer focused on a narrow promotion of aggressive anti-communism, but also challenged liberalism.

In the years following the Powell Memorandum, the right-wing billionaires increased their funding for right-wing projects on campus, including think tanks, funding of right-wing professors, and the founding and funding of student groups. Billionaire industrialist and arms manufacturer John M. Olin was probably just as motivated by the Powell Memo as he was by incidents at his alma mater. In 1969 Cornell University, with four buildings bearing the Olin family name, was briefly occupied by armed students from the Black Power

movement. In response Olin

> *began to fund an ambitious offensive to reorient the political slant of American higher education to the right. His foundation aimed at the country's most elite schools, the Ivy League and its peers, cognizant that these schools were the incubators of those who would hold future power. If these young cadres could be trained to think more like him, then he and other donors could help secure the country's political future. It was an attempted takeover, but instead of waging it with bandoliers and rifles, he chose money as his weapon.*[211]

The Olin Foundation's strategy was to establish "beachheads," or conservative cells, at the most influential schools; but this had to be done in a careful way in which donations would not raise concerns about academic integrity.[212] His operatives focused on pressuring universities to "balance" faculty representation, defining their programs by field of study rather than ideology, and supporting already-established professors who could go on to lead departments. By the time of its self-dissolution in 2005, the Olin foundation had spent almost half of its $370 million influencing campuses.[213]

Possibly the single most successful of Olin's right-wing campus operations was his work targeting the judicial field. Using its "beachheads" strategy to target law schools, in just four years the Olin Foundation funneled $10 million to Harvard, $7 million each to the University of Chicago and Yale, and $2 million each to Columbia, Cornell, Georgetown, and the University of Virginia; all this money was in support of the

new legal philosophy of Law and Economics.[214] This legal philosophy grew out of Hayek's Chicago School. In a 2005 interview, Piereson, former Executive Director of the Olin Foundation, revealed that he would have preferred to fund conservative constitutional law programs, but that universities would have balked at taking money for explicitly political programs. He saw Law and Economics

> *as a way into law schools... ...Law and Economics is neutral, but it has a philosophical thrust in the direction of free markets and limited government. That is, like many disciplines, it seems neutral, but it isn't in fact.*[215]

The crown jewel was the John M. Olin Center for Law, Economics, and Business at Harvard Law School, which the Olin Foundation ultimately spent at least $18 million to support. Through the funding of these centers, Olin was able to advocate for right-wing legal theories and financially support right-wing law professors.

Just as important as pushing Law and Economics was the winning over of the law students themselves, which the Olin Foundation pursued by its early funding of the Federalist Society. What started as a small student organization was rapidly, through the support of billionaire donations, to grow into not only a powerful national student organization, but also a professional association for right-wing law graduates. Mayer writes that

> *with $5.5 million from the Olin Foundation, as well as large donations from foundations tied to Scaife, the Kochs, and other conservative legacies, the Federalist*

> *Society grew from a pipe dream shared by three ragtag law students into a powerful professional network of forty-two thousand right-leaning lawyers, with 150 law school campus chapters and about seventy-five lawyers' groups nationally.*[216]

For the right-wing billionaires, the Federalist Society provided what the Law and Economics programs could not; an avenue for funding an explicitly pro-conservative group within the law schools.

Over the last half-century the network of billionaire-funded right-wing organizations on campus has only grown. Many of these organizations are affiliates of the State Policy Network, which acts as a mothership for conservative and neoliberal think tanks, associations, and other political operations. SPN affiliates specifically focused on the field of education include the anti-union Association of American Educators, the Center for Education Reform think tank, the campus-facing publication The College Fix, and student groups including the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, Students for Liberty, Young America's Foundation, and the Federalist Society. A key part of the strategy is that these student groups represent different tendencies of the right-wing movement, appearing as separate and competing groups when they are in fact funded by the same small network of super-donors.

This brief review of the right-wing forces on campus cannot serve as a full analysis of their workings and their impact on the campus struggle today, but the major point is that the forces of the right and the rich are committed to winning the campus and are highly organized to do so.

The Fight for the Campus

In contemporary America, as in pre-revolutionary Russia, the campus is a crucial site of class struggle. Both the Left and the Right recognize the significance of waging campaigns for the ideological control of the universities, and work to secure organizational leadership over professors, graduate and undergraduate students, and non-academic campus workers while blocking the influence of their opponents.

The campus is both a microcosm of wider society, as well as one of the crucial institutions of that wider society. There can be no united campus movement, but only the struggle for dominance among the various left, center, and right political tendencies. For socialists, work on the campuses means securing the hegemonic leadership of the socialists over the majority of the students, faculty, and campus workers while marginalizing the influence of opponents.

It is crucial that today's socialist movement recognize the opportunities and limitations of campus organizing. Socialist organizations have a crucial role in providing leadership for campus struggles and tying these struggles into larger efforts which are not restricted to the campuses. To the degree that campus organizing is left to students, it will remain organizationally mired and politically limited. But to the degree that socialists take a lead in overseeing campus movements, the campuses will not only forward new revolutionaries to our ranks, but will develop lasting power capable of challenging capitalist hegemony both on campus and in society at large. And this work is achieved not only by organizing socialist clubs on campuses and overseeing them with seasoned organizers, but also pushing the campus unions towards militancy and a

break with capitalist politics.

But we are not organizing in a vacuum, and the right-wing also recognizes the importance of winning influence on the American campuses. The right-wing movement has almost unlimited financial resources, and a large series of well-established front groups for the waging of class struggle on campus. To defeat the right-wing in the fight for control of the campus requires understanding and exposing the fingerprints of the billionaires on the campus, opposing their professional organizing apparatus with our own disciplined apparatus, and growing every expression of student unrest into a politically conscious mass-movement of students for the socialist revolution.

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