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## The Limits of Formal Protest: Worker Activism and Social Polarization in Petrograd and Moscow, March to October, 1917

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WILLIAM G. ROSENBERG and DIANE P. KOENKER

FEW PROCESSES ARE MORE CENTRAL TO THE EVOLUTION OF REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS in Russia during 1917 than those encompassed by historians in the concept "social polarization." This complex notion attempts to explain the social basis for the collapse of the Provisional Government and the successful acquisition of power by the Bolshevik party. As it applies to urban Russia, social polarization involves the multiple relationships between workers' activism in all of its forms and the equally complex (and complementary) activism of industrialists and other members of the business community. In the countryside, social polarization involves the emergence of irreconcilable conflict between the interests of the peasants and the gentry and rejection by the peasants of state-supported systems of land use, taxation, and agricultural development. Social polarization is not unique to Russia. Lawrence Stone has suggested that the coalescence "into two coherent groups or alliances of what are naturally and normally a series of fractional and shifting tensions within society" can be found in many revolutionary contexts.<sup>1</sup> The notion underlies Crane Brinton's theorized clash between French moderates and extremists in 1789, and it can be found as well in the French and German revolutions of 1848.<sup>2</sup> In the Russian case, the issue that has motivated much recent study is not whether social polarization characterized the revolutionary process in 1917 but, rather, the nature of this polarization and the extent to which it reflected long-term divisions

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Stone, "Theories of Revolution," *World Politics*, 18 (1966): 165.

<sup>2</sup> Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (New York, 1938); Peter Amman, "Revolution: A Redefinition," *Political Science Quarterly*, 77 (1962): 36–53.

in Russian society as opposed to short-term, conjunctural, or even accidental factors.<sup>3</sup>

Leopold Haimson has demonstrated that Russian urban society on the eve of the war was already polarized into "privileged" and "unprivileged" strata, as perceived from both sides of the social gulf. In the capital, St. Petersburg, in particular, but elsewhere in the empire, too, workers had developed a sense of their separateness from privileged society, a sense increasingly expressed in radical socialist ideological terms that rejected coexistence with the bourgeoisie, which they equated with all of privileged Russia. Such perspectives developed outside the cities as well. Landowners saw their interests increasingly challenged by peasants and peasant-oriented political movements, especially between 1905 and 1912, and mobilized their own political resources.<sup>4</sup>

Yet the polarized constellation of forces apparent in Russia before the war was not necessarily stable. Each "pole" was composed of elements whose interests could and did clash: landowners who did not share the same interests as industrialists; Moscow and St. Petersburg commercial groups that saw their tasks differently; skilled artisans, factory proletarians, and low-paid service employees with widely differing ambitions. Important also were strong countervailing tendencies: patriotic and nationalist commitments that mitigated social and political conflict after the outbreak of the war, for example, the increasing interdependence of urban and rural economies, and the extensive social interactions between urban and rural communities.<sup>5</sup> The fall of the old regime in Russia did not preordain the nature of conflict that followed. Along with the task of creating a new political and social order came the opportunity to recast social relationships and, to some degree, even social values.

Petrograd and Moscow were the crucial testing grounds. Despite accusations to the contrary, industrialists and workers had a common interest in maintaining production after February, 1917. Food shortages, crowded housing, the high costs (and scarcity) of "items of primary need," as they were called, intensified the demand for jobs, even as deteriorating conditions provoked unrest. Few industrialists were blind to the power their mobilized employees might have to alter fundamentally the nature of Russia's capitalist expansion. Animosities and unyielding hostility ran deep, and historical memory was strong on both sides. The simultaneous formation of the Provisional Government and the soviets in early March represented not only the bifurcation of power but also the opportunity to mediate profound social conflict. The institutionalization of labor interests in the

<sup>3</sup> For a general historiographical discussion of this problem, see Ronald Grigor Suny, "Toward a Social History of the October Revolution," *AHR*, 88 (1983): 31-52.

<sup>4</sup> Leopold Haimson, "The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905-1914," *Slavic Review*, 23 (1964): 619-42; 24 (1965): 1-22; and "Observations on the Politics of the Russian Countryside," *The Politics of Rural Russia, 1905-1914* (Bloomington, Ind., 1979), 261-300. See also Roberta T. Manning, *The Crisis of the Old Order in Russia: Gentry and Government* (Princeton, N.J., 1982); Victoria E. Bonnell, *Roots of Rebellion: Workers' Politics and Organizations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1900-1914* (Berkeley, Calif., 1983); and Robert Edelman, *Gentry Politics on the Eve of the Russian Revolution* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1980).

<sup>5</sup> See especially Joseph Bradley, *Muzhik and Muscovite: Urbanization in Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985).

soviets was as much an opportunity to deflect civil war through negotiation as it was a threat to the political strength of the regime.

The social processes involved in the polarization of Russia in 1917 thus deserve scrutiny, as a way of both testing the validity of the concept and, equally important, of giving it historical content. We propose to look closely at key elements of labor activism in Moscow and Petrograd and at labor-management relations. There is, of course, more to the story than we can analyze here. But these dimensions of the problem lay at its core, and, even in broad contour, it is in labor activism that we can see most clearly the emerging elements of Russia's urban social revolution.

One must note first the ways in which revolution changed the context of public life in Russia, just as it did in revolutionary France and elsewhere. The fall of the autocracy radically expanded the opportunities for workers and employers to pursue individual or collective interests. Strikes and other previously illegal forms of work protest were suddenly legal; conventions and congresses of industrialists and merchants, regularly banned in the last years of the old order, were not only possible but essential as a means of adjusting the needs of industry to the demands of the wartime democratic order.<sup>6</sup> In effect, both major contenders for power in the workplace were confronted after February, 1917 with the unprecedented task of finding new methods of struggle to achieve their goals. The goals themselves reflected the legacy of past conflict. The relationship of the methods to the values, principles, and institutions of democratic Russia critically affected, and perhaps ultimately determined, the ability of that order to survive.

In taking up these matters, one must deal with a range of subjective as well as quantifiable data. By "social polarization," we are referring not only to the emergence of contending power blocs but to mentalities as well. An integral element of the polarization process in 1917 was the development in commercial and industrial arenas of competing and incompatible sets of values, of different concepts of "property," a common understanding of which (or, at least, a consistently imposed and regulated definition of which) is essential to social and political stability. Social values in revolutionary Russia were more often expressed in actions than in words, making the task of forging a new society that much more difficult. No constitution or Magna Carta molded a collective state consciousness. Activism thus assumed a central place in the repertoire of revolutionary discourse. And, while all collective actions necessarily embody some value system, the centrality of this behavior to Russia in 1917 lay in the very malleability of revolutionary politics: the political process itself knew no formal or constraining boundaries. Economic circumstance, organization, tradition, and what might be called a "sense of the possible" shaped its limits. Labor activism created and then constantly re-created the boundaries of political struggle, defining norms and

<sup>6</sup> Under tsarist rule, strikes defined by the authorities as "political" were illegal, while those defined as "economic" were at least formally considered legal, although agitation in favor of *any* strike or work stoppage was not.

values while it put in place the new order's political and socioeconomic institutions.<sup>7</sup>

The most visible form of worker activism in 1917 was the strike, a form of protest that had occupied a central and traditional role in the Russian labor movement. Memories of the great Nevskii cotton-spinning strike of 1870, the Morozov strike in 1885, the strike waves of 1905–07, 1912–14, and the immediate pre-war period constituted touchstones for the organizational efforts of labor activists in pre-revolutionary Russia.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, strikes had acquired enormous political significance with the attention given them by the tsarist government. The reams of strike data compiled assiduously by tsarist factory inspectors speak to the centrality of strikes in the public consciousness before the revolution. But strikes are only one index of worker activism. They are also risky because they usually jeopardize a worker's wages and welfare. Since other forms of activity could sometimes achieve the goals of workers with less risk, it is hardly surprising that Russian workers in 1917 contended for a share of the revolutionary settlement by a variety of acts in and outside the factory, virtually all of which impinged directly or indirectly on labor-management relations. These other forms involved every manner of action, from mob justice to secondary boycotts, from searches of managers' apartments and company warehouses to threats on the lives of foremen and their "carting out" from factories and plants. Both strikes and these less uniform expressions of activism provide important and complementary evidence of the polarization process in the critical arena of labor-management relations.<sup>9</sup>

Our information on strikes comes from a file of slightly more than 1,000 work stoppages reported to have begun between 3 March and 25 October.<sup>10</sup> Collected from contemporary newspapers, Soviet archival publications, and archival documents, these materials are part of a larger project in which we examine major questions of labor activism and mobilization during the revolution. To explore forms of non-strike activity, we have also catalogued some 350 additional incidents that were not related to strikes, and that occurred between 3 March and 25 October in Moscow and Petrograd.<sup>11</sup> These two cities, which in 1917 employed about 33

<sup>7</sup> The best sociological discussion of collective action, and one to which we owe a substantial intellectual debt, is in Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, Mass., 1978).

<sup>8</sup> See Leopold Haimson and Ronald Petrusha, "Two Strike Waves in Imperial Russia (1905–07, 1912–14): A Quantitative Analysis," in Leopold Haimson, Michelle Perrot, and Charles Tilly, eds., *Patterns in the Evolution of Industrial Labor Conflicts in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup> Workers also adopted less active forms of protest in 1917, which, while important, are not our focus here. They passed scores of resolutions at factory meetings, for example, and often sent them off to soviet leaders and government officials alike, reviving an ancient protest tradition that the tsarist regime had only recently proscribed. They also participated in an almost constant series of elections, sending representatives to local and central soviets, electing delegates to district and city governments, organizing trade unions and various workers' conferences, and frequently electing and re-electing various factory committees. On occasion, these "passive" protests sent strong messages, as when Bolsheviks were elected to head the Petrograd and Moscow soviets in August and September. See the discussion in Diane Koenker, *Moscow Workers and the 1917 Revolution* (Princeton, N.J., 1981), especially chaps. 4–6.

<sup>10</sup> By "strike," we mean a collective work stoppage with common goals. See our chapter, "Strikes in Revolution, Russia, 1917," in Haimson, *Patterns*, forthcoming, for further discussion of strike data.

<sup>11</sup> Our data are limited to incidents that were reported in the contemporary press or in subsequent Soviet documentary publications, and that we think involved workers.

percent of the Russian factory labor force, also accounted for approximately one third of all reported strikes in Russia between March and October, involving approximately 850,000 strikers.<sup>12</sup> Countless labor protests in this period went unreported, of course, and our data are obviously not complete. Even if the data cannot be used with statistical precision, they constitute an extensive sample and provide a good basis for exploring the effects of worker protests in 1917 on labor-management relations and the processes of social polarization. Equally important, since our records are drawn from the contemporary press, the set of actions that inform our study also shaped public perceptions of social reality in 1917.

OF THE MANY DETERMINANTS OF WORKER ACTIVISM, none are more important or more difficult to analyze than the stimuli and constraints of historical circumstance. Sociologists and social historians differ on the relative weight they assign to objective factors (organization, goals, resources) and subjective ones (ideology, charisma, values) in explaining labor protest, but the question of why particular forms of action occurred at particular moments always depends to some extent on historical context and the perceptions of the participants themselves: how they understand the likely consequences of this or that action, how they estimate alternatives, and how they perceive what is timely and appropriate to shared social values. This understanding may or may not be fully conscious. Activists may choose a particular form of struggle after carefully weighing likely gains and possible losses, or they may act in the heat of the moment. Alternative actions may be avoided because they contradict political values or a clearly articulated political program, or simply because they are not part of the familiar and customary repertoire of a particular group in society at a given moment.

In this regard, the February revolution in Russia radically changed the environment of protest without engendering a clear sense of what was "appropriate" and "acceptable" or producing the coercive mechanism to constrain activism within these limits. Massive strikes and demonstrations had brought down a repressive autocracy distinguished by its inability to appreciate the value of orderly and routine social protest. What, then, was to be "orderly" and "routine" under the new regime? What were the boundaries of "legitimate" activism, and how could they be regulated?

One set of answers was implicit in the general conceptualization of "bourgeois democracy" shared by Provisional Government officials and soviet leaders alike. For the moment, democratic Russia would move forward as a Western industrial nation guided by principles and laws similar to those of European and American democracies. The rights gained by workers in the West would finally be recognized in Russia as a necessary first step toward social stability based on the orderly resolution of labor-management conflicts. Trade unions and other labor organi-

<sup>12</sup> Employment figures are from L. S. Gaponenko, *Rabochii klass Rossii v 1917 g.* (Moscow, 1970), 116; David Mandel, *The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Regime* (London, 1983), 45; and Koenker, *Moscow Workers and the 1917 Revolution*, chap. 1.

zations, including factory committees, would be welcomed as agents of labor's legitimate involvement in matters of primary concern. Factory despotism would disappear along with other vestiges of tsarist rule. And the right to strike was now a necessary (if at times unwelcome and extreme) form of labor's struggle for material betterment and hence an integral part of democratic labor-management relations. "Labor is the basic productive force of the country," the new minister of trade and industry, A. I. Konovalov, optimistically insisted, on assuming his new position. "The welfare of the motherland depends upon labor's achievements. The Minister of Trade and Industry believes that a correct approach to and proper solution of the labor question is a most urgent problem . . . [He] will strive wholeheartedly to satisfy, as much as possible, the needs of the workers, hoping, however, for vigorous cooperation on their part."<sup>13</sup>

Of primary concern to Konovalov and others was Russia's deteriorating economy and its relation to the war effort. By the end of 1916, output per worker had declined substantially in virtually all industrial branches, falling as much as 12 percent compared to pre-war levels, even in leading defense plants. Real wages had also declined some 10 percent in the aggregate since the start of the war (although they had increased in metals and chemicals); the cost of foodstuffs and other items of primary need had increased on the average some 200 percent.<sup>14</sup> The actual relationship between rising prices, especially of foodstuffs, and falling industrial productivity was by no means clear, but the need to mitigate obvious sources of labor discontent in the interest of increasing output was broadly felt in government and industrial circles. If the new regime could effectively revitalize Russia's production efforts in support of the war, a military victory would secure the country's "rightful" place in the competitive postwar global marketplace.

These views dominated public discourse during the first weeks of the new order, a time when major changes were introduced in Petrograd and Moscow factories as a result of workers' initiatives and the famous March 10th accord on an eight-hour work day and factory committees. On that date, representatives from more than 300 enterprises in Petrograd agreed at a general session of the Petrograd Society of Factory and Mill Owners (PSFMO) to accept the eight-hour day as a general standard, without wage reductions, and to sanction factory committees as organizations to represent the interests of workers.<sup>15</sup> Leaders of the PSFMO, under great pressure, understood very well Russia's new political realities. They also saw the value of concessions in improving productivity and restoring a semblance of industrial order.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See *Vestnik Vremennago Pravitel'stva*, 7 March 1917, *Revolutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii posle sverzheniia samoderzhavii* (Moscow, 1957), 438, and the discussion in Gaponenko, 226 and following.

<sup>14</sup> Tsentral'noe Statisticheskoe Upravlenie (TsSU) *Trudy*, 26 (Moscow, 1926): 38, 57, 70, 76-77; *Statistika truda*, 1 (1918): 10-11.

<sup>15</sup> *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Rossii nakanune velikoi Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii: Dokumenty i materialy*, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1957), 1: 511-13.

<sup>16</sup> The agreement on 10 March between the PSFMO and the Soviet was largely the result of Konovalov's success in getting PSFMO leaders to meet with Soviet Executive Committee members shortly after assuming his ministerial post. The sessions apparently took place in the ministry. A report appears in *Promyshlennost' i torgovlia*, 8-9 (1917): 214. PSFMO leaders included V. D. Zhukov from

These concessions were also a means of securing another component of the March 10th agreement that industrialists regarded as an even more fundamental workplace reform, the creation of conciliation boards (*primiritel'nye kamery*). These boards were intended to resolve labor-management disputes without costly strikes; they were to be established on the basis of labor-management parity within each enterprise that was party to the agreement. Initially, they had no formal legal status, could not impose sanctions for noncompliance, and were only consultative organizations whose success depended on the goodwill of both parties. The PSFMO clearly hoped, however, that they would facilitate the rapid settlement of disputes "free from any sort of external pressure" and, in particular, would prevent the expulsion of foremen and other supervisory personnel without at least some review.<sup>17</sup> For contentious issues, or issues "of general interest to all Petrograd enterprises or a particular group of enterprises," a Central Conciliation Board was created, composed of representatives in equal numbers from the PSFMO and the Petrograd Soviet.<sup>18</sup>

The creation of the central board was symbolically important. In effect, the political and moral authority of the Petrograd Soviet, dominated by moderate socialists, was being enlisted from the start for the Herculean task of resolving industrial disputes in an orderly manner. The central board began to function on 31 March with sixteen representatives and the Soviet's blessing. Similar institutions were soon organized elsewhere.<sup>19</sup> One can thus discern in prominent institutions during the first months of the new order the emergence of a consensus on both the appropriate means for resolving labor-management conflict and the general boundaries of "legitimate" labor activism, even if no mechanism was developed to assure that these boundaries were respected.

Yet even a cursory glance over the field of conflict from March to October suggests a disparity between what was "legitimate" and what happened. Broadly speaking, there were two categories of protest actions throughout this period: those that took place around or within the workplace and in the context of labor-management relations, and those that occurred in the streets, in the context of the community. Each exhibited patterns of behavior that reflected both

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the Petrograd metal works, L. I. Shpergadze from Erikson, and A. A. Bachmanov from the Lessner complex.

<sup>17</sup> Paragraph 7 of the agreement on 10 March precluded the removal of supervisory personnel without an examination by a conciliation board. See *Izvestiia*, 11 March 1917; N. Dmitriev, "Primiritel'nye kamery v 1917 godu," in A. Anskii, ed., *Professional'noe dvizhenie v Petrograde v 1917 g.* (Leningrad, 1928), 77-78, 512. Conciliation boards had emerged briefly in Russia with the 1905 revolution and were proposed again by the Central War Industries Committee in 1916. See Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *The Politics of Industrial Mobilization in Russia: A Study of the War Industries Committees* (New York, 1983), 176-78.

<sup>18</sup> Dmitriev, "Primiritel'nye kamery v 1917 godu," 77-78.

<sup>19</sup> The Moscow Soviet enacted a general policy on conciliation boards in early April and organized its own central conciliation board in May. The legal constitution of the boards received formal state approval in August, when the Provisional Government created a commission to draft appropriate legislation. The best discussion of the conciliation boards is by Heather Hogan, "Conciliation Boards in Revolutionary Petrograd: Aspects of the Crisis of Labor-Management Relations in 1917," *Russian History*, 9, (1982): 49-66. See also K. A. Pazhitnov, *Primiritel'nyia kamery i treteiskii sud v promyshlennosti* (Petrograd, 1917), 25; and I. Rubin, *Primiritel'naiia kamera i treteiskii sud* (Moscow, 1917), 20-26.

commitments to and antagonism toward the new order, sometimes within a single incident.

Strikes were the most common form of protest in the workplace. Since they were also the most familiar form of labor conflict in Western Europe and the United States, they were an acknowledged (if resisted) aspect of Russia's industrial order. Perhaps for this reason, the Russian strike movement did not unfold in 1917 as a wave of strikes that increased in intensity over the months, gathering momentum with each specific political crisis. Instead, the evidence suggests that the strike movement followed an uneven trajectory, in which periods of more intense strike activity clustered around what might be described as three stages of the country's revolutionary development.

The first cluster emerged after a period of quiescence in March and April, during which strike activity virtually had ceased. Beginning in the second half of April and lasting until the first week in July, new strikes broke out on the average of three to five a day, compared to one or two in the seven weeks or so after the end of the events in February. Strike activity fell off after the defeat of the July Days uprising in Petrograd, according to the data available to us, and revived again only toward the end of July. From then until late August, we can discern a second, less extensive, cluster of strikes, averaging three to four a day. Strike activity subsided once again at the end of the summer but revived a third time in mid-September. This last cluster, coming at a time of heightened political activity, social conflict, and economic crisis, lasted until the Bolsheviks came to power and was distinguished by the great number of strikers involved.<sup>20</sup>

The workplace was also the scene of many protest actions that did not involve the formal cessation of work, at least initially. Of these, the most common by far was the forcible expulsion of supervisory personnel by workers. Some of these expulsions led to strikes, either by workers or white-collar employees who were colleagues of the targeted supervisor. But the fragmentary records for 1917 suggest that the removal of such persons was most commonly carried out without work stoppages.

Based on reports of these incidents for Petrograd and Moscow, the number of workplace protests during the revolution may have been substantially less than the number of full-fledged strikes, yet one should hardly underestimate their effect on labor-management relations.<sup>21</sup> These events served to carry into 1917 traditions of pre-revolutionary activism that were part of a very different social and political order. A sack nailed to a foreman's office door or pulled over his head

<sup>20</sup> We have catalogued between 19 April and 6 July some 343 strikes out of 815 for the period between 3 March and 25 October for which starting dates are known, involving an estimated 567,000 strikers (a figure that includes the strike of 275,000 Petrograd workers during the July Days). For the period from 29 July to 26 August, we have information on 108 strikes, with 373,000 estimated strikers. For the six weeks between 16 September and 25 October, however, we estimate that more than 1.2 million workers went on strike (including some 700,000 railroad workers and 300,000 textile workers) in 192 strikes, showing a dramatic escalation of the number of participants.

<sup>21</sup> Our data include reports of some 373 strikes between March and October in the two capitals, compared to approximately eighty-five incidents of other work-related actions reported in the same sources during the same period. One has to be wary, however, of the unsystematic way these incidents were reported.

from behind or the act of carting a foreman out of the factory and dumping him in a manure pile to the accompaniment of workers' hoots and jeers had long been treasured weapons in the workers' arsenal.<sup>22</sup> Actions like these invariably raised the specter of unrestrained, coercive violence. In the case of expulsions, foremen were usually removed with little more than symbolic violence. (In one case, a threatened manager sat himself in the wheelbarrow and invited workers to cart him out.)<sup>23</sup> But there were also cases of beatings and even murder. An ousted foreman at the Respirator gas mask factory, for example, was beaten severely after he tried to resist by shooting his revolver at the protesting workers.<sup>24</sup>

Coercion and the specter of violence also accompanied plant seizures and the confiscation of property, another important category of worker protests.<sup>25</sup> As far as we can determine, most episodes of this sort in 1917 occurred where plants had already closed, as workers attempted to resume production on their own authority. In these instances, the actual violence involved appears to have been minimal, but the threat of violence was itself often coercive and an additional element of importance in labor-management relations.<sup>26</sup> More than once, organizations such as the PSFMO felt impelled to condemn workers' violent tendencies.<sup>27</sup> To complete this general catalogue of work-related protests, we should note the large number of resolutions, petitions, complaints to local soviets, and other public efforts to expose factory abuses, which led to conflicts being resolved without strikes. These petitions represent, along with formal legal redress (of which we find little published evidence), methods compatible with support for a stable political order.

Since the streets were now free, large numbers of protests occurred outside the workplace, in working-class neighborhoods, the marketplace, and other areas of the city. Collective activity in the streets is more difficult to evaluate than activity at work, but its existence surely influenced popular perceptions of disorder and violence as much as strikes did.

The most prevalent form of street action was crowd justice, or *samosudy*.<sup>28</sup> As Tsuyoshi Hasegawa has pointed out, crime increased significantly in Petrograd (and elsewhere) after February, as many ordinary criminals were released from

<sup>22</sup> See Eduard Dune, "Zapiski krasnogvardeitsa," unpublished manuscript in the Hoover Institution, Stanford, Calif., chap. 1. For Petrograd and Moscow, we have found only six recorded cases of "carting out" in 1917, substantially less than we had expected, but again, such traditional rituals may often have gone unreported.

<sup>23</sup> They did. This occurred at the Sampsonievskaiia textile mill, in a dispute over pay. See *Novaya zhizn'*, 7 July 1917.

<sup>24</sup> *Novaya zhizn'*, 7 May 1917. Also in *Rech'*, 7 May 1917, which omits the detail about the revolver. Elsewhere, a sniper attempted to shoot the director of the Dinamo factory, wounding instead the factory committee chairman, engaged in negotiations in the director's office at the time. See *Russkie vedomosti*, 8 September 1917. S. A. Smith reports that Putilov workers murdered the plant director and his aide in the first days of March. See S. A. Smith, *Red Petrograd* (Cambridge, 1983), 55.

<sup>25</sup> A nearby estate and its inventory were seized to provide workers in the Shlissel'burg munitions factory with milk, for example, an antidote to the poisons ingested in the production of gunpowder. See *Novaya zhizn'*, 19 May 1917.

<sup>26</sup> We have catalogued only one case, in fact, of an outright expropriation of a going concern.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, *Izvestiia*, 21 March 1917.

<sup>28</sup> Translated in some dictionaries as "lynching," but meaning, rather, "lynch-law."

city jails, and as economic conditions deteriorated.<sup>29</sup> A number of criminal "colonies" appeared, particularly around the Olympia amusement park, and on Vasilevskii Island. The city's militia was relatively ineffective in combating crime. The criminals were well armed, and the authorities had difficulty in detaining criminal suspects.<sup>30</sup> What interests us, however, is not the rise in crime but the tendency of those in the streets throughout 1917 to take justice into their own hands. In some cases, crowds apprehending a thief would attack and beat the culprit severely, at times, to death. In other cases, the victims were local officials, or shopkeepers and peddlers accused of speculation and hoarding. "Justice" would be dispensed quickly and harshly, though usually not with the severity reserved for criminals. Although the crowd's identity in the reports is almost always vague, there is no lack of detail about its angry and violent behavior.

Another manifestation of community action consisted of food riots and the appropriation of scarce goods. The major urban newspapers recorded about four dozen cases of these incidents, equally distributed between Moscow and Petrograd. These incidents strongly resembled the disorders that led to the downfall of the tsar in February (and also the consumer riots that can be found as far back as the eighteenth century in England and France.) Again, most reports of these incidents do not identify the crowd, but, in the case of food disorders, women seem to have played an important role.<sup>31</sup> Protest in the setting of the community also took the form of demonstrations, incidents involving the search and seizure of weapons by workers, seizure of property unrelated to factories, product boycotts (especially of newspapers), political arrests, and the liberating of political prisoners. Twelve major political demonstrations also took place in Petrograd and Moscow between March and October, including the well-known protests sparked by Foreign Minister P. N. Miliukov's note in April, the Soviet-sponsored demonstration in Petrograd on 18 June, and lesser protests to demand that the vote be extended to eighteen-year-olds, to protest the war, and to protest the death penalty for the Austrian Social-Democrat, Friedrich Adler.

It is difficult to assess the import of these incidents. Under what circumstances, for example, should crowd actions properly be construed as protests? Although the beating of a thief can be seen as an act of protest against a government that is powerless to preserve order and the destruction of a bread store or food stall can be seen as a protest against economic conditions or the economic system as a whole, both are actions qualitatively different from strikes or demonstrations.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The newspaper *Petrogradskii listok*, 24 April 1917, estimated as many as 20,000 ordinary criminals were set free in early March.

<sup>30</sup> Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, "Crime and Revolution in Petrograd, 1917," unpublished paper, 1981, 5-8.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, *Russkoe slovo*, 26 August 1917; *Trudovaia kopeika*, 2 September 1917; *Russkoe slovo*, 2 September 1917; *Delo naroda*, 3 September 1917; and *Trudovaia kopeika*, 12 September 1917. Students of European protest stress that women were disproportionately involved in such activism: it was the woman's role to put food on the table, and she did the marketing and paid the food bills out of the family income. See George Rudé, *The Crowd in History* (New York, 1964); Louise Tilly, "The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 2 (1972): 23-57; and James Cronin, "Insurgency and Class Formation," *Social Science History*, 4 (1980): 134-35, 144-45.

<sup>32</sup> In most instances, again, the nature of the crowds that dispensed street justice is far from clear; and, in any case, the relationship historically between the "mob" and the "working class" has been a

Also, in contrast to factory-related incidents, the setting of street actions usually tells little about their purposes or participants. Incidents of crowd justice occurred throughout Petrograd (and in Moscow, though apparently less frequently). Open markets, fertile territory for pickpockets and crowds mobilized against these miscreants, were the scene of several incidents. Crowd justice was dispensed often in central districts but even more heavily in outlying areas. Perhaps such incidents were more prevalent in neighborhoods with concentrations of soldiers; they do not appear to have been especially frequent in the neighborhoods of industrial workers. Many episodes of crowd justice, for example, were reported in the southern and eastern districts of Petrograd, while only two were noted in the Vyborg region, center of working-class autonomy and militancy. For all this uncertainty, however, there is little question that these episodes strongly affected perceptions about workers' values and commitments among leaders of the Soviet, trade-industrial groups, and the new government.

IN THE EARLY WEEKS OF THE REVOLUTION, MANAGEMENT HAD MUCH TO GAIN from a peaceful resolution of factory grievances. Russia was at war, and necessary first and foremost to industrialists and manufacturers was a climate in which investment and management decisions could be made with some degree of confidence in the future of the state and the European capitalist order: a climate of economic security, political stability, and social peace. "The pressing task of the moment," *Promyshlennost' i torgovlia*, the leading trade-industrial journal editorialized, is "the creation in the country of a firm legal order and a solid government, acting on the basis of strict legality."<sup>33</sup>

At first, these goals seemed within reach. Several strikes over wages began in Petrograd soon after the formation of the new government, but the agreement between the Soviet and the PSFMO on 10 March brought them to a halt.<sup>34</sup> In Moscow, where no agreement had been signed, and where workers sought the same gains as their Petrograd comrades did, strikes occurred during the second and third weeks of March in a number of textile plants, but steady pressure by

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difficult one to clarify. Two theoretical paradigms illustrate the conceptual problem. On the one hand is the identification of the "laboring classes" as the "dangerous classes," a common nineteenth-century assumption and one reflected in Louis Chevalier's important work on Parisian life, *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses* (Paris, 1958). On the other hand is the paradigm that distinguishes the "proletariat"—class-conscious workers—from the "dangerous class," the social scum," as Marx and Engels distinguished them in "The Communist Manifesto," *Selected Works of Marx and Engels* (New York, 1968), 44. The proletariat protested in the factory, facilitated by the organization of work, while the "scum" constituted the mob. Both views, however, are faulty. As Tilly and Lees have pointed out, workers in the first view are assumed *a priori* to be criminals because of their habits, poverty, and lack of a stake in the social order. See Charles Tilly and Lynn Lees, "Le Peuple de juin 1848," *Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations*, 29 (1974): 1061-91; and Charles Tilly, Louise Tilly, and Richard Tilly, *The Rebellious Century 1830-1930* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975). The second view ignores the reality of urban life, in which workers live in a heterogeneous community and often mingle with the poor, pickpockets, street hawkers, and deserters.

<sup>33</sup> *Promyshlennost' i torgovlia*, 8-9 (1917): 186-88.

<sup>34</sup> The most important of these occurred at the Old Parviainen works on 7 March.

Minister of Trade and Industry, Konovalov, weakened owners' resistance.<sup>35</sup> And, while the Moscow Society of Factory and Mill Owners (MSFMO) continued to reject the type of accord signed in Petrograd, workers and managers in most plants were already resolving the questions by themselves.<sup>36</sup> Virtually all strikes in Moscow were settled by agreement in March, and fewer strikes began in both Petrograd and Moscow during the first two weeks of April than in any other comparable period of the revolution.

It was in the area of non-strike actions, however, that pressures were building in the factories to undermine this relative calm. Most important was the degree to which workers in many major enterprises were acting without resorting to strikes to resolve longtime grievances, frequently by expelling foremen or rewriting factory rules. These actions rarely had to do with wages, but the impact on labor-management relations was all the greater because individual personalities were directly involved. Foremen and administrators were forceably expelled in Petrograd from Langenzippen, Treugolnik, the Russian-American rubber plant, Pressovaia metal works, Putilov, Peter the Great arsenal, the Lafetno stamping plant, and the heel shop of Skorokhod leather, among other enterprises, during the first three weeks of March; and, in Moscow, from major plants such as Trekhgornaia, Erikson, the Pavlov mechanical works, and Bromlei. Moscow workers at the Provodnik chemical works, which manufactured gunpowder and other military supplies, "arrested" several engineers who appeared to be against the war, while workers at Kauchuk rubber, Putilov, Treugolnik, and elsewhere threatened management with violence over wage issues and blocked some administrators from entering the factory, though not formally expelling them or demanding they be fired.

These actions were not simply "illegal" according to any standard that recognized property rights or the inviolability of person but they were also coercive and almost all successful. Only in a handful of instances do we find more passive forms of worker protest recorded: workers from the Putilov, Krug, Shkilin and Kirsh, and Beshekerov factories boycotted the "bourgeois" press for "baiting and slandering workers," for example, or silversmiths at the Winter Palace petitioned the Soviet for an improvement in their working conditions. In virtually every other reported instance, workers found themselves able to resolve grievances by means of their own choosing, with little adverse effect on their own well-being. No major factories closed because of worker militancy in March and April, as far as we can determine, and no workers were arrested for violating the rights of managers. Nor were the actions of workers limited by a lack of resources or organization. Until the first major political crisis erupted in demonstrations in late April, collective

<sup>35</sup> On 16 March, for example, Konovalov convened a meeting of trade industrialists to discuss this and related issues and urged accommodation, emphasizing that "freedom and order" would be basic goals of the new regime, within the framework of the existing economic system. *Revolutsionnoe dvizhenie posle sverzheniia*, 438. Among the leading Moscow plants struck in early March were the Lebedev and Korolov works, the Merkurii, Shevrokhrom, Rus and other leather (bootmaking) factories, and the Rozental', Borochin, Men'shikov and Gakental' metal plants.

<sup>36</sup> Koenker, *Moscow Workers and the 1917 Revolution*, 107-08.

actions were almost entirely by individual groups of workers in individual plants, spread broadly across major industrial branches.<sup>37</sup>

These successes may have engendered among workers in Petrograd and Moscow during March and April a somewhat grandiose sense of what direct collective action could achieve, although it is difficult to document attitudes of this sort. Factory workers were certainly not intimidated by state power or by the city militia, which had virtually ceased to function in industrial areas such as the Vyborg district, across the Neva from the city's center.<sup>38</sup> Nor is there any indication that the authority of plant and shop managers (to fire workers or impose fines, for example) was an effective restraint. Most important, the conciliation boards were soon ruling overwhelmingly in favor of the workers on virtually all grievances involving rudeness or assaults on workers' dignity, and even in most cases involving the expulsion of foremen or the recovery of wages lost during the March strikes. These institutions, which management had earlier embraced as a means of peaceful coexistence with labor, appeared instead to legitimize forms of direct action.<sup>39</sup>

Also, these actions quickly created doubts among industrialists and businessmen about the ability of Russia's new order to contain labor protests within formal boundaries. The Petrograd Council of Trade and Industrial Congresses (Soviet S'ezdov) notified its members that all factory disputes must be sent to the boards, but it seems clear that many (if not most) individual owners and plant managers had little confidence in this mechanism as a way of securing social peace.<sup>40</sup> Central conciliation boards, closely identified with the Moscow and Petrograd city soviets, were established during March and early April to resolve cases that factories wanted examined by outsiders and to deal with disputes affecting more than one enterprise. The majority of issues concerned wage disputes at major enterprises.<sup>41</sup> When the central board in Petrograd agreed in a series of cases to accept increased wage norms for certain categories of workers, however, the owners of small and middle-sized enterprises (with generally fewer than 200 workers) categorically refused to accept them, arguing through spokesmen in the Petrograd Committee of Medium and Small Industry (*Petrogradskii Komitet Srednei i Melkoi Promyshlennosti*) that to impose uniform wage levels based on the finances of large plants like Putilov and Parviainen would destroy smaller enterprises and only advance the interests of the Petrograd industrial barons.<sup>42</sup> When the PSFMO similarly agreed in early April to raise the wages of unskilled laborers in the city's dye factories from

<sup>37</sup> We record some forty factory-based protests between 7 March and 18 April in Petrograd and Moscow in textiles, food processing, leather, printing, construction, chemicals (rubber), and service enterprises, although the heaviest concentration were in Petrograd metal plants.

<sup>38</sup> See Rex A. Wade, *Red Guards and Workers' Militias in the Russian Revolution* (Stanford, Calif., 1985), especially chaps. 3-4.

<sup>39</sup> On the very day *Izvestiia* published the March 10th agreement, for example, workers at the Admiralty shipbuilding works threw out some fifty administrators without any thought of a board review.

<sup>40</sup> See *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie*, 1: 164. The letter also urged strikes be avoided.

<sup>41</sup> Dmitriev, "Primiritel'nye kamery v 1917 godu," 92-94.

<sup>42</sup> Dmitriev, "Primiritel'nye kamery v 1917 godu," 94.

two to five rubles a day, the owners and managers of most smaller dyeworks refused to agree.<sup>43</sup>

By mid-April, consequently, despite the relative absence of strikes and a lack of unanimity among Russia's industrial and managerial classes, tensions between management and labor were increasing, especially in smaller Moscow and Petrograd enterprises. When striking Petrograd pharmacy workers proposed in mid-April to submit their dispute to the arbitration board set up by the labor section of the Petrograd Soviet, shopowners refused to participate.<sup>44</sup> Despite the ideological and political commitments of the new regime to "preserving and strengthening the existing order," as Konovalov and others put it, Russia's major industrialists and manufacturers still had to be convinced that the government would be able to enforce its principles and obligations. In effect, both the rationality of the new order, defined in terms of its ability to resolve fundamental grievances through norms and procedures that brought real benefits, and its power, measured in terms of its ability to make these procedures work, were under serious challenge.

AS HISTORIANS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION WELL KNOW, massive anti-war demonstrations broke out in Petrograd on 20 and 21 April, partly in response to Foreign Minister Miliukov's reaffirmation of tsarist Russia's war aims. Within two weeks, pressure from below forced Miliukov and Minister of War, A. I. Guchkov, to resign, and the Provisional Government reorganized into a coalition, with socialists holding a minority of cabinet positions. These events reinforced the developing lines of struggle on both sides of the management-labor divide, revealing the degree to which power still lay in the streets. There was nothing illegal *per se* about the demonstrations, and a case could be made that they were an expression of the rights of citizens in a democratic society to assemble and petition their leaders. But their tenor was such as to suggest that just below the surface of democratic form was a play of forces having little to do with constitutional niceties. Direct action had toppled the tsarist regime, and the experience clearly taught Petrograd workers that the streets offered an opportunity to change governmental policies. Miliukov's resignation and the subsequent decision to bring socialists into the cabinet, to which the leaders of the Petrograd Soviet only agreed with extreme reluctance on 1 May, set the stage for a full effort on the part of workers and management to strengthen their control of the course of events.

The principal tactic of workers everywhere became the strike, which engaged service and industrial workers in every province of European Russia. Unlike the massive wave of strikes at the end of 1916 and early 1917, however, most work stoppages were relatively small and principally concerned with wages and working conditions, not questions of workers' control that directly challenged owner or

<sup>43</sup> F. Bulkin, "Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie rabochikh Petrograda nakanune Oktiabria 1917 goda," in *Professional'noe dvizhenie v Petrograde v 1917 g.*, A. Anskii, ed. (Leningrad, 1928), 39.

<sup>44</sup> *Rabochaia gazeta*, 25 April 1917.

managerial rights in the enterprise. The largest number of strikes during this period of widespread activity (approximately 30 percent) occurred in Moscow. Only some 15 percent of the strikes for which we have information began in Petrograd between 19 April and 6 July.

This spring cluster of strikes should not be interpreted as early evidence of the extremely polarized views that came to characterize management and labor in October, that is, as the beginning of a new revolutionary upsurge. Strikes were still broadly regarded as "legitimate" weapons of protest, however undesirable from the viewpoint of the government and employers. The spring cluster of strikes involved retail clerks, service employees, and other nonindustrial workers, rather than simply industrial workers from the country's large metal plants, as was the case before February. On the day the coalition cabinet was announced, for example, thousands of Petrograd laundry workers at more than 600 establishments left their jobs in a noisy and well-publicized protest, as if to symbolize the determination of "forgotten" labor groups to join the fight for social betterment. To be sure, metal workers continued to constitute the largest number of protesters in absolute terms during the spring, accounting for some 20 percent of the strikes and as much as 45 percent of the strikers (even excluding the July Days strikes). But the spread of strikes to a large number of Russian service workers suggests more the legitimation of strike protests in these weeks than it does a sharp division in civil society.

Strikes were clearly an effective means of securing wage concessions in the spring. Economic conditions in both Moscow and Petrograd, though difficult, had improved somewhat from the late winter and were far from subsequent crisis conditions. Food prices had increased (up in June some 39 percent from March and 150 percent from January in Moscow, for example, for bread, meat and meat products, fish, vegetables, milk and dairy products), but supply problems had eased, and the prices of sugar, salt, and tea remained constant. Strikes were more likely than other forms of protest to secure gains quickly, particularly wage increases, since few employers were yet willing to risk a prolonged halt in production. Strikes were particularly effective in metalworking because of the government's renewed commitment to the war, but they were useful elsewhere as well, in textiles, on the railroads, and in the service sector.<sup>45</sup> The Petrograd laundry workers won their well-publicized strike, for example, because shopowners, while resistant, could afford the concessions demanded, and because the laundry workers received sympathy and support from other labor groups. With soviet spokesmen now in the coalition government, and with factory committees formally recognized through the government's legislation of 23 April, the opportunities for real gains through legal strikes were no doubt appealing to many in the factory (especially trade-union activists), more so than other forms of direct action. The spring cluster of strikes should be understood more as a reflection of greater willingness to use the formal mechanisms of legitimate struggle in Russia's new

<sup>45</sup> See the discussion in William G. Rosenberg, "The Democratization of Russia's Railroads in 1917," *AHR*, 88 (1981): 983-1008.

"bourgeois" order than as an attack on the order itself. The strike movement in the spring may not have signified an acceptance of the order but neither should it be construed as a rejection of it.

In support of this proposition is the relative absence of strike-related violence, the relatively few number of strikes involving seizures of factories or other patently illegal actions, and the relatively high number of strikes that involved more than token negotiations with management and resulted in some form of compromise. Negotiations to settle and avoid strikes occurred more frequently between management and labor in these weeks over strike-related issues than in any other period of the revolution. Silk workers in Moscow, Petrograd warehouse workers, engravers, glassworkers, metalists, even workers in the Respirator gas mask factory in Moscow, who were among that city's most militant, entered into talks after indicating their intention to strike and agreed for the time being to postpone their walkouts. Elsewhere, negotiations resulted in settlements that completely avoided strikes.

Also, we find fairly substantial evidence that Petrograders and Muscovites were reluctant to take their grievances to the streets in this period, except as they pertained to government policies, a perfectly legal form of protest.<sup>46</sup> Cases of lynch-law occurred, but it is particularly noteworthy that these actions were directed almost entirely against the violators of social order in May and early June rather than against the institutions or persons representing or supporting that order. No attacks on government or soviet officials are reported, for example, and only an occasional report appeared in the press of attacks against militiamen who failed to apprehend criminals. In most instances, moreover, according to both liberal and socialist newspapers, the culprits were set upon by their attackers and beaten "cruelly." There seems to have been little tolerance for those suspected of ordinary crime, even among service or industrial workers who might themselves have undertaken harsh actions against their supervisors. At the same time, no reports of market disorders surfaced: no food riots or attacks on salespeople in Petrograd or Moscow during May and June, at least, in the public record. On the contrary, workers and anti-government political demonstrators were themselves the objects of attack in several cases, most notably during the April crisis, and the thieves and burglars assaulted in most instances were hardly the members of propertied groups. In sum, even though incidents of lynch-law seem to have been increasing during these weeks of the first coalition government, boding ill for the future, they still seem to have represented support for, rather than opposition to, the values and principles of Russia's new "bourgeois-democratic" system.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See Rudé, *Crowd in History*, chap. 5.

<sup>47</sup> In this respect, these acts presented some contrast to the large Petrograd demonstrations against the government and its war policy in April, before the formation of the coalition, as well as to Bolshevik-led efforts to hold a massive (but "peaceful") protest against the regime on 10 June, which was called off as a result of pressure from the Soviet. See the reports in *Izvestia*, 10 June 1917, and the documents in *The Russian Provisional Government*, Robert Paul Browder and Alexander F. Kerensky, eds., 3 vols. (Stanford, Calif., 1961), 3: 1311-23.

At the same time, ample evidence exists to suggest that the strength of workers' commitments to "legitimate" struggles such as strikes and legal street demonstrations was not very strong in May and June, and that their reliance on the accepted mechanisms of "bourgeois democracy" in the workplace was tenuous. Workers were impatient for gains, and bargaining talks with management did not usually postpone conflict very long. In a little more than half the relevant cases in our file for May and June, negotiations lasted twenty-one days or less before workers went out on strike. Most lasted one week or less. More important, in only two or three cases of negotiations begun in late April or May did workers postpone their strikes beyond the end of June, even when negotiations were carried on for more than three weeks. Thus, while workers and managers were, for a time, perhaps even more willing than they had been before the April crisis to discuss their differences at the enterprise level, the weeks of the first coalition government marked a shift from relative patience to relative impatience in strike-related conflicts on the part of both management and labor. Whatever the possibilities for constructive and peaceful labor relations presented by the February revolution, the rapidity with which harmony dissolved in these weeks suggests the depth of emotion and experience that underlay pre-war polarization and shaped attitudes in 1917.

Further indication of the shallowness of labor-management cooperation appears in the decreasing role of the conciliation boards during May and June, especially in personnel issues. By early summer, the boards were consulted largely as a consequence of pressure from outside the factory, from government officials such as the new minister of labor, Mikhail Skobelev, or from local soviets. Most often, the problem had to do with an increasingly antagonistic management, whose resistance undoubtedly derived from the boards' continued tendency to favor workers. (We know of only two cases from April through June in which disputes mediated by a factory-based conciliation board resulted in outright defeat for the workers).<sup>48</sup> Workers may well have had less patience now than earlier with the idea that conciliation boards should review issues workers could solve directly. At the Petrograd streetcar park, for example, workers wheelbarrowed three administrators out of the shops in early May, forceably preventing a conciliation board from hearing their case.

Finally, in addition to full-fledged strikes, more direct job actions that secured gains were reported during May than for all of March and April (if one excludes events associated with the February revolution and the large demonstrations connected with the April crisis). This increased success was possibly the result of a continued feeling among some plant owners, particularly in smaller enterprises, that the risks associated with concessions were less threatening than those involved with confrontation.<sup>49</sup> It may also have been because workers and others recognized

<sup>48</sup> There is some evidence that a reluctant attitude on the part of management to use the boards resulted more often than not in a compromise settlement, rather than outright victory for the workers. In these weeks, at least, a hard line on the part of enterprise owners may have brought some advantage.

<sup>49</sup> At the same time, leading trade and industry figures publicly and rather demonstratively insisted at a major Petrograd conference in early June that no further concessions of any sort could be given to industrial workers. See the resolutions in *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie*, 1: 181-84.

that non-strike actions could resolve grievances without the risk of halting production and losing wages. Smaller job actions were unlikely to secure higher wages but could effectively resolve conflicts concerning the dignity of the workers or the rules of the workshop.

In either event, what made this range of non-strike activity so important was that, in contrast to the strike movement, it directly confronted the fundamental principles on which Russia's new democratic order was being structured, and on which private enterprise depended for its own and Russia's prosperity. According to the reports we have been able to collect, most incidents that took place in or around individual enterprises in these weeks occurred in Petrograd, most were nonviolent, and most were directed toward owners or administrators in an effort to settle specific grievances. But an important shift occurred from March to May, away from attacks on individual foremen and plant administrative or engineering personnel and toward more comprehensive forms of collective action, such as exercising control or supervision over some or all activities of the enterprise. More than a dozen such cases were reported for May and early June in Petrograd and Moscow, affecting such major plants as the Gulavi machine and boiler works, the Brenner mechanical works, Petrograd aviation (Lebedev), and the Shlissel'burg munitions works, where workers put all managerial personnel on salaries under their supervision. Collective action in almost all of these instances was designed to keep the enterprises operating and prevent lockouts.

At Guzhon, in Moscow, for example, workers in the castings and bolt shops expelled the foremen in May for not performing their duties in a "proper" way. Other administrators were threatened. An aroused administration, led by the chairman of the board of directors, V. I. Arandarenko, tried to stand firm, insisting to the Guzhon factory committee that any disputes of this sort had to be presented to the board and submitted to the conciliation commission if they could not be resolved. Arandarenko threatened to close the factory if the factory committee could not guarantee the safety of foremen and other administrators. The Guzhon factory committee responded that such guarantees were impossible and, in any event, unnecessary if administrators fulfilled their jobs properly. It stated that the workers' decisions in these two cases were "final," that the conflict therefore did not need to go to arbitration. Adding insult to injury, the committee announced that the administrator in charge of passport registration and plant security was also being summarily expelled.

At a factory conference attended by representatives of the Moscow Soviet on 24 May, the Guzhon directors threatened to close the plant unless workers followed a legal course of action. Soviet spokesmen admitted problems were being caused by "unorganized workers with little political awareness" and recognized that the "sole legal route" for the resolution of disputes was through the conciliation board. The directors decided not to close the plant immediately, although the administrators remained "suspended." This retreat caused tremendous agitation among Guzhon's managerial personnel, and, on the afternoon of 25 May, they quit the plant *en masse*. While the board of directors appealed to the militia through the Moscow SFMO for protection, workers seized the plant and announced work

would continue. On 26 May, the managerial staff returned, and the plant's directors acknowledged they were left without any effective defense against violations of their legal rights. Arandarenko wrote that he heard repeated "accusations of lockouts and desertion. Industrialists are not foolhardy, and they know very well that workers thrown into the streets will not remain calm. The fact of the matter is that the very foundations of private industry are being destroyed."<sup>50</sup> Guzhon workers undoubtedly felt differently. Their actions had removed objectionable foremen, blocked the plant's closing, and seemingly secured their control over future Guzhon operations.

Similar events occurred elsewhere.<sup>51</sup> It is important to note that in virtually none of these enterprises were workers also actively involved in strikes.<sup>52</sup> In the factories, then, two powerful tendencies can be discerned, each with different implications for the future: on one hand, extensive and broadly based strike activity, now a legitimate weapon of bargaining and one appropriate to Russia's new social order; on the other, continuous and intense direct action in the factories, bypassing and violating conventional legal practice and undermining not only social stability in the general sense but, more important, the credibility of soviet, trade, industry, and government leaders who remained committed to the "bourgeois-democratic" values of negotiation and compromise, of private property and due process.

THESE ACTIONS TOOK PLACE AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF well-publicized radical activity. Kronstadt sailors established control of their naval base in late May; peasants engaged in acts of increasing disorder in the countryside; Petrograd anarchists seized the Durnovo mansion for their headquarters in early June and expropriated the reactionary newspaper *Russkaia volia*. Whether or not these events threatened social stability as sharply as some newspapers maintained, they clearly frightened Russia's bourgeoisie. In fact, industrialists and businessmen seemed eager to use broader signs of social unrest to build their case against strikes, challenging their appropriateness and legitimacy: "The workers have retreated behind their narrow class-based viewpoints," *Promyshlennost' i torgovlia* complained, not only as producers but also as consumers and, most important, as "citizens."

<sup>50</sup> *Ekonomicheskoe polozenie*, 1: 437.

<sup>51</sup> Thus the Brenner factory committee took control of the factory on 24 May and immediately secured shared orders from the Petrograd gun works to keep production going; *Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia i fabzavkany* (Moscow, 1927), pt. I, 147; the Gulavi workers took over on 26 May because their plant was owned by Germans and its future uncertain; *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v mae-iune 1917 g.* (Moscow, 1959), 283–84; *Velikaia Oktiabr'skaia sotsialisticheskaiia revoliutsiia: Khronika sobytii*, 4 vols. (Moscow, 1957–62), 2: 172 (henceforth, *Khronika*). Workers at the Prokhorovskaia Trekhgornaia textile factory in Moscow, alarmed by reports that as many as thirty-three textile plants in the Moscow region had shut down for lack of fuel, resolved in June to take control over fuel and raw materials and give supervisory responsibility in this area to their Control Commission. *Istoriia proletariata SSSR*, 8 (1931). Similar events occurred at the A. V. Bari boiler works in Moscow and the Sestroretsk glass works in Petrograd, among others, where the concerted protests of workers kept production going. *Khronika*, 2: 120, 401.

<sup>52</sup> Of the more than forty enterprises in Moscow and Petrograd in which we know some direct action took place in this period, in fact, only six—the Treugolnik rubber plant, Aivaz metals, the Pavlov mechanical works, Siemens-Shukert, the Liaskovskii tarpaulin factory, and the Moscow automobile works (AMO)—also went out on strike.

Limits had to be set. "Otherwise, all profits will disappear."<sup>53</sup> Although a June conference in Petrograd of leaders in trade industry failed to unify these efforts nationally (largely as a result of the opposition of leading Petrograd industrialists, who would have become a small minority in a national umbrella group), a "Committee to Defend Industry" was formed to coordinate the efforts of some thirteen groups of major industrialists in the capital. A set of strongly worded resolutions on the "obligation" of the government to protect capitalism and to crush control by the workers also removed any lingering ambiguities from the industrialists' position: under the "existing conditions of the world economy, there can be no other economic order in Russia besides capitalism."<sup>54</sup> The rampant anarchy that threatened to destroy all of industry and especially the "fruitless and unqualified harm consequent to all attempts to create some sort of socialist order in individual enterprises" meant there could be no question of "allowing workers to interfere in the management of industrial enterprises, or any sort of factual subordination of factory administration to workers or employees."<sup>55</sup>

There was still diversity, however, in the industrialists' outlook and some flickers of optimism in the Petrograd investment community, at least before the June offensive, which discredited the ability of the Provisional Government to wage war, and until the July uprising, which focused national hostility on the Bolsheviks. Between 1 May and 30 June, 103 new companies were formed throughout Russia, with 256 million rubles of capitalization, in contrast to only thirty-seven companies organized in March and April, and sixty-four in January and February.<sup>56</sup> The ability of the Petrograd Soviet to restrain anti-war demonstrations on 10 June suggested to some that moderates in the Soviet might have the radical left under control; the increasingly receptive response of governmental officials such as Skobelev, the new minister of labor, to industrialists' complaints, seemed to bode well. (On 13 June, Skobelev was reported to have promised South Russian industrialists help in their struggle against the wage demands of workers and indicated that he intended to issue an appeal to workers to this effect in the near future.)<sup>57</sup> Everything seemed to depend on businessmen and industrialists standing firm against new labor demands.

The momentous political events of early July and the collapse of the offensive virtually extinguished these modest hopes. The strength and passion of the July Days, led by the Bolsheviks, asserted once more the power of the streets. Failure at the front suggested the mortal weakness of the state. Order was soon restored but confidence was not, despite Aleksandr Kerenskii's assault on Lenin and his party. Almost overnight, the distinction between "legitimate" labor protest,

<sup>53</sup> *Promyshlennost' i torgovlia*, 12-13 (1917): 244; see also 20-21 (1917): 378-81, and 22-23 (1917). Tradesmen and industrialists were not the only ones shocked. The Menshevik journal *Rabochaia gazeta*, 22 June 1917, wrote of "drunken pogroms and mass rapes of women and girls in many places" in connection with the demonstrations on 18 June, "revealing the ignorance, savagery and brutality which we inherited from the old regime."

<sup>54</sup> Resolutions are in *Ekonomicheskoe polozenie*, 1: 181-84.

<sup>55</sup> *Ekonomicheskoe polozenie*, 181-84.

<sup>56</sup> *Torgovo-Promyshlennaia gazeta*, 13 October 1917.

<sup>57</sup> See the discussion in P. V. Volobuev, *Proletariat i burzhuziia Rossii v 1917 g.* (Moscow, 1964), 205.

appropriate to Russia's new "bourgeois-democratic" order, and "unacceptable" forms of action disappeared, suggesting that these distinctions were tenuous from the start. In fact, there was nothing illegal about the July Days demonstrations or even the urging of soldiers and Vyborg metalworkers, led by the Bolsheviks, that the Soviet take power in place of the provisional regime. The demonstrations threatened not anarchy but a sharp shift of state power to the left and the possible creation of a socialist order. This threat was more than enough for the lines of struggle between management and labor to be sharply drawn, however, especially in Petrograd, and for virtually any understanding among commercial leaders and industrialists of strikes as legitimate forms of protest to disappear.

Thus, on 4 July, the metals branch of the PSFMO issued a blunt circular condemning "anarchy" and insisting that "all promises, written or oral, given to workers under threat or force, are not obligatory for the enterprise."<sup>58</sup> A few days later, the PSFMO ordered its members not to pay workers for time lost during the July demonstrations. At the Trubochnyi plant, the Sestroretsk arms works, and elsewhere, workers were disarmed. At Sestroretsk, the factory committee was arrested. Industrialists from Vasilevskii Island called an urgent meeting and demanded that all workers be disarmed immediately.<sup>59</sup>

Managerial resistance stiffened everywhere. The line between "economic" and "political" became hopelessly blurred as the struggle for power implicit in any strike was writ large into the question of Russia's future state order. Moscow industrialists forbade paid leaves for their employees.<sup>60</sup> In Petrograd, industrialists began to reject individual plant settlements in favor of industry-wide agreements and insisted on negotiating major issues only with trade-union leaders. Workers in Moscow, South Russia, the Urals, and especially the Ukraine found new demands for wages and conditions rudely rejected, while trade and industrial leaders in the capitals pressed for a harder government line. When Kerenskii invited S. N. Tretiakov to take the trade and industry portfolio, the president of the Moscow Stock Exchange and his supporters insisted he could do so only if there were a "radical break" with the past.<sup>61</sup> Partly for this reason, negotiations over a new coalition cabinet took more than three weeks, succeeding only after Kerenskii himself resigned briefly on 21 July, and the moderate Social Democrat S. N. Prokopovich, rather than Tretiakov, agreed to become minister of trade and industry.

The appointment of Prokopovich hardly pleased the industrialists. In Moscow, Iu. P. Guzhon, now president of the MSFMO, gathered his colleagues together to reinforce their efforts at holding the line against further economic and political

<sup>58</sup> *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie*, 1: 526.

<sup>59</sup> M. Bortnik, "Na Trubochnom zavode," in A. Anskii, *Professional'noe dvizhenie*, 273.

<sup>60</sup> "Paid leaves [*otpusky*] for workers should absolutely not be granted; if workers demand such leaves by threatening to strike, and if they actually begin such strikes, under no circumstance should agreements be reached which satisfy these demands or pay workers for their strike time"; *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie*, 1: 527.

<sup>61</sup> See the discussion in V. Ia. Laverychev, "Vserossiiskii soiuz torgovli i promyshlennosti," *Istoricheskie zapiski*, 70 (1961): 46 and following.

deterioration.<sup>62</sup> The Petrograd SFMO, under A. A. Bachmanov,<sup>63</sup> which now included in its ranks more than 450 enterprises (employing some 270,000 workers) restructured itself along industrial branch lines, to strengthen the ability of management to resist workers and unions.<sup>64</sup> Early in August, leading members of the PSFMO joined with representatives from the Council of Trade and Industry Congresses (Soviet S"ezdov), the Union of Donets Coal Producers, the Ural Metallurgical Industrialists' Association, the Baku Oil group, the All-Russian Sugar Manufacturers' Association, the Association of Private Petrograd Banks, and others, to organize a Union of United Industrial Enterprises "to coordinate actions against the interference of workers in industrial management" and to work for new state regulations and decrees.<sup>65</sup> P. P. Riabushinskii, widely regarded as one of Russia's more moderate and progressive industrial leaders, remarked on 3 August, "We must insist, and this is recognized by all groups on the left, that the present revolution is a bourgeois revolution (voice: 'Correct!'), that a bourgeois order at the current time is inevitable, and since inevitable, should lead to a completely logical conclusion: those persons who rule the country ought to think and act in a bourgeois manner."<sup>66</sup>

How all of this affected the strike movement, and how, in turn, strikes themselves affected labor-management relations in this period can readily be seen. The summer cluster of strikes represented a much smaller peak than either the spring or fall clusters but involved more than 370,000 strikers in just twenty-nine days, a far higher proportion than in the spring.<sup>67</sup> These strikes were clearly larger than those earlier, they occurred in larger plants on average, and they exemplified a spread of strikes from single-plant stoppages to more widely coordinated actions. In the country as a whole, strikes were concentrated among industrial workers; the number of service workers on strike declined.<sup>68</sup> Most important, the success rate for strikes fell notably. So did the frequency of negotiated settlements, especially in Moscow and Petrograd, despite the fact that the Provisional Government issued new legislation on conciliation boards in early August, urging them "to prevent and settle disputes between workers and administrations of industrial enterprises."<sup>69</sup> Only one-third of the strikes for which we have data on outcomes ended in victory in these weeks. The workers lost 17 percent, compared to a failure rate of only 3

<sup>62</sup> *Promyshlennost' i torgovlia*, 28-29 (1917). The MSFMO executive committee now included V. I. Arandarenko, K. M. Zhemochkin, K. A. Malakhovskii, Iu. I. Poplavskii, N. V. Nabgol'ts, N. M. Mikhailov, V. V. Popov, and L. A. Rabenek, in addition to Guzhon.

<sup>63</sup> Bachmanov was a leading figure in the G. A. Lessner complex and director of "Old Lessner."

<sup>64</sup> See T. Shatilova, "Petrogradskoe obshchestvo zavodchikov i fabrikantov v bor'be s rabochim dvizheniem v 1917 g.," in A. Anskii, *Professional'noe dvizhenie*, 103. These new branch organizations were in addition to eight existing city district sub-organizations.

<sup>65</sup> Others included representatives from the metalworking, timber, paper, and private railroad associations, and a number of local SFMOs, including the PSFMO. *Promyshlennost' i torgovlia*, 28-29 (1917).

<sup>66</sup> *Ekonomicheskoe polozenie*, 1: 200-01. See also the discussion in William G. Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton, N.J., 1974), 205-12.

<sup>67</sup> Some 108 strikes began in this period of relatively intensive strike activity.

<sup>68</sup> Koenker and Rosenberg, "Strikes in Revolution, Russia, 1917."

<sup>69</sup> *Ekonomicheskoe polozenie*, 1: 551-52; Browder and Kerensky, *Russian Provisional Government*, 2: 742-43.

percent in the spring. Responsibility for the increased failure rate belonged to management, not labor. We have no cases at all for these weeks in which workers refused to enter into negotiations when requested to do so by management.

Strong anti-labor attitudes emerged in a wide variety of disputes. Owners of restaurants and taverns in Petrograd reneged on concessions they had offered strikers in early July, refusing to include tip income in waiters' salaries (an important "dignity" issue), ignoring provisions establishing an eight-hour day, and hiring minors at extended hours to replace professionals who complained.<sup>70</sup> Leather manufacturers in Moscow refused to accept a compromise settlement proposed by the minister of labor after three weeks of negotiations failed to avert a strike, despite terms that guaranteed to plant administrators sole responsibility for hiring and firing. Workers were at their benches expecting to resume work when the word came of the owners' refusal.<sup>71</sup> Owners of woodworking plants in Petrograd, Moscow coopers, and owners of Petrograd printshops similarly took a harder line. In the case of the coopers, the owners rejected the union's demand for a minimum wage of thirteen rubles a day and offered instead a scale running from eight to twelve, apparently telling workers in the process that their union was pitiful and hardly worth their time.<sup>72</sup> The association of printshop owners went so far as to issue a warning that, if workers dared to strike in response to the owners' categorical refusal to make a new agreement effective as of 1 August, all negotiations would end.<sup>73</sup> On 22 July, an important conference of Petrograd metal union delegates deplored the "aggressive" posture of the employers' association and expressed its feeling that a peaceful agreement with the PSFMO was impossible.<sup>74</sup> Sentiments elsewhere were much the same.<sup>75</sup>

In short, service and industrial workers in Petrograd and Moscow found themselves suddenly on the defensive in the aftermath of the July Days debacle, struggling not only against aggressive management but against the further deterioration of the economy as well, which greatly increased the risk to workers from strikes. The threat of unemployment was growing. Early gains from the

<sup>70</sup> *Rabochaia gazeta*, 1 August 1917.

<sup>71</sup> *Golos kozhevnik*, 4–5 (1917). The Likino textile manufacturing complex near Moscow shut down on 1 August despite a report by the Moscow industrialists' association that there was sufficient fuel and material to keep the plant in operation. Instead, "decisive measures" were called for against workers who, by September, were protesting by threatening to arrest the plant administration. *Ekonomicheskoe polozenie*, 1: 454–55.

<sup>72</sup> *Rabochaia gazeta*, 12 July 1917.

<sup>73</sup> *Delo naroda*, 14 August 1917.

<sup>74</sup> *Ekonomicheskoe polozenie*, 1: 528.

<sup>75</sup> For example, Singer sewing machine workers striking at plants and retail stores throughout Russia found themselves locked out after they agreed to a settlement proposed by the ministry of labor, which entered the dispute because of Russia's "critical political circumstances." The management insisted on the end of interference by local committees of any sort in enterprise affairs, something neither workers nor the government itself could guarantee. See *Ekonomicheskoe polozenie*, 1: 460–65; A. M. Lisetskii, *Bol'sheviky vo glave massovykh stachek* (Kishinev, 1974), 214–16; and *Russkaia volia*, 21 September 1917. There is some evidence that the order to close Singer came from New York.

In Baku, almost four months of negotiations over a new collective wage agreement for oil workers were interrupted twice by industrialists resisting proposed increases, and, when an agreement was reached at the bargaining table, individual enterprises refused to accept it. Anxious local soviet leaders asked the ministry of labor to intervene, and, on 31 July, Skobelev went to Baku to see if he could secure an agreement. *Rabochaia gazeta*, 4 August 1917.

strike movement were being eroded. Many owners seemed to be seeking excuses to shut down, at least temporarily. Some virtually dared their employees to walk out. Managers like those of the Vulkan machine construction plant seemed to take pleasure in announcing they were "forced" to cut in half the wages of factory committee members and those elected to other representative organs.<sup>76</sup> The options for workers were rapidly narrowing, particularly in large industrial plants of the two capitals and their surrounding areas.

One might expect in these circumstances that forms of direct action against employers other than strikes would become increasingly attractive, especially in Moscow and Petrograd. Our evidence suggests, however, that other types of direct action declined in the factories after the July Days, most dramatically in August, in contrast to strikes. Our data are not comprehensive, and it must be stressed again that many factory-based incidents went unreported. But there is little basis for thinking the frequency of press reports was now any less than in the spring and good reason to suspect it was higher, especially in newspapers concerned about the deteriorating political and economic conditions. In any event, the published record suggests that direct actions within enterprises in August fell substantially compared to July, and even more so in comparison to April and May.

Several reasons for this apparent decline suggest themselves when we examine factory-based protests more closely. Workers seem to have been just as cautious about engaging in actions that could result in production cutbacks as they were about strikes, since "illegal" acts provided owners with an even better excuse for shutting their doors than did strikes. Such actions as were reported seem instead to have been directed more toward maintaining production than settling grievances; indeed, the incremental expansion of areas of worker control in production during this period was largely motivated by this same goal.<sup>77</sup> In particular, workers now moved much more cautiously against plant foremen, supervisors, and salaried administrative personnel whose departure might have threatened their own work. Expulsions of unpopular administrators practically ceased. We have found only one case of wheelbarrowing reported in the press for all of July and August (at the Sampsonievskaja textile mills in Petrograd on 6 July). We find indications instead that a shift occurred in the objects of factory-based protest during these weeks, a shift that may have been even more extensive than the data indicate and certainly more important. When workers engaged in direct action in mid-summer, they commonly confronted plant owners or top management rather than foremen or lower-level managerial personnel, turning their attention in this way to the pinnacle of Russia's new socioeconomic order.<sup>78</sup> The majority of these and other protests occurred in those plants with the greatest management-labor tension in

<sup>76</sup> Z. V. Stepanov, *Rabochie Petrograda v period podgotovki i provedeniia oktiabr'skogo vooruzhennago vosstaniia* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1965), 151.

<sup>77</sup> Smith, *Red Petrograd*, chap. 7.

<sup>78</sup> In March and April, we define some 20 percent of factory-based non-strike protests as directed against plant owners or top management. In May and June, this figure increases to 43 percent and in July and August, to almost 47 percent. Even allowing for reporting biases and other inaccuracies of the data, both the prevailing trend and the magnitude of the July-August increase seem clear.

July and August: the metal-fabricating shops and machine works of Petrograd and Moscow.<sup>79</sup>

In contrast, collective actions outside the factories, on the streets, in apartment buildings, food stores, and public places, seem to have increased during these weeks, at least in relative terms. Whereas reported factory protests outnumbered street actions before August (if we exclude incidents associated with the July Days), almost four times as many street actions were reported in the first three weeks of August as factory-based, non-strike actions. In street actions, too, one can perceive a shift in focus of some importance. During May and June, as we have seen, crowds commonly turned on thieves and burglars, often beating them unmercifully. Reports of attacks of this sort continued after the July Days but were far less frequent (bearing in mind that this decrease may have been caused by the process of reporting). But, at the same time, we do find a substantial increase in reported food riots, attacks on hoarders, searches for food and other goods, and similar acts of protest against deteriorating material conditions, giving evidence that a significant shift in the arena of labor protest was indeed occurring.

In Moscow, late in August, for example, a reduction in the daily bread ration to one-half pound (*funt*) per person appeared to touch off a series of street actions, some of which resembled, in their orderliness and deference to institutions, the *taxation populaire* of eighteenth-century France. On 26 August, the newspaper *Russkoe slovo* reported a crowd in the central Kitaigorod district demanding that authorities search the house of a person suspected of hoarding; in another part of the city, a crowd examined loaded carts passing through the neighborhood, presumably for illicit transport of rationed goods. Still others searched a house for supplies of sugar and coffee; no sugar was found, but a large supply of coffee was seized and turned over to the neighborhood food supply committee. Elsewhere, sugar was found hidden in warehouse; the 244 recovered bags were sealed and turned over to the authorities.<sup>80</sup> In other parts of the city, crowds were angrier. A riot in the suburban district of Alekseevskii ended with women threatening to beat officials from the local commissariat and the neighborhood's food supply section for failing to provide bread; on the same day came reports of the ransacking of a meat store.<sup>81</sup> The majority of riots focused on empty food shops, but militia and public officials who failed to provide for their constituents also incurred the crowd's wrath: when the Skorokhod outlet store in Moscow ran out of shoes on the evening of 5 September, a crowd gathered to protest, and agitators were heard to denounce the regime (*vlast'*).<sup>82</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Thus workers at the Brenner machine works seized the plant in late July to prevent owners from closing it and putting it up for sale, trade-union activists took over the closed Ludwig Marx metals plant in Moscow, and factory committees at Shchetinin in Petrograd and the A. V. Bari boiler works in Moscow, among others, assumed proprietorial as opposed to merely administrative responsibility for contracting the purchase of raw materials. Workers from the unfinished Moscow automotive works even sued the owners in court in an effort to keep the plant open.

<sup>80</sup> *Russkoe slovo*, 26 August 1917.

<sup>81</sup> *Russkoe slovo*, 2 September 1917.

<sup>82</sup> *Trudovaya kopeika*, 6 September 1917.

It is impossible to determine whether (or how) these protests were related to the decreasing number of opportunities open to workers to secure gains in the workplace, or whether they were sparked merely by the absence of food. The inability of the regime to correct matters hardly raised hopes for improvement, likewise the ineffective, month-long debate over problems of food supply by the Moscow Soviet. In any case, the patterns of protest were the logical consequence of narrowing legal recourse, a sign of the rapidly diminishing appeal of "bourgeois-democratic" values. The weeks of August saw the expansion of the arena of protest from the factory to the community, from workers to entire families, and, in all likelihood, from men to both men and women. During August, workers increasingly went into the streets to secure their needs, rather than using "legitimate" means of protest, including strikes. This late summer period marked the emergence of state and soviet authorities, and the state itself, over managers and enterprises as the targets of protest, even in incidents that were not overtly political. As conflict over issues that were ordinarily part of "routine" labor protests (wages, rations, housing, unemployment rights) spilled into the streets, the expansion of protest reflected not only the political mobilization of broader segments of the laboring population but also the end of any shared assumptions there might have been about the authority and legitimacy of Russia's prevailing order.

THE ESCALATION OF SOCIAL CONFLICT IN THE AFTERMATH of the Kornilov mutiny in late August is well known.<sup>83</sup> So, too, are the transparent weaknesses the mutiny revealed in both army and state, the fundamental structures of "bourgeois-democratic" political control. For tens of thousands of industrial workers in Petrograd, General Kornilov's attempted march on the capital was rightly understood as a frontal attack on their opportunities for freedom and welfare, even if, in the eyes of many labor leaders themselves, the line between "freedom" and "industrial anarchy" was increasingly blurred. Outlawing strikes was reported to be an essential part of Kornilov's program.<sup>84</sup> "Restoring order" in the capital surely meant repression. No episode of the entire revolutionary period, in fact, did more to develop popular political consciousness or turn rank-and-file workers in favor of a radical socialist state.

At the same time, the ignominious collapse of the uprising and the humiliating defeat of right-wing Russia's man on a white horse left his supporters in the Petrograd and Moscow industrial community anxious and exposed. It was now most unlikely that real benefits could come from the efforts of Riabushinskii and others to defend "bourgeois" interests by strengthening their political ties with non-socialist parties. Many suspected the worst: that any efforts in this direction

<sup>83</sup> See, for instance, the discussions in Koenker, *Moscow Workers and the 1917 Revolution*, chap. 3, Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, chap. 7.

<sup>84</sup> A. Il'in-Zhenevskii, "Neudavshiisia Bonapart," *Miatezh Kornilova: Iz belykh memuarov* (Leningrad, 1928), 11; P. N. Miliukov, *Istoriia vtoroi russkoi revoliutsii*, 1, vyp. 2 (Sofia, 1921), 120; A. M. Lisetskii, "Ob otnoshenii bloka kontrrevoliutsionnykh sil k zabastovochnomu dvizheniiu proletariata Rossii (mart-oktiabr) 1917 g.," *Uchenye zapiski Kishinevskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 95 (1968): 7.

would prove futile. "Life presses us closer to politics," Bachmanov, president of the PSFMO council, told his colleagues on 5 September, but there was no longer any means to realize effectively "the wishes and needs of the industrial class."<sup>85</sup> With the German offensive against Riga, Russia's rapidly deteriorating economy, the initiation of contingency plans to evacuate major Petrograd plants, and the collapse once again of the governing coalition, tensions increased between peasants and landlords in the countryside, between radicals and moderates in the meeting chambers of local dumas and soviets, and particularly between the "rulers" and the "ruled" in the factories. Literally and figuratively, the building of barricades had begun.

A pervasive uncertainty about the future affected men and women worried that their factory gates would be locked as much as it did industrialists, merchants, and bankers eager to salvage their investments. By the end of the summer, production, even in favored defense industries, had fallen drastically, in some cases, to as little as 60 percent of February levels. Supply shortages in textiles were relieved by the annual industry holiday, which came in August, but reserves of food, fuel, and other essential goods remained precarious in Petrograd and Moscow, and no one thought the situation would soon improve. According to a report to the Special Council on Transport early in August, goods shipments on the railroads were off by more than 244,000 cars in July compared to the same period in 1916; more than 25 percent of the country's locomotives were out of service, with some 5,180 "undergoing repair," 1,705 more in July than in 1916. In Moscow, which was somewhat better supplied than Petrograd, food prices increased on the average more than 20 percent between August and September and were up 62 percent from May. The jump in Petrograd was more abrupt.<sup>86</sup> The vital aspect of this deepening crisis, moreover, lay not so much in its objective indexes but in the growing conviction of ordinary workers that deprivation was not shared by all. In many places, workers no longer simply demanded food and fuel, they demanded that luxury restaurants and cinemas be closed. As General Kornilov insisted on the death penalty for deserters, workers called angrily for harsh punishments for speculators and hoarders. Popular rage over the gap between privilege and need may have been growing even more rapidly than the gap itself.

In these circumstances, the strike movement underwent a remarkable change. While strikes again increased across the country in mid-September, their greater frequency was less significant than the fact that workers were now striking in unfavorable economic circumstances and, more important, doing so in enormous numbers. By our estimates, more than 1.2 million workers began strikes between mid-September and the October revolution (including some 700,000 railroad workers who struck between 24 and 26 September); 200,000 to 300,000 workers

<sup>85</sup> *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie*, 1: 205.

<sup>86</sup> *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie*, 2: 74–79, 90, 244–46, 163; *Statistika truda*, 1 (1918): 10–11. See the discussion in Smith, *Red Petrograd*, 168–71; Stepanov, *Rabochie Petrograda*, 142–44, 182–206; and Koenker, *Moscow Workers in the 1917 Revolution*, 251–52.

remained on the streets in strikes begun in August and earlier.<sup>87</sup> The magnitude of the fall cluster of strikes measured in numbers of strikers was ample testimony to the determination of workers everywhere to effect a radical change in industrial relations. Few could fail to perceive it.

Industrialists, manufacturers, even restaurant owners and those of other service establishments dug their heels in further against this pressure. Strikes resulted in fewer outright victories for workers in the two capitals in October than for any other month of the year. For the first time, we see numbers of workers striking primarily to force management to the bargaining table, something that had rarely happened earlier. The decline in successful wage strikes was especially sharp.<sup>88</sup> Still, the number of strikers escalated at an almost geometrical rate, as if workers refused to be restrained any longer by practical considerations.

It is difficult to measure whether the increase in worker actions after the Kornilov mutiny was the cause or consequence of the unyielding attitudes of employers, but, in both cases, the change from August was considerable, especially in Moscow and Petrograd. The evidence suggests that, by early October, workers' non-strike actions had shifted back into the factories and were increasingly violent toward factory owners and managerial personnel alike. At the Okhta munitions works, for example, one of the largest plants in Petrograd, workers "arrested" the head of the factory and subjected administration officials to an abusive search.<sup>89</sup> At the Peter the Great arsenal, workers forceably blocked the evacuation of equipment, temporarily seizing this important arms works.<sup>90</sup> Some sixty armed Skorokhod leather plant workers arrested their board of directors on 16 September to secure wage increases.<sup>91</sup> Women chemical workers resorted again to the wheelbarrow in an attempt to expel the director of Moscow's Vtorov chemical factory.<sup>92</sup> Woodworkers at the Markov plant reported to their district soviet that they were blocking the sale of lumber from the plant because they feared management was preparing to lock them out.<sup>93</sup> At Putilov, the Nevskii shoe works, and scores of other plants in Russia's two capitals, workers' committees inventoried supplies, demanded access to factory accounts, organized or extended factory-based Red Guard organizations, and, with a greater or lesser degree of political consciousness, strengthened the social basis on which the Bolsheviks would soon take power.

<sup>87</sup> These figures, moreover, are clearly low, based on estimates of strikers for only 68 percent of the strikes we know occurred between 16 September and 25 October. We lack adequate employment records to construct good estimates for the remaining 32 percent (sixty-one strikes).

<sup>88</sup> Frequencies are low, but our data suggest that approximately 33 percent of all wage strikes were won in October versus some 45 percent in September and in August. A dramatic decline also occurred in management's willingness to compromise on wages elsewhere after the Kornilov mutiny, although this decline still led more frequently to a favorable outcome for workers outside the capitals in September and October.

<sup>89</sup> *Khronika*, 3 (Moscow, 1960), 486.

<sup>90</sup> *Revolutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v sentia bre 1917 g.* (Moscow, 1961), 302.

<sup>91</sup> *Revolutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v sentia bre 1917 g.*, 380–81.

<sup>92</sup> *Sotsial-Demokrat*, 28 September 1917.

<sup>93</sup> *Raionnye sovety Petrograda v 1917 g.*, 3 vols. (Moscow and Leningrad, 1966), 2: 121.

An increase in the number of reports of factory-based actions in the weeks immediately preceding October was also accompanied by a decline in reports of street actions. Again, this shift could reflect a bias in the reporting, but the changing nature of lynch-law actions in this period suggests otherwise. Reports of attacks on burglars and thieves by angry crowds are almost gone. There is certainly no prevalent wave of anger or intolerance for thievery after the Kornilov affair, in sharp contrast to the spring. Instead, reports of street actions in the capitals concern food shortages and intolerance of officialdom, threats to lynch city officials responsible for food distribution, looting and seizing food stores, or searching and looting shops in which food caches were suspected to be hidden—as if the crowd had abandoned any attempt to forge a civil society in common with other social elements.

The available reports indicate that factory-based actions in September and October continued to be concentrated in the metal plants, despite the existence of a collective wage agreement for both Moscow and Petrograd.<sup>94</sup> The largest number of incidents in other plants occurred in the strife-torn leather trades, caught in the midst of one of the period's longest and most contentious strikes. The labor "peace" secured through collective wage agreements was no longer a substantial basis for social order in the business enterprises of the capitals.

Finally, more job actions that previously would have occurred without the cessation of work seem, in these last weeks before October, to have been directly connected to strikes. Even a strike was no longer sufficient for workers to achieve their goals and, indeed, may have played into the hands of plant owners seeking acceptable grounds to halt production. Correspondingly, this shift suggests the rejection of economically "benign" acts of protest, such as evicting a rate setter while maintaining production. In other words, a merger appears to have been taking place by September and October of previously separate forms of protest, a sign of the narrowing options for workers in their efforts to define the extent of their new freedoms. We must re-emphasize that our data are not quantitatively systematic or complete, and that our perceptions of changes in this regard may stem from biases in the evidence. Nonetheless, the magnitude of the change is startling. Fully 75 percent of the attacks on managerial personnel, the seizure of factories, the blockage of goods shipments, and other workers' actions that were reported in connection with strikes during 1917 occurred between 1 September and 25 October.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Some 60 percent of all reported factory-based actions were linked to metal plants in September and October, compared to approximately 45 percent in July and August. Because of the army's collapse, however, workers in defense-related production may have received disproportionate attention from newspapers and others providing evidence of these events.

<sup>95</sup> Thus, when the management of the Nevskii mechanical shoe factory attempted to evacuate equipment in early September, angry workers placed a guard at the factory gates to block the move and ordered that nothing be taken from the plant without a pass from the factory committee. Management responded by attempting to withhold the wages of committee members on the grounds that they were not engaged in productive work. This action led to a strike involving violence and threats of violence against administrative personnel. In response, the plant was formally closed, leading workers on 4 October to plan to seize it by force in an effort to restart production, and provoking an appeal for troops from Tretiakov, chairman of the Main Economic Committee, to the commander of

This connection reaffirms the changing character of strikes as an integral part of "conventional" management-labor relations on the eve of October. The change was occurring in ways that dramatically affected the mentalities of labor and management both, at least in Petrograd and Moscow. Although factory workers and commercial employees were better able to mobilize in September and October than in the spring, using their own committees and trade unions, and while Bolsheviks and others provided additional resources, economic conditions no longer favored the use of strikes as primary weapons in labor-management relations. Strikes shifted in the fall from a type of labor protest that formally respected the basic prerogatives of management in a "bourgeois-democratic" system (such as plant ownership and the inviolability of person), and that could be contrasted in this regard to the "informality" of street actions (which followed a different logic), to a form that was increasingly desperate, bitter, and violent. Even though workers may have understood that strikes were becoming ineffective as a means to achieve economic gains from their employers, they often struck anyway, shedding economic constraints with a sense of resignation about the outcome.<sup>96</sup>

In the process, strikes, like street actions, challenged the premises on which urban social relations had been structured since February. By October, strikes had evolved from a means of resolving labor-management conflict within formal "bourgeois-democratic" structures to a means for expressing a profound alienation from that order, a transformation both reflecting and defining the process of urban social polarization. From early April, government officials and moderate socialists alike had attempted to impose limits on the range of strikes and demonstrations. They sought to constrain "formal" protest within boundaries defined by judgments about what was economically feasible and what was

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the Petrograd military district. See *Rabochii put'*, 10 September 1917; *Khronika*, 4 (Moscow, 1961), 255; *Torgovo-Promyshlennaya gazeta*, 3 October 1917; *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii nakanune oktiabr'shogo voozruzhennogo vosstaniia (1-24 oktiabria 1917 goda)*, (Moscow, 1962), 251. Similarly, striking workers at the Kibbel' printing works, the Krel paper works, and the Benno-Rontaller button factory only returned to work in late September and early October after their factory committees had seized the plants. At Benno-Rontaller, workers seized the factory when management refused to implement a collective wage agreement that had been negotiated for nine such factories, demanding the matter be referred once more to a conciliation commission. Workers refused with little hesitation and simply took over. Reports are in *Russkie vedomosti*, 15 October 1917; *Izvestiia*, 15 October 1917. See also *Khronika*, 4 (Moscow, 1961), 62; and *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v sentiabre v 1917 g.*, 326.

<sup>96</sup> Examples abound. Striking paper workers on 20 September left their jobs with the greatest reluctance, recognizing that "any strike" in Russia's current circumstances was a "sharp blow to the whole social organism." Their view was broadly shared: among railroad workers, who initiated a nationwide stoppage on 24 September, among metalists and leather workers, among the tens of thousands of textile workers who came to believe in early October that the course of events had left them no alternative, *Rabochaia gazeta*, 20 September 1917. Under pressure from the government, the paper workers agreed to provide the necessary paper for Constituent Assembly ballots despite their strike. At the important Aivaz machine works in Petrograd, workers turned on the engineer, Abrabanskii, in October when he "rudely" refused to take back a woman worker who had been sick for ten days, wheelbarrowing him out the gate after a severe beating and dumping him in the dirt. Other engineers and foremen quit their posts in protest, leaving workers free to seize the plant despite the pleas of many urging restraint. See *Rabochaia gazeta*, 24 October 1917. When pharmacy workers struck in Petrograd in mid-October, the city duma demanded the regime empower municipal authorities to seize the shops and use the militia to assure their operation. In reaction, the Rozhdestvenskoi district soviet and others dispatched Red Guards to the shops, prepared, if necessary, for civil war, if that was needed to protect the rights of strikers; *Den'*, 13 October 1917.

considered necessary to meet the country's basic goals: defense against the Germans (if not outright military victory), social stability, economic and social justice, and the orderly creation of democratic political institutions and a rule of law. Even stronger limits had emerged, however, from the impersonal forces of the market and the conscious and collective decisions by organized management to resist any expansion of the rights of workers in the workplace.

In these circumstances, Russia's weak governmental administration, trying to construct its own feeble version of democratic order in 1917, was no match for either militant industrialists or militant labor. By the fall, strikes and other forms of protest customary in Western democracies, while still legal, were neither effective means of achieving workers' goals nor, in the opinion of established authorities, acceptable as "legitimate" forms of protest. The struggle was no longer over wages or material conditions but, in the words of Lenin, over who would control whom ("kto kogo"). As a result, strikes, other factory-based actions, and street actions came largely to symbolize the rejection of bourgeois values and the conventional processes of resolving labor-management conflicts in Western bourgeois societies, as well as the value system on which government and soviet leaders were attempting to construct Russia's new order. For both management and labor, collective actions exemplified instead the polarization of urban society and the developing tensions, mentalities, and violence of civil war.