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Soviet Rewriting of 1917: The Case of A. G. Shliapnikov

The career of Aleksandr Gavrilovich Shliapnikov dramatically illustrates the interrelationship of politics and historical writing in Soviet Russia from the early 1920s until 1931. During that formative period, the Bolshevik Party sought uniformity in its ranks by the general suppression of dissent and a corresponding requirement that its historians regard their craft chiefly as an extension of party policy. Although Bolshevik historians increasingly felt compelled to justify the party's past and present policies, Shliapnikov resisted. He continued to advocate many of the opinions he had held in the early 1920s as a leader of the Workers' Opposition. Although he was condemned for his behavior, he began an equally controversial career as a historian of the 1917 Revolution. Shliapnikov wrote a series of articles and a four-volume study on that sensitive subject in which he openly defied, even as late as 1931, mounting pressure for highly politicized reinterpretations. Initially, reviewers judged his historical studies according to the standards of scholarship by which he had written them. Yet Shliapnikov could not insulate his history from his or the party's politics. His understanding of 1917 influenced his criticism of contemporary Soviet society, as he himself noted on several occasions. By 1927, his detractors included historians who refused to acknowledge any distinction between party historian and propagandist. As a result, the Soviet historical profession added its harsh appraisal of Shliapnikov's scholarship to the official condemnation of his real and alleged political deviation.

A Bolshevik since 1903, Shliapnikov became one of the party's pivotal figures during World War I. With most of the members of the party's Central Committee in exile, Lenin commissioned Shliapnikov to create a Bureau of the Central Committee in Petrograd. This committee exercised leadership over the party in Russia until March 1917. In early 1917, Shliapnikov's position as a member of the bureau made him a prominent figure in the determination of party policy and thrust him forward as a Bolshevik representative to the executive committee of the Petrograd Soviet. Shliapnikov became less prominent in party affairs after April, but emerged as a key union leader. He held two significant

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labor posts, first as chairman of the Petrograd Union of Metal Workers and then, from July, also as chairman of the newly organized All-Russian Union of Metal Workers. Following the October Revolution, Lenin appointed him the first commissar of labor.

Shliapnikov consistently criticized party policies with which he disagreed. On November 4, 1917, he announced his association in principle with those commissars who resigned over Lenin's refusal to form a coalition government. He did not, however, resign along with them.¹ Two years later, as a leading proponent of the Workers' Opposition, he called for a sharing of political power by the party, soviets, and trade unions, an arrangement under which workers could exercise autonomous control of industry through the election of its administrative organs.²

At the Tenth Party Congress, held in March 1921, Lenin orchestrated a successful effort to condemn the Workers' Opposition as an "anarchist deviation." Simultaneously, he persuaded Shliapnikov and another member of the Workers' Opposition, I. I. Kutuzov, to run for election to the Central Committee. The Congress elected both. Perhaps Lenin hoped this would conciliate Shliapnikov and that the position itself would restrain him from further public outbursts. Shliapnikov, however, continued to speak his mind. Near the close of the Congress, he submitted his resignation from the Central Committee, but it was refused.³ He then strenuously objected to the party's crude display of power when, in May 1921, it imposed on the Metal Workers' Union its own choices for leadership. Once again Shliapnikov unsuccessfully attempted to resign from the Central Committee while he launched an attack on the NEP as an unwarranted concession to private capitalism. In August, Lenin recommended to the Central Committee that Shliapnikov be expelled from the party. Lenin failed by one vote to achieve the required two-thirds majority, but the committee did severely censure Shliapnikov.⁴ Undeterred, in February 1922, Shliapnikov signed the "Declaration of the Twenty-Two," submitted to the executive committee of the Comintern, in which the signatories complained of the party's harassment of those associated with the Workers' Opposition, but the executive committee rejected the complaint. On March 6, at a meeting of the Communist fraction of the Fifth Congress of the All-Russian Union of Metal Workers, Shliapnikov and Lenin clashed openly. Despite considerable support within the union for Shliap-

1. Shliapnikov declared that he considered it "inadmissible to relinquish my responsibility and obligations" as commissar of labor (see minutes of the Central Committee for August 1917 to February 1918, reprinted under the title, *The Bolsheviks and the October Revolution*, trans. Ann Bone [London, 1974], p. 142).

2. Robert Vincent Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution* (New York, 1960), p. 125. Daniels provides a solid account of Shliapnikov's political career from 1917 to 1926. Shliapnikov's role in the trade union controversy of 1918 to 1922 receives extensive treatment in Jay B. Sorenson, *The Life and Death of Soviet Trade Unionism, 1917-1928* (New York, 1969). A survey of Shliapnikov's political career, including an autobiographical sketch of his life until early 1920, may be found in Georges Haupt and Jean-Jacques Marie, *Makers of the Russian Revolution* (New York, 1972), pp. 212-21. See also a collection of Shliapnikov's political criticism and the party's response in M. Zor'kii, ed., *Rabochaia oppositsiia: Materialy i dokumenty, 1920-1926 gg.* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1926).

3. For a discussion of Shliapnikov and the Tenth Party Congress, see Sorenson, *Life and Death of Soviet Trade Unionism*, pp. 124-27.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 166-69, 173-74; and Daniels, *Conscience*, pp. 133, 146-50, 157, 161.

nikov and what he represented, party pressure led to his removal from the presidium of the Congress.⁵ A few weeks later, the Eleventh Party Congress condemned the twenty-two for maintaining a separate faction and recommended their expulsion from the party if Shliapnikov and the others continued their alleged “factional and antiparty activity.”⁶

The demise of the Workers’ Opposition, and the attacks made specifically on Shliapnikov, left him politically impotent and on the brink of expulsion. But true to his outspoken nature, he continued his criticism whenever the opportunity arose. The widening rift between Trotsky and Stalin gave him little satisfaction because he despised both leaders. In an article published in *Pravda* in January 1924, Shliapnikov condemned the supporters of each for the creation of a bureaucratic regime which had suppressed the Workers’ Opposition. Trotsky especially seemed to him to be an opportunist seeking “the seizure of the apparatus.” With customary temerity, Shliapnikov offered his own program for the revitalization of the party and Soviet society, a plan that was quite similar to that set forth earlier by the Workers’ Opposition, including a demand for freedom of discussion within the party.⁷

By 1926, it was not Shliapnikov or others from the former Workers’ Opposition, but rather the United Opposition of Trotsky, Kamenev, and Zinoviev which posed the major challenge to Stalin’s leadership. The United Opposition proposed such policies as a vigorous program of planned industrial development, more restrictions on the kulaks, more independence for the Comintern, and the right of intraparty discussion, views which Shliapnikov generally shared. Perhaps it was this, in addition to the increasingly envenomed political atmosphere, that provoked a burst of polemics directed at Shliapnikov. In July 1926, wholly on the basis of a letter written in 1924 by Shliapnikov’s former colleague in the Workers’ Opposition, S. P. Medvedev, two unsigned articles in *Pravda* charged that both men harbored hopes for the liquidation of the Comintern and opposed an alliance of the Russian proletariat and peasantry. They allegedly led an “ultra-right group of capitulationists” whose members, like Trotskyites and Mensheviks, demonstrated little faith in the party’s ability to make history.⁸ True to form, Shliapnikov made matters worse by staging a defiant counterattack. In the Central Committee’s official journal, *Bol’shevik*, he rejected *Pravda*’s conclusions even while he criticized, as before, official economic and political policies. He concluded that *Pravda*’s editorial board and the Central Committee itself consisted of bureaucratic careerists devoted to the creation of an oppressive “petty bourgeois order.”⁹ In response, the party leadership attempted to associate Shliapnikov with the United Opposition. When, on October 16, 1926, Trotsky, Zinoviev, and other prominent members of the United Opposition repented of violations of party discipline, they appended a statement rejecting the “platform of the Workers’ Opposition defended by Shliapnikov and Medvedev.”¹⁰ Thirteen

5. See information in Daniels, *Conscience*, pp. 127–28; and M. M. Vasser, “Razgrom anarkho-sindikalistskogo uklona v partii,” *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1962, no. 3, p. 74.

6. *KPSS v rezolutsiakh i resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK*, 8th ed., vol. 2 (Moscow, 1970), pp. 368–71. Shliapnikov was not reelected to the Central Committee.

7. *Pravda*, January 18, 1924, pp. 4–5.

8. *Ibid.*, July 10, 1926, pp. 2–4, and July 30, 1926, p. 1.

9. A. Shliapnikov, “O demonstrativnoi atake i pravoi opasnosti v partii,” *Bol’shevik*, no. 17 (September 15, 1926), pp. 62–73; a lengthy polemical response followed (pp. 74–102).

10. *Pravda*, October 17, 1926, p. 1.

days later, Shliapnikov and Medvedev repented of "factional activity," condemned Shliapnikov's most recent article in *Bol'shevik*, and promised to abide by all decisions of the party's hierarchy.¹¹

Trotsky, Kamenev, and Zinoviev remained prominent, even resisting Stalin's leadership for another year. The available record for Shliapnikov reveals only fragments of information concerning his general activity after 1926. He chaired the Metal Import Trust from 1926 until 1929 and thereafter engaged in work related to the Soviet economy.¹² Another confession followed in 1930.¹³ At the Sixteenth Party Congress (June–July 1930), both Shliapnikov and Medvedev were condemned for failure to report an alleged conversation with representatives of an underground remnant of the Workers' Opposition.¹⁴ When the party purged eight hundred thousand of its members in 1933, Shliapnikov was included in that number as a "degenerate." A former political prisoner reported him to be in prison in Verkhne Uralsk, sick and deaf, in 1935.¹⁵ At the show trial in August 1936, both Kamenev and Zinoviev implicated Shliapnikov and Medvedev in the activity of the "Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Center."¹⁶ Shliapnikov died in prison in 1937.¹⁷

11. *Ibid.*, October 31, 1926, p. 1.

12. *Malaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 10 (Moscow, 1931), p. 10; N. Popov, *Outline History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, vol. 2 (New York, 1934), p. 454.

13. Several biographical sketches of Shliapnikov referred to this confession but provided no source for it. Two Soviet sources mentioned only that in 1930 Shliapnikov "acknowledged his mistakes." See *Deviatyi s'ezd RKP(b), mart–aprel' 1921 goda: Protokoly* (Moscow, 1960), p. 639; and *Odninadtsatyi s'ezd RKP(b), mart–aprel' 1922 goda: Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1961), p. 860. According to Haupt and Marie, in 1930 "the Party secretariat forced him to publish a public confession of his 'political errors'" (Haupt and Marie, *Makers of the Russian Revolution*, p. 221). After an exhausting if not exhaustive search of all likely locations for more precise information and for the confession itself, I am left with only frustration and nagging curiosity.

14. Emelian Iaroslavskii made this charge (see *Shestnadsatyi s'ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii, 26 iunია–13 iulia 1930 g.: Stenograficheskii otchet* [Moscow-Leningrad, 1931], pp. 337–38). Iaroslavskii added that, if party members knew of the existence of underground counterrevolutionary organizations and failed to report it, then they shared responsibility for the activity of such organizations (*ibid.*, p. 338). At the preceding Fifteenth Party Congress (December 1927), Rykov, then allied with Stalin, used Shliapnikov as an example of a party member who observed rules of conduct even while in opposition. Referring to recent attempts on November 7 by Trotsky, Kamenev, and Zinoviev to arouse public support in Moscow and Leningrad through demonstrations and speeches, Rykov pointed out that, as head of the former Workers' Opposition, Shliapnikov "never carried antiparty banners in the streets and never appealed to the nonparty masses" (see *Piatnadsatyi s'ezd VKP(b), dekabr' 1927 goda: Stenograficheskii otchet* [Moscow, 1961], pp. 287 and 289).

15. See information provided by A. Tsiliga, published in *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, no. 47 (January 1936), p. 3.

16. *Report of the Court Proceedings: The Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre* (Moscow, 1936), pp. 68 and 72. Neither Kamenev nor Zinoviev provided any information on Shliapnikov's or Medvedev's alleged involvement.

17. Considerable confusion exists as to the year in which Shliapnikov died, because Soviet sources provide two dates. For example, appended biographical notes in the 1960 edition of *Deviatyi s'ezd RKP(b): Protokoly* indicated 1943 (p. 639); however, the 1961 edition of *Odninadtsatyi s'ezd RKP(b): Stenograficheskii otchet* mentioned 1937 (p. 860). More recently, the biographical notes in V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5th ed., vol. 27 (Moscow, 1969), indicated 1937 (p. 611). The year 1937 is probably correct, because 1943 may have been used to count Shliapnikov as a war casualty rather than as a victim of the terror.

The demise of the Workers' Opposition deprived Shliapnikov of any opportunity for a post from which he could direct the development of the Soviet political and economic system. On the other hand, until 1927 and again, briefly, in 1931, Shliapnikov pursued a productive career as a memoirist-historian, writing on the events of 1917. His first attempt, an article on the October–November 1917 period, appeared in late 1922 in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, the official publication of the Institute for the Study of Party History and the October Revolution (Istpart).¹⁸ The following year, he published an article about the February revolt and the first of four volumes of the work that would bring him acclaim, then damnation, *Semnadsatyi god (1917)*.¹⁹ By 1927, Shliapnikov had written two more volumes of *1917* and had published articles in six consecutive issues of *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*.²⁰ The second and third volumes of *1917* extended the author's coverage from March to mid-April, and the six articles covered events from mid-April to the closing of the Moscow State Conference in August. A fourth volume of *1917* appeared in 1931.²¹ In total, Shliapnikov published more than one thousand pages of narrative dealing with 1917.²²

Shliapnikov's initial ventures into the historiography of 1917 were not auspicious. His article about the Bolshevik Party's activity in October bore all the trademarks of a poorly compiled memoir. It provided a garbled and incomplete account, without any attempt to verify the nature or chronology of developments discussed. Only Shliapnikov's anecdotal sketch of the October 16 session of the Central Committee (which he dated "no earlier than October 8") and of Smolnyi on October 25 deserved particular attention. Nor did a review in 1923 of the initial two volumes of N. N. Sukhanov's *Notes on the Revolution* merit praise; Shliapnikov chose to criticize the book by damning the author's alleged politics rather than by carefully evaluating the facts and interpretations Sukhanov presented. Shliapnikov concluded that for the proletarian reader the books were not instructive.²³

18. A. Shliapnikov, "K Oktiabriu," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 10 (1922), pp. 3–42 (hereafter cited as *PR*). Created in 1920–21, Istpart was affiliated with the party's Central Committee. It dominated Soviet historical scholarship on party history and 1917 throughout the 1920s.

19. A. Shliapnikov, "Fevral'skie dni v Petrograde," *PR*, no. 13 (1923), pp. 71–134; A. Shliapnikov, *Semnadsatyi god*, vol. 1 (Moscow-Petrograd, 1923) (hereafter cited as *1917*). This volume appeared in an edition of ten thousand copies.

20. A. Shliapnikov, *1917*, vol. 2 (Moscow-Leningrad, 1925); A. Shliapnikov, *1917*, vol. 3 (Moscow-Leningrad, 1927); *PR*, nos. 3/50 to 8/55 (1926). The second and third volumes appeared in editions of ten thousand and three thousand copies, respectively.

21. A. Shliapnikov, *1917*, vol. 4 (Moscow-Leningrad, 1931). This volume dealt with developments from February to August not treated in his earlier publications. However, its final two chapters (pp. 217–323) were only slightly revised editions of articles that appeared in three earlier issues of *PR*, nos. 3/50 to 5/52 (1926). Despite the press run of five thousand copies, this volume proved difficult to obtain. Only recently has it been made available in this country. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign now possesses a microfilmed copy and the University of South Alabama has a photocopy.

22. Works on 1917 by Shliapnikov not included in this accounting are: *Fevral'skie dni v Peterburge* (Kharkov, 1925), an abridged edition of the first volume of *1917*; a two-part article chiefly on events after the October revolt, "Oktiabr'skii perevorot i stavka," in *Krasnyi arkhiv*, 1925, no. 8, pp. 153–75, and 1925, no. 9, pp. 156–70; and the final two chapters of *1917*, vol. 4.

23. A. Shliapnikov, "Iz literatury o Russkoi revoliutsii: O knigakh N. Sukhanova," *Pechat' i revoliutsiia*, no. 4, pp. 46–52. In the first volume of the book in question, Sukhanov

Although Shliapnikov had no academic training in history, his willingness to consider carefully many primary sources, apart from Sukhanov's memoir, made his book *1917* and his articles some of the best researched and most perceptive histories written by a party member.²⁴ He referred to and—perhaps excessively—quoted the periodical literature of the major political parties and governing bodies;²⁵ speeches and resolutions from meetings of various political parties, the Petrograd Soviet and its executive committee, the First Conference of Soviets, and the Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets; and memoirs by many other participants including those published abroad in the non-Bolshevik journal, *Arkhiv russkoi revoliutsii*. He used particularly effectively material that reflected the attitudes of army officers and soldiers and demonstrated the advancing disintegration of the army.²⁶ Each volume of *1917* included approximately one hundred pages of appended documents.

By reliance on such variegated sources, Shliapnikov provided a reasonably accurate, but often ponderous, account of the views of important non-Bolshevik politicians and key military commanders. For the most part, Shliapnikov avoided drawing abusive caricatures of these individuals. He portrayed them, albeit in a condescending fashion, as sincere though misguided individuals victimized by events and their own support of an increasingly unpopular war effort.²⁷ Even the tsar emerged not as “Bloody Nicholas,” but as a sincere, though pitiful, character, deserted in February and March by generals and politicians who had sworn their most profound loyalty to him.²⁸ Shliapnikov consistently showed that Martov and Trotsky, and the splinter groups they represented, frequently joined with the party in criticism of the Provisional Government and the war.²⁹

had provided a no less damning indictment of Shliapnikov. He observed that in 1917 Shliapnikov struck him as an unintelligent party “fanatic” who “lacked all independence of thought” (N. N. Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revoliutsii*, vol. 1 [Berlin, 1922], p. 94).

24. Perhaps a key to Shliapnikov's treatment of 1917 can be found in his predisposition from childhood to empathize with the hopes and activity of the Russian people. This contributed to his consistent belief that the 1917 Revolution was more a product of popular activity than party dictate. In his autobiographical sketch, Shliapnikov stressed that he experienced hard work and persecution. “Both my parents' families were Old Believers,” he reported, therefore, “from early childhood I knew what religious persecution meant.” As a youngster left largely to his own devices, as he put it, he worked as a manual laborer, often suffering persecution for his political activism (Haupt and Marie, *Makers of the Russian Revolution*, pp. 212–14). Shliapnikov's association with the metalworkers in 1917 probably reinforced this empathy.

25. Bolshevik *Pravda* and *Sotsial-demokrat*; Menshevik *Rabochaia gazeta*; Kadet *Rech'*; S.R. *Delo naroda*; Provisional Government *Vestnik Vremennogo Pravitel'stva*; Petrograd Soviet *Izvestiia*; the conservative paper *Novoe vremia*.

26. These included reports of government commissars to the armed forces submitted in March and April, letters and telegrams to the government from officials and commanding officers, April to June 18, reports of various army headquarters, including General Headquarters, from June 25 to July 17, and a conference of front commanders and other generals held in Petrograd on July 16.

27. Note Shliapnikov's condescending treatment of Kerensky in A. Shliapnikov, “Kerenshchina,” *PR*, no. 7/54 (1926), p. 27; and A. Shliapnikov, “Kerenshchina,” *ibid.*, no. 8/55 (1926), p. 52.

28. Shliapnikov, *1917*, vol. 2, pp. 3–26.

29. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 42–44, 153, 231–32, 244; vol. 3, p. 255; vol. 4, pp. 147–216; A. Shliapnikov, “Iiul'skie dni v Petrograde,” *PR*, no. 4/51 (1926), pp. 72–74, 87; A. Shliapnikov,

Shliapnikov also avoided caricatures of major political parties, the military command, and administrative bodies such as the Duma, the Petrograd Soviet, and the Provisional Government. Each of these, including the Bolshevik Party, appeared as a heterogeneous combination of conflicting views. Shliapnikov emphasized the considerable differences of opinion between the Petrograd Soviet and the Provisional Government, especially over war aims and related matters of army reform.³⁰ On the other hand, he believed that many of these differences disappeared as support of the war forced the moderate Socialists into a de facto alliance with military commanders and the bourgeoisie. By mid or late July, despite a subsequent flare-up of antagonism at the Moscow State Conference, Shliapnikov contended that most non-Bolshevik forces shared hopes for the creation of a counterrevolutionary dictatorship.³¹

Shliapnikov's account excelled in its description of attitudes held by soldiers and Petrograd workers.³² It demonstrated that both groups acted according to a concern—largely devoid of ideological considerations—for the improvement of their material conditions. Correspondingly, Shliapnikov interpreted the February revolt as a national movement that resulted from widespread discontent with the prosecution of the war, shortages, and inflation.³³ After the revolt, he emphasized, soldiers initially supported both the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet, in addition to the war effort. They expected that the Revolution, now defended by the war, would provide freedom from degrading conditions of military service, an honorable peace, and a subsequent redistribution of land.³⁴ At first, even the representatives in the Duma enjoyed a measure of popularity. The third volume of *1917* provided numerous examples of how Duma members, sent to the front as commissars of the Provisional Government, received ovations from soldiers in March and April. Shliapnikov explained that much of this support resulted from the soldiers' naïve assumption that the Duma had led the revolt and issued Order No. 1. Because of the Duma's initial popularity, it played a "positive role in the continuing destruction of the forces of tsarism."³⁵ Shliapnikov observed, therefore, that Bolshevik antiwar propaganda aroused more hostility than support.³⁶ He added that many troops opposed the party's proposals

"Iiul'skie dni v Petrograde," *ibid.*, no. 5/52 (1926), pp. 6–7, 11–12, 55; Shliapnikov, "Kerenshchina," no. 7, pp. 30–34, 54, and no. 8, pp. 13 and 20.

30. Shliapnikov, *1917*, vol. 1, pp. 207–15, 246–47; vol. 2, pp. 60–66, 157–59; vol. 3, pp. 175–76, 188; vol. 4, pp. 167, 204–7.

31. Shliapnikov, "Kerenshchina," no. 7, pp. 24–28, 38–56, and no. 8, pp. 5–13, 16–19.

32. Shliapnikov devoted considerable attention to the evolving attitudes of both soldiers and officers from March to August (see Shliapnikov, *1917*, vol. 2, pp. 52–108; vol. 3, pp. 36–92, 118–41; vol. 4, pp. 101–26; A. Shliapnikov, "Iiun'skoe nastuplenie," *PR*, no. 3/50 [1926], pp. 21–31; Shliapnikov, "Iiul'skie dni," no. 5, pp. 30–37; A. Shliapnikov, "Iiul' na fronte," *PR*, no. 6/53 [1926], pp. 16–59; Shliapnikov, "Kerenshchina," no. 7, pp. 41–56). Robert S. Feldman used Shliapnikov's information extensively in "The Russian General Staff and the June Offensive," *Soviet Studies*, 19, no. 2 (April 1968): 526–43.

33. Shliapnikov, *1917*, vol. 1, pp. 3–5, 123.

34. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 142–43, 173; vol. 3, pp. 36–46, 54–59.

35. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 46, 36–45, 54–79. For more on the Duma's role, see *ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 96–98.

36. This hostility forced a curtailment of Shliapnikov's own activity in 1917. In March, a sympathetic soldier concerned for Shliapnikov's safety convinced him not to speak at a

for immediate land redistribution while they remained in the trenches and barracks unable to participate in it.³⁷ When his account turned to a lengthy description of the army's disintegration, he only occasionally referred to Bolshevik propaganda as a cause. On the whole, he attributed this development to a spontaneous feeling that neither the government nor moderate Socialists in control of the soviets planned radical military or agrarian reforms. Similarly, Shliapnikov's description of the Petrograd labor force emphasized that its politics hinged on the limited objectives of the eight-hour day and higher wages.³⁸ He recalled that, at the October 16, 1917 session of the Central Committee, he insisted that the party had lost the opportunity for much urban support because of its preoccupation with the acquisition of political power at the expense of stressing the need for higher wages.³⁹

Shliapnikov presented a detailed and interesting account of the activity of the Bolshevik Party from February until Lenin's return on April 3. He insisted that the party contributed substantially to the success of the February revolt: first, for years the party had consistently agitated for the overthrow of autocracy; second, once the revolt began, individual Bolsheviks participated as leaders of mass meetings and demonstrations;⁴⁰ and finally, the party's Bureau of the Central Committee, organized and led by Shliapnikov, helped dispel the soldiers' distrust of the proletariat by urging workers not to arm themselves.⁴¹ The party also rallied diverse social and political groups to the cause of revolution by issuing, on February 28, a leaflet calling for a coalition Provisional Revolutionary Government to rule until a constituent assembly could be convened.⁴² Because of the party's crucial role in the rebellion, Shliapnikov labeled the revolt "semi-spontaneous."⁴³

In Shliapnikov's opinion, subsequent Bolshevik activity was not as successful in coping with events. He observed that soldiers and workers sent few Bolsheviks to the Petrograd Soviet chiefly because so many members, though leading demonstrations, failed to grasp the significance of participating in the elections.⁴⁴ Shliapnikov elaborated on the party's difficulties by asserting that, in

garrison meeting (*ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 142–43). Following the events of July 3–5, so many troops believed Bolsheviks to be German agents that Shliapnikov decided not to free some party members arrested by soldiers, even though the executive committee of the Petrograd Soviet had empowered him to release them (see Shliapnikov, "Iul'skie dni," no. 5, pp. 37–38).

37. Shliapnikov, "Iun'skoe nastuplenie," p. 22; and Shliapnikov, "Kerenshchina," no. 8, pp. 16–17, 48.

38. See especially Shliapnikov, *1917*, vol. 1, pp. 3–8; and Shliapnikov, "Iul'skie dni," no. 4, pp. 60–66.

39. Shliapnikov, "K Oktiabriu," p. 14.

40. Shliapnikov, *1917*, vol. 1, pp. 19–33, 47, 69, 87, 109, 144.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 67, 105, 134–35.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 185–86, 218–20. Shliapnikov's observations regarding this leaflet remain controversial among Soviet and Western historians. They disagree with both the dates and interpretation provided by Shliapnikov (see, for example, Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, "The Bolsheviks and the Formation of the Petrograd Soviet in the February Revolution," *Soviet Studies*, 29, no. 1 [January 1977]: 86–105).

43. Shliapnikov, "Fevral'skie dni," p. 93; and Shliapnikov, *1917*, vol. 1, p. 119. This interpretation has some validity as recognized by Marc Ferro in *The Russian Revolution of February 1917*, trans. J. L. Richards (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972), p. 57.

44. Shliapnikov, *1917*, vol. 1, pp. 144, 146, 203–4.

March, its membership had divided into three competing groups. On the right, a “group of *intelligenty*” supported the Provisional Government, war, and unification with the Menshevik Party. Shliapnikov counted himself a member of the left, which opposed both the government and the war effort. The center group called for conditional support of the Provisional Government and eventually opposed attempts to disorganize Russia’s armed forces.⁴⁵ Casting aside his usual scholarly tone, Shliapnikov bitterly described how, upon their return on March 12 from exile in Siberia, Muranov, Stalin, and Kamenev helped make the center’s positions roughly the official program of the party. According to this account, these three acted arrogantly toward party colleagues and violated party discipline by forcing their way into leading party posts.⁴⁶ But much to Shliapnikov’s credit, he acknowledged that the center’s moderate platform corresponded, at the time, to widespread public support for the government and the war and to the party’s own numerical weakness. The same factors, he explained, motivated many Bolsheviks, especially those outside Petrograd, to seek unification of the Menshevik and Bolshevik parties.⁴⁷

The third volume of *1917* devoted several pages to a discussion of Lenin’s April Theses and the party’s response. As described, the theses provoked a “heated discussion,” in particular because “the position of Vladimir Il’ich was more left than our left.”⁴⁸ But Shliapnikov’s account provides only a schematic account of party activity, following this initial negative response to the theses. This corresponded to his own withdrawal from a commanding position in the party to lead the Petrograd Union of Metal Workers.

Throughout his articles and volumes on the sensitive subject of 1917, Shliapnikov consistently arrived at bold conclusions regarding the dynamics of the Revolution and the role of various organizations, including the Duma and the Bolshevik Party, and such individuals as Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky. These conclusions, combined with Shliapnikov’s own declining political fortunes, made a favorable review of his histories largely dependent on the degree to which party critics acknowledged the importance of scholarship. Until early 1927, those who reviewed *1917* judged it by scholarly standards. They appreciated the research behind it, the publication of documents, its broad perspectives which included treatment of such individuals as Rodzianko, Miliukov, and Nicholas II, and its honest appraisal of the difficulties facing the Bolshevik Party.⁴⁹ A review of the third volume of *1917* by the prominent Bolshevik historian, S. A. Piontkovskii, in *Pravda* (January 1927) agreed with these evaluations, but with some careful reservations. Piontkovskii justifiably found the volume tedious reading because of excessive quoting from original materials; and, with equal justification, he complained of Shliapnikov’s failure to provide dates and sources for many of the

45. On disagreements and divisions within the party, see *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 241 and 256; vol. 2, pp. 179–87; vol. 3, pp. 209, 259–60, 263–64.

46. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 179–85.

47. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 210–11.

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 259–64. Shliapnikov noted that Lenin advocated a more rapid transition from the bourgeois-democratic to the socialist stage of revolution than many on the Bolshevik “left” had thought possible.

49. See separate reviews by S. Mitskevich, G. Lelevich, and Feliks Kon in *Pechat' i revoliutsiia*, 1923, no. 3, pp. 191–93; *ibid.*, 1924, no. 2, pp. 215–17; and *ibid.*, 1925, no. 5–6, pp. 414–17. See also V. Petrov’s comments in *Krasnaia letopis'*, no. 6/21 (1926), pp. 176–79.

documents cited. But the reviewer praised Shliapnikov's reliance on documents and publication of many that had previously been unavailable in print. Piontkovskii concluded that the specialist in particular would appreciate Shliapnikov's efforts.⁵⁰ Until early 1927, harsh remarks emanated only from those who felt personally abused by Shliapnikov's comments concerning their activity in 1917.⁵¹ This criticism centered on statements not essential to his general portrayal of the events. But Shliapnikov, perhaps sensitive to a fault, provided a spirited defense of historical truth, as he called it, against any attempts at "political rehabilitation of the past."⁵²

Shliapnikov's publications on 1917, and critics' favorable responses to them up to 1927, corresponded to prevalent attitudes among Bolshevik historians concerning historical methodology. They recognized that historical writing had to conform to Marxist ideology and to the demands for political service of the Bolshevik Party. But these philosophical and political criteria were not so rigidly defined as to exclude respect for the traditional canons of scholarship.⁵³ At its inception in 1922, Istpart, for example, called for the publication "not of narrow apologies but impartial, nonprejudiced, nonagitational, historical literature."⁵⁴ In 1926, the most prominent of Bolshevik historians, M. N. Pokrovskii, complained that many younger historians failed to "love the facts" or respect the principle of documentation.⁵⁵ At about the same time, Piontkovskii charged that the Main Archive Administration allowed current political considerations to dictate which documents were published.⁵⁶ The respect for scholarship encouraged interest in memoirs dealing with 1917. Even accounts by such non-Bolsheviks as Sukhanov, Miliukov, and others were considered to be important sources of information.⁵⁷ In such circumstances, Shliapnikov's contributions commanded respect as detailed memoirs of an important Old Bolshevik, and as a history, they were acclaimed as the product of extensive research and reasonably balanced conclusions.

Shliapnikov's interpretations also placed him in the mainstream of Soviet historical scholarship on 1917. Until 1927–28, many Bolshevik historians, espe-

50. *Pravda*, January 26, 1927, p. 5.

51. See the comments by Iu. Steklov, editor of *Izvestia*, "Po povodu stat'i A. G. Shliapnikova," *PR*, no. 4/16 (1923), pp. 176–84; and G. Petrovskii, "O Fevral'skoi revoliutsii v Iakutske," *PR*, no. 3/50 (1926), pp. 218–20.

52. A. Shliapnikov, "Otvét Iu. Steklovu," *PR*, no. 5/17 (1923), pp. 377–84; A. Shliapnikov, "Vynuzhdennyi otvet t. Petrovskomu," *PR*, no. 3/50 (1926), pp. 220–24.

53. For an extended treatment of the attempt by Soviet historians to achieve a working integration of Marxist ideology, political instrumentalism, and scholarship, see Larry E. Holmes, "Soviet Party Historians on Historical Method, 1921 to 1928," *New Review*, 12, no. 4 (December 1972): 53–66; and Larry E. Holmes, "Science as Fiction: The Concept 'History as a Science' in the USSR, 1917–1930," *CLIO*, 4, no. 1 (October 1974): 27–50.

54. "Ot Istparta," *PR*, no. 4 (1922), p. 360; and "Temy pereraboty po istorii Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii," *PR*, no. 5 (1922), p. 323.

55. M. N. Pokrovskii, "N. N. Avdeev, kak istorik," *PR*, no. 5/52 (1926), pp. 217–21.

56. S. Piontkovskii, "K voprosu ob izuchenii materialov po istorii Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii," *PR*, no. 2/49 (1926), p. 241.

57. See Pokrovskii's comments on Miliukov in M. N. Pokrovskii, "Burzhuznaia konceptsiia proletarskoi revoliutsii," *Istorič-marksist*, no. 3 (1927), pp. 56–77; P. Lepeshinskii on the memoir by the Menshevik, O. A. Ermanskii, in the introduction to O. A. Ermanskii, *Iz perezhitogo (1887–1921 gg.)* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1927); and N. Lentsner's review of Sukhanov's *Zapiski o revoliutsii* in *PR*, no. 10/33 (1924), pp. 267–70. Lentsner was considerably more charitable than Shliapnikov had been.

cially the most prominent, tended to emphasize the importance of spontaneity, the absence of distinct class lines, the immediate material concerns of the public, and the party's problems in coping with these developments. The party emerged as a rather small political body which lacked organizational control over the public at large and whose ideology was, at best, far in advance of popular sentiment.⁵⁸ In fact, several writers emphasized the significance of spontaneity in the February revolt more so than Shliapnikov, who had called it only a semispontaneous affair.⁵⁹ Like Shliapnikov, many of his fellow historians regarded the history of 1917 as not so much a law-governed struggle between homogeneous non-Bolshevik and Bolshevik forces as the complex product of variegated responses by individuals, governing organs, social groups, and parties to social, economic, and political issues often related in some way to the war.

The synthesis forged by party historians from the demands of ideology, political service, and scholarship created a favorable environment for Shliapnikov's work, but it was, at best, unstable. The pervasive requirement that all intellectual endeavor serve the party threatened historical scholarship, especially on such a delicate topic as 1917. In 1924, the appearance of Trotsky's *Lessons of October* demonstrated how easily politicians could reduce a discussion of 1917 to polemics. In order to discredit Kamenev and Zinoviev, his contemporary political opponents, Trotsky focused on what he called their petty bourgeois and democratic inhibitions and, by way of contrast, his own aggressive behavior in 1917.⁶⁰ Fortunately for the party's serious historians, Trotsky's severest critics, including Kamenev, Zinoviev, Bukharin, and Rykov, regarded *Lessons of October* as a political exercise.⁶¹ Hence, their abusive response was not intended to set methodological standards for historians; "Comrade Trotsky is not a historian," Kamenev hastened to insist, "and neither are we."⁶² But the increasingly bitter nature of party politics, which victimized Shliapnikov in 1926, imperiled the existence of extrapolitical standards for any form of intellectual or cultural activity. Shliapnikov's own role as a political critic—reinforced, as he saw it, by his interpretations of 1917—made it probable that his scholarship would not remain immune to political censure.

It was Shliapnikov, not his critics, who initially made his general interpretation of the party's past and 1917 a political issue. Writing in 1924, he maintained

58. See, for example, the following studies by prominent party historians: S. A. Piontkovskii, *Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia v Rossii, ee predposylki i khod* (Moscow-Petrograd, 1923); A. Pankratova, *Fabsavkomy Rossii v bor'be za sotsialisticheskuiu fabriku* (Moscow, 1923); and the studies of the peasantry by S. M. Dubrovskii, *Ocherki russkoi revoliutsii: Sel'skoe khoziaistvo* (Moscow, 1923) and S. M. Dubrovskii, *Krest'ianstvo v 1917 godu* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1927).

59. E. B. Genkina, "Fevral'skii perevorot" in *Ocherki po istorii Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii*, ed. M. N. Pokrovskii (Moscow-Leningrad, 1927), pp. 54–55. Ia. Iakovlev, future commissar of agriculture, directly rejected Shliapnikov's conclusion, although, like Shliapnikov, he emphasized the importance of the party's previous agitation against autocracy and its underground experience (Ia. Iakovlev, "Fevral'skie dni 1917 g.," *PR*, no. 2-3/61–62 [1927], pp. 80–81, 97).

60. Leon Trotsky, *Lessons of October*, trans. John G. Wright (New York, 1937).

61. See their articles in *Za Leninizm* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1925).

62. *Ibid.*, p. 208. A. Andreev made a similar comment on p. 241.

that bolshevism had survived in part because of, not despite, intraparty struggle.⁶³ Two years later, in a somewhat contrived manner, he insisted that the assault on his politics reminded him of the July Days of 1917, when the party as a defender of workers' democracy had come under attack, just as the party now attacked him. Furthermore, in his opinion, the party's hierarchy now cooperated with petty bourgeois elements as the Mensheviks and S.R.'s had in July 1917.⁶⁴

The Central Committee's *Bol'shevik* immediately rejected these analogies as an attempt to equate a "pitiful liquidationist group with the party of the working class" and identify the "Communist Party and the Soviet state with Kerensky's government."⁶⁵ The journal charged that Shliapnikov had resigned from the Sovnarkom in November 1917. He attempted to protect himself with his confession in October 1926, which was followed by his explanation in *Bol'shevik* that, although for practical reasons he favored a coalition government in November 1917, he had not resigned.⁶⁶ The editorial board of *Bol'shevik* countered that any inclination toward a coalition government amounted to resignation and, worse, collaboration with Kadets and Mensheviks.⁶⁷ Yet Shliapnikov's studies of 1917 still escaped criticism. This situation did not long persist.

In 1927, denunciation of Shliapnikov extended to his accounts of 1917. This was the outcome of not only his own forced comparisons of events in the 1920s with those of 1917, but also, and more important, of the interrelationship of his oppositionist views and overall interpretation of the dynamics of 1917. In his initial three volumes of *1917* and in his articles, he interpreted his role as that of an individual who, though in the minority within the party in March, correctly pursued a Leninist line against Stalin, among others. He regarded open debate and intraparty divisions to be natural and somewhat healthy. In Shliapnikov's opinion, in 1917 the party had acted primarily as an instrument for the realization of short-term material goals of soldiers, workers, and, to a lesser extent, the peasantry. Thus, his understanding of 1917 reinforced his support of the right to open discussion within the party, the control of industry by administrative organs elected by workers, and the satisfaction of material demands of the workers, chiefly through higher real wages. In addition, his treatment of Trotsky and Stalin, as well as his discussion of the cooperation between the party and other leftists in 1917, proved troublesome.

The political condemnation of Shliapnikov, the memoirist and historian, commenced in March 1927 with the simultaneous appearance of critiques by D. Kin, A. Divil'kovskii, and A. Lomakin.⁶⁸ Although these individuals did not hold commanding positions in the historical profession, the articles by Lomakin

63. *Pravda*, January 18, 1924, p. 4.

64. Shliapnikov, "O demonstrativnoi atake," pp. 72–73.

65. *Bol'shevik*, no. 17 (September 15, 1926), p. 101.

66. *Ibid.*, no. 21–22 (November 30, 1926), pp. 135–38.

67. "Po povodu Oktiabr'skikh kolebanii i oshibok," *Bol'shevik*, no. 21–22 (November 30, 1926), pp. 139–44. The editorial board consisted of Molotov, Bukharin, Em. Iaroslavskii, A. Slepov, and V. Astrov.

68. D. Kin, "Semnadsatyi god v izobrazhenii t. A. Shliapnikova," *Istoriĭ-marksist*, 1927, no. 3, pp. 40–55; A. Divil'kovskii, review in *Pechat' i revoliutsiia*, no. 2 (1927), pp. 164–66; Ark. Lomakin, "O novoi knige tov. Shliapnikova," *Bol'shevik*, no. 5 (March 1, 1927), pp. 91–96. Of the three critiques, Divil'kovskii's was the most sober, Kin's the most detailed but petty, and Lomakin's the most polemical.

and Kin appeared in two authoritative journals, *Bol'shevik* and *Istoriĭ-marksisit* (the publication of the Society of Marxist Historians founded in 1925). Like Piontkovskii a few months earlier, the critics justifiably found that Shliapnikov had unskillfully integrated into his narrative many lengthy quotations taken from source materials. The reviewers correctly stressed that neither Lenin nor the peasantry had received extensive coverage. No one, however, made the legitimate claim that Shliapnikov had ignored the role of the non-Russian minorities. But the presentation of valid complaints was not the main thrust of the reviews. All three critics demanded, essentially, that Shliapnikov rewrite his history of 1917 in accordance with a political methodology which included prescribed interpretations. Lomakin complained that Shliapnikov relied excessively on archival documents and not sufficiently on a "materialist philosophy of history."⁶⁹ In keeping with such rhetoric, each of the antagonists denied many of Shliapnikov's well-documented conclusions. They wanted him to equate official party policy in March with Lenin's instructions sent from Switzerland, to minimize the party's internal divisions, to reject any similarity in views between Stalin and Kamenev, his contemporary political opponent, and to include a special section devoted to the alleged serious differences between Stalin and the party on the one hand, and Kamenev on the other. More generally, the revision would attribute to the Duma and Provisional Government no positive role in furthering the Revolution, and it would indicate a polarization of political forces between those purportedly led by the so-called counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie and revolutionary Bolsheviks as early as March. A correct interpretation would portray, in proper "Leninist" fashion, the party as the key historical dynamic force, one able, implicitly, to make history on the scale of Stalin's projected socialism in one country. In addition, Kin included a criticism of Shliapnikov's activity in February–March 1917. He alleged that Shliapnikov's efforts to create a coalition Provisional Revolutionary Government amounted to nothing more than an unacceptable concession to Bolshevik enemies and a rejection, in principle, of a proletarian revolution. Kin also condemned his insistence on not arming workers.⁷⁰ Concurrently, the acknowledged chief of party historians, Pokrovskii, subjected Shliapnikov's activity in 1917 to similar criticism.⁷¹

Shliapnikov characteristically leaped to his own defense. He emphasized that no evidence had been presented to counter his conclusions. He did not agree that party policy in February–March should be reduced to little more than a summary of Lenin's analyses from exile. With considerable justification, he bitterly observed that Kin would have him "falsify the authentic history and events of which I was a participant and eyewitness."⁷² Shliapnikov repeated that in February the Bolshevik Party's numerical weakness and the popularity of other Socialist parties necessitated, for practical reasons, an appeal for a coalition government. Soldiers' distrust of workers, he continued, required that he caution at that time against precipitous arming of the workers. Except for some caustic remarks

69. Lomakin, "O novoi knige," pp. 92–94.

70. Kin, "Semnadtsatyi god," pp. 50–51, 53.

71. M. Pokrovskii, *Ocherki po istorii revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Rossii XIX i XX vv.* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1927), p. 183.

72. A. Shliapnikov, "Otvēt kritikam," *Bol'shevik*, no. 10 (May 31, 1927), p. 84. Shliapnikov's response continued in *Bol'shevik*, no. 11–12 (June 15, 1927), pp. 99–104.

concerning Pokrovskii's activity in 1917, Shliapnikov's defense largely consisted of referring to his own extensive research and firsthand observations. The standard of scholarship by which he judged his work, and hoped others would too, no longer commanded the respect it once had, however. Kin and Pokrovskii countered with heavy-handed attacks on Shliapnikov's alleged past and present political heresies, and Pokrovskii apologized for his prior "shameful" encouragement of Shliapnikov's writing.⁷³ Lomakin merely insisted that a Bolshevik historian should not reach many of Shliapnikov's conclusions; he thereby implied that special political criteria should determine historical writings of party members.⁷⁴ The historiographical issue had become not the quality of scholarship, but the conclusions and, to a significant extent, the author, Shliapnikov.

Shliapnikov did not publish any additional studies until the fall of 1931, more than four years later. The tension and intolerance that resulted from conflicts within the party and from the new economic and cultural policies of the late 1920s militated against continued publication of Shliapnikov's work and, more than before, against application of professional standards in most areas of intellectual activity. Stalin's struggle with the United Opposition, then with the so-called Right deviation, provoked suspicion of anyone alleged to be associated, in the past or present, with oppositionist views or unwilling to denounce all forms of purported deviation and conciliation. Official concern over the possibility of war and the implementation of the First Five-Year Plan necessitated the mobilization of all Soviet citizens for the protection and transformation of Soviet society. Between 1928 and 1931, arrests, trials, and even liquidation of some economic specialists threatened the work of all those who expressed less than an enthusiastic endorsement of Stalin's leadership.⁷⁵ At the same time, the party deprived the Academy of Sciences of its independence by imposing new charters, forcing the election of Communists, and arresting some of its leading members.⁷⁶ Inspired by official policies as well as by their own intolerance, young Bolsheviks launched efforts on the "ideological and theoretical front" to dominate and politicize their respective fields. The encouragement from the Central Committee and from Stalin himself of these Bolsheviks, as well as the extent to which they succeeded, varied from discipline to discipline.⁷⁷ In the field of history, these efforts went far beyond the denunciation of Shliapnikov's studies.

73. M. Pokrovskii, "Neskol'ko malenkiikh popravok," *Bol'shevik*, no. 14 (July 31, 1927), p. 88; D. Kin, "Otvét tov. Shliapnikovu," *Bol'shevik*, no. 14 (July 31, 1927), pp. 104–11.

74. Ark. Lomakin, "Neskol'ko slov tov. Shliapnikovu," *Bol'shevik*, no. 11–12 (June 15, 1927), p. 112.

75. See Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror*, rev. ed. (New York, 1973), pp. 731–36.

76. Loren Graham, *The Soviet Academy of Sciences and the Communist Party, 1927–1932* (Princeton, 1967).

77. A significant body of literature on these developments exists; see especially Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Cultural Revolution in Russia 1928–32," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 9, no. 1 (January 1974): 33–52; Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Emergence of Glaviskusstvo: Class War on the Cultural Front, Moscow, 1928–29," *Soviet Studies*, 23, no. 2 (October 1971): 236–53; David Joravsky, *Soviet Marxism and Natural Science, 1917–1932* (London, 1961); Edward J. Brown, *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature, 1928–1932* (New York, 1953); and Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931* (Bloomington, Ind., 1978).

Two interrelated developments substantially altered the historical profession. First, for the most part, the limited tolerance of nonparty institutions and historians ceased after 1927. Bolshevik historians condemned the work of their nonparty colleagues for their general failure to abide by Marxist-Leninist interpretations and to defend contemporary party policies.⁷⁸ As part of the liquidation of the nonparty Russian Association of Social Science Institutes (RANION), its Institute of History was displaced by a similar organization in the Communist Academy. State authorities imprisoned many distinguished “bourgeois” historians, such as E. V. Tarle and S. F. Platonov, ostensibly for participation in a monarchist plot. Second, extending the arguments used against Shliapnikov in 1927, party historians established partisanship as the single most important methodological principle governing the work of all members of the profession. This required praise for Stalin’s wisdom and policies. It also compelled, as Shliapnikov had learned in 1927, demonstration of the party’s past alleged unity and ability to control historical forces. Although, at the First Conference of Marxist Historians (December 28 to January 4, 1929), some speakers called for the careful use of empirical evidence, many went little further than appealing for “revolutionary political methodology” and rejecting “old professorial habits and academic inclinations.”⁷⁹ One year later, a Conference of Teachers of Leninism, Party History, and the History of the Comintern resolved that, because the party could never err, “the most vigorous partisanship in research guarantees genuine scholarship.”⁸⁰ Not only Shliapnikov’s 1917, but also most other memoirs failed to meet these new standards. After having already rejected nonparty memoirs in 1927 and 1928,⁸¹ in 1930 party historians proceeded to dismiss many Bolshevik memoirs as unacceptable historical sources.⁸² Critics found that these and most other firsthand accounts failed to emphasize sufficiently the virtues of Stalin and Lenin, or the party’s unity and strength; conversely, they praised Stalin’s writings on the subject of 1917 as important, even mandatory, sources.⁸³

78. Note, in particular, the discussion of the attacks on D. M. Petrushevskii and E. V. Tarle in George M. Enteen, “Marxists versus Non-Marxists: Soviet Historiography in the 1920s,” *Slavic Review*, 35, no. 1 (March 1976): 101–5; and Konstantin F. Shtepa, *Russian Historians and the Soviet State* (New Brunswick, 1962), pp. 53–62. Enteen’s article provides an excellent survey of the rejection of coexistence with nonparty historical scholarship.

79. “Vsesoiuznaia konferentsiia istorikov-marksistov,” *Istoriik-marksist*, no. 11 (1929), pp. 219, 224, 231, 248–50; and *ibid.*, 1929, no. 12, pp. 300–301. For a complete report, see *Trudy Pervoi Vsesoiuznoi konferentsii istorikov-marksistov*, 2 vols. (Moscow-Leningrad, 1930).

80. “Materialy soveshchaniia prepodavatelei leninizma, istorii partii i istorii Kominterna,” *PR*, no. 4/99 (1930), pp. 170–71.

81. Memoirs by Miliukov, Sukhanov, Chernov, Struve, Plekhanov, and Martov were condemned in *PR*, no. 10/69 (1927), pp. 299–300; *ibid.*, no. 7/90 (1929), pp. 201–3; and *Istoriik-marksist*, no. 5 (1927), pp. 184–90.

82. *PR*, no. 2-3/97–98 (1930), pp. 194–96; *ibid.*, no. 4/99 (1930), pp. 50–61. For a discussion which ended, essentially, in a rejection of memoirs as historical sources, see the debate over the journal *Katorga i ssylka*, a publication of the Society of Former Political Convicts and Exiles, in *PR*, no. 9/104 (1930), pp. 168–73; and *ibid.*, no. 11/106 (1930), pp. 183–89; as well as in *Katorga i ssylka*, no. 3/76 (1931), pp. 7–15; *ibid.*, no. 10/83 (1931), pp. 124–29; and *ibid.*, no. 11–12/84–85 (1931), pp. 19–28.

83. See statements in *PR*, no. 5/100 (1930), pp. 251–55; *ibid.*, no. 11/106 (1930), p. 273; and *ibid.*, no. 2-3/109–110 (1931), p. 168. For observations on Stalin’s concern for his own image in historical writing at this time, see Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary 1879–1929: A Study in History and Personality* (New York, 1973), chapters 12 and 13.

As the leader of Bolshevik historians, Pokrovskii, one of Shliapnikov's critics, both contributed to and suffered from attempts to make his craft political. Adjusting to new political and professional conditions, he minimized his former respect for scholarship and emphasized his hostility to nonparty and nonpartisan historiography, including Shliapnikov's.⁸⁴ By 1930, Pokrovskii had repeatedly urged all party members "at the theoretical front," especially historians, to expose bourgeois ideology, denounce all deviations from the party line, and defend any changes in party policy.⁸⁵ Yet Pokrovskii's younger colleagues, and perhaps the party, expected more; as a result, he extended his apology for encouraging Shliapnikov's work to include his own work as well. Pokrovskii admitted to an exaggeration of the influence of merchant capitalism in tsarist history and, although never a dogmatic economic materialist, now pointedly noted the potential historical role of the party and its leadership.⁸⁶ At the First Conference of Marxist Historians he rhetorically asked: "If the dictatorship of the proletariat is not able to overturn 'spontaneous' economic development, then for what purpose is the dictatorship of the proletariat?"⁸⁷

Given these conditions, the fact that the fourth volume of Shliapnikov's 1917 appeared at all in October 1931 is remarkable.⁸⁸ Shliapnikov adhered to the

84. An important study of Pokrovskii's activity from 1928 is George M. Enteen, "M. N. Pokrovskij and the Administration of Soviet Historical Scholarship," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 22, no. 1 (1974): 56–67. Other significant contributions relevant to Pokrovskii's methodology are: Samuel H. Baron, "Plekhanov, Trotsky, and the Development of Soviet Historiography," *Soviet Studies*, 26, no. 3 (July 1974): 380–95, which demonstrates a marked tendency, on Pokrovskii's part, toward intolerance long before 1928; and O. D. Sokolov, *M. N. Pokrovskii i sovetskaia istoricheskaia nauka* (Moscow, 1970).

85. See *Vestnik Kommunisticheskoi akademii*, 39 (1930): 10–11; M. N. Pokrovskii, *Istoricheskaia nauka i bor'ba klassov*, vol. 2 (Moscow-Leningrad, 1933), pp. 380, 387, 393–95; and Pokrovskii's speech to the Sixteenth Party Congress in *Shestnadsatyi s'ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii: Stenograficheskii otchet*, pp. 246–48.

86. For a detailed discussion of Pokrovskii's problems from 1928 to 1932, see Enteen, "M. N. Pokrovskij"; Roman Szporluk, "Pokrovsky and Russian History," *Survey*, no. 53 (October 1964), pp. 107–18, who notes some resistance by Pokrovskii to criticism; and Shteppa, *Russian Historians*, pp. 100–101. Sokolov referred to a letter, located in the archive of the Academy of Sciences, in which Pokrovskii complained of polemical attacks made on a group of Soviet historians working on Western history (Sokolov, *M. N. Pokrovskii*, p. 100).

87. Pokrovskii, *Istoricheskaia nauka*, vol. 2, pp. 271–72. Pokrovskii's tendency to view history in universal rather than national terms and his opposition to the systematic study of history in the schools provoked criticism even before his death. After his death in 1932, these "errors," and his notion of tsarist Russia as a "prison of peoples," led to a condemnation of Pokrovskii and his so-called "school."

88. *Knizhnaia letopis'* listed the volume in its October 1931 issue (no. 60, item 25020). Unlike the first three volumes which were published by *Gosizdat*, the fourth had the imprimatur of the *Gosudarstvennoe sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe izdatel'stvo*. I have not found information that would provide a satisfactory explanation for the publication of Shliapnikov's last work. On June 23, 1931, speaking to representatives of the Supreme Economic Council and Commissariat of Supply, Stalin declared that the bourgeois technical intelligentsia had recovered from the "disease of wrecking" (J. V. Stalin, *Works*, vol. 13 [Moscow, 1955], pp. 70–71, 75). This speech seems to have contributed to a modest reduction of hostility toward some skilled specialists (see information in Joravsky, *Soviet Marxism and Natural Science*, pp. 245–46). It may also have contributed to less severe sentences than those initially contemplated for some distinguished scholars arrested previously (see a discussion of the "Academic Case" in Vladimir V. Tchernavin, *I Speak for the Silent Prisoners of the*

methodology and conclusions of his previous works by his reliance on documentation, his broad perspective, avoidance of caricatures, emphasis on the limited material objectives of the Russian populace, and acknowledgment of the significance of spontaneity. Despite the earlier criticism and the current state of party politics, this volume did not embellish Stalin's role and continued to treat Martov, Trotsky, and, after March, Kamenev and Zinoviev as influential antagonists of the Provisional Government and the war. He added information that demonstrated the Duma's positive role in the February revolt: according to Shliapnikov, the Duma's military commission had initially acted as the "headquarters of the Revolution," winning the support of both soldiers and officers for the revolt and thereby bringing order to the "mass partisan struggle of workers and soldiers."⁸⁹

The final denunciation of the book and of Shliapnikov's previous works on the events of 1917 was triggered by Stalin's celebrated letter of November 1931 to the editorial staff of *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*. Stalin demanded that historians accept party-dictated interpretations as axiomatic and therefore not subject to discussion. In closing, he mentioned that the recent four-volume work, *Istoriia VKP(b)*, edited by Emelian Iaroslavskii, contained a "number of mistakes in matters of principle and history."⁹⁰ A Brigade on Party History of the Institute of Red Professors undertook a specification of the errors of *Istoriia VKP(b)*, and hastily compiled its report, which was published in the November 30 issue of *Bol'shevik*. The brigade claimed to have discovered a series of grievous errors in the second chapter of the fourth volume, dealing with party tactics from February to August 1917, written by none other than D. Kin, one of Shliapnikov's critics in 1927. Ironically, brigade members charged Kin with many of the same mistakes for which Shliapnikov had been censured: according to the brigade's report, Kin exaggerated Kamenev's influence and the party's weaknesses in March because of his use of such "objective sources" as Shliapnikov's 1917.⁹¹ Kin had relied on the study, but only to demonstrate, as Kin interpreted it, Shliapnikov's and Kamenev's poor leadership prior to Lenin's return.⁹² Recognition of the party's weaknesses, even if only for the denigration of Shliapnikov

Soviets, trans. Nicholas M. Oushakoff [New York, 1935], especially pp. 366-68). But Stalin's speech did not lead to a reversal of prevailing trends in the cultural and intellectual fields, and probably had little, if anything, to do with the publication of another volume of 1917. Perhaps Shliapnikov as well as those who may have sponsored his latest book believed the thorough defeat of the Right Opposition would make political considerations less of an issue in the evaluation of works on party history. If so, Stalin and young Bolshevik historians soon proved them wrong.

89. Shliapnikov, 1917, vol. 4, p. 96. Note also Shliapnikov's rather objective treatment of Chernov on pp. 205-7, and of the cooperation that existed between Bolsheviks and other leftists. The party's leadership, he concluded, cancelled plans for a demonstration on June 10 largely in order to maintain the support the party enjoyed from other leftists at the First Congress of Soviets (*ibid.*, p. 183).

90. I. Stalin, "O nekotorykh voprosakh istorii bol'shevizma: Pis'mo v redaktsiiu zhurnala 'Proletarskoi revoliutsii,'" *PR*, no. 6/113 (1931), p. 12.

91. Al. Abramov and I. Shmidt, "Protiv fal'sifikatsii istorii Oktiabria pod flagom 'ob'ektivnosti,'" *Bol'shevik*, no. 22 (November 30, 1931), p. 70.

92. Em. Iaroslavskii, ed., *Istoriia VKP(b)*, vol. 4 (Moscow-Leningrad, 1929), pp. 72-75.

or Kamenev, was now unacceptable, however. In its report, the brigade demonstrated, in its opinion, a more effective way of dispensing with Shliapnikov by dismissing his history as simply an attempt to justify its author's supposed "oppositionist and capitulationist" views.⁹³ One month later, much the same kind of polemic dominated a second report, which was devoted exclusively to all four volumes of 1917 under the pejorative title, "Menshevik Falsification of the History of 1917." As a "Menshevik-Trotskyite 'agitprop,'" Shliapnikov's study supposedly slandered Stalin, Lenin, and the party in an intentional effort to diminish their historical importance. The report complained, for example, that Shliapnikov portrayed Lenin only as a helpful comrade and not as the "chief [*voshd'*] whose every directive had to be followed."⁹⁴ Documentation was written off as reliance on "archival rubbish."⁹⁵ The second report ended with the ominous indictment: "The publication of these books by Shliapnikov should be regarded as a huge political mistake, a product of the rotten liberalism of several editors."⁹⁶

After the abusive condemnation of Shliapnikov the man, party activist, and memoirist-historian, interest in him dwindled. He became virtually a nonentity in party history and historiography. In 1935, libraries were ordered to lock up "Trotskyite-Zinovievite counterrevolutionary literature," which included books by Shliapnikov.⁹⁷ If historians of 1917 mentioned him at all, they did so with damning clichés designed to remind the reader of the party's unity and power. They labeled Shliapnikov's recognition of the importance of spontaneity in February a Menshevik, bourgeois, or Trotskyite slander.⁹⁸ The *Kratkii kurs* relegated the extent of his activity in 1917 to resignation along with a "handful of cowards" in November.⁹⁹ Only recently has the Soviet historical profession recognized, though often critically, Shliapnikov's role as a participant in and memoirist-historian of 1917.¹⁰⁰

93. Abramov, "Protiv fal'sifikatsii," p. 70.

94. A. Shcherbakov, L. Gotfried, A. Abramov, G. Ovsiannikov, and M. Shachnev, "Men'shevitskaia fal'sifikatsiia istorii semnadtsatogo goda," *Bol'shevik*, no. 23–24 (December 30, 1931), p. 121.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

97. Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 374.

98. E. Fokin, *Fevral'skaia burzhuazno-demokraticheskaiia revoliutsiia 1917 g.* (Moscow, 1937), p. 78; Em. Iaroslavskii, *Istoriia VKP(b)*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1933), p. 6.

99. *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course* (Toronto, 1939), p. 211. The initial two volumes of *Istoriia grazhdanskoi voiny v SSSR* likewise reduced Shliapnikov's role in 1917 to nothing more than his alleged resignation (see *Istoriia grazhdanskoi voiny v SSSR*, ed. M. Gor'kii et al., vol. 2 [Moscow, 1943], p. 542).

100. See E. Burdzhulov's *Vtoraia russkaia revoliutsiia* (Moscow, 1967). I. I. Mints made several remarks, often critical, in I. I. Mints, *Istoriia Velikogo Oktiabria*, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1967–73). For example, Mints listed Shliapnikov as one of those who resigned from the Sovnarkom in November 1917 (Mints, *Istoriia Velikogo Oktiabria*, 3:762) after not listing him that way previously (*ibid.*, p. 737). Shliapnikov has merited considerable attention in a recent work by Iu. S. Tokarev, *Petrogradskii Sovet rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov v marte-aprele 1917 g.* (Leningrad, 1976). But, among the huge number of biographical entries in E. F. Erykalov and V. E. Mushtukov, eds., *Geroi Oktiabria*, 2 vols. (Leningrad, 1967), not one was devoted to Shliapnikov. Shliapnikov was not listed in the last volume of *Sovetskaia istoricheskaia entsiklopediia*, 16 vols. (Moscow, 1971–76), nor is there an entry for him in the latest edition of *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, 3rd ed., vol. 29 (Moscow, 1978).

Shliapnikov combined his strength of conviction with a combative spirit. He seemed hypersensitive to criticism, although this trait was not surprising in light of his many controversial views. His critique of Sukhanov paralleled the politicized treatment he himself later received. Despite his defense of the right to rational discussion among party members, Shliapnikov did not feel compelled to extend this to the Left Menshevik, Sukhanov. Here, to be sure, his approach differed little from that of many other Bolsheviks. Yet, unlike many of his party colleagues, Shliapnikov scorned the politics of survival. He defiantly promoted the ideas of the Workers' Opposition far beyond the bounds of political prudence. What is most significant to this essay, he steadfastly advocated methodological principles and interpretations of history that became increasingly unacceptable for political reasons.

As a historian-memoirist, Shliapnikov contributed a great deal to Soviet historiography. Although he did occasionally use history to support his politics, a respect for scholarship led him to research extensively many non-Bolshevik sources and to arrive at relatively impartial conclusions. When the condemnation of Shliapnikov, the party critic, developed into a condemnation of Shliapnikov, the historian-memoirist, it marked an important chapter in the decline of professional standards to be applied to, as well as by, the Soviet historical profession.