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## The Making of a Right Communist— A. I. Rykov to 1917

Anyone familiar with Soviet history can identify A. I. Rykov: Lenin's successor as chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, a major leader of Right Communism, a victim of Stalin's purges. But this tells us very little. Because of Rykov's predilection for practical as opposed to ideological-literary work, his relative colorlessness in comparison with the other Bolshevik luminaries, and a lack of material, he has not been attractive to scholars.<sup>1</sup> Yet Rykov looms large within the Bolshevik movement; he was prominent long before the revolution as well as after 1917. Furthermore, the seeds of Rykov's positions of the 1920s—which clearly had an impact on the policies and politics of those years—were definitely sown before 1917.

The purpose of this article is fourfold: first, to shed some light on the early career and activities of a leading Old Bolshevik; second, by so doing, to throw light on the confusing labyrinth of émigré politics and on a little known but important faction within the Bolshevik ranks; third, to show that later important policies and positions defended by Rykov—his broad, reconciliationist approach to revolution and his greater acceptance of diversity within the political revolutionary milieu; his attitude toward the peasantry; and his practical, relatively nonideological and nonliterary approach to work—flowed logically from his pre-1917 experiences; and, fourth, to assess Rykov's role in the movement prior to 1917.

Aleksei Ivanovich Rykov was born in Saratov in 1881. His father had been a peasant in Viatka guberniia, but when he moved to Saratov he became a trader. He died before Aleksei was eight years old. Rykov's mother had died earlier, and his older sister, Klavdiia Ivanovna—who worked in the office of the Riazan'-Ural'sk railroad and gave academic lessons on the side—raised Aleksei and helped him get into the local gymnasium at the age of thirteen.

Aleksei, who especially liked mathematics, physics, and natural sciences, was a good student, but his atheism disturbed the school authorities. Although a search of his quarters for illegal literature, which occurred shortly before his

1. The author has never run across a scholarly article on Rykov, or one that interprets his career and tries to place him within the movement. The four pamphlet-monographs that appeared in the 1920s were short popular works designed to introduce Rykov to the population. These works are I. I. Vorob'ev, V. L. Meller, and A. M. Pankratova, *Aleksei Ivanovich Rykov, ego zhizn' i deiatel'nost'* (Moscow, 1924), 56 pages; A. Lomov, *A. I. Rykov* (Moscow, 1924), 32 pages; I. K. Vereshchagin, *Predsedatel' soveta narodnykh komissarov Aleksei Ivanovich Rykov: Ego zhizn' i deiatel'nost'* (Moscow, 1924), 24 pages; 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1925), 21 pages; 3rd ed. (Moscow, 1925), 28 pages; *Aleksei Ivanovich Rykov: Kratkaia biografia* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1927), 23 pages; and R. S. D., "Rykov, Aleksei Ivanovich," *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Granat*, 46, part 2 (n.d.), columns 223–30.

graduation, turned up nothing suspicious, he received a poor grade for behavior and was barred by the authorities from attending the universities in the capitals. In 1900 he entered the law faculty at Kazan' University. By then Rykov was a Marxist and active in the Saratov revolutionary movement.

Saratov had a population of 137,000 in 1897, and it was one of the main ports on the lower Volga, as well as a rail center. The total number of workers in the 775 "factory-plant enterprises" of Saratov guberniia (but located mostly in Saratov itself, or its suburbs) increased from approximately 3,850 in 1891 to 13,850 in 1901–2, and the number of workers engaged in the metalworking industries jumped from 1,789 in 1897 to 5,756 in 1900.<sup>2</sup>

"Self-education" circles arose in Saratov as early as 1892, but the most important forerunner of the Saratov Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (RSDRP), according to G. Saar, was the Saratov Social Democratic Workers' Group. It was formed in 1898 by bringing together Marxist self-education circles from three metalworking plants. The group was not an "economist" faction and published its own paper, the *Saratovskii rabochii*. The police broke up the group in August 1899.<sup>3</sup>

In this milieu Rykov dipped his feet into political waters. Stanchinskii vaguely recalls Rykov's presence at student gatherings (affirming the suspicion of the school authorities in early 1900) and among the local railroad workers. He also recalls Rykov's report, at a New Year's party ushering in the new century, on the development of capitalism in Russia.<sup>4</sup> Thus, when Rykov entered Kazan' University later in 1900 he was no political novice. Rykov was arrested in March 1901 for participation in Social Democratic work, spent nine months in jail, and then was sent back to Saratov under police surveillance.

When Rykov returned to Saratov in early 1902, he took an active role in the Social Democratic organization even though the revolutionary scene had changed greatly in his absence. The first Social Democratic committee in Saratov had been organized by Peter Lebedev in the spring of 1901, and in the fall of that same year the committee had begun to publish a newspaper, *Rabochaia gazeta*. After the first issue of *Iskra* arrived in April or May, however, the committee had split into *Iskraite* and economist factions, with the economists gaining control of the paper. Another important development was the beginning of a strike movement. But, as with the Saratov Social Democratic Committee, it started out strongly and then waned.<sup>5</sup>

2. *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* (1944), s.v. "Saratov"; G. Saar, "Vozniknovenie Saratovskoi organizatsii RSDRP," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 6–7/77–78 (1928), pp. 268 and 266; and G. Saar, "Saratovskaia organizatsiia RSDRP v nachale 1900-kh gg.," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 11–12/82–83 (1928), p. 126.

3. Saar, "Vozniknovenie," pp. 271, 273–74, 284 ff. Other works on the early phase of the Saratov movement include A. Stanchinskii, "Sotsial-demokraticeskoe podpol'e v Saratove i zhurnal 'Saratovskii rabochii' v 1899 g.," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 2/14 (1923), pp. 87–107; P. Lebedev, "K istorii Saratovskoi organizatsii RSDRP (1901–1903 gg.)," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 3/15 (1923), pp. 227–50; A. V. Kursanova, *Pervye sotsial-demokraticeskii organizatsii i iskrovtsy v Saratove* (Saratov, 1963); and G. F. Khodakov, *Ocherki istorii Saratovskoi organizatsii KPSS*, part 1: 1898–1918 (Saratov, 1968).

4. Stanchinskii, "Sotsial-demokraticeskoe podpol'e," pp. 92, 105–6.

5. Lebedev, "K istorii Saratovskoi organizatsii RSDRP," pp. 235–36, 237–43; V. N. Stepanov, "V. I. Lenin i sozdanie organizatsii 'Iskry' v Rossii," *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 6 (1960), p. 111; Saar, "Saratovskaia organizatsiia RSDRP," pp. 127–28, 129.

Rykov, a firm *Iskraite*, remained in Saratov less than a year, but certain characteristics of his thought which would later displease Lenin and others—his reconciliationism, or willingness to work with those not in his immediate faction in order to achieve broader common aims, and his attitude toward the peasantry—were already emerging. Although the sources do not say whether or not Rykov was on the local S.D. committee, M. Samsonov, in 1905 a member of the Saratov Committee, recalled that Rykov was “the most authoritative practical worker in Saratov,” “played one of the primary roles in the Saratov organization,” and had an apartment “always full of people under surveillance; day and night one could hear passionate theoretical arguments and observe practical revolutionary work.” Saar recalls that “the struggle with economism was especially strengthened after the arrival, at the beginning of 1902, of A. I. Rykov, who took an active part in this struggle.” By May 1902, the local Social Democratic committee was able to work with other groups in preparing a May Day demonstration which was the final blow to economism in Saratov.<sup>6</sup>

One problem facing the Saratov S.D.'s was how to get along with the strong local Social Revolutionary faction. The Marxist press occasionally printed populist material, and the Saratov Marxists had a difficult time holding their own in ideological combat. After the formation of the Saratov S.D. Committee in 1901, however, relations were very friendly. The two groups exchanged technical help and literature, and sometimes took joint action. Rykov had sought to solve the differences, shortly after his return to Saratov, through the formation of a joint Social Democratic/Social Revolutionary committee. It lasted no more than a few months; when it became clear that the S.D. and S.R. differences remained great, Rykov himself took the initiative in dissolving the joint committee.<sup>7</sup>

Why did Rykov seek a joint committee? Perhaps it was tactical expediency, the belief that each group, small and very weak in comparison with the power of the state, could better hold its own by joining with the other. Or it may have been strategic, the conviction that if the two groups worked more closely the S.R.'s would ultimately be won over to the Marxist position. Rykov's previous practical work may already have confirmed in him the belief, reinforced by later experience, that diverse groups could and should solve their differences within a joint organization. In Rykov's actions concerning the joint committee we see the seeds of the Bolshevik reconciliationist of 1908–11 and also of November 1917, when he insisted on a government more broadly based than that envisaged by Lenin.

Rykov and Lenin also disagreed over the agrarian question. Samsonov recalls asking Rykov about Lenin's draft program on the peasants and being “extremely amazed” at Rykov's criticism of it. Rykov said “skeptically” that “much space is devoted in the program to forms of production and technology, but very

6. M. Samsonov, “Saratovskaia organizatsiia R.S.D.R.P. v 1901–1905 gg. (Vospominaniia),” *1905 god v Saratovskoi gubernii (po materialam zhandarmskogo upravlenie): Sbornik statei*, vol. 1 (Saratov, 1926), pp. 107 and 105; Saar, “Saratovskaia organizatsiia RSDRP,” pp. 127–29.

7. Saar, “Saratovskaia organizatsiia RSDRP,” pp. 127–28; Lebedev, “K istorii Saratovskoi organizatsii RSDRP,” pp. 239 and 245.

little to the peasants.' ” And, of course, Rykov’s comment was correct, because for Lenin the question was how far one could go in satisfying the demands of the peasantry without holding up economic progress. Lenin’s solution was not to promise the peasants all the land of the landlords, but only those strips or plots which the peasant tilled prior to the emancipation but which were then awarded to the landlords as part of the emancipation settlement of the 1860s, the so-called *otrezki*, or “cut-offs.”<sup>8</sup>

Although the quote attributed to Rykov by Samsonov does not directly speak of the *otrezki*, within the context of the rest of Samsonov’s paragraph this promise would seem to be part of what Rykov was criticizing. And this would not have been an unnatural response, for Rykov, with his close ties to the village, had much greater empathy with the individual peasant and more sympathy toward his desire for additional land than did Lenin. As a child, Rykov probably heard stories of peasant life from his father, and the leader of the first circle that Rykov, the gymnasium student, attended was the S.R. Rakitnikov.<sup>9</sup> Throughout his years in the Soviet government Rykov was extremely sensitive to the needs and desires of the peasantry. He became a staunch defender of individual farming (as opposed to collective agriculture) as good for both the peasant and the development of socialism in Russia.

But all this was in the distant future; in the spring of 1902 Rykov was a firm *Iskraite*. He was active in organizing the May Day demonstration that year, and was almost killed in it. As a result of the demonstration, the Saratov organization, and apparently Rykov as well, were temporarily put out of action. The police forcefully attacked the demonstrators. Rykov was badly beaten, and Lebedev recalls seeing him lying in the street, his face covered with blood, and helping to carry him to safety. Rykov subsequently attributed his noticeable stammer to the beating he had taken that May Day in 1902.<sup>10</sup>

Rykov remained in Saratov until early November 1902, when he was arrested and sent to St. Petersburg. Released shortly thereafter, he went to Switzerland, where, Vereshchagin alleges, Rykov met Lenin. (However, no information on such a meeting seems to have appeared in print.) Rykov soon returned to Russia, but now to work in the north.<sup>11</sup>

We know pitifully little of Rykov’s work in the Northern Committee, little more than the succinct description in the Granat biographical sketch:

Upon returning from abroad, he began to work in the Northern Committee of the S.D. party, which carried on its work primarily in Iaroslavl’ and Kostroma guberniias. There he directed the work of local S.D. organizations in Iaroslavl’, Kostroma, Rybinsk, Kinishech, and other places.

8. Samsonov, “Saratovskaia organizatsiia R.S.D.R.P.,” p. 107; John H. L. Keep, *The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 78–84.

9. R. S. D., “Rykov, Aleksei Ivanovich,” p. 224.

10. Lebedev, “K istorii Saratovskoi organizatsii RSDRP,” p. 247; William Reswick, *I Dreamt Revolution* (Chicago: H. Regnery and Co., 1952), p. 87. Reswick was head of the Associated Press bureau in Moscow in the 1920s and came to know Rykov fairly well.

11. *Iskra*, nos. 29 and 34 (December 1, 1902; February 15, 1903), used from *Iskra*, 1–52, 7 vols. in 2 (Leningrad, 1925–29), 4:139 and 5:81; *Leninskiĭ sbornik*, 5 (1926): 592; and I. Vereshchagin, *Predsedatel’ soveta narodnykh komissarov*, 2nd ed., p. 10.

After a defeat in Iaroslavl<sup>1</sup>, arrests began to occur, and Rykov moved to work in the S.D. committee in Nizhnii-Novgorod. In 1904 he succeeded in carrying through a large strike at a Sormovo plant with rather successful results. Following this he was sent by the party to Moscow as a leading party organizer.<sup>12</sup>

The lack of information is not because of Rykov's inactivity or poor work. Whether it was Rykov who won the Sormovo organization back to the Leninist side and who was the moving spirit behind the strike, his move to a leading position in Moscow and his surprise autumn election to the Bureau of the Committees of the Majority, on which Lenin placed high hopes for controlling a third congress of the party, attest to his rising stature.

The Moscow organization had fallen on bad times. Lenin, for example, in a letter to the Moscow Committee dated August 15, 1904, stated that work in Moscow was "languishing from a shortage of people, an absence of literature," and speaks of the "stagnation in positive work."<sup>13</sup> Theoretically, the Moscow organization was headed by the Moscow Committee, which supervised activities in five *raions*. When Rykov arrived in Moscow in 1904 he found only one member of the Committee; many of the active workers had been jailed, and the organization's only sign of life was a small circle of propagandists, primarily made up of students, with whom Rykov began working. "Besides general organizational work," he subsequently wrote, "upon me fell the task of resurrecting the organization in the Sokolnicheskii *raion*, primarily in the railroad workshops." The work went well, and "in the course of several weeks we succeeded in establishing ties with the majority of *raions*, receiving literature and organizing its distribution. Along with this, a central college of propagandists was organized—seven or nine people. . . . analogous groups were then organized throughout the *raions*." The propagandists established ties with nonparty groups which shared the party's program, such as the literary group headed by A. A. Bogdanov and Stanislav Vol'skii, and "having included them in the general organization of the committee, we achieved the direction of the activities of all party and Marxist elements in Moscow."<sup>14</sup>

Later in the year, as war-weariness and dissatisfaction spread, contact was made with the Russian liberals. Rykov participated in two such meetings, with-

12. R. S. D., "Rykov, Aleksei Ivanovich," p. 225. For more information on the Northern Committee see O. Varentsova, "Severnii rabochii soiuz, 1900–1903," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 9 (1922), pp. 3–39; and O. Varentsova, *Severnii rabochii soiuz i severnyi komitet RSDRP, 1900–1905 gg.*, 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1935).

13. Archives of the Paris Division of the Okhrana, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California, index no. XVIId, folder 4: "Cohesion, Cleavage, and Morale," box 196. Also in V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 55 vols., 5th ed. (Moscow, 1958–70), 4:367–39, where it is cited only as a letter to M. K. Vladimirov, then in Gomel. This latter source apparently wishes to cover up the weakness of the MK in 1904. When originally published in 1934, the editors pointed out that on the inside of the envelope were found the words "for the M. K." (see *Krasnyi arkhiv*, no. 1/62 [1934], p. 162). For the similar recollections of other party workers see V. P. Miliutina, *Nakanune pervoi revoliutsii v Moskve* (Moscow, 1926), p. 62; and S. I. Mitskevich, *Revoliutsionnaia Moskva* (Moscow, 1940), p. 282.

14. A. I. Rykov, "Iz vospominanii," *Na zare rabocheho dvizheniia v Moskve*, ed. N. Ovsiannikov (Moscow, 1919), pp. 153–54.



out results. Perhaps because of this experience, or perhaps because of his earlier work, Rykov came to have a very dim view of the liberals, as did Lenin. A few months later, at the Third Congress, Rykov said: "Concerning . . . the liberals, I do not think there can be agreement. . . . we must act in such a way that they coordinate their actions with us, and not we with their policy."<sup>15</sup>

The activities of Rykov and his colleagues undoubtedly helped prepare the Leninists for the events immediately following Bloody Sunday. Certainly Moscow was no Saratov, for here a large, experienced, and class-conscious proletariat existed. Strikes began in Moscow on January 10 and did not cease until January 20. During this period, in both Moscow proper and in Moscow guberniia, approximately 25 percent of the proletariat went on strike.<sup>16</sup>

Party work continued once the strikes ended, and Rykov probably directed it. D. D. Himmer', sent to Moscow in February 1905 to work as a party organizer, found Rykov to be the "factual" (though not official) head of the Moscow Committee and the "inspirer of all work." A number of letters seem to substantiate Rykov's importance. One dated February 6, from "Bol'shinstvo" to A. A. Izakson "in Moscow," but meant for a wider group, says in part: "Dear comrades. At last we've found out your address. Why aren't you writing, why isn't Aleksei writing? From an arriving comrade we've found out that work in the committee isn't going badly, that many leaflets are coming out. . . ." Krupskaiia's letters also expressed a desire to have more mail from "Aleksei and other Muscovites."<sup>17</sup>

Before turning to the Third Congress, two other signs of Rykov's growing stature should be noted: his election to the Bureau of the Committees of the Majority, and his possible transfer to St. Petersburg before the Third Congress.

The Bureau of the Committees of the Majority (BKB) arose from Lenin's desire to hold a third party congress, an idea rejected by the Menshevik-controlled Central Committee (CC). Lenin therefore convened the "Conference of the Twenty-Two," allegedly a meeting of twenty-two Bolsheviks, in August 1904, in Switzerland, from which came the leaflet "To the Party," and the decision to form, within Russia, a Bureau of the Committees of the Majority to agitate for a new congress. Simultaneously, Lenin decided to publish a Bolshevik newspaper, *Vpered*, as the organ of the BKB.<sup>18</sup>

15. Ibid., p. 156; A. I. Rykov, "Vospominaniia A. I. Rykova," *Izvestiia*, October 20, 1918, pp. 1-2; *Tretii s'ezd RSDRP, april'-mai 1905 goda: Protokoly* (Moscow, 1959), p. 378.

16. A. S. Chebarin, *Moskva v revoliutsii 1905-1907 godov* (Moscow, 1955), pp. 7 and 19; V. Nevskii, "Ianvarskie dni 1905 g. v Moskve. Po neizdannym arkhivnym dokumentam," *Krasnaia letopis'*, no. 2-3 (1922), pp. 7, 12, 13; and V. Iakovlev, *1905 god v Moskve, istoriko-revoliutsionnyi ocherk: Khod sobytii i pamiatnye mesta* (Moscow, 1955), p. 20.

17. D. D. Himmer', "V Zamoskvorech'i," in *Piatyi god*, ed. M. V. Miliutina-Smidovich, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1925-26), pp. 260 and 269; Archives of the Paris Division of the Okhrana, index no. XVIIb(6) (a), folder 3: "Russian Socialist Workers Party—Bolsheviks," box 194 (Rykov's main revolutionary pseudonyms were Aleksei, Vlasov, and Sergeev); "Perepiska N. Lenina i N. K. Krupskoi s peterburgskoi organizatsiei," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 3/38 (1925), pp. 21 and 27.

18. For literature on the BKB see R. Khabas, "Sozdanie bol'shevistskogo tsentra (BKB) i gazety 'Vpered,'" *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 11/34 (1924), pp. 19-31; D. Kardashev, "K istorii zarozhdeniia biuro komitetov bol'shinstva," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 10/93 (1929), pp. 80-95, and no. 1 (1930), pp. 47-67; and Em. Iaroslavskii, ed., *Istoriia VKP (b)*,

According to R. S. Zalkind (Zemliachka), a leading party "practical," the members of the BKB were chosen in Geneva, but the groups within Russia had the right to add others. Zemliachka carried the "Declaration of the Twenty-Two" throughout Russia. She was instrumental, according to Lenin, in winning over fifteen committees and staging three conferences, for which he thanked her profusely in a letter of December 1904.<sup>19</sup>

Rykov represented the Moscow Committee at the northern conference, held in early December and attended by delegates from St. Petersburg, Moscow, Nizhni-Novgorod, the Northern Committee, Tver, and Riga. The main protagonists at this conference were Zemliachka and Maxim Litvinov, the CC's representative in the northwestern *krai* and a member of the Riga Committee. Litvinov wanted the conference to declare an immediate break with the CC, but Zemliachka successfully urged more caution. The conference's resolution, though, did call for a new congress. In addition, Rykov was voted onto the BKB, which shocked Litvinov and pleased Zemliachka, who wrote Lenin shortly thereafter:

The conference of the northern committees suggests co-opting Aleksei. I consider him one of the best candidates. For as long as I've known him (. . . since March), he has been an entirely dependable person. But still little tested. This bothers me a little, but I consider it necessary to agree on co-opting him.<sup>20</sup>

Rykov's election was indicative of his increasing stature among the practical workers in Russia.

Although Rykov later said that he remained in Moscow until the Third Congress, there is evidence that he had moved on to St. Petersburg. He apparently had acquired the reputation of a doctor of internal party medicine, and

vol. 1 (Moscow, 1926–30), p. 379. Solomon Schwarz, a former Menshevik, has concluded that there was no "conference," that Lenin himself wrote the leaflet "To the Party," sent it to Geneva from Lausanne, where he was vacationing, and had it approved by Bolsheviks in Geneva. It was decided, he goes on, to have the leaflet introduced from within Russia as a sign of internal Russian initiative for a congress, and that the leaflet was first known as "the Riga declaration," or "the Riga resolution" (see S. Schwarz, *The Russian Revolution of 1905: The Workers' Movement and the Formation of Bolshevism and Menshevism*, trans. Gertrude Vakar [Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1967], pp. 257–60).

19. Khabas, "Sozdanie bol'shevistskogo tsentra," pp. 26, n. and 27; Kardashev, "K istorii zarozhdeniia biuro komitetov bol'shinstva," no. 10/93 (1929), p. 89, and no. 1 (1930), pp. 63–64; Iaroslavskii, ed., *Istoriia VKP(b)*, vol. 1, p. 379; "Perepiska N. Lenina i N. K. Krupskoi s peterburgskoi organizatsiei," p. 17.

20. A. Bubnov, "VKP(b)," *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 11 (1930), p. 277; *Tretii s'ezd RSDRP: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Moscow, 1955), pp. 99 and 106; Kardashev, "K istorii zarozhdeniia biuro komitetov bol'shinstva," no. 1 (1930), p. 61; "Dokumenty i materialy k III s'ezdu R.S.D.R.P.," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 3 (1922), pp. 125–26; "Perepiska N. Lenina i N. K. Krupskoi s M. M. Litvinovym," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 2/37 (1925), pp. 75–76; "Perepiska N. Lenina i N. K. Krupskoi s peterburgskoi organizatsiei," p. 15.

certainly he could have been useful in St. Petersburg, where, by late 1904, Mensheviks controlled four of the six *raions*. The Bolsheviks themselves thought the situation critical. The recently skeptical Litvinov, upon his return from the BKB conference, wrote: "Petersburg we shall probably have to lose. Swarms of Mensheviks have arrived there. . . . We, too, ought to mobilize our forces for Petersburg, but where do we get them? We have decided to transfer Aleksei, even at the cost of losing Moscow. Losing Petersburg would be the worst blow for us."<sup>21</sup>

There is corroborating evidence of Rykov's transfer in the memoirs of Liadov-Mandel'shtam, as well as in the minutes of a meeting of the St. Petersburg Committee of March 6, 1905. At that meeting, "Aleksei," identified in the accompanying footnote as "evidently, Aleksei Ivanovich Rykov," was appointed responsible organizer of the Neva *raion* and was elected an alternate member of the St. Petersburg Committee to the Third Congress. In addition, after that congress, Rykov was named head of the St. Petersburg Committee, although this does not necessarily prove an earlier presence in St. Petersburg.<sup>22</sup>

Between 1902 and the Third Congress of the party in the spring of 1905 (held in London in April and attended by twenty-two full delegates and thirteen alternates), Rykov had become one of the leading "practical"<sup>23</sup> workers in Russia. At the Third Congress he became one of the leaders of the Bolshevik faction of Russian Social Democracy as well.

Rykov played an active role at the Third Congress. He served on three commissions, took vigorous part in the debates, and showed no fear of differing with Lenin, even derisively hissing at the "old man" at one point. But his position was not one of "wild" opposition. Rather, it fit a clear pattern, that of Rykov the practical worker, interested in businesslike, organizational questions as opposed to theoretical or utopian ones; disturbed at the lack of "positive work" by the central organization; fearful of having workers replace full-time revolutionaries on the local committees and of control shifting from the central groups to peripheral ones. He had, for example, serious reservations about sections of the proposed party constitution. The seventh paragraph would have permitted "any party organization having a full vote at the Congress to publish with its own means and in its own name party literature, in its own or in the party's printing facility. Every such organization has the right to receive via party transport whatever literature it demands." Rykov opposed this on two grounds: it would inundate the central party press, and the central organization should have more

21. Rykov, "Vospominaniia A. I. Rykova," p. 1; Schwarz, *The Russian Revolution of 1905*, pp. 53 and 55; "Perepiska N. Lenina i N. K. Krupskoi s M. M. Litvinovym," p. 79. Emphasis added.

22. M. Liadov [M. N. Mandel'shtam], *Iz zhizni partii nakanune i v gody pervoi revoliutsii (Vospominaniia)* (Moscow, 1926), p. 76; "Protokoly peterburgskogo komiteta RSDRP ot 6/19 i 10/23 marta 1905 goda," *Krasnaia letopis'*, no. 2/35 (1930), pp. 28–29. All of the numerous references to Rykov in the 1926 edition of Mandel'shtam's memoirs were deleted from the 1956 edition. Also, the minutes of the Third Congress list Rykov only as a Moscow delegate, not an alternate from St. Petersburg.

23. "Practical" workers were revolutionaries who worked directly in organizational affairs in Russia, as contrasted to the émigré thinkers and littérateurs.



control over local party publishing activities. The final draft satisfied, at least somewhat, his objections:

Every organization affirmed by the Congress or the CC has the right to print party literature in its own name. The Central Committee is obliged to transport the publications of any organization if five full committees demand this. All periodical party publications are obliged, upon the demand of the CC, to print all its declarations.<sup>24</sup>

The proposed eighth paragraph would have given "all peripheral organizations" (that is, groups or organizations sympathetic to the Social Democrats but not directly part of the party and therefore not subject to party discipline, such as leftist writers or non-Marxist workers' organizations) certain rights within the local committees—access to information, consultation, nomination of candidates, and so forth. Rykov, rather than opposing the content, argued that paragraph eight had no place in the party's constitution and should be a separate resolution. He undoubtedly felt that a separate resolution would tie the hands of the local committees less than a provision in the constitution. Rykov's suggestion, over Lenin's objection, carried.<sup>25</sup>

Lenin was also forced to expand his views on the agrarian question. He gave the main speech on agriculture, after the commission set up by the congress to draft a resolution on agriculture (and on which Rykov sat) had met. Lenin admitted "great dissonance" in those sessions. He denied ever having thought of limiting the peasantry to the *otrezki* (his earlier position criticized by Rykov) and proposed to let the peasants take all the land of the *pomeshchiks*. Even this did not satisfy the congress, which resolved "as our task the most energetic support of all revolutionary measures of the peasantry . . . right up to confiscation of *pomeshchik*, state, church, monastery, and appanage lands."<sup>26</sup> Rykov did not participate in the open debate, but we may assume that some of the "dissonance" to which Lenin referred was Rykov's, and that the young committeeman was satisfied with the broadened horizons the party condoned for the peasant movement.

The main disagreement at the Third Congress concerned the question of workers serving on local committees. The protagonists were Lenin and Rykov. Rykov opposed the resolution to expand the electoral base of local committees by increasing the number of workers and reducing the number of intelligentsia. The problem, Rykov said, was not a question of workers versus intelligentsia, but of the center versus the periphery (that is, the local committee versus the Marxist groups subordinate or sympathetic to Social Democracy), and this would not be solved by elections. Lenin answered Rykov, and in so doing broadened the discussion:

The task of the future center is to reorganize a significant number of our [local] committees. It is necessary to overcome the inertia of the committeemen. [Applause and hissing followed this remark.]

24. *Tretii s'ezd RSDRP: Protokoly*, pp. 270, 291, 461.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 270–71, 295.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 225–26, 242. Emphasis in the original.

I hear comrade Sergeev [that is, Rykov] hissing, and the committeemen are not applauding. I think it is necessary to glance at the matter more deeply. To bring workers into the committees is not only a pedagogical, but also a political task. . . . I feel very strongly that there should be eight workers for each two intelligentsia in the makeup of our committees.

The debate on this issue became heated. Lenin and Bogdanov proposed a resolution which Rykov scorned with his comment that "fine words butter no parsnips." He also called the resolution "wishy-washy" and said that it had less significance than even an editorial (an insult to Lenin). Rykov and Losev, another committeeman, then moved that "the Congress considers it superfluous to pass a special resolution about the relationship of workers and intelligentsia and move on to the next point on the agenda." The resolution passed, 12–10.<sup>27</sup>

Why did this suggestion of practical help to the local committees prompt such acrimony from Rykov and the other practical leaders? Theoretical, practical, and personal motivations underlay their opposition. Theoretically and practically, the committeemen were defending the position that Lenin himself had taken in 1902 when, in *What Is To Be Done?*, he argued against a broad-based movement which would be more susceptible to police infiltration and insisted on a party directed by a core of full-time revolutionaries. Although Lenin had changed his earlier position, the practical party leaders in Russia, that is, the full-time professional revolutionaries, had not. Personal factors undoubtedly played a role also. If workers made up 80 percent of the local committees, the influence of the nonworker local committeemen would have declined precipitously. Human nature being what it is, and in this case buttressed by ideological considerations, it was very easy for the committeemen, who formed a majority at the congress, to oppose and defeat Lenin on this issue.

Rykov was also critical of the draft resolution on armed uprising, apparently urging less emphasis on this form of struggle. He preferred to concentrate instead on a general strike and wanted to establish a popular literary organ to direct the Social Democratic appeal more broadly, that is, not merely to narrow groups such as the soldiers. In view of developments later that year, especially the success of the general strike which began in Moscow in October, one can credit Rykov with good foresight. The congress, however, rejected his views.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, the importance Rykov placed on practical work is clear in his criticism of the Central Organ:

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 253–54, 261–62, 332–33, 336. Schwarz says that "this was the only time in the history of Bolshevism that Lenin found himself in the minority at a Bolshevik congress after putting up a fight, and that a speech of his was booed" (see Schwarz, *The Russian Revolution of 1905*, p. 220, n. 41).

28. This position is less clear, since Rykov's first speech on the subject, at the sixth session, on April 15, was not recorded, and when the minutes of the sixth session were read for approval, at the fourteenth session, on April 20, an effort to have a copy of that speech inserted into the record failed (*Tretii s'esd RSDRP: Protokoly*, pp. 229 and 715, n. 63). Hence we only have what others said of his speech, plus a short speech of Rykov's at the seventh session, which still is not very clear (see *ibid.*, pp. 144 and 156 [Leskov's speech], and pp. 450–51 [the resolution]).

It has been guided by questions which do not interest us, for example, about Mach and Avenarius, and this has been spawned by the atmosphere of the district city of Geneva. . . .

Besides this, our central organs, very well versed on matters of co-opting, are poorly versed on the revolutionary movement. I therefore suggest that the future CO not concern itself with questions of co-opting and that it be better versed in positive work.<sup>29</sup>

Rykov made an impression upon Lenin at the congress. Mandel'shtam says that Lenin "was especially interested in Rykov" even before the congress began, and he also takes credit for recommending Rykov's candidacy to the CC to Lenin, who at first responded "very cautiously" because of Rykov's actions at the congress. Mandel'shtam claims that Zemliachka and Kamenev opposed Rykov's candidacy, and that Kamenev used the modern academic argument that "one does not see his name in our literature."<sup>30</sup> By the end of the congress, however, Rykov joined Lenin, Bogdanov, Krasin, and Postolovskii on the CC.

We now have some ideas as to the "how" and the "when" of Rykov's rise within Russian Social Democracy, but why, with the variety of revolutionary paths open to the alienated young Russian of his time, did Rykov become a Bolshevik? Lacking Rykov's own words, I would suggest that the young Rykov's whole socioeconomic-political milieu cried out for relief against the autocracy. Less than a generation removed from the village, he probably inherited from his father the peasants' belief in the inequity of the economic distribution of wealth, and his early poverty surely compounded this feeling. Being a virtual orphan added to his indignation and further alienated him, both socially and economically. The fact that he turned to law when he entered college points to his concern for changing the system of laws which he recognized as inequitable.

Rykov hated the existing system, but he loved the "*narod*," and especially the peasantry. It was, undoubtedly, a love tempered by knowledge of the weakness and backwardness of the masses, for his Marxist ideology must have served as an antidote to any romanticized view of the peasants. And his was not a fleeting attraction. Rykov was both a full-time revolutionary practical worker and a realistic idealist who sincerely wanted to improve the lot of the *narod*.

But Rykov was definitely not a revolutionary "hard," à la Lenin and Stalin. Why then did he become a Marxist and not a Social Revolutionary? There are several reasons.<sup>31</sup> Social Revolutionary thought differed from Marxist ideology in four important ways. First, in the interpretation of history, the S.R.'s saw historical causation in terms of the interaction of both subjective and objective forces, which led them to place more emphasis on the role of the individual in history than the Marxists. Second, the interests of the S.R.'s were centered on the peasant and agriculture, while those of the Marxists were centered on industry and the industrial proletariat. Third, the S.R.'s hoped to skip the capital-

29. *Ibid.*, p. 403.

30. Liadov [Mandel'shtam], *Is zhizni partii*, pp. 75, 77-78.

31. The following points of difference between Marxism and Social Revolutionary thought are taken from the first chapter of O. H. Radkey, *The Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism: Promise and Default of the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries, February to October, 1917* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1958).

ist stage of development and move right into the socialist phase. Finally, in regard to tactics, the S.R.'s were willing to accept and condone the use of terror for its own sake.

Seen in this light, Rykov and the S.R.'s shared only a common interest in the peasant. But while the S.R.'s concentrated their efforts on the peasantry because they did not foresee a large industrial proletariat, Rykov believed that such a class would arise. Thus, Rykov was one of the earliest Marxists to think in terms of what later was called "the peasantry and the toiling masses." This concern was shared by Lenin, who was the first prominent Russian Marxist to realize the importance of the peasantry for the success of the revolution.

Although Rykov's choice of Marxism is understandable, why did he choose bolshevism and not menshevism? It is important to remember that at first there was no decision to make, for Bolsheviks and Mensheviks appeared only after the Second Congress, in 1903. Before the Second Congress both the future Mensheviks and future Bolsheviks opposed economism, which was the first serious division within Russian Social Democracy. Similarly, if one asks why Rykov did not lean toward Mensheviks because of his concern for "broad" work, the answer is that the issue did not really arise full-blown at the time of the 1903 split, that is, when Rykov became an adherent of Lenin. Furthermore, when the issue of open/legal work as opposed to conspiratorial activities did arise, after 1905, Rykov placed greater emphasis on the latter. Of course, care must be exercised here in our use of terms. Practical work should not be construed to mean broad work. Even in the revolutionary conditions of 1905, and the subsequent Duma period, the success of party work, which was to be carried on among the broad masses, depended upon the practical, largely conspiratorial work of full-time professional revolutionaries.

What, then, drew Rykov to the Bolsheviks when that faction emerged? I suggest that the magnet was Lenin. To a person like Rykov, steeped in practical conspiratorial work, Lenin's activism and dynamism must have seemed more attractive than that of the Menshevik leaders. Tucker argues that Lenin's writings had an "electric appeal to many of the 'practical workers' in the movement," and that Lenin offered them what they needed in their work, "a practical plan and program designed to further the realization of the party's revolutionary goal" in a very difficult period.<sup>32</sup> Lenin's intellectual, practical-theoretical, and charismatic nature complemented the practical, nonintellectual (but not unintelligent), noncharismatic nature of Rykov. Lenin needed a competent non-commissioned officer, Rykov needed a leader. Although differences arose quite early in their revolutionary relationship, the exigencies of the situation held them together until the revolutionary peaks had been scaled, and beyond.

The newly-elected Central Committee met the day after the Third Congress ended to divide its responsibility. Rykov was to supervise the Moscow, Ekaterinoslav, Kremenchug, Voronezh, and Smolensk organizations, and to head the St. Petersburg Committee. However, almost immediately upon his return to

32. R. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879-1929* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), p. 30.

Russia the entire St. Petersburg Committee was arrested (on May 14, 1905).<sup>33</sup> Released after the October Manifesto, Rykov entered the St. Petersburg soviet as a Bolshevik representative. He was probably also engaged in duties connected with his Central Committee membership, and on December 10 the CC ordered him to Moscow to replace V. L. Shantser (Marat) and to head the Moscow Oblast Bureau of the party. According to Rykov himself, he did not arrive in Moscow until after the uprising and hence played no role in that event.<sup>34</sup>

Rykov's main duties in Moscow were to rebuild the party organization after the insurrection and to prepare for the Fourth Party Congress, to be held in Stockholm in 1906. Although there are only scattered references to Rykov in the memoir literature of this period, we may nonetheless infer that he was fairly successful. G. A. Aleksinskii, subsequently a Bolshevik member of the Duma, was sent to Moscow in mid-1906 (after Rykov had been arrested) to reorganize the Moscow Oblast Bureau. He indicated that he found the organization firmly in Bolshevik hands, and that the party people there were "unwavering" (*tverdokamennyi*). Furthermore, in the selection of delegates to the Fourth Congress, nine of thirteen delegates from the Moscow city organization and two of three from the Moscow *okrug* were Bolsheviks.<sup>35</sup>

Rykov's role at Stockholm was less prominent than at London. Lenin and Rykov had no open differences, and at the end of the congress the Bolshevik faction selected Rykov to fill one of the three positions allotted to the Bolsheviks on the new CC (the Mensheviks were to have seven). According to Mandel'shtam, all three of the designated Bolsheviks—Rykov, Krasin, and Desnitskii—were opposed to serving on such an unpromising body, but they were finally persuaded to enter the CC if only for informational purposes.<sup>36</sup>

Rykov again was arrested shortly after his return to Moscow. Exiled for three years to Archangel guberniia, he soon escaped, returned to Moscow, and continued his work in the Moscow Oblast Bureau. In that capacity he partici-

33. "Zasedanie tsentral'nogo komiteta v polnom sostave 11-go maia 1905 g. v sredu vecherom," *Leninskii sbornik*, 5 (1926), pp. 282 and 592; R. S. D., "Rykov, Aleksei Ivanovich," p. 226; B. I. Gorev, *Iz partiinogo proshlogo: Vospominaniia (1895-1905)* (Leningrad, 1924), p. 72.

34. G. M. Derenkovskii, "K voprosu o zasedanii Ts.K. RSDRP v seredine dekabria 1905 g.," *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 1 (1969), p. 109; Institut Marksizma-Leninizma, *Istoriia kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuza*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1964- ), p. 144 and 144 n. In early 1906 the MOB was reorganized as the Oblast Bureau of the Central Industrial Oblast.

35. Rykov, "Vospominaniia A. I. Rykova," p. 2; V. Sokolov, "Tipografia v podzemle ('Kavkazskii magazin')," *25 let R.K.P. (bol'shevikov), 1898-1923*, ed. I. V. Volkovicher (Moscow, 1923), pp. 127-28; I. Mikhailov, "Podgotovka k vooruzhennoi bor'be," *Boevaiia gruppa pri TsK RSDRP(b): Stat'i i vospominaniia*, comp. S. M. Pozner (Moscow-Leningrad, 1927), p. 127; V. Bogomolov, "Sviaz' 'voenno-tekhnicheskoi gruppy' s moskovskoi organizatsiei," *ibid.*, p. 154; I. I. Ivanov (Skvortsov), *Ot revoliutsii k revoliutsii: Sbornik statei 1905-1915* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1925), p. 10; S. Mitskevich, "Lektorskaia gruppa pri moskovskom komitete v 1905-1907 gg.," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 9/44 (1925), pp. 58 ff.; G. A. Aleksinskii, "Vospominaniia: Konets 1905 goda i 1906-1910," Archives of Russian and East European History and Culture, Columbia University, Aleksinsky Collection, folder no. 83, p. 113. By way of comparison, only five of eleven delegates from St. Petersburg were Bolsheviks.

36. *Chetvertyi (ob'edinitel'nyi) s'ezd RSDRP; aprel' (aprel'-mai) 1906 goda: Protokoly* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 191, 307, 435-36; Liadov [Mandel'shtam], *Iz zhizni partii*, pp. 157-58.



pated in preparations for yet another party congress, the third in three years, to be held in London in 1907. At a pre-congress meeting held in Finland in February 1907, Lenin, Rykov, Bogdanov, Lunacharskii, and Rozhkov were elected to a bureau to combat the Mensheviks on major questions at the upcoming congress.<sup>37</sup>

Once again the Okhrana intervened. In May Rykov was arrested along with Leonid Krasin. Rykov remained in jail for over a year, and was then exiled to Samara for two years. Despite his imprisonment, he was elected a candidate member of the CC at the London Congress and after the congress was among the fifteen Bolsheviks chosen for the CC's own operating center. By the time Rykov fled from exile in late 1908, however, the center of the revolutionary movement had shifted from Russia to Paris, and over the next few years Rykov became involved in the party intrigues that filled the lives of the Russian Marxist émigrés.<sup>38</sup> During these years, as earlier in Saratov and later as a Bolshevik state official, we see that Rykov's desire to achieve a practical goal—whether it was uniting against the great power of the tsarist state or building communism—often led him to accept as co-workers those with whose ideology he disagreed.

By 1908, as the revolutionary movement within Russia ebbed, the Social Democrats, seemingly having nothing better to do, turned upon each other. Lenin moved from Finland to Geneva and then to Paris in 1908. His main opponents continued to be the Mensheviks, most of whom were now branded "liquidators," that is, people who wanted to liquidate the illegal organization and put all emphasis on legal work, as in the trade unions and the Duma. What had changed, however, was that Lenin now was *also* at odds with large segments of his own Bolshevik faction—boycottists, otzovists (recallists), ultimatists, and *Vperedists*. Frequently, the same people fit into several of the above categories. The anti-Leninist Bolsheviks included Bogdanov, Vol'skii, Aleksinskii, Lunacharskii, Mandel'shtam, Pokrovskii, Bubnov, and Shantser-Marat.<sup>39</sup>

37. R. S. D., "Rykov, Aleksei Ivanovich," p. 226; K.P.S.S., Otdel po istorii, *Revoliutsiia i RKP v materialakh i dokumentakh*, 7 vols. (Moscow, 1924–27), 4:202; Liadov [Mandel'shtam], *Iz zhizni partii*, p. 200.

38. R. S. D., "Rykov, Aleksei Ivanovich," p. 226; Leonid Borisovich Krasin ('Nikitich'), *Gody podpol'ia: Sbornik vospominanii, statei i dokumentov*, ed. M. N. Liadov and S. M. Pozner (Moscow-Leningrad, 1928), pp. 44–45; *Piatyi (Londonskii) s'ezd RSDRP: Protokoly* (Moscow, 1963), p. 827, n. 260; M. Moskalev, *Biuro tsentral'nogo komiteta RSDRP v Rossii avgust 1903–mart 1917 (Vpered!)* (Moscow, 1964), p. 109; *Protokoly rasshirennoogo soveshchaniia redaktsii 'Proletariia'* (Moscow, 1934), p. 264, n. 1.

39. Boycottists were Bolsheviks in the post-1905 period who supported a boycott of elections to the Duma; otzovists were Bolsheviks in the same period who supported the recall of Social Democratic deputies from the Duma; ultimatists were Bolsheviks who supported the recall of S.D. deputies from the Duma after an ultimatum had been issued to the Duma; *Vperedists* were followers of *Vpered!* (Forward!), a journal published by dissident Bolsheviks in the post-1905 period. (*Vpered!* was concerned with literary, cultural, political, and philosophical questions. It should not be confused with the journal of the same name founded by Lenin in 1904 to achieve a third party congress.) For literature on these groups see N. Voitinskii, "Boikotizm, otzovizm, ultimatism," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 8–9/91–92 (1929), pp. 33–66; N. Voitinskii, "'Vpered' (1909–1917)," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 12/95 (1929), pp. 59–119; D. N. Rudnik, "Lenin v bor'be s gruppoi 'Vpered,'" *Krasnaia letopis'*, no. 2 (1929), pp. 461–74; A. Golubkov, "Moskovskie bol'sheviki v bor'be s likvidatorstvom i otzovizmom (1908–1910 gg.)," *Bor'ba klassov*, no. 7–8 (1934), pp. 143–47; *Partiia bol'shevikov v period reaktsii (1907–1910 gody)* (Moscow, 1968).



But Lenin's most dangerous supporters were the Bolshevik reconciliators, led by Rykov. They are accurately described in an Okhrana report: "part of the Bolsheviks, in no major way differing with Lenin on the solution of general political and tactical questions, in questions of an organizational character have not lost . . . hope in the possibility of resurrecting underground work" and therefore wished to have the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks work together.<sup>40</sup> In other words, the reconciliators sought unity within the RSDRP. The reconciliators, it must be made clear, did not seek to work with the S.R.'s or liberals, but only with the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks and their respective subfactions. The reconciliators were not themselves boycottists, ultimatumists, liquidators, Godbuilders,<sup>41</sup> or the like. Quite the contrary: on all strategic theoretical questions they shared common ground with Lenin. But they often strongly disagreed with Lenin on tactical organizational questions. Their concern was not to dilute further the strength of an already weak party ship by throwing overboard all those within the party whose views deviated. Given Lenin's uncompromising nature, however, the relationship between Lenin and the Bolshevik reconciliators, led by Rykov, was often strained.

Rykov and his co-reconciliators were torn between the conflicting desires to maintain Lenin's hard line of thought—with which they agreed—and to maintain a sufficiently strong party organization to achieve those ideological goals. These dual concerns, in the years 1908–11, at times led Rykov to stand firmly behind Lenin and to take a "hard" stand on theoretical-organizational matters, while at other times he almost stubbornly opposed Lenin and insisted on some degree of broader organizational unity, with dissident Bolsheviks as well as with Mensheviks. That his was not a consistent policy goes without saying, but it is understandable in light of his concerns and his background in practical organizational work.

When Rykov fled from exile to Europe in late 1908 he was patently shocked by the division within the party. As he recalled some months later: "When I reached Paris and went to a meeting of the local Bolsheviks, I was struck by the character of this meeting. I had never before seen at party or fractional meetings members of one and the same group arguing over their voting. It immediately became clear that such a situation could not exist any longer." As a leading practical worker, he also was disturbed at the negative impact of this interparty wrangling on practical work within Russia.<sup>42</sup>

According to the Granat biography, Rykov, on his arrival in Paris, "was entrusted with carrying out negotiations with all party currents and groups on the creation of a united bloc against liquidationism." This contact with both anti-Bolshevik and anti-Leninist elements may have shaken Rykov's loyalty to Lenin temporarily, as we can infer from Lenin's correspondence. In April 1909 Lenin wrote that "Vlasov [that is, Rykov] is now deciding his fate; if he is with the fools, Philistines and Machists, then, evidently, division and *stubborn* strug-

40. M. A. Tsiavlovskii, ed., *Materialy po istorii bol'shevizma s 1903 po 1916 god byvsh. moskovskogo okhrannogo otdeleniia* (Moscow, 1918), p. 57.

41. Godbuilders were Marxists who sought to combine Marxism with a higher, godlike, concept. Lenin wrote *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* against the Godbuilders.

42. *Protokoly rasshirennogo soveshchaniia redaktsii 'Proletaria,'* pp. 76, 107–8.

gle." On May 4 Lenin noted that there was still no word from Vlasov, that they had to be patient. Then, the next day, he exultantly reported:

Yesterday Marat (wholly with the opposition) and Vlasov (with us) arrived. . . . Vlasov is disposed in our direction: He is with us in principle. . . .

Today there was a meeting of the Paris group. Geneva has declared a break with the Bolshevik Center and has called upon Paris to do the same thing. Marat spoke for Geneva, Vlasov against him.<sup>43</sup>

Rykov was thus "with" Lenin in the early spring and summer of 1909, and when he returned to Russia that summer he took a hard line against the otzovists and ultimatists. He may have considered the local organizations so weak that to tolerate oppositional trends would have made them useless. In a letter to the Bolshevik Center Rykov reviewed a meeting of the St. Petersburg Committee to discuss his report and the question of elections to the Duma and party control over the Duma group. By a 3-2 vote the committee accepted the Bolshevik position. Rykov's hostility toward the ultimatists and otzovists is clearly expressed in his letter. He says that it is useless to put up with such people any longer, and that he is going to tell the committees in St. Petersburg to accept the Bolshevik position or else, for "to subscribe to their stupidities is, in my opinion, impossible." He closes by saying that only an extreme shortage of personnel could give the victory to the otzovists-ultimatists. Still, "the organization here is extremely weak. The committees are run by green infants."<sup>44</sup>

Rykov again went abroad before the January 1910 CC Plenum, and his travels made him more of a reconciliationist than ever. He was well aware that not only was the St. Petersburg organization very weak, but also that throughout Russia no more than five or six Bolshevik committees functioned on a regular basis. Rykov apparently now saw a CC plenum as a way to unite the splintered segments of Russian Social Democracy. According to Getzler, Rykov was one of the Bolsheviks who, "in the latter part of 1909," sought reconciliation with Martov and party unity. Lenin, on the other hand, sought to avoid a CC plenum on grounds that the CC elected at the Fifth Congress no longer existed, but he was in a minority even among the Bolsheviks and had to give in.<sup>45</sup>

The meeting, held in Paris (January 2-23, 1910), was a disaster for Lenin. He subsequently called it three weeks of "torture," adding that "the plenum wanted to unite *everybody*," and had left the party with an abscess that would have to be removed. The plenum decided to reorganize the CC into two bodies: a Russian College, with seven people (the *Semerka*—two Bolsheviks, two Mensheviks, and one representative from each of the national parties), which would

43. R. S. D., "Rykov, Aleksei Ivanovich," p. 226; Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5th ed., 47:174, 179-80. Emphasis in the original.

44. "Iz perepiski mestnykh organizatsii s zagranichnym bol'shevistskim tsentrom v 1910," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 9/80 (1928), p. 170.

45. L. Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1959), p. 101; Bertram D. Wolfe, *Three Who Made A Revolution*, rev. ed. (New York: Delta Books, 1964), p. 478; Moskaev, *Biuro tsentral'nogo komiteta RSDRP*, p. 161.

direct party work in Russia; and a Foreign Bureau of the Central Committee (ZBTsK), made up of five people, one per faction or national party, which would direct party work from abroad. The Bolsheviks on the *Semerka* were Rykov and, most likely, Nogin; Aleksandrov was the Bolshevik on the ZBTsK. The party press was also shuffled, to the disadvantage of the Bolsheviks.<sup>46</sup>

The results of the plenum justified Lenin's worst fears. Organizationally, the *Semerka* never got off the ground. The Menshevik "practicals" refused to nominate two Menshevik representatives, and Rykov was soon arrested. This left only the ZBTsK, which was not in Bolshevik hands. In addition, the publishing ventures turned into a debacle. Rykov, back in Berlin and Paris in January 1911, after another round of arrest, jail, exile, and flight from Russia, again moderated his reconciliationism. Though still seeking unity, he now went along with Lenin in breaking with the ZBTsK and seeking a party conference outside legal party channels.

In December 1910 Lenin called for a new CC plenum, since the one held in January clearly had proven fruitless. In January 1911, in Paris, some Bolshevik reconciliators and Poles came together to work out "points of agreement." The first point was, apparently, a statement against the Golosovites (supporters of the Menshevik newspaper *Golos sotsialdemokrata*) and otzovism-*Vperedism*. The second point concerned a new CC. It proposed an eight-man body: a minimum of three Bolsheviks and one each from the Plekhanovites, Golosovites, Poles, Bundists, and Latvians. The Bolshevik signers of the agreement were Rykov, Zinoviev, and the Pole Tyszko. After the meeting Rykov went to Berlin.<sup>47</sup>

Lenin, in a letter to Rykov written in early February, expressed disappointment with the agreement. The statement on the Golosovites and *Vperedists* was too weak; the proposed eight-man CC would not work; and "the result [would be]: neutralization, that is, the full impotence of the CC!! This result will repeat the mistake of the plenum [of January 1910]: good wishes, tearful words, good thoughts—and impotence in carrying them out." Lenin closed by saying that if the practical workers wished to fulfill the "points of agreement," *it is your affair.*<sup>48</sup>

The exchange of letters which followed shows that Rykov and Lenin were still far apart on organizational questions. Rykov was willing to dump the Menshevik Golosovites, but still did not think it wise to do the same to the Bolshevik *Vperedists*. Obviously, if forced to choose, Rykov preferred to stick with illegal as opposed to legal means of party work (the Menshevik Golosovites were liquidators, the *Vperedists* were supporters of illegal, underground work).

Although disturbed, Lenin did not break off correspondence. Indeed, Lenin and Rykov disagreed as comrades, not enemies, and other items were discussed

46. Quoted in Wolfe, *Three Who Made A Revolution*, p. 525 (emphasis in the original); Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, pp. 116–17; K. Ostroukhova, "Iz istorii bor'by s likvidatorstvom, 1907–1911," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 11/58 (1926), p. 108; Moskalev, *Biuro tsentral'nogo komiteta RSDRP*, p. 164.

47. "Bor'ba bol'shevizma s primirenchestvom: Pis'ma V. I. Lenina–A. I. Rykovu, fevral'-mart 1911 g.," *Leninskii sbornik*, 18 (1931): 14.

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13. Emphasis in the original.

in the letters. Thus, in March 1911, when Rykov became disgusted with the whole negative situation in the party and threatened to resign from the CC, Lenin urged him to remain on that body: "If you leave the CC, it will be running from the field of battle, betraying bolshevism at a difficult moment."<sup>49</sup> Very clearly Lenin considered Rykov's Bolshevik activities sufficiently valuable to urge him to remain in the Bolshevik camp despite their occasional strong differences.

Lenin convinced Rykov to remain on the CC and to abandon his efforts to fulfill the purposes of the January 1910 plenum as well. On May 27, 1911, a "letter to members of the CC living abroad," signed by Lenin, Rykov, and Zinoviev, was drawn up and sent. Pointing out the demise of the Russian Bureau and the failure of the ZBTsK to call a plenum, the three said they had taken upon themselves the initiative of calling a meeting for June 5. Rykov obviously helped prepare this meeting. "A Plan for the Report of Three Bolsheviks to the Private Meeting of Nine Members of the CC" was written in part by Rykov, and in numerous places he made notations on the text. But the meeting was not planned in a reconciliationist vein. Those attending were the Bolsheviks Lenin, Rykov, Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Tyszko, and also Goldman (Igor, Igorev), Ber, and Shvartz, but Goldman soon left, making it a Bolshevik gathering.<sup>50</sup> The meeting accused the ZBTsK of failing to do its job, and called for both a CC plenum and a party conference to decide its fate. Rykov was made a member of the Organization Commission for each of the proposed meetings, and also was appointed to a Technical Commission whose task it was to handle party publications, transport, and so forth until the meetings occurred.<sup>51</sup>

Despite this apparent victory for Lenin, Rykov's actions after the meeting could hardly have pleased him, for they were carried out in a broadly reconciliationist manner. On June 22 Rykov wrote the secretary of the ZBTsK, asking how soon the ZBTsK could attend a CC plenum and select delegates to it. This is generally seen as an act of reconciliationism, which it was, but it can be assessed in other ways as well. Rykov probably wrote with the hope that the ZBTsK might prove conciliatory, but not really expecting that it would, in which case he and the Bolsheviks could point out that they had made one more effort to bring the party together. Nothing came of these efforts to summon a CC plenum, however. In a letter of July 31, Rykov reported that the ZBTsK had replied that it considered the June meeting and all organizations created by it illegal, the Latvian foreign committee had forwarded the letter to the home committee, and the Bund had not replied at all.<sup>52</sup> Rykov's work as a member of the Organization Commission for the proposed party conference was definitely reconciliationist. According to the Okhrana, Rykov personally negotiated with Plekhanov, who approved of the June meeting but refused to participate in the Organization Commission until the attitudes of the other elements of the party could be ascertained.<sup>53</sup>

49. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

50. "Iz epokhi reaktzii i novogo pod''ema. Avgust 1907-1911," *Leninskiĭ sbornik*, 25 (1933): 78-79, 80, 84-87, 90; *Revoliutsiia i R.K.P. (b)*, 5, p. 456.

51. *Revoliutsiia i R.K.P. (b)*, 5, pp. 458-62.

52. Ostroukhova, "Iz istorii bor'by s likvidatorstvom," pp. 134-35; K. Shalagin, *Bor'ba bol'shevikov s trotskizmom, 1907-1914* (Moscow, 1965), p. 66.

53. Tsiavlovskii, ed., *Materialy po istorii bol'shevizma*, p. 52.

Clearer yet is the leaflet "To All Members of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party," which came out in Paris during late August 1911. The authors identified themselves only as reconciliators, but also referred to themselves as members of both the organizational and technical commissions created in June, and parts of the text were couched in terms very similar to those of Rykov's letters to Lenin in February and March. It seems highly likely, therefore, that Rykov wrote the leaflet himself or collaborated on it. The leaflet said, in part, that "the task of the construction of the party in the struggle with liquidationism was narrowly understood by the leaders of bolshevism. Instead of uniting all party elements in the struggle with liquidationism, instead of conducting this struggle in the name of the party, they have led it in the name of the fraction." The leaflet went on to urge the convening of a party conference at which the existing illegal organization could be unified and ended with the statement that "We value the formal unity of the party, but value its real unity still more."<sup>54</sup>

Lenin, because he disagreed with their approach, tried to hamper the work of the Organization Commission by withholding Bolshevik funds from it. Tyszko, however, brought pressure to bear on Lenin through his wife, Rosa Luxemburg. Luxemburg was close to the German Social Democrats, who had been designated as trustees of the Bolsheviks' funds by the plenum in January 1910. The result was a strong letter from the trustees to Lenin, who then released 30,000–40,000 francs to the commission.<sup>55</sup>

In view of Rykov's attitude and position, his arrest in August 1911, almost immediately upon entering Russia to work on the planned conference, was clearly a boon to Lenin. Spiridovich thinks it made it easier for Lenin to form his own kind of organization. Wolfe sees Rykov as "the outstanding leader" of the reconciliators, says that his arrest left only second-rate reconciliators at large, and believes that Rykov's arrest was one of the two most important factors in 1911 which made possible Lenin's organizational success in 1912 at the Prague Conference. Most important, we have the testimony of the well-informed police. Speaking of the reconciliators, a report of the Moscow Okhrana of that period says that "this group . . . has an extremely large number of adherents and followers, primarily among the party workers of the empire, and will play an especially prominent role in the further affairs of the party if the planned conference takes place."<sup>56</sup> With Rykov in jail the field was left to Ordzhonikidze, who formed a Russian Organization Commission from which came the Prague Conference and its CC, totally docile to Lenin's wishes.

Although Rykov was not continuously in prison or in exile after his arrest in 1911, he was free for only short periods of time. He did not go abroad again before the revolution, and his major activity of the pre-1917 period had ended.<sup>57</sup>

54. It is reprinted in full, with Lenin's markings, in *Leninskii sbornik*, 25 (1933): 98–101.

55. Tsiavlovskii, ed., *Materialy po istorii bol'shevizma*, pp. 53–54; Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, pp. 121–22.

56. A. Spiridovich, *Istoriia bol'shevizma v Rossii, ot vozniknoveniia do zakhvata vlasti, 1883–1903–1917* (Paris: Tipografiia franko-russkaia pechat', 1922), p. 232; Wolfe, *Three Who Made A Revolution*, pp. 527–29; Tsiavlovskii, ed., *Materialy po istorii bol'shevizma*, p. 57. Wolfe argues that the other factor was Martov's publication of the anti-Bolshevik pamphlet *Saviors or Destroyers?*

57. For a brief description of Rykov's life from his 1911 arrest to the time of the



Haupt, in *Les Bolchéviks par eux-mêmes*, divides the Bolsheviks into two groups, "the grand protagonists" and "the pleiade of October." In the first he lists, alphabetically, Bukharin, Kamenev, Lenin, Stalin, Sverdlov, Trotsky, and Zinoviev. The "pleiade of October" contains forty-five names, subdivided into "the Bolsheviks before the war," including such people as Enukidze, Frunze, and Kalinin; "the former dissidents," with, among others, Bogdanov, Lunacharskii, Lozovskii—and Rykov; and the rallies of 1917, new recruits, including Dzerzhinskii, Kollontai, Radek, and others.<sup>58</sup> This classification is extremely unfair to Rykov. If it is based on the post-1917 importance of Soviet leaders it is wrong to exclude Rykov from "the grand protagonists"; if based on their roles in the year 1917 itself, there is no reason to include Bukharin and Sverdlov; and if based on pre-1917 activities, it should omit Bukharin, Sverdlov, and Trotsky. Rykov's role within the party prior to 1917, and certainly before the war, was greater than that of Bukharin or Sverdlov, probably on a par with Stalin's, and within the Bolshevik faction, more important than Trotsky's. To place Rykov with "the former dissidents" is to accept completely the post-1930 view that Rykov constantly battled Lenin, and was a bad Leninist, if one at all. It implies that Rykov and Lenin parted not only immediately after, but long before, the revolution.

Although Soviet historians have charged Rykov with acts which aided and abetted Lenin's opponents, Rykov himself is not accused of being a Menshevik, Trotskyite, boycottist, ultimatist, otzovist, or *Vperedist*. In spite of their differences, men such as Rykov, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin continued to be considered Bolsheviks, even by the purist Lenin, and continued to hold important posts as Lenin's lieutenants. Rykov was a Bolshevik, and nothing else.

Moreover, in some respects Rykov was about as close to Lenin as anyone. If, for example, we constructed an ideological stairway, ranging from one to ten and outlining in ascending order the steps to the pearly gates of Leninism, it might go from non-Marxists at the bottom through the Menshevik practicals, Golosovites, Menshevik reconciliators, *Vperedists*, ultimatists, otzovists, Bolshevik reconciliators, pure Leninists, and, at the summit, the molder of the Bolshevik commandments, Lenin himself. Few if any angels can be identified on the penultimate, pure Leninist, step. Zinoviev and Kamenev (prior to 1917) probably came the closest, yet even they had differences with Lenin. Zinoviev offered the resolution on party publications at the meeting of the expanded editorial board of *Proletarii* in June 1909, which offended Lenin, and Kamenev sided with the reconciliators on certain issues at the January 1910 CC plenum, to mention just two cases of disagreement.<sup>59</sup> Rykov, then, at step number eight, is just behind Zinoviev and Kamenev, who in any case should probably be at eight and one-half, that is, more than Bolshevik reconciliators but not quite pure Leninists.

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February revolution, see S. A. Oppenheim, "Aleksei Ivanovich Rykov (1881–1938): A Political Biography" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1972), pp. 97–103.

58. G. Haupt and J. Marie, *Les Bolchéviks par eux-mêmes* (Paris: Francis Maspero, 1969), pp. 397–98. The book is largely a translation into French, with notes, of the biographies of the major Soviet leaders in the Granat encyclopedia.

59. *Protokoly rasshirennogo soveshchaniia redaktsii 'Proletariia'*, p. 119; N. Popov, *Ocherk istorii vsesoiuznoi kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov)*, 15th ed., vol. 1 (Moscow, 1932), p. 182, n. 3.



Rykov, although a close ideological supporter of Lenin, was at the same time his most dangerous opponent, certainly within the Bolshevik faction, and perhaps because of this, within the entire party. His organizational reconciliationism responded to the yearning for unity of most party members, at all levels and from almost all factions. Rykov himself lacked the charisma of Lenin, Martov, and Trotsky, but perhaps because of this was better suited to bring about party unity in a tribe top-heavy with chiefs.

In addition, Rykov was perhaps the most important of what we might call the Social Democrats' "double threats," that is, people who practiced their revolutionary trade both at home and abroad. Major leaders such as Plekhanov, Martov, Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev spent little or no time in Russia after 1900. And much of Lenin's stay in the empire in 1905–7 was in Finland. There had been earlier double threats, such as Zemliachka and Mandel'shtam, but after 1905 Rykov was the most outstanding. This undoubtedly contributed to his stature as a leader within both the party and his faction, and to the respect each accorded his views and acts. He was one of few who could base his thinking on direct party work in Russia. This gave him a "feel" for the aspirations toward unity which Lenin and the other perpetual exiles could not grasp or understand except in intellectual terms, if at all. Rykov's work within Russia undoubtedly kept stoking the flames of his reconciliationism, which had existed as early as Saratov and would continue after the revolution.

On the other hand, practical work at home made Rykov less useful abroad. Lenin and the others could express their frustrations via literary efforts. Rykov was neither a natural *littérateur* nor an ideologist, and he did not really understand the importance of such activities unless they were directly connected to practical work at home. Hence he constantly urged party organs to stress practical work, to emphasize what would unite the movement and make it strong within Russia rather than what would accelerate the forces bursting it asunder.

Finally, it must be recognized that Rykov's work prior to 1912 was excellent training for the postrevolutionary years. After years of dealing with practical revolutionary problems, he probably adjusted more easily to administrative tasks than Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev, for whom the transition to practical work after so many years of intellectualizing must have been difficult. Rykov was happy in administration—whether as long-time head of the Supreme Economic Council, as vice-chairman of the Council of Labor and Defense and the Sovnarkom, or as premier for seven years. To Rykov this was the *real* work of the revolution. And the attitudes Rykov developed before the revolution—his emphasis on practical as opposed to theoretical work, his acceptance of diversity in order to achieve broader goals, his propeasant attitude—were similar to those which he manifested after 1917.