

The Petrograd Workers and the February Revolution

ABSTRACT:

This paper seeks to understand, through focusing on the frequently underemphasized agency of the working class, why the Russian Revolution, specifically the February Revolution, broke out in Petrograd first. To do so, the essay surveys the unique features of the Petrograd workforce, comparing it with that of other Russian industrial centers. It then examines the series of events of the first three days of the February Revolution and analyzes the manner in which characteristics peculiar to the Petrograd working class played a role. It concludes that a confluence of factors, namely factory size, labor skill, and urban layout, in the face of mounting tensions, catalyzed worker protests, which quickly sparked one of the most influential revolutions in history.

KEYWORDS: Russia; February Revolution; workers; Petrograd; working class

While some may dispute the extent to which the Russian Revolution of 1917 was truly “by and for” the workers, there is no question that it was a movement in their name. Given the apparent importance of workers, then, in some form or another, it is curious how little attention historians (or English translators) have given them, focusing instead on the high politics of Dual Power or on great figures such as Lenin. In this narrative, the workers of Russia have often been lumped into a homogeneous, proletarian mass, a simplification that overlooks the complexity of the industrial workforce and its important consequences in the events of 1917. Significant social and economic diversity existed within the “working class.” Moreover, the characteristics of the working class from region to region, city to city, was hardly uniform. Thus, when Nikolai Sukhanov attributes a unique revolutionary nature to the workers of the capital by writing, “The Petersburg proletariat was the most dangerous internal enemy—during the revolution as well as before,”¹ the obvious question to ask is: “Why?” What made this collection of workers particularly revolutionary? The centrality of Petrograd in the high politics of Russia aside, what was special about the workers of the capital that helped make Petrograd the vanguard of the Russian Revolution?

In this paper, I will examine the unique attributes of the Petrograd workforce and how these attributes contributed in practice to the city’s leading role in the Russian Revolution, specifically the February Revolution. First, I will consider the economic and social composition of the Petrograd working class (a term that I only use for its descriptive ease in identifying the collection of people commonly recognized as workers, rather than in an ideological fashion), comparing it with that of the rest of Russia, and Moscow in

¹ N.N. Sukhanov, *The Russian Revolution 1917: A Personal Record* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984) 515.

particular. This examination will include an analysis of aspects of Petrograd's living and working environment, such as factory size and the physical particularities of the city. Next, I will follow the activities of Petrograd workers on February 23, 24, and 25, the days on which they sparked the events of 1917 and had the most unparalleled influence. In the end, I will show that a confluence of Petrograd's factory size, labor skill, and urban layout played a pivotal role in why and how the February Revolution broke out in the capital first.

First, let us take a broad overview of the characteristics of Russian industry as a whole in and before 1917. The vast majority of Russian industry was concentrated in a few industrial regions, mainly Petrograd and Moscow. In fact, these two industrial districts alone, comprising only 19% of the overall population, employed 60% of the industrial workforce.² Measuring all wage earners except for white-collar employees, the city of Petrograd had about 384,600 workers while the city of Moscow had 205,900, though the surrounding province of Moscow had significantly more workers than that.³ During the war, the number of factory workers grew significantly in both places but was particularly marked in Petrograd. From 1914 until 1917, the Petrograd workforce grew by more than 60%, to almost 393,000. The majority of these new workers were peasants, brought in to sustain production, which was increasingly strained by the war effort.

One of the peculiar features of Russian industrialization, compared with the rest of Europe, was the immense scale of Russian factories. This characteristic, which is often attributed as an important cause of Russia's revolution, was particularly prevalent in Petrograd. In 1917 Petrograd, enterprises of more than 1000 workers were responsible for

² Diane P. Koenker and William G. Rosenberg, *Strikes and Revolution in Russia, 1917* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989) 40.

³ Diane P. Koenker, *Moscow Workers and the 1917 Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981) 23.

67.9% of industrial employment in the city. The typical factory in Petrograd employed 40% more workers than the country's average.⁴ This difference was even bigger with Moscow: while 247 workers labored in the average factory of Moscow province, around 389 worked in a typical Petrograd enterprise. Furthermore, fewer than half of Moscow's workers were employed by factories at all, of any size. Clearly then, the laborers of Petrograd worked, on average, in larger, more concentrated units than the rest of the empire. While there were exceptions, such as Vladimir province, which employed around 482 workers per plant, such industrial regions did not have the same concentration of large production units within as small an area as Petrograd occupied.

Both before and during World War I, such large industries did indeed exhibit tendencies of especial worker activism. These factories provided a necessary base for political organization and collective action. Their size alone meant that, even if only a few factories struck, huge numbers of workers would be on the streets. Moreover, these workers could then exert pressure on other nearby laborers in smaller units of production, "taking them out" into the streets for demonstrations.⁵ At the same time, factories that were *extremely* big, such as the Putilov Works or the Petrograd Pipe Factory, tended to be somewhat less politically active. In these cases, their immense size contributed to an atmosphere of shopism, in which internal divisions along workshop lines emerged, reducing the unity and scope for collective action.⁶ For this reason, activism was generally strongest in the medium-large factories. Indeed, these enterprises would play an important

⁴ S.A. Smith, *Red Petrograd: Revolution in the Factories 1917-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 9-11.

⁵ Koenker, *Moscow*, 23.

⁶ Ronald Grigor Suny, "Revising the old story: the 1917 revolution in light of new sources," *The Workers' Revolution in Russia, 1917: The View from Below*, ed. Daniel H. Kaiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 12.

role in the February uprising in Petrograd. Even within this category, however, there are distinctions to be made. Though textile mills were on average quite large, only somewhat smaller than metalwork factories, they had a reputation for being significantly less active than their metalwork counterparts. Thus, plant size cannot be the only factor at work. In a simplified sense, this distinction comes down largely to the question of worker skill level. As such, we will now turn to a discussion of the working class's social and economic composition in Petrograd and, most important, their varying levels of skill.

In Russia at this time, metalworkers were generally in a world apart from workers of textiles and most other industries in terms of skill. Though metalworkers were by no means all highly skilled, the industry possessed a particularly strong core of “cadre” workers—full time industrial wage earners, almost completely detached from any peasant background. These cadre workers were occupied in more difficult knowledge-based tasks, such as machine building.⁷ The skilled nature of the metal industry can also be gleaned from several signs. For one, literacy of the metalworkers was higher than every other industry, except for printing.⁸ Also, there tended to be a relatively low concentration of female workers, almost always unskilled at the time, in the metalworks. For example, although in absolute numbers more women in 1917 Petrograd worked in the metal industry than any other, as a proportion of the industry they were comparatively scarce: only 20.3% of the metal workforce consisted of women, while textiles consisted of 68.6% women, chemicals 46.7%, and the city average was 33.3%. This preponderance of unskilled women in the textiles helped give that industry a reputation of being peasant-like, while

⁷ Smith 14-23.

⁸ Koenker 28-29.

the skilled, male-dominant metalworkers were considered the true industrialized proletariat.⁹

Two other very significant indicators of skill level are wages and conscription into the military. Wages were particularly high amongst the most highly skilled cadre workers, even as other, more “peasant-like” metalworkers received wages comparable to those of other industries.¹⁰ In terms of conscription, the Russian Empire could not afford to send its most skilled workers to the front, as their productivity, necessary to the war effort, could not easily be replaced. It is telling that 53% of Russian metalworkers were exempted from conscription, while the overall average was only 27%.¹¹ Of course, this number is almost certainly partially skewed by the fact that the particular skills most in demand in order to produce armaments for the war naturally belonged to metalworkers. Even so, the combination of highly urbanized cadre workers, high literacy rates, low proportions of female laborers, elevated wages, and low conscription levels make clear that metalworkers belonged to an unusually skilled industry.

These skills contributed to a greater political activism for several reasons. Most simply, as skilled workers were generally those who had participated in urban, industrial life the longest (the cadres), they had ample experience in strikes and labor activism to draw from. Moreover, higher rates of literacy kept these workers more politically knowledgeable and aware. This awareness included greater exposure to the ideas of radical revolutionary parties, like the Bolsheviks, who, though not the central focus of this study, cannot be disregarded. Furthermore, workers with higher wages were not as

⁹ Smith 23-29.

¹⁰ Koenker and Rosenberg, *Strikes*, 55.

¹¹ Koenker, *Moscow*, 29.

economically troubled; thus, they were able to focus more on political issues in place of economic ones. Finally, these skilled laborers recognized their relative job security, and, as such, they could strike without an overwhelming fear of losing employment.¹²

The skilled, activist metalworking industry had an uncommonly heavy presence in Petrograd. Whereas Moscow and industrial regions like Vladimir province, before World War I, were dominated by the textile industry, the economy of St. Petersburg, as it was called then, was centered on metalworkers. In 1913, 37.7% of Moscow's workers were employed in textiles while 15.3% worked in metal factories. At the same time, in St. Petersburg the numbers were virtually switched: textiles accounted for 16.5% of the workforce while metalworkers made up 41.5%. During the war, the scope of metal industry expanded everywhere, bringing Moscow's metalworkers up to 27.6% of the city's workforce. Metalworking in Petrograd, however, expanded even more, reaching an unparalleled level of 61.3%.¹³

Beyond the absolute numerical predominance of metalworkers in the labor force in 1917, the fact that they had been so prominent even before the war shows that, despite rapid metal industry growth driven by in-migration of unskilled peasants, a large core of experienced cadres still remained. This more experienced, skilled urban workforce of Petrograd can in part be seen by looking at the city's wages, the highest in the country. It is also evidenced by Petrograd workers' weak connections to land. A 1918 industrial census, though not entirely reliable, found that before the October Revolution 19.5% of Petrograd workers had owned land and 7.9% had worked it for their families, as opposed to 39.5% and 22.8% respectively in Moscow. Other research shows that 52-57% of Petrograd

¹² Koenker and Rosenberg, *Strikes*, 59.

¹³ Koenker, *Moscow*, 25-26.

laborers at the beginning of 1917 had worked in the city before the war.¹⁴ Moreover, the proportion of women in the Petrograd workforce, though it did increase significantly, remained far lower than elsewhere. From 1913 to 1917, women as a percentage of Petrograd workers rose from 25.7% to 33.3%, as opposed to the transition from 26.6% to 43.2% in the whole of Russian industry. Likewise, the proportion of youth workers grew more slowly in the capital than in the rest of the country. Though it must be noted that such youths were often more ready than most to take up political action, they would not have been the skilled, experienced leaders. These trends, thanks in part to especially low conscription rates of skilled laborers in the capital, demonstrate the continued presence of a particularly strong, though somewhat proportionally diminished, core of urban, skilled metalworkers in Petrograd in the months leading up to the Russian Revolution.¹⁵

The layout of the city was another distinct feature of Petrograd that would play an important part in the events of the February Revolution. A combination of social segregation coupled with relative physical proximity to bourgeois society created the conditions for class conflict. Both Moscow and Petrograd had a series of districts that made up the cities. In each case, the main industrial districts were located on the outskirts of the city, while the city center was the territory of the middle class, or bourgeoisie, as well as the official political leadership. Finding industrial factories of any substantial size in the center of the city was extremely rare. For the most part, only employees from the printing industry worked in the urban centers and interacted with the bourgeoisie every day. (Incidentally, this helps explain why printers, despite being similarly skilled to

¹⁴ David Mandel, *The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Regime: From the February Revolution to the July Days, 1917* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983) 47.

¹⁵ Smith 20-29.

metalworkers, did not develop an identity of radical political activism.) Rather than the heart of the city, then, it was the areas around the center that employed laborers, such as textile or metalworkers, in large units and, also, generally constituted the homes of working class people. In Moscow, such working class neighborhoods were comparatively socially diverse. After all, in the city as a whole, no industry comprised more than 27.6% of the overall labor force, and, thus, it is hardly surprising that no one industry could dominate the culture of any individual district. Additionally, there was at least a minor presence of other social classes in pretty much every district, helping to limit class tensions and preventing a completely unified movement from erupting.¹⁶

The working districts of Petrograd, on the other hand, were a different story when it came to social heterogeneity. Though a few districts enjoyed some level of social mixture, there were several that were overwhelmingly working class and, more significantly than that, predominated by metalworkers. The most notable of these, by far, was the Vyborg district. This district employed (and presumably was the residence of) the largest number of laborers of any city district. Furthermore, an incredible 84.1% of these laborers worked in the metal industry. As significant as that seems, there were even higher concentrations of metalworkers in a pair of smaller districts, Petergof and Kolomna, with 93.4% and 88.1% respectively. Given this peculiar social homogeneity of several Petrograd districts, the geographical proximity of the non-working heart of the city took on greater meaning. Workers in Vyborg, completely socially separated from residents of the city center, were just across the Neva River from these people, instead of on the outer reaches of the outskirts as was usually the case. Since, quite literally, the factories were right on the banks

¹⁶ Koenker, *Moscow*, 14-21.

of the Neva, directly across from the urban center, the workers of Vyborg could quickly get news and information from the heart of the city as well as see the differences in living standards. This unusually conspicuous social segregation when combined with the homogeneous, metal-heavy demography of the outskirts of Petrograd endowed Vyborg, and certain other districts to a lesser extent, with a culture of extreme worker activism.¹⁷

Additional elements of the layout of Vyborg and other districts were important to the revolutionary nature of these areas. For one, in conjunction with its abundance of skilled metalworkers, Vyborg had a high concentration of large, but not too large, factories, theoretically ideal for organizing united worker action, as was established earlier.¹⁸ In place of any massive enterprises like the Putilov Works, medium-large factories—almost all of Vyborg’s factories ranged from five hundred to several thousand employees—were clustered together along the banks of the Neva and Bol’shaya Neva Rivers or the nearby street Bol’shoi Sampson’evskii Prospekt. Such intense clustering of so many prime units for organizing collective action made communication swift and further improved the ability of the politically active Vyborg workers to coordinate and diffuse strikes or demonstrations. It also meant that nearly all workers in this area, even if they were not metalworkers, would have been exposed to or participated in strikes during or before the war. While no other district of Petrograd had such a perfect storm of these conditions as Vyborg, there were plenty of other cases of clustering of large firms. Petrograd district, for example, though the working class was not especially predominant in the area as a whole, had collections of large factories, each employing around 1,500 workers on average, on the west and northeast shores. These northeastern factories were right across the Bol’shaya

¹⁷ Mandel 48-60.

¹⁸ Smith 52.

Neva River from many of the Vyborg factories, creating yet another opportunity for labor activism to spread quickly.¹⁹ In all these ways, the layout and labor composition of the city of Petrograd and the Vyborg district gave the workers of the capital a very distinct, atypical character.

Before moving on to the events of the February Revolution, it is necessary, in order to prove the importance of the distinctions that have been made, to establish briefly that the uprising was indeed a product of the Petrograd working class, and not of political parties like the Bolsheviks. While the activities of workers cannot fully be extricated from those of organized political agitators, since such agitation over the years had undoubtedly influenced workers, the question comes down to the relative spontaneity of the outbreak of demonstrations on February 23 and the days after. In fact, the start of the revolution did have a very spontaneous character. In spite of effective party-organized demonstrations on January 9 and February 14 (along with failed attempts on February 10 and 13), the February Revolution broke out on International Women's Day and had the most far-reaching effects without any significant organization or planning by central socialist parties. As a matter of fact, the Bolsheviks had planned nothing for the day.²⁰ As such, the outbreak of this powerful movement came as a surprise to almost everyone. Even four days into the revolution, on the night of February 26, "the Bolshevik representatives maintained that the uprising was hopeless and fated to end with repressions and deeper reaction."²¹ The documents of the Okhrana, the secret police of the Russian Empire, repeatedly

¹⁹ Mandel 50-60.

²⁰ Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *The February Revolution: Petrograd, 1917* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981) 204-216.

²¹ Robert Paul Browder and Alexander Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government, 1917: Documents* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961) Volume I, 22.

emphasize that the movement “flared up without any party preparing it and without any preliminary discussion of a plan of action.”²² The only people who did seem to recognize that there was “some big political moment” coming were workers themselves, such as a delegation of Putilov workers that went to warn Kerensky on February 22 of approaching crisis.²³ The evidence of the non-party, unanticipated nature of the eruption of revolution supports the interpretation of the February Revolution as spontaneous and fundamentally worker-driven.

Despite its spontaneity, however, the February Revolution was far from unprecedented and could hardly have been *completely* shocking. Labor strikes, which had peaked in 1913 before the war and then declined precipitously with its outbreak, had resurged in 1915 and 1916, once again reaching near pre-war levels. Notably, during this time, strikes were also becoming more political in nature, focusing less on questions of economic subsistence and more on issues like ending the war.²⁴ The strike on January 9 of 1917, the anniversary of Bloody Sunday, was the biggest of World War I, with over 140,000 workers going on strike in Petrograd. A month later, within weeks of the start of the revolution, 84,000 workers took to the streets on February 14. Regardless of the fact that these strikes were partly party-organized, unrest among the workers was clearly building. Several different workshops of the Putilov Works remained on strike from February 14 until February 21, slowly attracting other workshops. The management of this gargantuan factory, in order to avoid giving these workers a political base with which to plan their demonstrations, locked the factory gates on February 22. At the same time, rumors and

²² Browder and Kerensky 38.

²³ V. Zenzinov, “Fevral’skie dni,” *The Russian Provisional Government, 1917: Documents*, ed. Robert Paul Browder and Alexander Kerensky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961) Volume I, 27.

²⁴ Mandel 61-63.

realities of bread shortages had hit Petrograd as well as the rest of the Empire, causing further unrest. It was in this context that the February Revolution would break out on the following morning.²⁵

Interestingly, the instigators of the February Revolution were not the Putilov workers, nor any skilled metalworkers for that matter, but female textile workers. Women textile workers, who were generally considered peasant-like and inactive, started one of the most important movements in 20th Century history on the morning of February 23. Of course, these women were not the typical female textile workers of the Russian Empire; they were laborers of several textile factories in the Vyborg district, located in the hotspot of worker activity along the Neva and Sampson'evskii Prospekt. Because of their location and its culture of labor activism, these women had experienced and participated in far more strikes than the typical textile mill employee in Russia. They had been integrated into the lifestyle of the activist, urban "proletariat" by the strong cadre presence of the metalworkers that surrounded them. Thus, when these women organized illegal meetings in their factories on the morning of International Women's Day to plan a strike demanding bread, there were leaders among them who knew how to organize a strike.

Concluding their meetings, the women of these factories took to the streets, shouting out their demands of "Bread!" Several of these factories were fairly large, numbering 1,500 or more. Consequently, when they went to the neighboring metalwork factories, such as New Lessner and Erikson, calling for them to join the strike, the strikers had already begun to make a genuine commotion on the streets. After some brief hesitation by cadre leaders of the metal factories—who were partly hesitant due to the central

²⁵ Hasegawa 199-211.

socialist parties' apparent indisposition to stage any demonstrations that day—the 4,500 workers of Erikson and 7,500 workers of New Lessner joined the strike. This collection of workers, now led by the experienced cadres of the metal factories, made their way down Sampson'evskii Prospekt, actively pulling the workers of other plants into the strike. When other factories resisted this process of “taking out,” as was the case with the Arsenal factory, the large numbers of strikers turned militant and forced the workers to leave their factories. In this way the strike movement spread throughout much of Vyborg.

As more skilled and experienced metalworkers joined the strike, the people's demands transformed from the economic call for bread of the textile workers to the more political slogans of the metalworkers.²⁶ In the midst of their chants of “Down with the war” and “Down with autocracy,” a new very significant call began to take shape: “To Nevskii!” By calling on each other to bring the movement to Nevskii Prospekt, in the middle of the city, the strikers were trying to make the movement more than an ordinary strike. According to E.N. Burdzhakov, to demonstrate on the Nevskii was to “[take] a stand as an independent political force against the autocracy.”²⁷ Though police quite easily prevented most of the workers from crossing the Liteinyi Bridge to reach the center of the city on the first day, the workers' determination to demonstrate on the Nevskii indicated the special intensity of the strikers that would soon turn simple labor activism into a legitimate revolution.

The first day was not remarkable in terms of size, nor did it reach all that much of the city. Nonetheless, it is telling that Vyborg was unquestionably at its center. Of the

²⁶ Hasegawa 215-221.

²⁷ E.N. Burdzhakov, *Russia's Second Revolution: The February 1917 Uprising in Petrograd* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) 111.

78,000 to 128,000 workers who struck on February 23, nearly 60,000 came from the Vyborg district.²⁸ Moreover, the districts of Petrograd and Rozhdestvenskii—the other parts of the city that experienced scattered strikes that day according to the Okhrana documents—were both situated directly across the river from many of the factories of Vyborg district.²⁹ The February Revolution had begun, led by the workers of Vyborg, a district entirely unique to the city of Petrograd. The next day, the movement would grow stronger.

The morning of February 24 started yet again with factory meetings, by the strikers of February 23 as well as new strikers, planning how they would build on the previous day. The leaders of the movement on February 24 were largely the same as the day before, as the metal factories of Vyborg, specifically New Lessner, Erikson, Parviainen, and Russian Renault, sought to rally other workers to the cause, using force if necessary. On this day, however, even as more workers in Vyborg participated in strikes, activism was not as singularly concentrated in Vyborg. Workers in many of the other districts began to take part in the movement, including workers from some of the limited industry in the center of the city. Once again, the strikers attempted to make their way to Nevskii Prospekt and other important city forums to stage demonstrations, sometimes traversing the iced over river to do so. They had more success than before, but the police still kept them mostly at bay. Even so, the workers' confidence in the movement was growing, and as they went home at night they told each other, "We will see you tomorrow on the Nevskii."³⁰

²⁸ Hasegawa 221-224.

²⁹ Browder and Kerensky 34.

³⁰ Hasegawa 232-239

Far more of the city's workforce participated in strikes on the second day of the uprising than on the first. As opposed to 87,000 strikers from 50 enterprises on February 23, by Okhrana estimates, February 24 saw over 158,000 workers take to the streets from 131 enterprises. At that point in time, these numbers represented the highest single-day participation in strikes of the war. Moreover, based on the Okhrana's figures, a greater number of smaller factories became involved on the second day: February 23 averaged about 1,750 workers per striking enterprise, while February 24 averaged 1,210.³¹ The large factories of Petrograd then, unsurprisingly, played a greater part in initially sparking the revolution. Part of this can be accounted for by the fact that Vyborg, which had larger enterprises on average, had been such a prominent actor on the first day; but its activity in the first place must also be considered a product of the district's ideal average factory size. It is noteworthy, as well, that in the first two days of the February Revolution two of the truly massive factories of the city, the Putilov Works and the Petrograd Pipe Factory, had yet to take part in the uprising. While Putilov's lack of headquarters for organization, due to the factory lockout, held some responsibility, it is likely that shopism helped prevent the participation of these two mammoth enterprises. When they finally did enter the movement on February 25, they were joining what had become a general strike.

On February 25, the strike became truly city-wide, now incorporating all districts. It was no longer a strike primarily of skilled metalworkers and large-factory activists from Vyborg. The rest of the working class, including unorganized wage earners like store clerks or cab drivers, joined, and even many middle class elements entered the fray. In unprecedented numbers, the whole of Petrograd had been brought into a general

³¹ Browder and Kerensky 34.

atmosphere of revolution, with over 200,000 people from various segments of society striking and demonstrating. Unlike February 23 and 24, those who sought to demonstrate on the Nevskii were highly successful. A general attitude of aggression toward the police reigned, and this day experienced significantly more violence than those that came before it. In spite of the fact that central party leadership, such as the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee, still failed to recognize the true significance of these events, the workers of Petrograd had sparked a movement that had taken on a life of its own. The success of the revolution now depended solely on how soldiers responded. Although they cracked down on February 26, the following day the soldiers mutinied and the uprising had essentially succeeded.³² Soon, news spread to the rest of the Russian Empire; other cities followed Petrograd's lead, the Tsar abdicated, and workers' soviets were established alongside a Provisional Government. While the Russian Revolution would go on for months to come, the February Revolution was complete.

The February Revolution was distinctly a product of Petrograd's unique collection of workers. Though women initiated the revolution, their actions had been shaped by the culture and experiences of Vyborg district, which concentrated an unparalleled level of large factories predominantly employing skilled, urbanized metalworkers within a relatively small area. This hotspot of labor activism, unmatched in any other part of the Russian Empire, formed the center of the labor movement in the first days of the revolution. Unrest, however, quickly radiated outward from Vyborg to much of the surrounding city, which as a whole was marked by a similarly unusual preponderance of large factories and an experienced core of cadre metalworkers. Soon enough, the actions of

³² Hasegawa 247-277.

large units of skilled protestors attracted smaller, less organized and less politically active segments of the population to the cause until, eventually, the movement became a general strike with a momentum of its own. It was no accident that the February Revolution broke out in Petrograd, nor did it result from the high politics centered in the capital. Instead, it was the unique nature of this city's workers, who were far more than some dark shapeless mass, that put Petrograd at the heart of one of the most influential events in history.