No. 8

Report on the Work of the Social-Democratic Party in the Urals

28 July (10 August)–3 (16) August 1917

Chairman: The delegate from the Urals, comrade Preobrazhensky, has the floor.

Preobrazhensky: The work of Social Democracy in the Urals is taking place in special conditions. With the exception of Maltsevsky and a few other factories, the workers are not pure proletarians, but have ties to the land. This connection to the land leaves a special impression on the psychology of the Urals worker and on the form of his struggle with capital. Possessional right exists to this day in the Urals, and factory-owners have 2.5 million desyatins of land. The economy is most backward. There is chronic unemployment in the Urals, including up to forty-five to fifty percent of all workers.

1. [From Shestoi s’ezd RSDRP (Bol’shevikov). Avgust 1917 goda: Protokoly, pp. 80–1.]
2. [For an explanation of possessional property in the Urals, see Document 2:13.]
In place of the proven methods of class-struggle, one has to put forth special methods and adapt to local conditions. In the Urals, Social Democrats have been forced to lay out a specific programme, which may or may explain the success of our Party. Even during illegal times, the threat of death faced Urals industry and immediately demanded effective slogans; the land-relations demanded a special agrarian programme. We have land belonging to representatives of foreign capital, which means that the workers are compelled to turn their attention to the struggle with international capital, to international politics.

On the other hand, there is the backwardness of industry. The worker’s connection to the land facilitates the success of the S-Rs and Mensheviks as parties of the petty bourgeoisie.

Before the revolution, the Urals was considered a bastion for Bolshevism. Presently, the Bolshevik influence has relatively weakened; there are strong S-R organisations; the Mensheviks have also become stronger but, being only an appendage of the S-Rs, they have surrendered all class-positions.

Before the Revolution, there were underground Bolshevik organisations in Ekaterinburg, Lysva and at other points. The strength of Bolshevik influence just now is yet to be established, although we are without question the most influential party. A few summary data will provide a clearer understanding of this matter. In the Urals there have already been two conferences. At the first, fifteen thousand, five hundred party-members were represented; at the second – twenty-two thousand party-members; moreover, not all organisations had representatives, so, in reality, the Party included up to twenty-five thousand members. Bolshevik organisation would have been even stronger but for a number of reasons, such as sackings at the factories and the political conditions of work for our organisations – which led to some reduction of our members and the strengthening of Menshevik organisations. All the same, the number of Mensheviks does not exceed one-third of the membership of our Party.

Our work is conducted mainly among the workers. We have little influence on the peasants, except for those who are connected to the factories. It is interesting to note that there were delegates from the parishes at our conference looking for solutions to different questions.

Amongst the soldier-masses, the S-Rs have the predominant influence.

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3. [The reference is to the first two regional conferences of the RSDRP(B), held in Ekaterinburg. The first ‘free’ conference took place on 14–15 (27–8) April, 1917. It was called ‘free’ because it was the first to take place in conditions of legality. There were more than sixty delegates present. The second conference convened on 14 (27) July, 1917, with 63 delegates.]