Between 1905 and 1917, St. Petersburg and Moscow workers made claims on Russian society and the Tsarist regime for economic justice, political equality, and the recognition of their rights as citizens and as human beings. Many joined the labor and revolutionary movements that presented a formidable challenge to employers and the state. What were the bases of solidarity among urban workers that enabled them to act collectively and to form organizations, such as trade unions, beginning in 1905? How did these workers, most of them migrants from the countryside, acquire a new social identity in the urban milieu?

Although a comprehensive investigation of these questions lies outside the scope of this article, there is much to be gained from taking a fresh look at three issues that have far-reaching implications for interpreting the historical role played by urban workers in the final years of autocratic rule. These include the definition and composition of the urban working class; stratification, status differentiation, and identity formation among urban workers; and finally, the workplace environment and its impact on workers' experiences and perceptions. Focusing, in particular, on the characteristics of skilled workers, both in factories and artisanal shops, I will suggest that the position of these groups at the workplace and in the urban labor force facilitated their involvement in the labor and revolutionary movements from 1905 on. A better understanding of the social and political realities in urban Russia can be achieved, I will argue, by drawing on new sources and theoretical perspectives that have not yet been brought to bear on the study of Russian labor.

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1. It should be observed at the outset that this article is limited to a discussion of urban workers. Nevertheless, a substantial number of the nonagricultural manual workers were employed in enterprises situated outside the major cities. The study of these workers, many of them located in the dense "factory villages" of the Central Industrial Region and in the mining districts of South Russia, deserves separate consideration. The kustar' (rural artisanal) workers in the countryside provide still another important but neglected subject for investigation.
The Problematic of the "Working Class"

In contrast to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, when radical popular movements originated in the artisanal workshop more often than in the "dark satanic mill," the Russian upheavals of 1905 and 1917 marked the beginning of an era involving the revolutionary mobilization of the industrial worker. Western and Soviet scholars alike have recognized that factory workers played an unprecedented part in the events that weakened and finally overthrew both the Tsarist autocracy and the Provisional Government, installing the Bolsheviks in power. But the historic novelty of mass participation by these workers has led some scholars to present an incomplete and imbalanced picture of the urban working class as a whole.2

Since the 1930s, Soviet studies in the Russian labor field—with a few notable exceptions—have concentrated on workers employed in factories and plants, to the exclusion of other strata in the urban hired labor force.3 Ad-

2. It is not possible, in this article, to grapple with the concept of the "working class," a central problem in any labor study. Suffice it to note that my own inclination is to look for the conjunction between structures and social solidarities, in the belief that a class becomes manifest in the concrete actions of groups that, "as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs." E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (New York: Pantheon, 1964), p. 9. Given this perspective, I am inclined to emphasize the way in which workers, through their own statements and actions, reveal underlying concepts of class and status in Russian society.

3. In characterizing Soviet scholarship in this way, I have in mind studies dealing with various aspects of the pre-revolutionary workers' movement. The standard procedure in Soviet works is to provide a perfunctory survey of the labor force, followed by a substantive discussion of workers' activities that concentrates almost exclusively on the role of factory groups. Illustrative of this pattern are Rossiskii proletariat: oblik, bor'ba, i ego vliyanie (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1970); Rabochie v Rossii (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1966); G. A. Arutiunov, Rabochie v Rossii v periode novogo revoliutsionnogo pod'ema 1910-1914 gg. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1975) and E. E. Kruze, Peterburgskie rabochie v 1912-1914 godakh (Moscow-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1961). Studies of the 1905-07 period are particularly prone to distortion as a consequence of this narrow conceptualization of the working class. Thus the collection Revoliutsiia 1905-1907 godov v Rossii i profsoiuzy (Moscow: Profizdat, 1975), with contributions by V. Ia. Lavertychev and others, makes only passing reference to the involvement of non-factory groups in the trade union movement, despite the overwhelming evidence of their predominance in these organizations. Iu. I. Kir'ianov's recent study, Zhiznennyi uroven' rabochikh Rossii (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1979), while rich in documentation, deals exclusively with factory groups. Notable exceptions to the dominant approach in Soviet historiography are U. A. Shuster, Peterburgskie rabochie v 1905-1907 gg. (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1976), N. I. Vostrikov, Bor'ba za massy (gorodskie srednie sloi nakanune oktiabria) (Moscow: "Mysl," 1966), S. N. Semonov, Peterburgskie rabochie nakanune pervoi Russkoi revoliutsii (Moscow-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1966). It is also noteworthy that the important statistical compilation by A. G. Rashin, Formirovanie rabochego klassa Rossii Istoriko-ekonomicheskie ocherki (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoj literatury, 1958), applies a broad definition of the working class, and includes data on such groups as artisans, sales-clerical employees, household servants, day laborers, and workers in transportation, communications, and construction.