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## **ЛИКВИДАТОРСТВО Н.А. РОЖКОВА, ОБЩЕСТВО ЗАЩИТЫ ИНТЕРЕСОВ РАБОЧЕГО КЛАССА И НАША ЗАРЯ 1911-1912**

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### **N.A. ROZHKOVA'S LIQUIDATIONISM, THE POLITICAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING CLASS AND NASHA ZARIA 1911-1912<sup>1</sup>**

*Аннотация.* Термин «ликвидаторство» использовался В.И. Лениным в уничижительном значении по отношению к тем, кто не разделял его взгляды, особенно в годы так называемой Столыпинской реакции. Несмотря на то, что этот термин достаточно важен, ему уделялось слишком мало внимания. В настоящей статье предпринимается попытка устранить этот пробел, проанализировав то, каким образом Ленин использовал его в своей критике теорий Н.А. Рожкова, человека, который, по мнению лидера Большевиков, больше, чем кто-либо еще, сделал для того, чтобы этот термин употреблялся именно в таком значении. Вся последующая полемика между Лениным и Н.А. Рожковым привлекала внимание ведущих политических лидеров того времени, включая А. Мартынова и Ю. Мартова. Все идеи и взгляды противоборствующих сторон, которые происходили из этой язвительной полемики, публиковались в *Меньшевицком журнале Наша Заря* и именно они рассматриваются впервые. В настоящей статье предпринимается попытка представить Н.А. Рожкова независимым мыслителем, чье мнение было весомым, и который предложил разочарованным социал-демократам жизнеспособную политическую альтернативу. Делается вывод о том, что к 1912 году лидеры Меньшевиков уже настолько расходились во взглядах, что были не способны выступать с критикой, как Ленинских представлений о ликвидаторстве, так и призыва Рожкова к созданию официальной организации, которая по его мнению помогла бы свергнуть царский режим.

*Ключевые слова:* Н.А. Рожков, ликвидаторство, Наша Заря, А. Мартынов, Ю. Мартов, политическая ассоциация, меньшевизм, Ленин, социал-демократия.

*Abstract.* The term “liquidationism” was used by V.I. Lenin as a term of abuse for those who challenged his views especially during the years of so-called Stolypin reaction. Despite its significance, this term has received very little attention. This article attempts to address this gap in our knowledge by examining how Lenin used it against N.A. Rozhkov, the individual who, in the Bolshevik leader's mind, did more than anyone else to raise concern over the meaning of the term. The subsequent polemic that ensued between Lenin and Rozhkov drew the attention of other key political figures including A. Martynov and Iu. Martov. The conflicting ideas and viewpoints that emerged from this acrimonious debate were published in the Menshevik journal entitled *Nasha Zaria (Our Dawn)* and these discourses are scrutinised for the first time. This article attempts to show that Rozhkov was an independent thinker who could not be easily pigeonholed and who offered a viable political alternative to disillusioned social democrats. It also draws the conclusion that by 1912 leading Mensheviks were already so varied in their thinking they were unable to provide a fundamental critique of either Lenin's views on liquidationism or Rozhkov's call for a legal organisation that he believed ultimately would help bring down the Tsarist regime.

*Key words:* N.A. Rozhkov, liquidationism, *Nasha Zaria*, A. Martynov, Iu. Martov, political association, Menshevism, Lenin, social democracy.

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As we quickly approach the centenary of the 1917 Russian Revolution, it appears that we are all now capable of writing dispassionately about it. With this thought in mind, it was time that something was written about the general concept of «liquidationism» and, more specifically, what Nikolai Aleksandrovich Rozhkov (1868-1927) understood by this term. A discussion about «liquidationism» is important essentially for the reason that Abraham Ascher raised in his study of Pavel Axelrod, that is, it is «one of those hopelessly elusive words so often encountered in the history of Russian Social Democracy and, indeed, in the history of Russia»<sup>1</sup>. It is a term that requires further examination because it was coined by Lenin to attack those who did not agree with him on party organisation and policies during the so-called years of Stolypin Reaction. Since he first officially used it at the Fifth All-Russian Conference of the RSDLP, which took place in Paris on 3-9 January 1909, the term liquidationism has received minimal attention. As L.B. Schapiro pointed out many years ago now, given that this opprobrious term did not have an «objective foundation» and given that it was used to explain the irreconcilable difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism, leading to their final and definitive split in 1912, it is imperative that this term be examined more closely<sup>2</sup>.

This article begins the re-examination of the term liquidationism by using Rozhkov's views on the subject for several reasons: firstly, Lenin believed that Rozhkov had raised the question of liquidationism «to a higher plane» and it was no longer possible simply to discuss the matter as once before because what Rozhkov put forward was «the most comprehensive plan imaginable of immediate practical action»<sup>3</sup>; secondly, Rozhkov is an ideal reference model with which to examine the meaning of the term liquidationism because his social-democratic beliefs allowed

him to straddle both sides of the Menshevik-Bolshevik dichotomy; and thirdly, Rozhkov's interpretation of liquidationism led to a polemic with Lenin, which Martov, Martynov and others joined. Lenin's views on the subject have been known for quite some time. The views of those who did not agree with him, on the other hand, have received little attention even though much of the debate was published in the monthly political journal *Nasha Zaria*. In an attempt to begin to address this imbalance, this article will, for the first time, examine in detail the debate as it unfolded in *Nasha Zaria*<sup>4</sup>.

The *Nasha Zaria* discussions are particularly of interest not just because they reveal that the label of «liquidator» did not neatly fit Rozhkov but because they amply demonstrate that Menshevism was not a homogenous movement driven by an ideological and organisational dynamic. Leading Mensheviks could not even agree on the fundamental question of whether the RSDLP should continue operating as an underground, illegal organization. With such fragmented views, Menshevism found it very difficult to match the unwaivering revolutionary pragmatism which Lenin made sure fuelled Bolshevism<sup>5</sup>.

It is necessary to add that a revision of the concept of liquidationism is long overdue because it is such a defining aspect of Menshevism, which is also in urgent need of critical revision. Menshevism has not received the attention it justifiably deserves. The idea that socialism can be achieved through parliamentary means, through the «self-activity» of the working class, is also revolutionary<sup>6</sup>. In fact, Plekhanov called it «revolutionary Menshevism» and thought it was consistent with the aim of creating an open proletarian party that would grow into a large, mature political force that would lead a second revolution to establish socialism<sup>7</sup>. Given the events of the last few decades in Russia, there can be little doubt that discussions of

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<sup>1</sup> A. Ascher, *Pavel Axelrod and the Development of Menshevism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 277.

<sup>2</sup> S.H. Baron, *Plekhanov The Father Of Russian Marxism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 282.

<sup>3</sup> V.I. Lenin, «Manifest Liberal'noi Rabochei Partii», *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii Izdanie Piatoe* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1973), p. 396.

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<sup>4</sup> Lenin's views on liquidationism were so important that they were collected in a single volume and published separately. See: V.I. Lenin, *Against Liquidationism* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d.).

<sup>5</sup> S.H. Baron, *Plekhanov The Father Of Russian History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 281-286.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 283.

Menshevism and alternative paths of Russian development will resonate with today's readers.

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After the defeat of the 1905 Revolution, a huge number of RSDLP members fled Russia. By the time Lenin got to Geneva in December 1907, for example, only four members of the former Bolshevik Central Committee remained in Russia: Rozhkov, I.F. Dubrovinskii, I.P. Goldenberg and V.P. Nogin<sup>1</sup>. Rozhkov continued working very hard in the party's underground until he was once again arrested on 30 April 1908 by the Tsarist authorities. After 25 months in the infamous Butyrskaya prison, he was exiled to eastern Siberia. At the end of spring on 24 May 1910, Rozhkov arrived at the Aleksandrovskii Transit Prison in the guberniia of Irkutsk whereupon he was sent to the village of Malyshevka and then to Cheremkhovo. If the authorities thought that by forcing Rozhkov to live in remote and isolated communities they would succeed in breaking his revolutionary spirit, they grossly misjudged their enemy. Almost as soon as he arrived at Cheremkhovo, Rozhkov circulated a discussion paper among the many other comrades in exile calling for the dissolution of the underground organization<sup>2</sup>. As his friend and colleague N.F. Chuzhak (Nasimovich) reluctantly declared, this marked the beginning of Rozhkov's «liquidationist» period<sup>3</sup>.

A.A. Ivanov has discussed how the growing number of Social Democrats and other political groups exiled to the Irkutskaya guberniia organised themselves and continued to develop and promote their political views among the local population<sup>4</sup>. Rozhkov possessed exceptional skill as a writer,

organiser and propagandist and he demonstrated this very clearly while in Siberian exile.<sup>5</sup> He was able to settle down very quickly in the local communities and he was very successful at attracting even those who did not agree completely with his political statements. As Chuzhak, who spent over six years in Siberian exile with Rozhkov, wrote: «We did not always agree with Rozhkov about underground work, that is, we came at it from different angles. And, with regard to cultural work, there was a lot there that I averted. However, before the revolution, we worked together all the time in newspapers and we got along marvelously, doing the same work energetically»<sup>6</sup>. Rozhkov worked extremely hard to present and garner support for his ideas. Using legal newspapers and giving talks whenever he could, Rozhkov set out to prove the correctness of his position regarding the road to socialism in Russia and, in Chuzhak's words, «it was difficult to say what Rozhkov did not do: he chronicled events, he wrote articles, he proof-read, he made deals with the head of trade unions, he made sure newspapers were sent to subscribers and he did the bookkeeping»<sup>7</sup>. Rozhkov was also very adept at collecting funds to run newspapers<sup>8</sup>. It was no wonder that Lenin thought it was «painful» for the Bolsheviks to lose someone like Rozhkov.<sup>9</sup> From 1910—1917, Rozhkov predominantly used legal newspapers to state and develop his socio-political views which, in many regards, diverged from those put forward by Lenin and other key Bolshevik figures.<sup>10</sup>

After putting out a discussion paper for all political exiles in the region to consider, Rozhkov

<sup>1</sup> M.A. Moskalev, *Biuro tsentral'nogo komiteta RSDRP* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1964), p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> S. Kachurin, «O zhizni ssyl'nykh v Cheremkhovo Irkutskoi gubernii» in *Irkutskaya Ssylka. Sbornik irkutskogo zemliachestva*. Edited and forward by V.V. Bustrem (Moscow: Vsesoiuznogo Obshchestva politkatorzhan i ssyl'no-poselentsev, 1934), p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> N. Chuzhak 'N.A. Rozhkov v ssylke', in 'Pamiati Nikolaia Aleksandrovicha Rozhkova', *Katorga i ssylka* no. 3 (1927), p. 173.

<sup>4</sup> A.A. Ivanov, «Politicheskaya ssylka i formirovanie opozitsionnogo dvizheniia v Irkutskoi gubernii v kontse XIX - nachale XX vv.» in *Sibir' i ssylka: Istoriia penitentsiarnoi politiki Rossiiskogo gosudarstva i Sibir' XVIII—XXI vekov*, [http://penpolit.ru/papers/detail2.php?ELEMENT\\_ID=970](http://penpolit.ru/papers/detail2.php?ELEMENT_ID=970).

<sup>5</sup> See: T.A. Borisova, «Obshchestvenno-politicheskaya, zhurnalistskaya i nauchnaya deiatel'nost' N.A. Rozhkova v sibirskoi ssylke (1910-1917)», Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Irkutskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, Irkutsk, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> N. Chuzhak, «Rozhkov v ssylke», in «Pamiati Nikolaia Aleksandrovicha Rozhkova», *Katorga i ssylka* no. 3 (1927), p. 173.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Lenin, «Manifest Liberal'noi Rabochei Partii», p. 396.

<sup>10</sup> M.B. Sheinfeld, «K izucheniiu istorii sibirskoi politicheskimi ssyl'nymi v nachale XX veka (N.A. Rozhkova)», *Ssyl'nye revoliutsionery v sibir' (XIX v. — Febral' 1917 g.)*, Vypusk 1, Irkutsk, 1973, pp. 160-161. See also: S.P. Isachkin, «Ideia 'kul'turnogo kapitalizma' v tvorchestve N.A. Rozhkova perioda sibirskoi ssylki», in *Sibir' i ssylka: Istoriia penitentsiarnoi politiki Rossiiskogo gosudarstva i Sibir' XVIII—XXI vekov*, [http://penpolit.ru/authors/profile\\_view.php?id=494](http://penpolit.ru/authors/profile_view.php?id=494)

decided to press on with his plan to create a legal labour party under the Tsarist regime. He writes an article entitled *Neobkhodimyi Pochin* [An Essential Initiative], which he sends to be published in the Bolshevik legal newspaper *Zvezda* [The Star] with the expectation that it will promote further discussion and produce responses from other members of the RSDLP including its key figures. However, *Zvezda*'s editorial board did not publish the article. Instead, the article was forwarded to Lenin and his comrades in France for evaluation. Little did Rozhkov suspect that his political ideas would draw the criticisms and warnings that he got. L.B. Kamenev, on behalf of all the other comrades, wrote to Rozhkov from Paris asking him to reconsider his plan to create a new political party in Russia. He warned Rozhkov that if he pushed ahead with his plan he would be treated with the same contempt reserved for all liquidationists.<sup>1</sup> G.E. Zinov'ev added a postscript that spelt out the warning very clearly. He wrote:

It is a pity, dear Nikolai Aleksandrovich, that it was necessary to send you this far from delicate message. We do not want war with you. It was not even imaginable that this was going to be necessary. However, if 'An Essential Initiative' were to appear then a war of extermination would become inevitable.<sup>2</sup>

Not only did these leading Bolsheviks let Rozhkov know that they rejected his political programme but they warned him about publishing and spreading his views.

Rozhkov responded by writing two more articles — *Sistema deistvii* [A System of Operation] and *Bor'ba za legal'nost'* [The Struggle for Legality] — in which he justified his theory and outlined practical steps that he was convinced needed to be followed to create a legal organisation that protected the rights of the working class.<sup>3</sup> Con-

<sup>1</sup>GAIO, f. 600, op. 1, d. 581, vol. 2, l. 413. See also: Borisova, «Obshchestvenno-politicheskaia, zhurnalistskaia i nauchnaia deiatel'nost' N.A. Rozhkova», p. 85.

<sup>2</sup>GAIO, f. 600, op. 1, d. 581, vol. 2, l. 413.

<sup>3</sup>Agenturnye svedeniia po RSDRP, Irkutskaiia guberniia, GARF, f. 102, dp. 00, 1911, op. 241, d. 5, chast' 27, litera B, ll. 85-88. This very rare document was made available for the first time in 2003 when it was transcribed and included in

vinced that Rozhkov's assessment of the political situation in Russia was wrong, Lenin writes to him on 23 February (8 March) 1911 trying to convince him not to publish his views. Lenin wrote: «I earnestly implore you to delay, give up, think over and correspond».<sup>4</sup> And, upon learning that Rozhkov was determined to print his articles, on 29 April (12 May) Lenin wrote a response entitled «A Conversation Between a Legalist and an Opponent of Liquidationism» in *Diskussionny Listok* (Discussion Bulletin), No. 3, a supplement to *Sotsial-Demokrat*, the illegal newspaper of the RSDLP.<sup>5</sup> Despite his hatred of «liquidationism», Lenin mildly concluded his repudiation of Rozhkov's political action plan with the following words: «the gulf between the adversaries in this conflict ..... cannot be bridged by any good intentions, by any attempts to draw a verbal distinction between legalism and liquidationism».<sup>6</sup> Up to this point, Lenin was prepared to debate Rozhkov's political thinking because he thought there was still a chance that Rozhkov would reconsider his «intellectual-Liquidationist» ways.<sup>7</sup> However, by late 1911 any notion that Lenin had of reconciliation with Rozhkov vanished after Rozhkov went ahead and published the fourth article that had been rejected by the Bolsheviks and their newspapers.

A determined Rozhkov had made up his mind to publish his views. As he earnestly declared to M.S. Ol'minskii:

At the moment, ideologically there is nothing more important for me than the struggle for the legality of the workers' party by legal means. In my position I can only talk and write about it as I am unable to act on it. So far, unfortunately, I have even been unable to publish anything; my friends do not want to, they even call me «a liquidator», which to me incidentally is nothing particularly scary.<sup>8</sup>

T.A. Borisova's doctoral thesis. See: Appendix 4 in Borisova, «Obshchestvenno-politicheskaia, zhurnalistskaia i nauchnaia deiatel'nost' N.A. Rozhkova», pp. 388-390.

<sup>4</sup>Letter from Lenin to Rozhkov dated February 23 (March 8), 1911 in Lenin, *Miscellany XXV*, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup>V.I. Lenin, *Against Liquidationism* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 166-177.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>8</sup>N.A. Rozhkov letter to M.S. Ol'minskii, RGASPI, f. 91,

By the time his article entitled *Sovremennoe polozhenie Rossii i osnovnaia zadacha rabochago dvizheniia v dannyi moment* [The Contemporary Situation in Russia and the Fundamental Task of the Working Class Movement at the Present Moment] was published in late September 1911 in *Nasha Zaria*, Rozhkov had little doubt that he was now at loggerheads with Lenin and leading Bolsheviks.<sup>1</sup> Lenin reacted immediately and began his attacks on Rozhkov's theory in a lecture he gave in Paris on 14 (27) November 1911 and initiated a lengthy polemic against him.<sup>2</sup>

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When the editors of *Nasha Zaria* decided to include Rozhkov's controversial article in their monthly socio-political journal published in St. Petersburg, they did so not because they agreed wholeheartedly with Rozhkov's political agenda but because they felt it was important for social-democracy to consider all avenues that would benefit the working class in the socialist process, including «finding expression in a parliamentary fraction».<sup>3</sup> In fact, the editors wrote that they considered Rozhkov's biggest mistake to be wanting to substitute the RSDLP for an «open society». They argued that the RSDLP was a historically essential part of the movement. The party «could not be concealed under a pseudonym and it was impossible to contain it within the limits of such a society».<sup>4</sup> As they clearly stated: «It is undoubtable that in the process of the struggle all sorts of open political 'societies' must and will arise but they will arise not as a substitute for the party but only to help the political formation of the proletariat».<sup>5</sup> Believing that Rozhkov's article would attract a lot of attention and required examination, the editors of *Nasha Zaria* went ahead and published it in their journal.

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op. 1, d. 211, l. 5.

<sup>1</sup> See: N.A. Rozhkov, «Sovremennoe polozhenie Rossii i osnovnaia zadacha rabochago dvizheniia v dannyi moment», *Nasha Zaria*, No. 9-10, 1911, pp. 31-35.

<sup>2</sup> V.I. Lenin, «Plan for a Lecture "Manifesto of the Liberal Labour Party"», *Collected Works*, vol. 41, 242-243.

<sup>3</sup> Rozhkov, «Sovremennoe polozhenie Rossii», pp. 31-32.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

Rozhkov began his short article by getting straight to the point. He wrote:

The principle objective task in Russia at present is the unconditioned completion of the change from grossly predatory, semi-feudal economic practices to civilized capitalism (*kul'turnym kapitalizom*). This is absolutely beyond doubt or dispute. This is not debatable. The debate is over whether Russia, at the present moment, has reached that stage when the social and political superstructure has adapted to the economic basis to such an extent that although the possibility of social upheavals is not excluded, these upheavals are not indispensable or inevitable in the near future.<sup>6</sup>

He believed that socialism could only be realized after a period of «civilized capitalist» development had taken place in Russia. He also believed that such a road to socialism would be non-violent. He emphasised very clearly that there was no preaching of any sort of violence in his socialist programme. He wrote:

There is no advocacy of any violence in this; there is not a word, not a thought about a violent revolution being necessary, because in reality, too, no such necessity may ever arise. If anyone, blinded by such reactionary frenzy, took it into his head to accuse the members of such an «association» of striving for violent revolution, the whole burden of an absurd, unfounded and juridically flimsy accusation of this sort would fall upon the head of the accuser.<sup>7</sup>

Rozhkov maintained that all the conditions were now right for the realization of the programme advocated by the Second Congress of the RSDLP in 1903, and it could be achieved through parliamentary means.<sup>8</sup> He added: «despite it being extremely painful for the masses, all the prerequisites now exist for the slow but cer-

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup> R.H. McNeal (Gen. Ed), *Resolutions and Decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, Vol. 1 edited by R.C. Elwood, *The Russian Social Democratic Labour Party 1898 — October 1917* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1974), pp. 39-45.

tain advance of a bourgeois social and political system in Russia».<sup>1</sup>

Rozhkov's programme included the long-term aims of the public ownership of the means of production, a planned economy and the elimination of classes in society. More immediately, his programme called for the establishment of a proper democracy, based on universal, direct and equal suffrage by secret ballot, without discrimination on the basis of sex, religion or nationality. Rozhkov wanted to see the establishment of civil rights and freedoms, democratic local self-government, the eight-hour working day, state insurance for workers, factory legislation protecting the interests of workers, more land to peasants and the right to landownership.<sup>2</sup> This was a programme for the so-called «praktiki» (i.e. those Mensheviks who worked in legal labour organizations such as trade unions, co-operatives, educational establishments and cultural clubs).<sup>3</sup>

Generally speaking, although Mensheviks could not agree on the extent to which the RSDLP ought to be «liquidated», Rozhkov became convinced that «the workers must assume the task of exercising political hegemony in the struggle for a democratic regime».<sup>4</sup> By this he meant adhering to the hitherto generally accepted formulation proposed by Plekhanov in the days of the Emancipation of Labour Group: namely, Plekhanov's two-stage revolutionary theory, which asserted that a bourgeois revolution would be followed by a lengthy period of bourgeois rule.<sup>5</sup> Or, as Trotsky succinctly put it, Rozhkov believed that «the political hegemony of the proletariat must be preceded by the political hegemony of the bourgeoisie; a bourgeois democratic republic must serve as a long historical school for the proletariat».<sup>6</sup> Rozhkov made it absolutely clear that, for him, the working class could only make

progress through parliamentary reforms. As he so authoritatively put it:

The objective conditions of the time, completing the transition to civilized capitalism, presuppose the possibility and even the necessity of an open and broad economic and political organization of the workers: the history of every capitalist country confirms this and demonstrates that only through the legal organization of workers is a civilized class struggle possible.<sup>7</sup>

Rozhkov even admitted that although what was in the offing was the «triumph of a quite moderate bourgeois 'progressism'», it was still more attractive to «the man in the street» than was the «spectre of smashed illusions».<sup>8</sup> In the end, he believed that «Even the most moderate variety of progressism would undoubtedly extend the all too narrow confines in which workers found themselves at present».<sup>9</sup>

Convinced that the impetus for social change came from the bourgeoisie – or, more specifically, from «the moderately progressive industrial and commercial bourgeoisie that will share power with the conservative rural bourgeoisie» – Rozhkov urged the working class to support and use the electoral system that had been established on 3 June 1907.<sup>10</sup> In his opinion, the Russian State Duma, from that date on, had «the significance of the French Legislative Corps during the last years of the Second Empire, or that proportional mean between the German Reichstag and the Prussian Landtag that was characteristic of Prussia in the eighties of the nineteenth century».<sup>11</sup> In other words, he believed that the State Duma was now very important because «a civilized and planned struggle is inconceivable without an open and broad political organization»<sup>12</sup>. He added that without such an organization of the working class, «the struggle would inevitably assume an anarchistic character, harmful not only to the working class but to the civilized bourgeois-

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<sup>1</sup> Rozhkov, «Sovremennoe polozhenie Rossii», p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 34. See also Z. Galili, *The Menshevik Leaders in the Russian Revolution: Social Realities and Political Strategies* (Studies of the Harriman Institute) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 32–4.

<sup>4</sup> Rozhkov, «Sovremennoe polozhenie Rossii», p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> S.H. Baron, *Plekhanov in Russian History and Soviet Historiography* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), p. 116.

<sup>6</sup> Trotsky, 1905, p. 330.

<sup>7</sup> Rozhkov, «Sovremennoe polozhenie Rossii», p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

sie as well»<sup>1</sup>. It was just how Rozhkov proposed to organize the working class that most concerned Lenin in his thorough scrutiny and rejection of what he labelled Rozhkov's «Liberal Labour Party Manifesto»<sup>2</sup>. Rozhkov proposed the creation of an organization called «Politicheskoe obshchestvo zashchity interesov rabochogo klassa» [«The Political Association for the Protection of the Interests of the Working Class»], its primary function was to educate and train members of the worker intelligentsia for participation in the running of all sorts of organizations, with the aim of influencing and eventually shaping parliamentary decisions that affected the working class.<sup>3</sup> According to Rozhkov, this organization would also put up working-class candidates in all government elections.<sup>4</sup> In effect, what Rozhkov was proposing was an open Liquidationist party.

An outraged Lenin wasted no time in detailing his objections and criticisms in the legal Bolshevik newspaper *Zvezda* and *Sotsial-Demokrat*, the illegal newspaper and central organ of the RSDLP which Lenin used in his war of words against those who challenged Bolshevik policies, including liquidators.<sup>5</sup> In his inimitable polemical style, Lenin critically assessed all of Rozhkov's main points and concluded that Rozhkov was merely presenting a non-Marxist or liberal idea, which, he believed, was utopian<sup>6</sup>. In his zealous desire to obliterate his adversaries, Lenin reduced their arguments to basic logical equations that were then easy to label and describe. Using this literary device as a political weapon, Lenin claimed that Rozhkov's programme was little more than «a dirty threadbare liberal rag» that was «undoubtedly protecting the interests of the working class» but only «as conceived by the liberals in a liberal manner».<sup>7</sup> Expressing his disdain

for Rozhkov's programme, Lenin asserted that his arguments were the product of «professorial distortions of Marxism», «philistinism», «parliamentary cretinism», «liberal complacency» and «liberal progressivism»<sup>8</sup>.

Nevertheless, despite his complete rejection of Rozhkov's so-called «Liberal Labour Party Manifesto», to some extent Lenin managed to express the respect he had for Rozhkov as a professional historian and party intellectual and activist. Noting that Rozhkov was known for his tremendous energy and hardworking nature, Lenin acknowledged that he was «not a phrase-monger». Lenin knew Rozhkov as a «man of deeds», as a man who implemented policies and did everything that was necessary to have them realized.<sup>9</sup> As Lenin put it:

R-kov begins at the very beginning and by consecutive stages arrives at the very end, as is to be expected of anyone who has any realization of the serious political responsibility he bears for his words and deeds. And it must be said in fairness to R-kov that from beginning to end he most consistently substitutes liberalism for Marxism<sup>10</sup>.

In fact, it was precisely because he was familiar with Rozhkov's single-minded determination and energetic ability to rally support that Lenin so relentlessly criticized Rozhkov's call to form an open organization aimed at realizing his political objectives.<sup>11</sup>

Knowing precisely that Rozhkov's political gaze faced westward, Lenin attacked the politics of the major parties in Britain, Germany and elsewhere that claimed to represent working-class interests. As Lenin made it very clear:

It is immaterial that the programme of the association which R-kov wants to found provides for 'the establishment of a new society based on

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, it also concerned the editorial board of *Nashazaria*, which viewed Rozhkov's proposal to be something akin to an election campaign and disagreed with it.

<sup>3</sup> Rozhkov, «Sovremennoe polozhenie Rossii», p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> See: *Zvezda*, 3 December, 1911 and *Sotsial-Demokrat*, 8 (21) December, 1911. See also: Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 17, pp. 313-24, 354-359 and Vol.18, 17-21.

<sup>6</sup> V.I. Lenin, 'A Liberal Labour Party Manifesto' in Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 17, p. 324.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 322-4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 322.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 313-314

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 313. He continued this line of reasoning in his article entitled 'From The Camp of the Stolypin "Labour" Party' in Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 17, pp. 354-9. See also Lenin, 'Fundamental Problems of The Election Campaign' in *Collected Works*, vol. 17, p. 421; 'The Fourth Duma Election Campaign' in *Collected Works*, Vol. 18, p. 21; and 'The Illegal Party And Legal Work', in *Collected Works*, Vol. 18, p. 395.

the public ownership of the means of production, etc. Actually, the recognition of this great principle did not prevent a section of the German Social Democrats in the sixties from pursuing a 'royal-Prussian labour policy', nor does it prevent Ramsay MacDonald (leader of the British 'Independent Labour Party' – meaning independent of socialism) from pursuing a liberal labour policy.<sup>1</sup>

He added: «How is it possible to regard as other than utopian the suggested foundation of an open workers' association at a time when absolutely peaceful, tame, non-political trade unions are being suppressed?»<sup>2</sup> Lenin concluded his article by ordering Rozhkov to remove his «professorial blinkers» because by doing so Rozhkov would realise that such «an association» as the one he wants to «put into effect» has already existed for two years in the form of the magazine *Nasha Zaria* «not as a collection of so much printed matter, but as an ideological group».<sup>3</sup> Accusing Rozhkov of having ceased being Marxist, Lenin wrote that the «association» for protecting the interests of the working class was simply a liberal idea.<sup>4</sup>

Less than a week after publishing his «A Liberal Labour Party Manifesto», Lenin produced another critical assessment of Rozhkov's ideas in an article entitled «From the Camp of the Stolypin 'Labour' Party».<sup>5</sup> In it, Lenin continued arguing that Rozhkov had substituted «Marxism» for «liberalism» or «Struveism» and that a «moderately progressive bourgeoisie» could not emerge gradually and steadily to assume power peacefully.<sup>6</sup> «It is obvious», wrote Lenin, «that the 'powers that be' will never permit such an association .... they will never agree to let it be 'put into effect'. Only blind liberals can fail to see this».<sup>7</sup> Lenin concludes his polemic by ironically pointing out that by being so forthright Rozhkov «will compel people to think about the ideological roots of liquidationism».<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, «A Liberal Labour Party Manifesto», p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 322-3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 324.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Lenin, «From the Camp of the Stolypin 'Labour' Party» in Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 17, pp. 354-359.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 354-356.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 357.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 358-359.

Early in 1912, A. Martynov (A.S. Pikker) wrote a very interesting and insightful article entitled *V. Il'in protiv N. R-kova i «Nasha Zaria»* [V. Il'in' against N. R-kov and *Nasha Zaria*] in which he made the point that Lenin's «feuilleton *A Liberal Labour Party Manifesto* was the first experience of 'the usage of legal means' to square accounts with the 'internal enemy'».<sup>9</sup> The «internal enemy» was a reference, of course, to any group or individual that jeopardized the political programme that Lenin had for the RSDLP. In this case, it was a reference to the threat Lenin perceived liquidationism posed and, in particular, Rozhkov's liquidationism. Anticipating the Fourth Duma election campaign, Martynov added that Lenin's attack «was only the beginning; a real orgy of fractional war was to be expected in relation to the voters' campaign» and, comparing the Bolsheviks to Ivan the Terrible's oprichniki, declared that «these knights carrying 'brooms and dogs' heads'» already threatened to poison the entire social-democratic election campaign with its demagoguery.<sup>10</sup> And, although there is no love lost between Martynov and Lenin, Martynov hardly defends Rozhkov against Lenin's criticisms. Instead, he repeatedly reminds the reader that, until very recently, Rozhkov was a Bolshevik who had been «educated in the political school of Lenin».<sup>11</sup>

Martynov accuses Lenin of hypocrisy and of being ignorant of the facts. He claimed that for years Lenin had argued that capitalism had developed in Russia, including in the countryside, but now he was more intent on showing that the village commune (*obshchina*) «had not moved forward».<sup>12</sup> Martynov believed that Lenin had changed his mind about the nature of peasant reform and the degree of capitalist development that had taken place in the country. Martynov, like Rozhkov, maintained that capitalism would create a «rural-economic bourgeoisie» that would modernise the country and resolve the agrarian question. Naturally, Lenin did not believe that Russia's rural

<sup>9</sup> A. Martynov, «V. Il'in' protiv' N. R-kova i *Nasha Zaria*», *Nasha Zaria*, No. 1-2, 1912, 19.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 14-16.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 15.

economy could be addressed through «bourgeois-democratic reform». He believed that only a worker-peasant alliance could fix Russia's agricultural woes. As he had written elsewhere: «The question is clear. Either a bold call for a peasant revolution, even including a republic, and the thorough ideological and organisational preparation of *such* a revolution in alliance with the proletariat. Or useless whining, political and ideological impotence in face of the Stolypin-landlord-Octoberist attack on the village commune».<sup>1</sup>

Martynov quoted Rozhkov who pointed out that during periods of «reaction» new social forces mature. In the case of Russia: «The majority of our big landowners — nobles and commoners — who are represented in the Duma by the Nationalists and the Right Octoberists, are gradually and steadily being converted into an agricultural bourgeoisie».<sup>2</sup> Rozhkov believed that the country's agricultural problems would be solved if the feudal obshchina system that still existed were totally destroyed and replaced by «completely free and diverse land relations».<sup>3</sup> In other words, he wanted capitalism, albeit «civilized capitalism» to be allowed to flourish and the rural economy of Russia to be reorganised on bourgeois-democratic lines. While Rozhkov did not advocate the violent destruction of the obshchina (village commune) that the Stolypin reforms brought about, especially after the laws enacted on 14 June 1910, he did not want to preserve this backward agricultural system<sup>4</sup>. As a positive example «of flexibility (gibkost') in communal land (obshchinno-pozemel'nykh) relations» Rozhkov cited west and south Germany where the development of civilized capitalism changed the form of communal landownership.

Rozhkov contended that as capitalism changed from being «crudely predatory» to

«civilized», the new landowners would behave less like landed nobility and more like liberal bourgeoisie, joining their urban industrial counterparts in their efforts to secure their interests through democratic parliamentary reforms. Expressed in terms of the politics of its day, he believed that support for right-wing nationalist politicians like V.M. Purishkevich and N.E. Markov (Markov The Second) would diminish in favour of more moderate liberal politicians who supported agrarian reforms. Rozhkov wrote:

Take the representatives of our big landowning class. Not so long ago the bulk of them were real serf-owners (krepostniki), typical landed aristocracy (dvoriane-pomeshchik). Now a few of these last Mohicans remain. They are a small cluster still grouped around Messieurs Purishkevich and Markov II and powerlessly spluttering the venom of despair. «Right-wing» organisations are fading away and collapsing with each day, the consultative zemskii sobor, which was once the ideal of the liberals of the 1880s, is at present the object of ardent longings of extreme reactionaries; no more than a senseless dream, unrealizable as a result of its own reactionary character (reaktsionnost'). Old serf-owners can either reorganise their economy the bourgeois way or they can liquidate, perhaps more profitably, their landownership. They even often do the latter because of the inability to do the first; Gentry and Peasant banks diligently help them in this matter<sup>5</sup>.

Lenin, of course, dismissed Rozhkov's argument as «boundless liberal self-delusion» again calling it a «typically 'professorial' distortion of Marxism»<sup>6</sup>.

Martynov's assessment of Rozhkov's analysis, in many regards, is intriguing to say the least. He is critical of Rozhkov because essentially he still regards him as being a Bolshevik. Although Martynov declares that «much water has flowed under the bridge in Russia since the first time the Bolshevik direction emerged in our Marxism» [*italics are mine*], he has very little to say

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, «Novaia agrarnaia politika», Collected Works, Vol. 16, p. 425.

<sup>2</sup> Martynov, «Vil'in' protiv' N. R-kova i Nasha Zaria», p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> See: N. Rozhkov, «Shag nazad», Obskaia zhizn', 1911, 6 November as cited in Borisova, «Obshchestvenno-politicheskaiia, zhurnalistskaia i nauchnaia deiatel'nost' N.A. Rozhkova», p. 102.

<sup>4</sup> On this point, he specifically distanced himself from «Narodniki of various shades». See: N. R-kov, «Ukrepliaetsia li obshchina», Mysl', 1911, March No. 4, p. 43.

<sup>5</sup> Rozhkov, «Sovremennoe polozhenie Rossii», p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> Lenin, «Manifest liberal'noi rabochei partii», Collected Works, Vol. 20, p. 401.

that is favourable about Lenin or his followers.<sup>1</sup> He suggests that Lenin is responsible for leading Rozhkov politically down the «wrong road» and for «bewildering his credulous readers».<sup>2</sup> After all, speaking metaphorically, Martynov claimed that Lenin changed his political costume according to the season and even enjoyed «to swank about in the costume of his enemy pretending it was his own»<sup>3</sup>. This, he quickly added, is how Lenin essentially remained «a very, truly Russian Shveitser; more embittered, more hot-tempered, more unscrupulous in his ways and thereby making sectarian labour policy a historical anachronism»<sup>4</sup>. As far as Martynov was concerned, there was now less need for the «revolutionary adventurism» that came from Bolshevik and Socialist Revolutionary «spontaneity» because the labour movement had made enough progress in Western Europe to bring about parliamentary reforms and the introduction of laws to protect workers<sup>5</sup>. Martynov believed that the «latest literary statement of the prominent Bolshevik N. R-kov is a clear symptom of the crisis in Bolshevism» and although Rozhkov would be «sincerely welcomed» by the Mensheviks, he needs to «free himself from V. Il'in's embrace»<sup>6</sup>.

Martynov's criticism of Lenin's attack on Rozhkov attests to the unique position in which Rozhkov found himself and helps explain why he was never completely comfortable with either the label of Bolshevik or Menshevik. About four months after Martynov's article, the editorial board of *Nasha Zaria* afforded Rozhkov the right to reply to Lenin's criticisms because Rozhkov was unable to publish his reply anywhere including newspapers like *Zvezda* and literary monthly magazines like *Prosveshchenie [Education]*<sup>7</sup>. Rozhkov wrote: «I was obliged to object on two fronts. In its clearest form, the plan being pro-

posed by me is distinct from the tactical and organisational line which seems the sole salvation for V. Il'in and his like-minded people and is distinct also from the position taken by the editorial board and the collaborators of *Nasha Zaria*»<sup>8</sup>. It is worthwhile remembering that although Rozhkov recognised Lenin's influence in the RSDLP, especially among Bolsheviks, he treated Lenin like any major figure of any political group and Lenin, in turn, defended his views like someone who believed his standing was under attack. As Rozhkov confidently rebuked: «Enough V. Il'in, you are either joking or fooling people, speculating on their unconditional worshipping of your authority»<sup>9</sup>.

Rozhkov's article entitled *Na Dva Fronta [On Two Fronts]* is an extraordinary document no matter how it is viewed. The language Rozhkov uses in it and the self-assured manner with which he counters Lenin's arguments and criticisms are rarely, if anywhere, found in any other documents. Rozhkov regarded himself a viable alternative leader who was putting forward a political programme that differed from the programmes offered by Lenin and his Bolshevik followers and Martov, Martynov and their Menshevik supporters.

Rozhkov wrote that Lenin tried to intimidate him by labelling him all sorts of things and portraying him as some kind of «red monster» who would not have the courage or tenacity to reply, especially given that publications like *Zvezda* and *Mysl' [Thought]* would not print his articles.<sup>10</sup> However, Rozhkov was once again allowed to reply in *Nasha Zaria* and he made it very clear that he believed only a minority of workers and participants in the labour movement would be too frightened to hear his objections. Rozhkov then proceeds to counter Lenin's arguments attacking not only his evidence but his reasoning. Using the same historical references and logic as Lenin, Rozhkov confidently and coherently defended his ideas.<sup>11</sup> His major points can be summarised as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Martynov, «V. Il'in' protiv' N. R-kova i Nasha Zaria», p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. The reference here to Schweitzer is to Jean Baptista Schweitzer (1833-1875), the leader of the General Workingmen's Union of Germany (Lassalleans) after Ferdinand Lassalle's death in 1864.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 17-18.

<sup>7</sup> N. Rozhkov, «Na dva fronta», *Nasha zaria*, 1912, No. 5, 28.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

1. That he always recognised the hegemony of the working class in the struggle for a democratic society and this is not inconsistent with believing that a democratic society can be achieved more quickly and less painfully if civilised capitalism is allowed to flourish in Russia;<sup>1</sup>

2. Unlike Lenin who thought politicians like V.M. Purishkevich and N.E. Markov (Markov The Second) were «the masters of the situation», Rozhkov argued that the Nationalists with the Octobrists and the Progressists with the Kadets had control of the political situation;<sup>2</sup>

3. He was aware of the notion of the «complexity of adaptation» and that is why he did not rule out «the spasmodic nature» [skachkoobraznost'] of uprisings but he maintained that a compromise between the proletariat and the peasants with the bourgeoisie was inevitable. The only issue that needed consideration was the kind of compromise that it would be;<sup>3</sup>

4. That Lenin's comparison of the Third Duma with Louis XVIII's so-called Chambre Introuvable was imprecise. Rozhkov preferred comparing Russia at the time to France of the 1860s and Germany of the 1880s and dismissed completely Lenin's assertion that there was no «open and broad» political organisation in existence in Germany between 1878 and 1890. In Rozhkov's opinion, the opposite was true and the Russia of his day would have been breathing with relief if it had the open and broad political organisation that existed during the 1880s in Germany;<sup>4</sup>

5. Rozhkov's plan for an open political association of workers was not «utopian» or «non serious» as described by Lenin. Rozhkov proposed a «propaganda campaign among the masses» which, over time, would give rise to a groundswell of people demanding a democratic society. At the time he was writing, Rozhkov believed that such a thought was more realistic than imagining the same population acquiring the «energy», from predominantly a depleted and weak Bolshevik underground organisation, to bring

about a revolution sometime in the near future.<sup>5</sup>

Rozhkov concluded his article by providing one of the most interesting and clearest statements about liquidationism that can be found in any of the literature which discusses the concept. He felt he had to clarify the uniqueness of his interpretation of liquidationism given Lenin's criticism which compared him to Y. Larin, a pseudonym used by M.Z. Lur'e (1882-1932), whom Lenin also targeted as a «Menshevik Liquidator». Lenin asserted that:

liquidationism will be smothered by R-kov's ardent embrace just as the labour congress was smothered by Y. Larin's ardent embrace. Y. Larin perpetrated that bloodless murder by the simple device of writing a pamphlet, after which people, primarily out of fear of the embarrassment involved, began to be wary of defending the idea of a labour congress. After the new «manifesto» of liquidationism published by R-kov in *Nasha Zarya*, people, primarily out of fear of the embarrassment involved, will begin to be wary of defending the idea of an open liquidationist party.<sup>6</sup>

Rozhkov responded by stating that liquidationism was a heterogeneous and complicated phenomenon characterised by several distinct elements which unfortunately are not all well understood or precisely defined. He proceeds to identify the main ways in which liquidationism has been interpreted. He attributed the first interpretation to B.O. Bogdanov (1884-1960) and claimed that although he wanted to form a really open and public labour party, initially he proposed «to broaden only the base of existing workers' organisations to prepare cadres for the future party».<sup>7</sup> Rozhkov argued that essentially «political action, so urgently necessary, is substituted for political propaganda» and, while propaganda is important in the overall plan, «it is inadmissible to substitute a political party for a society of propaganda».<sup>8</sup> Rozhkov argued that such a way of going about building an open polit-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 30

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Lenin, «A Liberal Labour Party Manifesto», pp. 323-324.

<sup>7</sup> Rozhkov, «Na dva fronta», p. 31.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

ical party to bring about the society of the future «is the longest, slowest and most painful way for the working class». <sup>1</sup>

Rozhkov identified the so-called «Larin-Akselrod organisational plan» as the second major interpretation of liquidationism. However, as far as Rozhkov was concerned, this approach too did not meet his criterion of «the shortest and easiest path» to a democratic society. In his opinion, the Larin-Akselrod plan had in mind to unite workers who possessed varying degrees of class-consciousness and different class interests into a broad labour party. In a nutshell, Rozhkov argued that such an approach would produce «a blurred, formless, ideologically-fluctuating organisation» when what was needed was «an organisation of a political labour party, consciously and firmly standing on the ground of the classical struggle of the proletariat fighting for its own interests». <sup>2</sup> He argued that the editors of *Nasha Zaria*, like the Larin-Akselrod political plan, expressed a view which clearly lacked what he proposed, namely, «a struggle for an open party sustained on principle». <sup>3</sup> He added that this difference between them was «extremely profound» and there could be no mistaking this difference. <sup>4</sup>

To make it absolutely clear that he was not following any of the main currents of liquidationism but rather putting forward his own political viewpoint, Rozhkov made the following significant statement:

The main nucleus [iadro] of so-called liquidationism, represented by Martynov and Dan, remains for me elusive and mysterious. I cannot understand what it is they want because as Plekhanov has fairly observed, Martov, Dan and their adherents [edinomyshlenniki] have proposed absolutely nothing concrete. It goes without saying that such elusiveness and vagueness cannot be viewed any other way except negatively. It is as though they were undecided and were just marking time. I do not know a worst possible position for politicians to find themselves. <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 31-32.

Determined to declare his «basic practical proposal», Rozhkov reiterated the course of action he wanted to undertake and advance. His main points can be listed as follows:

- a propaganda campaign among the working masses to form an open, broad political organisation;
- a constant struggle to make sure that the concept of an open, broad political organisation is discussed in the press, at specialist labour meetings and gatherings, for example, union gatherings;
- a petition campaign;
- requesting inquiries and presenting bills in the Duma;
- presenting declarations and information about the establishment of political labour organisations in work places and workers' venues;
- the establishment of political labour organisations even if they are denied registration.

Other forms of action will be implemented as an open labour movement develops. <sup>6</sup>

As a separate point, Rozhkov stressed the importance that «the programme and tactics of the proposed political labour organisation must have a tight ideological connection with the programme and tactics of the international labour movement and, consequently, with Russia's past labour movement». <sup>7</sup> However, he attached a very poignant caveat to the concept of the internationalisation of Russia's labour movement which was that the idea of «the inevitability of sharp shocks should no longer be at the forefront of the movement's thinking because circumstances have changed». <sup>8</sup> Rozhkov believed that it was «reasonable and even necessary to reject direct organisational succession». <sup>9</sup> In other words, at that particular point in time he did not believe the Russian working masses were ready to take control of the government.

Rozhkov concluded his article by denying he was a so-called liquidator. He wrote:

I do not want to liquidate or renounce anything. The ideological legacy is entirely preserved. I

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

only propose to build a new organisational legacy, one flowing naturally from the entire position of things and which is the shortest and best way of defending the interests of the working class given contemporary conditions.<sup>1</sup>

He also appealed to readers to make up their own minds as to whether Lenin (Vl. Il'in) was right to portray him as «some sort of liberal bugbear [pugalo], like the devil which Gogol's blacksmith Vakula painted on the wall of the village church and with which mothers frightened their children saying: 'Look what a poophead has been painted!'».<sup>2</sup> Of course, Rozhkov declared that the unbiased reader will come to the conclusion that «The devil is not as black as he is painted», that is, that he was not the person Lenin decried him to be. Furthermore, Rozhkov also declared that Martynov was also wrong for calling him «an apologetic Bolshevik» [kaiushchiisia Bol'shevik] in *Nasha Zaria*. As far as he was concerned, he was not apologising for anything. As he proclaimed:

The fact of the matter is that I have nothing to repent. I have not changed, circumstances have changed. And, had circumstances developed like this earlier, then the tactical and organisational line accordingly would also have been different.<sup>3</sup>

It was no coincidence that straight after Rozhkov's piece the editors of *Nasha Zaria* published Martov's significantly longer article entitled «O tom, kak možhno byt' nepravym na oba fronta» [How it is possible to be wrong on both fronts] which scutinized Rozhkov's arguments.<sup>4</sup> Reading Martov's article, it is hard to imagine that it was written only a few months after the RSDLP Conference in Prague and a few months before the August bloc of Mensheviks was formed.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. In Gogol's story «The Night Before Christmas», the frightened children said: «smotri, iaka kaka namalevana».

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> L. Martov, «O tom, kak možhno byt' nepravym na oba fronta», *Nasha Zaria*, No. 5, 1912, pp. 33-42.

<sup>5</sup> I. Getzler, *Martov: A Political Biography of a Russian Social Democrat* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967), p. 134.

Written at a time when Menshevism was increasingly losing ground to Leninism, Martov's article helps us better understand the complex set of circumstances that saw key figures in the RSDLP, himself included, effectively being emasculated and Menshevism being politically outplayed by Lenin and his Bolshevik followers.<sup>6</sup>

Unlike Lenin, Martov did not reject liquidationism. He believed in a broad, democratic, multi-sided party where there was a place for illegal party organisations. However, illegal work should always play a support role to the more important work of legal organisations.<sup>7</sup> As far as Martov was concerned, a major tactic for the Social Democrats was to form an alliance with the Kadets.<sup>8</sup> Relying on a strong base of class-conscious workers, he believed bourgeois progressives could «play an effective role in opposing the tsarist regime».<sup>9</sup> Sadly for Martov, the truth is that his theoretically level-headed position was too accommodating of views that obviously were never going to coexist peacefully. Despite half-hearted attempts at reconciliation, Lenin was never going to abandon his revolutionary theory to embrace Martov's call for equality of rights between legal and illegal party work.<sup>10</sup> In reality, Martov's belief in conciliation meant that he could not wage an all-out struggle with the Bolsheviks; he could not support the «praktiki» because they were «dead set against any co-operation with the Bolshevik underground committees»<sup>11</sup>; and he supported liquidators who he defined as «Marxists who thought in a European way» because they were «trying to use the constitutional alien elements in the body of the Russian state organism as their arena of operation».<sup>12</sup> It is very hard to see

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 134-137.

<sup>7</sup> See Martov, «O likvidatorstve», *Golos sotsialdemokrata*, Nos 16-17, August-September, 1909. Cited in Getzler, *Martov*, p. 125.

<sup>8</sup> Martov, «O tom, kak možhno byt' nepravym», p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> A. Ascher, ed., *The Mensheviks in the Russian Revolution* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), p. 21. See also: Martov letter to P.B. Akse'rod dated 26 June 1907 in F. Dan, B.I. Nicolaevsky and L. Tserderbaum-Dan (eds), *Pis'ma P.B. Akse'roda i Iu.O. Martova, 1901-1916* (Berlin: Russisches Revolution-sarchiv, 1924), p. 163.

<sup>10</sup> Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 16, p. 158. See also: Getzler, *Martov*, p. 128.

<sup>11</sup> Getzler, *Martov*, p. 133.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

Martov's conciliatory approach as anything other than politically ambiguous or even contradictory and this comes across quite clearly in his criticism of Rozhkov.

It would seem that Rozhkov's biggest mistake, according to critics like Martov and his followers, was that he wanted to form a new movement which would detract from the RSDLP and especially the Menshevik wing within the party. Despite having so much in common, Martov attacked Rozhkov for being ambiguous and unrealistic. It is worth spotlighting some of Martov's major criticisms of Rozhkov. Like Lenin, Martov pointed out that Rozhkov could not realistically expect to legalise his «Political Association For The Protection Of The Interests Of The Working Class» at a time when it was impossible even to register any organisation that was not approved by the new Tsarist government.<sup>1</sup> Unlike Lenin, Martov criticised, in quite some detail, Rozhkov's views on the role the peasants would play in bringing down the old order. Banking on the theory that the middle class would «become more radical» and eventually abolish the feudal latifundia which characterised the serf economy that still existed, Martov criticises Rozhkov for believing in what Lenin called the «Prussian path» of bourgeois development.<sup>2</sup>

Martov argued that Rozhkov «was convinced of the fundamental Bolshevik schema» that feudal landlord economy over a long period of time evolves into bourgeois landlord economy.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Martov believed that Rozhkov had a «deeper need for an economic explanation of social development perspectives than Il'in» (Lenin) which is why Rozhkov spent so much time examining capitalisation in Russia's rural economy.<sup>4</sup> According to Martov, whereas Rozhkov spoke about the «'bourgeoisification' of the country and the blunting of the contradiction between peasant and bourgeois society by means of a 'revolution from above'», Lenin was content to talk about the «flabbiness», «half-heartedness» and «psychological qualities»

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<sup>1</sup> Martov, «O tom, kak možno byt' nepravym», p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, «The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy in the First Russian Revolution, 1905-1907, Collected Works, Vol. 13, p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> Martov, «O tom, kak možno byt' nepravym», pp. 33-34.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

of the Russian bourgeoisie.<sup>5</sup> Despite the apparent differences of opinion, Martov still declared that «the practical basis on which Rozhkov builds his views is narrow and therefore unstable».<sup>6</sup>

Given the constraints of this article, it is impossible to analyse all of Martov's statements in any detail. However, in responding to Rozhkov's political views and attempting to show how they differed to his own views, Martov reveals the complex situation in which he found himself and how difficult it was, generally speaking, for Menshevism to combat Lenin's straightforward invective about liquidationism. In dealing with Rozhkov's views alone, Martov is unable to state his views simply and clearly. The reader is confounded by Martov's conciliatory and seemingly contradictory remarks. His conclusion is worth quoting in full to illustrate this point.

If R-kov is proposing to us the well established slogan of a struggle for an open labour party to realise in that struggle essentially the legalisation of a social-democratic, political labour association, we, «liquidators», do not go along with him on this because, at the current stage of the decay of the counter-revolutionary regime, there are still no preconditions for the functioning of such an association-party within the framework of this regime and its existence, at best, would only be achieved at the cost not only of a formal but a real narrowing of objectives and a distortion of the methods of struggle «which take cover behind a pseudonym» for the party.

If R-kov is not posing a utopian or opportunistic objective to accommodate all social-democracy and everything in the practice of social-democracy within the framework of a legalised association conceivable in the immediate period but, rather, is proposing to widen the struggle being led by workers for an open display of class movement, in the struggle for the legalisation or for the definite assumption of political societies, then we are entirely with him, and we consider this struggle not only useful for the cause of the political education of the working class; not only something which can result in certain immediate success, but also as leading to the most reli-

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 34-36.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

able path to the ultimate achievement, namely, the right and possibility of an open functioning party, as a normally functioning and integrated organism of political activity.<sup>1</sup>

Any political organisation, whether trying to establish its presence or expand its influence, had to be part of the general «democratisation of the social structure», otherwise, according to the Martov, it was doomed to failure.<sup>2</sup> In other words, Martov believed that «without a substantial break in the legal conditions which created the counter-revolution, the realisation to any satisfactory measure of a slogan calling for a struggle for an open party is impossible».<sup>3</sup> Sounding very much like Lenin, Martov contented that a genuinely open, social-democratic, proletarian mass organisation was not possible in a society that suppressed political opposition. However, Martov's brand of social democracy was incompatible with the notion of party dictatorship. Just as he rejected Bolshevik control of the party, he rejected Rozhkov's notion of a political association for the protection of the interests of the working class as it entailed «an organised and centralised class party».<sup>4</sup>

From 1912 to 1917 Rozhkov's geographical isolation, imposed by the Tsarist regime, was compounded severely by the political isolation that he experienced after Lenin's polemic against

him as well as other criticisms he endured from leading Bolshevik and Menshevik figures. The general internecine differences within the RS-DLP over policy, especially after 1908, and the increasing difficulty to publish and to disseminate opposing political theories and ideas also help to explain the political path that Rozhkov chose for the rest of the time he was in Siberian exile.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.