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Stalin's Bolshevism: The First Decade*

ERIK VAN REE

Summary: This article discusses Stalin's Bolshevism during his Tiflis and Baku periods in the first decade of the century. It focuses on his position in the inner-faction debate between Lenin and Bogdanov. It holds that Dzhugashvili's tactical and organizational views in the years from 1907 to 1909 moved from sympathetic to Bogdanov to a position near Lenin, though remaining somewhat to the left of the latter. Dzhugashvili never belonged to the leftist tendency. He was a typical representative of the "Russian" *praktiki*, whose main concern was to further conciliation in the Bolshevik faction.

In 1908 the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party was torn by an inner conflict between the followers of Lenin and the leftist tendency headed by A. A. Bogdanov (1873–1928). On 2 August 1909 the Bolshevik committee of the RSDWP of the city of Baku adopted a resolution condemning the leftist Bolsheviks, dubbed "Recallists" and "Ultimatists" who were critical of continued participation in the State Duma. At the same time the resolution condemned the Bolshevik Centre for its recent expulsion of Bogdanov.¹ Thus, the Baku Bolsheviks did not unconditionally support Lenin, the leader of the relatively moderate majority in the Bolshevik Centre. Authorship of the resolution was later claimed by Stalin, who had it included in his *Sochineniia*, and this has given rise to the intriguing question of the precise position of Iosif ("Soso") Dzhugashvili, or "Koba", in the inner-Bolshevik conflict.

In his 1972 article in *Soviet Studies* Ronald Suny showed that Dzhugashvili represented the left wing of the Baku party organization, which he joined in June 1907. More insistently and more persistently than other local Bolsheviks, such as S. G. Shaumian (1878–1918), he defended the boycott of a conference of workers' representatives with the oil industri-

* My research in Moscow was made possible by grants from the University of Amsterdam, Nuffic and the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).

¹ I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 2, 1907–1913 (Moscow, 1946), pp. 165ff. [*Sochineniia*] dates prior to 1918 will be given according to the old style.

alists.² In 1986 Robert Himmer argued that Koba, as opposed to Lenin, was in favour of a boycott of the State Duma from 1906 onwards and remained a disguised “boycottist” ever afterwards. Dzhugashvili became deeply dissatisfied with the new moderate face of his leader, who, Himmer had Stalin think, “had become a threat to Bolshevism”. He hoped for a new generation of proletarian leaders in the RSDWP to replace the intellectuals around Lenin.³ In his study *The Other Bolsheviks* on Bogdanov and his friends, Robert Williams drew attention to the known fragments of letters Dzhugashvili wrote in the years 1908–1911 in which he expressed concern about some aspects of Lenin’s policies. Dzhugashvili, Williams concluded, “remained in this period a Bolshevik, but not always a Leninist.”⁴ The conclusions of these authors contrast in varying degrees with Robert Tucker’s analysis that during these early years Lenin was Dzhugashvili’s ideal type of heroic leader.⁵

In the present article I will not discuss the philosophical aspects of the struggle between Lenin and Bogdanov in 1908–1909, despite its important role in the debate. Nor will I go into the related conflict with the *Bogostroiteli* of Antatolii Lunacharskii (1875–1933). Rather I will limit myself to the tactical and organizational aspects of the conflict, and my conclusion will be that during his Tiflis years Koba had developed a fascination with direct mass actions that was so intense that he did indeed experience a temporary “relapse” into the boycottist approach in 1907, as Himmer suggested. But, in my opinion, Himmer overstated and misinterpreted the differences between Lenin and the later Stalin. The latter soon took a position nearer to Lenin than to Bogdanov. My main conclusion will be that Dzhugashvili became a typical representative of what Geoff Swain in his analysis of the meeting of the editorial board of *Proletarii* of June 1909 called the “‘Russians’”, local Bolsheviks who stood by Lenin in his struggle against Bogdanov but remained, at the same time, critical of both *émigré* tendencies, Bogdanovist and Leninist.⁶

LEFTIST VERSUS LENINIST BOLSHEVISM

Lenin’s conflict with the leftist Bolsheviks was part of a complex struggle for power within the Bolshevik Centre. This leading group of the faction

² Ronald Grigor Suny, “A Journeyman for the Revolution: Stalin and the Labour Movement in Baku, June 1907–May 1908”, *Soviet Studies*, XXIII, 3 (January 1972), pp. 373–394.

³ Robert Himmer, “On the Origin and Significance of the Name ‘Stalin’”, *The Russian Review*, 45, 3 (1986), pp. 269–286, esp. p. 285.

⁴ Robert C. Williams, *The Other Bolsheviks. Lenin and His Critics, 1904–1914* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1986), pp. 119–121, 142, 155.

⁵ See: Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879–1929. A Study in History and Personality* (New York and London, 1974).

⁶ Geoff Swain (ed.), *Protokoly Soveshchaniya Rasshirennoi Redaktsii “Proletariya” Iyun’ 1909 (Proceedings of the Meeting of the Expanded Editorial Board of Proletarii June 1909)* (New York, London and Nendeln, 1982), p. xxvii.

was established after the Fourth Congress of the RSDWP in April 1906, with Lenin, Bogdanov and L. B. Krasin (1870–1926) as its leading members.⁷ A factional meeting at the Fifth Party Congress in April–May 1907 elected a new Centre of fifteen members, among whom was the same leading troika.⁸

None of these three men was elected to the Central Committee by the Congress, and they obtained only candidate status.⁹ During the summer of 1907 tensions between Lenin on the one hand and Krasin and Bogdanov on the other rose. Leaving the philosophical causes aside, the conflict was touched off by the disbandment of the Second State Duma by Prime Minister Petr Stolypin on 2 June 1907.

The subsequent changes of the electoral law caused a debate among the Russian Social-Democrats concerning participation in the elections for the Third Duma that autumn. At the Third Party Conference at Kotka (Finland) in July 1907 Bogdanov proposed to boycott the elections. He was supported by a majority of the Bolsheviks, but Lenin and a Menshevik majority in favour of participating had their way. The Fourth Party Conference, held in Helsingfors in November of that year, laid down guidelines for the new Social-Democratic Duma faction. However, among the Bolshevik rank-and-file anti-parliamentary feelings continued to run high. This appears from the desperate appeal of the Central Committee to the party organizations to support the work of the Duma faction, published in February 1908 in the Bolshevik journal *Proletarii*.¹⁰ Lenin's confrontation with Bogdanov and Krasin over financial matters dates back to this month.¹¹ Around the same time the editorial board of *Proletarii*, dominated by Lenin, refused to publish an article critical of the Duma faction, written by Bogdanov, himself a member of the board.¹²

In March–April 1908 resolutions were adopted in several Moscow party districts to the effect that the Duma faction be recalled and this event provoked an intense struggle throughout the Bolshevik organization, forcing all party leaders to take a stand. Lenin never dreamed of giving up the illegal party apparatus, but he felt that the revolutionary high tide had temporarily receded, compelling the Bolsheviks to take the remaining “legal opportunities” more seriously than they had done in the recent past. The difference with the leftists was a matter of emphasis. Most of them did not oppose parliamentary work as such but

⁷ Boris Nikolaevskii, “Bol'shevistskii Tsentr”, *Rodina*, 3 (1992), p. 13.

⁸ Swain, *Protokoly Soveshchaniya*, p. 264n.

⁹ *Piatyi (londonskii) s'ezd RSDRP. Aprel'-mai 1907 goda. Protokoly* (Moscow, 1963), p. 827n.

¹⁰ “Pis'mo TsK RS-DRP k part. organ. o dumskoi fraktsii”, *Proletarii*, 21, 26(13) (February 1908), p. 3.

¹¹ Boris Nikolaevskii, “Bol'shevistskii Tsentr. Okonchanie”, *Rodina*, 5 (1992), p. 28.

¹² P. Barchugov, *Soveshchanie rasshirennoi redaktsii "Proletariia"* (Moscow, 1961), p. 20.

they did attach less value to it. In June 1908 Bogdanov proclaimed in *Proletarii* that it would be a political mistake to recall the Duma faction, now that the RSDWP had accepted parliamentary responsibility, but he thought that the bad performance of the faction proved the boycotters to have been right.¹³ The article was accompanied by an editorial comment to which Bogdanov's reaction was not allowed to be printed¹⁴ and subsequently he resigned from the editorial board.¹⁵ The Bolshevik Centre's financial troika of Lenin, Krasin and Bogdanov was dissolved.¹⁶

In the late summer of that year Bogdanov's ally G. A. Aleksinskii formulated his version of what became known as "Ultimatism" in an article in *Proletarii*. He proposed to subject the Duma faction to an ultimatum. It was its last chance to bow unconditionally to the directives of the Central Committee and if the faction disregarded the call it would be disowned. The leftist leaders expressed the restless mood among rank-and-file Bolsheviks who were bewildered by the hard times their party found itself in. Many of them refused to accept that the revolution had failed. They considered the work in the Duma, legal clubs and trade unions harmful because it reconciled the masses with the existing order and they clung to high hopes of radical mass initiatives that would rekindle the fire of revolution. The resolution which the "Recallists" forwarded at the city conference of the Moscow RSDWP in May 1908 (defeated by a small majority) eloquently expressed that mood. It complained that the Duma faction buried itself in "commissions, about which nobody knows anything" and that its work only served to strengthen "constitutional illusions".¹⁷ In the autumn of that year the St Petersburg Recallists proposed a resolution to the RSDWP city committee in the same spirit: because "Russia marches towards a new revolutionary upheaval" only those activities were allowed that "do not weaken the revolutionary struggle."¹⁸

In August 1908 the Central Committee decided to convene the Fifth Party Conference in the near future to solve the problems. This transformed the struggle among the Bolsheviks into one for the mandates of the local party organizations. Initially the leftists had a strong position, but gradually support for Bogdanov among the Bolsheviks in Russia

¹³ Maksimov, "Boikotisty i otzovisty", *Proletarii*, 31, 17(4) June 1908, pp. 2-3.

¹⁴ Swain, *Protokoly Soveshchaniya*, p. 266.

¹⁵ Bogdanov was also provoked by Lenin's ally I. F. Dubrovinskii, who grossly attacked him during a lecture in Geneva on 28 May 1908. ("G. A. Aleksinskii i Mikha Tskhakaia-V. I. Leninu [Zheneva, nachalo iunია 1908g]", in *Dokumenty k istorii "Bol'shevistskogo Tsentra"* [a collection of B. I. Nikolaevskii's materials, held by the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam], Materialy-3, pp. 1-5).

¹⁶ Nikolaevskii, "Bol'shevistskii Tsent. Okonchanie", 5, p. 29.

¹⁷ "Rezoliutsiia 'otzovistov'", *Proletarii*, 31, 17(4) June 1908, p. 6.

¹⁸ K. A. Ostroukhova (ed.), *Revoliutsiia i RKP(b) v materialakh i dokumentakh. (Khrestomatiia) Tom piaty. Epokha reaksii (1907-1911 gg)* (Moscow, n.y. (1927?)), p. 275. This collection contains the full text of the resolution.

waned. Moreover, at the Fifth Party Conference, held in Paris in December 1908, Bogdanov could not get the upper hand, despite the fact that among the five Bolshevik representatives of local RSDWP organizations three were allied to him and only two to Lenin.¹⁹ The latter successfully prevented an attempt to organize a Bolshevik conference with exclusive voting rights for the local representatives which would have unseated him from the Bolshevik Centre.²⁰ The atmosphere was further heated up by *Proletarii's* publication in February 1909 of L. B. Kamenev's article against Lunacharskii's *Bogostroitel'stvo*.²¹

In February 1909 Lenin succeeded in provisionally expelling Bogdanov and Krasin from the Bolshevik Centre. They were accused of misappropriation of party funds,²² and the decision to expel Bogdanov was confirmed at a meeting of the expanded editorial board of the journal *Proletarii* in June of that year. At the conference a resolution was adopted which summarized Lenin's point of view, stressing that henceforth "considerably more attention" be paid to "legal opportunities", such as work in the Duma.²³ The leftists stuck to their views, however, and in their pamphlet published in Paris in late 1909 Bogdanov and Krasin held that Russia had "not entered a period of normal, organic development". Therefore, the preservation of the "revolutionary-fighting tendency" in the party remained a priority task.²⁴

In December 1909 Bogdanov, Lunacharskii and fourteen other prominent party members applied to the RSDWP Central Committee to be registered as the literary organization *Vpered*. Their platform was included in the application.²⁵ Apart from a suspicious attitude towards parliamentary work, a further common trait that distinguished the leftists was a preoccupation with improved representation of workers in high party positions. In their report to the party after their expulsion Bogdanov and Krasin had stated that "the best literary-propagandist forces of our party" needed now to concentrate on educating leaders from the working class.²⁶ And the *Vpered* platform declared enthusiastically on its very first page that "almost all party jobs are now performed by the hands of workers." Workers were even involved in "that responsible,

¹⁹ P. N. Pospelov et al. (eds), *Istoriia kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuzna*, vol. 2, *Partiia bol'shevikov v bor'be za sverzheniia tsarizma. 1904-fevral' 1917 goda* (Moscow, 1966), p. 259.

²⁰ Swain, *Protokoly Soveshchaniya*, p. 282n.

²¹ "Ne po doroge", *Proletarii*, 42, 12(25) February 1909, pp. 6-7.

²² Swain, *Protokoly Soveshchaniya*, pp. 162, 283n. See also: Nikolaevskii, "Bol'shevistskii Tsentr. Okonchanie", p. 29.

²³ Swain, *Protokoly Soveshchaniya*, p. 176. Krasin considered himself expelled too, see pp. 241ff. See also pp. 76-81.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 242-243, 245. The full text "Otchet tovarishcham bol'shevikam ustranennykh chlenov rasshirennoi redaktsii 'Proletariiia'" is given here.

²⁵ Krasin, who had moved to Berlin in 1908, remained aloof from the group.

²⁶ Swain, *Protokoly Soveshchaniya*, p. 244.

leading [literary] work” that was formerly the preserve of intellectuals. Not all ventures were brought to a satisfactory end, it admitted, but the proletariat had already produced “officials [*rabotniki*] of a higher caliber than ever before.”²⁷

The leftists were not the only ones to feel concern about the status of workers in the workers’ party. It formed an old subject of debate in the RSDWP and in the years following the defeat of the first Russian revolution of 1905 it was a commonly held notion among all shades of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks that the so-called “flight of the intellectuals” was a blessing in disguise because it improved the relative weight of the true proletarians in the party. Lenin was no exception here. In early 1909 *Sotsial-Demokrat* carried one of his articles which optimistically predicted a turn for the better for the RSDWP. He pleaded for “the concentration of leading positions in the hands of leaders of the Social-Democratic movement from among the workers themselves.”²⁸ And in December of that year *Proletarii* suggested concrete steps to improve proletarian involvement in the party and noted that a true workers’ avant-garde had become a reality. Those new leaders of local proletarian groups should henceforth be represented at party conferences in an advisory capacity.²⁹ As a whole, though, the leftists were more occupied by the matter and to further the process the Bogdanov circle had opened a school for the education of party cadres from the working class on the Italian island of Capri in August 1909. The school closed down after a few months but later another one was organized in Bologna.³⁰

TIFLIS

In the course of the first decade of the century Iosif Dzhugashvili became a Bolshevik of considerable status in the Transcaucasus. In that region the Bolsheviks were very weak in comparison to the Mensheviks and one could scale their hierarchical ladder rather easily. From April 1902 until January 1904 Koba found himself in prison and exile, and he did not hesitate to choose the Bolshevik side when the factional struggle broke out in the party in 1903. Subsequently, in the years 1904–1907,

²⁷ *Sovremennoe polozhenie i zadachi partii. Platforma, vyrabotannaia gruppoi bol'shevikov* (Paris, n.y.), pp. 1–2.

²⁸ “Na dorogu?”, in V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*. vol. 17, *Mart 1908–iun’ 1909* (Moscow, 1961), p. 363.

²⁹ “Ocherednaia zadacha”, *Proletarii*, 50, 28(11) December 1909, pp. 2–3.

³⁰ For a recent discussion on Lenin’s and Bogdanov’s positions on workers and intellectuals see John Eric Marot, “Alexander Bogdanov, Vpered and the Role of the Intellectual in the Workers’ Movement”, *The Russian Review*, 49, 3 (July 1990), pp. 241–264; Zenovia A. Sochor, “On Intellectuals and the New Class”, *ibid.*, pp. 283–292; and Andrzej S. Walicki, “Alexander Bogdanov and the Problem of the Socialist Intelligentsia”, *ibid.*, pp. 293–304.

he became a leading Bolshevik in the Tiflis party organization.³¹ Perhaps more significantly, some time after his escape from Siberian exile in January 1904, he had been co-opted into the Committee of the Caucasian Union, which coordinated all Bolshevik party work in the Transcaucasian area. It ceased to exist in 1906, but was revived in early 1907 under the name "Literary Bureau". Koba was again included,³² and his "Tiflis period" lasted until June 1907 when he moved to Baku.

In the tenth *opis'* of *fond* 71 of the former Central Party Archive can be found the materials of the sector of the former Marx–Engels–Lenin Institute which was responsible for the publication of Stalin's *Sochineniia*. It contains a large collection of early pamphlets and articles (where necessary translated from the Georgian into Russian) which did not find their way into the brown volumes.³³ They shed interesting light on the early Stalin and help to understand the position he was to take later in the conflict between "Leninists" and leftists during his "Baku period". Their most striking feature is to convey a feeling of intense hatred, a yearning for bloody revenge and a fascination with the battles on the streets. The style is flamboyant, brimming over with excessive pathos and drama.

"You, dear comrades," he addressed the workers in *Brdzola*, a Social-Democratic newspaper from Tiflis, in November–December 1901, "seem to have been specially created for the struggle: you thirst for the struggle as for life itself." The class struggle had a tremendous effect on those engaged in it: "You were of iron, but you became steel! You were tigers, but you became lions!"³⁴ In a pamphlet printed in March 1902

³¹ Dzhughashvili's status among the Tiflis Bolsheviks is indicated by his attendance of the Bolshevik Party Conference in Tammerfors in December 1905 as one of two representatives from Tiflis. See A. Bubnov, *VKP(b)* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1931), p. 467. At both the Fourth and Fifth Party Congresses in 1906 and 1907 he was the only Bolshevik representative from Tiflis. See *Chetvertyi (ob'edinitel'nyi) s'ezd RSDRP. April' (aprel'-mai) 1906 goda. Protokoly* (Moscow, 1959), p. 540; *Piatyi (londonskii) s'ezd [. . .]*, p. 630.

³² Ts. P. Agaian *et al.* (eds), *Ocherki istorii kommunisticheskikh organizatsii Zakavkaz'ia. Chast' pervaiia. 1883–1921 gg* (Tbilisi, 1967), pp. 102, 167, 171. See also D. I. Antoniuk *et al.* (eds), *Perepiska V. I. Lenina i rukovodimykh im uchrezhdenii RSDRP s partiinymi organizatsiiami 1905–1907gg. vol. 1, 22(9) Ianvaria- Mart 1905g. Kniga vtoraia. Mart 1905g* (Moscow, 1979), p. 341.

³³ Many of the pamphlets and articles were unsigned. The researchers working during Stalin's lifetime tried (as far as I could judge) to establish conscientiously which of them could be attributed to Stalin. They made detailed stylistic comparisons with known writings, took the whereabouts of Stalin at the time of writing and his activities into account, and discussed possible other authors. Generally two or three researchers made an assessment and they often came to different conclusions. I should add that the writings selected for publication in the *Sochineniia* were subjected to the same system and their authorship is no more or less certain than that of many writings not included.

³⁴ *Rossiiskii Tsentri Khraneniia i Izucheniia Dokumentov Noveishei Istorii*, f. 71, op. 10, d. 169, l. 61. All other references to archival materials in the present article are from the *RTsKhIDNI*.

in Batum he remarked that, "Others live off our labour; they drink our blood; our oppressors quench their thirst with the tears of our wives, children and relatives." But when, he added, "the bitter weeping of our wives and children mixed with the joyous laughter of the rich and when the dark grumbling of the people was drowned in the happy sounds of the pianos of our oppressors" the people considered it enough. "Blood to such a government, may it be cursed!"³⁵ On 15 May 1904 the journal *Listok "Bor'by Proletariata"* carried a long account by Dzhugashvili of a street battle where the drama of it is painted in stark colours: "The first fell, killed instantaneously by a bullet, which struck him right in the mouth, *Potskhishvili*. But the stream of popular anger only became more wild – again the crowd pushed forward, straight towards death! The guards of the tsar fired one volley after another into it." The people wanted to "destroy them", but their revolvers did not carry far enough. "And then a treacherous bullet mortally wounds *Iese Kalandadze* in the stomach! He who walked in front of all others, brave as a lion. He falls. Collecting his last strength, he jumps back to his feet and hurls himself upon the one who blocks the road to popular freedom [. . .] Comrades support him and want to carry him away. He resists, and words tear themselves from his mouth: 'Leave me! I will die here!'" Iese falls again, but he is still alive and, surrounded by friends and comrades "he leaves them and us all, brothers, his last wish: 'Fight on to the end! Fight on till final victory! [. . .] When the day of the revolution breaks, my bones will rise from the earth and will fight in your ranks!' Those were his last words. He died! Killed, our comrade, an ordinary village locksmith! A fighter for the happiness and freedom of the people, killed! [. . .] Killed! [. . .] But his words, his final wish live on! They are carried like a bloody alarm signal through the villages in revolt, the wind blows them all over the country!"³⁶

The lust for bloody revenge seems to have consumed Dzhugashvili. In a passionate appeal to the Caucasian workers in January 1905 he wrote: "Do you hear it, comrades? [The tsarist autocracy] asks us to forget the whistling of the whips and the buzzing of the bullets, the hundreds of heroes, our comrades who were killed, and their glorious ghosts, floating around us, whispering: Avenge us!"³⁷ A pamphlet of 25 June 1905 carried this to the end. It was a response to those saying "The blood of our brothers is spilled, we must shed tears for them." But Koba would not mourn, "We and tears?!", he asked, "How miserable are they! They don't know that [. . .] the house of freedom is only built on the innocent blood of the people! [. . .] They don't see the bright shining of freedom in the blood of the people! [. . .] No! There will be no tears on our faces! Tears are for cowards! We enjoy the

³⁵ *Ibid.*, I. 64.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, II. 101–102.

³⁷ *Sochineniia*, vol. 1, p. 76.

victorious battle-cry, we want to laugh, do you hear – laugh! [. . .] When the enemy sheds tears, is killed, moans and writhes with pain, then we must beat the drums and be happy. The victorious do not cry, the brave will not shed tears! So, cowards, weep if you want to – seeing your tears will make us laugh.”³⁸

In this tone Dzhugashvili went on. In a pamphlet of August 1905: “Blood for blood and death for death – that is how we will answer! To arms, on to revenge, long live the insurrection!”³⁹ Another pamphlet, printed the next month: “It will not be the people begging them for mercy, rather it will be them crawling at our feet. Then the autocracy will pay with its dark blood for the honest blood of the workers. And having trampled upon the corpse of the autocracy with our feet we will go forward to socialism victoriously.”⁴⁰ One more pamphlet – printed in October 1905: “Popular freedom can only be erected on the bones of the oppressors, only by the oppressors’ blood can the soil be dunged for the autocracy [*samoderzhavie*] of the people!”⁴¹ These early writings suggest that it would become very difficult for Dzhugashvili to come to his senses when the defeat of the revolution of 1905–1906 became undeniable. He would not be the kind of man to accept a relative downgrading of the armed struggle easily.

In his March 1906 defence of the Bolshevik boycott of the elections for the First State Duma Dzhugashvili argued that the Duma, being a “parliament of enemies of the people” deserved to be destroyed. The advocates of participation in the elections weakened “the revolutionary spirit of the people”, because they “call out the people for police elections and not for revolutionary actions; they see salvation in ballots and not in the action of the people.” The article suggested that as long as parliament was not fully democratically elected and did not have the final say in running the country Social-Democratic participation would have to be rejected.⁴² Even by Bolshevik standards that position was a rigid one because it left little room for tactical manoeuvring. At the Fourth Party Congress in April 1906, when the elections were under way, Lenin voted for the Menshevik proposal to participate in those of the elections that had not yet taken place. Dzhugashvili abstained, which suggests that he stood to the left of Lenin at that moment.⁴³ The First State Duma opened on 27 April and was dissolved on 8 July.

³⁸ F. 71, op. 10, d. 169, ll. 189–190.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, l. 286.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, l. 296.

⁴¹ *Sochineniia*, vol. 1, p. 190.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 207, 209.

⁴³ *Chetvertyi (ob’edinitel’nyi) s’ezd* (1959), pp. 357–358. Lenin claimed he only voted for the resolution in support of some of its other provisions – not out of real support for participation in the elections themselves. The significance of the difference in voting behaviour at the Congress between Lenin and Dzhugashvili should therefore not be overestimated.

Though the blood-and-bones approach gradually disappeared from Koba's writings in the course of 1906 he remained infatuated with the concept of the "street". In the Tiflis Bolshevik daily *Akhali Tskhovreba* of 7 and 9 July 1906 he defended the position of his faction against Menshevik accusations of overestimating "the street". In response Dzhugashvili defined the street as "the revolutionary activity of the mass, expressed now in meetings, then in strikes, manifestations and demonstrations or in insurrection." While the Duma is "an assembly of representatives of the mass", the street was "the mass itself" and the fate of the revolution was mainly decided by the street.⁴⁴ Reacting on the dissolution of the Duma in the same journal on 12 July in an article signed "Koba", Dzhugashvili noted with satisfaction that "the autocracy cannot dissolve the street". Once again, the article concluded, "the time for the organized street should come, the power of the street should be confirmed on the ruins of the Duma, – that is how popular freedom should unfold."⁴⁵

Under Lenin's influence Bolshevik opinion gradually shifted towards rejection of the boycott tactics in favour of using the Duma as a platform for agitation. Dzhugashvili shifted along with it but, as it seems, not wholeheartedly. In his brochure *The Present Moment and the Unification Congress of the Workers' Party* (July–August 1906) he did not exclude work in the Duma as a matter of principle. He rather held that "the street and not the Duma is the *main* arena of the revolution, that *mainly* the street, the struggle on the street, and not the Duma, not the chattering in the Duma, will bring victory to the people." Expounding his vision of the future he concluded that "the leader in the revolutionary street must also be the leader in the revolutionary government."⁴⁶ In a later debate with the anarchists he even defined the dictatorship of the proletariat as "the dictatorship of the street".⁴⁷ Koba's intense preoccupation with the battle on the streets had not left him when the revolutionary ebb-tide came. That was his state of mind when the Second State Duma, which had opened on 20 February 1907, was dissolved on 2 June.

BAKU

The event coincided with Dzhugashvili's moving from Tiflis to Baku, and in October 1907 he was elected to the Bolshevik Baku committee of the RSDWP.⁴⁸ Shaumian, the only member exclusively working in

⁴⁴ F. 71, op. 10, d. 193, l. 98.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, ll. 107, 109.

⁴⁶ *Sochineniia*, vol. 1, pp. 253, 259.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 410.

the committee itself, was its head. All others, including Dzhugashvili, represented lower, district organizations.⁴⁹ Koba's work in Baku was interrupted when he was arrested in March 1908, but after his escape from Sol'vychevodsk in June 1909 he returned to Baku, only to be arrested again in March 1910. When he arrived in Baku in 1907 he became part of a Social-Democratic (Bolshevik) branch organization that tended to take a radical view of tactical questions. As described in Suny's article mentioned above, it was opposed to participation by the workers in a conference with the oil industrialists and only in November was conditional participation agreed to, but Dzhugashvili was among those Bolsheviks who even then pleaded against the tactical about-turn and had to be overruled by others like Shaumian and "Alesha" Dzhaparidze. Koba's writings suggest, though, that he subsequently became convinced that the new line was a wise one.⁵⁰

In his article Robert Himmer held that Koba, like many Bolsheviks, reverted to a boycottist position in regard to the Third State Duma in the latter part of 1907. One indication of this is his article in *Bakinskii Proletarii* in June 1907 where he concluded that neither the First nor the Second State Duma had produced anything of value. In this article on the tasks of the proletariat Dzhugashvili said nothing concerning participation in a third Duma and stressed the growing revolutionary crisis,⁵¹ and there exists other, more definite evidence of his "boycottism". On 10 July 1907 the same paper of the Baku organization published "The Cadet danger and electoral agreements", an unsigned article over the first and second page clearly expressing the official standpoint of the Baku Bolshevik organization. It held: "We think that the best form of struggle with the Cadet danger is an active boycott of the Third Duma, a boycott both of the Duma itself and of the elections for it." The article was written by Dzhugashvili.⁵²

Years later Stalin still remembered his disappointment when a Menshevik-"Leninist" majority overruled the advocates of the boycott at the Kotka conference. In a speech at the Executive Committee of the Comintern on 14 May 1929 he tried to convince American comrades sympathetic to Bukharin to give up their resistance to the "general line": "I would like to draw attention to such a case, that of 1907, when one part of the Bolsheviks favoured a boycott of the Duma, while a large percentage of the Bolsheviks were for participation [. . .] The

⁴⁹ G. S. Akopian, *Stepan Shaumian. Zhizn' i deiatel'nost' (1878-1918)* (Moscow, 1973), p. 67.

⁵⁰ *Sochineniia*, vol. 2, pp. 87f.

⁵¹ "The dissolution of the Duma and the tasks of the proletariat" (*ibid.*, pp. 41-45).

⁵² "The Cadet danger and electoral agreements", in *Bakinskii proletarii*, no. 2 (10 July 1907), p. 1. A copy of the article is included in a collection of articles by Stalin compiled by I. P. Tovstukha, with a stamp *Kabinet proizvedenii I. V. Stalina* on it (f. 71, op. 10, d. 196, ll. 199-200). See also f. 155, op. 1, d. 80.

struggle within our party was bitter. But once the struggle had run its course and a decision had been taken, *we*, as soldiers, bowed to the decision of our CC.”⁵³

I do not find Himmer’s further assumption that Dzhugashvili remained a disguised boycottist throughout 1908 and later years convincing.⁵⁴ After the Kotka decision Koba called for revolutionary parliamentary work in a pamphlet in September 1907.⁵⁵ A good indication of the mood among the Baku Bolsheviks concerning the Duma is provided by the unsigned front page article “The 3rd Duma and the Revolution” in *Bakinskii proletarii* of 15 May 1908. It gave a disastrous account of the Duma as “a collection of committees working under the directives of the ministries”, but it also held that the Duma *could* be the tribune “most suited” for revolutionary agitation. Unfortunately, though, “our faction in the Third Duma was not able to use the Duma tribune to a sufficient degree”. But then again there followed no Recallist conclusion: “the party should influence the faction”. In August 1909 Koba acknowledged the wisdom of using all available “legal opportunities”, including participation in the Duma, to improve the party’s position – though he added that it was not the most vital of tasks to be performed.⁵⁶ His “Letters from the Caucasus” suggest that from November–December of that year he was prepared to recognize the value of “legal opportunities” in straightforward terms.⁵⁷

In connection with the above, Himmer pointed at Dzhugashvili’s striving to enhance the role within the party of ordinary workers and he allegedly hoped that new proletarian leaders could be trusted to continue the old policy of militant boycottism which the intellectual Lenin and his fellow *émigrés* had abandoned. In other words, Koba’s plea for more worker cadres expressed his estrangement from Lenin.⁵⁸ In my opinion, this interpretation is beside the point. To begin with, the “workerist” approach had not always been among Koba’s prominent traits. In March 1906 he had written an article in *Gantiadi*, signing it with the pseudonym I. Besoshvili, in which he attacked those who waged a “struggle against the socialist *intelligentsiia*” in the party under the false motto “We are workers”. Many intellectuals, the author held, had come over to the proletariat and the party received them “with open arms”. If they were not only to accept its programme but take a leading role “it will be even better”.⁵⁹ In March 1907, in an issue of *Dro*, a

⁵³ F. 558, op. 1, d. 2889, l. 146. Italics are mine.

⁵⁴ For his argument, based on an interpretation of some of Stalin’s writings, see Himmer, “Origin and Significance of the Name ‘Stalin’”, pp. 276–277.

⁵⁵ *Sochineniia*, vol. 2, pp. 78–80.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 149, 157.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 183ff.

⁵⁸ Himmer, “Origin and Significance of the Name ‘Stalin’”, pp. 271, 279, 285.

⁵⁹ F. 71, op. 10, d. 193, ll. 26–27.

Bolshevik daily in Tiflis, he spoke up again against harming the intellectuals in the party though pleading for sending "as few intellectuals as possible" to the Fifth Party Congress, because worker delegates would profit more from the experience.⁶⁰

In his article "The crisis in the party and our tasks" of August 1909 Dzhugashvili urged that party work be concentrated in the "powerful hands" of experienced workers, "that they, and precisely [*imenno*] they, occupy the most important positions in the organization, from practical and organizational to journalistic [*literaturnye*] ones." The intellectuals must make the transfer of power in the party possible by organizing "higher circles" to teach Marxism to the new proletarian party leaders. The party organizations of the Central region and Ural had shown the way, as they "had long since managed to do without intellectuals as all."⁶¹ If we may attach significance to the changing tone in the writings from 1906 through 1907 to 1909 we may assume that Koba gradually obtained a more open mind to the significance of proletarianization of the leading cadres. His enthusiasm for it suggests proximity to the views of the leftists. But there exists no hard evidence that this matter played any role in his perception of the conflict in the Bolshevik faction. Moreover, he never even suggested that he expected the new proletarian cadres to revive the old militancy.

I hope to show that the basic position Dzhugashvili came to take in 1908–1909 was not one of leftist militancy, as Himmer assumed, but one of *conciliation* between the rivalling tendencies. We should first take a closer look at personal factors involved in the factional conflict. Leonid Krasin had worked as an engineer in Baku from 1900 to 1904, contributing substantially to the work of the local RSDWP⁶² and probably he still enjoyed a measure of popularity among the Baku Bolsheviks. Of still greater importance was the role of M. G. Tskhakaia (1865–1950), who had upheld the contact between the Baku organization and the Bolshevik Centre during Lenin's stay in Geneva in 1908.⁶³ He had emigrated to Geneva during 1907 where he became part of the "Geneva Ideological Circle of Bolsheviks" which severed its relations with the Bolshevik Centre in solidarity with Bogdanov in April 1909.⁶⁴ As a founding member of *Mesame dasi*, the first Transcaucasian organization

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, d. 196, l. 53.

⁶¹ *Sochineniia*, vol. 2, pp. 152–153.

⁶² See L. B. Krasin (Nikitich), *Dela davno minuvshikh dnei (Vospominaniia)* (Moscow, 1934), pp. 34ff, 91ff; and Timothy Edward O'Connor, *The Engineer of Revolution. L. B. Krasin and the Bolsheviks, 1870–1926* (Boulder, San Francisco and Oxford, 1992), pp. 40f.

⁶³ Agaian, *Ocherki istorii*, p. 216; G. B. Garibdzhanian, *V. I. Lenin i bol'sheviki Zakavkaz'ia* (Moscow, 1971), p. 98.

⁶⁴ *Dokumenty k istorii*, Materialy-4, p. 5. See also Swain, *Protokoly Soveshchaniya*, p. 265n.

sympathetic to Marxism, in 1892 he was considered the senior Caucasian Bolshevik and was held in very high esteem. His choosing Bogdanov's side must have made the Baku Bolsheviks less than enthusiastic about Lenin's rigid tactics towards the radical group.

Koba had extra personal reasons to be unhappy about the split in the faction. After the Bolshevik Third Party Congress in April 1905 the Central Committee established a "technical fighting group" headed by its member Krasin until 1907.⁶⁵ Krasin was personally responsible for the "expropriations" in the Transcaucasian area,⁶⁶ but there have always been indications that, as a leading member of the Tiflis and Baku party organizations, Koba was involved in the hold-ups.⁶⁷ In the archive of the RSDWP commission which investigated rumours about *provocateurs* can be found the testimony of a certain Voznesenskii, made on 20 September 1907, according to which Koba recruited him in late 1904 or early 1905 to participate in the robbing of money from Tiflis postal agencies. His contact with Koba about the matter continued at least to the spring of 1906, when the latter indirectly arranged a meeting with the notorious "Kamo". It ended with the robbery on Erivan Square in Tiflis on 13 May 1907.⁶⁸ In April 1918 Iulii Martov accused Stalin of having been involved in the organization of the robbery at the steamship Nikolai I in Baku in 1908.⁶⁹ These activities would establish a link between him and Krasin.

As to Tskhakaia, Koba directly cooperated with him for years. The former was a founding member of the Committee of the Caucasian Union into which Koba was co-opted several months after his escape in January 1904. What is more, in 1948 Tskhakaia wrote that he personally co-opted "comrade Soso (Koba)" into the committee. For some time they worked together on a daily basis⁷⁰ and cooperation lasted for several years. Both Tskhakaia and Dzhughashvili were again part of the "Literary Bureau", mentioned above, the new *de facto* Bolshevik centre for the Transcaucasian area created in early 1907.⁷¹ Tskhakaia's remark that he co-opted Dzhughashvili is both plausible and significant. Plausible, because he was the senior member of the committee and therefore in a position to take such steps, and, moreover, he would not make the claim during Stalin's lifetime when it was unfounded. And significant, because this makes "Misha" Tskhakaia the person who gave Koba's career in the party the first real boost. He moved him up from a

⁶⁵ See B. Mogilevskii, *Nikitich (Leonid Borisovich Krasin)* (Moscow, 1963), pp. 59–60.

⁶⁶ Nikolaevskii, "Bol'shevistskii Tsentr. Okonchanie", 3, p. 33.

⁶⁷ On Stalin's possible involvement in the great hold-up in Tiflis in 1907, see Boris Sapir, *From the Archives of L. O. Dan* (Amsterdam, 1987), pp. 101, 104.

⁶⁸ F. 332, op. 1, d. 53, ll. 19–20. 13 May is the date given in this document.

⁶⁹ F. 558, op. 2, d. 42, l. 9.

⁷⁰ F. 157, op. 1, d. 122, l. 82. See also *ibid.*, d. 57, ll. 98, 104.

⁷¹ Agaian, *Ocherki istorii*, p. 172.

“committee-man” of local (Tiflis) significance to one of a regional level, and therefore Dzhugashvili was indebted to Tskhakaia. It was the same Tskhakaia who tried to draw the Baku organization into the factional conflict.

In May 1908 “Misha” sent a letter to Shaumian asking for his support against Lenin’s policy on “legal opportunities”. The Baku leader distributed the letter among his imprisoned comrades, among whom was Dzhugashvili. In July the latter wrote a long reply which served as the official reaction of the Baku organization.⁷² “Where is the root of this ‘tempest in a teapot’, which could develop into a veritable storm?”, Koba asked. He divided his own answer into three parts, touching on philosophical, tactical and organizational matters, and did not hide his irritation about the philosophical debate. He recognized that it was “necessary and useful” and even acknowledged that it proved the superiority of the Russian party over foreign Social-Democrats who did not take philosophy as seriously. But he added that “if our party is not a sect – and it is definitely no sect – it should not divide itself into groups *according to philosophical* (gnoseological) tendencies.” A discussion is one thing, “but leaving the editorial board – is quite another thing.” The party had to “call” Bogdanov “to order” for leaving his post. *Proletarii* had acted “totally correctly” when it kept its columns closed to philosophical debates, which would have to be waged elsewhere. Our fate would be bitter, Koba concluded, “if we, Russian *praktiki*, could not call our nervous *literatory* to order [. . .]”.

Proceeding to the tactical differences he noted that the “question of the boycott is a matter of the past – is it worth it to re-awaken it *after* [the decision to] participate in the Duma?” Even Bogdanov had called Recallism “badly understood Bolshevism”. Koba acknowledged that “Il’ich somewhat *overestimates* the meaning of such [legal, E.v.R.] organizations, but other comrades (for instance the Muscovites) somewhat *underestimate* it”. Of course, he added, “*specific* deviations of strict Bolshevism *do exist* among one part of our faction headed by Il’ich (the question of the boycott of the Third Duma), but in that field primarily we ourselves are guilty, for not once did we attempt (*seriously attempt*) to *argue the correctness of our position* in such cases.” But do we have to “create an elephant from a fly”? Finally, concerning the policy towards the left-wing Mensheviks and the Bund, “I think that the Leninist policy [. . .] demanding now and then a certain polishing of the sharp corners of Bol[shev]ism, is the *only possible policy in the context of the unity of the party*”. He added, that the “unity of

⁷² See Shaumian’s letter to Tskhakaia, dated 27 July 1908 (St. Shaumian, *Pis'ma, 1896–1918* (Erevan, 1959), p. 151; also p. 288). In his letter Dzhugashvili referred to Bogdanov’s leaving the editorial board of *Proletarii*. The latter announced his decision to that effect in a letter of 10(23) June 1908 (f. 377, op. 1, d. 49).

Social-Democracy is no less necessary than unity of the faction" even if that meant " 'forgetting' not the basic but the passing, non-essential interests of the faction".

The letter confirms that the Baku organization had favoured a boycott of the Third Duma, but had now come round to a recognition of the value of legal positions, though somewhat less enthusiastically than Lenin. Dzhugashvili concluded his letter with the remark that "we have decided to hand your mandate to Il'ich", implying that, though taking a position in the middle, the Baku Bolsheviki were more on Lenin's side than on the other. The main reason for that seems to have been their indignation about Bogdanov's leaving the board of *Proletarii* when he had been denied the possibility to react to the comment it had added to his article. "Tell me, for God's sake", Dzhugashvili wrote, "is it worth leaving the editorial board for an irrelevant 'comment' [. . .]? What Bogdanov did was downright shameful!"⁷³ In his letter of 27 July 1908 to Tskhakaia Shaumian unreservedly supported Koba's standpoint.⁷⁴

However, Bogdanov did not leave things at that. On 8 August he wrote a personal letter to the Baku organization explaining his position. He said that he had favoured *Proletarii's* neutral position in the philosophical debate and had only left the board when normal work under conditions of mutual comradely respect was denied to him.⁷⁵ That letter made a favourable impression. In early November Shaumian wrote another, warm letter to Tskhakaia, praising him as his "respected senior comrade". We, "your friends", are at our posts, the letter said, but the "conditions of our work, dear Mikha, have become terribly difficult: we are literally being crucified, spat on from all sides, humiliated." One consequence of that was that they had "no possibility at all to study philosophy seriously". Three volumes of Bogdanov's *Empiriomonism* were on his table always, but he could only read occasionally. He asked to convey their warm regards to Bogdanov: "The documents you sent and his letters have convinced us that he acted correctly, although we still feel sorry that he left the editorial board." Having read Bogdanov's letter Koba himself now felt sorry about his "small taunt" against him. Shaumian urged Tskhakaia to keep up good relations with Lenin. While for "the *Baku* conference" they had decided to transfer the former's mandate to the latter "under the impression of our fights and conflicts" he promised that for "the all-Russian conference" he would try to have Tskhakaia's mandate confirmed. "Because there you will all come out in solidarity."⁷⁶

⁷³ F. 558, op. 1, d. 5262.

⁷⁴ Shaumian, *Pis'ma*, pp. 151–153.

⁷⁵ F. 377, op. 1, d. 55.

⁷⁶ Shaumian, *Pis'ma*, pp. 154–155, 157. The All-Russian conference referred to the Fifth Party Conference.

As we know the conflict did not abate, reaching its apogee at the *Proletarii* meeting of June 1909. In his analysis of the conference Geoff Swain observed that it contained not two but *three* "parties". While Lenin and Bogdanov both wanted a split, "the delegates most recently in Russia" (like Mikhail Tomskii, who represented St Petersburg), though supporting Lenin against the leftists, realized the already weakened state of the Recallists. The " 'Russians' ", as Swain called them, were against exacerbating the conflict. After Bogdanov was forced out of the meeting a rift among the victorious coalition between Lenin and the "Russian" delegates opened up. The latter pleaded against the dominant position of the *émigrés* in the faction, favouring a stronger position for those members of the Bolshevik Centre living in Russia. Furthermore, they wanted a legal, popular newspaper, discussing Duma and trade union affairs, instead of *Proletarii* which failed to appeal to the workers. Lenin was forced to give in to some of the demands.⁷⁷

The Baku organization reacted to the split in the faction in a predictable way. In its resolution of 2 August it condemned Recallism and Ultimatism, but it also stubbornly held that "both parts of the editorial board" remained "in solidarity with each other" where it concerned the main questions of the day. Unity of the faction remained necessary. It protested "against all 'chasing from our midst' of followers of the minority of the editorial board" and also against "the behaviour of comr. Maksimov [Bogdanov, E.v.R.] who declared that he would not submit to the decisions of the editorial board".⁷⁸ In the big unsigned article "The crisis in the party and our tasks" of August 1909 Dzhugashvili echoed the position of the "Russians" at the *Proletarii* meeting. "It would be strange to think," he held, "that [journals] located abroad, far from Russian realities, could unite the work of the party". The moment demanded "an all-Russian newspaper, finding itself at the centre of party work and published in Russia." That newspaper was to become a "centre, leading party work, uniting and directing it."⁷⁹

Some time before early October 1909 M. G. Toroshelidze received a letter from Shaumian at his Swiss address. The former served as the new contact with Lenin for the Baku organization.⁸⁰ The Baku leader confirmed, that "we adhere to the majority of the editorial board from the perspective of the essence of the matter, but nevertheless we do not agree with [its] organizational policy (in our opinion, it contributes to the split)". Il'ich, he added meaningfully, "does not realize how irritated the workers are about the people abroad even without this

⁷⁷ Swain, *Protokoly Soveshchaniya*, pp. xxvff.

⁷⁸ *Sochineniia*, vol. 2, p. 168.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 147, 155.

⁸⁰ Agaian, *Ocherki istorii*, p. 216; Garibdzhanian, *V. I. Lenin*, p. 98.

matter.”⁸¹ On 5 November “Soso” wrote a very warm letter to Tskhakaia full of friendly reproaches: “How are things with you, what makes you happy and what makes you sad? – write to me, you bastard, why do you keep silent? Do these ‘tendencies’ cursed by God really have to keep us apart?” I think, Dzhugashvili wrote, “that the ‘Bogdanovists’ are mistaken (read the Baku resolution), but as to useless fights, both sides deserve to be thrashed, the one as much as the other [. . .]” He ended with a “fiery greeting” to Bogdanov and his comrades.⁸²

Exactly one week later Dzhugashvili wrote another letter to *Proletarii*. At the conference in June Bogdanov’s departure had been characterized as a “splitting away [*otkol*]” instead of a “split [*raskol*]”. Dzhugashvili pointed at the inconsistency of Lenin’s policy: “You can’t have it both ways. If joint work is fundamentally harmful and inadmissible, you should not have waited for them to leave, but you should have thrown them out of the editorial board yourselves. But if joint work is admissible, then ‘the whole question’ is reduced to the question of the conduct of comr. Maks[imo]v and his ‘school’.” Dzhugashvili thought that the policy of *Proletarii* only chased “the large circle of misguided Ultimatism *praktiki* and ‘advanced’ workers” away. “We understand the situation of the editorial board abroad, the atmosphere abroad etc. But you should also understand that we do not live abroad, that you write for us and that what serves a purpose abroad does not always serve a purpose in Russia.”⁸³ In accordance with this the Baku Committee proposed in its resolution of 22 January 1910 “the relocation of the (leading) practical centre to Russia” which then ought to organize the publication of a new newspaper in the country itself. That would be favourable for a better use of the “legal opportunities” and create an atmosphere of reunification in the party.⁸⁴

In the years to come Koba continued to look at things in this way. In his letter to Semen Shvarts in Paris, dated 31 December 1910 and published in the *Sochineniia*, he expressed support for Lenin’s attempts to come to terms with Plekhanov’s “party-minded” Mensheviks. As to the Bogdanovists, they could now “stew in their own juice.” But he added: “That’s how I think about abroad. But that’s not all and it is not even the main thing. The main thing is the organization of the work in Russia.” Differences of opinion, Dzhugashvili held, “are not decided in a discussion, but mainly in the course of work, in the course of applying the principles.” And he repeated the old idea of a new Russia-based party centre.⁸⁵ From the same place of exile, Sol’vychevodsk, he wrote a letter to V. S. Bobrovskii on 24 January 1911. “Perhaps you

⁸¹ F. 377, op. 1, d. 311.

⁸² F. 558, op. 1, d. 4516.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, d. 26.

⁸⁴ *Sochineniia*, vol. 2, pp. 198–199.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 209ff.

remember Gurgen (the old Mikho)", he wrote, "He is now in Geneva [. . .] where he is 'recalling' the Duma faction of the SD. The old one has gone too far [*Razmakhnulsia*], the devil take him." Dzhugashvili called the discussions about the various blocs in the party another " 'tempest in a teapot' abroad". He thought "the attitude of the workers to the [Lenin-Plekhanov] bloc is favourable. But in general the workers start to look at the situation abroad with contempt: 'let them climb the walls to their hearts content, they say; but in our opinion, to whomever the interests of the movement are dear – let him work, the rest will take care of itself.' I think they are right."⁸⁶

CONCLUSION

In the philosophical field the "other Bolsheviks", as Williams dubbed the leftists, did indeed represent "another" Bolshevism, fundamentally different from Lenin's. However, their approach to tactical and organizational questions during the period under discussion (1907–1909) can only be considered as a somewhat radicalized version of "Leninism". All Bolsheviks agreed that the party should combine legal and illegal work, the latter type of activity being decisive in the end. Similarly, all Bolsheviks agreed that a workers' party should mainly rely on cadres from the proletariat, but the contribution of "honest" intellectuals should be gladly accepted. None of the tendencies discussed here transgressed the boundaries of this "Leninist" model, but varied only in the accents placed.

During his "Tiflis period" Iosif Dzhugashvili appeared as a Bolshevik filled with hatred and "class" bitterness to an unusual degree, which made him extraordinarily suspicious of moderate, parliamentary tactics. When he came to Baku in 1907 he fitted in quite well because the local Bolsheviks sympathized with Bogdanov's proposal to boycott the Third Duma. However, as time went by, the Baku Committee notably moderated its views, coming to recognize the wisdom of Lenin's plea for using "legal opportunities" in a more profound way. All that remained of its initial boycottism was the impression that Lenin got somewhat carried away by his own change of heart. Dzhugashvili's ideas on the proletarianization of the party were probably more outspoken than Lenin's, but not to a degree to justify a *rapprochement* with Bogdanov's group. Koba's tactical and organizational views in the years from 1907 to 1909 moved from sympathetic to Bogdanov to a position near Lenin, though remaining somewhat to the left of the latter.

However, these matters were not the real issue. It is the concept of the "*praktik*" which provides the key to an understanding of Koba's position in the factional conflict of 1907–1909, as well as of the position

⁸⁶ F. 558, op. 1, d. 29.

of the whole Baku organization. To characterize the early Stalin from the Baku period as a *praktik* is not only an analytical construct. The Soviet leader himself would have agreed. In a letter of 15 May 1926 to the members of the delegation of the All-Union Communist Party (bolsheviks) to the Executive Committee of the Comintern he attacked Grigorii Zinov'ev in the following terms: "During the period from 1898 until the February revolution in 1917 we, old activists of the illegality, managed to live and work in all regions of Russia, but we did not meet comr. Zinov'ev, neither in the illegality, nor in the prisons, nor in the places of exile".⁸⁷ Commenting on the first volume of his *Sochineniia* in 1946 Stalin described himself in retrospect as among the former "Bolshevik *praktiki*" – in explicit contrast to Lenin.⁸⁸

As a term the "*praktik*" indicated, first of all, not a state of mind but a way of living. It was somebody who worked for the party in Russia, as opposed to those professional revolutionaries living abroad. The *praktiki* were the ones carrying out what the emigrants thought up, carrying the risks in the process as well. Distrust of the "Russian" *praktiki* towards their leaders abroad was not a new phenomenon arising in 1908 or 1909, but had a tradition, especially in Baku. For instance, in November 1904 the Baku Bolsheviks had sent a declaration to the newly established Bureau of the Committees of the Majority in Geneva, Lenin's Bolshevik centre, expressing anger that they were not consulted when the committee was established. Their "*distrust towards abroad*" was based on the fact that those living in "the choking atmosphere abroad", were "to a significant degree cut loose from local work". In conclusion the declaration pleaded for "an inner-party life as independent as possible from abroad".⁸⁹

As such the *praktik* was not necessarily a radical, a moderate or belonging to any other tendency for that matter. The "Russians" presented in Swain's analysis of the June 1909 conference tended to be more moderate and "legally" oriented than Lenin, while the Baku *praktiki* tended to be of a more radical complexion than he. What they did have in common, however, was that they specifically cherished the *unity of the faction*. As hard-working practical revolutionaries they considered themselves left out in the cold by the senseless bickering of the *émigrés* in their Paris and Geneva cafés. That is not to say that the *praktik* was necessarily without an interest in principles, or even in philosophy. In two of his letters, the one to Tskhakaia of July 1908 and another one to Toroshelidze on 20 December 1909, Dzhugashvili explained his position in the philosophical discussion.⁹⁰ In his letter of

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, d. 2777, l. 4.

⁸⁸ *Sochineniia*, vol. 1, p. xiii.

⁸⁹ D. I. Antoniuk *et al.* (eds), *Perepiska [. . .] Kniga pervaiia. 22(9) Ianvaria–Fevral' 1905g* (Moscow, 1979), p. 333. See also p. 459.

⁹⁰ For the letter of 1909 see f. 558, op. 1, d. 5225.

early November 1908, which was quoted above, Shaumian did the same. The former was even capable of violently negative characterizations of what he considered as “narrow” *praktiki*. In a letter to the Bolshevik centre abroad in May 1905 he described the Caucasian Mensheviks in the following terms:

[The Mensheviks] are *no organizers at all*, – in the best case they are narrow “*praktiki*” of the Bund type without *generalizing thoughts*, without *will-power*, they are vulgar sentimentalists of the pre-party period, the period of the “*worker-lovers*” [*rabocheliubstva*], they are only fossils of the artisan period, they even carry the rotting smell of fossils [. . .]), they have no profound *propagandists* (they are all people with fragments of knowledge, like vulgar “Marxists”), they have no, or hardly any, *agitators* (most of them are “good” worker-lovers, with whom the workers get bored very soon) [. . .]⁹¹

However, the *praktiki* felt that party members were entitled to hold different interpretations of the “materialist” philosophy and differences over principles that were not directly relevant to the running of the party should not be allowed to tear it apart. As far as tactical and organizational matters were concerned, the purity of the “principles” was a matter of vital concern, but even in this field one should not blow up what were really minor differences into ones of principle. In sum, Dzhugashvili was not a leftist Bolshevik – he was rather a *praktik* with a certain amount of sympathy for the leftists. It is tragically ironic that after he came to power Stalin’s obsession for party unity changed from the sober form it had in 1908–1909 into its vicious opposite. One way of assessing the terror campaign of the 1930s is to take it as a continuation of the struggle of the former *praktiki* with the former *émigrés*, many of whom were now finally silenced.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, d. 938.