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0521526973 - The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries: Voices from the Menshevik  
Past

Leopold H. Haimson

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# THE MAKING OF THREE RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONARIES

Voices from the Menshevik past

LEOPOLD H. HAIMSON

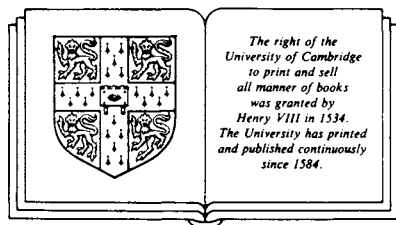
*W. Averell Harriman Institute  
for Advanced Study of the Soviet Union,  
Columbia University*

in collaboration with

Ziva Galili y Garcia and Richard Wortman

Introduction by Leopold H. Haimson,

Notes by Ziva Galili y Garcia



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## PREFACE

The three life histories from which the reminiscences in this volume have been drawn were originally recorded on tape in the course of an interviewing program conducted between 1960 and 1965, as part of an interuniversity project on the history of the Menshevik movement. All the interviews were transcribed as faithfully as possible, but our informants were given and usually availed themselves of the opportunity to edit their remarks, and especially to correct the inevitable errors in the transcripts.

For reasons more fully explained in the Introduction, I concluded soon after beginning my interviews with three survivors of the Menshevik movement that the interest their reminiscences presented warranted a systematic effort to trace the trajectory of their lives, and in particular the shaping of their ideas, attitudes, and values. If the end product of this effort proves of enduring interest and value, thanks are owed first and foremost to these three informants – Lydia Dan, Boris Nicolaevsky, and George Denike – for the time and energy that they invested, notwithstanding advanced age and failing health, in this long and arduous interviewing program.

Long after the conclusion of the interviews – which by the time of the deaths of these informants comprised thousands of pages of transcripts – several readers expressed the view that the light shed by these life histories on Menshevik political culture and the radical intelligentsia of which it was a part warranted dissemination of edited versions among a broader circle of readers. Most encouraging in this regard was Professor Richard Wortman, who offered me his collaboration in selecting and eventually editing those portions of the transcripts that most deserved broader circulation. With his help, and eventually that of Professor Ziva Galili y Garcia, I embarked on the difficult task of selecting portions of the interviews for translation into English. These translations, which often proved extremely demanding, were undertaken by Mr. Martin Lopes Morillas and eventually by Ms. Lynn Solotaroff, to whom I wish to express our gratitude for the efforts they invested in what sometimes seemed an almost impossible task.

The final selection and editing of the excerpts to be published, which Richard Wortman, Ziva Galili, and I undertook after the completion of these translations, was itself no easy job. We had jointly concluded that in the reminiscences of Lydia Dan and Boris Nicolaevsky preference should be accorded in this process of selection to the reminiscences that these two informants had left us of their childhood and youth, and of their early political careers. We drew this conclusion partly because of the much greater vividness with which these earlier stages of their life experience had

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remained imprinted upon their memories, but also because of the light that they jointly shed – especially given these two informants' very different social origins and backgrounds – on the processes of socialization that had been at work in the shaping of Menshevik political culture, and in the evolution of the radical intelligentsia as a whole. (Our considerations on this issue are elaborated in the Introduction.)

But even after this decision was reached, we were confronted with the problem of reconciling our objective of making these reminiscences accessible and hopefully interesting to a broader readership with that of rendering as faithfully as possible the actual transcripts. One of our working rules, in this connection, was to eliminate most of the inevitable repetitions in these long series of interviews. Another was to eliminate major digressions from the narrative flow (usually biographical details concerning secondary figures in Russian Social Democracy and other currents of the revolutionary movement). We also condensed the introductory remarks with which I had usually opened our interview sessions in an effort to provide a framework and chronological points of reference for the chapters in their lives which my informants would seek to recount; and we eliminated many of the follow-up questions with which the sessions had been punctuated to elicit fuller responses, and to provide pauses for memory to do its work.

The final preparation of the manuscript consequently involved occasional “splicing” of the interviews to bridge gaps left by the editing process. But we took considerable care not to allow these efforts to achieve greater readability to distort the record that the interviews provided of my informants' processes of recall.

This description of the preparation of the volume will hopefully suggest that for all those who were involved in it, it came to constitute a labor of love as much as a work of scholarship. I have already mentioned the debt we owe to the memory of our three informants (two of whom, Lydia Dan and George Denike, died shortly after the completion of my interviews with them), as well as to the translators of these interviews, Martin Lopes Morillas and Lynn Solotaroff. But I particularly wish to acknowledge indebtedness to Richard Wortman and Ziva Galili for their help in the final shaping of this volume. Ziva Galili played an especially important part in the final editing, and contributed elaborate endnotes that will make the historical record provided here more valuable to interested readers. I wish to thank Madame Marianne Dumont – as remarkable a person as the informants in which she took such a deep personal interest – for her assistance in the preparation of the introductory section during my stays in Paris. I also owe a special debt to Ruth Mathewson for her help in turning the draft of the introduction into serviceable English prose, to Lola Peters who took charge of the final editing, as well as to Jan Sammer who patiently recorded the various versions on the word processor. Last but not least, I wish to acknowledge our debt to the Ford and Atran Foundations, which funded the work of the Menshevik project during the years when these interviews were conducted, and to the American Council of Learned Societies, which provided the grant that enabled us to present them in this edited version.



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## EDITORS' NOTE

All editorial additions to the text of the interviews have been placed in brackets. These include the translation into English of certain Russian terms; the Russian origin of certain words rendered into English in the text; surnames otherwise identified in the text only by proper name and patronymic; and the interjection of a word or a phrase to clarify an incomplete sentence or a misleading statement. Introductory or connecting passages are also in brackets.

In transliterating Russian names we generally adhered to the more precise Library of Congress system, but deliberately allowed for certain exceptions, especially in the text. Thus, Lydia Dan's first name, and Boris Nicolaevsky's last name, have been anglicized both for aesthetic reasons and to conform to their preferences. In the notes, however, these are treated as Russian names and transliterated as Lidia Dan and Boris Nikolaevskii. Only in one case did we use the more familiar anglicized version throughout; namely, in the case of Trotsky.

All the abbreviations in the text are those actually used during the interviews, most notably, *SRs* for Socialist Revolutionaries and *SDs* for Social Democrats. In the notes, the abbreviation *CC* is often used for Central Committee, *NSs* for the Party of People's Socialists, *PSR* for the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries, and *RSDRP* for the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party.

Unless otherwise indicated, all pre-1918 dates follow the Julian or "Old Style" calendar, twelve days behind the Gregorian or "Western" calendar in the nineteenth century and thirteen days behind in the twentieth.