When Mayakovsky was born in 1894 A.D, serfdom in Russia was on its last legs. At the expiry of it, the country entered into a new phase that of capitalist economy. The abolition of serfdom made way for the development of industries, factories and other means of production at a fast speed. New factories and industries were not only built in towns and cities but even in rural areas and existing ones were extended. There was no labour shortage. More people were available from country side and by 1905 AD, Russia had turned into a capitalist state, according to Russian historians and intellectuals, whereas it emerged as semi capitalist state in the eyes of Europeans. It united 60 big and small peoples-----Russians, Ukrainians, Letts, Georgians and many other peoples. After the abolition of serfdom, capitalism or semi-capitalism reshaped itself in the National Border lands including Central Asian States. Mines, iron and steel works were built in Ukraine, oil fields were opened up in Trans-Caucasia, the vast spaces of Siberia were being rapidly developed. Raw materials and markets for the finished products were needed if industry and trade were to develop. Large areas in Central Asia were used for the cultivation of cotton. It resulted in the opening of the textile mills in the centre of Russia and

1 Alexeyev, Kartsov, Troitsky, A Short History of the USSR, Progress Publishers, Moscow, P. 48.
Vladimir Mayakovsky (1894-1930)
fabrics, ploughs, barrows and other commodities manufactured by Russian Workers were supplied to Central Asia.\(^2\)

Thus the capitalist or semi-capitalist system developed in the style that all Russian workers and peasants were concentrated either around factories and industries or stayed on the lands of big landlords. The capitalist and the land owners kept the working people in ignorance. Many nationalities had neither schools nor a written language of their own. The Tsar, capitalist and landowners, thus were afraid that all such oppressed peoples might unite and join the revolutionary struggle which had by 1905 started, if not as a mass movement but as secret-open minority movement. However, they were in search of a mass leader. They found that mass leader in V.I Lenin, who was already heading their struggle and trying to seek alliance with all working people to win the state power. It meant to establish a proletarian dictatorship with the help of en-mass workers and the peasantry. From his young days, he was a serious student of Karl Marx and Engels and took part in demonstrations and protests. The organization emerged and leadership strove to begin active revolutionary work as early and quickly as possible.\(^3\)

In Petersburg in 1893, the leadership made the workers and peasantry to consolidate. It organized several worker group discussions. At their clandestine meetings the workers listened attentively to their

---

\(^2\) *A Short History of the USSR*, Ibid, P.49.

\(^3\) *A Short History of the USSR*, Ibid, P.56.
young leaders, who proved to them that it was necessary to unite all the workers, not only in Petersburg but throughout the country.\textsuperscript{4}

In 1895, different worker's Discussion Groups were merged with groups in Petersburg and finally into a single organization—the League of Struggle for the emancipation of the working classes. The League led strikes, demonstrations and protests against the Tsarist regime. The organization became both political as well as an activist League. The movement or as we call Russian Movement for Freedom, continued to grow. The workers and peasants struggled to emerge as united front against Tsarist Russia. The organization had \textit{Iskra} newspaper published outside Russia, with the help of Progressive Workers of Germany, to propagate their philosophy. In this endeavour the German Progressive Workers equipped the organization with a secret printing press. In 1903, representatives of the revolutionary workers in Russia belonging to different Social Democratic Organizations visited London. There were forty three delegates from the biggest industrial districts of the country. In the conference the birth of Marxist Party was proposed and accepted. The speakers at the congress also proposed that its members should be cemented by iron discipline and having a clear cut programme into which only staunch and active fighters for the emancipation of the working people could be registered.\textsuperscript{5}

The organization as such was established to bring a Socialist Revolution in Russia. It also wanted to overthrow Tsarist regime and capitalism in all forms. The beginning of it was aimed to bring revolution to establish proletarian dictatorship. The leadership pointed

\textsuperscript{4} \textit{A Short History of the USSR}, Ibid.

\textsuperscript{5} \textit{A Short History of the USSR}, Ibid, Pp. 57-58.
out to the workers that without full political power, the working people would not be able to built any new system of their choice. It was pleaded that in their struggle, they shall be prevented from achieving the goals by the remnants of the defeated exploiting classes and Tsarist agents. They decided not to keep even vestiges of power and influence in the new state. In the congress of workers, however it became necessary to elect the party leadership. The majority voted for Lenin and his supporters gave emergence to Bolshevik Party. The same party was afterwards renamed as the Communist Party of USSR.⁶

The same party led the workers and peasants in the struggle for revolution. The workers in other countries already had parties of their own but they did not have such a strong and militant party as the one that Lenin organized in Russia. In 1904, Tsarist Russia began a war against Japan with two pronged strategy. One was aimed, in case of success in war, to suppress the workers inside Russia and secondly the capitalists of the country who were behind the monarch wanted to plunder Korea and their far Eastern countries. Russia was defeated and the position of the workers and peasants became worse and was in fact, the last straw that broke the patience of the working class. The War with Japan had lost many Russian lives and then endless strikes at the factories ensued.⁷

In April 1905, at Lenin’s insistence the Bolshevik convoked the second and third party congress to work out a programme for the leadership of the revolution. The third party congress decision was to

---


⁷ *Early Russia, Historical Sketches*, Ibid.
work out a plan for the leadership of the revolution. It stated that Russian Bourgeoisie was unable to head the revolution successfully because it did not intend to overthrow the Tsar, but only wanted to limit his power. The congress however was confident that once the peasantry and the workers unite they could attain a complete victory of the democratic revolution. Thus the industrial workers had to support the demands of the peasants in full and had to initiate the struggle of the masses for the overthrow of the Tsarist regime in Russia.8

The wave of strikes in the country started during winter and spring in 1905 and a "Soviet of workers deputies" which successfully organized a strike that continued for two months. Since that time onwards, disobedience continued. Lands belonged to landowners were ploughed by the peasants. Properties belonging to landlords were occupied by the workers and the peasantry. Its impact on the workers of the Navy and the soldiers was tremendous. Bolsheviks organized strikes all over Russia. The workers stopped their work in factories and industries. All the people supported the slogan:

"Down with autocracy" and "long live the democratic republic".

At this juncture of the movement, the workers demanded the establishment of an 8 hour working day and other civil rights for the people. During the strike, "The Soviets of the Workers Deputies", asserted itself, which was the demonstration of the first political power of the proletariat.9

---

8 Early Russia, Historical Sketches, Ibid, P.63.
9 Early Russia, Historical Sketches, Ibid.
In response to the strikes Tsar issued a Manifesto for workers, in which the king promised to workers to create an elected legislative body-------the state Duma. Freedom of speech and freedom of assembly were promised. Some government agencies and bourgeoisie sympathizers of Tsar, Mensheviks, were trying to persuade the workers that having wrought concessions from the Tsar, they should stop the demonstrations and strikes. The Bolsheviks, however, propagated against it. On the ground that it was only trickestry. To suppress this overall revolt, the Tsarist state, the emergence of monarchists, unions under the control of police, shopkeepers, civil servants, criminals released from the prison, joined to create a dissension amongst the workers and the peasants. All such agencies were financed by the government. Suppression and killings followed. However, situation changed when Lenin returned to Russia. The workers then gathered en-mass raising the slogan after Karl Marx, “workers unite, you have nothing to loose but your chains”. After the return of Lenin, they were able to seek arms from abroad. Many battle fields between workers, peasants and the government forces took place. One such accident occurred in Presnya district. When the confrontation took place, the women column ahead unfolded the red banner and wanted to meet the forces shouting, “Kill us! You will not take our banner while we are alive”.

These demonstrations continued in the whole of Russia, many comrades were killed and hundreds and thousands wounded. Many uprisings followed and in 1906 the peasants raided the houses of the

10 Early Russia, Historical Sketches, Ibid, p. 66.
landowners and divided their land amongst themselves. However, there was no collective uprising and by 1907 nearly 25000 people were jailed and 2000 revolutionaries were executed by order of the Tsarist courts. The 1905-1907, revolution showed that only the Leninist Bolsheviks were able to organize the battle for freedom. They were by then, always in vanguard of the insurrectionists. Bolsheviks were interested in armed revolution, were as Mensheviks desired to have launched peaceful uprising. In this ideological shift Lenin gave a rejoinder to the Mensheviks by saying:

"On the contrary we should have taken to arms more resolutely, energetically and aggressively, we should have explained to the masses that it was impossible to confine things to a peaceful strike and that a fearless and relentless armed fight was necessary".11

The uprisings of 1905, 1907 and 1910, made the conditions of the labour class and peasantry worst than ever. The mud huts of the workers were deplorable, in which the family members were huddled together. It is believed by the Bolsheviks that the condition of workers was that of the animals and their huts were not fit even for animals.

In Moscow Bolshevik worker Makhail Kalinin set up a club and was later arrested for subversive activities but the programmes of the party were published in the newspaper, Proletary. Leaflets were published and circulated amongst the workers, soldiers and Navy personnel of the Tsarist army. On the eve of May 1, 1908, the Baku Bolsheviks printed 20,000 leaflets in Russian, Azerbaijani and

---

Armenian languages and circulated amongst peasantry and workers. One of the leaflets defined the goal in this message:

"Join the workers and the peasants, help them to take the land from the landowners, help them over throw the bloody autocratic gang and let the people themselves govern their country through the people they elect."\textsuperscript{12}

The movement advanced with more vigour between 1909 AD and 1912, many leading leaders in various parts of Russia were arrested, exiled or released. The struggle continued to advance and flourish more and more people joining the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Lenin. In March 1912, the workers struck work at Lena Gold fields, far away in Siberia and 3000 people marched towards the offices of the Goldfields management. They were suppressed by the Tsarist army leaving 270 dead and 250 wounded. The workers of Petersbourg adopted a protest revolution which read, "we the workers accused not only the Lena executers but the entire police state of taunting the working class". "Let the death of the victims of the tyranny make us organize and strengthen our solidarity", other resolution said.\textsuperscript{13}

In many places strikes, demonstrations and secret or open meetings like Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Lugansk, Samara, Saratov, Riga, Kishinev and other towns made the nights of Tsar go sleepless. This led to bitter repression and the persecution of the peasants and workers. Russia demonstrated everywhere red flags and calls to overthrow the autocracy were heard everywhere. The Bolsheviks paper

\textsuperscript{12} Alexeyev, Kartsov, Troitsky, \textit{A Short History of the USSR}, Progress Publishers, Moscow, P.72.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{A Short History of the USSR}, Ibid, P.74.
Pravda in Russia played a vital role by educating the masses against the autocratic role and providing new guidelines relating to the movement. Between 1910-1914, workers and peasantry further consolidated themselves and struck the work. It was a period which witnessed series of events challenging the Tsar. There was agitation in Army and Navy and other departments of the Tsar government. The movement was turning into a mass rebellion against the rulers. The rebellion of the sapper in Tashkent, the artillery men in Kiev, a mutiny of the sailors of Baltic Fleet, were making hell for Tsars. The summer of 1914, troops and police fired at a meeting of the workers of the Putilov works in Petersburg. A series of demonstrations followed and the government suppressed it ruthlessly. The government concentrated troops and even the editorial office of Pravda was raided and raised to debris.

To counter the movement, according to a Russian historian, world imperialist war broke out on August 1, 1914. The government of Russia thought that the war would save it from the revolution within. Thirty eight states participated in the war known as First World War. Russians call it as first imperialist world war. Why, the answer is given by Russian historian and intellectuals? According to them imperialism starts where small and petty bourgeois class vanish and multinationals take their place. All means of production go in the hands of big bourgeoisie class. Their unions become the undivided owners of all branches of industry and agriculture and turn into monopolies. The monopolists needed in the beginning of 20th century, new sales markets. They began to setup new enterprises in colonial and backward countries, whose labour was very cheap. In their scramble for super
profits they prompted their governments, which had become their obedient tool, to annex these countries. According to Lenin the place of Imperialism in history is the highest stage of capitalism. He writes, “We have seen that in its economic essence imperialism is monopoly capitalism. This in itself determines its place in history, for monopoly that grows out of the soil of free competition and precisely out of free competition is the transition from the capitalist system to a higher socio-economic order. We must take special note of the four principal types of monopoly capitalism, which are characteristic of the epoch we are examining.”

This, according to Bolsheviks was the reason behind war. The British and French imperialists dominated Africa and Asia. Tsarist Russia was also a vast colonial empire which oppressed the peoples of Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Volga basin and other lands in its borders. Besides, the Russian imperialists wanted to take over Turkey-controlled straits leading from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. According to Russian communist ideologues Germany had out stripped Britain and other European powers in industrial development but had few colonies. These ideologues believed that the first world war was a clash between imperialist predators for a redivision of the already divided world. The another reason for the First World War, according to the ideologues of the revolution, was that the imperialists wanted to suppress the revolutionary uprisings wherever, they occurred. The

---

imperialists, according to them hoped that it will set different workers 
of different countries to fight against each other. That was the reason 
that bourgeois parties of all countries called upon the people to support 
the war. In this war, Mensheviks in Russia helped the Russian 
capitalists. Their slogan was that the war aims at the ‘defense of the 
fatherland’.

The risings in Russia since 1905 against Tsarist regime, reached 
its logical conclusions when the working people of Petrograd workers, 
peasants and oppressed people throughout the country rose against the 
Tsarist power. The soldiers also moved in sympathy with the workers. 
Marx’s dictum that workers unite, they have nothing to loose except 
chains, was coming true. The soviets began to emerge throughout the 
state in solidarity. The peasants, workers and soldiers deputies 
consolidated. A firm alliance in the struggle against Tsarism was 
forming between workers and the peasants. It was great concern for the 
rulers. The foundations of monarchy was shaking and it was no longer 
possible to preserve the monarchy. The representatives of the Russian 
bourgeois persuaded Nicholas—II to abdicate and he did by granting 
powers to a provisional government. The Tsarist power, which had 
oppressed Russia’s working people for centuries, collapsed under 
pressure from industrial workers, peasants and soldiers. The provisional 
government was assisted by all reactionary forces against working class 
movement. Mensheviks sided with the government. They pleaded in 
favour of the provisional government by proclaiming that the Tsars 
monarchy has ended once for all. The government had resolved to 
settle all problems of workers and peasants. However, months passed 
factories still belonged to the capitalist, the exploitation of land-owners
and kulaks continued as before. Dissatisfaction was growing among the people. The Bolsheviks were, at the same time released and they returned from the jails and exiles. They continued to educate people that the movement has been high jacked. Lenin told the workers that “the overthrow of Tsarism was only the first step. The warning was advanced to the working people not to trust the provisional government and to prepare for the final struggle.”

After the overthrow of the monarchy duel power structure developed in Russia. Firstly, it was owned by Mensheviks and the bourgeois elite and later, the February revolution showed itself in the form of the soviets. This revolution had created organs of the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry relying on the armed masses. Lenin returned to Petrograd late at night on 16\textsuperscript{th} April 1917. He set forth the basic proposition of his programme which has gone down in history as the April theses. “No support for the Provisional Government Servant, all power to the Soviets!”

The April theses was discussed at different levels, in detail by the 7\textsuperscript{th} All Russia (April) Conference of the Bolsheviks. The Soviets and its leadership under the leadership of Lenin addressed its concerns about bourgeois take over. Meetings is Moscow and elsewhere adopted resolutions demanding immediate measures to put an end to the war. The provisional government attempted to revive them in order to develop ‘Revolutionary defencism’ into counter-revolutionary chauvinism and relying on the later, to do away with the revolution”.

---

17 Schmidst, Tarnovsky, Berkhin, A Short History of USSR, Progress Publishers, Moscow, P. 129.
18 A Short History of USSR, Ibid, P.130.
This technique led to the fall of the provisional government. The day when May Day celebrations were held, the foreign minister of the Provisional Government committed a tactical mistake by sending a telegram to the Russian ambassadors abroad that Russia would remain true to the obligations assured by Tsarist regime. Lenin could see that Russia was at the brim of civil war. Under the circumstance Lenin wrote,

“It became perfectly obvious to everybody that the government could not retain power. The soviets could (and should) have taken power without meeting the least resistance from any quarter.”

The series of meetings of the Soviets and demonstrations thereafter took place immediately. One such first All Russian Congress of soviet of workers and soldiers deputies assembled on June 16, 1917. A joint conference of members of the central and Petrograd committees of the Bolshevik Party with members of the factory committees, trade unions and military units approved staging a peaceful demonstration in the days. The slogans were: “All power to the soviets”, immediate peace and down with the ten capitalist ministers in the Provisional Government. Such appeal and slogans were published in ‘Pravda’.

The new upsurge began in autumn 1917. The bourgeoise congress tried and aimed to establish a military dictatorship in the country. The troops were moved from the front against the Petrograd on September 7 (August 25). All the consolidating measures taken by the provisional government failed. However, the workers rose in defense of Proletarian revolution. Red guard units were found at factories and were supported by units of the capital’s garrisons. The

---

19 A Short History of USSR, Ibid, P.131.
Bolsheviks headed the revolutionary masses. The Bolsheviks consolidated their position and demanded peace, land to the workers and control over production. The Bolshevization of the soviets began. Though Lenin asked Mensheviks and SR leaders to shun bourgeois leadership and join them, yet the endeavours failed. The war between the Provisional government and the Bolsheviks continued and at times the former were successful and later failed. In early October 1917, Lenin illegally returned to Petrograd and took into his hands all matters pertaining to the direct preparation of the armed insurrection in the capital.\(^{20}\)

Finally, resolution on the report of Lenin had final decision to launch an armed revolution was adopted. A council of the prominent members of a central committee was formed which included Stalin also.\(^{21}\) Thus Lenin instructed the members of the central committee of the Bolshevik Party when the immediate preparations for the insurrection began:

"To be successful, insurrection must rely not upon conspiracy and not upon a party, but upon the advanced class. That is the first point. Instruction must rely upon a revolutionary upsurge of the people. That is the second point. Insurrection must rely upon that turning point in the history of the growing revolution. When the activity of the advanced ranks of the people is at its height, and when the vacillation in the ranks of the enemy and in the ranks of the weak, half-hearted and

---

\(^{21}\) Andre Buhnov, Yakov Sweerdlov, Moisei Uritsky, Joseph Stalin and Felix Dzerzhinsky.
irresolute friends of the revolution are strongest. That is the third point”.  

The insurrection was conducted under the Lenin’s direct leadership in Petrograd. The revolutionary agencies had three principal military forces at its disposal. Units of Red Guards (armed workers) enveloped centre from the north, east and south. The second unit was formed by Petrograd garrison, which was inner semi-circle. The ships of the Baltic fleet were to enter the mouth of the Neva River from the west, at the first order from the military revolutionary committee. “It was decided that to encircle and cut off Petrograd; to seize it by a combined attack of the sailors, the workers and the troops—a task which requires art and triple audacity”. That task was carried through in the triumphant days of November 6 and 7 (Oct 24 and 25 old style), 1917.

After the victory of the Socialist Revolution in Russia, Lenin addressed to all workers, soldiers and the peasants in the following words:

“Backed by the will of the vast majority of the workers, soldiers and peasants, backed by the victorious uprising of the workers and the garrison, which has taken place in Petrograd, the congress takes power into its own hands....The congress decrees: all power in the localities shall pass to the soviets of workers, soldiers and peasants deputies which must guarantee to genuine revolutionary order”.

It is in the context of this upsurge that one would assert that our poet V. Mayakovsky was the product of this revolution. He was

---

Russian, born on 7th July 1894 (or 93). The date of the birth of the poet was disputed because the mother’s opinion and his father’s service records were at variance. His birth place was village Bagdady, Kitaisskaya Gubernia, Georgia.25 The poet would call himself as bad student at examination but had artistic talent. At the same the poet says that he enjoyed learning to read.

His association with the revolution and his activism, he calls illegal activities. He recalls the event when his sister arrived from Moscow in ruptures. He received secretly from his sister long pieces of paper. Though he liked them but he thought that his sister had taken risk because it was literature regarding Bolsheviks party and its movement. He remembers that it carried the call for joining the movement. It read:

“Come, Comrade, awake; come, brother, awake. Make haste now and throw down your rifle. and something else with the ending ... --or otherwise-- to the Germans with son, and wife, and Mama— (meaning the Tsar)” 26

According to Mayakovsky it was revolution that determined verse and goal of his life. He confesses that the revolution and the verse came together in his head. Thus he thought verse itself shall bring revolution if that verse is based on Socialist-realism. Consequently


26 V. Mayakovsky, Selected Verse, Ibid, Translated by Alex Miller, P.32.
Mayakovsky wrote a new type of poetry. It encompassed political and social reality that was unknown thematically before the poet. His lyric verse, therefore, has contents like history, politics, love and private life—all features not as a remote background, but as the main object of poetic depiction; the main theme of poetic meditation.\(^{27}\)

The poet soon started to think that revolution is more important than his studies. He asks us not to mind his lack of interest in his studies and securing low marks. For his slow progress in education, he attributes it to a bash by a stone. For the poet, however, the revolution entered in his mind when his friend Isidor once in joy jumped on to the stove barefoot—general Alikhanov had been assassinated. He was a pacifier from his native land Georgia. In memory of the death, demonstrations and meetings began. Our poet also participated in these demonstrations and he felt joy in it. He asserts that, “I saw it in terms of painting monarchists in black, socialist revolutionary in red, social-democrats in dark-blue and the federalists in other colours”.\(^{28}\)

So was our poet involved as a revolutionary activist. He spoke and he wrote and learned to know. He had to learn unfamiliar concepts and words but he learnt, what he had not till he turned revolutionary. He got up at six in the morning and read voraciously. He was for the rest of his life by the socialist ability to disentangle facts and systematize the world. He read only what was recommended to be read by comrades or communists. He could not understand the intricacies of Marxian economics, but he had capacity to question and know. He was


introduced to a Marxist circle. He learnt the programme of the German socialist party or Erfurft programme, adopted in 1891, which was read in Russian revolutionary circles. He considered himself a ‘social democrat’ and attended the social democratic committee along with the rifle of his father. His symbolic hero was Lassalle. He was young and he confused him as the Demosthenes.\(^{29}\)

Mayakovsky, had hardly entered teen age when Bauman was assassinated in Moscow in 1905. He was a leading member of the revolutionary movement and our poet got frightened while participating a demonstration in memory of the revolutionary Bauman. He was struck after a fall by a drum on the head. He was so much afraid that he thought he had cracked. During the same year he lost his father. His father’s death was caused by a prick in his finger which had poisoned his body. After the burial of his father, his prosperity came to an end. He was so panicky for his livelihood that he had to sell even tables and chairs of his domestic use. Then the family moved to Moscow, where they had not even any acquaintance. In Moscow, they rented a small flat on \textit{Brovnaya street}.\(^{30}\)

In Moscow, the poet and his two sisters were attending school with all difficulties. They had little food, the pension was ten rubles a month. Their mother had to let rooms with dinner. According to his own confession, the rooms were rubbish and they lived poorly. He recalls that amongst socialists, “I remember the first Bolshevik I met in the flesh, Vasya Kandelaki.”

\(^{29}\) Mayakovsky V, \textit{Selected Verse}, Ibid.

\(^{30}\) Mayakovsky V, \textit{Selected Verse}, Ibid.
Mayakovsky: Verse is Revolution

In Moscow, the poet and his family lived a poor life. Sometimes, Mayakovsky had to do poker work and other time he had to paint. He continued to be next to bottom marks at the school. He was more interested to read Anti-Duhring and the preface to the Critique of Political Economy written by Karl Marx. He was also attracted by “a dark-blue two tactics” by Lenin, which talked about social democracy in the democratic revolution. The rigorous reading habits made our poet to write first semi or half poems. The secondary school No: 03 was putting out the illegal magazine Porye (Impetus) as he would assert which provoked our poet to write. He started creating verse at very early age and wrote immature poems, which he later tore out.

According to his autobiography, he joined the Russian social-democratic workers party (Bolsheviks) in 1908, when he was only fourteen years of age. He took an examination in the trade and industrial sub-district and passed. He turned to be a propagandist. He first joined the community of bakers, later took the trade of cobblers and finally found a way to the printing press workers. He was elected to the Moscow committee at an all-city conference, which was also representing the leaders like Lomov, Povalzhets, Smidovich and others. He was given the name, “Comrade Konstantin”. Thus he turned to be a revolutionary and political activist at a very early age.\textsuperscript{31}

On 29\textsuperscript{th} March 1908, he was arrested in an ambush. He had in his possession a notepad, with addresses and the names of his comrades. He was subjected to rigorous interrogation but was released on probation. During his arrest he read a novel Sanin, which was hit and

\textsuperscript{31}Mayakovsky V, Selected Verse, Ibid, P.35.
was found at every police station. He continued to work for his party for a year or so when he was arrested again. He was detained second time on 18th January 1909 and held in custody for over a month. He was arrested along with his revolver and it was snatched from him. Makhmudbekov, who had been a friend of his father, was then assistant to the jailor, who testified that the revolver belonged to him and consequently he was released. He was imprisoned many times and released. Thus the verse and the revolution turned to be his passion.\textsuperscript{32}

A most important time for the poet, after three years of theory and practice, imprisonment and freedom, was when he fell in love with belles-lettres. After imprisonment he read all the latest literature—the symbolists, Bely and Belmont. The formal novelty intrigued him. He felt it all alien to him. He understood that the themes and imagery in the poetry or his language had no relevance to his life. Consequential upon it, Mayakovsky tried to write or compose as his predecessors had attempted but he wanted something different. To him it turned out to be difficult for him. It came out stilted and maudlin for him. He wrote something like:

\begin{quote}
In purple and gold the forests were dressed,
the church domes were bright in the sun's dancing rays.
I waited in months were the days being lost,
hundreds of wearisome days.
\end{quote}

He wrote, in the jail, enough of such poetry in a notebook but the staff took it off when he was released from the confinement, possibly the jailor thought that the poet might publish it. During his confinement, Mayakovsky started reading his contemporaries and

\textsuperscript{32} Mayakovsky V, Selected Verse, Ibid.
swooped even classics, like Byron, Shakespeare and Tolstoy. His last study was Anna Karenina. Our poet could not finish the last book but left it half-read. He was discharged from the prison without finishing Anna Karenina and the poet himself declares,

“I still don’t know how it ended with the Karenins”\(^{33}\)

In the prison, his third term, he was charged on account of the affair of the clandestine printing press but released being too young, leaving the responsibility of his good behaviour to his parents.

The poet after the release from his third term in jail was confused and had a dilemma. He thought that he had studied and read men of letters in jail who, according to him were so-called great ones. He had, both as member of the Bolshevik party and experiences of poverty and imprisonments, developed a right attitude to the world. However, he thought himself to be untrained. He had been struck off from Grammar School. “If he were to continue as a political activist, he had to go underground”, he thought. He assessed that in the event of political activism he will learn nothing. He did not like that Marxian method, which he cherished to adopt, should fall in the hands of a child because he was inexperienced. He believed that it was easy to use Marxian method, if he would draw lessons from his own cultural heritage. He had many party members, who had been to university and he was subjected to frustrations. He thought that revolution demands serious schooling. He talked to his party comrade Medvedev, if he could produce ‘socialist art’. His comrade laughed out the idea. There was a reaction in the poet against the laugh and Mayakovsky remarks: “I

\(^{33}\) Mayakovsky V, Selected Verse, Ibid, P.36.
nevertheless thought that he had underestimated my guts, I gave up party work and sat down to my studies".34

So he had vigorous study for one year to know how he could learn to draw the human heads. He entered the school of painting, sculpture and architecture. He had easy access to the courses and he worked laboriously and honestly. His experience was amazing because in such school imitators were encouraged and independents were hounded out. The artists like Larionov and Mashkov were hounded out. While he was in the college of artists, Russian futurism was born. He conceived it because futurism as a trend had emerged in his country. Mayakovsky could visualize it in the organization known as the cubo-futurists. He started appearing in public with the futurists and publishing his verse in their publications. He thus saw it as a movement and a force struggling with mores and art of the bourgeois society and regarded it as innovative. In fact, futurism as an artistic trend reflected the general crisis of bourgeois culture. Although Mayakovsky was associated with futurism, his poetry, with its tragic interpretation of life, its growing social protest and its humanist message, was fundamentally different from that being written by the futurists.35

The poet had reached intellectual ecstasy that he could compose poetry. It was message of the socialist who knew that the collapse of the old world was inevitable. When he composed, he would not expose himself. When he declared that the verses he had composed, belonged to his friend, David retorted, looking up and down, "but you wrote that

34 Mayakovsky V, Selected Verse, Ibid.
35 Mayakovsky V, Selected Verse, Ibid, P.270 (Notes).
Mayakovsky: Verse is Revolution

yourself. Why, you are a poetic genius?” This remark fascinated Mayakovsky. He then confessed, “that evening quite unexpectedly, I became a poet”. This made him to write every day. His verse became the slogan of futurists. His first poem opened with the words, “The white and the crimson.” He thinks of David with undying love. He says that he was his wonderful friend and his real teacher. His assertion is that Burlyuk made him a poet. He read French and German to Mayakovsky. He brought books for him and walked and talked with him without end. Our poet admits that his friend Burlyuk was in love with him and never let him be out of his sight. He gave 50 kopecks a day to the poet so that he could write without starvation. \(^{36}\)

At this juncture of the revolution, Mayakovsky, Burlyuk and others met several nights and gave birth to a joint manifesto. David put it together and copied it out and together they gave it a name and so brought it out, “A slap in the face of the public taste”.

Mayakovsky, had intellectually grown up, in poetry he was being recognized. He was an activist both in verse and revolution because his verse was revolution. David and other poets delivered impassioned speeches so was Mayakovsky to thunder. The newspapers were full of their speeches and poetry. Their tone was not polite but emotional. He was, as poet, given abuses for being aggressive. He was poor and had no money and did not enjoy suits. He had hardly two blouses of ghastly appearance. He believed that the most noticeable and beautiful thing about a man is his tie. He, once took a piece of yellow ribbon from his sister. He tied it round his neck and created sensation. However, in the

college they created a havoc—students revolution through art and poetry. The staff of the college bristled and demanded that they stop the criticism and agitation. The students refused and the council of 'artists' expelled them from the college. The dress and the poetry turned to be revolutionary.\textsuperscript{37}

Expulsion from the college was followed by tours, recitals and lectures. Our poet then was a rebel, a revolution and the verse. In Nikolayev, the provincial governor went on the alert and demanded that the poet and his associates should not mention high-ups and Pushkin. Their lectures disturbed the police but the poet was gradually improving his creativity and consciousness for revolution. The publishers did not publish their works or the works of the futurists. The capitalists disdained them. They would not buy a single line from the poet. He had to return to Moscow and live on the boulevards. The period was tragic for our poet, he was humiliated taunted and teased but he did not submit to frustration that surrounded him. He had inspired skill, and he had mastered over theme. He set himself the problem of the theme and that too a revolutionary one. He composed and wrote, \textit{Cloud in pants}.\textsuperscript{38}

By the time our poet was facing all kind of hardship, the first world war broke. The poet was excited. He wrote another poem, "War's declared". The first battle, the horror of war in all stations, disgusted the poet. He tried to join it as a volunteer because he wanted to see it with his own eyes but he was not reliable and colonel Model

\textsuperscript{37} Mayakovskiy V, Selected Verse, Ibid, P.38.

\textsuperscript{38} Mayakovskiy V, Selected Verse, Ibid.
rejected him. The poet, the revolutionary verse had revulsion and hatred for war. He stopped composing poetry and lost interest in art. At the same time he earned some money and left for Finland and Kuokk. While in Kukkala, he wrote the poem ‘cloud’. The poet asserts that he had become aware of the fact that the approach of revolution was certain and strong. He writes, “went to Mustumyaki. M. Gor’ky. Read him part of cloud. The deeply moved Gor’ky wept over my waistcoat. I was almost proud. It soon emerged that Gorky sobs on every poetic waistcoat. I keep the waistcoat as a momento nevertheless, I might let it go to someone for a provincial museum”.39

In October, 1915, Mayakovsky, was called by the state agency for army service and was posted to the military automobile school in Petrograd. He in the school finds Brik, who is delightful to read his verse and buys all the verses at 50 kopecks a line. The buyer prints his two poems, one The backbone Flute and the Cloud. However, censor board dots many lines not to publish. He writes, “Since then, a hatred for dotted lines. And camas too”.40

The plight of our poet during First World War was deplorable. It was ghastly time for the poet. He was drawing the portraits (taking) of his officers. His mind was preoccupied with war and peace but he had human in his heart. He was verse in himself but his verse was revolution. Ultimately his revolution and verse stood for humanist attitude and goal. Soon war ended and peace was restored and perfected. A little later, he composed the poem Man. Its verses were

39 Mayakovsky V, Selected Verse, Ibid.
40 Mayakovsky V, Selected Verse, Ibid.
partly published in the chronicle named *Letopis* but never shown in the barracks of the army.

On February 26, 1917, the poet went with cars to the *Duma*. He entered into the office of Rodzyanko’s office, where Milynkov was present, who spoke with hicups or hicoughs and the poet was fed up and left after an hour. He was predicting that the Bolsheviks will take over soon. Accordingly, he looked with disdain at the establishment of a reactionary political course or provincial government, which was in command till then. He asserts, “It is clear to me that the socialists must inevitably come after this. During the first days of (October) revolution, I write revolution (A poets chronicle). I read lectures—‘The Bolsheviks of art’. ”41

Thus, the great socialist revolution, in Oct 1917, put an end to the state of Imperialism. The population of one-sixth of the world launched out the ideas and schemes for building up of socialism. The October revolution inspired the workers and peasants, as the Russian ideologues accept, with confidence. It showed the poet Mayakovsky way to victory and the building of a free and happy life. The verse of the poet was revolution and when the revolution is complete what next? To the poet it is socialism. So, in the poem ‘fine’ he speaks about the fusion of his own destiny with the destinies of the revolution, the country, the heroic process of creating a new life:

This is time

humming taut

a telegraph wire,

My heart

alone
with the truth whole and sole.

This happened-
with fighters,
with the country entire,
in the depth
of my own soul.\footnote{Mayakovsky V, Selected Verse, Ibid, P.09.}

Thus Mayakovsky and his verse is revolution and in depth
his soul.