The Bolsheviks and Workers Control

The Bolsheviks and Workers Control is a remarkable pamphlet by Maurice Brinton exposing the struggle that took place over the running of workplaces in the immediate aftermath of the Russian Revolution. In doing so, not only does it demolish the romantic Leninist ‘history’ of the relationship between the working class and their party during these years (1917 - 21) but it also provides a backbone to understanding why the Russian revolution failed the way it did. From this understanding flows alternative possibilities of revolutionary organisation and some 32 years after the original was written this is perhaps its greatest contribution today. For this reason alone this text deserves the greatest possible circulation today and we encourage you to circulate it as widely as possible.

The Russian Revolution in its entirety from 1905 to 1917 continues to be one of the great periods of history for the struggle for freedom by the working class against the capitalist class. Now that Leninism is finally dying it is up to anarchists and other libertarian communists to rescue the positive and negative lessons of that great revolution from the distortions of the left and the right. This book is a vital contribution to writing the real history of the revolution.
This pamphlet has two aims. It seeks to contribute new factual material to the current discussion on ‘workers’ control’. And it attempts a new kind of analysis of the fate of the Russian Revolution. The two objectives, as will be shown, are inter-related.

Workers’ Control / ‘Workers’ control’ is again being talked about. Nationalisation (whether of the Western or Eastern variety) and the rule of the ‘Party of the working class’ (whether of the Eastern or Western variety) have manifestly failed. They have not satisfied the hopes and expectations of ordinary people - or given them any real say in determining the conditions under which they live. This has created new interest in the subject of ‘workers’ control’ and in ideas that, in a different context, were common currency at the beginning of the century.

Today people as different as Young Liberals and Labour ‘lefts’, tired trade union officials and ‘Trotskyists’ of one kind or another - not to mention anarcho-syndicalists and ‘libertarian Marxists’ - all talk about ‘workers’ control’. This suggests one of two things. Either these people have common objectives - which seems unlikely - or the words serve to mask as much as they convey. We hope to dispel some of the confusion by recalling how, at a critical stage of history, the advocates of different conceptions of ‘workers’ control’ confronted one another and by showing who won, why they won, and what the consequences were to be.

This return to the historical roots of the controversy is not motivated by an addiction to archivism or by a partiality for the esoteric. The revolutionary movement in Britain - unlike that in several European countries - has never been much concerned with theory, preferring on the whole an empirical, ‘suck-it-and-see’ kind of approach. This may at times have helped it avoid becoming bogged down in the swamps of metaphysical speculation but the overhead costs - in terms of clarity and consistency, have been heavy. Without a clear understanding of objectives and of the forces (including ideological forces) impeding advance - in short without a sense of history - the revolutionary struggle tends to become ‘all movement and no direction’. Without clear perspectives, revolutionaries tend to fall into traps - or be diverted into blind alleys - which, with a little knowledge of their own past, they could easily have avoided.

The confusion about workers’ control (at least in Britain) is partly terminological. In the British movement (and to a lesser extent in the English language) a clear-cut distinction is seldom made between ‘control’ and ‘management’, functions that may occasionally overlap but are usually quite distinct. In French, Spanish or Russian political literature two separate terms (‘contrôle’ and ‘gestion’, ‘control’ and ‘gerencia’, ‘kontrolia’ and ‘upravleniye’) refer respectively to partial or total domination of the producers over the productive process. A moment’s reflection will make it obvious why one must make this distinction.

Two possible situations come to mind. In one the working class (the collective producer) takes all the fundamental decisions. It does so directly, through organisms of its own choice with which it identifies itself completely or which it feels it can totally dominate (Factory Committees, Workers’ Councils, etc.). These bodies, composed of elected and revocable delegates probably federate on a regional and national basis. They decide (allowing the maximum possible autonomy for local units) what to produce, how to produce it, at what cost to produce it, at whose cost to produce it. The other possible situation is one in which these fundamental decisions are taken elsewhere; ‘from the outside’, i.e. by the State, by the Party, or by some other organism without deep and direct roots in the productive process itself. The ‘separation of the producers from the means of production’ (the basis of all class society) is maintained. The oppressive effects of this type of arrangement soon manifest themselves. This happens whatever the revolutionary good intentions of the agency in question, and whatever provisions it may (or may not) make for policy decisions to be submitted from time to time for ratification.
There are words to describe these two states of affairs. To manage is to initiate the decisions oneself, as a sovereign person or collectively, in full knowledge of all the relevant facts. To control is to supervise, inspect or check decisions initiated by others. 'Control' implies a limitation of sovereignty or, at best, a state of duality of power, wherein some people determine the objectives while others see that the appropriate means are used to achieve them. Historically, controversies about workers control have tended to break out precisely in such conditions of economic dual power.

Like all forms of dual power, economic dual power is essentially unstable. It will evolve into a consolidation of bureaucratic power (with the working class exercising less and less of the control). Or it will evolve into workers' management, with the working class taking over all managerial functions. Since 1961, when 'Solidarity' started advocating workers' management of production others have begun to call for 'workers' direct control', 'workers' full control', etc. - so many tacit admissions of the inadequacy (or at least ambiguity) of previous formulations.

It would be a shortsighted view to see in all this a question of linguistic purism, a terminological or doctrinal quibble. We have to pay a ransom to both the past and the present. We have not appeared on the political scene from nowhere. We are part of a revolutionary libertarian tradition for whom these concepts had deep significance. And we are not living in a political vacuum. We are living in a specific historical context, in which a constant struggle is taking place. In this struggle the conflicting interests of different social strata (bourgeoisie, bureaucracy and proletariat) are expressed in different types of demands, more or less clearly formulated. Different ideas about control and management figure prominently in these controversies. Unlike Humpty Dumpty we cannot make words mean exactly what we choose.

The revolutionary movement itself moreover is one of the forces on this social arena. Whether we like it or not - and whether it fully appreciates it or not - most of the revolutionary movement is impregnated with the ethos, traditions and organisational conceptions of Bolshevism. And in the history of the Russian Revolution - particularly between 1917 and 1921 - the issue of 'workers' control' versus 'workers' management' loomed large. 'From 1917 to 1921 the issue of industrial administration was the most sensitive indicator of the clash of principles about the shaping of the new social order... It was the most continuous and provocative focus of actual conflict between the communist factions'. (1) And, it should be stressed, between the Bolsheviks and other tendencies in the revolutionary movement. Thousands of revolutionaries were to be killed and hundreds of thousands incarcerated, fighting it out.

Most of those now entering the revolutionary movement will be unfamiliar with these controversies. A virtue should not however be made of this state of affairs. Clarification is essential, but here new problems arise. The methodological poverty, a-historicism (at times even anti-intellectualism) among so many of those revolutionaries who do have some knowledge as to what actually happened is a first tragic obstacle. And it is one of the ironies of the present situation that those others (the residual legates of Bolshevism) who talk loudest about the 'need for theory' and the 'need to study history' should be those with the most to hide (should their own historical antecedents really be unearthed) and with the most to lose (should a coherent alternative emerge to challenge their ossified beliefs).

Some of the confusion about 'workers' control' is neither terminological nor due to ignorance concerning past controversies. It is deliberate. Today, for instance, one finds some hardened, old-time Leninists or Trotskyists (in the Socialist Labour League, International Marxist Group or in the 'leadership' of International Socialism for instance) advocating 'workers' control' without batting an eyelid. Seeking to capitalise on the confusion now rampant in the movement, these people talk of 'workers' control' as if a) they meant by these words what the politically unsophisticated might think they mean (i.e. that working people should themselves decide about the fundamental matters relating to production) and b) as if they - and the Leninist
doctrine to which they claim to adhere - had always supported demands of this kind, or as if
Leninism had always seen in workers' control the universally valid foundation of a new social
order, rather than just a slogan to be used for manipulatory purposes in specific and very limit-
ed historical contexts.  (2)

The question of self-management is not esoteric.  Its discussion - in the sharpest possible
terms - is not sectarian.  Self-management is what the revolution of our time is all about.  This
in itself would justify a pamphlet such as the present one.  A study of this period (Russia, 1917-
1921) has, however, deeper implications.  It could provide the basis for a new kind of analysis
of the fate of the Russian Revolution, a task to which we will now briefly turn.

The Russian Revolution

To propose a new way of looking at what happened in Russia in 1917 (and after) is syn-
thonymous with an invitation to be misunderstood.  If moreover the questions asked and the
methodology suggested happen to differ from those in current use the proposal almost
becomes a guarantee.  As we have had occasion to mention before misrepresentation is a way
of life on the traditional left, for whom nothing is quite as painful as a new idea.

Over the last 50 years all the existing organisations of the left have elaborated a whole
mythology (and even a whole anti-mythology) about the Russian Revolution.  The parlia-
mentary fetishists of Social-Democracy see 'the failure of Bolshevism' in its ' antidemocratic prac-
tices'.  The original sin, for them, was the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly.  The self-
styled 'communist' movement (Stalinists, Trotskyists, Maoists, etc.) talks with filial pride of the
'glorious, socialist, October Revolution'.  They seek to vaunt and popularise its original achieve-
ments while differing in their appreciations of what happened subsequently when it happened,
why it happened and to whom it happened.  For various anarchists the fact that the State or 'police'
were not immediately 'abolished' is the ultimate proof and yardstick that noth-
ing of fundamental significance really occurred.  (3) The SPGB draw much the same conclu-
sion, although they attribute it to the fact that the wages system was not abolished, the major-
ity of the Russian population not having had the benefit of hearing the SPGB viewpoint (as put
by spokesmen duly sanctioned by their Executive Committee) and not having then sought to
win a Parliamentary majority in the existing Russian institutions.

On all sides people seek to use the Russian Revolution with a view to integrating it into their
own propaganda - only retaining of it those aspects that happen to conform with their own par-
ticular analysis of history, or their own particular prescriptions for the present.  What ever was
new, whatever seemed to contradict established theories or break out of established catego-
rries, has been systematically 'forgotten', minimised, distorted, denied.

Any attempt to re-evaluate the crucial experience of 1917-1921 is bound to evoke opposi-
tion.  The first to react will be the 'apparatchiks' who for years have been protecting 'revolu-
tionary' organisations (and 'revolutionary' ideology) from the dual threats of subversion and
renewal.  Opposition will also be found however in the minds of many honest militants, seek-
ing the road to genuinely revolutionary politics.  One isn't dealing here with a simple psycho-
logical resistance but with a much deeper phenomenon that cannot be explained away by ref-
erence to the reaction role and influence of various 'leaderships'.  If the average militant has
difficulty in understanding the full significance of some of the problems raised in the early
stages of the Russian Revolution it is because these problems are amongst the most important
and difficult (if not the most important and difficult) ever to have confronted the working class.
The working class made a revolution that went beyond a mere change in the political person-
nel at the top.  It was able to expropriate the former owners of the means of production (there-
by profoundly altering the existing property relations).  But to what extent was it able to go
beyond even this?  To what extent was it able - or prepared - to revolutionise the relations of

Footnotes

(2) ibid., p. 779, Appendix 6.
(3) ibid.
(4) A. Kollontai. Tenth Party Congress, p. 103.
(6) ibid, p. 57.
(7) ibid, p. 79.
(8) The full text is available as Solidarity Pamphlet No 7, price 3/6, post free.
(9) See for instance K. Shelavin's Rabochaya oppozitsiya (The Workers Opposition), Moscow 1930
(10) R. V. Daniels, op. cit., p.127
(12) Pravda, January 27, 1921
(13) Quoted in A.S. Pukhov ‘Kronshtadtski myatezh v 1921 g.’ (The Kronstadt revolt of 1921), Leningrad 1931, p. 52.  Ida Mett's pamphlet on ‘The Kronstadt Commune' (Available from Zabalaza Books) gives a good idea of the 'disaffection' rampant in Petrograd at the time.
(14) For useful documentation, see Solidarity Pamphlet No. 27 ‘The Kronstadt Commune', by Ida Mett and Kronstadt 1921 by Victor Serge (9d. post free).
(15) Ivestiya vremenogo revolyutsionnogo komiteta (News of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee), March 10, 1921.
(16) ibid., March 12, 1921.
(17) R.V. Daniels, op. cit., p. 145-6
(18) News of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee March 9.
(19) Tenth Party Congress. ‘O sindikalistskom i anarkhistskom uklone v nashei partii’ (On the syndicalist and anarchist deviation in our party). Resolutions I, 530.
(20) ibid., pp. 382-383.
(21) ibid., p. 258.
(22) Trotsky. Letter to friends in the USSR, 1930. (Trotsky Archive T 3279).
(23) Tenth Party Congress (Ignator Theses).
(25) Tenth Party Congress Resolutions 1, 531
(27) ibid., p. 46.
(28) No footnote 28 in original!!
(29) Radek. ibid., p. 540.
(30) ibid., p. 93.
(31) ibid., p. 140.
(32) ibid., Resolution on Party organisation proposed by the Workers Opposition. p. 663
(33) Yaroslavskiy, ibid., reporting statements by V. K. Mironov.
(34) ibid., p. 828, n.l.
(35) R. V, Daniels, op. cit., p.156.
(36) L. Schapiro. op. cit., p. 308.
(37) Tenth Party Congress Resolutions, pp. 522-526.
(38) R. V. Daniels, op. cit., p. 151-152.
been the immediate judgement of history throughout the ages. This is why so little was heard about those revolutionaries who didn't wait till 1923 but who as early as 1918 saw the direction in which Russian society was moving and proclaimed their opposition, often at the cost of their lives. They, and their very memory, were to be obliterated in the great bureaucratic upsurge of the ensuing decades, euphemistically described as the 'building of socialism'. It is only in recent years, when the fruits of the 'victorious' revolution began to be reaped (in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere) that widespread doubts have emerged and real questions at last been asked. It is only now that serious work is being devoted to the real nature of the rot (the Bolshevik attitude to the relations of production) and attention redirected to the prophetic warnings of the 'vanquished'. An enormous amount of valuable material relating to those formative years still remains to be restored to the revolutionary movement, to whom it rightly belongs.

Fifty years after the Russian Revolution we can see in sharper focus some of the problems that were being so heatedly discussed between 1917 and 1921. The libertarian revolutionaries of 1917 went as far as they could. But today we can speak from real experience. Hungary 1956 and France 1968 have highlighted the problems of modern bureaucratic capitalist societies and shown the nature of the revolutionary oppositions they engender, in both Eastern and Western contexts. The irrelevant and the contingent have been swept aside. The key questions of our epoch are now increasingly seen as man's domination over his environment and over the institutions he creates to solve the tasks that face him. Will man remain in control of his creations or will they dominate him? In these questions are embedded the even more fundamental ones of man's own 'false-consciousness', of his demystification in relation to the 'complexities' of management, of restoring to him his own self-confidence, of his ability to resist control over delegated authority, and of his re-appropriation of everything that capitalism has taken from him. Also implicit in this question is how to release the tremendous creative potential within every one of us and harness it to ends which we ourselves have chosen.

In the struggle for these objectives Bolshevism will eventually be seen to have been a monstrous aberration, the last garb donned by a bourgeois ideology as it was being subverted at the roots. Bolshevism's emphasis on the incapacity of the masses to achieve a socialist conscious-ness through their own experience of life under capitalism, its prescription of a hierarchically structured 'vanguard party' and of 'centralisation to fight the centralised state power of the bourgeoisie', its proclamation of the 'historical birthright' of those who have accepted a particular vision of society (and of its future) and the decreed right to dictate this vision to others - if necessary at the point of a gun - all these will be recognised for what they are: the last attempt of bourgeois society to reassert its ordained division into leaders and led, and to maintain authoritarian social relations in all aspects of human life.

To be meaningful, the revolution to come will have to be profoundly libertarian. It will be based on a real assimilation of the whole Russian experience. It will refuse to exchange one set of rulers for another, one bunch of exploiters for another, one lot of priests for another, one authoritarianism for another, or one constricting orthodoxy for another. It will have to root out all such false solutions which are but so many residual manifestations of man's continued alienation. A real understanding of Bolshevism will have to be an essential ingredient in any revo- lution which aims at transcending all forms of alienation and of self-mystification. As the old society crumbles both the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy will have to be buried under its ruins. The real roots from which they grew will have to be understood. In this gigantic task the revolution to come will find its strength and its inspiration in the real experience of millions, both East and West. If it is even marginally assisted by this little book our efforts will have been well worthwhile.
represents an unsuccessful attempt by the Russian working class to break out of relations of production that were proving increasingly oppressive. The massive upsurge of 1917 proved strong enough to smash the political supremacy of the bourgeoisie (by shattering the economic base on which it was founded: the private ownership of the means of production). It altered the existing system of property relations. But it did not prove strong enough (despite heroic attempts in this direction) to alter the authoritarian relations of production characteristic of all class societies. Sections of the working class (those most active in the Factory Committee movement) certainly attempted to influence the Revolution in this direction. But their attempt failed. It is worth analysing the causes of this failure - and seeing how new masters came to replace the old ones.

The forces pitted against those seeking a total transformation of the conditions of industrial life? First, of course, there was the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie had everything to lose in such a total social upheaval. Confronted with workers' management, it stood to lose not only its ownership of the means of production but also the possibility of privileged positions vested in expertise and in the exercise of decisional authority. No wonder the bourgeoisie breathed a sigh of relief when they saw that the leaders of the Revolution would 'go no further than nationalisation' and were keen to leave intact the order-giver/order-taker relationship in industry and elsewhere. True, large sections of the bourgeoisie fought desperately to regain their lost property. The Civil War was a protracted and bloody affair. But thousands of those who, through custom and culture, were more or less closely attached to the expropriated bourgeoisie were very soon offered the opportunity to re-enter the 'revolutionary stronghold' - by the back door as it were - and to resume their role as managers of the labour process in the 'Workers' State'. They seized this unexpected opportunity eagerly. In droves they either joined the Party - or decided to co-operate with it, cynically welcoming every utterance by Lenin or Trotsky in favour of 'labour discipline' or 'one-man management'. Many were soon to be appointed (from above) to leading positions in the economy. Merging with the new political-administrative 'elite', of which the Party itself formed the nucleus, the more 'enlightened' and technologically skilled sections of the 'expropriated class' soon resumed dominant positions in the relations of production.

Secondly, the Factory Committee Movement had to cope with openly hostile tendencies on the 'left', such as the Mensheviks. The Mensheviks were repeatedly stressed that as the revolution could only be of bourgeois-democratic type there could be no future in attempts by the workers to manage production. All such endeavours were denounced as 'anarchist' and 'utopian'. In places the Mensheviks proved a serious obstacle to the Factory Committee Movement, but the opposition was anticipated, principled and consistent.

Thirdly - and far more difficult to see through - was the attitude of the Bolsheviks. Between March and October the Bolsheviks supported the growth of the Factory Committees, only to turn viciously against them in the last few weeks of 1917, seeking to incorporate them into the new union structure, the better to emasculate them. This process, which is fully described in the pamphlet, was to play an important role in preventing the rapidly growing challenge to capitalist relations of production from coming to a head. Instead the Bolsheviks canalised the energies released between March and October into a successful onslaught against the political power of the bourgeoisie (and against the property relations on which that power was based). At this level the revolution was 'successful'. But the Bolsheviks were also 'successful' in restoring 'law and order' in industry law and order that re-consolidated the authoritarian relations in production, which for a brief period had been seriously shaken.

Why did the Party act in this manner? To answer this question would require a much fuller analysis of the Bolshevik Party and of its relation to the Russian working class than we can attempt here. Again one would have to steer clear both of mythology ('the great Bolshevik Party', 'the weapon forged by Lenin', 'the spearhead of the revolution', etc.) and of anti-mythology ('the

entrusted by the Central Committee of the Party with the preparation of the appropriate 'theses' and with getting them accepted first by the Party fraction and later by the Congress as a whole. All went smoothly until by 1,500 votes to 30 the Congress also accepted an inoffensive-looking motion proposed by Ryazanov on behalf of the Party fraction, which was to precipitate a major scandal. The key section of the resolution stated: "the leading personnel of the trade union movement must be chosen under the general guidance of the Party, but the Party must make a special effort to allow normal methods of proletarian democracy, particularly in the trade unions, where the choice of leaders should be left to the trade unionists themselves". (41) The Central Committee was furious. It came down on the Congress like a ton of bricks. Tomsky, who had not even supported the maverick resolution, had his credentials as representative of the Congress immediately to the Central Committee withdrawn. Ryazanov was replaced in this position by such noted trade unionists as Lenin, Stalin and Bukharin - whose task it was to curb the fractious fraction. Ryazanov was barred from ever engaging in trade union work again. A special commission, headed by Stalin, was set up to 'investigate Tomsky's behaviour'. Its investigation completed, it decided to reprimand him severely for his 'criminal negligence' (in allowing the Congress to express its own wishes). Tomsky was relieved of all his functions on the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions. As for the Party fraction, it was 'talked into' reversing its decision of the day before. There is no record of how the hundreds of others fared who had supported the resolution. But who cared? In 1917 it had been proclaimed that "every cook should learn to govern the State". By 1921 the State was clearly powerful enough to govern every cook!

Conclusion

The events described in this pamphlet show that in relation to industrial policy there is a clear-cut and incontrovertible link between what happened under Lenin and Trotsky and the later practices of Stalinism. We know that many on the revolutionary left will find this statement hard to swallow. We are convinced however that any honest reading of the facts cannot but lead to this conclusion. The more one uearthes about this period the more difficult it becomes to define - or even to see - the 'gulf' allegedly separating what happened in Lenin's time from what happened later. Real knowledge of the facts also makes it impossible to accept - as Deutscher does - that the whole course of events was 'historically inevitable' and 'objectively determined'. Bolshevik ideology and practice were themselves important and sometimes decisive factors in the equation, at every critical stage of this critical period. Now that more facts are available self-mystification on these issues should no longer be possible. Should any who have read these pages remain 'confused' it will be because they want to remain in that state - or because (as the future beneficiaries of a society similar to the Russian one) it is their interest to remain so.

The fact that so many who have spent a lifetime in the socialist movement know so little about this period is not surprising. In the first flush of enthusiasm for the 'victorious socialist revolution' of 1917 it was almost inevitable that the viewpoint of the victors should alone have achieved a hearing. For many years the only alternative appeared to be the hypocritical laments of social democracy or the snarls of open counter-revolution. The voice of the revolutionary-libertarian opposition to Bolshevism had been well and truly smothered. "Vae victis" said Brennus the Gaul in 390 BC as he threw his heavy sword onto the scales that were weighing the ransom, to lift the siege of Rome. "Woe to the vanquished" has indeed
The document which spoke a lot about 'workers' democracy' went on to stress in unequivocal terms that the Party would guide all trade union work. On the penultimate day of the Congress, at the end of a session, without any previous discussion in the Party and after a number of delegates had already left, Lenin made his famous proposals concerning the New Economic Policy. He proposed the substitution of a "tax in kind" for the forced requisitioning of grain from the peasants, one of the most hated features of 'war communism'. There would be an end to Government control of the grain supply and, by implication, a free trade in grain. This momentous proposal was followed by four ten-minute contributions from the floor. The official report of the Tenth Congress runs to 330 pages, of which a bare 20 are devoted to the NEP! The main preoccupation of the Congress had clearly been elsewhere.

Internal tightening up now proceeded with a vengeance. A resolution was voted to the effect that "the most immediate task of the Central Committee was the stringent effectuation of uniformity in the structure of Party committees". The membership of the Central Committee was raised from 19 to 25 - of whom 5 were to devote themselves exclusively to Party work (especially visiting provincial committees and attending provincial Party Conferences). (37) The new Central Committee immediately imposed a radical change in the composition of the Secretariat. The Trotskyists (Krestinsky, Preobrazhensky and Serebrjakov), judged lukewarm in their support of the Leninist line, were dropped from the Central Committee altogether. Radical changes were also brought about in the Orgbureau and in the composition of a number of regional Party organisations. (38)

"Disciplined", 'safe' mediocrity's were being installed at all levels. "The organisational shifts of 1921 were a decisive victory for Lenin, the Leninists and the Leninist philosophy of Party life". (39) The Party having willed the end was now willing the means.

May 1921
All-Russian Congress of Metalworkers' Union.
This union had proved the backbone of the 1905 events. It had been won over by the Bolsheviks as early as 1913. It had animated the Factory Committees and provided many detachments of Red Guards. It was now deeply influenced by the idea of the Workers' Opposition. Its leader, Medvedev, was an active member of the Opposition. His grip on the union had to be broken.

At the Metalworkers' Congress the Central Committee of the Party handed down to the Party fraction in the union a list of recommended candidates for union (sic!) leadership. The metalworkers' delegates voted down this list, as did the Party fraction in the union (by 120 votes to 40). Every conceivable pressure was then brought to bear against them. The Opposition had to be smashed. The Central Committee of the Party disregarded every one of the votes and appointed a Metalworkers' Committee of its own. (40) So much for 'elected and revocable delegates'. Elected by the union rank and file and revocable by the Party leadership!

May 17-25
Fourth All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions.
This was to discuss the role of trade unions in the new, privately owned, sector sanctioned by the NEP. Tomsky as president of the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions, was Party as the embodiment of totalitarianism, militarism, bureaucracy,' etc.), seeking constantly to understand rather than to rant or rave. At the superficial level both the Party's ideology and its practice were firmly rooted in the specific historical circumstances of Tsarist Russia, in the first decade of this century. Illegality and persecution partly explain (although they do not justify) the Party's organisational structure and its relationship to the class. (80) What is more difficult to understand is the naivete of the Bolshevik leaders who don't seem to have appreciated the effects that this type of organisation and this type of relationship to the class would inevitably have on the subsequent history of the Party.

Writing of the early history of the Party no lesser an exponent of Bolshevik orthodoxy than Trotsky was to state - "The habits peculiar... to a political machine were already forming in the underground. The young revolutionary bureau was already emerging as a type that was the con-ditions of conspiracy, true enough, offered rather meagre scope for such formalities of democ-incy as elections, accountability and control. Yet undoubtedly the Committee men narrowed these limitations considerably more than necessity demanded. They were far more intran-ger and severe with the revolutionary working men that with themselves, preferring to domi-neer even on occasions that called imperatively for lending an attentive ear to the voice of the masses. Krupskaya notes that, just as in the Bolshevik committees, so at the Congress itself, there were almost no workingmen. The intellectuals predominated. "The Committee man" writes Krupskaya, "was usually quite a self-confident person... as a rule he did not recognise any internal party democracy... did not want any innovations... did not desire and did not know how to adapt himself to rapidly changing conditions". (7)

What all this was to lead to was first hinted at in 1905. Soviets had appeared in many places. "The Petersburgh Committee of the Bolsheviks was frightened at first by such an innovation as a non-partisan representation of the embattled masses. It could find nothing better to do than to present the Soviet with an ultimatum: immediately adopt a Social-Democratic pro-gramme or disbanded. The Petersburgh Soviet as a whole, including the contingent of Bolshevik working men as well, ignored this ultimatum without batting an eyelid". (8) Broue, one of the more sophisticated apologists of Bolshevism, was to write that "those in the Bolshevik Party who were the most favourable to the Soviets only saw in them, in the best of cases, auxiliaries for the Party... only... and theinterest that the Soviets presented for increasing the Party's influence with a view to leading the masses". (9) The problem is put here in a nutshell. The Bolshevik cadres saw their role as the leadership of the revolution. Any movement not initiated by them or independent of their control could only evoke their suspicion. (10) It has often been said that the Bolsheviks were 'surprised' by the creation of the Soviets; this euphemism should not mislead us. The reaction of the Bolsheviks was of far deeper significance than mere 'surprise' - it reflected a whole concept of revolutionary struggle, a whole concept of the relationship between workers and revolution-aries. The action of the Russian masses themselves, as far back as 1905, was already to con-demn these attitudes as outdated.

This separation between the Bolsheviks and the masses was to be revealed repeatedly during 1917. It was first witnessed during the February revolution, again at the time of the 'April Theses', and later still at the time of the July days. (11) It has repeatedly been admitted that the Party made 'mistakes' both in 1905 and in 1917. But this 'explanation' explains nothing. What one should be asking is what made these mistakes possible? And one can answer only if one understands the type of work undertaken by the Party cadres, from the creation of the Party right up to the time of the Revolution. The Party leaders (from those on the Central Committee down to those in charge of local groups) had been placed, through the combined effects of the conditions of the struggle against Tsarism and of their own organisational con-cerns, in a situation which allowed them only tenuous links with the real workers movement. "A worker-agitator" wrote Lenin, "who shows any talent and is at all promising should not work...
in the factory. We must see to it that he lives on Party support... and goes over to an underground status". (12) No wonder the few Bolshevik cadres of working class origin soon lost real contacts with the class.

The Bolshevik Party was torn by a contradiction that helps explain its attitude before and after 1917. Its strength lay in the advanced workers who supported it. There is no doubt that this support was at times widespread and genuine. But these workers could not control the Party. The leadership was firmly in the hands of professional revolutionaries. In a sense this was inevitable. A clandestine press and the dissemination of propaganda could only be kept going regularly by militants constantly on the move and at times compelled to seek refuge overseas. A worker could only become a Bolshevik cadre on condition he ceased work and placed himself under the Party, which would then send him to special museums or intensive training courses. The apparatus of the Party was in the hands of revolutionary specialists. The contradiction was that the real living forces that provided the strength of the Party could not control it. As an institution, the Party totally eluded control by the Russian working class. The problems encountered by the Russian Revolution after 1917 did not bring about this contradiction, they only served to exacerbate it. The attitude of the Party in 1917 and after are products of its history. This is what rendered so futile most of the attempts made within the Party by various oppositions between 1918 and 1921. They failed to perceive that a given ideological premise (the preordained hegemony of the Party) led necessarily to certain conclusions in practice. But even this is probably not taking the analysis far enough. At an even deeper level the very conception of this kind of organisation and this kind of relationship to the mass movement reflects the unrecongnised influence of bourgeois ideology, even on the minds of those who were relentlessly seeking to overthrow bourgeois society. The concept that society must necessarily be divided into leaders and led, the notion that there are born to rule while others cannot really develop beyond a certain stage have from time immemorial been the tacit assumptions of every ruling class in history. For even the Bolsheviks to accept them shows how correct Marx was when he proclaimed that the 'ruling ideas of each epoch are the ideas of its ruling class'. Confronted with an efficient, tightly-knit organisation of this kind, built on ideas of this kind, it is scarcely surprising that the emerging factory Committees were unable to carry the Revolution to completion.

The final difficulty confronting the Committees was inherent in the Committee movement itself. Although certain individuals showed extraordinary lucidity, and although the Committee Movement represents the highest manifestation of the class struggle achieved in 1917, the movement as a whole was unable to understand what was happening to it and to offer any serious resistance. It did not succeed in generalising its experience and the record left is, unfortunately, very fragmentary. Unable to proclaim its own objectives (workers' self-management) in clear and positive terms, it was inevitable that others would step into the vacuum. With the bourgeoisie in full disintegration, and the working class as yet insufficiently strong or conscious to impose its own solutions to the problems tearing society apart, the triumphs of Bolshevism and of the bureaucracy were both inevitable.

An analysis of the Russian Revolution shows that in allowing a specific group, separate from the workers themselves, to take over the function of managing production, the working class loses all possibility of even controlling the means of producing wealth. The separation of productive labour from the means of production results in an exploiting society. Moreover, when institutions such as the Soviets could no longer be influenced by ordinary workers, the regime could no longer be called a soviet regime. By no stretch of the imagination could it still be taken to reflect the interests of the working class. The basic question: who manages production? Is it therefore a hierarchy of the bourgeoisie? Should there be a hierarchy of the bourgeoisie? Should there be any serious discussion about socialism? Today the old equation (liquidation of the bourgeoisie = workers' state) popularised by countless Leninists, Stalinists and Trotskyists is just not good thought - was tantamount to 'treason' to the Revolution, to a rape of History. "Unity" was the all-pervasive theme of the Congress. Given the threat from without and the threat from within it didn't prove very hard for the leadership to get draconian measures accepted. These were still further to restrict the rights of Party members. Fractional rights were abolished. "The Congress - and I here describe the rapid dispersal of all groups without exception which have formed themselves on one platform or another... failure to execute this decision of the Congress will lead to immediate and unconditional expulsion from the Party". (28) A secret provision gave the Central Committee unlimited disciplinary rights, including expulsion from the Party and even from the Central Committee itself (for which a majority of two-thirds would be required.)

These measures, an organisational turning point in the history of Bolshevism, were overwhelmingly endorsed. But not without certain misgivings. Karl Radek stated: "I had a feeling that a rule was being established which left us uncertain as to whom it might be applied against. When the Central Committee was chosen, the comrades from the majority composed a list that gave them control. Every comrade knew that this was done at the beginning of the dissolution in the Party. We do not know... what complications may arise. The comrades who propose this rule think it is a sword aimed against differently thinking comrades. Although I am voting for this resolution I feel that it may even be turned against us". Stressing the dangerous situation confronting both Party and State, Radek concluded "let the Central Committee at the moment of danger take the sternest measures against the best comrades, if it finds this necessary". (29) This attitude, or rather this mentality [the Party can't be wrong in relation to the class. The Central Committee can't be wrong in relation to the Party] was to explain many subsequent events. It was literally to prove a noose around the necks of thousands of honest revolutionaries. If the centralised punishment of 1927 Lenin had never left a political testament, and the 'confessions' of the Bolshevik Old Guard during the Moscow Trials of 1936-1938. The Party, as an institution, had become reified. It now epitomised man's alienation in relation to revolutionary politics.

In relation to these political shifts - or rather to this emergence of what had always been some of the underlying strands of Bolshevism - the actual 'discussions' of the Conference were of less significance. They have therefore deliberately been left to the end. Still operating within the ideological framework of 'the Party' Perepechko, a member of the Workers' Opposition, identified bureaucratisation (in the Party) as the source of the cleavage between the authority of the Soviets and the Soviet apparatus as a whole and the broad working masses. (30) Medvedev charged the Central Committee with "deviations in the direction of distrust of the creative powers of the working class and concessions to the petty-bourgeoisie and to the bourgeois official castes". (31) To offset this tendency and preserve the proletarian spirit in the Party, the Workers' Opposition proposed that "every Party member be required to live and work for 3 months out of every year as an ordinary proletarian or peasant, engaged in physical labour". (32) Ignatov's theses called for a minimum of two thirds of each body to be composed of workers. Criticism of the leadership was more bitter than it had been for years. A delegate raised a storm by calling Lenin “the greatest chinovnik” (hierarch of the tsarist bureaucracy). (33) The leadership played its usual game. A long resolution on the trade unions, drawn up by Zinoviev was passed by 336 to 50 (for Trotsky's position) and 18 (for the Workers' Opposition). (34) "Zinoviev took pains in this document to claim absolute continuity with the trade union doctrine... stated by the First Trade Union Congress and in the Party programme of 1919. This was the familiar device of generating a smoke screen of orthodoxy to cover a change of course".

* But even they were material of dubious value. The first Russian edition of 'What is to be done' had carried on its frontispiece Lasalle's famous aphorism: "the Party strengthens itself by purging itself".
petty-bourgeois”, “syndicalist”, “anarchist” strand “caused in part by the entry into the ranks of the Party of elements which had still not completely adopted the communist world view”. (19) (In fact the Opposition was the very opposite. It was the reaction of the proletarian base of the Party to the entry of hordes of such elements.) The basic arguments of the Opposition were not “genuinely counter-revolutionary” in any depth. What argument - as distinct from invective - there was, was often confused. For instance, apart from being (a) “genuinely counter-revolutionary”, and (b) “objectively counter-revolutionary” the Workers’ Opposition was also “too revolutionary”. Their demands were “too advanced” and the Soviet Government still had to concentrate on overcoming the masses’ cultural backwardness. (20) According to Smilga the extreme demands (of the Workers’ Opposition) disrupted the Party’s efforts and raised hopes among the workers that could not be disappointed. (21) But, most important, that demands of the Workers’ Opposition were revolutionary in a wrong (anarchist-syndicalist) way. This was the ultimate anathema. “If we perish” Lenin said privately, “it is all the more important to preserve our ideological line and give a lesson to our continuators. This should never be forgotten, even in hopeless circumstances” (22).

Gone were the brief days of the 1917 honeymoon. Gone was the rhetoric of ‘State and Revolution’. Out came the skeletons of the split in the First International. The cardinal crime of the Opposition was that elements among it (and more particularly among its fringes, such as Myasnikov and Bogdanov) were beginning to raise really awkward questions. In a clumsy and still fumbling manner some were beginning to question the primacy of the Party others the class nature of the Russian State. As long as criticisms dealt with the ‘bureaucratic deformations or distortions’ of this or that institution - or even in the Party itself - the Party could cope, it had (in fact become quite practised in the matter!) But to raise doubts about these other absolutely basic questions would be counter-revolutionary.

The threat was serious, even if at the moment only implicit in the Opposition’s thinking. Ignatov’s theses had warned of the likely effects of “the mass entry into the ranks of our Party of people from bourgeois and petty-bourgeois strata” combined with “the heavy losses sustained by the proletariat during the Civil War”. (23) But one thing led to another. Shortly after the Congress Bogdanov and the ‘Workers’ Truth’ Group were to claim that the revolution had ended in a “complete defeat for the working class”. They were to charge that “the bureaucracy, along with the NEP men had become a new bourgeoisie, depending on the exploitation of the workers and taking advantage of the working process in a country of whose political institutions it was also master.” This kind of thinking threatened the very basis of the Bolshevik regime and had ruthlessly to be expunged from the minds of working people. “Marxism teaches us” Lenin said “that only the political party of the working class, i.e. the Communist Party, is in a position to unite, educate, organise... and direct all sides of the proletarian movement and hence all the working masses. Without this the dictatorship of the proletariat is meaningless” (25) ‘Marxism’ of course taught other things too. It emphasised that “the emancipation of the working class was the task of the working class itself” (26) and that “the communists do not form a separate Party, opposed to working class parties”. (27) What Lenin was now preaching was not in fact ‘Marxism’ but the crude Leninism of ‘What is to be done?’ written in 1902, the Leninism which had asserted that the working class left to its own devices could only develop a trade union consciousness and would have to have political consciousness injected into it from the outside, by those ‘vehicles of science’ the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, the so-called professional revolutionaries of the Party under the direction of the Party leaders. It was by the class the whether the class understood it or not - and whether the class wanted it or not. Given these premises, any challenge to the hegemony of the Party - whether in action or only in enough.

In 1917 the Russian workers created organs (Factory Committees and Soviets) that might have ensured the management of society by the workers themselves. But the soviets passed into the hands of Bolshevik functionaries. A state apparatus, separate from the masses, was rapidly reconstituted. The Russian worker did not succeed in creating new institutions through which they would have managed both industry and social life. This task was therefore taken over by someone else, by a group whose specific task it became. The bureaucracy organised the work process in a country of whose political institutions it was also master.

All this necessitates a serious re-evaluation of several basic concepts. ‘Workers’ power’ cannot be identified or equated with the power of the Party - as it repeatedly was by the Bolsheviks. In the words of Rosa Luxemburg, ‘workers’ power must be implemented by the class, not by a minority, managing things in the name of the class. It must emanate from the active involvement of the masses, remain under their direct influence, be submitted to control by the entire population, result from the increasing political awareness of the people’. As for the concept of ‘taking power’ it cannot mean a semi military putsch, carried out by a minority, as it obviously does for so many who still seem to be living in the Petrograd of 1917. Nor can it only mean the defence - however necessary - of what the working class has won against attempts by the bourgeoisie to win it back. What ‘taking power’ really implies is that the vast majority of the working class at last realises its ability to manage both production and society - and organises to this end.

This text is in no sense an economic history of Russia between 1917 and 1921. It is, at best, a selective industrial chronology. In most instances the facts speak for themselves. In a few places, we have taken the opportunity of describing our own views, particularly when we felt that the protagonists in the great historical debates were wrong, or trapped in a system of ideas that prevented them from appreciating the real significance of what was happening. Events such as the stages of the Civil War are only mentioned in order to place various controversies in context - and to nail once and for all the allegation that many of the measures described were taken ‘as a result of the Civil War’.

It will probably be objected that, throughout the narrative, greater stress has been placed on various struggles within the Party than on the actions of the millions who, for one reason or another, never joined the Party or who, from the beginning, saw through what it was endeavouring to do. The ‘charge’ is true but the shortcoming almost unavoidable. The aspirations of thousands of people, their doubts, their hesitations, their hopes, their sacrifices, their desire to transform the conditions of their daily life and their struggles to do so are undoubtedly as much a moulding force of history as the resolutions of Party Congresses or the speeches of Party leaders. Yet an activity that has neither rules nor statutes, neither tribunes nor troubadours, belongs almost by definition to what history suppresses. An awareness of the problem, however acute, will not generate the missing material. And an essay such as this is largely a question of documentation. The masses make history, they do not write it. And those who do write it are nearly always more concerned with ancestor worship and retrospective justification than with a balanced presentation of the facts.

Other charges will also be made. The quotations from Lenin and Trotsky will not be denied but it will be stated that they are ‘selective’ and that ‘other things, too’ were said. Again, we plead ‘guilty’. But we would stress that there are hagiographers enough in the trade whose ‘objectivity’ (like Deutscher’s for instance) is but a cloak for sophisticated apologistics. There is moreover another reason for uneartthing this material. Fifty years after the Revolution - and long after its ‘isolation’ has been broken - the bureaucratic system in Russia clearly bears little resemblance to the world of the Bolsheviks, the Party leaders, the Petrograd workers, etc. (including receiving more than a workingman’s wage, etc., etc.). In fact Russia’s social structure has scarcely any anticipation in the whole corpus of Marxist theory. It therefore seems more rele-
want to quote those statements of the Bolshevik leaders of 1917 that helped determine Russia's evolution rather than those other statements that, like the May Day speeches of Labour leaders, were for ever to remain in the realm of rhetoric.

Note on Dates: On February 14, 1918, Russia abandoned the old Julian calendar and adopted the Gregorian one in use in Western Europe. February 1 became February 14. Old style dates have been observed up to this point. New style dates thereafter.

The Kronstadt Rebellion.

This key event which had a profound effect on the Congress which opened a few days later has been analysed in detail elsewhere. (14)

March 8 - 16

Tenth Party Congress

This was to prove one of the most dramatic assemblies in the whole history of Bolshevism. But in a sense the arguments used and the battles fought out there were only a distorted reflection of the much deeper crisis in the country as a whole. Strikes had broken out in the Petrograd area towards the end of February and Kronstadt was up in arms. Both were but the visible portions of a much larger iceberg of submerged discontent and disaffection.

From beginning to end the apparatus was in full control of the Congress. An atmosphere of near hysteria, such as had not been seen before at Bolshevik gatherings pervaded the proceedings. It was now essential for the Party leadership to suppress the Opposition which whether it knew it or not - and whether it wanted to do so or not - was making itself the mouthpiece of all these frustrated aspirations. It was above all necessary to expunge the image of Kronstadt as a movement that defended the principles of the October Revolution against the communists - the idea of the 'third revolution' - which was exactly what the Kronstadters were proclaiming. “We fight” the rebels proclaimed “for the genuine power of the working people while the bloody Trotsky and the glutted Zinoviev and their band of adherents fight for the power of the Party...”(15) “Kronstadt has raised for the first time the banner of the uprising of the Third Revolution of the toilers... The autocracy has fallen. The Constituent Assembly has been despatched to the region of the damned. Now the commissarocracry is crumbling...” (16)

At the Congress Trotsky rounded on the Workers’ Opposition. ‘They have come out with dangerous slogans. They have made a fetish of democratic principles. They have placed the workers’ right to elect representatives above the Party. As if the Party were not entitled to assert its dictatorship even if that dictatorship temporarily clashed with the passing moods of the workers’ democracy!” Trotsky spoke of the “revolutionary historical birthright of the Party”. “The Party is obliged to maintain its dictatorship... regardless of temporary vacillations even in the working class... The dictatorship does not base itself at every given moment on the formal principle of a workers' democracy...”

The physical attack on Kronstadt - in which over 200 delegates to the Congress participated - was accompanied by a massive verbal onslaught against the Workers’ Opposition and similar tendencies. Although leading members of the Opposition were to fight against the Kronstadters (because they still retained illusions about ‘the historical role of the Party’ and because they were still trapped in old organisational loyalties), Lenin and the Party leaders were fully aware of the deep affinities between the two movements. “Both attacked his leadership for having violated the spirit of the revolution, for having sacrificed democratic and egalitarian ideals on the altar of expediency and for inclining to bureaucratic concern with power for its own sake”. (17)

In relation to real issues their demands also overlapped in a number of areas. The Kronstadters - among whom were many dissident Party members - had proclaimed that “the Soviet Socialist Republic can only be strong when its administration belongs to the toiling classes, represented by renovated trade unions... Thanks to the policy of the ruling party the trade unions have had absolutely no opportunity to be purely class organisations”. (18) Down to the fetishism of the unions, the language was the same.

The Congress opened with a virulent speech by Lenin appealing for loyalty to the Party and denouncing the Workers’ Opposition as a threat to the Revolution. The Opposition was a
January 25

Pravda publishes the Workers' Opposition's 'Theses on the Trade Unions'. Alexandra Kollontai publishes 'The Workers' Opposition' which develops the same ideas at a more theoretical level. (8) For all the political storm unleashed by the Workers' Opposition there is little reliable documentation about this tendency. What information there is comes mainly from Leninist sources. (9)

The virulence of the attacks against the Workers' Opposition suggests it enjoyed considerable support among rank and file factory workers and that this caused the Party leadership serious alarm. Shlyapnikov, (the first Commissar of Labour), Lutovinov and Medvedev, the leaders of these workers were its most prominent spokesmen. (10)

"Geographically it seems to have been concentrated in the South Eastern parts of European Russia: the Donets Basin, the Don and Kuban regions and the Samara province on the Volga. In Samara the Workers' Opposition was actually in control of the Party organisation in 1921. Before the Party shake-up in the Ukraine, in 1920, the oppositionists had won a sympathetic majority in the republic as a whole. Other points of strength were in the Moscow province, where the Workers' Opposition polled about a quarter of the Party votes and in the Metal workers union throughout the country". (10) When Tomsky was to abandon the trade unionists and rejoin Lenin's camp later in 1921, he was to 'explain' the appeal of the Workers' Opposition in terms of the metalworkers' ideology of industrialism and socialism. (11) It should be remembered that these same metalworkers had formed the backbone of the Factory Committees in 1917.

February

During the pre-Congress discussion the Leninist faction made full use of the newly established Control Commission. They ensured the resignation of both Preobrazhensky and Dzerzhinsky (judged unduly 'soft' in relation to the Workers Opposition and to the Trotskyists respectively) and their replacement by hardened apparatchiks such as Solts who proceeded to berate the divided Party leadership for its weakness in curtailing the 'ultra left'. The Leninists whipped up a noisy campaign and played relentlessly on the themes of unity and of the internal dangers confronting the Revolution. Again and again they took refuge in the cult of Lenin's personality. All other tendencies were labelled 'objectively counter-revolutionary'. They succeeded in getting control of the Party machine, even in areas with a long tradition of support for the Opposition.

So 'successful' were some of these 'victories' that there is serious doubt as to whether they were not achieved by fraud. On January 19 for instance a Party Conference of the Baltic Fleet is said to have given a 90% vote to the Leninists. (12) Yet within two or three weeks a strong Fleet Opposition was to develop and widely distribute leaflets proclaiming: "The Political Department of the Baltic Fleet has lost all contact not only with the masses but with the active political workers too. It has become a bureaucratic organ without authority... It has annihilated all local initiative and reduced all political work to the level of secretarial correspondence". (13) Outside the Party, even harsher things were being said.

Footnotes

(2) Not all Trotskyist tendencies practice this kind of deception. Some are unambiguously reactionary. For instance K. Coates and A. Topham state "It seems sensible for us to speak of 'workers' control' to indicate the aggressive encroachment of Trade Unions (sic!) on management powers, in a capitalist framework, and of "workers' self-management" to indicate attempts to administer a socialised economy democratically". (Industrial Democracy in Great Britain, Macgibbon and Kee, 1968, p. 363.) Trotsky himself was just as straightforward. Although not making of workers' control a function to be exercised by the unions he distinguished clearly enough between 'control' and 'management'. "For us the slogan of control is tied up with the period of dual power in production which corresponds to the transition from the bourgeois regime to the proletarian... In the language of all mankind by control is understood surveillance and checking by one institution over the work of another. Control may be very active, authoritative and all embracing. But it still remains control. The very idea of this slogan is an outgrowth of the transitional regime in industry, when the capitalist and his administrators can no longer take a step without the consent of the workers, but on the other hand, when the workers have not as yet... acquired the organs essential for this". (L. Trotsky, What Next?: Vital Questions for the German Proletariat, 1932)
(3) An example of such an over-simplified analysis of the fate of the revolution can be found in Voline Nineteen Seventeen (Freedom Press, 1954). "The Bolshevik Party, once in control, installed itself as absolute master. It was quickly corrupted. It organised itself as a privileged caste. And later it flattened and subjected the working class in order to exploit it, under new forms, in its own interests".
(4) For a full discussion of this concept - and of all its implications - see 'Les rapports de production en Russie' by P. Chaulieu, in issue No. 2 (May-June 1949) of Socialisme ou Barbarie. Although the concept may survive many 'marxists' it is of interest that Engels had clearly perceived it. In his letter to Schmidt (October 27, 1890) he wrote: "In a modern state law must not only correspond to the general economic condition and be its expression, but must also be an internally coherent expression which does not, owing to its inner contradictions, reduce itself to nought. And in order to achieve this, the faithful reflection of economic conditions suffers increasingly... The reflection of economic relations as legal principles is necessarily a topsy-turvy one". (Marx Engels - Selected Correspondence, pp. 504-5)
(5) That such an analysis might be possible is suggested in an excellent short pamphlet Notes pour une analyse de la Revolution Russe (n.d.) by J. Barrot. (Obtainable from Librairie 'La Vieille Taupe', I rue des Fosses-St. Jacques, Paris 5).
(6) Both explicitly outlined in the theory (c.f. Lenin: 'What is to be done' and 'One step forwards, two steps back') and in the practice of Bolshevism, between 1901 and 1917.
(8) L. Trotsky, ibid., pp. 64-65.
(10) The same attitude was to be found within the Party itself. As Trotsky himself was to say, this time approvingly "The statutes should express the leadership's organised distrust of the workers, a distrust manifesting itself in vigilant control from above over the Party". (Industrial Democracy in Great Britain, Macgibbon and Kee, 1968, p. 363.)
(11) No, we are not saying that the military overthrow of the Provisional Government was possible in July. We are merely stressing how out of touch the Party was with what the masses really wanted.
(12) Lenin. Sochineniya, IV, 441.
February

Strikes and bread riots in Petrograd. Angry street demonstrations against the Government. Troops, sent to restore order, fraternise with demonstrators. Soviets reappear in several cities, for the first time since 1905.

February 27

Abdication of Nicholas II

Formation of Provisional Government (Prince Lvov as Prime Minister).

March

Factory and Shop Committees (1). Workers’ Councils and Councils of Elders appear in every major industrial centre of European Russia. From the onset, their demands are not limited to wages or hours but challenge many managerial prerogatives. In several instances Factory Committees were set up because the previous owners or managers had disappeared during the February turmoil. Most of those who later drifted back were allowed to resume their positions - but had to accept the Factory Committees. “The proletariat” wrote Pankratova “without legislative sanction, started simultaneously to create all its organisations: soviets of workers’ deputies, trade unions and Factory Committees”. (2) A tremendous working class pressure was developing all over Russia.

March 10

First formal capitulation by a significant body of employers. Agreement signed between Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet and Petrograd Manufacturer’s Association, granting the 8-hr day in some enterprises and ‘recognising’ some of the Committees. Most other employers refused to follow suit. For instance on March 14 the Committee for Commerce and Industry declared that “the question of the 8-hr day cannot be resolved by reciprocal agreement between workers and employers, because it is a matter of state importance.” The first major

* Anna Mikhailovna Pankratova joined the Bolshevik Party in 1919 as an Odessa University student. She wrote a number of books on the history of the Russian labour movement and later became a professor at Moscow University and at the Academy of Social Sciences. In 1952 she was elected to the Central Committee of the Party and the following year became editor-in-chief of the Party journal Voprosy Istorii (Questions of History). She died in 1957. Published before the era of systematic historical distortion, her pamphlet on the Factory Committees contains interesting material. Her scope and vision are however seriously limited because of her endorsement of two fundamental Bolshevik assumptions: (a) “that the role of the Factory Committees ends either with the ebb of the revolutionary tide or with the victory of the Revolution” and (b) that the “demands and aspirations arising from the depths of the working class are given formulation, and provided with ideological content and organisational cement through the Party... The struggle for workers’ control took place under the leadership of the Party, which had allowed (sic!) the proletariat to take political and economic power”.

January

‘Official’ campaign, preparatory to Tenth Congress, launched by the strongly Leninist Petrograd Party Committee (in Zinoviev’s hands). Even before the Congress, many administrative measures were taken to ensure the defeat of the Opposition. So irregular were some of these that the Moscow Party Committee at one stage voted a resolution publicly censoring the Petrograd organisation “for not observing the rules of proper controversy”. (1)

January 13

Moscow Party Committee denounced “tendency of the Petrograd organisation to make itself a special centre for the preparation of Party Congresses”. (2) The Leninists were using the Petrograd organisation as a base from which to apply pressure to the rest of the Party. Moscow Committee urged Central Committee “to ensure the equitable distribution of materials and speakers... so that all points of view should be represented”. (3) This recommendation was to be flagrantly violated. At the Congress, Kollontai stated that the circulation of her pamphlet had been deliberately impeded. (4)

January 14

Publication of the ‘Platform of the 10’ (Artem, Kalinin, Kamenev, Lenin, Lozovsky, Petrovsky, Rudzutak, Stalin, Tomsky and Zinoviev). This document gave a more finished form to Lenin’s theses for the Congress.

January 16

Pravda publishes the Bukharin platform, described by Lenin as the “acme of ideological disintegration”. (5)

January 21

In an article in Pravda on the Party crisis, Lenin writes: “Now we add to our platform the following: we must combat the ideological confusion of those unsound elements of the opposition who go to the lengths of repudiating all ‘militarisation of economy’, of repudiating not only the ‘method of appointing’ which has been the prevailing method up to now, but all appointments. In the last analysis this means repudiating the leading role of the Party in relation to the non-Party masses. We must combat the syndicalist deviation which will kill the Party if it is not completely cured of it”.

A little later Lenin was to write that “the syndicalist deviation leads to the fall of the dictatorship of the proletariat”. (6) In other words working class power (‘the dictatorship of the proletariat’) is impossible if there are militants in the Party who think the working class should exert more power in production (‘the syndicalist deviation’). *

January 24

Meeting of the Communist Fraction during Second Congress of the Miners’ Union. Kiselev, a miner, put the case for the Workers’ Opposition which got 62 votes - as against 137 for the
Once again on the trade unions, the present situation and the mistakes of comrades Trotsky and Bukharin.

"From the Factory Committee should emanate all instructions concerning internal factory organisation (i.e. instructions concerning such matters as hours of work, wages, hiring and firing, holidays, etc.). The factory manager to be kept notified...

The whole administrative personnel (management at all levels and technicians) is taken on with the consent of the Factory Committee which has to notify the workers of its decisions at mass meetings of the whole factory or through shop committees...

The Factory Committee controls managerial activity in the administrative, economic and technical fields... representatives of the Factory Committee must be provided, for information, with all official documents of the management, production budgets and details of all items entering or leaving the factory... "

"Our immediate task shall not be the "introduction of socialism" but to bring social production and distribution of products... under the control of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies."
May 1917

More and more employers were 'having to cope' with Factory Committees. The bourgeois press launched a massive campaign against the 8-hr day and the Committees, trying to smear the workers in the eyes of the soldiers as lazy, greedy, good-for-nothings, leading the country to ruin through their 'excessive' demands. The workers' press patiently explains the real causes of industrial stagnation and the real conditions of working class life. At the invitation of various Factory Committees, Army delegates were sent to 'verify' conditions at the rear. Then they publicly testified as to the truth of what the workers were saying...

May 17

In Pravda Lenin explicitly endorses the slogan of workers' control, declaring that "the workers must demand the immediate realisation of control, in fact and without fail, by the workers themselves". (7)

May 20

Lenin produces draft for a new Party programme: 'The Party fights for a more democratic workers' and peasants' republic, in which the police and standing army will be completely abolished and replaced by the universally armed people, by a universal militia. All official persons will not only be elected but also subject to recall at any time upon the demand of a majority of the electors. All official persons, without exception, will be paid at a rate not exceeding the average wage of a competent worker'.

At the same time Lenin calls for the "unconditional participation (my emphasis) of the workers in the control of the affairs of the trusts" - which could be brought about "by a decree requiring but a single day to draft". (8) The concept that 'workers participation' should be introduced by legislative means (i.e. from above) clearly has an illustrious ancestry.

May 29

Kharkov Conference of Factory Committees.

In certain respects the provinces were in advance of Petrograd and Moscow. The Kharkov Conference demanded that the Factory Committees become "organs of the Revolution... aiming at consolidating its victories". "The Factory Committees must take over production, protect it, develop it". "They must fix wages, look after hygiene, control the technical quality of products, decree all internal factory regulations and determine solutions to all conflicts." (9) Some non-Bolshevik delegates even proposed that the Committees should take over the factories directly and exercise all managerial functions.

May 30-June 5

First full Conference of Petrograd Factory Committees.

The Conference met in the Tauride Palace, in the same hall where three months earlier the State Duma (Parliament) had assembled. At least half the Committee represented were from the engineering industry. "The long and flowery speeches of the bourgeois parliamentarians had given way to the sincere, simple and usually concise contributions of 'deputies' who had just left their tools or their machines, to express for the first time in public their humiliations, their
Footnotes

(1) Sobranie Uzakoneni, 1920, No 8, Art. 49. Also Treti vserossiiski s'yezd professionalnykh soyuzev (Third all Russian Congress of Trade Unions), 1920, I, Plenumi, pp. 50-51. (Henceforth referred to as Third Trade Union Congress).

(2) ibid., p. 493.

(3) V. I. Lenin. Speech to Third Congress of Economic Councils, Sochineniya XXV, p. 17.


(6) R. V. Daniels, op. cit., p. 126.

(7) Ninth Party Congress. Theses of the Moscow Provincial Committee of the R.C.P. Appendix 15, p. 542.

(8) Vmesto programmy: rezolyutsvii i il vserossiissikkh konferentsii anarkho-sindikalistov (Berlin 1922), p. 28.

(9) I. Deutschner, Sovjet Trade Unions, p. 36.

(10) L. Trotsky, Sochineniya (works), vol. XV, p. 126.

(11) Ninth Party Congress, p. 128

(12) First Trade Union Congress p. 269-72,

(13) I. Deutschner, op. cit., p. 35.

(14) L. Kritzman Geroicheski period russkoi revolutsii (The Heroic Period of the Russian Revolution), Moscow and Leningrad, 1926, p.83.


(16) ibid., p. 564, n32.

(17) ibid., pp. 123 - 4.

(18) ibid., p 571, n75

(19) ibid., 'To the organisations of the R.C.P. (b) on the question of the agenda of the Party Congress.' Appendix 2, p.474

(20) Pravda, March 12, 1920


(22) ibid., 'The Trade Unions and their Tasks' (Lenin's theses). Appendix 12, p. 532

(23) ibid., pp.26, 28

(24) ibid.

(25) At the Eleventh Congress in 1922, Lenin was to say It is absolutely essential that all the authority in the factories should be concentrated in the hands of management... Under these circumstances any direct intervention by the trade unions in the management of enterprises must be regarded as positively harmful and impermissible (Resolutions I, 607, 610-612)


(27) L. Kritzman, op. cit., p. 83.

(28) R. V. Daniels , op. cit., p. 114

(29) ibid., pp. 115, 117.


(31) Treti vserossiiski s'yezd professionalnykh soyuzev: stenograficheski otchet (Third All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions: stenographic report) Moscow 1920, pp. 87-97. (Henceforth referred to as Third Trade Union Congress.)

(32) I. Deutschner, op. cit., pp. 500-507

(33) Trade Unions in Soviet Russia (Labour Research Department and ILP Information Committee), November 1920, British Museum (Press Mark: 0824-bb-41).

(34) R. V. Daniels, op. cit., p. 107.

Bolshevik delegates were in a majority. Although most of their contributions centred on the need to introduce workers' control as a means of 'restoring order' and 'maintaining production', other viewpoint were also voiced. Nenotsov, a Bolshevik metal worker proclaimed that the "workers of the factories is now in the exclusive hands of higher management. We must introduce the principle of election. To assess work... we don't need the individual decisions of foremen... By introducing the elective principle we can control production". Naumov, another delegate, claimed that "by taking into our own hands the control of production we will learn about its practical aspects and raise it to the level of future socialist production". (11) We are a long way here from the later Bolshevik advocacy of the 'efficiency' of one-man management and from their late practice of appointments from above.

The Conference was widely attended. Even M. I. Skobelev, Menshevik Minister of Labour in the Provisional Government was to address it. His contribution was of interest as a sort of anticipation of what the Bolsheviks would be saying before the year was up. Skobelev asserted that "the regulation and control of industry was a task for the State. Upon the individual class, especially the working class, lies the responsibility for helping the state in its organizational work". He also stated that "the transfer of enterprises into the hands of the people at the present time would not assist the Revolution". The regulation of industry was the function of Government, not of autonomous Factory Committees. "The Committees would best serve the workers' cause by becoming subordinate units in a state wide network of trade unions". (12) A similar viewpoint was put by Rozanov, one of the founders of the Professional Workers' Union. His assertions that the "functions of the Factory Committees were ephemeral" and that "Factory Committees should constitute the basic elements of the unions" were sharply criticised. Yet this is exactly the role which - within a few months - the Factory Committees were to be relegated by Bolshevik practice. At this stage, however, the Bolsheviks were critical of the idea (the unions were still largely under Menshevik influence).

Lenin's address to the Conference contained a hint of things to come. He explained that "the organisation of thorough control by labour over production and distribution" and for "a proletarian majority in all institutions having executive power". (13) "Under 'workers' control' Lenin clearly envisaged an 'administration' other than the workers themselves. The final resolution, supported by 336 of the 421 delegates, proclaimed the Factory Committees "fighting organisations, elected on the basis of the widest democracy and with a collective leadership". Their objectives were the "creation of new conditions of work". The resolution called for "the organisation of thorough control by labour over production and distribution" and for "a proletarian majority in all institutions having executive power". (14) The next few weeks witnessed a considerable growth of the Factory Committees. Wherever they were strong enough (both before but especially after the October Revolution, when they were abetted by local Soviets) the Committees "boldly ousted the management and assumed direct control of their respective plants". (15)
lective agreements concluded by the unions were also observed. The Factory Committees were to agitate for the entrance of all workers of the enterprise into the union. They should “work to strengthen and extend the trade unions, contribute to the unity of their fighting action” and “increase the authority of the unions in the eyes of unorganised workers”. (17)

This Conference, dominated by Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries, had considerable misgivings concerning the Factory Committees. It expressed these by advocating that the Committees should be elected.

The Bolshevik theses, presented to the Conference by Glebov-Avilov, suggested that for the conduct of workers’ control “economic control commissions” should be attached to the central administration of the unions. These Commissions were to be made up of members of the Factory Committee and were to co-operate with the latter in each individual enterprise. The Factory Committees were not only to perform ‘control functions’ for the trade unions but were also to be financially dependent upon the union. (18)

The Conference set up an All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions, to which representatives were elected in proportion to the numerical strength of the various political tendencies present at the Conference.

At this stage the Bolsheviks were riding two horses, seeking to gain the ascendency in both the unions and the Committees. They were not averse to a considerable amount of double talk in the pursuit of this double objective. In unions under strong Menshevik control the Bolsheviks would press for considerable autonomy for the Factory Committees. In unions under their own control, they would be far less enthusiastic about the matter.

It is necessary at this stage to say a few words about the role of the unions before and immediately after the February Revolution.

Before 1917 the unions had been relatively unimportant in Russian labour history. Russian industry was still very young. Under Tsardom (at least until the turn of the century) trade union organisation had been illegal and persecuted. “In suppressing trade unionism Tsardom unwittingly put a premium upon revolutionary political organisation... Only the most politically-minded workers, those prepared to pay for their conviction with prison and exile, could be willing to join trade unions in these circumstances... whereas in Britain the Labour Party was created by the trade unions, the Russian trade unions from their beginning led their existence in the shadow of the political movement”. (19)

The analysis is correct - and moreover of much deeper significance than Deutscher probably realised. The Russian trade unions of 1917 reflected this peculiar development of the Russian working class movement.

On the one hand the unions were the auxiliaries of the political parties, which utilised them for recruiting purposes and as a mass to be manoeuvred. “On the other hand the union movement, reborn in a sense after February 1917, was pushed forward by the more educated workers: the leadership of the various unions reflected the predominance of a sort of intellectual elite, favourable at first to the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, but later won over, in varying proportions, to the Bolsheviks.

It is important to realise that from the beginning of the Revolution the unions were tightly controlled by political organisations, which used them to solicit support for their various actions. This explains the ease with which the Party was able - at a later date - to manipulate the unions. It also helps one understand the fact that the unions (and their problems) were often to prove representation in various controlling bodies. “Not a single person was to be appointed to any administrative-economic post without the agreement of the trade unions”...

...Officials recommended by the trade unions were to remain accountable for their conduct to the unions, who should also have the right to recall them from their posts at any time. The programme culminated in the demand that an ‘All-Russian Producers’ Congress’ be convened to elect the central management of the entire national economy. National Congresses of separate unions were similarly to elect management’s for the various branches of the economy. Local and regional management’s should be formed by local trade union conferences, while the management of single factories was to belong to the Factory Committees, which were to remain part of the trade union organisation... “In this way” Shlyapnikov asserted, “there is created the unity of will which is essential in the organisation of the economy, and also a real possibility for the influence of the initiative of the broad working masses on the organisation and development of our economy”. (74)

Last but not least the Workers’ Opposition proposed a radical revision of the wages policy in an extremely egalitarian spirit: money wages were to be progressively replaced by rewards in kind. Within the Party, it was clearly on the shoulders of the Workers’ Opposition that, at this late stage, fell the task of endeavouring to maintain the revolutionary ideals of State and Revolution, with respect to the autonomous and democratic involvement of the masses in the functions of economic decision taking.

* We are not here ‘denouncing’ the fact that the unions were being influenced by political parties. Nor are we advocating anything as simplistic as ‘keeping politics out of the unions’. We are simply describing the real state of affairs in Russia in 1917, with a view to assessing its significance in the subsequent development of the Russian Revolution.
the state to appoint officials from above (a long, long way had been travelled since the statements recorded under the heading of May 20, 1917 - M.B.) it would be in expediency for the trade unions to do the same. The unions could make recommendations for administrative-economic jobs and should co-operate in planning. They should inspect, through specialised departments, the work of the economic administration.

Wage-rate fixing was to be transferred to the All Russian Central Council of Trade Unions. In relation to wages the extreme egalitarianism of the Workers Opposition had to be fought. Wages policy was to be designed so as to "discipline labour and increase its productivity". (66) Party members had "chattered enough about principles in the Smolny. Now, after 3 years, they had decrees on all points of the production problem". (67) "The decisions on the militarisation of labour and discipline of the shop floor are the laws which can no more be evaded without the acceptance of the economic ruin of Russia, the galloping inflation, the scarcity of consumers' goods, and so on, made normal 'bread and butter' struggle look unreal. In addition the threat of mobilisation hung over would-be strikers. The working class was in no mood to strive for limited economic advantage and partial reforms. The entire social order of Russia was at stake". (20)

June-July

Persistent efforts of Mensheviks fully to subordinate the Factory and Plant Committees to the trade unions. These were successfully resisted by a temporary alliance of anarchists - objecting on grounds of principle - and of Bolsheviks acting on the basis of tactical considerations.

The autonomous Factory Committee movement found its highest development and most militant expression in the engineering industry. (21) This is of particular relevance as it explains the drastic measures the Bolsheviks had to resort to in 1922, to break the independent organisations of the engineering workers. The Bolsheviks had decrees on all points of the production problem. Wage-rate fixing was to be transferred to the All Russian Central Council of Trade Unions. (22)

July 26-August 3

Sixth Party Congress.

Milyutin declares: "We will ride on the crest of the economic wave of the movement of the workers and we will turn this spontaneous movement into a conscious political movement against the existing state power". (22)

August 7-12

"Second Conference of Factory Committees of Petrograd, its Environs, and Neighbouring Provinces", held at the Smolny Institute. The Conference resolved that 1/4% of the wages of all workers represented should go to the unions... formed the greatest task of our epoch. "The unions ought permanently to assess their membership from the angle of production and should always possess a full and precise characterisation of the productive value of any worker". The leading bodies of the trade unions and of the economic administration should have between one third and one half of their members in common in order to put an end to the antagonism between them. Bourgeois technicians and administrators who had become full members of a union were to be entitled to hold managerial posts, without supervision by commissars. After a real minimum wage had been secured for all workers there should be 'shock competition' (udarnichesto) between workers in production.

Bukharin's views had been evolving rapidly. What he now advocated was an attempt to build a bridge between the official views of the Party and those of the Workers' Opposition. There had to be "workers' democracy in production". The "governmentalising of the unions" had to go hand in hand with the "unionsisation of the state". "The logical and historical termination" (of this process) "will not be the engulfment of the unions by the proletarian state, but the disappearance of both categories - of the unions as well as of the state - and the creation of a third: the communistically organised society". (69)

Lenin was to seize upon Bukharin's platform as "the full break with communism and a transition to a position of syndicalism". (70) "It destroyed the need for the Party. If the trade unions, nine-tenths of whose members are non-Party workers, appoint the managers of industry, what is the use of the Party?". (71) "So we have "grown up"", he added ominously, "from small differences to syndicalism, signifying a complete break with communism and an unavoidable split in the Party". (72)

Other attacks on Lenin on Bukharin's views are to be found in his famous article censuring Trotsky. (73) The views of the Workers' Opposition were put to the Moscow meeting by Shlyapnikov, a metal worker (and were later to be developed more fully by Kollontai and others). Explicitly or implicitly these views postulated the domination of the trade unions. These were successfully resisted by a temporary alliance of anarchists - objecting on grounds of principle - and of Bolsheviks acting on the basis of tactical considerations.

The conference declared that 1/4% of the wages of all workers represented should go to the unions. (23) Rank and file supporters of the Factory Committees viewed the setting up of this 'Central Soviet' with mixed feelings. On the one hand they sensed the need for co-ordination. On the other hand they wanted this co-ordination to be carried out from below, by themselves. Many were suspicious of the motives of the Bolsheviks, on whose initiative the 'Central Soviet' had been bureaucratically set up. The Bolshevik Skrypnik spoke of the difficulties of the Central Soviet of Factory Committees, attributing them "in part to the workers themselves. The Bolsheviks had to resort to, in 1922, to break the independent organisations of the engineering workers.

The Bolsheviks had decrees on all points of the production problem. Wage-rate fixing was to be transferred to the All Russian Central Council of Trade Unions. (22)

The Conference adopted that a whole number of statutes, regulating the work of the Committees, the duties of the management (sic!), procedures for electing the Committees, etc.
Syndicalist Propaganda.

1.5 million in July 1917, 2.6 million in January 1918, 3.5 million in 1919, 4.3 million in 1920 and 7 million in 1921. According to figures given by Zinoviev at the Tenth Party Congress union membership was...

According to Lenin, militarisation was not to be regarded as a permanent feature of social...

A little later in the month a Conference of Employers was held in Petrograd. It set up a...

According to Zinoviev's concern for democracy did not carry much weight, being factionally motivated (it was part of a campaign to discredit Trotsky). At that time public orators in search of laughs could usually get them by carefully chosen quotations from Zinoviev on the subject of democratic rights. (63)

December 30

Joint meeting of the Party fraction to the Eighth Congress of Soviets, of Party members on the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions, and of Party members in various other organisations, held in the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow, to discuss the 'trade union question'. All the main protagonists were on hand to state their respective cases. The various viewpoints, as stated at the meeting (or outlined in articles written at the time or within the next few weeks) can be summarised as follows: (64)

Trotsky and particularly Bukharin later amended their original proposals in order to constitute a bloc at the Congress.

For Lenin the trade unions were "reservoirs of state power". They were to provide a broad social basis "for the proletarian dictatorship exercised by the Party", a base that was badly needed in view of the predominantly peasant nature of the country. The unions were to be the "link" or "transmission belt" between the Party and the mass of non-party workers. The unions could not be autonomous. They could not play an independent role either in the initiation or in the implementation of policy. They had to be strongly influenced by Party thinking and would undertake the political education of the masses along lines determined by the Party. In this way they would become "schools of communism" for their 7 million members. *The Party was to be the teacher. The Russian Communist Party, in the person of its Central and Regional organisations, unconditionally guides as before the whole ideological side of the work of the trade unions*. (65)

Lenin stressed that the unions could not be instruments of the State. Trotsky's assumption that the unions need no longer defend the workers because the State was now a workers' state was wrong. "Our state is such that the entire organised proletariat must defend itself: we (sic) must use these workers' organisations for the defence of the workers from their state and for the defence of our state by the workers..." (The words in bold are often omitted when this famous passage is quoted.)

According to Lenin, militarisation was not to be regarded as a permanent feature of socialist labour policy. Persuasion had to be used as well as coercion. While it was normal (sic!) for...
The Eighth All-Russian congress of soviets was held in Moscow. It provided an opportuni-

tasks of the trade unions. “It was necessary immediately to proceed to reorganise the trade
unions i.e. to select the leading personnel” (Thesis 5). Dizzy with success, Trotsky again
threatened to “shake up” various trade unions as he had “shaken up those of the transport
workers”. (48) What was needed was “to replace irresponsible agitators (sic!) by production-
minded trade unionists”. (49) Trotsky’s theses were put to the vote and defeated by the nar-
row margin of 8 votes to 7. Lenin then “bluntly dissociated himself from Trotsky and persuad-
ed the Central Committee to do likewise”. (50) An alternative resolution proposed by Lenin was
then passed by 10 votes to 4. It called for “reform of the Tsektran”, advocated “sound forms of
the militarisation of labour” (51) and proclaimed that “the Party ought to educate and support...
a new type of trade unionist, the energetic and imaginative economic organiser who will
approach economic issues not from the angle of distribution and consumption but from that of
expanding production”. (52) The latter was clearly the dominant viewpoint. Trotsky’s ‘error’ had
been that he had carried it out to its logical conclusion. But the Party needed a sacrificial goat.
The Plenum was “to forbid Trotsky to speak in public on the relationship between the trade
unions and the State”. (53)

December 2

Trotsky, in a speech to the enlarged Plenum of Tsektran declared that “a competent, hier-
archically organised civil service had its merits. Russia suffered not from the excess but from
the lack of an efficient bureaucracy”. (54) “The militarisation of the trade unions and the mil-
tarisation of transport required an internal, ideological militarisation”. (55) Stalin was later to
describe Trotsky as “the patriarch of the bureaucrats”. (56) When the Central Committee again
rebuffed him “Trotsky fretfully reminded Lenin and the other members of how often they had pri-
vately urged him... to act ruthlessly and disregard considerations of democracy. It was disloy-
al of them... to pretend in public that they defended the democratic principle against him”. (57)

December 7

At a Plenum of the Central Committee Bukharin had produced a resolution on ‘industrial
democracy’. The terms were to infuriate Lenin. They were “a verbal twist”, “a tricky phrase”,
“confusing”, “a squib”. “Industry is always necessary. Democracy is not always necessary.
The term ‘industrial democracy’ gives rise to a number of utterly false ideas”. (58) “It might be
understood to repudiate dictatorship and individual management”. (59) “Without bonuses in
kind and disciplinary courts it was just empty talk”. (60)

The strongest opposition to Trotsky’s schemes for the ‘militarisation of labour’ came from
that section of the Party with the deepest roots in the trade unions. Some of these Party mem-
bers had not only dominated the Trade Union Council up to this time but “were also the direct
beneficiaries of the doctrine of autonomous trade union responsibility”. (61) In other words they
were already, in part, trade union bureaucrats. It was partly from these elements that the
Workers Opposition was to develop.

By now, however, the leading politico-economic apparatus was quite different from the one
we saw emerging in 1918. In just over 2 years the Party apparatus had gained undisputed
political control of the State (through the bureaucratised soviets). It had also gained almost
complete control of the economic apparatus (through trade union officials and appointed indus-
trial managers). The various groups had acquired the competence and experience necessary to
become a social category with a specific function - to manage Russia. Their fusion was inevi-
table.

December 22 - 29

The Eighth All-Russian congress of soviets was held in Moscow. It provided an opportuni-

August 25

Golos Truda, in a famous article headed ‘Questions of the Hour’, wrote: “We say to the
Russian workers, peasants, soldiers, revolutionists: above all, continue the revolution.
Continue to organise yourselves solidly and to unite your new organisations: your communes,
your unions, your committees, your soviets. Continue, with firmness and perseverance, always
and everywhere to participate more and more extensively and more and more effectively in the
economic life of the country, continue to take into your hands, that is into the hands of your
organisations, all the raw materials and all the instruments indispensable to your labour.
Continue the Revolution. Do not hesitate to face the solution of the burning questions of the
present. Create everywhere the necessary organisations to achieve these solutions. Peasants, take the land and put it at the disposal of your committees. Workers, proceed to put in
the hands of and at the disposal of your own social organisations - everywhere on the spot
- the mines and the subsoil, the enterprises and the establishments of all sorts, the works and
factories, the workshops and the machines”.

A little later, issue No. 15 of the same paper urged its readers to “begin immediately to
organise the social and economic life of the country on new bases. Then a sort of ‘dictatorship
of labour’ will begin to be achieved, easily and in a natural manner. And the people would learn,
little by little, to do it”.

During this period there were a number of important strikes (tannery and textile workers in
Moscow, engineering workers in Petrograd, petrol workers in Baku, miners in the Donbas)
There was a common feature to these struggles: the employers were prepared to make con-
cessions through increased wages but categorically refused to recognise any rights to the
Factory Committees. The workers in struggle “... were prepared to fight to the bitter end not
so much on the question of wage increases as on the question of the recognition of their fac-
tory organisations”. (29) One of the main demands was the transfer to the Committees of the
rights of hiring and firing. The inadequacies of the ‘law of April 23 were by now widely realised.
Demands for the Soviets to take the power were beginning to evoke an echo. “During its strug-
gele for a ‘factory constitution’ the working class had become aware of the need itself to manage
production”. (30)

August 28

In response to an increasing campaign in the bourgeois journals against the Factory
Committees and “working class anarchism” the Menshevik Minister of Labour Skobelev issued
his famous ‘Circular No. 421’ forbidding meetings of the Factory Committees during working
hours (“because of the need to devote every energy and every second to intensive work”). The
‘circular’ authorised management to deduct from wages time lost by workers in attending
Committee meetings. This was at a time when Kornilov was marching on Petrograd, and
“when the workers were rising, threatening, to the defence of the Revolution without consid-
ering whether they were doing so during working hours or not”. (31)

September 10

Third Conference of Factory Committees.

On September 4, another circular from the Ministry of Labour had stated that the right of
hiring and firing of workers belonged to the owners of the enterprise. The Provisional
Government, by now very alarmed at the growth of the Factory Committees, was striving des-
erately to curtail their power.
The Menshevik Kolokolnikov attended the Conference as the representative of the Ministry of Labour. He defended the Circulars. He 'explained' that the circulars did not deprive the workers of the right of control over hiring and firing ... but only of the right to hire and fire. "As the Bolsheviks were themselves to do later Kolokolnikov defined control as supervision over policy, as opposed to the right of making policy." (32)

At the conference a worker called Afimogenev asserted that "all parties, not excluding the Bolsheviks, entice the workers with the promise of the Kingdom of God on earth a hundred years from now... We don't need improvement in a hundred years time, but now, immediately." (33) The Conference, which only lasted two sessions, decreed that it would seek the immediate abolition of the circulars.

September 14
Meeting of the Government-sponsored Democratic Conference. Emphasising that the tasks of the Factory Committees were 'essentially different' from those of the trade unions, the Bolsheviks requested 25 seats for the Factory Committees. (The same number had been allocated by the Government to the unions.)

September 26
Lenin writes, "The Soviet Government must immediately introduce throughout the state workers' control over production and distribution". "Failing such control... famine and catastrophe of unprecedented dimensions threaten the country from week to week". (34)

For several weeks the employers had been resorting to lockouts on an increasing scale in an attempt to break the power of the Committees. Between March and August 1917, 586 enterprises employing over 100,000 workers had been closed down, (35) sometimes because of the lack of fuel or raw materials but often as a deliberate attempt by the employers to evade the increasing power of the Committees. One of the functions of workers' control was seen as putting an end to such practices.

October 1
Publication of Lenin's 'Can the Bolsheviks retain State power?' This text contains certain passages that help one understand many subsequent events. "When we say workers' control, always associating that slogan with the dictatorship of the proletariat, and always putting it after the latter, we thereby make plain what state we have in mind... If it is a proletarian state we are referring to ([i.e. the dictatorship of the proletariat] then workers' control can become a national, all-embracing, omnipresent, extremely precise and extremely scrupulous accounting (emphasis in original) of the production and distribution of goods".

In the same pamphlet Lenin defines the type of 'socialist apparatus' (or framework) within which the function of accountancy (workers' control) will be exercised. "Without big banks socialism would be impossible of realisation. The big banks are a 'stable apparatus' we need for the realisation of socialism and which we shall take from capitalism ready made. Our problem here is only to lop away that which capitalistically disfigures this otherwise excellent apparatus and to make it still bigger, still more democratic, still more comprehensive..." "A single huge state bank, with branches in every rural district and in every factory - that will already be nine-tenths of a socialist apparatus". According to Lenin this type of apparatus would allow "general state bookkeeping, general state accounting of the production and distribution of goods", and would be "something in the nature, so to speak, of the skeleton of a socialist society". (Lenin's emphasis throughout.)

No one disputes the importance of keeping reliable records but Lenin's identification of workers' control in a 'workers' state', with the function of accountancy (i.e. checking the imple-
dation a form of organisation of labour". (36) "The creation of a socialist society means the organisation of the workers on new foundations, their adaptation to those foundations and their labour re-education, with the one unchanging end of the increase in the productivity of labour". (37) "Wages, in the form of both money and goods, must be brought into the closest possible touch with the productivity of individual labour. Under capitalism the system of piecework and of grading, the application of the Taylor system, etc., have as their object to increase the exploitation of the workers by the squeezing out of surplus value. Under socialist production, piecework, bonuses, etc., have as their problem to increase the volume of the social product... those workers who do more for the general interest than others receive the right to a greater quantity of the social product than the lazy, the careless, and the disorganisers". (38) "The very principle of compulsory labour is for the Communist quite unquestionable... the only solution to economic difficulties that is correct from the point of view both of principle and of practice is to treat the population of the whole country as the reservoir of the necessary labour power - an almost inexhaustible reservoir - and to introduce strict order into the work of its registration, mobilisation and utilisation". (39) "The introduction of compulsory labour service is unthinkable without the application, to a greater or lesser degree, of the methods of militarisation of labour". (40) "The unions should discipline the workers and teach them to place the interests of production above their own needs and demands". "The young Workers' State requires trade unions not for a struggle for better conditions of labour - that is the task of the social and state organisations as a whole - but to organise the working class for the ends of production". (41) "It would be a most crying error to confuse the question as to the supremacy of the proletariat with the question of boards of workers at the head of factories. The dictatorship of the proletariat is expressed in the abolition of private property in the means of production, in the supremacy of the collective will of the workers (a euphemism for the Party - M.B.) and not at all in the form in which individual economic enterprises are administered". (42) "I consider that if the civil war had not plundered our economic organs of all that was strongest, most independent, most endowed with initiative, we should undoubtedly have entered the path of one-man management in the sphere of economic administration much sooner and much less painfully". (43)

August

Due to the Civil War - and to other factors less often mentioned such as the attitude of the railway workers to the 'new' regime the Russian railways had virtually ceased to function. Trotsky, Commissar for Transport, was granted wide emergency powers to try out his theories of 'militarisation of labour'. He started by placing the railwaymen and the personnel of the repair workshops under martial law. When the railwaymen's trade union objected, he summarily ousted its leaders and, with the full support and endorsement of the Party leadership, 'appointed others willing to do his bidding. He repeated the procedure in other unions of transport workers". (44)

Early September

Setting up of Tsektran (Central Administrative Body of Railways). Very much Trotsky's brainchild, it was brought into being as a result of a compulsory fusion of the Commissariat of Transport, of the Railway unions and of the Party organs (political departments) in this field. The entire railroad and water transport systems were to fall within Tsektran's compass. Trotsky was appointed its head. He ruled the Tsektran along strictly military and bureaucratic lines. "The Politbureau backed him to the hilt, as it had promised". (45) The railways were got going again. But the cost to the image of the Party was incalculable. Those who wonder why, at a later stage, Trotsky was unable to mobilise mass support for his struggle, within the apparatus, mentation of decisions taken by others) is extremely revealing. Nowhere in Lenin's writings is workers' control ever equated with fundamental decision-taking (i.e. with the initiation of decisions) relating to production (how much to produce, how to produce it, at what cost, at whose cost, etc.). Other writings by Lenin in this period reiterate that one of the functions of workers' control is to prevent sabotage by the higher bureaucrats and functionaries. "As for the higher employees... we shall have to treat them as we treat the capitalists - roughly. They, like the capitalists, will offer resistance... we may succeed with the help of workers' control in rendering such resistance impossible". (36) Lenin's notions of workers' control (as a means of preventing lock-outs) and his repeated demands for the 'opening of the books' (as a means of preventing economic sabotage) referred both to the immediate situation, and to the months which were to follow the revolution. He envisaged a period during which, in a workers' state, the bourgeoisie would still retain the formal ownership and effective management of most of the productive apparatus. The new state, in Lenin's estimation, would not be able immediately to take over the running of industry. There would be a transitional period during which the capitalists would be coerced into co-operation. 'Workers' control' was seen as the instrument of this coercion.}

October 10
Fourth Conference of Factory Committees of Petrograd and its Environs.

The main business on the agenda was the convocation of the first All-Russian Conference of Factory Committees.

October 13

Golos Truda calls for "total workers' control, embracing all plant operations, real and not fictitious control, control over work rules, hiring and firing, hours and wages and the procedures of manufacture".

Soviets and Factory Committees were appearing everywhere at a phenomenal rate. Their growth can be explained by the extremely radical nature of the tasks confronting the working class. Soviets and Committees were far more closely associated with the realities of everyday life than were the unions. They therefore proved far more effective mouthpieces of fundamental popular aspirations.

During this period intensive propaganda was conducted for libertarian ideas. "Not a single newspaper was closed, not a single leaflet, pamphlet or book confiscated, not a single rally or mass meeting forbidden... True the Government at that period was not averse to dealing severely with both Anarchists and Bolsheviks. Kerensky threatened many times to 'burn them out with red hot irons' But the Government was powerless, because the Revolution was in full swing". (37)

As already pointed out, the Bolsheviks at this stage still supported the Factory Committees. They saw them as "the battering ram that would deal blows to capitalism, organs of class struggle created by the working class on its own ground". (38) They also saw in the slogan of 'workers control' a means of undermining Menshevik influence in the unions. But the Bolsheviks were being "carried along by a movement which was in many respects embarrassing to them but which, as a main driving force of the revolution, they could not fail to endorse": (39) During the middle of 1917 Bolshevik support for the Factory Committees was such that the Mensheviks were to accuse them of 'abandoning' Marxism in favour of anarchism. "Actually Lenin and his followers remained firm upholders of the Marxist conception of the centralised state. Their immediate objective, however, was not yet to set up the centralised proletarian dictatorship, but to decentralise as much as possible the bourgeois state and the bourgeois econ-
The Bolsheviks & Workers Control  -  Page 22

Omy. This was a necessary condition for the success of the revolution. In the economic field therefore, the Factory Committee, the organ on the spot, rather than the trade union was the most potent and deadly instrument of upheaval. Thus the trade unions were relegated to the background...” (4)

This is perhaps the most explicit statement of why the Bolsheviks at this stage supported workers’ control and its organisational vehicle, the Factory Committees. Today only the ignorant or those willing to be deceived can still kid themselves into believing that proletarian power, at the point of production was ever a fundamental tenet or objective of Bolshevism.

October 17-22

First All-Russian Conference of Factory Committees, convened by Novy Put (New Path) a paper "strongly coloured with a new kind of anarcho-syndicalism, though no anarcho-syndicalists were on its staff". (41)

According to later Bolshevik sources, of the 137 delegates attending the Conference there were 86 Bolsheviks, 22 Social-Revolutionaries, 11 anarcho-syndicalists, 8 Mensheviks, 6 ‘maximalists’ and 4 ‘non-party’. (42) The Bolsheviks were on the verge of seizing power, and their attitude to the Factory Committees was already beginning to change. Shmidt, future Commissar for Labour in Lenin’s government, described what had happened in many areas.

“At the moment when the Factory Committees were formed, the trade unions actually did not yet exist. The Factory Committees filled the vacuum". (43) Another Bolshevik speaker stated "the growth of the influence of the Factory Committees has naturally occurred at the expense of centralised economic organisations of the working class such as the trade unions. This of course is a highly abnormal development which has in practice led to very undesirable results”. (44)

A different viewpoint was stressed by a delegate from Odessa. He declared that "the Control Commissions must not be mere checking commissions but must be the cells of the future, which even now are preparing for the transfer of production into the hands of the workers". (45) An anarchist speaker argued "the trade unions wish to devour the Factory Committees. There is no popular discontent with the Factory Committees, but there is discontent with the trade unions. To the worker the trade union is a form of organisation imposed from without. The Factory Committee is closer to them”. Returning to a theme that was to recur repeatedly he also emphasised that "the Factory Committees were cells of the future... They, not the State, should now administer". (46)

Lenin at this stage saw the tremendous importance of the Factory Committees... as a means of helping the Bolshevik Party to seize power. According to Ordzhonikidze he asserted "we must shift the centre of gravity to the Factory Committees. The Factory Committees must become the organs of insurrection. We must change our slogan and instead of saying ‘All Power to the Soviets’ we must say ‘All Power to the Factory Committees’". (47)

A resolution was passed at the Conference proclaiming that “workers’ control - within the limits assigned to it by the Conference - was only possible under the political and economic rule of the working class”. It warned against ‘isolated’ and ‘disorganised’ activities and pointed out that “the seizure of factories by the workers and their operation for personal profit was incompatible with the aims of the proletariat”. (48)

October 25

Overthrow of Kerensky's Provisional Government.

Proclamation of Council of Peoples Commissars (Sovnarkom) during opening session of Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

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April 6 - 15

Third All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions.

Trotsky declared that “the militarisation of labour... is; the indispensable basic method for the organisation of our labour forces... “Is it true that compulsory labour is always unproductive...? This is the most wretched and miserable liberal prejudice: chattel slavery too was productive... “Compulsory slave labour... was in it’s time a progressive phenomenon”. “Labour... obligatory for the whole country, compulsory for every worker, is the basis of socialism”.

“Wages... must not be viewed from the angle of securing the personal existence of the individual worker” but should “measure the conscientiousness, and efficiency of the work of every worker”. (31) Trotsky stressed that coercion, regimentation and militarisation of labour were no mere emergency measures. The workers’ state normally had the right to coerce any citizen to perform any work, at any time of its choosing. (32) With a vengeance, Trotsky’s philosophy of labour came to underline Stalin’s practical labour policy in the thirties.

At this Congress Lenin publicly boasted that he had stood for one-man management from the beginning. He claimed that in 1918 he “pointed out the necessity of recognising the dictatorial authority of single individuals for the purpose of carrying out the Soviet idea” (33) and claimed that at that stage “there were no disputes in connection with the question (of one-man management).” This last assertion is obviously untrue - even if one’s terms of reference are restricted to the ranks of the Party. The files of Kommunist are there to prove the point!

June - July

By the middle of 1920 there had been little if any change in the harsh reality of Russian working class life. Years of war, of civil war and of wars of intervention, coupled with devastation, sabotage, drought, famine and the low initial level of the productive forces, made material improvement difficult. But even the vision had now become blurred. In the ‘Soviet’ Russia of 1920 the industrial workers were “subjected again to managerial authority, labour discipline, wage incentives, scientific management - to the familiar forms of capitalist industrial organisation with the same bourgeois managers, qualifed only by the State’s holding the title to the property”. (34)

A ‘white’ professor who reached Omsk in the autumn of 1919 from Moscow reported that “at the head of many of the centres and glavki sit former employers and responsible officials and managers of business. The unprepared visitor to the centres who is personally acquainted with the former commercial and industrial world would be surprised to see the former owners of big leather factories sitting in Glavkozh, big manufacturers in the Central textile organisations, etc.” (35)

Under the circumstances it is scarcely surprising that the spurious unity achieved at the Ninth Congress a few months earlier did not last. Throughout the summer and autumn differences of opinion on such issues as bureaucracy within the Party, the relations of the trade unions to the State and even the class nature of the State itself were to take on a very sharp form. Opposition groups appeared at almost every level. In the latter part of the year (after the conclusion of the Russo-Polish war) repressed discontent broke into the open. In the autumn Lenin’s authority was to be challenged more seriously than at any time since the ‘left’ communist movement of early 1918.

July

Publication of Trotsky’s classic ‘Terrorism and Communism (just before the Second Congress of the Communist International). This work gives Trotsky’s views on the ‘socialist’ organisation of labour in their most finished, lucid and unambiguous form. “The organisation of labour is in its essence the organisation of the new society: every historical form of society is in its foun-
and by the gradual introduction of individual management in units directly engaged in production”. (21) One-man management was to apply to all institutions from State Trusts to individual factories. “The elective principle must now be replaced by the principle of selection”. (22) Collective management was “utopian”, “impractical” and “injurious”. (23) The Congress also called for a struggle “against the ignorant conceit of... demagogic elements... who think that the working class can solve its problems without having recourse to bourgeois specialists in the most responsible posts”. “There could be no place in the ranks of the Party of scientific socialism for those demagogic elements which play upon this sort of prejudice among the backward sections of the workers”. (24) The Ninth Congress specifically decreed that “no trade union group should directly intervene in industrial management” and that “Factory Committees should devote themselves to the questions of labour discipline, of propaganda and of education of the workers”. (25) To avoid any recurrence of ‘independent’ tendencies among the leaders of the trade unions those well-known proletarians Bukharin and Radek were moved onto the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions to represent the Party leadership and keep a watchful eye on the ARCTU’s proceedings. (26) All this of course was in flagrant contradiction with the spirit of the decisions taken a year earlier, at the Eighth Party Congress, and in particular to the famous Point 5 of the Economic Section of the 1919 Party Programme. It illustrates quite clearly how vulnerable the working class was to become, once it had been forced to relinquish its real power, the power it had once held in production, in exchange for a shadowy substitute - political power represented by the power of Its’ Party. The policy advocated by Lenin was vigorously to be followed. In late 1920, of 2051 important enterprises for which data were available, 1783 were already under ‘one-man management’. (27) The Ninth Party Congress also saw changes relating to the internal Party regime. The congress had opened to a storm of protests concerning this matter. Local Party Committees (at least democratic in form) were being made subservient to bureaucratically constituted local ‘political departments’. “With the institution of such bodies all political activity in the plant, industry, organisation or locality under their jurisdiction was placed under rigid control from above...This innovation... taken from the Army... was designed to transmit propaganda downward rather than opinion upward”. (28) Verbal concessions were again made - amid repeated pleas for unity. Both at the Congress and later in the year “the dissidents made the mistake of concentrating on attempts to rearrange top political institutions, to reshuffle the forms of political control or to introduce new blood into the leadership - while leaving the real sources of power relatively unaffected... Organisation, they naively believed, was the most effective weapon against bureaucracy”. (29) The Ninth Congress finally gave the Orgbureau (set up a year earlier and composed of 5 members of the Central Committee) the right to carry out transfers and postings of Party members without reference to the Politbureau. As had happened before - and was to happen again repeatedly - retrogressive changes in industrial policy went hand in hand with retrogressive changes in internal Party structure.

April

Trotsky given Commissariat of Transport as well as his Defence post. “The Politbureau offered to back him to the hilt in any action he might take, no matter how severe”. (30) Those who peddle the myth of an alleged Leninist opposition to Trotsky’s methods at this stage, please note.

November 3

Publications in Pravda of Lenin’s ‘Draft Decree on Workers’ Control’. (51) This provided for the ‘introduction of workers’ control of the production, warehousing, purchase and sale of all products and raw materials in all industrial, commercial, banking, agricultural and other enterprises employing a total of not less than five workers and employees - or with a turnover of not less than 10,000 rubles per annum’. Workers’ control was to be “carried out by all the workers and employees in a given enterprise, either directly if the enterprise is small enough to permit it, or through delegates to be immediately elected at mass meetings. Elected delegates were to have access to all books and documents and to all warehouses and stocks of material, instruments and products, without exception”. These excellent, and often quoted, provisions in fact only listed and legalised what had already been achieved and implemented in many places by the working class in the course of the struggles of the previous months. They were to be followed by three further provisions, of ominous import. It is amazing that these are not better known. In practice they were soon to nullify the positive features of the previous provisions. They stipulated (point 5) that “the decisions of the elected delegates of the workers and employees were legally binding upon the owners of enterprises but that they could be ‘annulled by trade unions and congresses’ (our emphasis). This was exactly the fate that was to befall the decisions of the elected delegates of the workers and employees: the trade unions proved to be the main medium through which the Bolsheviks sought to break the autonomous power of the Factory Committees. The Draft Decree also stressed (point 6) that “in all enterprises of state importance” all delegates elected to exercise workers’ control were to be “answerable to the State for the maintenance of the strictest order and discipline and for the protection of property”. Enterprises “of importance to the State” were defined (point 7) - and this has a familiar tone for all revolutionaries - as “all enterprises working for defence purposes, or in any way connected with the production of articles necessary for the existence of the masses of the population” (our emphasis). In other words practically any enterprise could be declared by the new Russian State as “of importance to the State”. The delegates from such an enterprise (elected to exercise workers’ control) were now made answerable to a higher authority. Moreover if the trade unions (already fairly bureaucratised) could ‘annul’ the decisions of rank-and-file delegates, what real power in production had the rank-and-file? The Decree on Workers’ Control was soon proved, in practice, not to be worth the paper it was written on. *
November 9
Decree dissolving soviet in the People's Commissariat of Posts and Telegraphs. (52)
The concept of workers' control had spread even to the Civil Service. A soviet of Employees had taken control of the People's Commissariat of Posts and Telegraphs and another had established itself in the Admiralty. On November 9 an appeal was issued by the People's Commissar for the Ministry (sic) of Posts and Telegraphs that concluded "I declare that no so-called initiatory groups or committees for the administration of the department of Posts and Telegraphs can usurp the functions belonging to the central power and to me as People's Commissar". (53)

November 14
Lenin expected his 'draft statutes on Workers' Control' to be ratified, with only minor modifications, by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets (V.Ts.I.K.) and by the Council of Peoples Commissars (Sovnarkom). In fact his proposals were to give rise to heated discussion and to be criticised from both right and left. Lozovski, a Bolshevik trade unionist, was to write: "To us, it seemed that the basic control units should only act within limits rigorously determined by higher organs of control. But the comrades who were for the decentralisation of workers control were pressing for the independence and autonomy of these lower organs, because they felt that the masses themselves would incarnate the principle of control". (54) Lozovski believed that "the lower organs of control must confine their activities within the limits set by the instructions of the proposed All-Russian Council of Workers Control. We must say it quite clearly and categorically, so that workers in various enterprises don't go away with the idea that the factories belong to them".

Despite heated protests from the rank and file - and after nearly two weeks of controversy - a 'compromise' was adopted in which the trade union - now the "unexperienced champions of economic centralisation of production" (55) - had clearly won the upper hand. The new text was adopted by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets (V.Ts.I.K.) on November 14 (by 24 votes to 10), ratified by the Council of People's Commissars on November 15 and released the following day. Milyutin, who presented the revised decree to the V.Ts.I.K. explained somewhat apologetically that "life overtook us" and that it had become urgent to "unite into one solid state apparatus the workers control which was being operated on the spot". "Legislation on workers' control which should logically have fitted into the framework of an economic plan had had to precede legislation on the plan itself". (56)

There could be no clearer recognition of the tremendous pressures from below and of the difficulties the Bolsheviks were experiencing in their attempts to canalise them. In the revised decree Lenin's 8 original points had now increased to 14 (57). The new decree started with the ingenious statement that: "In the interests of a planned regulation of the national economy" the new Government "recognised the authority of workers' control throughout the economy". But there had to be a firm hierarchy of control organs. Factory Committees would be "allowed" to remain the control organ of each individual enterprise. But each Committee was to be responsible to a "Regional Council of Workers' Control", subordinated in turn to an "All-Russian Council of Workers' Control". (58) The composition of these higher organs was decided by the Party.

The trade unions were massively represented in the middle and higher strata of this new pyramid of "institutionalised workers' control". For instance the All-Russian Council of Workers' *It is quite dishonest for those who should know better (see article by T. Cliff in Labour Worker of November 1967) to trumpet these decrees on workers' control as something they never were and were never intended to become. ions or put into concentration camps". He advocated "incentive wages for efficient workers" "socialist emulation" and spoke of the "need to adopt the progressive essence of Taylorism". (10) In relation to industrial management Lenin and Trotsky's main preoccupation was with 'economic efficiency'. Like the bourgeoisie (both before and after them) they identified 'efficiency' with individual management. They realised however that this would be a bitter pill for the workers to swallow. They had to tread carefully. "Individual management" the official resolution delicately proclaimed "does not in any degree limit or infringe upon the rights of the working class or the "rights" of the trade unions, because the class can exercise its rule in one form or another, as technical expediency may dictate. It is the ruling class at large (again identified with the Party - MB.) which in every case appoints persons for managerial and administrative jobs". (11) Their caution was justified. The workers had not forgotten how at the First Trade Union Congress (January 1918) a resolution had proclaimed that "it was the task of workers' control to put an end to autocracy in the economic field just as an end had been put to it in the political field". (12)

Various patterns of industrial management were soon outlined. (13) In drawing these up it is doubtful whether Lenin and Trotsky were encumbered by any doctrinal considerations such as those of Kritzman, the theoretician of 'left' communism, who had defined collective management as "the specific, distinctive mark of the proletariat... distinguishing it from all other social classes... the most democratic principle of organisation". (14) Insofar as he had any principled view on the matter Trotsky was to declare that collective management was a "Menshevik idea".

At the 9th Congress Lenin and Trotsky were opposed most vehemently by the Democratic Centralists (Osinsky, Sapronov, Preobrazhensky). Smirnov, obviously ahead of his time, argued that if one-man management was so bad a thing it wasn't being bad at all. (15) Shlyapnikov called explicitly for a three-way "separation of powers" between Party, soviets and the trade unions. (16) Speaking for the Democratic Centralists, Osinsky endorsed Shlyapnikov's idea. He observed a "clash of several cultures" (the "military-soviet" culture, the "civil soviet" culture and the trade union movement which had "created its own sphere of culture"). It was improper to apply to all of the cultures certain particular methods (such as militarisation) which were appropriate to only one of them. (17) This was a clear case of being caught in a trap of one's own making.

On the question of 'one-man management' the Democratic-Centralists also had a position that was beside the real point. A resolution, which they had voted through the earlier Moscow Provincial Party Conference minimised the matter. "The question of the collegial System (collective management) and individual authority is not a question of principle, but a practical one. It must be decided in each case according to the circumstances". (18) While correctly grasping that collective management had of itself no implicit virtues they failed to recognise that the real problem was that of the relation between management (individual or collective) and those it managed. The real problem was from whom the 'one' or the 'several' managers would derive their authority.

Lenin was not prepared for any concessions on the matter of trade union autonomy. "The Russian Communist Party can in no case agree that political leadership alone should belong to the Party and economic leadership to the trade unions". (19) Krestinsky had denounced Lenin's idea as "syndicalist centralism". (20) At Lenin's instigation Trotsky called on the unions to explain to the broad circles of the working class that industrial reconstruction can only be achieved by a transition to the maximum curtailment of collective administration
control was to consist of 21 ‘representatives’: 5 from the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, 5 from the Executive of the All-Russian Council of Trade Unions, 5 from the Association of Engineers and Technicians, 2 from the Association of Agromrists, 2 from the Petrograd Trade Union Council, 1 from each All-Russian Trade Union Federation numbering fewer than 100,000 members (for Federations of over this number), and 5 from the All-Russian Council of Factory Committees! The Factory Committees, often under anarchosyndicalist influence had been well and truly ‘cut down to size’. Long gone were the days when Lenin had asserted “the source of power is not a law previously discussed and passed by parliament, but the direct initiative of the masses from below, in their localities - outright “seizure”, to use a popular expression”. (59)

The very mention however in the decree “All-Russian Journal of Factory Committees” meant that side by side with the “official” structure of organs of ‘workers control’ another structure was still present almost inevitably antagonistic: the pyramid of organs representing the Factory Committees. It also shows that the Factory Committee movement was still seeking to co-ordinate its activities on a nation-wide basis. Even this minor representation for the Factory Committees had been a tactical concession on Lenin’s part and events were soon to show that the leaders of the Russian government had no intention of accepting for long this potential threat to the hegemony of the Party and of its supporters within the unions. The Party got to work. “Those who had paid most lip service to workers’ control and purported to ‘expand’ it were in fact engaged in a skilful attempt to make it orderly and innocuous by turning it into a large scale, centralised, public institution”. (60)

Bolshevik propaganda, in later years, was constantly to reiterate the theme that the Factory Committees were not a suitable instrument for organising production on a national scale. Deutscher for instance claimed that anarchic characteristics of the Committees made themselves felt: every Factory Committee aspired to have the last and final say on all matters affecting the factory, its output, its stocks of raw material, its conditions of work, etc., and paid little or no attention to the needs of industry as a whole”(61) - Yet in the very next sentence Deutscher points out that “a few weeks after the upheaval (the October revolution) the Factory Committees attempted to form their own national organisation, which was to secure their virtual economic dictatorship. The Bolsheviefs now called upon the trade unions to render a special service to the nascent Soviet State and to discipline the Factory Committees. The unions came out firmly against the attempt of the Factory Committees to form a national organisation of their own. They prevented the convocation of a planned All-Russian Congress of Factory Committees and demanded total subordination on the part of the Committees”.

The essential precondition for the Committees to have started tackling regional and national tasks was their federation on a regional and national basis. It is the height of hypocrisy for latter-day Bolsheviefs to blame the Committees of 1917-18 for showing only parochial preoccupations when the Party itself was to do all in its power to prevent the committees from federating from below, in an autonomous manner. The Bolshevief-sponsored ‘Central Soviet of Factory Committees’ was wound up, after the overthrow of the Provisional Government, as quickly as it had been set up. The Revolutionary Centre of Factory Committees, a body of anarchist insparation which had been going for several months never succeeded in supplanting it, so many were the obstacles put in its path.

Some comments are called for in relation to these developments. The disorganisation created by the war and by the resistance of the employing class (manifested as sabotage or desertion of their enterprises) clearly made it imperative to minimise and if possible eliminate unnecessary struggles, between Factory Committees, such as struggles for scanty fuel or raw materials. There was clearly a need to co-ordinate the activity of the Committees on a vast scale, a need of which many who had been most active in the Committee movement were well aware.
The point at issue is not that a functional differentiation was found necessary between the various organs of working class power (Soviets, Factory Committees, etc.) or that a definition was sought as to what were local tasks and what were regional or national tasks. The modalities of such a differentiation could have been - and probably would have been - determined by the proposed Congress of Factory Committees. The important thing is that a hierarchical pattern of differentiation was externally elaborated and imposed, by an agency other than the producers themselves.

A Bolshevik spokesman (62) described the situation, as seen through the eyes of those now in power. "Instead of a rapid normalisation of production and distribution, instead of measures which would have led towards a socialist organisation of society, we found a practice which recalled the anarchist dreams of autonomous productive communes". Pankratova puts the matter even more bluntly: "During the transitional period one had to accept the negative aspects of workers' control, which was just a method of struggle between capital and labour. But once power had passed into the hands of the proletariat (i.e. into the hands of the Party. M.B.) the practice of the Factory Committees of acting as if they owned the factories became anti-proletarian". (63)

These subtleties were however above the heads of most workers. They took Bolshevik propaganda about workers' control at face value. They didn't see it as "something transitional" or as "just a stage towards other methods of normalisation of economic life". (64) For them it was not just a means of combating the economic sabotage of the ruling class or a correct tactical slogan, decided in committee as 'appropriate' to a given stage of the 'developing revolution'. For the masses 'workers' control' was the expression of their deepest aspirations. Who would be boss in the factory? Instinctively they sensed that who managed production would manage all aspects of social life. The subtle difference between 'control' and 'management' of which most Bolsheviks were deeply aware * eluded the masses. The misunderstanding was to have bloody repercussions.

The November 1917 Decree on Workers' Control appeared to give official sanction to the drive of the working class towards total domination of the conditions of its life. A metalworkers' paper wrote that "the working class by its nature... should occupy the central place both in production and especially in its organisation... All production in the future will... represent a reflection of the proletarian will and mind". (65) Whereas before October workers' control had usually taken a passive, observational form, workers' committees now took on an increasingly important role in the overall management of various enterprises. "For several months following the Revolution the Russian working class enjoyed a degree of freedom and a sense of power probably unique in its history". (66)

There is unfortunately little detailed information available concerning this most interesting period. The data available usually come from sources (either bourgeois or bureaucratic) fundamentally hostile to the working class. The misunderstanding was that the workers did not just reject the vague, nebulous slogan of 'control of production'. They advocated expropriation - progressive but immediate - of private industry by the organisations of collective production.

* Unlike so many anarchists of today, most anarchists at the time were also well aware of the difference. Voline (op. cit., p. 77) says: "the anarchists rejected the vague, nebulous slogan of 'control of production'. They advocated expropriation - progressive but immediate - of private industry by the organisations of collective production".
November 28

Meeting of the newly decreed All-Russian Council of Workers’ Control.

The previous disagreements reappeared. (68) Larin, representative of the Bolshevik fraction in the unions, declared that "the trade unions represent the interests of the class as a whole whereas the Factory Committees only represent particular interests. The Factory Committees should be subordinated to the Trade Unions." Zhivtsov, spokesman of the Factory Committee movement, declared: "In the Factory Committees we elaborate instructions which come from below, with a view to seeing how they can be applied to industry as a whole. These are the instructions of the workshop, of life itself. They are the only instructions that can have real meaning. They show what the Factory Committees are capable of, and should therefore come to the forefront in discussions of workers’ control." The Factory Committees felt that "control was the task of the committee in each establishment. The committees of each town should then meet... and later establish co-ordination on a regional basis". The setting up of the All-Russian Council of Workers’ Control by the Bolsheviks was clearly an attempt to by-pass the Committee movement. The attempt proved partly successful. The Factory Committees continued their agitation. But their voice, silenced by administrative means, only evoked a feeble echo within the All-Russian Council itself dominated as it was by Party nominees: "In January 1918 Riazanov was to declare that the body had only met once (and in May 1918 that it had never really met at all). According to another source it ‘tried to meet’ but couldn’t gather a quorum." (69) What is certain is that it never really functioned at all. It is difficult to say whether this was due to systematic Bolshevik boycott and obstruction, to lack of understanding on the part of non-Bolshevik revolutionaries as to what was actually happening, or whether it was due to the genuine weakness of the movement, unable to burst through the bureaucratic straitjacket in which it was being progressively incarcerated. All three factors probably played a part.

November 28

Decree dissolving Soviet in the Admiralty. (70)
trol to the creation of the Supreme Council of National Economy". (74) The function of this Council was clearly to "replace, absorb and supersede the machinery of workers' control." (75) A process can now be discerned, of which the rest of this pamphlet will seek to unravel the unfolding. It is a process that leads, within a short period of 4 years, from the tremendous upsurge of the Factory Committee movement (a movement which both implicitly and explicitly sought to alter the relations of production) to the establishment of unquestioned domination by a monolithic and bureaucratic agency (the Party) over all aspects of economic and political life. This agency not being based on production, its rule could only epitomise the continued limitation of the authority of the workers in the productive process. This necessarily implied the perpetuation of hierarchical relations within production itself, and therefore the perpetuation of class society.

The first stage of this process was the subordination of the Factory Committees to the All-Russian Council for Workers' Control in which the unions (themselves already strongly under Party influence) were heavily represented. The second phase - which almost immediately followed the first - was the incorporation of this All-Russian Council for Workers' Control into the Vesenka, even more heavily weighted in favour of the unions, but also comprising direct nominees of the State (i.e. of the Party). The Vesenka was momentarily allowed to retain a 'left' communist leadership. A little later these 'lefts' were to be removed. A sustained campaign was then launched to curb the power of the unions that, albeit in a very indirect and distorted way, could still be influenced by the working class. It was particularly important to curb such power as the unions still held in relation to production - and to replace it by the authority of direct Party nominees. These managers and administrators, nearly all appointed from above, gradually came to form the basis of the new bureaucracy.

Each of these steps was to be resisted, but each fight was to be lost. Each time the adversary appeared in the garb of the new 'proletarian' power. And each defeat was to make it more difficult for the working class to organize and manage the new factories. The Vesenka was a more efficient form of organization than the Factory Committees and a more flexible tool than workers' control. We had to link the management of the new factories to the principle of a single economic plan and we had to do it in relation to the socialist objective, whatever the pronouncements of its leaders. This is the real lesson of the Russian Revolution.

The problem can be envisaged in yet another way. The setting up of the Vesenka represents a partial fusion - in a position of economic authority - of trade union officials, Party stalwarts and 'experts' nominated by the 'workers' state'. But these are not three social categories 'representing the workers'. They were three social categories which were already assuming managerial functions - i.e. were already dominating the workers in production. Because of their own antecedent history each of these groups was, for different reasons, already somewhat remote from the working class. Their fusion was to enhance this separation. The result is that from 1918 on, the new State (although officially described as a 'workers' state' or a 'soviet republic' - and although by and large supported by the mass of the working class during the Civil War) was not in fact an institution managed by the working class. * If one can read between the lines (and not be blinded by words such as 'workers' state' and 'socialist perspective', which only reflect the false consciousness so prevalent at the time) the following account by Pankratova as to what was at stake in the formation of the Vesenka is most informative: "We needed", she said "a more efficient form of organisation than the Factory Committees and a more flexible tool than workers' control. We had to link the management of the new factories to the principle of a single economic plan and we had to do it in relation to the

* It is not a question of counter posing, as various anarchists do 'the movement of the masses' to 'dictatorship by the state' but of understanding the specific form of the new authority relations which arose at that particular point of history.
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The decline in the Soviets was also discussed at the Congress. The Soviets were no longer playing any active role in relation to production - and very little role in other matters either. More and more of the decisions were being taken by the Party members serving in the 'Soviet apparatus'. The Soviets had become mere organs of ratification (rubber stamps). The thesis of Sazonov and Osinsky - according to which the Party should not seek to 'impose its will on the Soviets' were decisively rejected.

The Party leaders made minor concessions on all of these issues. But the process of tightening up control, both in the Party and in the economy as a whole, continued at an unrelenting pace. The Eighth Congress established the Politbureau, the Orgbureau and the Secretariat, technically only sub-committees of the Central Committee, but soon to assume tremendous power. The concentration of decision-making authority had taken a big step forward. 'Party discipline' was strengthened. The Congress ruled that each decision must above all be fulfilled. Only after this is an appeal to the corresponding Party organ permissible. * "... The whole matter of posting of Party workers is in the hands of the Central Committee. Its decisions are binding for everyone". (16) The era of political postings - as a means of silencing embarrassing criticism - had begun in earnest.

April
High Point of Kolchak's offensive in Urals.

June
Decree introducing 'labour books' for workers in Moscow and Petrograd.

October
High point of Denikin's offensive in South Russia Yudenich's drive on Petrograd.

December 2-4
Eighth Party Conference.

The Eighth Congress worked out a statute that rigidly defined the rights and duties of Party cells (fractions or fraktsya) and elaborated a scheme calculated to secure for the Party a leading role in every organisation. "The Communist trade unionist was to be a Communist first and only then a trade unionist, and by his disciplined behaviour he enabled the Party to lead the trade unions." (17) As the Party degenerated, this 'leadership' was to play an increasingly pernicious role.

December 5-9
Seventh All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

(There had been two such Congresses in 1917 and four in 1918). Resolution passed in favour of collective management of industry. (18) At the congress, Sazonov attacked the unpopular 'glavs', arguing that they represented an attempt to substitute 'organisation by departments for organisation by soviets, the bureaucratic for the democratic system.' Another speaker declared that if people were asked 'what should be destroyed on the day after the destruction of Denikin and Kolchak, 90% would reply: the glavki and the centres'. (19)

* A pathetic echo, nearly fifty years later, is to be found in the 'Perspectives for I.S.'; submitted in September 1968 by the Political Committee of International Socialism. Point 4 ran 'Branches must accept directives from the Centre, unless they fundamentally disagree with them, in which case they should try to accord with them while demanding an open debate on the matter'.
turnings that at best lead nowhere - or at worst onto the grounds of previous defeats.

The 'Manual' made a number of concrete suggestions to the Factory Committees. Each Committee should set up four control commissions, "entitled to invite the attendance of technicians and others in a consultative capacity" (so much for the widely-peddled lie that the Factory Committees were not prepared to associate the technicians or specialists in their work).

The functions of the 4 commissions were to be: a) the organisation of production; b) the reconversion from war production; c) the supply of raw materials; and d) the supply of fuel. The proposals are developed in considerable detail. It is stressed throughout that 'workers' control' is not just a question of taking stock of the supplies of raw materials and fuel (c. i. Lenin's: "Socialism is stocktaking; every time you take stock of iron bars or of pieces of cloth, that is socialism") but that it is intimately related to the transformation of these raw materials within the factory - in other words with the totality of the work processes culminating in a finished product.

The 'production commission' should be entrusted with the task of establishing the necessary links between the different sections of the factory, of supervising the state of the machinery, of advising on and overcoming various deficiencies in the arrangement of the factory or plant, of determining the coefficients of exploitation in each section, of deciding on the optimum number of shops, and of workers in each shop, of investigating the depreciation of machines and of buildings, of determining job allocations (from the post of administrator down) and of taking charge of the financial relations of the factory.

The authors of the 'Manual' announce that they intend to group the Factory Committees into Regional Federations and these in turn into an All-Russian Federation. And to be sure there was no misunderstanding they stressed that 'workers' control of industry, as a part of workers' control of the totality of economic life, must not be seen in the narrow sense of a reform of institutions but in the widest possible sense: that of moving into fields previously dominated by others. Control should merge into management".

In practice the implementation of workers' control took on a variety of forms, in different parts of Russia. These were partly determined by local conditions but primarily by the degree of resistance shown by these different sections of the employing class. In some places the employers were expatriated forthwith, 'from below'. In other instances they were merely submitted to a supervisory type of 'control', exercised by the Factory Committees. There was no pre-determined model to follow. The various practices and experiments were at first the subject of heated discussions. These were not a waste of time, as was later to be alleged. They should be seen as essential by all who accepted that the advance towards socialism can only come about through the self-emancipation of the working class. The discussions unfortunately were soon to be drawn to a close.

December 13

Isvestiya publishes the 'General Instructions on Workers Control in Conformity with the Decree of November 14'. These became known as the 'Counter-Manual' and represent the finished expression of the Leninist point of view. *

The first 4 sections deal with the organisation of workers' control in the factories and with the election of control commissions. The next 5 sections decree the duties and rights of these commissions, stressing which functions they should undertake and which should remain the verbal retreat. The clause was anyway surrounded by a number of others, partly invalidating it.

The programme proclaimed that "the socialist method of production could only be made secure on the basis of the comradely discipline of the workers". Assigned to the trade unions the chief role in creating this new socialist discipline". Point 8 urged the unions to impress upon the workers the need to work with and learn from the bourgeois technicians and specialists - and to overcome their "ultra-radical" distrust of the latter... The workers could not build socialism without a period of apprenticeship to the bourgeois intelligentsia... Payment of high salaries and premiums to bourgeois specialists was therefore sanctioned. It was the ransom which the young proletarian State had to pay the bourgeois-bred technicians and scientists for service in a society in which it could not dispense with.

We cannot here become involved in a full discussion on the role of 'specialists' after the revolution. The problem is not an exclusively Russian one, although the specific conditions of Russian development doubtless resulted in a particularly marked divorce between technicians and industrial workers. Specialised knowledge of a technical nature will clearly be required by the Workers' Councils but there is no reason why those who now possess it should all find themselves on the side of the bourgeoisie. This knowledge does not of itself however, entitle anyone either to impose decisions or to enjoy material benefits.

These problems have been exhaustively discussed in a number of publications - but nearly always in terms of either crude expediency or of immutable 'basic principles'. The theoretical implications have only recently been explored. According to Linton (14) management is partly a technical question. But the historical circumstances in which the working class will be compelled to undertake it will make it appear to them as primarily a political and social task. At the everyday, down-to-earth and human level the workers at the time of the socialist revolution will almost inevitably see the technicians and specialists not as human beings (who also happen to have technological know-how) but exclusively as the agents of the exploitation of man by man.

The capitalist world is one of fetishism, where interpersonal relationships tend to disappear behind relationships between things. But the very moment when the masses revolt against this state of affairs, they break through this smoke screen. They see through the taboo of 'things' and come to grips with people, whom they had 'respected' until then in the name of the all-holy fetish known as private property. From that moment on the specialist, manager or capitalist, whatever his technical or personal relationship to the enterprise, appears to the workers as the incarnation of exploitation, as the enemy, as the one with whom the only thing they want to do is to get him out of their lives. To ask the workers, at this stage, to have a more 'balanced' attitude, to recognise in the old boss the new 'technical director', the indispensable specialist is tantamount to asking the workers, at the very moment when they are becoming aware of their historical role and of their social power, at the very moment when at last confident in themselves they are asserting their autonomy - to confess their incompetence, their weakness, their insufficiency - and this in the area where they are most sensitive, the field encompassing their daily lives from childhood on - the field of production.

The bureaucratisation of the Party itself provoked pointed comments at the Congress. Osinsky declared: "It is necessary to enrol workers into the Central Committee on a broad scale; it is necessary to introduce there a sufficient quantity of workers in order to proletarianise the Central Committee". (15) [Lenin was to come to the same conclusion in 1923, at the time of the so-called Lenin Levy!] Osinsky proposed that the Central Committee be expanded from 15 to 21 members. It was extremely naive, however, to expect that this introduction of proletarians into the higher echelons of the administrative machine could somewhat compensate for the fact that the working class had by now almost totally lost the power it had briefly held at the point of production.

* Both the 'Manual' and the 'Counter-Manual' should be translated into English. An idea of their contents can be obtained from the interesting article by D. L. Limon in the December 1967 issue of 'Autogestion' although the article degenerates in places into sophisticated Leninist apologetics.
spoke as an independent internationalist against Bolshevik policy in the unions.

A resolution was passed demanding that “official status be granted to the administrative prerogatives of the unions”. It spoke of “statisation” (gosudarstvennie) of the trade unions, “as their function broadened and merged with the governmental machinery of industrial administration and control”. (6) The Commissar for Labour, V. V. Schmidt, accepted that “even the organs of the Commissariat of Labour should be built out of the trade union apparatus”. (7) (At this stage the membership of the unions stood at 3,500,000. It had been 2,600,000 at the time of the First Trade Union Congress, in January 1918, and 1,500,000 at the July Conference of 1917.) (8)

The Second Congress finally set up an Executive vested with supreme authority between Congresses. The decree of this Executive were declared “compulsory for all the unions within its jurisdiction and for each member of those Unions”... “The violation of the decrees and insubordination to them on the part of individual unions will lead to their expulsion from the family of proletarian unions”. (9) This would of course place the union outside the only legal framework in which the Bolshevik regime would permit unions to exist at all.

March 2-7
First Congress of Comintern (Third International).

March 18-23
Eighth Party Congress.

The Ukraine and Volga regions had now been re-occupied by the Red Army. A short period of relative stability followed. Later in the year, the advances of Denikin and Yudenich were to threaten Moscow and Petrograd respectively.

A wave of left criticism surged up at the Eighth Congress against the ultra centralist trends. A new Party programme was discussed and accepted. Point 5 of the ‘Economic Section’ stated that “the organisational apparatus of socialised industry must be based primarily on the trade unions... Participating already in accordance with the laws of the Soviet Republic and established practice in all local and central organs of industrial administration, the trade unions must proceed to the actual concentration in their own hands (my emphasis) of all the administration of the entire economy, as a single economic unit... The participation of the trade unions in economic management and their drawing the broad masses into this work constitutes also the chief method of struggle against the bureaucratisation of the economic apparatus.” (10)

This famous paragraph was to give rise to heated controversies in the years to come. The conservatives in the Party felt it was going too far. Ryazanov warned the Congress that “we will not avoid bureaucratisation until all trade unions... relinquish every right in the administration of production”. (11) On the other hand those Bolsheviks who had voted for the incorporation of the Factory Committees into the structure of the unions - and belatedly seen the error of their ways - were to hang on to this clause as to a last bastion, seeking to defend it against the all-pervasive encroachments of the Party bureaucracy. Deutscher (12) describes the famous “Point 5” as a “syndicalist slip committed by the Bolshevik leadership in a mood of genuine gratitude to the trade unions for the work performed by them in the Civil War”. He describes how Lenin and the other Bolshevik leaders “would soon have to do a lot of explaining away in order to invalidate this promissory note which the Party had so solemnly and authoritatively handed to the trade unions”. The interpretation is questionable; Lenin was not in the habit of making ‘slips’ (syndicalist or otherwise) or of being influenced by such considerations as ‘gratitude’. It is more probable that the relation of forces, revealed at the Congress - itself only a pale reflection of working class attitudes outside the Party compelled the Bolshevik leadership to beat a

prerogative of the owner-managers. Section 5 stresses that insofar as the Commissions play any real role in the management of enterprises, this role should be confined to supervising the carrying out of directives issued by those Central Government agencies “specifically entrusted with the regulation of economic activity on a national scale.” Section 7 states that “the right to issue orders relating to the management, running and functioning of enterprises remains in the hands of the owner. The control commissions must not participate in the management of enterprises and have no responsibilities in relation to their functioning. This responsibility also remains vested in the hands of the owner”.

Section 8 specifies that the commissions should not concern themselves with matters relating to finance, all such matters being the prerogative of the Central Governmental Institutions. Section 9 specifically lists the commissions from expropriating and managing enterprises. They are however entitled to “raise the question of taking over enterprises with the Government, through the medium of the higher organs of workers' control”. Section 14 finally puts down on paper what had been in the minds of the Bolshevik leaders for several weeks. Even at a local level the Factory Committees were to be made to merge with the union apparatus. “The control commissions in each factory were to constitute the executive organs of the control of ‘distribution stations’ of the local trade union federation. The activities of the control commissions should be made to conform with the decisions of the latter”.

The fact that these ‘general instructions’ were issued within a fortnight of the setting up of the Vesenaia clearly shows the systematic lines along which Lenin and his collaborators were thinking. They may have been ‘right’ or they may have been ‘wrong’. [This depends on one’s ideas of the kind of society they were trying to bring about.] But it is ridiculous to claim - as so many do today - that in 1917 the Bolsheviks really stood for the full, total and direct control by working people of the factories, mines, building sites or other enterprises in which they worked, i.e. that they stood for workers’ self-management.

December 20
The official trade union journal ‘Profesional’ny Vestnik’ (‘Trade Union Herald’) published a ‘Resolution concerning the Trade Unions and the Political Parties’. “Without turning into independent organs of political struggle, into independent political parties or appendages to them, the trade unions cannot remain indifferent to the problems advanced by the political struggle of the proletariat”. After these banal generalities the resolution came down to earth. “Joining their destiny organisationally with some political party, the trade unions, as fighting class organisations of the proletariat, must support the political slogans and tactics of that proletarian party, which at the given moment approaches more closely than others the solution of the historical tasks, etc., etc,...”

The same issue of the paper carried an article by the Bolshevik Lozovsky protesting against the Bolshevik policy of suppressing by violence workers’ strikes against the new government. “The tasks of the trade unions and of the Soviet power is the isolation of the bourgeoisie elements who lead strikes and sabotage, but this isolation should not be achieved merely by mechanical means, by arrests, by shipping to the front or by deprivation of bread cards”. “Preliminary censorship, the destruction of newspapers, the annihilation of freedom of agitation for the socialist and democratic parties is for us absolutely admissible. The closing of the newspapers, violence against strikers, etc., irritated open wounds. There has been too much of this type of action recently in the memory of the Russian toiling masses and this can lead to an analogy deadly to the Soviet power”.

That a leading Party member should have to speak in this manner is a telling indictment of how widespread these practices must have been. This was increasingly the method by which the Party was seeking to settle its differences not only with its bourgeois opponents but with its
more articulate opponents within the working class movement itself. Withdrawal of bread cards deprived those subject to it of the legal right to rations, i.e. of the right to eat. Individuals deprived of their cards would be forced to obtain food on the black market or by other illegal means. Their ‘crimes against the State’ would then be used as legal means of ‘neutralising’ them.

It was in this atmosphere concerning Party, unions and non-party masses (euphemistically described as ‘bourgeois elements’) that the big debate of January 1918 was to take place.

December 23
Decree setting up a network of Regional Councils of National Economy (Sovnarkhozy) under the supervision of the Vesenka.

"Each regional Sovnarkhoz was (to be) a replica in miniature of Vesenka at the Centre. It was to be divided into 14 sections for different branches of production and was to contain representatives of local institutions and organisations..." Each Sovnarkhoz could set up "smaller units incorporating the corresponding organs of workers control where the latter had come into being". "What had been created was a central economic department with local offices". (80)

January 16-25
Second All Russian Congress of Trade Unions

Throughout 1918 the trade unions had played an important role in industrial administration. This had vastly increased when the government, afraid that privately-owned industry wouldn’t work for the needs of the Red Army, speeded up the nationalisation programme, “at first as a matter of military rather than of economic policy”. (1) What Lenin called the “state functions” of the unions had increased rapidly. Party members in the trade union leadership (such as Tomsky, Chairman of the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions) enjoyed considerable power.

The relation between the union leaderships and the rank and file were far from democratic however. “In practice the more the trade unions assumed the administrative functions of a conventional managerial bureaucracy, the more bureaucratic they themselves became”. (2) A Congress delegate, Chirkin, claimed for instance that “although in most regions there were institutions representing the trade union movement, these institutions were not elected or ratified in any way; where elections had been conducted and individuals elected who were not suitable to the needs of the Central Council or local powers, the elections had been annulled very freely and the individuals replaced by others more subservient to the administration” (3) Another delegate, Perkin, spoke out against new regulations which required that representatives sent by workers’ organisations to the Commissariat of Labour be ratified by the Commissariat. “If at a union meeting we elect a person as a commissar - i.e. if the working class is allowed in a given case to express its will - one would think that this individual would be allowed to represent our interests in the Commissariat, would be our commissar. But, no. In spite of the fact that we have expressed our will - the will of the working class - it is still necessary for the commissar we have elected to be confirmed by the authorities... The proletarian is allowed the right to make a fool of itself. It is allowed to elect representatives but the state power, through its right to ratify the elections or not, treats our representatives as it pleases”. (4)

The unions - and all other bodies for that matter - were increasingly coming under the control of the state, itself already in the exclusive hands of the Party and its nominees. But although there had already been a very definite shift of power in the direction of the emerging bureaucracy, working class organisation and consciousness were still strong enough to exact at least verbal concessions from Party and union leaders. The autonomous Factory Committees had by now been completely smashed but the workers were still fighting a rear-guard action in the unions themselves. They were seeking to preserve a few residual shreds of their erstwhile power.

The Second Trade Union Congress “sanctioned the arrangements under which the unions had become at once military recruiting agents, supply services, punitive organs and so on”. (5) Tomsky for instance pointed out “that at a time when the trade unions determined wages and conditions of work, strikes could no longer be tolerated. It was necessary to put dots on the i's." Lenin spoke about the “inevitable stratification of the trade unions”. (The pill was coated with talk about the function of the unions being to educate the workers in the art of administration and about the eventual ‘withering away’ of the state.). Lozovsky, who had left the Party
Footnotes

(1) Fabravzavomy: short for frabrichno-zavodnye komitety.
(2) A.M. Pankratova. Fabavzavomy Rossvi borbe za sotsialisticheskyu fabriku (Russian Factory Committees in the struggle for the socialist factory). Moscow. 1923. p.9. Parts of this important document were published in the December 1967 (No. 34) issue of the French journal, Autogestion (page numbers refer to the French version).
(3) ibid., p. 12-13.
(4) ibid., p. 12.
(5) V.I. Lenin. Tasks of the Proletariat in our Revolution. Selected Works, vol. VI, p.62
(6) V.I. Lenin. Political Parties and Tasks of the Proletariat. ibid., p. 85-6.
(7) V.I. Lenin. Materials on Revision of Party Programme. ibid., pp. 116-117
(8) V.I. Lenin. Ruin is Threatening. ibid., p. 142.
(9) I. Kreizel. Iz Istoriy Prodtivzheniya g. Kharkova v 1917 godu (On the history of the Trade Union Movement in Kharkov in 1917). Referred to by Pankratova (op. cit., p.15). Kharkov, 1921
(10) A. Pankratova, op. cit., p.19.
(11) ibid., p.19.
(13) V.I. Lenin, Socheniyniya, XX, 459.
(14) S. O. Zagorsky, State Control of Industry in Russia during the War. (New Haven, 1928), pp. 174-5.
(17) ibid., para 6.
(18) ibid., p.323.
(20) ibid., p.13.
(22) Shestoi s’yezd RSDRP (b): Protokoly. (The Sixth Congress of the RSDWP (b): Protocols [1917]) Moscow: IMEL, 1934, p.134.
(23) Oktjabryskaia revolutsiya i fabavzomnye materialy po istoriy fabrichno-zavodskikh komitetov (The October Revolution and the Factory Committees: materials for a history of the Factory Committees), Moscow 1927-1929, 3 vols. 1, pp. 229, 259. These volumes (henceforth referred to as Okt. Rev. i Fabavzomnye) are the most useful source on the Factory Committees. (24) ibid., p. 190.
(25) ibid., p. 171.
(26) These are described in great detail in Okt. Rev. i Fabavzomnye.
(27) A. Pankratova, op. cit., p.25.
(28) ibid., p.25.
(29) ibid., p.29. So much for the workers “only being capable of trade union consciousness”.
(30) ibid., p. 36.
Footnotes

(1) P. Avrich, op. cit., p. 156. (Several secondary references given.)
(2) Pervy vserossiiski s’yezd professionalnykh soyu佐ov, 7 - 14 yanvarya 1918 . (First All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions, 7 - 14 January, 1918), Moscow 1918, p. 193. (Henceforth referred to as the first Trade Union Congress.)
(3) ibid page 212
(4) ibid page 48.
(5) ibid., p. 235.
(6) P. Avrich op cit p.168
(7) First Trade Union Congress p.85
(8) ibid., p. 239.
(9) ibid., p. 215.
(10) ibid., p. 85
(11) ibid., p. 85.
(12) ibid - , p. 221
(13) P. Avrich op. cit., pp. 168-169
(15) Quoted by A. S. Shlyapnikov, Die Russischen Gewerkschaften (The Russian Trade Unions), Leipzig, 1920. (In German.)
(16) First Trade Union Congress, p 374
(17) ibid., pp. 369 - 370.
(18) ibid., p. 369.
(19) ibid., p. 192.
(20) ibid., p. 230.
(21) ibid., p. 195.
(22) ibid., p. 369.
(23) ibid Adopted Resolution p. 370.
(24) F. Kaplan op. cit, p. 128.
(25) ibid., p. 181
(26) First Trade Union Congress, p.11
(27) ibid., p. 80.
(28) ibid., p. 364.
(29) ibid., preface.
(30) ibid., p. 27.
(31) ibid., p. 367.
(32) Vsesoyuzny s’yezd professionalnykh soyu佐ov tekstilshchikov i faorichnykh komitetov (Moscow 1918), p. 8.
(33) ibid., p. 5.
(34) ibid., p. 30.
(35) Sbornik delretov ipostanovleni po narodnomu khozyaistvu (Moscow 1918, p. 8.
(37) no footnote
(38) see 37 above
(39) see 37 above
(40) see 37 above
(43) Narodnoye Khozyaista No.2, 1918, p38
(44) K. Radek. ‘Posle pytamesyatsev’ (After five months), Kommunist No. 1, April 1918, pp. 3 - 4.

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ed of any meaningful decisional authority in the matters that concerned them most.

**September 28**

The Bolshevik trade union leader Tomsky declares at the First All-Russian Congress of Communist Railwaymen that “it was the task of the Communists firstly to create well-knit trade unions in their own industries, secondly to take possession of these organisations by tenacious work, thirdly to stand at the head of these organisations, fourthly to expel all non-proletarian organisations and fifthly to take the union under our own communist influence”. (79)

**October**

Government Decree reiterates the ruling that no body other than Vesenka “in its capacity as the central organ regulating and organising the whole production of the Republic” has the right to sequester industrial enterprises. (80) The need to publish such a decree suggests that local soviets, or perhaps even local Sovnarkhozy were doing just that.

**November 6 - 9**

Sixth All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

**November 25 - December 1**

Second All-Russian Conference of Anarcho-Syndicalists meets in Moscow.

**December**

A new decree abolished the regional Sovnarkhozy and recognised the provincial Sovnarkhozy as “executive organs of Vesenka”. The local Sovnarkhozy were to become ‘economic sections’ of the executive committees of the corresponding local soviets. The ‘glavki’ were to have their own subordinate organs at provincial headquarters. “This clearly represented a further step towards the centralised control of every branch of industry all over the country by its glavk or centre in Moscow, under the supreme authority of Vesenka. (81)

**December**

Second All-Russian Congress of Regional Economic Councils.

Molotov analysed the membership of the 20 most important ‘glavki’ and ‘centres’. Of 400 persons concerned, over 10% were former employers or employers’ representatives, 9% technicians, 38% officials from various departments (including Vesenka)... and the remaining 43% workers or representatives of workers’ organisations, including trade unions. The management of production was predominantly in the hands of persons “having no relation to the proletarian elements in industry”. The ‘glavki’ had to be regarded as “organs in no way corresponding to the proletarian dictatorship”. Those who directed policy were “employers’ representatives, technicians and specialists”. (82) “It was indisputable that the soviet bureaucrat of these early years was as a rule a former member of the bourgeois intelligentsia or official class, and brought with him many of the traditions of the old Russian bureaucracy”. (83)
1918

January 6

Dissolution of Constituent Assembly. The detachment which dispersed the Assembly was led by an anarchist Kronstadt sailor, Zheleznyakov, now commandant of the Tauride Palace Guard. He unseated the Chairman of the Assembly, Victor Chernov, with the blunt announcement: “The guard is tired”. (1)

January 7 - 14

First All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions held in Petrograd.

Two main themes were to dominate the Congress. What were to be the relations between the Factory Committees and the unions? And what were to be the relations between the trade unions and the new Russian state? Few delegates, at this stage, sensed the close relationship between these two questions. Still fewer perceived how a simultaneous resolution of the first question in favour of the unions and of the second in favour of the new ‘workers’ state’ would soon emasculate the Committees and in fact irrevocably undermine the proletarian nature of the regime.

The arguments at this Congress reflected matters of deep significance and will be referred to in some detail. In the balance lay the future of the Russian working class for many decades to come.

According to Lozovsky (a Bolshevik trade unionist) “the Factory Committees were so much the owners and masters that three months after the Revolution they were to a significant degree independent of the general controlling organs”. (2)

Maisky, then still a Menshevik, said that in his experience “it was not just some of the proletariat but most of the proletariat, especially in Petrograd, who looked upon workers’ control as if it were actually the emergence of the kingdom (tsarstvo) of socialism”. He lamented that among the workers “the very idea of socialism is embodied in the concept of workers’ control”. (3)

Another Menshevik delegate deplored the fact that “an anarchist wave in the shape of Factory Committees and workers’ control was sweeping over our Russian Labour movement” (4)

D. B. Ryazanov * a recent convert to Bolshevism, agreed with the Mensheviks on this point and urged the Factory Committees “to commit suicide by becoming an integral element of the trade union structure”. (5)

The few anarcho-syndicalist delegates to the Congress “fought a desperate battle to preserve the autonomy of the Committees... Maximov** ** claimed that he and his fellow anarcho-syndicalists were “better Marxists” than either the Mensheviks or the Bolsheviks - a declaration which caused a great stir in the hall”. (6)

He was alluding with no doubt to Marx’s statement that the liberation of the working class had to be brought about by the workers themselves. ***

* D. B. Ryazanov a Marxist scholar best known as the historiographer of the International Workingmen’s Association (the First International) later became the founder of the Marx - Engels Institute in Moscow and published a biography of Marx and Engels.

** Maximov

***

Aug 25 - Sept 1

First All-Russian Conference of Anarcho-Syndicalists meets in Moscow.

The industrial resolution accused the government of ‘betraying the working class with its suppression of workers’ control in favour of such capitalist devices as one-man management, labour discipline and the employment of ‘bourgeois’ engineers and technicians. By forsaking the Factory Committees - the beloved child of the great workers’ revolution - for those ‘dead organisations’, the trade unions, and by substituting decrees and red tape for industrial democracy, the Bolshevik leadership was creating a monster of ‘state capitalism’, a bureaucratic Behemoth, which it ludicrously called socialism”. (74)

Volny Colos Truda’ (The Free Voice of Labour) was established as the successor to Golos Truda (closed down in May 1918). The new paper was itself closed down after its fourth issue (September 16, 1918). This had contained an interesting article by ‘M. Sergedv’ (Maximov?) called Paths of Revolution. The article made a remarkable departure from the usual condemnation of the Bolsheviks as betrayers of the Working Class. Lenin and his followers were not necessarily cold-blooded cynics who, with Machiavellian cunning, had mapped out the new class structure in advance to satisfy their personal lust for power. Quite possibly they were motivated by a genuine concern for human suffering. But the division of society into administrators and workers followed inexorably from the centralisation of authority. It could not be otherwise. Once the functions of management and labour had become separated (the former assigned to a minority of “exports” and the latter to the untutored masses) all possibility of dignity or equality were destroyed. (75)

In the same issue Maximov slammed the ‘Manilovs’ (76) in the anarchist camp as “romantic visionaries who pined for pastoral utopias, oblivious of the complex forces at work in the modern world. It was time to stop dreaming of the Golden Age. It was time to organise and act”. For these principled yet realistic views Maximov and the anarcho-syndicalists were to be viciously attacked as anarcho-bureaucratic Judases by other tendencies in the anarchist movement. (77)

Aug 1918

A government decree fixes the composition of the Vesenka to 30 members nominated by the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions, 20 nominated by the Regional Councils of National Economy (Sovnarkhozy) and 10 nominated by the All-Russian Central Executive of the Soviets (V.Ts.I.K.). Current Vesenka business was to be entrusted to a Presidium of 9 other members, of whom the President and his Deputy were nominated by the Council of Peoples Commissars (Sovnarkom) and the others by the V.Ts.I.K. The Presidium was officially supposed to implement the policies decided at the monthly meetings of all 69 of the Vesenka’s members. But it soon came to undertake more and more of the work. After the autumn of 1918 full meetings of the Vesenka were no longer held. It had become a department of state. (78)

In other words, within a year of the capture of state power by the Bolsheviks, the relations of production (shaken for a while at the height of the mass movement) had reverted to the classical authoritarian pattern seen in all class societies. The workers as workers had been divest-
aimed at subordinating the owners of the means of production... But this co-existence soon became intolerable. The state of dual power between managers and workers soon led to the collapse of the enterprise. Or it rapidly became transformed into the total power of the workers, without the least authorisation of the central powers”. (68)

Much ‘left’ communist writing at this time stressed the theme that early nationalisation of the means of production would have avoided many of these ambiguities. Total expropriation of the capitalists would have allowed one to proceed immediately from ‘workers’ control to ‘workers’ management’ through the medium of some central organisational regulating the whole of the socialised economy. It is interesting that Lozovský, although at the time strongly opposed to the viewpoint of the ‘left’ communists (because he felt that the revolution had only been a ‘bourgeois-democratic revolution’) was later to write: ‘It was soon to be proved that in the era of social revolution, a constitutional monarchy in each enterprise (i.e. the previous boss, but only exercising limited power. M.B.) was impossible and that the former owner - however complex the structure of a modern enterprise - was a superficial cog’. (69)

A split occurred a little later among the ‘left’ communists. Radek reached an agreement with the Leninists. He was prepared to accept ‘one-man management’ in principle (not too hard a task for a non-proletarian?) because it was now to be applied in the context of the extensive nationalisation decrees of June 1918. In Radek’s opinion these decrees would help ensure the ‘proletarian basis of the regime.’ Bukharin too broke with Osinsky and rejoined the fold. Osinsky and his supporters however proceeded to form a new oppositional tendency: the ‘democratic centralists’ (so-called because of their opposition to the ‘bureaucratic centralism’ of the Party leadership). They continued to agitate for workers’ management of production. Their ideas, and those of the original group of ‘left’ communists were to play an important role in the development, two years later, of the Workers Opposition.

With the Civil War and War Communism the issues appeared, for a while, to become blurred. There was little production for any one to control. ‘The issues of 1918 however were only postponed. They could not be forgotten thanks to the left communists’ work of criticism. As soon as the military respite permitted, left wing oppositionists were ready to raise again the fundamental question of the social nature of the Soviet regime”. (70)

August
High point of Volga offensive by the Whites.
The Civil War immensely accelerated the process of economic centralisation. As a knowledge of previous Bolshevik practice might have led one to expect, this was to prove an extremely bureaucratic form of centralisation. The whole Russian economy was ‘reorganised’ on a semi-military basis. The Civil War tended to transform all major industry into a supply organisation for the Red Army. This made industrial policy a matter of military strategy. It is worth pointing out, at this stage, that we doubt if there is any intrinsic merit in centralisation, as some anarchists maintain. The Paris Commune, a Congress of Soviets (or a shop stewards’ committee or strike committee to take modern analogies) are all highly centralised yet fairly democratic. Feudalism on the other hand was both decentralised and highly bureaucratic. The key question is whether the ‘centralised’ apparatus is controlled from below (by elected and revocable representatives) or from above (by those on whose behalf it is allegedly acting. This period witnessed a considerable fall in production, due to a complex variety of factors which have been well described elsewhere. (71)

The trouble was often blamed by Party spokesmen on the influence of heretical ‘anarchosyndicalist’ ideas. Mistakes had certainly been made but what had been the growing pains of a new movement were now being attributed to the inherent vices of any attempt by the workers to dominate production. ‘Workers control over industry carried out by the Factory and Plant

Maximov urged the delegates to remember “that the Factory Committees, organisations introduced directly by life itself in the course of the Revolution, were the closest of all to the working class, much closer than the trade unions”. (7)

The function of the Committees was no longer to protect and improve the conditions of the workers. They had to seek a predominant position in industry and in the economy.

“As the offspring of the Revolution the Committees would create a new production on a new basis.” (8) The unions “which corresponded to the old economic relations of tsarist times had lived out their time and couldn’t take on this task”. (9)

Maximov anticipated “a great conflict between state power in the centre and the organisations composed exclusively of workers which are found in the localities”. (10)

“The aim of the proletariat was to co-ordinate all activity, all local interest, to create a centre but not a centre of decrees and ordinances but a centre of regulation, of guidance - and through such a centre to organise the industrial life of the country” (11)

Speaking on behalf of the Factory Committees, a rank and file worker, Belusov, made a scathing attack on the Party leaders. They continually criticised the Committees “for not acting according to rules and regulations” but then failed to produce any coherent plan of their own. They just talked. “All this will freeze local work. Are we to stand still locally, wait and do nothing? Only then will we make no mistakes. Only those who do nothing make no mistakes”. Real workers’ control was the solution to Russia’s economic disintegration. “The only way out remaining to the workers is to take the factories into their own hands and manage them”. (12)

Excitement in the Congress reached a climax when Bill Shatov “**** characterised the trade unions as ‘living corpses’ and urged the working class “to organise in the localities and create a free, new Russia, without a God, without a Tsar, and without a boss in the trade union”. When Ryazanov mentioned Shatov’s vilification of the Workers Opposition, Maximov rose to his comrade’s defence, dismissing Ryazanov’s objections as those of a whitehanded intellectual who had never worked, never sweated, never felt life. Another anarcho-syndicalist delegate, Laptev by name, reminded the gathering that the revolution had been made “not only by the intellectuals, but by the masses”, therefore it was imperative for Russia to “listen to the voice of the working masses, the voice from below”. (13)

The anarcho-syndicalist resolution calling for “real workers’ control, not state workers’ control”, and urging “that the organisation of production, transport and distribution be immediately transferred to the hands of the toiling people themselves and not to the state or some civil service machine made up of one kind or other of class enemy” was defeated. [The main strength

** Gregori Petrovich Maximov born in 1893. Graduated as an agronomist in Petrograd in 1915. Graduated as an agronomist in Petrograd in 1915. In 1918 joined the Red Army. When the Bolsheviks used the Army as a weapon against the bourgeoisie, Maximov rose to his comrade’s defence, dismissing Ryazanov’s objections as those of a whitehanded intellectual who had never worked, never sweated, never felt life. Another anarcho-syndicalist delegate, Laptev by name, reminded the gathering that the revolution had been made “not only by the intellectuals, but by the masses”, therefore it was imperative for Russia to “listen to the voice of the working masses, the voice from below”. (13)

In Berlin edited Rabotchi Put (The Worker’s Voice) the organ of Russian syndicalists in exile. Later went to Paris and finally settled in Chicago. Died 1950. Author of various works on anarchism and on the Bolshevik terror (The Guillotine at Work, 1940).

*** It is interesting that as great a ‘Marxist’ as Rosa Luxemburg was to proclaim at the founding Congress of the German Communist Party (January 1919) that the trade unions were destined to disappear being replaced by Councils of Workers and Soldiers Deputes and by Factory Committees. Bericht uber die Verhandlung des Grundungarteilages der KPD (1919), pp. 16, 80.
of the anarcho-syndicalists was among the miners of the Debaltzev district in the Don Basin, among the portworkers and cement workers of Ekaterinodar and Novorossiysk and among the Moscow railway workers. At the Congress they had 25 delegates (on the basis of one delegate per 3,000 - 3,500 members). (14) The new government would have none of all this talk about extending the power of the Committees. It clearly recognised in the unions a ‘more stable’ and ‘less anarchic’ force (i.e. a force more amenable to control from above) in which it could provisionally vest administrative functions in industry. The Bolshevists therefore urged “the trade union organisations, as class organisations of the proletariat constructed according to the industrial principle, to take upon themselves the main task of organising production and of restoring the weakened productive forces of the country”. (15) At a later stage the Bolshevists were to fight tooth and nail to divest the unions of these very functions and place them firmly in the hands of Party nominees. In fact the Party demands of January 1918 were again and again to be thrown back in the face of the Bolshevist leaders during the next 3 years. This will be dealt with further on.)

The Congress, with its overwhelming Bolshevist majority, voted to transform the Factory Committees into union organs. (16) The Menshevik and Social-Revolutionary delegates voted with the Bolshevists for a resolution proclaiming that “the centralisation of workers’ control was the task of the trade unions”. (17) “Workers’ control” was defined as “the instrument by which the universal economic plan must be put into effect locally”. (18) “It implied the definite idea of standardisation in the sphere of production”. (19) It was too bad if the workers read more into this term than this. “Just because the workers misunderstand and falsely interpret workers’ control is no reason to repudiate it”. (20) What the Party meant by workers’ control was spelt out in some detail. It meant, inter alia, that “it was not within the competence of the lower organs of workers’ control to be entrusted with financial control functions. This should rest with the highest organs of control, with the general apparatus of management, with the Supreme Council of National Economy. In the sphere of finance everything must be left to the higher organs of workers’ control”. (21) “For workers’ control to be of maximum use to the proletariat it was absolutely necessary to refrain from atomising it. Workers of individual enterprises should not be left the right to make final decisions on questions touching upon the existence of the enterprise”. (22) A lot of re-education was needed and this was to be entrusted to the “economic control commissions” of the unions. They were to inculcate into the ranks of the workers the Bolshevist conception of workers’ control. “The trade unions must go over each decree of the Factory Committees in the sphere of control, explain through their delegates at the factories and shops that control over production does not mean the transfer of the enter prise into the hands of the workers of a given enterprise, that it does not equal the socialisation of production and exchange”. (23) Once the Committees had been ‘devoured’ the unions were to be the intermediate agency through which workers’ control was gradually to be converted into state control. These were not abstract discussions. Underlying the controversies, what was at stake was the whole concept of socialism: workers’ power or the power of the Party acting on behalf of

June 28
Council of Peoples’ Commissars, after an all-night sitting, issues Decree on General Nationalisation involving all industrial enterprises with a capital of over one million rubles. The aims of the decree were “a decisive struggle against disorganisation in production and supply”. The sectors affected, whose assets were now declared the property of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic, were the mining, metallurgical, textile, electrical, timber, tobacco, resin, glass and pottery, leather and cement industries, all steam driven mills, local utilities and private railways, together with a few other minor industries. The task of “organising the administration of nationalised enterprises” was entrusted “as a matter of urgency” to Vesenka and its sections. But until Vesenka issued specific instructions regarding individual enterprises covered by the decree “such enterprises would be regarded as leased rent-free to their former owners, who would continue to finance them and to draw revenue from them”. (24)

The legal transfer of individual enterprises to the state was easily transacted. The assumption of managerial functions by appointees was to take a little longer but this process was also to be completed within a few months. Both steps had been accelerated under the, threat of foreign intervention. The change in the property relations had been deep - going. In this sense a profound revolution had taken place. “As the Revolution had unleashed Civil War, so Civil War was to intensify the Revolution”: (25)

But as far as any fundamental changes in the relations of production were concerned, the Revolution was already spent. The period of ‘war communism’ - now starting - was to see the working class lose what little power it had enjoyed in production, during the last few weeks of 1917 and the first few, weeks of 1918.

July 4 - 10

Fifth All Russian Congress of Soviets.

Throughout the first half of 1918 the issue of ‘nationalisation’ had been the subject of bitter controversy between the ‘left’ communists and the Leninists. Lenin had been opposed to the total nationalisation of the means of production, immediately after October. This was not because of any wish to do a political deal with the bourgeoisie but because of his underestimation of the technological and administrative maturity of the proletariat, a maturity that would have been put to an immediate test had all major industry been formally nationalised. The result had been an extremely complex situation in which some industries had been nationalised ‘from above’ (i.e. by decree of the Central Government), others ‘from below’ (i.e. where workers had taken over enterprises abandoned by their former owners), while in yet other places the former owners were still in charge of their factories - although restricted in their freedom of action or authority by the encroachment of the Factory Committees. Kritzman, one of the ablest theoreticians of ‘left’ communism had criticised this state of affairs from an early date. He had referred to the ‘Workers Control’ decree of November 14, 1917 as “half-measures, therefore unrealisable”. “As a slogan, workers’ control implied the growing but as yet insufficient power of the proletariat. It was the implied expression of a weakness, still to be overcome, of the working class movement. Employers would not be inclined to run their businesses with the sole aim of teaching the workers how to manage them. Conversely the workers felt only hatred for the capitalists and saw no reason why they should voluntarily remain exploited”. (26)

Osinsky, another ‘left’ communist, stressed another aspect. “The fate of the workers’ control was decided during the Fifth Congress of Soviets. ‘Workers’ control’ had been impossible without a reform of production. If the Congress now allowed mass nationalisation of industry, that meant that the whole concept of socialism was thirty years too late”. (27)

The issue of nationalisation was one of the most urgent tasks of the Congress. The new government would have none of this talk about extending the power of the Committees. It clearly recognised in the unions a ‘more stable’ and ‘less anarchic’ force (i.e. a force more amenable to control from above) in which it could provisionally vest administrative functions in industry. The Bolshevists therefore urged “the trade union organisations, as class organisations of the proletariat constructed according to the industrial principle, to take upon themselves the main task of organising production and of restoring the weakened productive forces of the country”. (15) At a later stage the Bolshevists were to fight tooth and nail to divest the unions of these very functions and place them firmly in the hands of Party nominees. In fact the Party demands of January 1918 were again and again to be thrown back in the face of the Bolshevist leaders during the next 3 years. This will be dealt with further on.)

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**** Vladimir Shatov born in Russia emigrated to Canada and USA. In 1914 secretly reprinted 100,000 copies of Margaret Sanger’s notorious birth - control pamphlet ‘Family limitation’. Worked as machinist longshoreman and printer. Joined IWW. Later helped produce Golos Truda, weekly anarcho - syndicalist organ of the Union of Russian workers of the United States and Canada. Returned to Petrograd in July 1917 and ‘replanted’ Golos Truda in the Russian capital. Later became member of Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee and an officer of the 10th Red Army. In 1919 he played important role in defence of Petrograd against Yudenich. In 1920 became Minister of Transport in the Far Eastern Soviet Republic. Disappeared during the 1936 - 38 purges.

IVANOSINSKY, another ‘left’ communist, stressed another aspect. “The fate of the workers’ control slogan,” he wrote “is most interesting. Born of the wish to unmask the opponent, it failed when it sought to convert itself into a system. Where, despite everything it fulfilled itself, its content altered completely from what we had originally envisaged. It took the form of a decentralised dictatorship, of the subordination of capitalists, taken individually, to various working class organisations acting independently of one another... Workers’ Control had originally been
used it with the aim of private accumulation) or good ones (as when the 'workers' state' used it for the benefit of the many). Lenin put this quite bluntly. "Socialism", he said, "is nothing but state capitalist monopoly made to benefit the whole people". (57) What was wrong with capitalist methods of production, in Lenin's eyes, was that they had in the past served the bourgeoisie. They were now going to be used by the Workers' State and would thereby become "one of the conditions of socialism". It all depended on who held state power. (58)

The argument that Russia was a workers state because of the nationalisation of the means of production was only put forward by Trotsky in 1936! He was trying to reconcile his view that; the Soviet Union had to be defended with his view that "the Bolshevik Party was no longer a workers' party".

May 24 - June 4
First All-Russian Congress of Regional Economic Councils held in Moscow. This 'economic Parliament' was attended by rather more than 100 voting delegates (and 150 non-voting delegates) drawn from Vesenka, its 'glavki' and centres, from regional and local Sovnarkhozy and from the trade unions. The Congress was presided over by Rykov - a man of "unimpeachable record and colourless opinions". (59) Lenin opened the proceedings with a plea for "labour discipline" and a long explanation for the need to employ the highly paid 'spetsy' (specialists).

Osinsky stood uncompromisingly for the democratisation of industry. He led an attack on 'piece rates' and 'Taylorism'. He was supported by Smirnov and a number of provincial delegates. The 'opposition' urged the completion and perfection of the de facto nationalisation of industry that the Factory Committees were bringing about and called for the establishment of an overall national economic authority based on and representing the organs of workers' control. (60)

They called for "a workers administration... not only from above but from below" as the indispensable economic base for the new regime. Lomov, in a plea for a massive extension of workers' control, warned that "bureaucratic centralisation... was strangling the forces of the country. "The masses are being cut off from living, creative power in all branches of our economy". He reminded the Congress that Lenin's phrase about "learning from the capitalists" had been coined in the eighteen nineties by the quasi-Marxist (and present bourgeois) Struve. (61) Then there took place one of those episodes that can highlight a whole discussion and epitomise the various viewpoints. A sub-committee of the Congress passed a resolution that two-thirds of the representatives on the management boards of industrial enterprises should be elected from among the workers. (62) Lenin was furious at this.

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May 25
Clashes between government forces and troops of the Czech Legion in the Urals. Anti-Bolshevik uprisings throughout Siberia and South Eastern Russia. Beginning of large-scale civil war and beginning of Allied intervention. [Those who wish to incriminate the Civil War for anti-proletarian Bolshevik practices can do so from now on.]

Maurice Brinton - Page 39

the working class. "If workers succeeded in maintaining their ownership of the factories they had seized, if they ran these factories for themselves, if they considered the revolution to be at an end, if they considered socialism to have been established then there would have been no need for the revolutionary leadership of the Bolsheviks." (24)

The bitterness with which the issue of the Factory Committees was discussed highlights another point.

"Although the Bolsheviks were in a majority at the first All-Russian Conference of Factory Committees - and although as representatives of the Factory Committees they could force resolutions through this Conference they could not enforce resolutions against the opposition of the Factory Committees themselves... The Factory Committees accepted Bolshevik leadership only so long as the Congress's in goals were not brought to the test". (25)

The First Trade Union Congress also witnessed a heated controversy on the question of the relation of the trade unions to the state. The Mensheviks claiming that the revolution could only usher in a bourgeois - democratic republic, insisted on the autonomy of the unions in relation to the new Russian state. As Maxis put it: "If capitalism remains intact, the tasks with which trade unions are confronted under capitalism remain unaltered". (26) Others too felt that capitalism would revert itself and that the unions should do nothing that would impair their power. Martov put a more sophisticated viewpoint: "In this historic situation" he said "this government cannot represent the working class alone It cannot but be a de facto administration connected with a heterogeneous mass of toiling people, with proletarian and non-proletarian elements alike. It cannot therefore conduct its economic policy along the lines of consistently and clearly expressed working class interests." (27) The trade unions could. Therefore the trade unions should retain a certain independence in relation to the new state. It is interesting that in his 1921 controversy with Trotsky - when incidentally it was far too late - Lenin was to use much the same kind of argument. He was to stress the need for the workers to defend themselves against 'their own' state, defined as not just a 'workers' state, but a workers and peasants' state' and more over one with 'bureaucratic deformations'.

The Bolshevik viewpoint, supported by Lenin and Trotsky and voiced by Zinoviev, was that the trade unions should be subordinated to the government, although not assimilated with it. Trade union neutrality was officially labelled a 'bourgeois' idea, an anomaly in a workers' state. (28) The resolution adopted by the Congress clearly expressed these dominant ideas:

"The trade unions ought to shoulder the main burden of organising production and of rehabilitating the country's shattered economic forces. Their most urgent tasks consist in their energetic participation in all central bodies called upon to regulate output, in the organisation of workers' control (sic!), in the registration and distribution of the labour force, in the organisation of exchange between town and countryside... in the struggle against sabotage and in enforcing the general obligation to work..."

"As they develop the trade unions should, in the process of the present socialist revolution, become organs of socialist power, and as such they should work in co-ordination with and subordination to other bodies in order to carry into effect the new principles... The Congress is convinced that in consequence of the forestalled process, the trade unions will inevitably become transformed into organs of the socialist state. Participation in the trade unions will for all people employed in any industry be their duty vis-a-vis the State".

The Bolsheviks did not unanimously accept Lenin's views on these questions. While Tomsky, their main spokesman on trade union affairs, pointed out that "sectional interests of groups of workers had to be subordinated to the interests of the entire class" (29) which like so many Bolsheviks he wrongly identified with the hegemony of the Bolshevik Party - Ryazanov argued that "as long as the social revolution did not begin here he had no reason to anticipate the revolution of Europe and of the whole world... the Russian proletariat... must be on its guard and must not renounce a single one of its weapons... it must maintain its trade union organisation".
According to Zinoviev, the "independence of the trade unions under a workers' government could mean nothing except the right to support 'saboteurs'". Despite this, a prominent Bolshevik trade unionist, proposed that the Congress ratify the right of unions to continue to resort to strike action in defence of their members. A resolution to this effect was however defeated (31).

As might be expected the dominant attitude of the dominant Party (both in relation to the Factory Committees and in relation to the unions) was to play an important role in the subsequent development of events. It was to prove as much an 'objective fact of history' as the 'dev-astation' and the 'atomisation of the working class' caused by the (subsequent) Civil War. It could, in fact, be argued that Bolshevik attitudes to the Factory Committees (and the dashing of the great hopes that those Committees represented for hundreds of thousands of workers) were to engender or reinforce working class apathy and cynicism, and contribute to absenteeism and to the seeking of private solutions to what were social problems, all of which the Bolsheviks were so loudly to decry. It is above all essential to stress that the Bolshevik policy in relation to the Committees and to the unions which we have documented in some detail was being put forward twelve months before the murder of Karl Liebknecht and of Rosa Luxemburg - i.e., before the irrevocable failure of the German revolution, an event usually taken as 'justifying' many of the measures taken by the Russian rulers.

January 15 - 21
First All-Russian Congress of Textile Workers held in Moscow.
Bolsheviks in a majority. The Congress declared that "workers' control is only a transitional step to the planned organisation of production and distribution". (52) The union adopted new statutes proclaiming that "the lowest cell of the union is the Factory committee whose obligation consists of putting into effect, in a given enterprise, all the decrees of the union". (33) Even the big stick was waved. Addressing the Congress, Lozovsky stated that "if the local patriotism of individual factories conflicts with the interests of the whole proletariat, we unconditionally state that we will not hesitate before any measures (my emphasis. M.B.) for the suppression of tendencies harmful to the toilers". (34) The Party, in other words, can impose its concept of the interests of the working class, even against the workers themselves.

January 23 - 31
Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets

February
Bolshevik decree nationalising the land.

March 3
Signature of Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty.

Decree issued by Vesenka defining the functions of technical management in industry. Each administrative centre was to appoint to every enterprise under its care a commissioner (who would be the government representative and supervisor) and two directors (one technical and the other administrative). The technical director could only be overruled by the government commissioner or by the 'Central Direction' of the industry. (In other words only the 'administrative director' was under some kind of control from below).

The decree laid down the principle that "in rationalised enterprises workers' control is exercised by submitting all declarations and decisions of the Factory or Shop Committee, or of the control commission, to the Economic Administrative Council for approval". "Not more than half..."
settlement of these important issues, profoundly affecting the whole working class, had not been "by discussion, persuasion or compromise, but by a high pressure campaign in the Party organisations, backed by a barrage of violent invective in the Party press and in the pronouncements of the Party leaders. Lenin's polemics set the tone and his organisational lieutenants brought the membership into line". (49) Many in the traditional revolutionary movement will be thoroughly familiar with these methods!

April 28

Lenin's article on "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government" published in Isvestiya of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. "Measures and decrees" were called for "to raise labour discipline" which was "the condition of economic revival". (Among the measures suggested were the introduction of a card system for registering the productivity of each worker, the introduction of factory regulations in every enter prise, the establishment of rate of output bureaux for the purpose of fixing the output of each worker and payment of bonuses for increased productivity.)

If Lenin ever sensed the potentially harmful aspects of these proposals he certainly never mentioned it. No great imagination was needed, however, to see in the pen pushers (recording the "productivity of each worker") and in the clerks (managing the "rate of output bureaux") the as yet amorphous elements of a new bureaucracy.

Lenin went even further. He wrote: "We must raise the question of piece-work and apply and test it in practice... we must raise the question of applying much of what is scientific and progressive in the Taylor system (50) ... the Soviet Republic must at all costs adopt all that is valuable in the achievements of science and technology in this field... we must organise in Russia the study and teaching of the Taylor system". Only "the conscious representatives of petty bourgeois laxity" could see in the recent decree on the management of the railways "which granted individual leaders dictatorial powers" some kind of "departure from the collegium principle, from democracy and from other principles of Soviet government".

"The irrefutable experience of history has shown that the dictatorship of individual persons was very often the vehicle, the channel of the dictatorship of the revolutionary classes".

"Large-scale machine industry which is the material productive source and foundation of socialism - calls for absolute and strict unity of will... How can strict unity of will be ensured? By thousands subordinating their will to the will of one".

"Unquestioning submission (emphasis in original) to a single will is absolutely necessary for the success of labour processes that are based on large - scale machine industry... today the Revolution demands, in the interests of socialism, that the masses unquestioningly obey the single will (emphasis in original) of the leaders of the labour process". (51)

The demand for 'unquestioning' obedience has, throughout history, been voiced by countless reactionaries, who have sought moreover to impose such obedience on those over whom they exerted authority. A highly-critical (and self-critical) attitude is, on the other hand, the hallmark of the real revolutionary.

May

Burevestnik, Anarkhia, Golos Truda and other leading anarchist periodicals closed down.

Preobrazhensky, writing in Kommunist warns "The Party will soon have to decide to what degree the dictatorship of individuals will be extended from the railroads and other branches of the economy to the Party itself". (52)
March 26

Izvestiya of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee publishes Decree (issued by the Council of Peoples Commissars) on the “centralisation of railway management”. This decree, which ended workers’ control on the railways was “an absolutely necessary prerequisite for the improvement of the conditions of the transport system”. (39)

It stressed the urgency of “iron labour discipline” and “individual management” on the railways and granted “dictatorial” powers to the Commissariat of Ways of Communication. Clause 6 proclaimed the need for selected individuals to act as “administrative technical executives” in every local, district or regional railway centre. These individuals were to be “responsible to the People’s Commissars of Ways of Communication”. They were to be “the embodiment of the whole of the dictatorial power of the proletariat in the given railway centre”. (40)

March 30

Trotsky, appointed Commissar of Military Affairs after Brest-Litovsk, had rapidly been reorganising the Red Army. The death penalty for disobedience under fire had been restored. So, more gradually, had saluting, special forms of address, separate living quarters and other privileges for officers. * Democratic forms of organisation, including the election of officers, had been quickly dispensed with. “The elective basis”, Trotsky wrote, “is politically pointless and technically an expedient and has already been set aside by decree”. (41)

N. V. Krylenko, one of the co-commissars of Military Affairs appointed after the October Revolution, had resigned in disgust from the Defence Establishment (42) as a result of these measures.

April 3

The Central Council of Trade Unions issued its first detailed pronouncement on the function of the trade unions in relation to ‘labour discipline’ and ‘incentives’. The trade unions should “apply all their efforts to raise the productivity of labour and consistently create in factories and workshops the indispensable foundations of labour discipline”. Every union should establish a commission “to fix norms of productivity for every trade and category of workers”. The use of piece rates “to raise the productivity of labour” was conceded. It was claimed that “bonuses for increased productivity above the established norm may within certain limits be a useful measure for raising productivity without exhausting the worker”. Finally, if “individual groups of workers” refused to submit to union discipline, they could in the last resort be expelled from the union “with all the consequences that flow there from”. (43)

April 11 - 12

Armed detachments of Cheka raid 26 anarchist centres in Moscow. Fighting breaks out between Cheka agents and Black Guardsmen in Donskoi Monastery. Forty anarchists killed or wounded, over 500 taken prisoner.

April 20

The issue of workers’ control was now being widely discussed within the Party. Leningrad District Committee publishes first issue of Kommunist (a ‘left’ communist theoretical journal edited by Bukharin, Radek and Osinsky, later to be joined by Smirnov). This issue contained the editors: “Theses on the Present Situation”.

The paper denounced “a labour policy designed to implant discipline among the workers under the flag of ‘self-discipline’, the introduction of labour service for workers, piece-rates, and the lengthening of the working day”. It proclaimed that “the introduction of labour discipline in connection with the restoration of capitalist management of industry cannot really increase the productivity of labour”. It would “diminish the class initiative, activity and organisation of the proletariat. It threatens to enslave the working class. It will arouse discontent among the backward elements as well as among the vanguard of the proletariat. In order to introduce this system in the face of the hatred prevailing at present among the proletariat against the ‘capitalist saboteurs’ the Communist Party would have to rely on the petty-bourgeoisie, as against the workers”. It would “ruin itself as the party of the proletariat”.

The first issue of the new paper also contained a serious warning by Radek: “If the Russian Revolution were overthrown by violence on the part of the bourgeois counter-revolution it would rise again like a phoenix; if however it lost its socialist character and thereby disappointed the working masses, the blow would have ten times more terrible consequences for the future of the Russian and the international revolution”. (44)

The same issue warned of “bureaucratic centralisation, the rule of various commissars, the loss of independence for local soviets and in practice the rejection of the type of state - commune administered from below”. (45)

“It was all very well”, Bukharin pointed out, “to say as Lenin had (in State and Revolution) that each cook should learn to manage the State. But what happened when each cook had a commissar appointed to order him about?” The second issue of the paper contained some prophetic comments by Osinsky: “We stand for the construction of the proletariat society by the class creativity of the workers themselves, not by the ukases of the captains of industry... if the proletariat itself does not know how to create the necessary prerequisites for the socialist organisation of labour no one can do this for it and no one can compel it to do this. The stick, if raised against the workers, will find itself in the hands of a social force which is either under the influence of another social class or is in the hands of the soviet power; but the soviet power will then be forced to seek support against the proletariat from another class (e.g. the peasantry) and by this it will destroy itself as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Socialism and socialist organisation will be set up by the proletariat itself, or they will not be set up at all - something else will be set up - state capitalism”. (46)

Lenin reacted very sharply. The usual vituperation followed. The views of the ‘left’ Communists were “a disgrace”, “a complete renunciation of communism in practice”, “a desertion to the camp of the petty bourgeoisie”. (47) The left were being “provoked by the Isuvs (Mensheviks) and other Judases of capitalism”. A campaign was whipped up in Leningrad that compelled Kommunist to transfer publication to Moscow, where the paper reappeared first under the auspices of the Moscow Regional Organisation of the Party, later as the “unofficial” mouthpiece of a group of comrades. After the appearance of the first issue of the paper a hastily convened Leningrad Party Conference produced a majority for Lenin and “demanded that the adherents of Kommunist cease their separate organisational existence”. (48)

So much for alleged factional rights, in 1918! (i.e. long before the 10th Congress officially prohibited factions - in 1921)

During the following months the Leninists succeeded in extending their organisational control into areas that had originally backed the ‘lefts’. By the end of May the predominantly proletarian Party organisation in the Urals region, led by Preobrazhenskii, and the Moscow Regional Bureau of the Party had been won back by the supporters of the Party leadership. The fourth and final issue of Kommunist (May 1918) had to be published as a private factional paper. The

* For years Trotskyist literature has denounced these reactionary faces of the Red Army as examples of what happened to it ‘under Stalinism’. They were in fact first challenged by Smirnov at the Eighth Party Congress, in March 1919.