

The Workers' Movement in Russia

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1. The Workers' Movement in Russia

At one level the story of the workers' movement in Russia can be briefly told. Although the workers' movement appeared to play a decisive role in the collapse of the project of perestroika, in the confrontation between Yeltsin and Gorbachev, and in the disintegration of the Soviet Union, it was a mere bubble, formed in 1989, inflated in 1991, and burst in 1992.

There is some truth in this caricature, but at the same time it was not an empty bubble. There are around eighty million workers in Russia, the vast majority of whom are as disillusioned with the new system as they were with the old, facing threats to their livelihood, to their security and to their peace of mind, engaged in conflicts at work almost every day of their lives. A significant number of such workers put their faith in the new workers' movement, and the fact that the movement itself has faded does not mean that the problems that it addressed have gone away.

It is not sufficient to note that the new workers' movement failed to live up to the high hopes and expectations placed in it. It is important to begin to understand why it failed, to draw lessons from that failure for the future. In this book our aim is not so much to provide such an explanation, which we have outlined elsewhere, as to provide some of the evidence on which to base further discussion of such explanations and understandings, evidence which incidentally may provide some insight into the wider political processes of the perestroika and post-perestroika eras.

With this aim in view, we have focused in this book on a detailed study of three very different organizations, each of which has had national significance, and which typify the three different ways in which new workers' organizations have developed. The Independent Miners' Union in the Kuznetsk coal basin (Kuzbass) in Western Siberia grew from the base up, out of the miners' strikes of 1989 and 1991. Sotsprof, originally formed in 1989 as the Association of Socialist Trade Unions, grew from the top down, developing primary groups from 1991. The Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Unions estab-

lished its independence on the basis of a split in the official state trade union of the aviation industry.

The focus on national organizations gives an exaggerated view of both the strengths and the weaknesses of the new workers' movement. The political significance of the new workers' movement between 1989 and 1991 depended on the specific political conjuncture in which workers' organisations had a weight out of all proportion to their real strength in terms of the activities of organized workers on the ground. On the other hand, the decline of the organizations of the new workers' movement since 1991 has not been linked to a diminution in such grass roots activity, which has, if anything, increased, although in less favourable circumstances and less dramatic form. Moreover, the very fact of independent workers' activity had an impact, all be it small and undramatic, on the former official trade unions, whose modest reform was a factor in the decline of the new workers' movement and perhaps an indicator of further changes to come.

Our aim in this book is therefore to locate the new workers' movement in Russia in its connections with the workers it claims to represent as well as with the national and local political authorities to whom it addresses its demands and whose development it seeks to influence. We would like to try to paint a picture that has sufficient depth to enable us not so much to judge as to understand the course of development of the new workers' movement. The scope of the subject means that the picture necessarily remains impressionistic, with a number of linked vignettes, rather than offering a systematic treatment of the movement at all levels. But to do the latter would require a lifetime of work, a tolerant publisher and a patient reader. Before saying something about our approach to the subject, it is necessary briefly to put the elements of the workers' movement studied in this book into their wider context.¹

Although the Soviet Union was nominally a workers' state, Soviet workers were systematically denied any institutional channels through which they could express and articulate their own interests, grievances and aspirations. The trade unions were strictly 'democratic centralist' organizations, supposedly expressing the interests of the working-class as a whole, as those were defined by the programmes and resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and interpreted and implemented by local Party committees. Within the workplace the trade union's primary responsibility was to make its contribution to the realization of the interests of the working-class as a whole by encour-

aging the intensification of labour, reducing labour turnover, improving the 'discipline' of labour, and encouraging the educational, social and moral development of the class.

Workers' resistance was constant and pervasive, but it was expressed, dissipated and defused through the informal relations of the workplace. Spontaneous work stoppages by small groups of workers seem to have been fairly common, and most people knew of cases of demonstrations or riots which extended beyond the limits of the workplace, but these were rare, and were always suppressed by force, the most brutal being in Novocherkassk in 1962. However, worker opposition only very rarely took on an organized or public form – there was little contact, and no love lost, between worker activists and intellectual 'dissidents'.

Vladimir Klebanov, who came to the attention of the West when he protested publicly and was arrested in Moscow in 1978, had had a small organization in the Makeevka mine in the Ukrainian Donbass since the 1950s. On his release from psychiatric hospital he reconstituted his 'Combined All-Union Central Committee of Free Trade Unions' in 1988.² Similar groups, usually comprising a single ideologist/leader surrounded by a small number of dedicated followers, could be found in other enterprises and other cities, but were equally ruthlessly victimized if their activities or writings were discovered by the authorities. The Inter-Professional Union of Workers (SMOT) had been established in 1978, inspired by Klebanov's protest and providing a link between a small number of dissident intellectuals, with its roots mainly among engineering-technical workers (ITR). SMOT had been effectively smashed in the early 1980s as three of its key leaders were arrested and two others deported to the West, but, like Klebanov and many other imprisoned dissidents, its former leaders resumed their activities as soon as they were released under Gorbachev's amnesty in 1987. SMOT had links with the Christian Democratic 'Popular-Labour Union' (NTS), an *émigré* organization originally established in 1930 as the National Union of Russian Youth (NSRM). The NTS was a political organization, but sought particularly to recruit workers on the basis of its strongly anti-Communist Christian ideology of 'popular-labour solidarity'. NTS had always claimed to have an underground network in the Soviet Union, and organized openly from 1988. These and other groups could not be called workers' *organizations*, because even where they recruited workers they were strongly individualistic, following the line of exemplary individual protest, and this heritage,

understandable in the period of repression, carried through into the first phase of the open workers' movement.

The disruption caused by the early phase of perestroika, and particularly by Gorbachev's wage reform, provoked a growing number of small wildcat strikes, which were usually settled rapidly in the traditional Soviet way with immediate concessions designed to placate and isolate the striking workers, although a strike at the Yaroslavl Motor Factory in December 1987 grew beyond the authorities' control, and lasted for a week.³

Although most of these strikes and other forms of protest left no immediate organizational legacy, a new wave of activists emerged through them, and it was often these people who formed the nuclei of the small workers' groups which began to be formed in cities around the Soviet Union. The ideology of these groups was predominantly syndicalist, appealing to Soviet workers' antipathy to the intelligentsia by demanding the sharp reduction of the administrative apparatus, the sacking of managerial and technical staff and some form of workers' control. This anti-intelligentsia workerism greatly facilitated the efforts of Party and KGB authorities to prevent the formation of links between such workers' groups and the emerging democratic movement.⁴

The period from the January 1987 Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), at which Gorbachev opened the flood gates of 'democratization', to the Nineteenth Party Conference of June 1988, at which he signed the Party's death warrant by announcing the transfer of executive power to elected soviets, was dominated by the activity of social-political organizations, taking advantage of glasnost to agitate more or less cautiously for democratic reform in accordance with the spirit of perestroika, legitimating their activity by reference to Gorbachev's 1987 call for 'perestroika from below'. These organizations were primarily discussion groups, dominated by students and young people, organizing meetings and publishing leaflets primarily directed against conservative elements in the local Party apparatus but also waging campaigns over ecological issues, environmental conditions and similar relatively 'safe' political problems.

The Democratic Union (DS) was formed as the first openly declared opposition political party in May 1988 with a membership dominated by students, but with a nucleus of more seasoned agitators. DS adopted a radical abstentionist position in relation to any electoral

process not based on free multi-party elections, and sought to develop a popular base for its liberal democratic programme through propaganda and deliberately provocative demonstrations. However, the bulk of the democratic movement continued to work within the system, seeking to take advantage of the concessions of glasnost and perestroika to contest both internal Party and public elections, spurred initially by the selection of delegates for the Nineteenth Party Conference in which the Party apparatus tried to squeeze out leading reform Communists. At that Conference, in June 1988, Gorbachev announced that a new USSR Congress of People's Deputies would be elected the following spring, as the basis for a transfer of executive power from Party organs to elected soviets. The elections to the Congress in March 1989 provided a focus for concerted political mobilization, since they provided some opportunity to contest the election of those sponsored by the apparatus and even, if a number of hurdles were overcome, to put up independent candidates. The final piece in the electoral jigsaw was the March 1990 elections to local soviets and Republican Congresses, in which in Moscow, Leningrad and Russia as a whole self-proclaimed democrats (the majority still Party members) secured a majority of seats.

The movement from protest to election on the part of the democratic movement led the various democratic groups to try to link up with the nascent workers' organizations. In some cities 'Workers' Clubs' were established to link democratic intellectuals and worker activists. Following the lead of the Baltic Republics, Popular Fronts were set up in many cities during 1988 which, although hardly united, brought together activists from a wide range of oppositional groups and managed to call sizeable demonstrations in favour of democratic reform, although only in a few cities (such as Yaroslavl, Perm', Sverdlovsk and to a lesser extent Leningrad) was there significant workers' participation.⁵ During 1989 informal activists sought to establish closer links with workers' organizations, with the establishment of the Club for the Democratization of Trade Unions (KDP) in Leningrad in February 1989 and Sotsprof, the 'Association of Socialist [later Social] Trade Unions', in Moscow in April 1989, although the former disintegrated in June 1989, and Sotsprof was riven with internal conflict until it split at the end of 1990. In July 1989 Sotsprof co-sponsored a controversial Congress of Informal Workers' Organizations with the official trade union body VTsSPS, which again came to nothing. A conference of workers' organizations near Sverdlovsk in

August 1988 was more successful in bringing grassroots worker activists together, leading to the formation of groups of the union *Rabochii*, originally founded in Sverdlovsk in March 1987, in Perm', Magnitogorsk and Chelyabinsk, and establishing links with similar syndicalist-inclined groups in other cities, including Moscow, Kuibyshev (Samara) and Gorki (Nizhni Novgorod). However, none of these groups had more than a handful of members, owing their existence to the indefatigable efforts of one or two individuals. In Leningrad, meanwhile,⁶ the trade unions *Spravedlivost'* (Justice) and *Nezavisimost'* (Independence) emerged from the wreckage of the KDP.⁷ Following their success in the March 1990 elections the democrats lost interest in the workers' movement to concentrate on exploiting their new political positions in the apparatus, sometimes for political but too often for personal advantage.⁸

The miners' strike of July 1989, which began in the Kuznetsk coal basin (Kuzbass) in Western Siberia and soon spread to the coalfields of Vorkuta, Donbass in Ukraine and Karaganda in Kazakhstan, fundamentally transformed the significance of the workers' movement in the political development of the Soviet Union. The Kuzbass miners established a regional workers' committee, with representatives of all the mining towns, while in Vorkuta and Donetsk workers' committees linking all the mines in the city were established. Although the miners' leaders insisted that the strike was purely economic, it was not long before the workers' committees began putting forward political demands, including the demand for the repeal of Article Six of the Soviet Constitution, which guaranteed the leading role of the Communist Party, and the removal of Party committees from the territory of coal-mining enterprises. These demands were put forward by the Vorkuta miners in a political strike in the autumn of 1989 in which the influence of representatives of the Democratic Union was significant.

The Kuzbass miners established connections with the reformist Inter-Regional Group of People's Deputies, and in particular with Boris Yeltsin. After consultation with Yeltsin, the Kuzbass miners called an anniversary strike in July 1990 on the eve of Yeltsin's dramatic resignation from the Communist Party, but a political strike called in January 1991 proved a dismal failure. However, a further miners' strike across the Soviet Union lasting from March to May 1991, which was again co-ordinated with Yeltsin and his supporters, marked the high point in the impact of the workers' movement, backing Yeltsin and republican autonomy against Gorbachev and the preservation of

the Soviet Union, and playing a part in opening up the division between Gorbachev and his Prime Minister Pavlov that culminated in the abortive *putsch* of August 1991. However, the final showdown between Yeltsin and Gorbachev made it clear that the workers' movement had been decisive not in its own right, but in a struggle for power between contending factions of the ruling stratum.

Following Yeltsin's counter-*putsch*, the old apparatus gradually reconstituted itself in a new guise. The rhetoric of the transition to a market economy and a democratic polity concealed a shift in the balance of power from ministries to monopolistic enterprises and associations, from the Party to the executive branch of the state apparatus, and from the centre to the regions, all of which considerably weakened the political position of the workers' movement. Yeltsin felt that he had paid his debts to the miners with a tripling of their wages in May 1991, soon eroded by inflation, although the leaders of the Independent Miners' Union (NPG) remained faithful to Yeltsin until the spring of 1994, when some Vorkuta mines came out on strike with the demand for his resignation, a demand soon echoed in Kuzbass.

The NPG leaders had banked on exploiting their political connections in Moscow, rather than building up their organization on the ground, and the gamble had not come off. While the miners' leaders still had access to Yeltsin during 1992, his government moved progressively closer to the official trade union federation (FNPR), taming the official unions with implicit and explicit threats to remove their property and privileges. The government was still willing to sign agreements with the miners' leaders, but it was by no means as eager to implement them. But every time the NPG leaders prepared to call a strike, the political polarization between Yeltsin and the Congress of People's Deputies forced them back into Yeltsin's arms. When the government invited the World Bank to collaborate with it in drawing up a programme for the destruction of the industry, the NPG leaders participated enthusiastically, in the naive belief that the jobs of the underground miners whom it represented would be preserved.

The same fate befell Sotsprof, which had been reconstituted in 1991 following a bitter split, but which started off with no significant working-class base. However, Sotsprof had close connections with the Social Democratic Party, which gave it access first to the Moscow city soviet (Mossoviet), which provided it with office facilities and with political, legal and administrative support, and then, following Yeltsin's counter-*putsch*, to the Ministry of Labour, which was initially a

Social Democratic Party fiefdom and through which Sotsprof emerged as official representative of the independent workers' movement, with three seats on the Tripartite Commission for 1992. The Sotsprof leaders drafted the Law on Collective Agreements, passed in March 1992, which they were then able to use to build up their organization by asserting the legal obligation of management to negotiate a collective agreement with any established trade union. However, Sotsprof's success was not to last as the government moved closer to the official unions, with the Sotsprof representatives being removed from the Tripartite Commission and the Ministry of Labour being taken away from the Social Democrats at the end of 1992. As Sotsprof lost its political influence, so its ability to defend its members was undermined and enterprise directors became more confident in resisting its demands. In the summer of 1993 its last prop was removed, when a government resolution effectively reversed the provisions of the Law on Collective Agreements. Sotsprof concentrated increasingly on pursuing cases through the courts, primarily with regard to illegal dismissals, refusal to negotiate a collective agreement, and delays in the payment of wages.

The miners' workers committees had established their Independent Miners' Union (NPG) in 1990, although the union only really became established on the ground after the 1991 strike, gradually displacing the workers' committees as trade union activity came to assume precedence over political action. Sotsprof had similarly been set up as the trade union arm of a political organization, the Social Democratic Party, although the two had gradually drifted apart. Independent trade unions arose in other regions and other branches of production, but most were tiny, confined to one factory or one shop, and usually formed with the principal purpose of defending their members from victimization since, under Soviet labour law, workers could not be dismissed without the permission of their union. The majority of such unions emerged in transport and engineering, with the most active and effective being those which organized skilled transport workers, such as bus drivers (more rarely tram and trolleybus drivers, who are often women and are considered less skilled), metro and train drivers, dockers and seafarers. In some cities these small unions came together in city-wide committees, but they had few resources and a very limited ability to do more than pass resolutions and attempt to defend their own members against victimization. It was primarily such micro-

unions which affiliated to Sotsprof in the attempt to secure outside support and, particularly, legal services.

The most effective of the independent trade unions was that of the air traffic controllers, FPAD, originally formed as a breakaway from the official union of aviation workers and on that basis organizing the overwhelming majority of Russian air traffic controllers.⁹ FPAD was very successful in pressing the claims of its members against the Soviet government in 1991, and actively supported Yeltsin in his resistance to the August *putsch*. They were rewarded with a very favourable tariff agreement covering the profession, signed by the government in May 1992 following a strike threat. However, finding that the agreement was not being implemented on the ground, they issued another strike call for August against the old-guard bureaucrats who, they thought, were thwarting the implementation of the government's laws and the President's decrees. To their shock their bluff was called, and with Yeltsin and Gaidar away they found themselves face to face with Vice-President Rutskoi, who threatened them with prosecution and their union with destruction. The strike collapsed in the midst of widespread intimidation. Still convinced that Yeltsin would support them if only he knew of their case, the air traffic controllers threatened to strike again in November, but found themselves faced with the prosecution threatened by Rutskoi. The strike was called off at the last minute with empty promises that victimization would cease. Like Sotsprof, they found the ground cut away from under their strategy of collective bargaining by changes in government policy and by opposition from the official union. However, the reorganization of the air traffic control system in 1994 provided them with a lifeline.

It is impossible to provide a complete picture of the workers' movement in Russia in the space of a single book, or even a series of volumes. One could fill a large book with accounts of the dozens (if not hundreds) of congresses of workers' organizations, with discussion of the resolutions passed, programmes adopted and slogans proclaimed. One could fill a book with an account of the daily life of workers in one factory, or even in one brigade, living through perestroika and reform. In preparing this book we have done a great deal of research at both ends of the spectrum, collecting documentary materials, attending congresses, conferences, plenums and meetings, interviewing leaders and activists in the workers' movement, and interviewing and observing life in the workplace in the period of transition.¹⁰

Our original intention had been to discuss the development of the workers' movement in a number of Russian regions: Kuzbass, Vorkuta, St Petersburg, Samara, Moscow and the Urals (Chelyabinsk, Yekaterinburg, Perm'), and possibly the Ukrainian Donbass, having conducted interviews, attended meetings and collected documentary materials on the workers' movement in all those regions. However, as we wrote up the material it became clear that a comprehensive account based on the materials we already had would be far too long, and would become repetitive since many tendencies and developments in one region are duplicated in others. Moreover Russia is a big country, communications are bad, and even local newspapers are extremely imperfect and unreliable sources of information, so that having conducted and written up the basic research another few months had passed, requiring another round of research to bring the material up to date. Rather than produce a wide-ranging but summary account we decided to focus this book on three contrasting moments of the workers' movement: the miners' movement in Kuzbass, Sotsprof, and the Federation of Trade Unions of Air Traffic Controllers. We also decided to end the systematic account with the elections of December 1993, which not only provided a convenient break, but also marked the definitive marginalization of the new workers' movement. We then address developments in 1994 and future prospects at a more summary level.

The three organizations selected for study are the only new workers' organizations which have had a national political significance, and so from a political science point of view our account is reasonably comprehensive.¹¹ In focusing our account of the miners' movement on Kuzbass we have deliberately ignored the other coalfields, which might lead to the justifiable charge that this makes our account very one-sided. We have carried out extensive research in Vorkuta and Chelyabinsk in particular and can confirm that the development of the miners' movement in the other coalfields has certainly been different from that in Kuzbass. However, Kuzbass, which is by far the largest of the coalfields, has dominated the representation of the miners at national level through the Independent Miners' Union of Russia, whose President is from Kuzbass, with little input from or co-ordination with the activities and demands of the other coalfields which have tended to be much more parochial.

The Vorkuta miners have been more militant, more highly politicized, and less strongly committed to Yeltsin and his apparatus than

those of Kuzbass, but their main concern at national level has been to press the particular interests of Vorkuta as part of the arctic Northern Region. Until Yeltsin's bombardment of the White House NPG Vorkuta pressed those interests not through NPG Russia, but through Viktor Utkin, a Vorkuta people's deputy and nominally president of the International NPG. The other coalfields, which are not so dominant in their regions, have pressed their interests through established political and industrial structures.

To consider the impact of the miners' movement on national politics would certainly require more detailed consideration of its development nation-wide, including Ukrainian Donbass and Karaganda in Kazakhstan, since the strikes of 1989 and 1991 were nation-wide strikes. However, neither was a national strike, in that there was very little coordination, even at the height of the 1991 strike, between the different coalfields. It is therefore possible to discuss the development of the miners' movement in Kuzbass, and even at national level, with limited reference to the other coalfields.

The three organizations on which we have focused are also very different from one another. The Independent Miners' Union grew from the bottom up, as the result of the mass upsurge of protest in 1989 and 1991, at least nominally to represent the trade union interests of underground miners. Sotsprof was built from the top down in the attempt to develop a political base for its own leadership and, to a lesser extent, for the politics of the Social Democratic Party. FPAD was formed as a breakaway from the official branch trade union, to pursue the professional interests of a specific occupation within the industry. These three contrasting patterns of development represent in essence the three possible ways in which new workers' organizations can be formed, and so provide us with a basis to assess the development and prospects of the movement as a whole.

While the great political conflicts were fought out at the national and republican levels, the workers' movement has always been locally based, with its roots in local enterprises, and its political links with local political forces. The pattern of development of the workers' movement was correspondingly strongly influenced by local conditions. Even the miners' movement, which came together on a national basis in the strikes of 1989 and 1991, found it very difficult to maintain any effective national organization, with deep divisions regularly appearing between the representatives of the different coalfields, and within the coalfields themselves, so that only in Kuzbass was there

even an effective regional organization. This tendency to the local fragmentation of the movement was further reinforced during 1992 as workers' representatives were increasingly excluded from political power at republican and regional levels, as the economy disintegrated into regional blocks, and as the privatization programme brought conflict back to the level of the enterprise.

A workers' movement has to be defined as a movement which organizes workers, which is the basis on which we exclude from this book consideration of those many organizations, from the Communist Party and the official trade unions to the Party of Labour or the 'Marxist Workers' Party (Bolshevik) – Party of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat' which claim to represent workers but which do not organize significant numbers of workers to represent their own interests. For the same reason we exclude consideration of the former official trade unions from this book, beyond some reference to the miners' union, Rosugleprof, since, despite their very large membership and however much they might claim to represent the workers' interests, these trade unions cannot be said to be based on the self-organisation of workers. Whether or not these unions will become such organizations is one of the most fundamental questions raised, but not addressed, by this book, although it is an issue that we have discussed at length elsewhere.¹²

The local roots of the workers' movement make an account which focuses on national developments and national organizations extremely misleading. For this reason we have tried to connect developments at the national level with developments on the ground at all stages in our exposition. At a general level our information on the latter derives primarily from interviews and discussions with local activists and observers, and is necessarily impressionistic. But we and our collaborators have also carried out more focused interviews and case studies to provide more detailed information on specific cases and events, the results of which we have interwoven with our story.

The Russian workers' movement can by no means be identified only with those activities and organizations which are integrated into or co-ordinated through national organizations, and the fate of the former can by no means be identified with the fate of the latter. If the story of the national movement is of a spectacular rise and equally spectacular decline, the struggle of workers on the ground for the most elementary rights and human dignities has continued at a much more even pace. As we shall see, the rise and fall of the national organiza-

tions has owed more to their political connections and, to some extent, their commercial activity than to their real strength on the ground. If the events of 1991 might lead us to overestimate the significance of the workers' movement at that stage, the low ebb of 1994 can easily lead us to underestimate it. This is another reason why we have tried to interweave our case studies of the everyday reality of workers' organizations into the broader picture, because within the workplace coal miners are not in a significantly different situation from that of bus drivers in Krasnodar or engineering workers in Penza, despite the fact that the former are affiliated to an organization that represents them in Moscow as the new vanguard of their class, while the latter may belong to no independent organization at all.

The persistent complaint of primary groups of larger organizations is that the centre does little or nothing to support them, and that on the ground they are engaged in little more than a struggle for survival. This is particularly the case of Sotsprof primary groups, whose affiliation to Sotsprof tends to be largely a formality and largely a matter of chance. Thus the activity of Sotsprof primary groups is fairly typical of groups of independent activists who are affiliated to purely local coordinating bodies, such as Spravedlivost' in St Petersburg, or who are affiliated to no wider bodies at all, such as the trade union Solidarnost' in Samara.¹³ Similarly, the political complexion of such co-ordinating bodies is also largely a matter of chance, primary groups affiliating to organizations which can provide them with material and legal support, whatever their ideological position.

This finally leads us to the one point at which the approach that we have adopted does undoubtedly distort the reality of the workers' movement. The three organizations on which we focus have been among the most ardent and steadfast supporters of Yeltsin and the programme of radical economic reform, remaining true to Yeltsin even as others fell by the wayside. This politicization of the movement by no means expresses the views of the organizations' own members, whose regular complaint is that their leaders spend all their time playing politics and do nothing to improve the conditions of their members on the ground. To some extent, this politics expresses the personal interests of the leadership, but more fundamentally it expresses the constraints within which workers' organizations have developed, where workers themselves are unable or unwilling to pay sufficient membership dues to support an effective apparatus, and where independent organizations are unable to compete with the state

trade unions in the provision of benefits. This means that workers' organizations have to choose between engaging in commercial activity and securing political patronage to give them the resources to be an effective force, or continuing to lead a hand-to-mouth existence with no full-time workers, no office facilities, no places to hold meetings, no friends in high places to protect members from dismissal, no money to travel to congresses or to hire legal advice, and sometimes not enough even to buy paper and pens.

Power is always corrupting, and the temptations and opportunities for corruption and compromise are as great in Russia as anywhere in the world. However, it is important not to be diverted by the widespread stories of scandal and corruption attached to the workers' movement, not only because they distract attention from the real issues, but also because they obscure the very real heroism of those who have stood out against a system which perfected its methods of controlling and repressing workers over seventy years. For both of these reasons we have refrained from retailing these stories, except where they have an integral part to play.

In conclusion, we would like to dedicate this book to the Russian workers who have overthrown one utopianism only to find themselves the victims of another, and above all to those who still resist the attempt to impose an inhuman logic on history.

NOTES

- ¹ We do not provide more than the immediate political context for the events and activities that we describe in this book, nor do we seek to develop generalisations or a broader theoretical analysis, which need more than the evidence presented here. We have discussed the development of the workers' movement in this wider context, up to the end of 1991, in an earlier book, Simon Clarke, Peter Fairbrother, Michael Burawoy and Pavel Krotov, *What About the Workers?*, Verso, London, 1993. See also Simon Clarke, 'Trade Unions, Industrial Relations and Politics in Russia', *Journal of Communist Studies*, 9, 4, December 1993, 133–60; Simon Clarke and Peter Fairbrother, 'Trade Unions and Industrial Relations in the Workplace', in Richard Hyman and Anthony Ferner (eds), *New Frontiers in European Industrial Relations*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1994; Vadim Borisov, Peter Fairbrother and Simon Clarke, 'Is There Room for an Independent Trade Unionism in Russia? Trade Unionism in the Russian Aviation Industry', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 32, 3, 1994, 359–378; Vadim Borisov, Simon Clarke and Peter Fairbrother, 'Does Trade Unionism Have a Future in Russia?', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 25, 1, 1994, 15–25, Vladimir Il'in, 'Social contradictions and conflict in Russian state enterprises in the transition period', and 'Russian trade unions and the management apparatus in the transition period', in Simon Clarke, ed., *Conflict and Change in the Russian Industrial Enterprise*, Edward Elgar,

Cheltenham, 1995. For those unfamiliar with the recent political and economic development of Russia, and for those with short memories, there are plenty of books which provide this background.

We have tried not to clutter the text with too many references, but the sources are identified in the appropriate places. Transliteration of Russian follows the British Standard, with the exception of initial E, which is transliterated as Ye, and names with established English spellings (Yeltsin, Dostoyevsky, soviet).

² Viktor Haynes and Olga Semyonova, *Workers Against the Gulag*, Pluto, London, 1979 and our own interviews with Klebanov. Despite its name this was not so much a trade union as a group which defended victimized workers, particularly those who had been dismissed, by petitioning, picketing and supporting legal proceedings. Klebanov was rehabilitated in 1988, with a string of convictions going back to 1969 being annulled, but he was still denied housing and a pension. He received no credit for being a 'pre-mature democrat' either at home or abroad, continuing his struggle with a small group of supporters, camping out in a friend's flat in Moscow, and threatened with deportation by the Moscow authorities (on 5 January 1994 Klebanov was arrested and given three days to leave the capital: *Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 1, 1994).

³ David Mandel, 'Revolutionary Reform in Soviet Factories', in *Perestroika and the Soviet People*, Black Rose, Montreal and New York, 1991.

⁴ The strategy of the Party and the KGB was not so much to infiltrate or directly subvert the emerging opposition groups, as to structure their activity with a judicious selection of sticks and carrots: providing or withholding facilities for meetings, office space, communications, printing and reproduction facilities, all of which were under their control, and without which it was extremely difficult for any effective organization to function, restricting the application of directly repressive measures only to those who crossed the shifting boundaries of the permissible. Many individuals and organizations knowingly compromised with the authorities in this period, up to and including the receipt of financial support, as what they judged to be the necessary price of advancing the movement.

⁵ Boris Kagarlitsky, *Farewell Perestroika*, Verso, London, 1990.

⁶ On the workers' movement in Leningrad see Anna Temkina, 'The Workers' Movement in Leningrad, 1986-91', *Soviet Studies*, 44, 2, 1992, 209-36. Boris Ikhlov, a leading activist in the workers' movement, has written a detailed account of the workers' movement focusing on his own city of Perm', *Ocherki sovremennogo rabochego dvizheniya na urale*, Perm', 1994. See also Simon Clarke et al., *What About the Workers?*, Chapter 5; Simon Clarke, Peter Fairbrother and Vadim Borisov, 'The Workers' Movement in Russia, 1987-92', *Critique*, 26, 1994, 55-68. This account is also based on our own interviews with worker activists, particularly in Leningrad (St Petersburg), Sverdlovsk (Yekaterinburg), Chelyabinsk, Samara and Moscow.

⁷ The majority of trade unions formed in this period were not workers' organizations at all, but established by new entrepreneurs, nominally to represent the interests of their workers and to provide them with health and social insurance, but in fact primarily to exploit the tax advantages enjoyed by trade unions.

⁸ The most useful source on the workers' movement has been the KAS-KOR information bulletin, published weekly by the information service of the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists from the middle of 1990 until KAS-KOR disintegrated at the end of 1993, with reports from a network of correspondents throughout the former Soviet Union (a monthly edition in English was also published). This is referenced throughout the book as KASKOR. The balance of coverage depends on the spread and enthusiasm of its correspondents, but KAS-KOR's coverage seems to have been reasonably representative, if not fully comprehensive, although it appears already to have been in decline through 1993. The rump of KAS-KOR renamed themselves the Social-Labour Information Agency (ASTI) at the beginning of 1994, with financial support from the AFL-CIO-sponsored Russian-American Fund, and published a monthly bulletin *Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, which is useful but far less comprehensive than the old KAS-KOR bulletins.

The Russian–American Fund itself has published the quarterly ‘information-analytical bulletin’, *Novoe rabochee i profsoyuznoe dvizhenie*, since 1993, replacing an earlier information bulletin, *Novoe rabochee dvizhenie*, published by the Russian–American University, but these rely primarily on interviews with AFL-inclined ideologists and press cuttings. The Russian–American Fund also sponsors the newspaper *Delo*, which reports the activities of its friends. Information bulletins, *Rubikon* and later *NeRV*, have been produced in Leningrad/St Petersburg since 1989, which report both local and nation-wide developments (much of the latter coming from KAS-KOR). Most of the independent trade unions and various political groupings also publish information bulletins more or less sporadically. Apart from those of NPG, FPAD and the loco-drivers, which mostly reproduce documents, these tend to be very unreliable, since their main purpose is to create an impression of activity and influence where there is none. Collections of documents have been published by the Institute of Employment of the Russian Academy of Sciences as *Rabochee dvizhenie: Dokumentalnye i analiticheskie materialy*, Moscow, 1992 and, more useful, by the Institute of Comparative Politology and Problems of the Workers’ Movement of the Russian Academy of Sciences as *Novye dvizheniya trudyashchikhsya: opyt Rossii i drugikh stran SNG*, Moscow, 1992. Alain Touraine has directed a research project jointly with Leonid Gordon, whose results are reported in *Novye sotsial’nye dvizheniya v Rossii*, edited by Leonid Gordon and Eduard Klopov, Progress-Kompleks, Moscow, 1993, and in L. Gordon, Ye. Gruzdeva and V. Komarovskii, *Shakhtery-92*, Progress-Kompleks, Moscow, 1993. Leonid Gordon is one of the leading liberal ideologists of the new workers’ movement, and has written extensively on the workers’ movement, including *Ocherki rabochego dvizheniya v poslesotsialisticheskoi Rossii*, Moscow 1993, and (with others) *Na puti k sotsial’nomu partnerstvu*, Moscow, 1993; however, these latter works are somewhat short on empirical material.

⁹ The pilots had broken away from the official union at the same time, but were effectively reabsorbed into the framework of the official union in 1992. On the relation between the pilots and the air traffic controllers see Vadim Borisov, Peter Fairbrother and Simon Clarke, ‘Is There Room for an Independent Trade Unionism in Russia? Trade Unionism in the Russian Aviation Industry’, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 32, 3, 1994, 359–78.

¹⁰ This research has not been conducted by the authors on their own, but as part of three research projects. One, specifically focused on the workers’ movement, was funded by the Nuffield Foundation. The second, on the restructuring of management and industrial relations in Russia, funded by the East-West Programme of the Economic and Social Research Council, has focused on shop-floor relations, involving four teams of Russian researchers totalling twenty-four people. The third, also funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, has focused on the restructuring of the Russian coal-mining industry. Some research specifically for this book has been conducted on our behalf by Svetlana Krasnodemskaya, Petr Bizyukov, Vladimir Ilyin and Olga Rodina, and is acknowledged in the appropriate places. We have also drawn directly on unpublished research prepared by Galina Monousova, and have benefited greatly from collaboration with David Mandel. In addition, we would like to thank our other colleagues who have contributed more generally to the project, and above all to the long-suffering Russian workers who are not consoled by the knowledge that their fate lies in their hands alone.

¹¹ There has been a plethora of national associations and organizations, most of which have been sponsored by small circles of Moscow intellectuals, but which have consisted of no more than a founding conference, a constitution and a programme, and which have had no impact on anything. We refer to such organizations, where they do have any relevance, only in passing. In addition to the pilots’ unions, referred to above, the only other independent trade unions of national significance have been the Trade Union of Railway Locomotive Brigades and the dockers’ union, both of which have a small but scattered membership and have not been able to secure recognition.

¹² See references in note 1 above.

¹³ On Solidarity see Irina Tartakovskaya, 'The trade union Solidarity', in Simon Clarke, ed., *Conflict and Change in the Russian Industrial Enterprise*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 1995

2. The 1989 Miners' Strike in Kuzbass

THE CONTEXT OF THE STRIKE

The miners' strikes of July 1989 marked a qualitatively new stage in industrial conflict in Russia, not only because of the scale and location of the strikes, but also because the strikers' demands extended beyond the jurisdiction of the enterprise.¹ In this respect they were anticipated by the wave of mass strikes launched by the nationalist movements in the Caucasus and the Baltics in 1988, but in the case of the miners' strikes the disputes were over fundamental economic issues, and soon centred on the operation of the administrative-command economy, ultimately raising the questions of the form of property and of political power. While some have seen the first wave of miners' strikes as supporting perestroika,² and many of the leaders were still Communist Party members, the political demands of the miners' movement soon became radicalized, and the miners' leaders aligned themselves with the demands for democratization and a rapid transition to a market economy.

Soviet miners had always suffered from unhealthy and dangerous working conditions, and the Russian coalfields were located in inhospitable regions with appalling living conditions. This had created problems of labour recruitment, which had been solved by the widespread use of slave and prison labour,³ and more recently by the payment of relatively high wages and a lower retirement age, with a 25 per cent regional pay premium for Kuzbass, although declining relative wages were creating labour supply problems by the mid-1980s. Although the use of forced labour declined from the 1950s, the mines retained the authoritarian forms of management and summary forms of labour discipline characteristic of the penal system, and the culture of the miners retained many features of the macho culture of the prison.

The drive to expand coal production since the late 1960s had been at the expense of the working and living conditions of the workers, as

rest days and maintenance were sacrificed, and social investment lagged behind social need, with around a quarter of all miners living in barracks and hostels, while productivity had been falling for a decade before the strike as a result of lagging investment. Although miners received relatively high pay for their dangerous working conditions, it could not compensate for the appalling health and safety record of the pits, while the regional premiums did not even compensate for the increased cost of living, and money was no use if the supply of basic foodstuffs was deteriorating.

In all regions there was plenty of evidence of deteriorating labour relations within the coal fields, but issues came to a head with the decline of the economy, as bonuses were cut back, deliveries of food and essential supplies fell, and 'uneconomic' enterprises were threatened with closure. In January 1989 the mines, which had consistently run at a loss, were supposed to start to shift to full self-financing, which seriously compounded the pressure.

There were at least a dozen short strikes in mines in various coal-fields in the first half of 1989 (*Trud*, 5 May 1989), but all still followed the traditional pattern in being short stoppages confined to a single mine. The workers of one section at the Severnaya mine in Vorkuta had held a sit-in strike down the mine at the beginning of March in protest at arbitrary fluctuations in their wages, which had developed into a short underground hunger strike with demands for no Sunday working, a six-hour working day, cuts in the management apparatus, the sacking of the director, and enhanced pay for night work, announcing the formation of an independent trade union, ominously called *Solidarnost'*.⁴ Support meetings were held in the city, but the strike was resolved with the usual influx of Party officials and rapid concession of the bulk of the workers' demands (*Trud*, 10 March 1989, and our interviews). Following this strike the Vorkuta miners met to establish a City Workers' Committee on 10 June.

In Kuzbass there had been a strike over wages in one section in the Lenin pit in Mezhdurechensk in February, and another in the neighbouring Usinskaya mine, in which one shift refused to start work over a demand for higher piece rates, as well as strikes over wages at the Severnaya mine in Kemerovo and Kapital'naya in Osinniki. The same month there was a sit-down strike in the small Kuznetskaya mine in Leninsk-Kuznetsk when the night shift refused to come to the surface in protest at the shortage of cigarettes. The Party secretary of the coal association arrived with two boxes of cigarettes in his car.

These stoppages were all settled rapidly with the acceptance of all the workers' demands. There was nothing unusual in these strikes except for their frequency (interviews).

The tempo of strikes increased through March and April, and they were not confined to the coal-mining industry. One brigade of workers in the Western Siberian Metallurgical Complex refused to work for three hours as a result of the failure of the director to meet their demands for increased pay, night-shift payments and various other matters. A similar strike by another brigade occurred at the end of the month.

On 24 March members of the Komsomol-youth construction detachment of Rospadskaya mine in Mezhdurechensk went on to the roof of the drying building and declared that they would not leave until their demand for the immediate construction of the building in which they had been promised separate apartments by the management of the South Kuzbass Coal Production Association was met.⁵ It was only at 10 p.m. the following day, after the regional administration of the Coal Ministry, Kuzbassugol', and the Kuzbass Mine Construction Kombinat had passed a resolution to include the immediate construction of the building in the plan that the members of the detachment went home.

On 2 April there was a strike in the 60th Anniversary of the USSR mine in the small town of Malinovka when 33 workers from the eighth section (including three Communists) stopped work and refused to come up to the surface, demanding an increase in the piece-rates for cutting coal, full payment for evening and night work, increased bonuses and a 40 per cent cut in the size of the managerial staff, together with various claims concerning living conditions: complaints about the failure to supply water to a miners' settlement, about interruptions in the electricity supply, and inadequate maintenance of communal buildings and roads, although the immediate cause of the strike was, according to the obkom (Regional Party committee), 'the irresponsible attitude of the mine management to the elementary needs of the workers: they were not conveyed in good time to their work places, before their descent into the mine there turned out to be no respirators, drinking water or tea'. According to Aleksandr Aslanidi, a leader of the miners and later one of the leaders of the regional workers' committee, the immediate reason for the strike was the fact that the workers did not receive towels, and had no soap with which to wash after the shift. As a result of this stoppage the local administra-

tion organized a large meeting in the Malinovka Palace of culture, attended by Anatolii Lyutenko, the chairman of Kemerovo regional executive committee (oblispolkom). Grandiose promises were made to the workers at this meeting and they started to work again, but according to Aslanidi 'nobody was satisfied' (Interview). After the strike the mine administration introduced a new set of rules to prevent a recurrence, according to which no more than two shifts were allowed to be in the shaft at once. Other strikes took place or were threatened in various transport enterprises and in Azot, a large chemical plant in Kemerovo.

On 3 April there was a second strike at the Lenin mine in Mezhdurechensk when one brigade of miners stopped work and refused to come to the surface, demanding increased bonuses and a reduction in the number of engineering-technical staff (ITR) in the mine. The same demand was made at a similar sit-down strike at the Volkov mine just outside Kemerovo, the regional capital, in which the workers of two sections refused to come to the surface. The mine director, B. Konyukhov, lost his temper and promised to get them up with the help of the mine safety service and the police, a threat which merely aggravated the situation. The precipitant of this strike was the poor organization of work. The face-workers had been complaining that they were expected to carry logs hundreds of metres by themselves. They complained to the chief engineer, who told them to get on with it. The director was no better – 'a horseradish is no sweeter than a black raddish'. They did not expect any help from the president of the Labour Collective Council, who was also head of the Department of Labour and Wages – in the words of the miners, quoted by Kostyukovskii, 'nobody knows who voted for him'. The workers demanded that all three should be sacked, that the size of the management apparatus should be reduced, that norms and wage-rates should be reviewed, and added as a footnote the demand that Party and trade union organizations should be more active. They concluded their demands thus: 'Not one of the participants in this statement will come to the surface without having received a positive answer to all the points of our demands. There will be no negotiations with the administration of the mine' (Kostyukovskii, 8–9).

Neither these nor any other strikes were reported at the time, but they were the subject of a resolution of the bureau of the obkom on 5 April, which identified the causes of the strikes as 'violations of social justice, levelling, dependence, inadequacies in the organization,

norming and payment of labour, errors connected with the transfer of enterprises to new economic conditions, distortions in the development of the social sphere' (Lopatin, 39–40). The obkom bureau resolution denounced strikes, declared the participation of Communists in strikes incompatible with Party membership and imposed on Party members an obligation to prevent strikes, but also instructed Party committees at all levels to work urgently with managers to resolve problems related to the satisfaction of the everyday needs of workers, pointed out to the first secretaries of the Novokuznetsk, Mezhdurechensk and Osinniki city Party Committees the low level of political-educational work in labour collectives, and demanded that the Osinniki city Party committee prepare a report on the events at the 60th Anniversary of the USSR mine and resolved to bring the mine management, the secretary of its Party committee and the trade union President to account before the Party, while requiring the South Kuzbass Production Association to establish a commission to resolve the workers' problems (Lopatin, 40).

On the basis of this resolution the bureau also issued a statement warning against disorder: 'As recent events show, the slogans of democratization, glasnost, broadening the rights and freedom of the individual are all often used by those who would like to turn democracy into indiscipline, lawlessness and general licence. In particular, this is shown by the refusal of workers to work, taking place in enterprises in Kemerovo, Novokuznetsk, Mezhdurechensk, Osinniki, Kiselevsk' (Kostyukovskii, 8–9), and issued a strident warning to Communists that they would be expelled from the Party if they participated in strikes, a statement that led to widespread discussion in Kuzbass.

THE STRIKE MOVEMENT AND THE CONTRADICTIONS OF PERESTROIKA

Government, Party and industry authorities were well aware of the seriousness of the situation that was developing in Kuzbass.⁶ The bureau of the Kemerovo Regional Party committee had addressed a statement on the situation in Kuzbass personally to Gorbachev in October 1988, which was ignored (Lopatin, 101). The most dramatic sign of impending crisis was the fate of the Party's nominees in the elections for people's deputy of the USSR in March, many of whom

were swept aside.⁷ But at the same time rising social tension, expressed in wildcat strikes and the election results, could be harnessed by the local and regional authorities the more forcefully to press their claims in Moscow. Occasional strikes were not altogether inimical to the interests of the local authorities – provided that they could be kept firmly under control.

Immediately after the catastrophic election results, Prime Minister Ryzhkov paid a notorious visit to Kuzbass, reportedly shedding tears over the living conditions of the miners in Prokop'evsk and Kiselevsk, and promised to take immediate action to relieve the situation. Nothing happened. At the end of April Aleksandr Mel'nikov, secretary of the regional Party committee, warned the plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU of the critical situation in Kuzbass (Kostyukovskii, 23).⁸

These local developments took place against the background of momentous political events at the national level. The First Congress of People's Deputies assembled in Moscow on 26 May to elect the new Supreme Soviet and, although it turned out to be dominated by the old apparatus, its proceedings were broadcast on television, giving a national platform to 'reformers' and critics which attracted record viewing figures. The Supreme Soviet itself convened on 7 June and was in session throughout the miners' strike, providing a platform for the handful of representatives who supported the strikers, and an opportunity for regional representatives to assimilate the miners' demands to the usual battle for resources from Moscow. The miners' leaders themselves felt that the fact that the Supreme Soviet was in session was decisive in forcing the government to negotiate with them, and to exclude the use of force to suppress the strike.⁹

Only four days before the strike began, a joint session of the Supreme Soviet and the Soviet of Nationalities held its confirmation hearing of the renewal of the appointment of Mikhail Shchadov as Coal Minister. In his confirmation speech Shchadov stressed the problems of the industry, 'the most important of which is the question of the social conditions of the miners' (Kostyukovskii, 14), with particular emphasis on the problems of Kuzbass. Shchadov quoted the figures for the USSR as a whole: 365,000 miners waiting for flats, 67,000 children without nursery school places, shortages of medical facilities, quality of drinking water, ecological problems, levels of injury, reclamation, food supplies, the need for more independence for the mines. The latter call, which was to become the central demand of

the Kuzbass Regional Workers' Committee, was taken up in their nomination speeches by the deputies from Donbass and Kuzbass. Shchadov's appointment was confirmed with one vote against and six abstentions.

However, Shchadov's rhetoric about independence for the mines and concerns did not mean that he intended to give up any of his powers. Kostyukovskii reports a meeting in Prokop'evsk between Shchadov and the leading figures in the Kuzbass coal industry at which each in turn spoke about the catastrophic situation in the social and welfare sphere. The head of Kuzbassugol', the ministerial apparatus in Kuzbass, Vladlen Yalenskii, proposed that they temporarily stop all kinds of industrial construction and use all the resources for social welfare. The minister scowled at him and broke in: 'I would have understood if a simple miner, an ordinary worker, spoke like this. But someone like you, a big leader, how can you not understand!'. Similarly, at a meeting during the First Congress with people's deputies from Kuzbass, at which they raised the long-standing grievances of the miners, Shchadov simply replied 'I will decide these questions. Here.' and pointed to his office (Kostyukovskii, 12–13).

Ironically, it was only the morning after the strike began that the national trade union newspaper *Trud* published a set of five demands presented to Shchadov by the Presidium of the mining industry trade union, alongside an interview with the president of the union Srebnyi. These demands were very modest and had been on the table for some time, but the fact that the union pressed them at all was significant, and the tone of Srebnyi's interview was, at the very least, one of impatience. The demands related to the implementation of existing agreements concerning the scheduling of work; the implementation of a 1987 order to pay evening and night shifts at higher rates; payment for time taken to travel from the mine to the workplace and back; and the demand to reallocate investment funds from productive to social needs. These demands were backed up by a sit-in strike of 24 miners at the Leninsk Komsomolets mine in Aleksandria in the Ukraine.¹⁰ *Trud's* interviewer referred to the demands as an 'ultimatum – and it can be called nothing else – which is unprecedented in the relations between the central committee of a trade union and a minister', to which Srebnyi replied with an even more unprecedented threat: 'it may even go so far as a vote of no confidence in the minister at the next plenum of the central committee of the union'. However, although Srebnyi was quick to try to link the Kuzbass strike to his

demands, the workers' own activity had already swept the union aside (*Trud*, 11 July 1989, 1).¹¹

All this special pleading and breast-beating was unremarkable in itself. The authorities in Moscow had paid lip-service to the problems of Kuzbass for decades. Endless promises had been regularly violated. However, as should already be clear, it was not only the workers who were reaching the end of their patience but also the regional authorities, both in the coal industry and beyond, who were confronting increasing difficulties in maintaining the economic and social stability of the industry and the region. Moreover, the bungled process of perestroika had opened up growing tensions both within the industry and within the local and regional administration.

The coal-mining industry was administered along traditional Soviet lines, with the control of resources and planning centralized in the ministry in Moscow. The mines were grouped into coal associations, and so did not have the status of independent enterprises but only of component units of the association. In the other Russian mining regions one association covered the whole region, but Kuzbass had associations in Novokuznetsk (Yuzhkuzbassugol', the South Kuzbass Association, later Kuznetskugol'), Prokop'evsk, Kiselevsk, Belovo, Berezovskii, Leninsk-Kuznetsk and Kemerovo (Severokuzbassugol', the North Kuzbass Coal Association), and also a separate association for the open-cast mines based in Kemerovo. In addition to the All-Union Ministry there were until 1989 separate republican ministries, and a regional office of the ministry in Kemerovo, Kuzbassugol', which was supposed to monitor the associations, and which was liquidated after the 1989 strike.

The coal associations negotiated their plans and financing with the ministry on an annual basis, within the framework of the Five Year Plan, but with frequent *ad hoc* revisions. The coal price was heavily subsidized as a part of the Soviet policy of cheap energy, which meant that the associations were kept on a tight financial leash. The financing from Moscow comprised three basic elements: the production subsidies, based on the relation between costs and the heavily subsidized coal price; finance for investment and the development of new mines, which was determined through negotiations in which personal contacts in the ministry played a decisive role; and finance for social development.

The situation had become more complicated as a result of the reforms of perestroika, which had opened up divisions in the formerly

monolithic hierarchy of the industry. Gorbachev had abolished the republican coal ministries at the beginning of 1989 as part of his streamlining drive. In theory this was a decentralizing reform, with the mines being given regional autonomy under a system of 'regional cost accounting', but in practice the system had not been introduced, so that the measure simply increased the power of the All-Union Ministry while enabling it to evade responsibility, which had nominally been devolved to the mines and associations.

The mines themselves had been given greater responsibility without acquiring any powers of autonomous decision-making because they were not independent enterprises. In particular, this meant that the mines themselves did not fall under the 1987 Law on the State Enterprise (Association) which was the cornerstone of perestroika and which, nominally at least, gave the enterprise wide-ranging powers over the disposal of its own resources, switching from a system of compulsory plan targets to contracted state orders, and allowing enterprises the freedom to sell additional output for their own benefit.¹² In the coal-mining industry it was the association, not the individual mine, that was covered by the law so that all the rights of proprietorship defined by the law were enjoyed exclusively by the association.

The majority of mine directors were not aggrieved at this situation. They had grown up within the rigidly hierarchical and disciplinarian framework of the coal industry, and almost all of them had a background in mine engineering not in economics, and so were not unhappy to leave economic questions to the associations while they got on with their job of lobbying the association and ministry for resources, producing coal, and hoping for a career advance into the structures of the association or the ministry. Meanwhile, their main concerns were more with the decline of discipline in the industry and the erosion of managerial authority as a result of the process of perestroika. However some directors, particularly of the more productive mines which had most to gain, and a significant number of more junior managers,¹³ had a much more positive attitude to the promise (although not the achievement) of perestroika, seeing the independence of the mines as a way of escaping from the shackles of heavy subsidies and centralized control which provided no incentive to local innovation and no scope for local improvement (and no possibility of a non-conformist making a career).

The coal associations, unlike the mines, had acquired the formal rights of state enterprises, but the system of subsidies and state orders made it impossible for them to realize significant benefits from these rights. In particular, in order to benefit from their independence they had to be able to produce coal above the levels which they were (compulsorily) contracted to supply to the state, and to be able to sell this coal at prices which would realize a profit. This meant, first, a reduction in state orders in favour of directly contracted deliveries to customers; second, an increase in the domestic price of coal (and corresponding phasing out of subsidies) and/or third, independent access to export markets and the right to retain at least a proportion of the foreign currency income derived from exports. These became the central demands of the Kuzbass workers' movement.

Greater autonomy for the mines and associations was also of concern to the local and regional authorities, who hoped that it would provide the basis for an increase in the resources available to the social sphere in the region. Responsibility for the provision of social and welfare facilities was split between the mines and the local authorities. In practice, particularly in the mining towns, there was no clear division of financial or administrative responsibility, planning being on an *ad hoc* basis, co-ordinated by the city Party committee (gorkom) in collaboration with the local mine directors and the city executive committee (gorispolkom). The gorispolkom was 'elected' from the local soviet, whose members were traditionally nominated by the city Party committee from 'socially active' members of the local community, who were not necessarily Party members. Local social and welfare facilities were therefore financed out of the revenues of the mines, allocated by the association out of a budget ultimately decided in Moscow, and the revenues of the municipality, which were similarly allocated by the regional executive committee (oblispolkom), under the leadership of the regional Party committee (obkom) from a regional budget determined in Moscow. Although in principle the allocation and use of funds was determined in Moscow, in practice the mines and local authorities had quite a lot of leeway, and could reallocate funds to purposes other than those intended. Thus it was normal for mines to use production funds to subsidize social and welfare facilities, for example by including employees in the social sphere in its production budget.

Perestroika had disrupted the smooth running of the local and regional administration as much as it had that of the mining industry. In

particular, in the past the co-ordination and allocation of resources had been managed primarily through the Party structures of gorkom and obkom, while the role of the members of local and regional soviets was primarily to monitor the administration of social and welfare policy at the micro level, people's deputies acting as a mixture of Citizens' Advice Bureau and social workers. However, perestroika was now supposed to involve a separation of the Party from direct control of the administration and a strengthening of the powers of elected bodies, albeit still under the leadership of the Party. In principle this gave local and regional Soviets greater autonomy, so that people's deputies could become local politicians performing a decision-making role, although in practice it meant in the first instance an increase in responsibility, so that soviets could increasingly be blamed for shortcomings by the Party committee, without any corresponding increase in power, since the soviet had no independent source of revenue nor any effective control over the executive.¹⁴

Although the majority of people's deputies were content with their traditionally passive political role, some were more ambitious, while local executive committees saw in the independence of the mines and associations the basis for increasing local revenues, improved local conditions, and a reduction in social tension in their districts, while they saw the miners' strikes as a source of pressure on Kemerovo and Moscow to increase their share of centrally distributed resources, rushing to attach their long-standing local demands to those which were spontaneously thrown up by the miners. Thus the strike committees tended to work quite closely with the local executive committees in drawing up and implementing their demands, while one of their central demands became the call for new local elections, realized on a national scale in March 1990.

Although the July strike was unexpected in its scale and its militancy, there were plenty of groups ready and willing to attach their demands to the miners' cause. The most conspicuous feature of the July strike is the speed with which the local powers responded to the challenge, and the effectiveness with which they harnessed the miners' strike to their own more modest ambitions. The 1989 miners' strike may have become a part of the process of 'perestroika from below' for which Gorbachev had called in 1987, but it began as a spontaneous explosion of anger with every aspect of the system and a rejection by the workers of all their self-appointed leaders. Just how the movement in Kuzbass was tamed in 1989 is crucial to the understanding of the

subsequent development of the workers' movement in Russia as a whole.

THE STRIKE IN MEZHDURECHENSK

The July strike wave followed the well-established pattern of Soviet strikes, but on a vastly greater scale. The decisive difference in July was that the workers did not stay below ground but launched the strike on the surface, extended it to the scale of the whole mine, and then called on other miners for support.

It is difficult to overestimate the courage that this apparently simple step took. People knew something of the events at Novocherkassk in June 1962 when strikers were dispersed by armed militia, leaving dozens of dead. The miners were certainly aware that force could be used against them at any time, and we now know that military intervention was proposed, but immediately rejected, probably by Gorbachev himself. The hill opposite the Shevyakova mine, in which the strike began, is very picturesque in summer, dotted with fruit trees between the miners' cottages painted in pastel shades. But beneath the cottages and orchards are the graves of those killed in a previous large strike in Mezhdurechensk, when the prison labourers rose up in the late 1940s. Everyone knew that a strike in Mezhdurechensk and another in the nearby city of Novokuznetsk had similarly, although less brutally, been put down by the use of military force in the 1970s (Aslanidi Interview).¹⁵

The strike wave began on 10 July at the Shevyakova mine in Mezhdurechensk, from where it spread like wildfire. Despite the growing tension in the Kuzbass mines and the increasingly frequent spontaneous strikes, there were few if any direct contacts between worker activists in the various pits, and little contact even between different shifts or sections within the same mine. Apart from the press and TV, which rarely reported strikes, the only sources of information were the official channels of meetings of the regional committee of the trade union, attended by mine trade union presidents, and the daily meetings of section chiefs within each mine.¹⁶ Nevertheless, small groups of workers in mines across the Kuzbass were discussing their grievances and beginning to formulate their demands.¹⁷

Although it was in one sense mere chance that the spark that ignited the strike wave was struck in Mezhdurechensk, the city does have

specific characteristics which perhaps explain why it was in Mezhdurechensk that the strike rapidly extended to the city level. Mezhdurechensk is a fairly large town, with a population of 45,000, which is almost entirely dependent on coal-mining, located in the extreme south-east of Kuzbass, with no alternative employment nearby. Moreover Mezhdurechensk is a very important base of the coal industry, producing high quality coking coal which amounts to 20 per cent of the output of Kuzbass. However, the municipal facilities in Mezhdurechensk are poor even by the standards of the region. The citizens of Mezhdurechensk blamed this largely on the fact that the city did not have its own coal association, the deep mines being part of the South Kuzbass Coal Association based in Novokuznetsk, around fifty miles away, and the large open-cast mines coming under the open-cast association based in the regional capital, Kemerovo, two hundred miles away in the north of Kuzbass. There was, therefore, a strong feeling in Mezhdurechensk that the city had no control over its own resources, which were siphoned off to the two main cities, Kemerovo and Novokuznetsk, on their way to Moscow.

The strike at Shevyakova began in section 5 and was led by Aleksandr Petrovich Kovalev, then as now a mine foreman in the section.¹⁸ Kovalev was not untypical of the new generation of activists. He had originally been a senior research worker in the Kuznetsk Mining Research Institute, but he was a man of determined independence with a very strong streak of individualism who was frustrated by the bureaucracy, which led him to choose a downwardly mobile path. He came to the mine as a head of section, then became deputy head of section, and finally in 1983 moved to the lowest rung of the management hierarchy as mine foreman.¹⁹

The strike broke out as the culmination of a long-drawn-out process of submission of grievances and formulation of demands by the workers of the section, in which the leading role was played by another mine foreman in the section, Valerii Kokorin.²⁰ On 28 December 1988 the labour collective of the fifth section of Shevyakova had sent a letter to 'Prozhektor Perestroiki', a current affairs programme on central TV, over Kokorin's name. The letter complained about a whole series of defects in production and the social sphere, including falling pay, inadequate equipment, the inflated managerial apparatus, bad food, shortages of soap, the poor operation of the transport system, problems with supplies, the demand for additional pay for evening and night shifts, and the demand for the status of a state enterprise

(Kostyukovskii, 10 and Lopatin, 76). The TV programme sent this letter to the central committee of the branch trade union at the beginning of February, which sent it to the territorial committee of the union and the regional office of the Coal Ministry, which in turn sent it to the South Kuzbass Coal Association, to which Shevyakova belongs. A commission of four persons was established, headed by the deputy director of the association, which 'closed the complaint', having resolved nothing (Kostyukovskii, 10; Avaliani Interview, *Moscow News*, 32, 6 August 1989; Lopatin, 76), while the trade union gave a purely formal response.

According to Kovalev, the underlying issue was not wages, but the poor organization of work, which had meant that the workers in this section had had no real work for a year so that they were regularly assigned to other jobs.²¹ Kovalev and one or two others formulated their grievances as a set of demands at the beginning of June, apparently independently of Kokorin's initiatives, and discussed them over the next two weeks, at first in the section at meetings when workers gathered an hour before the start of the shift, before discussing them with neighbouring sections. The first demands were that the workers should only work at their own speciality, and that the administration should organize the maintenance of equipment more efficiently, to avoid stoppages. They submitted these demands to the administration, but got no response. During their discussions they added more demands, mostly connected with wages and labour conditions, including a demand that the regional wage premium should be increased to 60 per cent, and adding the demand that Party meetings should be banned during working hours.²² The list of demands eventually attracted the signatures of five hundred workers.²³ The workers in the neighbouring Rapsadskaya mine had developed a similar set of demands at about the same time, although there does not seem to have been any co-ordination or even communication between the two.

On 28 June, Kokorin sent a list of 21 demands by recorded delivery to the central committee of the trade union, which merely passed the letter on to the ministry. Meanwhile the workers had sent their demands to the mine director, V.L. Soroka, and the city Party committee, with a deadline of 10 July for them to be met.

On 4 July an expanded meeting of the Labour Collective Council (STK), including participation of management, Party, trade union and about fifty workers, was held. The general director accepted most of the demands, but claimed that seven points, which the workers re-

garded as being the most important, were beyond his ability to resolve, primarily because of the financial position of the mine in the new conditions of self-financing. For example, according to a ministerial order of 1987 the mine administration was supposed to pay a premium for evening and night work which miners at Shevyakova did not receive, although the mine was on a permanent four-shift system, because the order included the sentence 'all money has to be paid from its own funds'. According to the director, backed by the union president, the mine did not have the money to pay, although the workers responded that other mines paid the premium, and the director of the Usinskaya mine had met all the similar demands of his workers. The director of the mine dismissed the workers' demands as 'utopian', and the workers walked out of the meeting, which continued without them. After this the administration organized shift meetings of the workers to attempt to explain the situation to them, but to no effect. Two days later, on 6 July, the trade union committee of the mine discussed the remaining demands and sent them to the Coal Minister to resolve.

On 7 July the Secretary of the coal miners' union from Moscow, V. G. Lunev, arrived in Mezhdurechensk and had a meeting with the trade unions of practically all of the pits, who brought along the demands that they had taken from their workers. They all warned of the high level of social tension, but he simply brushed aside the workers' demands, insisting that they were not Moscow's responsibility since the mines were now self-financing, so that they could solve their problems for themselves. He simply laid down on his table the demands from four pits and told the trade union leaders that it was their problem to resolve the demands because they had signed the documents. On 8 July tension was further raised by an incident in the canteen at Shevyakova in which miners complained that their food was off because it had been made with sour milk.²⁴

On 10 July the deadline for the workers' demands expired. At 9 o'clock in the morning 80 miners coming off the night shift refused to hand in their lamps and were joined by the 200 miners arriving for the first shift, and they stood around and talked. There was no formal meeting, nor any vote or resolution, but the common mood was to stop work. In the words of Kovalev, who was on the night shift, 'it was just the collective mind'.²⁵ The miners stayed at the mine, gathered around the administration building, organized food supplies, for which the union immediately offered to pay, and organized a maintenance rota

without any reference to the administration.²⁶ A strike committee was elected from the meeting, headed by Kokorin.

The second secretary of the city Party committee, Shcherbakov, arrived at the mine at 11 a.m., followed shortly after by the General Director of the South Kuzbass Coal Association, G.M. Filat'ev. However, the miners refused to negotiate with them, demanding to talk to Coal Minister Shchadov, who alone had the power to resolve their problems.

At first, the mine administration did not take the workers seriously, but very soon the union, STK, and the mine administration realized the way things were going, and rushed to align themselves with the workers, at least to the minimal degree necessary to maintain the fiction of a common interest, in the hope of deflecting the workers' demands away from the administration and towards the ministry. It was in this context that the trade union took responsibility for providing food and drink for the strikers.

During the rest of the day the miners sent delegates to the neighbouring pits (Lenin, Tomskaya, Usinskaya and Raspadskaya) to explain their demands, and some also went to the local railway station where they blocked the railway for about ten minutes while they discussed their demands with miners in the train taking them to other pits, while others went around the other pits on the buses.

Three miners from Shevyakova arrived at Raspadskaya while the miners were changing their clothes at the change of shift that evening. They read out the list of their demands, and asked if the Raspadskaya workers agreed and supported them. The workers backed the demands, but the third shift decided to go to work after the pit director, together with the chair and deputy chair of the STK, persuaded them to put off any action until the next morning and proposed the establishment of a negotiating commission. However, when the fourth shift arrived by electric train they had more information, and at the change of shift those in pit clothes and those in clean clothes met together in the square in front of the pit. The unofficial workers' leaders in Raspadskaya, who had hitherto been organizing secretly, declared to the meeting that they had got no results, and should take things into their own hands, immediately issuing their own list of demands. Volunteers (including the secretary of the mine Party committee) were immediately signed up for a strike committee which was appointed on the basis of self-nomination. The workers decided to strike on the spot, although, as at Shevyakova, they decided to continue maintenance.

The Rospadskaya workers then sent delegates to Shevyakova. The Lenin and Tomskaya pits stopped soon after, on the morning of 11 July. Altogether ten city enterprises stopped work on the first day, with 15,900 people on strike and the city at a standstill.

In the morning of 11 July, the miners at Shevyakova arranged for mine buses and electric trains (the latter are also run by the mines) to take the workers to the city square in a move which proved the decisive escalation of the strike. Even city buses came to help, brought by volunteers from the city bus drivers. The workers gathered in the city square to confront the symbols of Soviet power: by Lenin's statue, in front of the offices of the local Party and the local executive, where they were joined by workers from other mines as they too came on strike, and by delegates from neighbouring towns who came to find out what was happening. Delegates from Anzhero-Sudzhensk arrived drunk, and by unanimous decision of the mass meeting they were put into the drying-out prison (*Trud*, 13 July 1989).

When they first arrived in the square the workers found the secretary of the city Party committee, Yurii P. Cherepov, already there. The president of the city executive committee, N.Ya. Zav'yalov, immediately provided the strikers with a loudspeaker system, and for the next two days the workers held a continuous meeting, discussing their situation, and developing their demands. The discussions were relayed night and day not only over loudspeakers but also over the city radio. A city strike committee was elected in the square on the basis of self-nomination, again headed by Kokorin. Although the miners' central demands were clearly political, they rejected all offers of support and participation from representatives of outside political organizations (who were already arriving by the second day of the strike), for fear of provoking a reaction. This was the basis of their constant insistence that their strike was not political but only economic.

At first nobody knew what to do next. Many of the miners expected Gorbachev to arrive to sort out all their problems, 'because they believed in Gorbachev at that time'. The Strike Committee was given a set of rooms in the Komsomol building for their offices. The main activity of the strike committee was maintaining order in the city, in which they co-operated closely with the local chief of the criminal police, who gave regular reports to the town meeting. Together the strike committee and the police chief set up road blocks to control access to Mezhdurechensk, and enforced a ban on alcohol to avoid problems caused by drunkenness among strikers.²⁷ The workers are

proud that there was not a single crime in Mezhdurechensk during the course of the strike, but the reason for this preoccupation was not moral fervour, but an acute awareness that the authorities would seize on any provocation to justify the use of force against the strikers. There were rumours that troops were being sent in to suppress the strike, and two large lorry loads of vodka arrived mysteriously on the first day, but were turned away.

The strategy of the authorities was the traditional one, of trying to suppress information about the strikes, while looking for a quick settlement. Roadblocks were set up on the roads from Novokuznetsk, telephone communications were disrupted. Mel'nikov called all the media chiefs together on the first day of the strike and told them to report it only as a meeting (*Nasha gazeta*, 23 July 1991), and, indeed, no reports were published locally on the first two days of the strike. However, once it became clear that the strike could not be hushed up, but was rapidly spreading to other towns, the Party reversed its policy. On 12 July the obkom established a press-centre to handle information, and city Party committees were encouraged to make every effort to inform the local population of the costs of the strike and of the need to maintain order. On 16 July the obkom instructed all city Party committees to issue bulletins on TV, radio and in the press at least three times a day. Nevertheless, the Party did not have complete control of media coverage, and on the third day a popular TV programme from Kemerovo provided a long and accurate account of the strike.

The city administration sat back and waited, providing the strikers with facilities, adding their own demands to those of the miners, and trying to direct the miners' demands away from themselves and towards Moscow, keeping out of the negotiations until they saw which way the wind was blowing. It was only when Shchadov, the Coal Minister, agreed to meet the workers' demands that the city administration joined the commission which was set up to prepare the full programme of demands.

Shchadov, who was already in Kuzbass, arrived in Mezhdurechensk on 11 July with his Deputy Zaidenvarg, president of the miners' union Srebnyi, first secretary of the obkom, Mel'nikov, and chairman of the oblispolkom, Lyutenko. Shchadov spoke to the crowd in the square for three hours, explaining that many of their demands could be settled locally, and others he could deal with, but some he could not meet because they were outside his jurisdiction. He was clearly shaken by

the hostile reception, and by the refusal of the crowd to allow him time to resolve their demands. He proposed going to Moscow to sort it out, but a member of the strike committee intervened: 'Lads! Nobody is going off anywhere, we all need to sit and calm down. We did not put forward our demands just to listen to this.... Of course the minister cannot give us an answer right away. We can't let him go. He must stay here and think about it.' A striker: 'So he says that he cannot simply raise the price of coal ... but prices of food stuffs or consumer goods can be raised without ceremony, without consulting anybody. Understand – they wanted them raised and they were raised. But the minister says that he cannot raise pay. If he cannot do anything, let him leave. Then Ryzhkov can come and we will decide it with him'. 'We have got plenty of time, we will wait here', so Shchadov went off to telephone the government in Moscow (Kostyukovskii, 18–20).

Shchadov then negotiated 'man to man' with Valerii Kokorin, the president of the city strike committee, while he spent an hour and a half on the telephone to Moscow. Moscow allowed him to offer to raise the regional pay supplement, but Moscow would not allow him to meet any of the other major demands. Meanwhile, Srebnyi had mounted the rostrum in the square to explain that the union supported the demands of the toilers of Mezhdurechensk, as proved by the fact that four of their five demands matched those of the strike committee (*Trud*, 13 July 1989). Mel'nikov, the regional Party boss, similarly identified himself with all the workers' demands, but not their methods.

Shchadov went back to the square to explain that he could not meet all the workers' demands, and in particular the demand for independence of the mines, which Shchadov insisted was a complicated matter and would take time to prepare, but the miners in the square angrily rejected his offer of a pay rise and decided to continue the strike. Shchadov called Moscow again, and was told to go back to the square and tell the miners that Moscow was not willing to offer any more, but Shchadov angrily told Moscow to come and try it themselves. In response, the Council of Ministers was gathered in Moscow, and each minister was asked how much he could give from his budget to satisfy the miners (Interviews with Mezhdurechensk City Workers' Committee). By now it was early in the morning of 12 July, negotiations having continued all night. Moscow promised to meet the miners' demands, including the immediate provision of supplies of food and medical equipment. Moscow's willingness to concede was no doubt

influenced by reports that were already coming in through the night that mines in Osinniki and Novokuznetsk were also preparing to strike, reports which were confirmed during 12 July as the strike did indeed spread to individual mines in Osinniki, Novokuznetsk and Prokop'evsk. Moscow's urgent priority was to do a deal with Mezhdurechensk, where the entire town was at a standstill, before the strike escalated in the neighbouring towns.

Moscow had agreed to meet the miners' demands, but these demands were themselves still not clearly formulated. In particular, the demand for the independence of the mines, which had moved to the centre of the stage, remained ambiguous, and Shchadov continued to resist immediate concession on this issue. Negotiations continued through 12 July and deep into the following night as the strike committee formulated its final list of demands and Shchadov continued to negotiate with Moscow, and to consult with the local and regional leaders of the Party and administration. The central sticking point continued to be the demand for independence of the mines.

The initial demand of the city strike committee, one which had long been in the air, and was no doubt sponsored by the local administration, was for Mezhdurechensk to have its own association. At dawn on 13 July, Shchadov came to the microphone and announced that Mezhdurechensk could have its association, but without the open-cast mines which would have to remain with Kemerovougol'. However in the meantime the issue had been the subject of further heated discussion. Vyacheslav Golikov, later to emerge as president of the regional workers' committee, had arrived early that morning with three others from Berezhovskii, delegated to go to Mezhdurechensk to find out what was happening. When they arrived they met the leaders of the city strike committee, including Kokorin and Sergeev, an electrical fitter from the Tomskaya mine in Mezhdurechensk, who later became President of the Independent Miners' Union.

Golikov asked to see the miners' demands just as Shchadov started to speak from the rostrum. Golikov told those around him that he knew something about the rights of the enterprise, and in his view the important thing was not to create a new association, but to establish the financial independence of the mines. He tried to convince people that they had the chance of freedom but instead they were planning to give it to another association. According to Golikov, those around him asked why he just talked in this narrow circle, and suggested he take the microphone and explain it to everybody. He took the microphone

and there were cries from the crowd, 'listen to him: he is talking sense'. And after that, he claims, everyone began to talk about independence for the enterprise instead of an association.²⁸ It was at precisely that point that Shchadov suddenly agreed to create an association, despite the fact that he had been adamantly opposed up until then.

Shchadov's offer of an association was rejected by the crowd. Moreover, the strike committee put a new demand, which can only have been an ominous sign for the government of the way the situation could develop if they did not settle fast. This was the demand that a new constitution be submitted for immediate discussion and adopted by 7 November 1990, and that the leaders of the Party and government should come to Kuzbass to negotiate on this issue, the committee calling for an All-Kuzbass strike to back the demand (*Trud*, 14 July 1989).²⁹ As more reports came in of the strike spreading, Shchadov backed down once more and conceded full independence, promising all the mines in Mezhdurechensk the status of state enterprises, and signing an agreement with the strike committee on the morning of 13 July.

The deal provoked a split in the strike committee, with a minority resisting the settlement on the grounds that many of the original demands had not been satisfied and that there were insufficient guarantees that Shchadov's promises would be fulfilled. The strike committee issued a statement at 3 p.m. calling on the workers of Mezhdurechensk to return to work at 8 a.m. the following day, and also appealing to all the workers of Kuzbass to support their decision, adding that 'any further prolongation of the strike might lead to an uncontrolled situation and unpredictable consequences'. This decision was opposed by an initiative group, led by Valentin Mikhailovich Sorokopudov, a mine engineer from the Lenin pit, which proclaimed itself a regional strike committee and demanded the continuation of the strike, but the leaders of the city strike committee simply shouted into the microphone 'the strike is over, that's all' and local officials went around the square persuading people to go back to their mines to make their decisions. Within an hour of the strike committee issuing its statement the town square was empty. The strike was over. At least in Mezhdurechensk.³⁰

WHO WON THE FIRST ROUND?

The strike in Mezhdurechensk turned out to be only the first round in a fight which would eventually end in the collapse of the administrative-command system, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the dissolution of the Communist Party, and the collapse of the economy, all of which have been laid at the door of the Kuzbass miners.³¹ But who won the first round?

In addition to immediate economic concessions of higher wages and improved supplies, the main gain made by the workers was the concession of independence for their mines. But where did the demand for the independence of the mines come from? Kostyukovskii says that the demand that the mines be given the status of a state enterprise was included in the letter sent to central TV by Kokorin in December 1988, but none of the members of the strike committee we spoke to in Mezhdurechensk could remember it being on the list of original demands coming from the mines. Independence was certainly an issue that was firmly on the agenda, not of the workers but of the Association, mines and local administration. The issue for the local administration was primarily a result of the fact that the mines of Mezhdurechensk were paying their dues to two associations, in Novokuznetsk and in Kemerovo. There was a strong feeling locally not only that the miners were supporting an inflated bureaucracy but also that funds were being diverted to subsidize less efficient mines elsewhere. If Mezhdurechensk had its own association then the city would be able to increase its social and welfare expenditure, for example to build a long-planned youth centre.

On the other hand, the issue for the mines was one of having control of their own resources. At one level this was a trivial demand, simply involving the mines acquiring the same status as other industrial enterprises, which would bring them into the framework of the 1987 Law on State Enterprises. However, this was not simply a bureaucratic matter, since independence would make no sense if it was not associated with an increase in the price of coal to free the mines from dependence on subsidies and to allow them to sell above-plan output at a profit, and almost certainly a relaxation of state orders as well, a demand which was of interest to the associations as much as to the individual mines. Interestingly, Aleksandr Mel'nikov, first secretary of the obkom, made this issue his first point in an interview with Kostyukovskii on the night of 11 to 12 July, when he noted that about

a third of the miners' demands could be met by the mines themselves once the basis for their self-financing could be put in place (Kostyukovskii, 23).

Shchadov's initial obstinate resistance to the demand for an association seems not to have been a matter of principle, but of bureaucratic obstruction, stressing the administrative complexity and the time needed to carry out such a change. The demand for independence was another matter altogether, since this threatened the power of the whole ministerial system. The issue of mine independence was relevant to the workers' demands, since it would provide mines with the resources to meet those demands, but it was primarily an issue that involved a complex struggle for power between the ministry in Moscow, the local associations, the individual mines and the city administration, and was certainly not one which excited the workers gathered in the square, who wanted to get rid of their bosses, not give them more power.³²

The formulation of the miners' demands was a complex process. The strike originated with long lists of demands drawn up by activists in Shevyakova and Raspadskaya, many of which concerned matters internal to the mine. However, as soon as the strike moved beyond the level of the individual mine these issues were lost, on the grounds that they were parochial, and broader issues, of concern to the city as a whole, replaced them. With the arrival of Shchadov, the scope of the demands was further broadened to emphasize those demands which could only be met by Moscow. The final list comprised forty-two points, including demands for higher pay and improved supplies, improved social and welfare provision (including the recruitment of 3,000 female and young workers for Mezhdurechensk), demands concerning the management of the coal industry (including the universally popular demand among the workers for cuts in management staff) and ecological questions. However, this list was clearly a patchwork which was dominated not by the concerns of the workers which had given rise to the strike, but primarily by the concerns of the city and regional authorities, which seized the opportunity to press their long-standing grievances on Moscow. Moreover, it was a list which had reformulated the diffuse grievances of the workers to confine them within the limits of the system as a part of the process of perestroika. The constant refrain of the authorities at all levels was that the miners' demands were entirely justified, and perestroika was precisely about providing the means to meet such demands. All that was re-

quired was patience on the part of the workers, and a return to work before order broke down.

The transformation of the workers' demands was at one level a natural consequence of the way in which the issues were rapidly generalized with the arrival of Shchadov and the focusing of the negotiations on Moscow. However, this process of absorbing the workers into a negotiating framework in which their demands were effectively neutralized was by no means automatic. The primary aim of the authorities at all levels was to direct the movement into channels within which they could bring it under control. The first task was to encourage the emergence of a strike leadership, which would take responsibility for the conduct of the strike, and with which the authorities could negotiate a speedy end to the dispute. We have already seen this process in the run-up to the strike, when Kokorin took it upon himself to represent the workers through official channels, and then proposed himself as head of the mine and then city strike committees.³³ This could be seen from the very first hours of the strike, when the trade union sought to establish its position as representative of the workers by providing food free of charge, and by espousing the demands (if not the methods) of the miners at their meetings, but it was immediately obvious that the official union would not be able to provide the leadership required.

As soon as the workers moved out of the mines, the question of the workers' representation became an urgent one. The workers' demands were diffuse and undirected, while their leadership was ill-defined. Who was going to negotiate what with whom? The immediate aim of the local authorities was to maintain order in the strike movement, which required the establishment of relations of hierarchy and responsibility. They encouraged this by providing loudspeaker systems and a platform for the town meeting, by permitting police co-operation with the strikers to maintain order, and by providing offices for the strike committee. All these measures encouraged the replacement of the spontaneous democracy of the first hours of the strike by an institutionalized hierarchical relationship between an active leadership and a passive mass.

The diffuse character of the miners' demands provided the authorities with considerable scope to channel them in favourable directions. However, the authorities at different levels were by no means united, as each sought to deflect the miners' anger against others. The majority of the initial demands of the miners were internal to the mine,

concerning such things as working conditions, changing facilities or the quality of food in the canteen, and were submitted first to the mine administration. However, the mine administration directed the miners' main demands beyond the enterprise, on the grounds that they had neither the authority nor the resources to meet them on their own. This enabled them to assimilate the miners' demands to their own attempts to extract resources from Moscow. From this point of view the strike served the interests of the mine directors and local administration, as long as they were not taken to task for allowing it to happen.³⁴

As soon as the strikes moved outside the individual mines, the local authorities very quickly hitched their interests to the strike movement, cautiously aiding, if not supporting, the miners and adding their own demands to those of the miners for presentation to Moscow. The result was that the diverse grievances of the miners were swiftly swept aside, to be subsumed under the one central demand that the mines should be switched to full financial independence, on the basis of an increase in the price of coal, although this had not figured in the original demands of the workers.³⁵

In the first hours of the strike, the mine managers and local administration successfully deflected worker criticism towards the ministerial system, which they claimed prevented them from meeting the workers' demands, and began to impose a hierarchical structure on the workers' movement. By the time Shchadov arrived in Mezhdurechensk on the first full day of the strike there was already a president of a city strike committee with whom he could negotiate a deal 'man to man', although they had to keep referring back to the distrustful workers in the square, and there was already a set of demands around which he could negotiate, although these remained fluid throughout the strike.

The actions of the local authorities had focused the miners' demands on the Coal Ministry, and when Shchadov arrived in Mezhdurechensk he was at first authorized by Moscow to resolve the dispute only within the limits of his own powers as Coal Minister. Clearly unable to do so, he angrily passed responsibility for resolving the dispute in Mezhdurechensk to the government as a whole. The Ministry was not going to get off the hook so easily: the government did not take collective responsibility for Mezhdurechensk, but each minister was asked what contribution he could make to help the Coal Ministry, and Mezhdurechensk was soon flooded with supplies.

The institutionalization of the strike also changed the character of the strike committee. The initial demands may have been mundane and

parochial, but they were central to the lives of ordinary workers. Once the demands moved beyond the level of the individual mine the issues became much more complex, their resolution demanding some knowledge of the way in which the system worked, and in particular of 'economics'. The strike committee therefore had to rely increasingly on the advice of 'experts' within and beyond its ranks.

Kovalev, who had formulated the original demands in Shevyakova, himself had higher education, but did not join the city strike committee. Kokorin, who emerged as president of the committee, was an active member of the Communist Party. Although only four of the seventeen members of the committee were well known as Communists, the first committee was soon working closely with the local Party apparatus, which had privileged access to resources and expertise, and the strike committee even defended the city Party boss when the regional Party committee tried to reprimand him in the wake of the strike. The workers did not rely only on their own resources, but needed outside experts to help them formulate their demands, of whom there were plenty willing to offer their services. The workers themselves demanded that Mikhail Naidov, a local hero and former director of Lenin mine, be brought to Mezhdurechensk to give them leadership, precisely in relation to the issue of mine independence, and Shchadov promised to send for him.³⁶

If things had stopped there the strike would not have had a great deal of significance. Workers in a remote town in Western Siberia had been on strike for four days, but the authorities had successfully headed off their protest, making a wide range of concessions without conceding any fundamental changes and without giving up any of their powers, with the mine managers winning the promise of independence from Shchadov on the backs of their workers. However, the mines could not achieve their independence at the stroke of a pen. The government was very happy to grant independence in principle, since it immediately passed the buck back to the mine management, but independence in practice was a very different matter, requiring a sufficiently high price of coal to guarantee the pits' profitability or the abolition of the system of state orders (or both), neither of which were achieved even by Yeltsin's radical 1992 programme, or by the stalled privatization and restructuring plans of 1993.

The strike committee had been separated from the workers it represented, many of whom felt that they had been betrayed by the deal, while miners in other cities felt that they had been sold out by the

workers of Mezhdurechensk who had made a separate deal instead of standing together with those who had originally come out in their support. Moreover, the committee did not sustain its independence for long, as responsibility for ensuring the fulfilment of the agreement made with Shchadov fell not so much to the strike committee, now renamed the workers' committee, as to the city Party committee. The day after the agreement was signed, 14 July, the city Party committee discussed the question, and drew up an additional list of demands to put to the representatives of the Party–Government Commission which visited Mezhdurechensk to discuss local demands on 20 July (Lopatin, 79). On 18 July there was a meeting of the Mezhdurechensk Party economic *actives* which set up a working group to consider the issue of the transfer of the coal mines to self-financing and creation of an association in the town. Order and control, the bedrock of Soviet Communism, had apparently been restored.

However, things did not stop there. Mezhdurechensk provided the spark, the inspiration and the precedent for other workers in the Kuzbass coalfield, and soon for miners throughout the Soviet Union. Despite the speed with which Moscow had acted, it was already too late to stop the spread of the strike. However, the authorities had already gained valuable experience, and they learned fast.

THE STRIKE SPREADS

In general the strike was more tightly controlled by the local authorities the further one moved away from its epicentre in Mezhdurechensk, with Novokuznetsk and Berezovskii as exceptions, for different reasons. The strike spread immediately to the nearby centres of Osinniki and Malinovka before the authorities could react, while in Prokop'evsk and Kiselevsk the authorities launched their own initiatives to head off the strike wave, but they were too late. Elsewhere, by contrast, the authorities managed to get in first, and on the whole the strike was controlled from the start by the mine and local administration and city Party committees.

Shchadov, having completed his negotiations in Mezhdurechensk, raced from one town to another like a man trying to put out a bush fire with a bucket. Once it became clear that the strike was spreading throughout the region, it became equally clear that only a regional settlement could end it. The problem was on what basis was such a

settlement to be achieved. Somebody had to bring the various city strike committees together to draw up and negotiate a common set of demands on the basis of which to secure a rapid return to work. The key question was who could do this? Before seeing how this question was answered, it will be helpful to chronicle the spread of the strike and the way in which the workers' demands arose in each city.

Osinniki

Osinniki is a mining town in the hills to the south of Novokuznetsk which already had a history of militancy to match that of Mezhdurechensk, as did Malinovka, a small mining settlement just up the valley. Kapital'naya in Osinniki and the 60th Anniversary of the CPSU mine in Malinovka had already struck earlier in the year, and they were quick to follow the lead of Mezhdurechensk. Like Mezhdurechensk, Osinniki and Malinovka were miners' towns which did not have their own association, but came under the jurisdiction of the South Kuzbass Association in Novokuznetsk.

At about 10 or 11 in the evening of 11 July someone arrived at the 60th Anniversary of the CPSU mine from Mezhdurechensk to ask them to come out in solidarity. That was enough for the whole pit to stop spontaneously and to gather in the square in front of the mine. Aleksandr Aslanidi, who was a senior mechanic in the mine and at that time a Party member, reached the mine at about 4 a.m. July 12 where elections to the strike committee were taking place, with one person being elected from each shift in each section or service, although initially the election was only from the night shift. Many people were afraid to come forward for various reasons, the Party secretary refusing to join the committee because Party members had been strictly forbidden to strike, so the committee was dominated by young people. Aslanidi was well known as an informal leader, regularly being nominated to all kinds of local committees, and was elected president – 'Sanka won't keep quiet, let's elect him', people said.³⁷ According to Aslanidi, everyone was afraid that force would be used against them, and this was a crucial factor in maintaining the solidarity and discipline that was missing in later strikes. Anyone who did not do his job on the committee was immediately replaced.

The miners of the nearby Kapital'naya mine in Osinniki, the largest mine in the Soviet Union in terms of employment with some 6,500 workers, who had already struck earlier in the year, came out in the

morning of 12 July. The miners of Kapital'naya called on the other mines in Osinniki to strike and were immediately joined by the coal construction administration and several other enterprises, including all the deep and open-cast mines and the sewing factory, which employed almost entirely women. In the view of the first secretary of the city Party committee D.F. Nikitin the emergency had reached an all-city scale (*Trud*, 14 July 1989). As in Mezhdurechensk, the miners filled the square in front of the gorispolkom building and elected a strike committee with the familiar demands relayed from Mezhdurechensk: independence for the collective, an end to orders from above, a resolution of problems with the pay system. As in Mezhdurechensk, the sale of alcohol was banned and a lot of vodka was confiscated at the city limits, with a receipt provided so that the owner could reclaim it after the strike.

The strike committee realized that they were unlikely to make progress on their own and, as in Mezhdurechensk, immediately sought to link up with miners in other cities. The first demand of the strike committee was for a car to enable them to tour the coalfield and gather information, since they did not believe what they read in the press or heard on radio or TV. Every day for the duration of the strike a carload would set off at five or six in the morning, returning at midnight or one the next morning to report to the workers gathered in the square.³⁸

Shchadov and his retinue went directly from Mezhdurechensk to Osinniki, where they met with the city strike committee on 14 July. However, the negotiations did not go easily, and the Strike Committee rejected Shchadov's official response to their demands. Shchadov and Mel'nikov went on to Novokuznetsk, where the strike had also broken out, but the meeting in the square continued from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. and the city strike committee was re-elected.

Novokuznetsk

Novokuznetsk is the historic capital and largest city in Kuzbass (formerly Stalinsk, and before that Kuznetsk, Dostoyevsky's place of exile), which is the basis of some rivalry and even enmity directed at the upstart administrative capital, Kemerovo. Novokuznetsk is dominated by two enormous and antiquated metallurgical complexes, KMK and Zapsib, with its mines based on smaller settlements around the outskirts of the city. The city Party organization was strong and conservative, based in the metallurgical enterprises rather than the mines,

and showed little subtlety in dealing with the strike, but some success in keeping it under control.

Novokuznetsk is the nearest mining city to Mezhdurechensk, and the first to which the strike spread, although it took off fairly slowly compared to Osinniki.³⁹ The first pit to join the strike seems to have been the Novokuznetskaya pit on the road from Mezhdurechensk. Delegates from Shevyakova arrived at the mine in the evening of 10 July at the end of the shift. The workers coming off shift agreed to strike in solidarity, although they had never had a strike before and had no prepared demands, despite the difficult conditions in the mine. There was some discussion between the outgoing and incoming shifts as to who would start the strike. The new shift was nervous about joining the strike, because they would be identified as its initiators since the previous shift had finished their work, but eventually agreed to join. The workers all gathered by the administration building and some people went off to the other five nearest pits to tell them that they had stopped work in solidarity, adding their own demands to those of Mezhdurechensk, including the demand that all the workers on the 'third floor' of the administration building should be sacked. The director and the chief engineer spent the whole night in the square and the director promised that he would throw out all the staff from the third floor, although in practice he did not do it.

By 13 July all the deep mines around Novokuznetsk were on strike, electing strike committees to draw up their demands. However, beyond Novokuznetskaya mine it seems that the Party initially had much better control over the process than elsewhere in South Kuzbass. Kostyukovskii quotes a conversation at the end of the strike with Vladimir D'yachenko, a combine machinist at Abashevskaya mine outside Novokuznetsk and a Party member. When the strike began, D'yachenko went to the Party secretary of the mine, Shutov, and said to him 'There is going to be an explosion, we must control it ... we must control it so that there is no disorder, so that nobody suffers'. The Komsomol organizer, who was sitting in the office, just laughed: 'So where do you expect it to come from, eh?', but the Party secretary agreed with D'yachenko, who established an initiative group.

It seems that this Party-led initiative was generalized to other mines. D'yachenko continued, 'When our people came back from Mezhdurechensk we set up strike committees in the mines, districts and town'. D'yachenko became president of his mine strike committee and a member of the Novokuznetsk city committee.⁴⁰ He also implies

that it was at the instigation of the Party that the decision was taken that in Novokuznetsk the miners should remain at their pits, outside the city, and not gather in the central square: 'We thought our town is large, not only miners, and we do not want to stir the water at meetings so we decided that we would have a sedentary strike, not leaving the enterprise' (Kostyukovskii, 111–16). The decision to remain at their pits was supported by the miners around Novokuznetsk because they were afraid that they would be vulnerable if they gathered in the centre of the city, particularly as the local authorities were already trying to stir up the workers of the giant Novokuznetsk metallurgical complexes against the miners.⁴¹ Meanwhile a strike committee established itself in the Mayakovski culture palace where it negotiated with leaders of the South Kuzbass Coal Association until the arrival of Shchadov on 14 July.⁴²

Although the authorities in Novokuznetsk showed no sympathy to the strikers, late in the evening of 13 July the first secretary of the Novokuznetsk City Party Committee, A. Lenskii, told Kostyukovskii that the Party committee 'supports and shares all the basic demands of the strikers, and considers them just'. While disagreeing with the form in which they were being expressed, Lenskii declared that 'Nevertheless, once it has happened I consider that Communists must at this time be alongside the workers. In the mines strike committees have been elected which, one must admit, have been joined by very authoritative people, including many Party members, and even presidents of trade union committees and members of Party committees. For example the director of the Baidaevskaya mine is a member of his strike committee' (Kostyukovskii, 44). Lenskii went on to stress the importance of going beyond the demands of the Mezhdurechensk strikers to raise wider issues and to attract more state investment to meet the needs of Kuzbass. Lenskii himself established a committee to maintain essential services in the city.

Prokop'evsk

Prokop'evsk is a mining town, virtually joined to Kiselevsk, just to the north of Novokuznetsk and in the heart of the coal-mining region, with generally the oldest pits and the worst working conditions, surrounded by slag heaps and old open-cast workings. It was the sight of Prokop'evsk that had supposedly reduced Prime Minister Ryzhkov to tears in March.

Tension had been running high in Prokop'evsk where, according to Maksimova, there were already plans for an unofficial strike to take place in the autumn. As soon as the strike broke out in Mezhdurechensk, Naidov, General Director of Prokop'evskgidrougol', organized meetings in every mine to inform the workers about the strikes and to promise to improve conditions without the workers having to resort to such measures in Prokop'evsk. Each mine was ordered to send a representative to a meeting at the association where they were presented with a programme of demands to Moscow produced by the management, which the meeting unanimously decided to send to the Coal Ministry in the name of the Prokop'evsk miners (Maksimova, 67). However, even before they could inform the workers of what they had done, the strike had broken out in Prokop'evsk.

The strike in Prokop'evsk broke out on the evening of 12 July, when, in solidarity with the Mezhdurechensk miners, the third shift of the Kalinin mine refused to go down the mine, to be joined later by the fourth shift when they arrived for work.⁴³ During the morning of 13 July, bus and truck drivers arriving at the mine joined the strike and transported the strikers to other pits to spread the word. As in Mezhdurechensk, the strikers boarded buses and trams to tell workers what they had done, so that by the morning of 13 July every pit in Prokop'evsk was on strike.

By mid-day the Kalinin mine had elected a strike committee, and miners from the Tsentral'naya and Kalinin mines had marched to the central Victory Square in their work clothes, where, as in Mezhdurechensk, a permanent meeting got under way, workers airing their grievances as the microphone was passed from hand to hand. The miners were soon joined by workers from other enterprises, some of which joined the strike, others sending delegations and material support, so that the meeting was attended by about eight thousand workers, crammed into the small square. In the square they passed resolutions, made their demands, and elected a city strike committee from representatives of the mine committees, a majority of whom were workers, which prepared a strike programme. But who had written the demands?

Kostyukovskii arrived in Prokop'evsk late in the evening of 13 July, and immediately bumped into Naidov, whom he told about developments in Mezhdurechensk, including the workers' demand that Naidov be called to Mezhdurechensk at once. Naidov knew about the demand, but told Kostyukovskii that the workers of Prokop'evsk did not want

him to leave, and had written to the workers of Mezhdurechensk to that effect. Kostyukovskii asked Naidov, “‘have you read the demands? Yours, the Prokop’evsk demands?’” Naidov smiled and, having lowered his voice, said: “‘I have not read them, I wrote them. Well, not on my own of course, I simply took part in this process.’” Naidov did not dissociate himself from the strike – ‘a good shaking up was what was needed to change this system’ – he was only concerned that coal deliveries from the bulging stockyards to the metallurgical complex should be maintained, as in Prokop’evsk initially they were at the request of management, ostensibly to prevent the problem of fires in coal heaps, although the strike committee resolved to stop deliveries on 14 July. Naidov summed up the demands of Mezhdurechensk and Prokop’evsk, with which he was in complete agreement, as the demand for independence of the mines: ‘the essence of the demands is “give us the ability to work effectively, so that we can live well”’ (Kostyukovskii, 45).⁴⁴

The miners in Victory Square sat in their work clothes, and each section and mine had its own part of the square where workmates sat together, facilitating consultation.⁴⁵ The miners reported to the square in shifts where their attendance was recorded, those who did not report being marked down as absentees. As elsewhere, the workers were distrustful of all sources of information, and at first did not believe it when they heard that Mezhdurechensk had ended its strike.

Following the example of Mezhdurechensk, the strikers imposed a ban on alcohol, worked closely with the police to maintain order, asked enterprises providing for the needs of the city to keep working, rejected collaboration with other political organizations and informal intellectuals (but not with independent trade unionists from Leningrad, who were invited to join in the workers’ discussions in Victory Square),⁴⁶ and provided maintenance for the pits. As in Mezhdurechensk, no sooner was the strike committee established than its members were bombarded with long-standing grievances which people had previously submitted to the local administration in vain.

The authorities in Prokop’evsk were caught on the hop by the strike, which broke out before they were able to impose their own demands on the movement. Nevertheless, as in Mezhdurechensk, they gave the strikers a loudspeaker system, installed a telephone and illuminated Victory Square. One trade union president who provided food for the strikers immediately was sacked, and joined the miners’ Strike Committee (Maksimova, 70), but then orders came from above

and all the trade union committees provided free food and polythene shelters from the rain. Local Party and trade union leaders declared their full support for the demands of the strikers, while expressing reservations about the means and warning against any disorder.

Talk in the square was of pay, living conditions, the shortage of housing, and the money that was taken away from Prokop'evsk to support the bureaucrats (Kostyukovskii, Maksimova, *passim*).⁴⁷ The workers in the square showed no confidence in any of their 'leaders', apart from the local chief of police who, for admittedly tactical reasons, treated them with respect, declaring his support, calling the miners 'lads' not 'comrades' and beginning each speech 'As you entrusted me to report'. It was not the workers in the square who resisted the Mezhdurechensk request to send Naidov, for one of their first demands was for his resignation, and they treated the head of the local administration, trade union bosses and Shchadov with an equally dismissive contempt when they came on to the square (Maksimova, 70; Kostyukovskii, 70).

The first set of demands put forward on the square was hardly non-political, starting by expressing lack of confidence in the city Party committee, and demanding the sacking and censure of various Party officials for inactivity in the creation of a construction–repair base, with a list of demands concerning the control of prices, night operation of trams, supply of buses, installation of telephones for presidents of street committees in settlements, building a children's playground, the supply of disposable syringes, reduced kindergarten charges, turning the Party education building and the association's hotel into a children's home and children's polyclinic, setting up local anti-crime detachments, and strengthening the struggle against parasites, with no mention of mine independence or the price of coal (Lopatin, 42). However, Makhanov, deputy president of the city strike committee, had more ambitious objectives, 'this is a strike, not a holiday ... whose aim is to secure the reform of the present economic system' (Kostyukovskii, 55).⁴⁸

The strikers demanded that Prime Minister Ryzhkov come to Prokop'evsk because Shchadov did not have the authority to resolve the most important questions (Lopatin, 43), but in the evening of 15 July Shchadov returned to Prokop'evsk from Novokuznetsk. Naidov proposed that he have a rest then study the demands and reply to the people in the square early next morning, but Shchadov asked to meet with the strike committee at once, before speaking in the square,

where he was not well received by the strikers: 'We know that not every question can be settled at once. But why were the things we are being promised now not settled decades ago? The basic demand of the workers is to increase our standard of living. If the people of Prokop'evsk work for their money, why do they have to hand it out to every Tom, Dick and Harry? Every worker feeds six or seven people in the managerial apparatus. All the profits must stay here ... I can only see one way out – we need full financial independence, but together with increased pay and health care and welfare and social services' (Kostyukovskii, 63).

Kiselevsk

On 13 July members of the city Party committee toured all the town's enterprises, and persuaded them to stay at work. However, during the afternoon strikers arrived from adjoining Prokop'evsk, and the fourth shift of Karagailinskaya mine did not go to work. The next morning Vyacheslav Sharipov was in the trade union offices when a message came that the strike was spreading in Kiselevsk. Sharipov went to the office of Aleksandr Volkotrub, the head of the association, and they discussed what to do. Volkotrub gave Sharipov a car, and he took his group of development workers to the Central Square, where a microphone was installed. By afternoon six of the ten mines had stopped, together with various local factories and the open-cast Kiselevskii mine, and by 15 July the town was at a standstill, with about 20,000 strikers gathered in the city square, where a strike committee was elected with three delegates from each enterprise, amounting to about seventy people, of whom about one-third were active, with a core of about seven. The committee moved to the building of the association where they had been allocated an office, and elected Mauletdin Barievich Minyazov, later to become head of the city administration, as its chair. However, despite the militancy and solidarity of the workers in Kiselevsk, the strike committee more or less disintegrated as many of those elected on the first day disappeared, so that it had to be reconstituted in order to call off the strike on 19 July (*Kuzbass*, 20 July 1989).⁴⁹

Belovo

Belovo is a mining city, with some additional industry, on the road north from Kiselevsk. In Belovo, the city Party committee discussed the situation on 14 July, worked out proposals to Shchadov, and gave advice to labour collectives (Lopatin, 79). At 10.30 in the evening, Novaya mine came out on strike and by the next day all six mines had stopped. In Pionerka mine the director, N.A. Vlasov, met the strikers with shouts and threats that they would be sacked, but then stopped and went into his office to phone his bosses. After a long conversation he ran out of his office and greeted the miners, 'Lads, I am with you'.

A city meeting elected a strike committee which drew up 60 demands, and appealed to essential enterprises not to stop work. However, the strike committee in Belovo continued to work 'in close contact' with the city Party committee (*Kuzbass*, 19 July 1989), and its main functions were to maintain order and keep the population informed.

Leninsk-Kuznetsk

Leninsk-Kuznetsk is between Belovo and Kemerovo and is a mining city with the most prosperous mines in Kuzbass. The mines began to come out on 13 July and by 14 July were all closed. A workers' (not strike) committee was established and a delegate meeting in the Leninskugol' Coal Association drew up a list of 37 demands (Kostyukovskii, 47). However, the fact that the committee was under the supervision of the association did not mean that it could ignore the workers' aspirations or the achievements of the workers in Mezhdurechensk. Thus the list embraced the normal range of economic demands, some of which were quite radical, but which contained no reference to financial independence for the mines: pay for evening and night shifts; an increase in the regional wage coefficient for all workers and pensioners; indexation of pay to prices; increased holidays; introduction of time-wages and full payment for travel to the coal face; review of norms for special clothes and soap; a common day off (Sunday) for everyone; the placing of Kuzbass into Category One for supply of consumption goods (the same category as Moscow and Leningrad); improvement in medical services; cutting of institutional car parks and transferral of personal cars to police and emergency services; permission for the export of above-plan coal to buy technical

equipment and consumer goods; immediate re-election of gorispolkom and gorkom; cutting of staff of the ministry by two-thirds; liquidation of the local office of the ministry; cutting of management of associations and mines by 30 per cent by 1 January 1990; liquidation of special shops; reduction of the plan for the days lost during the strike and payment of average pay for its duration; constitution of strike committees as workers' committees to monitor the implementation of the demands (Lopatin, 42–3). The committee also forbade the continuation of coal production, which perhaps indicates that the strike was not as strong as the figures suggest.

Kemerovo

Kemerovo is the capital of the region, an administrative centre with a large chemical industry (not coal-based) and five mines, employing fewer than 10,000 people in all, at some distance from the city, the nearest mine being Severnaya, the mine shown to visitors and enjoying the best conditions because of its proximity to the city.

Gennadii Alekseevich Mikhailets had worked for seventeen years in Severnaya mine as a development worker, combine driver, deputy head of section several times, and assistant head of section, and was a Party activist. When the strike broke out at Mezhdurechensk the pace of work slowed and everybody just talked about the strike. When he came to work for the night shift on the evening of 13 July he found that work had stopped, but the workers just sat around in the hall and looked at one another, not knowing what to do, although it was obvious to Mikhailets and his comrades that the issues were much deeper than sausage and slippers, however much the miners tried to tell everybody that the strike was not political.⁵⁰ They set up a strike committee and Mikhailets was elected from his section. They were then given a telephone and got themselves organized.

The following day, the miners gathered in the construction yard near the mine, even those on vacation coming in, and decided to wait for representatives of the other mines who were reported to be on their way. The general director of the association and the mine directors offered them buses to go into town, but they decided to go on foot. The whole process was much more orderly than in South Kuzbass, as they formed up in a column of two hundred representatives in civilian clothes, to march silently to the city centre, where they elected a city strike committee and presented their demands to the city executive

committee. The first secretary of the city Party committee declared his support for the just demands of the miners. The leaders decided that they needed to link up with the other cities, and the general director of the association gave them a car so that the main leaders could go to Prokop'evsk, where Mikhailets eventually ended up as the Kemerovo representative on the regional strike committee.⁵¹ The meeting continued in the city square, but the majority of those present were non-miners and, as in Novokuznetsk, the informal political movements were well represented, although apparently the activists of the ultra-radical Democratic Union were rebuffed.

Berezovskii

Berezovskii is a mining city to the north of Kemerovo. Here the local Party committee did not quite have things all its own way, largely as a result of the activity of the Golikov brothers.

According to Vyacheslav Golikov, the strike in Berezovskii was absolutely unexpected and spontaneous, and although there might have been talk, nobody had prepared anything. The mines in Berezovskii had sent a delegation, including the Golikov brothers, to Mezhdurechensk to find out what was happening, and they stayed there until the agreement was signed with Shchadov.⁵² On the drive back they found that all the mines on the way had stopped work, but when Vyacheslav Golikov returned to Berezovskii early in the morning of 14 July he went to sleep. However, he was soon woken up by his friends who said 'You are kipping here, but everyone is on the square, Pervomaiskaya first, Biryulinskaya second, Berezovskaya and Yuzhnaya'. When he came to the square the Secretary of the city Party committee was speaking and trying to tell people that all their demands were just 'sausage', and that they should adopt the Mezhdurechensk demands, which he completely misrepresented. Golikov yelled from the crowd that he was just back from Mezhdurechensk with their demands in his pocket, and that the Party secretary was a liar. Golikov was given the microphone, and he read out the Mezhdurechensk demands, adding some of his own. Immediately afterward he was elected on to the city strike committee by the miners of his mine assembled on the square, and at the first meeting of the committee he was elected president. The next day all the deep and open-cast mines were on strike.

Most strike committees were initially content to send their demands to the local or regional authorities, but the Berezovskii Committee went to the top, sending a list of 44 demands to the Supreme Soviet, the Prime Minister, the Coal Minister and the president of the trade union. The first four demands bear the radical stamp of Vyacheslav Golikov, and eventually became the basis of the demands of the regional strike committee and of the programme of the Kuzbass Regional Council of Workers' Committees. The remaining demands largely derived from Mezhdurechensk, modified and supplemented to take account of local conditions. The Berezovskii demands were much the most sophisticated and comprehensive of any city.

The first demand was for the full economic and juridical independence of enterprises and the extension of the law on state enterprises to them, followed by: the demand for the right of labour collectives to determine the form of property themselves ('within a socialist framework'); the introduction of a single fixed-sum tax in place of the confiscation of profits by the ministry, not less than 40 per cent of export earnings to go to the enterprise; the right of the enterprise to make direct sale contracts; the abolition of the decree linking increases in pay to productivity; the payment of evening and night-shift premiums; an increase in the regional coefficient by 60 per cent, and its application to pensions, as recommended by the Siberian Academy of Science; pay to be indexed to prices of production and industrial goods; increased holidays; an increase in the wholesale price of coal to the world level; people's record of service to be kept inviolable; increased danger money; improved pension rights, invalidity benefit and maternity leave; Kuzbass to be added to the first category regions for the supply of consumption goods; improvement of the supply of medical goods and disposable syringes to Berezovskii; improvement of rest facilities and the building of a sports complex; the creation of a city rest area in the forest; preservation of the green zone; at least double housing construction and improvement of repairs; declaration of an absence of confidence and demand for the re-election of the city soviet; cutting of administrative staff under the supervision of the Labour Collective Council; cutting of the plan for the strike days; transferral of Nissan automobiles bought by enterprises to the emergency services; payment for travel to and from the face; 75 per cent of road tax to stay in the city budget; uniting of city construction organizations; and lots more specific local demands (including the transfer of heating plants and a new electric power station to the use of gas); and

transfer of the city newspaper from Party control to that of the city soviet (Lopatin, 45–7).

The process of elaborating the demands was heated. According to Golikov, every member of the strike committee proposed his own demands, which were then discussed by the committee. However, the workers on the square were distrustful of this discussion going on behind closed doors. It was their first experience of a strike, and it was very hot, they were excited, and frightened, and cautious, expecting provocations from all sides. Suddenly somebody in the square asked 'What are they doing in there? It is obvious that the administration has bought them all already, they have betrayed us and are talking about doing something against us'. In response a group of miners burst into the room where the strike committee was discussing its demands and shouted at them 'What are you doing here? Show us what you have done?', so Golikov proposed that after they had adopted a decision on each point they should go to the square and announce it and ask people to agree with it, and then go on to the next point.

The strike committee had taken over the conference hall in the city executive building by the square without asking the city administration, but the chairman of the gorispolkom arranged for a telephone to be installed. However, telephone communications were not very good – lines kept going down, and provocateurs kept phoning in to report that this or that city had gone back to work, so they decided to go to Prokop'evsk to find out what was going on. With them they took a thousand copies of their list of demands.

Anzhero-Sudzhensk

Anzhero-Sudzhensk is an isolated town in the north of the region, whose old and unprofitable mines joined the strike late, only coming out on 15 July. The gorkom and gorispolkom sent a telegram to Shchadov, Mel'nikov and Lyutenko asking them to come: 'the workers of Anzhero-Sudzhensk, the majority supporting the justice of the demands of the Mezhdurechensk miners, have continued to work expecting a solution covering the whole of Kuzbass, and not separate solutions for each city. But in an interview on Kemerovo television on 14 July 1989 you did not give a clear answer to the question of how issues will be resolved for the whole of Kuzbass, and concentrated basically on measures taken in each separate city. As a result the situation in miners' collectives has sharply deteriorated' (Lopatin, 44).

An evening meeting in the central square elected a strike committee and decided to stop coal production but to maintain deliveries. The strike committee was enormous, with over one hundred members from all enterprises in the city, headed by Nikolai Smirnov, a deputy chief engineer and a member of the regional Party committee, with its offices in the gorkom building.

THE FORMATION OF A REGIONAL STRIKE COMMITTEE AND THE END OF THE STRIKE

The Gathering of the Clans

The local and regional authorities did not sit idly by and watch the strike develop. The line had clearly been established very early on that Party, trade union and state bodies would fully recognize the justice and legitimacy of the workers' demands without threatening any punitive measures (not even loss of pay for the days spent on strike), while the threats against Party members participating in strike action were forgotten. The regional Party, trade union and administration leaders accompanied Shchadov, and later the Government-Party Commission, wherever they went. The trade unions immediately sprang into action providing food and drink for the workers, local administrations provided the strikers with premises, telephones and amplification systems for the meetings in the squares, the Party organization collaborated with the strikers in drawing up their demands, and conducted intensive propaganda work. 'Responsible workers of the apparatus of the obkom of the CPSU participate in meetings in all the miners' cities of the region, meet with leaders of the strike committees, talk to workers, help Party, city and factory newspapers with their evaluation of the situation and constantly keep the obkom informed' (15 July, Lopatin, 80). However, the local

powers were becoming increasingly worried about the situation, and on 15 July the obkom, oblispolkom, obsovsprof, and obkom of the Komsomol issued a joint statement endorsing the request of the Mezhdurechensk Strike Committee to end the strike or 'its further continuation may lead the situation to get out of control, with unpredictable consequences' (*Trud*, 16 July 1989).

The absolute priority was to keep the movement under control and get the workers back to work. However, Shchadov was having little success as he tirelessly ran from place to place trying to negotiate with workers on the city squares, the workers becoming increasingly dismissive of any settlement he proposed. The key to a settlement, as in Mezhdurechensk, was to detach the strike committees from the mass of the workers and draw them into rapid negotiations. Moreover, if the escalation of demands was to be stopped, the priority was to bring the strike committees into negotiation at a regional level on a manageable set of demands. Those in the best position to do this were the local nomenklatura clans.

The most powerful clans were those in Prokop'evsk and Kiselevsk, whose leaders were very close to Shchadov and had the best contacts in Moscow, but as it turned out were also well placed on the ground. As we have already seen, Mikhail Naidov, head of the Prokop'evsk clan as director of Prokop'evskgidrougol and President of the Council of all the Kuzbass Associations, had been chosen as mediator by the workers of Mezhdurechensk, and claimed to have written the demands of those supposedly striking against him in Prokop'evsk (although, hardly surprisingly, the final Prokop'evsk demands were almost entirely addressed to Moscow). However, Naidov was initially met with anger and contempt by the workers in Victory Square in Prokop'evsk. The task of bringing the movement under control fell to the junior members of the clan. Teimuraz Avaliani, people's deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and Deputy Director for Capital Construction of the concern Kiselevskugol', was elected president of the regional strike committee.⁵³ Vyacheslav Sharipov, who was to become president of the Independent Miners' Union of Kuzbass, was a long-standing client of Avaliani, having worked under him in a series of jobs and being related by marriage.⁵⁴ Like Naidov, these two came through the Tekhnikum which prepared leading cadres, as did Mikhail Kislyuk, chief economist of the Chernigovskii open-cast mine near Kemerovo.⁵⁵ But how did they pull it off?

The Formation of the regional strike committee

The initial objective in Kuzbass, as it had been in Mezhdurechensk, was to establish a committee with which the authorities could negotiate. According to Aslanidi, there were two attempts to bring the various city strike committees together organized by the Novokuznetsk nomenklatura clan which were unsuccessful. The third attempt was initiated by Prokop'evsk and was much better organized.

On 14 July a curious telegram was sent in the name of the Prokop'evsk Strike Committee to the regional Party committee in Kemerovo informing all labour collectives, through the obkom, that the Prokop'evsk miners were on strike, and inviting city strike committees of other cities to meet in Prokop'evsk at 4 p.m. that same day. The curious thing about the telegram is that it was not signed by the leaders of the city strike committee established the previous day, which was headed by Yurii Rudol'f and Vladimir Makhanov, but by S.P. Velikanov, A.G. Shiripinskikh and headed by V.M. Il'in (Lopatin, 41). Viktor Mikhailovich Il'in was hardly a rank-and-file miner – he was director of a Prokop'evsk mining machinery factory – nor was he a striker – his factory had already transferred to leasehold, and only joined the strike later – nor did he have the full confidence of the workers – he was shouted down in Victory Square because his factory had not joined the strike. However, like Avaliani, he was a people's deputy of the USSR.⁵⁶

In fact it was another day before miners' representatives gathered in Prokop'evsk. People were sent out from Prokop'evsk to all the mines and cities on strike to inform them of the meeting.⁵⁷ The committees from the South Kuzbass cities heard about the meeting when the Prokop'evsk messengers arrived at the Mayakovski culture palace in Novokuznetsk, where they were holding their negotiations with the South Kuzbass Coal Association, and they decided to send five people from each city to Prokop'evsk.

The delegates gathered in Prokop'evsk on the evening of 15 July, but on the first day nothing was achieved beyond establishing the basis of representation for the regional committee, with two people from each city, one from each coal village, and two from the mine rescue service.⁵⁸ The delegates went back to their own cities and gathered the demands to bring back to Prokop'evsk the next day.⁵⁹

On 16 July delegates gathered to consider their demands at 5 p.m. in the Artem culture palace in Prokop'evsk, a meeting attended by

several hundred people sitting in their delegations.⁶⁰ In theory all representatives of official power structures, including in particular Shchadov, were excluded from the meeting, although journalists were admitted. However, Naidov, Il'in, Avaliani and Korovitsyn, head of the regional trade union committee, were not only admitted to the hall, but played a leading role in the deliberations, while Lyutenko, head of the oblispolkom, was allowed to present three questions from the microphone, although he was not well received.

At first the meeting was chaotic. Rudol'f, who was chairing the meeting, proposed that they should separate their demands into two groups, one all Kuzbass, the other local, and take the Prokop'evsk demands as their basis, on the grounds that they were general demands and that they had already spent some time working on them with the minister and his team, and Shchadov had already presented them to Moscow. However, Novokuznetsk proposed their list as the basis for discussion, and in practice demands from both lists were bandied about. There was much shouting and yelling as Rudol'f pleaded at least to be allowed to read the demands to the meeting. At this point Lyutenko put his questions, which provoked even more shouting.⁶¹

Aslanidi proposed that they establish a regional strike committee to go away and consider the questions calmly, but the meeting continued with Rudol'f at last being allowed to read out the first of the Prokop'evsk demands. The first point of the Prokop'evsk demands was the economic independence of the mines, and increased wholesale prices for coal linked to the world market price. There was a long discussion of the first point, the independence of the mines, with the chief economist of Kuznetskaya mine in Leninsk-Kuznetsk insisting that not all mines wanted to be independent, and that the question should be decided by the labour collective, while Golikov argued that the mines must first establish their independence, and on that basis could then choose to unite if they wished.

For an hour or more there was heated discussion, while Rudol'f stood at the board with only the number '1' written on it, as no agreement could be reached even on the first point, and Rudol'f, who had lost his voice, could only whisper into the microphone. People became more and more frustrated and began to feel that the whole thing was a waste of time. However, Anatolii Malykhin came to the front and said 'Why re-invent the wheel?' and introduced Vyacheslav Golikov, whom Malykhin had met in Mezhdurechensk, although he still did not know his name. Malykhin began to read out the Berezovskii demands,

starting with the point that the labour collective should choose the form of property, and then Golikov came forward to introduce the demands that mines should retain their profits, paying only a fixed tax, and then that they should retain a proportion of their export earnings. Someone from the hall asked why they were going on about all this when the real issue was pay, pensions and supplies, but the reply was that the first group of demands were most important because they embraced most of the others.

Eventually someone proposed that Golikov should join Rudol'f on the platform, instead of bobbing up and down all the time, and so he distributed the leaflet listing the Berezovskii demands and joined Rudol'f. At the same time Lyutenko was thrown out of the hall (*Nasha gazeta*, 30 October 1990). Malykhin proposed that they take the Berezovskii demands as the basis for discussion in place of those of Prokop'evsk.⁶²

The discussion continued for a long time, with endless disagreements and little progress, having reached the fourth point after four hours. Then someone suggested that these were technical questions which needed to be considered by economists. Avaliani, who was indeed an economist, then spoke. He said that he thought the most important thing was to elect a regional committee, which could then get down to work which would take at least two weeks, and once it had sorted out all its demands it could negotiate with the government.⁶³ Rudol'f agreed that the meeting should concentrate on issues which were within its competence. A mine engineer endorsed this, arguing that these were difficult technical issues, so the strike should be suspended for negotiations, and resumed if the government failed to agree to the workers' demands. However, this proposal met with hostility from the hall and in the square, where the discussion was being relayed – 'We want our demands met, these other matters are for specialists to work out'. So it was decided to define the immediate demands which could be resolved by the minister, beginning with the demand for additional pay for evening and night shifts (although Shchadov had already accepted this and provided the money), and then the demand for an increase in the regional coefficient, and the provision of housing according to the Moscow norms, although these were not issues that could be dealt with by Shchadov.

Rudol'f then invited Seleznev, the oblast prosecutor, to speak. Having informed the hall that he had instructed all local prosecutors to give strikers free legal advice and support, he went on to say that at the

first stage workers had been distrustful of all managers and Party and trade union officials, with good reason, but had gradually come to realize that not all of them were bad and their distrust had thawed. In the heat of the moment in Prokop'evsk they had demanded the re-election of Naidov, and expressed the same attitude to the trade union, but by then Naidov and Korovitsyn had become theirs. They wouldn't listen to the people's deputies, and cursed at People's Deputy Il'in, basically because his factory joined the strike later than others, although it later came out in solidarity with the miners even though it was already a leasehold company, for which Il'in had fought.

Following a eulogy to his virtues Il'in then spoke, proposing the election of a committee from city representatives, which could then be left to work in peace. The committee should group the demands so that there was one list for the government, one set for the coal ministry, one for the health ministry and so on. 'We don't need polemics and votes; we need to work things out'.

The scene was now set for Naidov to take the stage. Naidov stunned the audience by announcing the imminent arrival of a joint Government-Party-Trade Union Commission from Moscow. He went on to lay out his stall:

We have to follow this through to the end. If we do so we must get a result, and soon. And not just half a result. You know well that you have raised a lot of problems, and in the past the obkom, the oblispolkom and we have raised them. But what was the point? Time and again resolutions of the Central Committee of the CPSU and Council of Ministers concerning the social development of the region have come to nothing! Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov, as you know, was in Prokop'evsk in March and was horrified to see the way we lived, but again with no result. We do not raise these questions lightly, there is always the possibility that they will silence us, shut us up. But with you it is another matter. Now you have to enter a dialogue with the commission which is coming, and not in the name of the association or the president of some ispolkom, but in your name, in the name of an oblast strike committee elected by you. I absolutely think that you must give the committee complete authority to call off the strike the day the commission arrives, and if the commission does not resolve the problems you can strike again (Kostyukovskii, 71-3).

The array of speakers had clearly been set up to win the meeting over to agree to form a regional strike committee and to suspend the strike pending negotiations. However, the meeting firmly rejected any suggestion of suspending the strike, and to pursue the proposal would have been counter-productive. The other key question was coal deliveries, and the overwhelming majority in the hall wanted to stop them,

but the Leninsk delegate objected that they had to meet an export order which was paying for building a hospital. Eventually it was agreed to leave the question of coal deliveries to the city committees.⁶⁴ The meeting then proceeded to the formation of the regional strike committee. There was a long discussion of whether each city should have two or three delegates, and of what counted as a city, before it was decided by 118 votes to 65 to have two delegates from each city. There was then a discussion of the payment of salary and protection of rights of members of the committee, and of whether to elect the committee then or to refer it back to the city committees for nominations, the eventual decision being to establish the committee at once, following a break for the city representatives to get together to discuss the procedure.⁶⁵ The Mezhdurechensk delegate from Lenin mine proposed that Naidov should be invited to chair a commission to prepare their demands, a proposal that was firmly rejected, although it was agreed to invite Naidov as a consultant.

A committee of 26 persons was established (22 from eleven cities, two from villages, two from mine rescue), although according to Aslanidi, who was elected from Osinniki, there was no proper process of nomination or election.⁶⁶ A majority of the committee (fourteen persons) were declared Party members, including two secretaries of enterprise Party committees. A majority (sixteen persons) were identified as workers, but certainly the most active of these workers had relatively high levels of education, and in several cases extensive management experience. Vyacheslav Golikov was elected from Bere-zovskii, but had to go back to the doctor, so declined in favour of his brother Gennadii, although he joined the committee later.

The elections completed, Rudol'f read out the telegram from Gorbachev and Ryzhkov which had just been forwarded from Kemerovo announcing the arrival of the commission established to consider 'the question of the socio-economic development of the region' (*Kuzbass* 18 July 1989).⁶⁷

The Settlement of the Strike

The meeting was adjourned, and the newly elected regional strike committee went into closed session to draw up the list of demands. Avaliani, who was one of the representatives from Kiselevsk, insisted that the committee should elect the president, rather than the larger meeting of representatives, on the grounds that the committee had to

work with him (there were no women on the committee) and the meeting duly elected Avaliani to the post.⁶⁸

The committee tried to sort out all the demands that had come from the various cities, with a number of specialists providing them with advice. According to Aslanidi it was real bedlam – they had two mountains of paper with demands, one of those waiting to be analysed and one of those with which they had finished. Avaliani just moved papers across with demands with which he did not agree, without any discussion. Once the demands were adopted they were passed to a typist who typed them up. They put together a list of thirty-two demands, to which a further eleven were added (probably the main administration demands, according to Aslanidi) when the commission arrived.

The commission arrived in Kemerovo at 2 p.m. on 17 July and after a short meeting with the obkom, Slyun'kov spoke in the square. The commission proposed to negotiate with the strikers in Kemerovo, but the strike committee insisted that it come to Prokop'evsk, for fear of being cut off from the miners in Kemerovo. The commission immediately flew to Prokop'evsk and went into negotiation in the city Party committee hall that evening.

The commission fully acknowledged the legitimacy of the miners' grievances, assimilated their demands to the movement for perestroika, and identified the opposition to the miners as the conservative ministerial system and backward managers and local Party and executive bodies, while arguing that strike action was unjustified and unnecessary because the miners' legitimate demands would be met now that they had been brought to the government's attention. The demands for mine independence in particular were entirely in accordance with the general direction of perestroika.⁶⁹

In the hall the three members of the commission sat on the platform alongside Avaliani, Rudol'f and Gerol'd representing the strikers, while the rest of the strike committee sat in the hall and listened to the discussion.⁷⁰ The negotiations were dominated by Avaliani, who had surrounded himself with a large team of consultants, specialists, economists and lawyers who were in a small room near the hall, so that when they faced problems formulating or resolving questions these were often referred to the consultants, who provided one more filter for the strikers' demands. The behaviour of different representatives of the commission was different. Slyunkov tried to reach a compromise, but Voronin was more wily and constantly tried to defer

discussion by proposing to refer the issues to the next meeting of the Council of Ministers. By four o'clock in the morning agreement had been reached on nine points, and the meeting adjourned until later that day.

According to Aslanidi, the most active participants in the discussion from the floor were the representatives from South Kuzbass, and the mine rescue people who always emphasized that the same demands must be implemented for mine rescue, giving rise to a common saying: 'to resolve things for all the people of Kuzbass, and also for the mine rescue service'. The most passive representatives were from the north of Kuzbass, who seemed largely to have been selected by the administration.

Despite the start of negotiations an increasing number of non-mining enterprises joined the strike on 17 July. At a televised joint session of the Supreme Soviet and Soviet of Nationalities that same day V.Ya. Medikov, a people's deputy from Novokuznetsk, prepared the ground for the next phase of assimilation of the strike movement, declaring that the strike

is not leading the country to ruin, but to the acceleration of the process of perestroika. For that reason I fully support the workers and inhabitants of Kuzbass and I beg to consider myself as the permanent representative of the workers' committee in the Supreme Soviet. The justice of the demands is demonstrated by the fact that the Coal Ministry, the Council of Ministers, Party and Soviet organs have adopted all these demands. These are not demands for meat and sausage as many try to represent them. The basic demand is to grant independence and the right to resolve their fate themselves, to escape from the dictates of Moscow and other bureaucrats.

Medikov called for immediate local elections, with the strike activists 'as the fundamental core of the new soviets', but he ended with an appeal to stop the strike, proposing that the guarantors that the promises would be fulfilled would be the Supreme Soviet, the Congress of People's Deputies and the new Council of Ministers. Ryzhkov made a counter-productive speech, claiming that large quantities of goods had already been sent to Kuzbass, which only provoked distrust because nobody in Kuzbass had seen them (Kostyukovskii, 79–80).

On 18 July the strike wave began to recede. Slyun'kov and Avaliani made speeches in the square which were broadcast on the regional radio, declaring their satisfaction with the progress of the negotiations and promising that once the negotiations in Prokop'evsk were concluded the commission would visit every city to investigate their

particular problems. In his speech Avaliani appealed to city strike committees to suspend the strike from the third shift that day, with a promise to resume in the event of failure to reach agreement (Kostyukovskii, 88–91).

Although Avaliani had called for an end to the strike, the square in Prokop'evsk was more packed than ever, the crowd overflowing into the neighbouring streets, and the general mood was one of distrust both of the government and of their own committee, and of determination to continue the strike. Members of the regional committee toured the mines to explain the settlement, but in every city the announcement was greeted initially with disbelief, since only nine points had been agreed, and there were no guarantees at all.

The Kiselevsk Committee, once it had been reconstituted, decided to continue the strike, only finally reaching a majority decision to suspend it late the following evening. In Kemerovo the strike committee voted by 19 to 3 to continue the strike, in Leninsk-Kuznetsk the same decision was taken by a majority of 13 to 2. In Belovo the meeting in the square decided to continue the strike and demanded that Gorbachev himself come to Kuzbass. Workers in Novokuznetsk and Osinniki also voted to continue the strike. In Berezovskii the city strike committee decided at 8 p.m. to suspend the strike, but only after midnight did they get the workers in the square to agree. In Anzhero-Sudzhensk the city committee faced the same problem having decided to suspend the strike, with the situation remaining tense as committee members went around enterprises explaining the decision (*Kuzbass*, 19, 20 July 1989). Nevertheless the peak of the strike in Kuzbass had been reached on 17 July, when 158 enterprises and almost 180,000 workers were on strike, and by 21 July everybody was back at work.

The commission resumed its work, and later on 18 July a thirty-five point agreement was signed between the members of the commission and Avaliani, Rudol'f and Gerol'd on behalf of the regional strike committee. This agreement, with the additional nine measures agreed a week later, was incorporated into Resolution 608 of the Council of Ministers adopted on 3 August. Seven representatives from workers' committees around the country were included in the membership of a government Commission to monitor the implementation of the resolution, although the workers' committees themselves had no defined role to play in the process.

The deal made substantial and wide-ranging concessions to the miners. The agreement included large increases in pay and benefits,

additional payment for evening and night shifts, an increase in the regional coefficient to apply to all workers, increased maternity leave, improved pensions and invalidity benefits, a common day off, payment for travel to and from the coal face, improved holidays, full economic and juridical independence for the mines, regional self-financing, re-organization of the associations and a wide range of property forms, an increase in regional and local budgets, a reformed system of profit taxation, autonomy in the determination of work practices, reform of the normative relation between productivity and wages, the right to sell above-plan coal for hard currency, an increase in the domestic price of coal with an interim increase from 12 to 20 roubles per ton from 20 July,⁷¹ a cut in mine management staff and in the amount of paperwork, improved equipment for the police, improved supplies, medical facilities, repair and maintenance of housing and communal facilities, the abandonment of construction of the Krapivinskii reservoir, strike pay, payment for members of strike committees, support from the regional trade union in establishing control groups to monitor the distribution of goods etc., and a promise of no reprisals. The miners' one obligation was to consider dissolving the strike committees on 1 August, subject to the situation (Protocol, Lopatin, 68–73, dated 17–18 July. Additional measures, mainly concerning ecological issues, leisure and pensions, were agreed on 22 July).

Following agreement with the regional committee, the commission set off on its tour of Kemerovo cities to discuss the local demands drawn up in each place, accompanied everywhere by Mel'nikov and Lyutenko. Thus the process of formulating demands was reproduced from one city to another over the next week, although at the local level it seems that the local Party and administration were at least as active as the strike committees in drawing up demands, the local administration at last seeing the chance to acquire some of the power that it had never had in the past.⁷²

THE AFTERMATH OF THE STRIKE: ORDER AND GOOD GOVERNMENT?

The general strategy of the regional and local authorities after the strike was to co-operate with the strike committees, while drawing the

activists back into the official trade union, Party and soviet structures. The Party leadership seemed completely confident that the strike movement, which had at first looked as though it could bring the whole world crashing down around their ears, had been entrusted to responsible hands and assimilated to the movement for perestroika and for the rights and interests of the region – such confidence is not surprising since the president of the regional strike committee was at the same time a loyal member of the regional Party committee.

On 19 July there was a meeting of regional Party economic activists in Novokuznetsk. Mel'nikov's speech was triumphalist: 'The reserves of the working-class, as we see in this business, are inexhaustible, and so it is too early to assign to the archives the leading role of the working-class, as some comrades sometimes do.... The role of the Party is not weakened but strengthened if you see that Communists play a leading role in the strike movement and work there actively'. Forgetting his denunciation of the involvement of Communists in strikes only three months before, he endorsed the work of the Party with the regional strike committee, and acclaimed the role of the strike committees in maintaining order and reducing crime: 'That is what is meant by the power of the working-class' (Kostyukovskii, 100–101).

On 25 July the obkom held an expanded meeting, also attended by the Government–Party Commission just before its return to Moscow, to consider the political situation in the region. The obkom still denounced strikes as harmful, but recognized the positive aspects of demands for widening the rights and economic independence of enterprises, for the destruction of the administrative-command system of management, and for giving real powers to soviets, thus paving the way for new initiatives. It also recognized the positive role of the strike committees in formulating socio-economic demands and in maintaining order, discipline and public services, which facilitated the participation of Communists, managers and specialists in the strike committees. The committees had decisively rebuffed attempts to introduce political slogans, and in this situation the participation of Communists in the strike and their support for the workers' demands was justified. Thus, the obkom concluded, it would be right to continue to participate actively in the positive development of these processes, although the demand for the re-election of soviets was a hasty demand. The meeting concluded by stressing the need to explain the law on meetings, demonstrations and other mass measures to labour collectives (Lopatin, 85–6; *Kuzbass*, 27 July 1989).

At the end of July a plenum of all gorkoms considered the lessons of the strike and concluded that it was necessary to reconsider existing methods of resolution of socio-economic questions, renew personnel, improve communication, encourage more active primary groups, explain the law on meetings, and similar measures. The Party had had a profound shock, but it was now confident that it had matters in hand (Lopatin, 90–91). During August it began to take symbolic measures in accordance with the local agreements: the obkom ordered an end to separate dining facilities for managers within two weeks, the transfer of various state and Party buildings to hospitals and children's homes, a ban on privileges for managers and so on (Lopatin, 92–3).

On 8 August the obkom held a plenary meeting on the lessons of the strike which began to draw out a plan for the future. A.M. Zaitsev, first secretary of the Belovo gorkom, and later to become first secretary of the obkom, had collaborated closely with his strike committee from the beginning. He proposed that the Party should make maximum use of the activists of the strike committees, getting Communists into the gorkom apparatus and recommending ordinary comrades to local soviets. This seemed to reflect a general view at the meeting that the main lesson of the strike was that the Party was out of touch with workers and was losing members, collaboration with the activists of the workers' committees providing a way forward. Smirnov, President of the Anzhero-Sudzhensk Workers' Committee, proposed new Party elections to bring working-class members more actively into the Party, concluding that the priority at that time was to implement the agreement, reconsider cadre policy, and increase political and ideological work. Naidov neatly summarized his own activity as an expression of the laws of history in explaining the strike wave as a result of the decentralization of power with perestroika, through which the centre tended to unite local powers and the working-class against itself. Avaliani stressed the need to prepare for self-financing and to move immediately to the market economy (Lopatin, 98–105).

This strategy of the obkom in practice corresponded reasonably closely with the predominant thinking within the workers' committees, and not only among their Communist members. The workers' committees were not seen as institutions exercising dual power, but as organizations which sprang up to fill a power vacuum. Thus the first stage in the development of the workers' movement was focused on putting pressure on existing institutions to fulfil their functions and strengthening them through an infusion of new personnel, reinforced

by legislative changes concerning the rights and responsibilities of such bodies. In this way, as the new wave of activists permeated existing power structures, the workers' committees themselves would dissolve.

The Second Conference of Workers' Committees, which was held in Prokop'evsk on 26 July, decided that the strike committees would remain in being, renamed workers' committees in token accordance with the agreement with the Party–Government Commission that the strike committees would be suspended on 1 August, with each city committee deciding its own structure and principles of representation.⁷³ The conference issued a statement to all workers and to the Supreme Soviet, stressing that their first demand was for the economic independence of enterprises and regions. They were not looking to better their own position at the expense of others, but to make perestroika an urgent and progressive movement. The first task was declared to be the establishment of effective control of the implementation of the agreement. To do this new elections to trade union committees and local soviets were declared to be necessary. It was necessary to return trade unions to their basic function of defending the interests of workers, for which purpose members of strike committees needed to join trade union committees. The second stage would be to seek election to local executive committees. 'We can declare with full confidence that our movement is conducted in support of perestroika' (Lopatin, 87–8).

The illusion of a harmonious convergence between the forces for perestroika in the regional Party committee and the Regional Council was not one that could be sustained for long. The workers' committees had been entrusted to safe hands, but most of the members of the Regional Council were genuinely committed to a radical perestroika, unlike the regional Party committee, which was by and large only paying lip-service to the latest Party line, and using the workers' committees as a battering ram to press its own claims on Moscow.

NOTES

¹ On the 1989 miners' strikes see David Mandel, *Perestroika and the Soviet People*, Black Rose, Montreal and New York, 1991, Chapter Three and Peter Rutland, 'Labour Unrest and Movements in 1989 and 1990', *Soviet Economy*, 6, 1990, 34–84. Theodore Friedgut and Lewis Siegelbaum, 'Perestroika from Below: the Soviet Miners' Strike

and its Aftermath', *New Left Review*, 181, 1990, 5–32, and David Marples, 'Why the Donbass Miners Went on Strike', *RFE/RL Report on the USSR*, 8, September 1989, 30–32, and 'Turmoil in the Donbass: the Economic Realities', *RFE/RL Report on the USSR*, 12, October 1990, 14–16, provide detailed accounts of the Donbass strike.

Most of our information on the workers' movement in Kuzbass derives from our own interviews on regular visits to Kuzbass and Moscow during 1992–94, supplemented by a series of interviews on the 1989 strike with the leaders of the movement conducted for us by our colleague Petr Bizyukov from Kemerovo State University, who has also provided us with the benefit of his own very extensive knowledge and research in regular discussions and reports since 1991 (quotations are from these interviews unless otherwise stated). We have also made extensive use of reports in *Nasha gazeta*, which was founded as the newspaper of the workers' committee in December 1989 (the name *Nasha gazeta* was adopted for the eighth issue of the paper in February 1990. The first seven issues were published as special issues of a succession of factory newspapers, three from the chemical industry, two coal enterprises and the railway administration, headed at the time by Aman Tuleev, twice, and in the KASKOR information bulletin, published weekly from June 1990 to the end of 1993. On the 1989 strike we have also drawn on an eye-witness account of the strike by Viktor Kostyukovskii, *Kuzbass: Zharkoe leto 89-go*, Sovremennik, Moscow, 1990 (at the time of the strike, Kostyukovskii was the correspondent for *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, later for *Izvestiya*); extracts from a book by the editor of the TV programme Pulse 'Professiya – Kolpakov' published in *Nasha gazeta*, 23 July 1991; an eye-witness account of the strike in Prokop'evsk, Nina Maksimova, 'Zabastovka', *EKO*, 11, 1989, and a transcript of a tape-recording of the radio relay of the negotiations in Prokop'evsk which concluded the 1989 strike and of meetings in the city square in Kemerovo at the same time. We have had extensive access to documentary materials in Kuzbass, Vorkuta and Moscow (although the NPG archive, which was kept in Viktor Utkin's offices on the fifth floor of the White House, was destroyed in the shelling of the White House in August 1993 before we were able to explore it systematically). A collection of documents prepared by L.N. Lopatin, *Rabochee dvizhenie kuzbassa: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, Sovremennaya Otechestvennaya Kniga, Kemerovo, 1993, also proved invaluable (these documents are referenced in the text as Lopatin). Another, less comprehensive, selection of documents has been published by the Institute of Employment of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Ministry of Labour as *Shakhterskoe dvizhenie: dokumental'nye i analiticheskie materialy*, 2 vols, Moscow, 1992. We have also been able to see video-recordings of a seminar discussion involving the miners' leaders in early 1990, of the July 1990 strike in Kemerovo, and of the Confederation of Labour Congress in Novokuznetsk in April 1990.

² Leonid Gordon was probably the leading advocate of this view, 'The democratic workers' movement in Kuzbass ... objectively assists the leader of perestroika' (*Izvestiya*, 12 January 1990). See also Friedgut and Siegelbaum, 1990. This is also the tone of all the published contemporary accounts: Maksimova, Kostyukovskii, and the reports in *Trud* and in the local press.

³ One of the demands of the Kuzbass miners was that labour shortages should no longer be met by the settlement of released prisoners in Kuzbass, a demand that was ignored (Lopatin, 107).

⁴ Rutland, 1990, 353. *Soviet Labour Review*, 1, 7, June 1989, no source given. This report also notes that Coal Minister Shchadov and the regional Party secretary (incorrectly identified as Mel'nikov, the Kuzbass Party boss) recognized the justice of the miners' demands and promised that the guilty would be punished – the traditional, but usually less public, response to popular unrest. It was equally traditional for the leaders of the unrest later to be quietly removed.

⁵ This and the next two examples are taken from the Resolution of the Bureau of the Kemerovo obkom (regional Party committee) of the CPSU, 'On facts concerning the

refusal of workers to work in various enterprises in the region', 5 April 1989 reproduced in Lopatin, 39.

- ⁶ The Sociology Department of the South Kuzbass Coal Association had conducted a survey in three mines in January 1989 which revealed very high levels of dissatisfaction among the workers with virtually every aspect of their lives, and a marked lack of confidence in their Party and trade union organization: L. Mal'tseva and O.N. Pulyaeva, 'Chto privedo k zabastobke (What Led to the Strike?)', *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, 1990, 38–42.
- ⁷ The 1989 election was the high point of the informal movement in Kuzbass, which had developed gradually over the previous three years. Viktor Koznin, a leader of the ecological movement in Kuzbass, defeated the president of the oblispolkom Lyutenko. Yurii Golik, head of the Law Faculty at Kemerovo State University, defeated Aman Tuleev, at that time head of the railway administration. Golik was a leader of Argument, and backed by Citizen's Initiative, but opposed the miners' strike, became a protégé of Gorbachev and ended up supporting the 1991 *putsch* as a non-communist defender of the Soviet Union. Although a minority of participants in the informal movement were workers, there were few if any miners involved. After the 1989 strike, Citizens' Initiative proposed collaboration with the workers' committee but was rebuffed, primarily because of the miners' suspicion of intellectuals, and the informal movement died, although individuals reappeared in the democratic movement the following year. However, the miners did pick up one of the central demands of the informal movement, the cancellation of a huge and ecologically disastrous hydroelectric project on the Tomsk river, the Krapivinskii reservoir.
- ⁸ Mel'nikov had been appointed from a background in the construction industry in September 1988 when his predecessor Vadim Bakatin was summoned to Moscow. Mel'nikov was an extremely bureaucratic conservative leader, seen as a representative of Moscow structures in Kuzbass, who had been appointed against the local nominee.
- ⁹ Workers were very anxious about military intervention, and afraid of reprisals after the strike, which is one reason why the miners were wary of outside political contacts (cf., Friedgut and Siegelbaum, 1990, n. 119, p. 30). Rutland, 1990 says that few fears of reprisals were voiced outside Vorkuta (where a poll showed that 38 per cent feared reprisals), but according to our informants such fears were acute, general and constant, in both 1989 and 1991. Aslanidi: 'Everybody felt an instinctive fear that the strike might be suppressed by military force'. Golikov: 'We were frightened at the possibility of repression so when we drove to Mezhdurechensk we kept our eyes open all the time for military forces. People were prepared to protect themselves, and the miners formed platoons and had sentry posts at the railway station and on the roads so they were ready. They could protect themselves because miners had a lot of dynamite and were very experienced people'. Lyakin: 'People thought that the system could use military force against them and they knew that in a lot of yards police and people in civilian clothes were standing by and a lot of cars were in a state of readiness'. Mikhailets, on the other hand, said that he was not afraid of the use of military force, at least once the strike had spread.
- ¹⁰ The first reports of the Kuzbass strike linked it to these demands (*Soviet Home Service*, 11 July 1989, quoted in *Soviet Labour Review*, 2, 7, August 1989, 2).
- ¹¹ The submission of such demands, although not in such a manner, was a normal part of the Soviet system, the purpose of which was to lay a 'paper trail' so that the appropriate body could absolve itself of responsibility if conflict broke out. Their tone does not indicate resolve so much as the expectation of imminent trouble.
- ¹² On the contradictions of the law see Clarke et al., *What About the Workers?*, 204–10.
- ¹³ There was quite a high degree of mobility within the mines between skilled underground work and middle managerial posts, many of those with advanced technical qualifications choosing to take jobs as skilled workers both because of the higher pay and because of the frustrations of managing. Most of the 'workers' on the workers' committees had relatively high levels of qualification, and many had previously held

- managerial posts up to section head, the top level of middle management and effectively third in the line of command of the mine from director through chief engineer.
- ¹⁴ After the Mezhdurechensk strike the regional Party committee issued a strong reprimand both to the Secretary of the gorkom and to the president of the gorispolkom, but recommended the sacking only of the latter. (This could not be done directly, since he had been elected by the people, so the obkom could only 'recommend to the gorkom that it raise the question of the expediency of using him in his present post' (Lopatin, 106).)
- ¹⁵ There had also been a strike in Lenin mine in Mezhdurechensk in 1960. A strike in a mine construction enterprise in Osinniki in February 1958 was exceptionally resolved without the use of force. As so often, the poor organization of work and contemptuous attitude of the management to the workers provided the background to the strike – the workers sank a mine into what turned out to be a seam already exhausted by the neighbouring pit. When they complained to management they were told just to do what they were paid to do and not ask questions. The new mine was completed and handed over according to plan, but of course the miners found that the coal had already been taken out – all that remained were old rails and pit props! The actual precipitant of the strike was more mundane. The workers came up from the third shift into a temperature of minus 40 degrees to find that the bus which was supposed to take them back to the pithead had not arrived. They walked the two kilometres back, only to find that there was neither water nor heating in the changing room. One of the miners, Vasilii Gatsko, asked 'How long are we going to suffer?', somebody else replied 'Why ask us? Let us go and wake the director Malev from his bed and let him take a shower with us here'. Several hours later the morning shift arrived, and everyone in the enterprise supported the demands of the third shift. When Malev arrived at the mine it was obvious that he had just woken up and was very angry, but people stood up to him and told him that his power had been destroyed. Malev, who was usually very rude, suddenly started to try to justify himself, obviously terrified of the consequences of such an outburst. Some time later the First Deputy Minister for Coal of the USSR responsible for mine construction arrived together with the secretaries of the regional and city Party committees, the head of the regional mine construction organization and others, including KGB officers. The members of the commission appealed to the workers not to be afraid to tell the truth, but nobody believed it. The deputy minister then beat his chest and said 'I give you my word as a Communist that not one hair will be lost from the head of a person who will tell the truth'. One of the older workers, Sasha Bogdanov, held up his hand and announced to everybody in the hall, 'Lads you can see very well that there is a great game being played here and the stakes are very high. I will tell them everything that we know, but you keep silent. If anything happens to me remember who made me a promise.' He stood up and went to the stage where all the leaders were sitting, and he went over all the workers' grievances. By the time he had finished the deputy minister was scarlet with rage and turned to the director, saying to him 'Tomorrow morning you will work as an ordinary development worker in this mine, so that you will understand what it is to be an ordinary worker'. The next day Malev turned up to work on the face, but was driven out by the other workers. Four years later the author of this description, Moiseev, who had been a member of the brigade that struck but is now a journalist, met Malev, now working as chief of a mining section in another pit (Viktor Moiseev, *Zona Absurda, Kuzbass*, 12 and 16 March 1993).
- ¹⁶ According to Rutland, 1990, the decision to strike at Shevyakova was inspired by a report in the trade union newspaper *Trud*, 14 June 1989, of a stoppage at the Krasnii Lug pit in the Ukraine in June (Rutland, 1990, 353), although we have found no evidence to confirm this.
- ¹⁷ In the specific conditions of Soviet society, a key responsibility of Party primary groups was to recruit 'active' people and channel them into appropriate forms of activity to absorb their energies, whether it be through Party membership or through 'social service'. It took a particularly strong-willed, and often bloody-minded, individualism to

stand out against the blandishments of the Party committee. Independent activists, while tolerated within limits, would often be subjected to ostracism and isolation if they approached those limits, such psychological pressure being more insidiously effective than direct repression. The result was that their oppositional activism often tended to be directed into strongly individualistic and politically harmless channels, for example the persistent writing of letters of complaint to state and Party bodies, persistent litigation through disputes procedures and courts over the calculation of pay, and in the most unfortunate cases into chronic alcoholism and/or mental breakdown (cf. Boris Ikhlov, *Ocherki sovremennogo rabochee dvizheniya na urale*, Perm', 1994, 56–9). There was certainly greater scope for the activity of informal workers' leaders under perestroika, and our impression is that there is a marked difference between the kind of people who emerged as workers' leaders after 1989 and those individualists with a longer history of dissidence who pioneered the development of the independent workers' movement from 1987.

18 The mine foreman is responsible for mine safety, not for the organization of work, so it is a post with responsibility but not power. The job is usually the first step on the managerial ladder for those graduating from mining institute.

19 Kovalev joined the mine strike committee, but he was asleep at home when the town committee was elected. He lost patience with the workers' committees after the first year, because he felt that they lacked direction and achieved nothing, and became active in the official trade union, although he saw the official union structures as a barrier to effective trade unionism and remained in opposition to the union president in the mine, Aleksandr Andreevich Shchepan, who managed to escape the censure of both the Party and the workers in the wake of the strike, and who has been re-elected to his post annually since October 1988.

20 Kokorin, a Communist Party member, became the chair of the mine strike committee and then the first chair of the city strike committee until he was removed from the chairmanship, although not the committee, amidst charges of corruption. In the official account of the Mezhdurechensk strike prepared by the obkom on 20 July, Kokorin plays the leading role in the strike (Lopatin, 76–7) and, as we shall see, conducted the initial negotiations with Coal Minister Shchadov on his own. However, according to Kovalev and members of the city workers' committee, Kokorin's role was from the beginning to contain the workers' anger and direct it into official channels. After his removal from the chair of the committee, Kokorin was elected to the bureau of the city Party committee, and tried unsuccessfully to become both mayor of the city and president of the regional committee of the trade union (*Nasha gazeta*, 27 November 1990).

21 The bad organization of work was a repeated complaint of workers. The bonus system in the mines meant that shortfalls in production, whether or not the fault of the worker, had a disproportionate impact on the workers' pay packet if they fell below plan targets. After the 1989 strike the miners moved on to a progressive piece-rate system in which the impact of production losses on wages, while still significant, was less dramatic. Subsequently the miners began to demand a guaranteed basic minimum.

22 According to all the official propaganda, the first miners' strike raised only social and economic questions and did not challenge the existing political system. However, there is no doubt that radical political demands were frequently raised by the miners, only to be filtered out in the process of selection. There seem to have been two main reasons for this. Firstly, the fear on the part of the leaders of the movement that to politicize the strike would be to invite repression. Secondly, the concern on the part of the Party authorities to confine the strike within established political channels.

23 This set of demands, elaborated collectively by the workers, is quite distinct from the set of demands laid out in Kokorin's letter of the previous December.

24 The quality of the food in the canteen was, even by the standards of Soviet mines, apparently appalling. A friend of the trade union president, who had been a miner at the nearby Lenin pit, was eventually brought in by the union to improve the canteen. He told us proudly that he had done so by sacking 70 per cent of the 'stupid women'.

- ²⁵ The first *Pravda* report of the strike named Kokorin and Kovalev as joint leaders (*Pravda*, 13 July 1989).
- ²⁶ The union claimed that it organized the provision of food and drink for the workers, but the latter say that it was they who took the initiative, the union only coming along later. However, the provision of food and drink became the basic activity of the official trade union for the duration of the strike.
- ²⁷ According to the official Party report on the events these activities were organized by the city Party committee, selflessly working round the clock to maintain vital services (Lopatin, 77).
- ²⁸ Sergeev took up Golikov's call in his speech to the meeting: 'We don't need sausage and soap. We eat meat and sugar, and soap is finished too. We need freedom — economic independence for the mine so that we can control the results of our own labour! That is what we need' (*Nasha gazeta*, 23 July 1991).
- ²⁹ They were also demanding the resignation of the city soviet.
- ³⁰ The miners of Mezhdurechensk have had to bear the brand of 'strike-breakers' for making a separate settlement just as the rest of Kuzbass came out. 'Was not that the moment at which they broke the back of the workers' committee? Was not that the point at which those we had elevated became strike-breakers, when they said that politics and miners are incompatible? It was only then that we painfully understood that it was not those people who had come forward to lead the workers' movement. The apparatus had done everything to draw the strike committees into a luxury mystery tour. The best hotels, free trips — with a workers' committee identity card — to the holy of holies. Informal meetings with government leaders ... on one big condition — not a word about politics' (A. Kunts, President of the workers' committee of Raspadskaya mine, Mezhdurechensk, *Nasha gazeta*, 27 November 1990).
- ³¹ At first the miners' leaders were anxious to claim credit for all these achievements, except the last. However, more recently they have begun to disclaim responsibility, particularly for the disintegration of the Soviet Union which almost all of them see as a disaster.
- ³² In the end Mezhdurechensk never got its association. After the strike Raspadskaya, the largest mine in the Soviet Union in terms of output, was transformed into a leasehold enterprise, one no doubt conscious by-product of which was to undermine the solidarity of the mines in Mezhdurechensk. During the 1991 strike Raspadskaya was again bought off by being offered the opportunity to become a closed joint-stock company. (This was not the first time that Shchadov had used this tactic. He had previously removed the Kirovskaya mine from the jurisdiction of the Leninsk-Kuznetsk Association and placed it directly under the ministry for similar reasons.)
- ³³ This does not imply a conspiracy, although it is extremely unlikely that Kokorin would or could have played such a leading role in the events over such a long period without at least guidance from higher Party bodies, particularly in the light of the declaration of the obkom that Communists should not participate in strikes, and its very strong reaction to the participation of Communists (including Aleksandr Aslanidi) in the strike in Osinniki in April. As we will see, once the strike spread the Party was very active in putting 'its' people in place in other cities.
- ³⁴ Mine directors would not be expected to intervene openly, although in Donetsk two mine directors actively supported the miners once the latter had decided to strike, and in Kuzbass the director of the Baidaevskaya mine was a member of his mine's strike committee. It is important to remember that there was no clear dividing line in mining towns between mine directors and the leaders of the Party, trade union and local administration, who still constituted a relatively cohesive local elite tied together by the Party apparatus. There is no doubt that close co-ordination was maintained between these different groups throughout the strike.
- ³⁵ This point was made forcefully by David Mandel in his *Perestroika and the Soviet People*, Chapter 3.

- ³⁶ Mikhail Naidov had had a switchback career – from First secretary of the Kiselevsk city Party committee, to director of a mine in Kemerovo, then head of the Kuzbass Mine Construction Kombinat, where he fell out with the deputy minister in Moscow and asked to be transferred back to a mine, being sent to Mezhdurechensk as director of the Lenin mine which, according to local legend, he transformed from a clapped-out pit on the brink of closure to one of the most prosperous in the branch, with a large social and welfare apparatus developed by Naidov, the pit being rewarded with the Order of Lenin, while Naidov was transferred to the most difficult job in the industry, as General Director of Prokop'evskugol', which he, with Shchadov's support, transformed into the Scientific Production Association Prokop'evskgidrougol'. Naidov had a reputation as a man who always worked in the interests of the workers, and this had brought him trouble with superiors, but also enabled him to bounce back. Naidov was the man to bridge the gap between Shchadov and the workers, and although he did not in fact come to Mezhdurechensk, which would have been very provocative in the eyes of Yuzhkuzbassugol', he was to play a crucial role in the resolution of the strike across Kuzbass (Kostyukovskii, 38–40). Naidov became chairman of the oblast executive committee after the March 1990 elections, resigning in January 1991 to become General Director of Kuzbassimpex, a privatized export–import concern (*Nasha gazeta*, 4 January 1991).
- ³⁷ Aleksandr Valentinovich Aslanidi was born in a village in South Kuzbass in 1947, moving to Malinovka in 1955. He worked as a fitter in the Malinovka mine construction organization as soon as he finished middle school, and was sent to the Kuzbass Polytechnical Institute in 1968, from which he graduated in 1973, returning to work in mine construction and then at the 60th Anniversary of the CPSU mine (later renamed Alarda), where he was a fitter, safety engineer and finally senior mechanic. From 1975 to 1977 he was an Instructor of the Osinniki city Party committee, and from 1977 to 1979 was deputy secretary of the Party committee in his mine. In 1989 he cited former Swedish Prime Minister Olaf Palme as his political hero (*Khimik [Nasha gazeta]*, 48, 11 December 1990). He was probably the most highly respected of the leaders of the regional workers' committee, from which he resigned in 1993 to return to his original job. In December 1993 he took the second Kuzbass seat on the Federation Council behind Tuleev, with almost 20 per cent of the vote.
- ³⁸ Aslanidi did not think much of the meetings held in the city squares, because they tended to be dominated by emotion instead of common sense, with those who shouted loudest being elected to the city strike committee, but turning out to be no good at the day-to-day work, so that after the strike many just drifted away. Most strike committees were made up of younger workers, with an average age across Kuzbass of 37, because older workers were more afraid of reprisals, and were elected from sections. There were eventually eleven city committees formed across Kuzbass with an average of thirty members each, 82 per cent of whom were workers and 38 per cent Communist Party members (varying between 25 per cent and 40 per cent), including 4 secretaries of primary groups, 3 chairmen of trade union committees and 8 chairmen of STK (*Pravda*, 21 August 1989).
- ³⁹ Apart from the small settlement Myski on the road between Mezhdurechensk and Novokuznetsk, which has an open-cast mine and an enrichment plant. The open-cast Sibirginskii at Myski established a strike committee headed by its Party secretary, Yurii Yefimenko, on 14 July and joined the negotiations with Shchadov in Novokuznetsk, but did not actually stop working until 15 July.
- ⁴⁰ There is some confusion about the name and status of this person. The original list of members of the regional committee identifies Viktor Sergeevich D'yachkov, an underground miner from Abashevskaya, as the first president of the Novokuznetsk committee (Lopatin, 65).
- ⁴¹ In Novokuznetsk there was an 'unauthorized' meeting in the Central Square but the miners stayed away (Lopatin, 78 – the term 'unauthorized' would imply that the strike committees were authorized). The meeting was small and apparently dominated by

informal political organizations, which called for an All-Union general political strike – representatives of informal groups poured into Kuzbass in the first days of the strike.

Once the miners had achieved their settlement, the Novokuznetsk Party leapt on the bandwagon, calling a meeting on 18 July in the central Teatral'naya Square attended by representatives of STKs of enterprises of the city. A further meeting was called for the following day to consider the demands put forward by KMK and Zapsib for the Government Party Commission, which visited the city on 22 July. These demands were similar to those of the miners, including an increase in the regional pay coefficient, payment for long service, a change in the normative relation between the productivity of labour and pay increases, a concrete timetable for the reconstruction of KMK and permission to export unused materials (*Kuzbass*, 19 July 1989).

42 The committee was initially constituted not as a city committee, but as the Ordzhonikidzii District Strike Committee.

43 In almost every case it was the night shift that initiated the strike, one reason being the fact that they were not being paid their bonuses for night work.

44 According to Rutland, 1990, the collaboration of management in drawing up the demands in Prokop'evsk was exceptional (Rutland, 1990, 354). However, management and the local administration were more or less active in drawing up the demands in every city.

45 They sat in their work clothes partly for symbolic reasons, despite the stifling heat. But there was another reason – if miners wore their everyday clothes they could easily slip away from the square without anyone noticing, while an absentee in work clothes stood out like a sore thumb.

46 According to the official Party report on the strike V.R. Sokolov, an activist of the Leningrad Popular Front, turned up on the 18 July and circulated the programme and leaflets of the trade union *Nezavisimost'*, but met with opposition from the strikers and had to leave the square (Lopatin, 82), but according to Maksimova the crowd welcomed him (Maksimova, 69–70).

47 According to Maksimova the miners showed a high degree of distrust and contempt for all 'intelligentsia'. One mine director threatened ITR (engineering and technical workers) with the sack if they went to the square, even in their free time. Others sent them to work on the harvest for the duration of the strike (Maksimova, 70).

48 Vladimir Makhanov was an underground miner from Tsentral'naya mine. He later became president of the city workers' committee and in March 1990 was elected a People's Deputy of Russia, but a year later the Regional Council was demanding his resignation for failing to support the 'democratic forces' in the Congress of People's Deputies.

49 Tarubarov, secretary of the city Party committee, worked on the list of demands together with the remnants of the strike committee (Sharipov, interview). The strike committee included a number of mine directors, including one who was elected a deputy president – Viktor Petrenko, director of Karagailinskaya mine, a 'convinced Communist', though twice expelled by the Party — who was delegated to announce the end of the strike to the workers in the square (an impressionistic account of the strike in Kiselevsk, including later interviews with leading activists, is given by Vera Karzova in *Nasha gazeta*, 10 July 1993; 13 July 1993; 15 July 1993).

The general director of the Vakhrusheva mine in Kiselevsk managed to get his workers to call off the strike by explaining his plans to establish the mine's independence by leasing it from the state. Shchadov signed his approval of the mine's plan, which had been resisted by the Coal Association, on the steps of his plane as he left Kuzbass.

50 According to Aslanidi, Mikhailets joined the strike having spent two hours discussing it in the city Party committee, where it was decided to stop work in the mine and then across the city. Aleksandr Yevsyukov, an electrical fitter from Severnaya, Party member, and first chair of the Kemerovo Workers' Committee was quoted in *Pravda* (16 July 1989) as saying 'For four straight hours we held a dialogue with Party and soviet

leaders of the town and oblast ... on the majority of our demands we were not given a straight answer' (quoted in *Soviet Labour Review*, 2, 7, August 1989, 2), putting a different slant on the meeting. Lyakin agrees that the administration played the leading role in drawing up the miners' demands, and that such leaders as Mikhailets and Avaliani were effectively their appointees.

51 Mikhailets later left the workers' committee, having been elected a people's deputy of Russia, and became a full-time worker in the official trade union apparatus.

52 Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Golikov was born in Komsomol'sk-na-Amure in 1952, moving with his family to Berezovskii in 1957. During his military service he was his company Komsomol organizer, but did not later join the Party. He went to the Anzhero-Sudzhensk Mining Tekhnikum, but left following an incident in which a man was killed during a fight in 1972, although Golikov was acquitted of causing his death, receiving two years' probation for manslaughter. He completed his higher education by correspondence in 1988. He had worked as an electrical fitter in the Pervomaiskaya mine in Berezovskii, but had been on sick leave for a year following an accident. His two brothers were sent to Mezhdurechensk (his brother Gennadii, who worked in Berezovskaya mine, became a founder member of the regional strike committee), and took him along with them. It was Vyacheslav Golikov who raised the issue of mine independence in Mezhdurechensk (see above page 37). In 1989 he declared that Lenin was the political figure with whom he had most sympathy, because of his ability to analyse the real situation and change his position in response to the changing situation (*Stroitel'* [*Nasha gazeta*], 62-3, 20 December 1989. He also confessed that he liked beer, although others had the impression that he liked something a bit stronger than beer). He later became President of the Regional Council of Workers' Committees.

53 Avaliani had become well known in Kuzbass. Born in Leningrad in 1932, he had moved to Kiselevsk after military service in 1956, working for seventeen years in the Vakhrusheva mine, and then moved to the shoe industry, where he spent eleven years as director of the shoe production association Kuzbassobuv' in Kiselevsk, but was removed from the post amid rumours of scandal, and transferred to the post of Deputy Director for Capital Construction of Kiselevskugol'. In the run-up to the elections for People's deputy of the Soviet Union in March 1989 it transpired that he had written a personal letter to Brezhnev in 1980 in which, among other things, he had invited Brezhnev to resign in the interests of the Party and of the people. Various attempts were supposedly made to discipline him: he was sent to a psychiatrist, but did not go, and the city Party committee was invited to expel him from the Party, but did not take the hint because he had not violated the Party Constitution. However, when he resumed writing letters to the Central Committee he was removed from his post (Kostyukovskii, 75). Nevertheless, by the time of the strike he was a member of the regional Party committee, and his heroic record had secured him election to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Avaliani was the first to propose the formation of an independent miners' union, immediately after the strike, and later became secretary of the Union of Kuzbass Workers. He left the Regional Council in January 1990 and became First secretary of the Kiselevsk city Party committee which led to his expulsion from the Kiselevsk Union of Kuzbass Workers at the end of July 1990. The following month he was elected to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. He stood against Gorbachev for the post of General Secretary of the CPSU at the 28th Party Congress, receiving 16 per cent of the votes. With the disbanding of the Party in 1991 he became a leading figure in the Russian Communist Workers' Party.

54 Vyacheslav Sharipov, born in 1957, a member of the bureau of the Kiselevsk city Party committee, was Avaliani's trusted lieutenant. He was a graduate of the Mining Tekhnikum and had worked as head of the supply department in Avaliani's shoe factory before moving to work as a mine development brigadier in a model brigade in Kiselevsk where he could earn better money. In 1987 he received the 'Laureate of Kuzbass' award. A member of the Regional Council of Workers' Committees, in October 1989 he was elected to the trade union committee of his enterprise and then became Presi-

dent of the city committee of mine development enterprises of the official trade union. However, he soon found that he could achieve nothing within the old trade union. Within the enterprise the collective agreement was prepared in the old way, under the direction of the Party committee, and the obsovprom was still dominated by the old people, so he was prevented from attending the Miners' Congress. He left the official union after a year to become a member of the executive committee of the newly established Independent Miners' Union (NPG), moving to Moscow for four months, later becoming President of the Kuzbass NPG.

55 Mikhail Borisovich Kislyuk was born in Ukraine, but his parents moved to Kuzbass when he was a child. His father worked as a mine foreman at the Kedrovskii open-cast pit near Kemerovo. Kislyuk graduated from the Kemerovo Polytechnical Institute as a mine engineer. He then worked his way up through the open-cast mines, having been secretary of the Party bureau, before becoming deputy chief of the economic planning department of the open-cast association before moving to the post of deputy director of Chernigovskii. Ironically, in 1989 he declared that Gorbachev was the political figure with whom he had most sympathy because he was a centrist (*Khimik [Nasha gazeta]*, 48, 11 December 1990. Like Aslanidi, Pyatenko and Golikov, Kislyuk declared his favourite music to be the Beatles. Like several other leaders, his current reading was Selyunin's book *Chernaya dyra ekonomiki* (The Economic Black Hole). Kislyuk became Deputy President of the Regional Council of Workers' Committees, and was its chief economic ideologist. He was later appointed by Yeltsin as Chief of Administration in Kuzbass.

56 Velikanov later emerged as one of the Kuzbass Committee's nominees to join Grigorii Yavlinskii's group of economists drawing up the 500 days programme, and was one of the delegation which met Yeltsin at the end of 1991.

57 The meeting was so well organized that Aslanidi was immediately convinced 'that it was organized by Naidov with the support of Avaliani', a suspicion amply confirmed when he got to Prokop'evsk.

58 The decision was signed by Yurii L. Rudol'f, President of the Prokop'evsk Committee, as 'Acting President of the Council of Workers' Committees of Kuzbass' (Lopatin, 48). Rudol'f was a development worker from the Kalinin mine in Prokop'evsk and informal organizer who, according to Maksimova, was planning the strike for the autumn. He became deputy president of the Regional Council until his resignation in August 1990 to concentrate on his family responsibilities. He was replaced as deputy president by Aleksandr Aslanidi.

59 This account of the meeting is based on Kostyukovskii, Maksimova, Lopatin, *Kuzbass*, transcripts of tapes of part of the broadcast proceedings and interviews with Golikov and Aslanidi. The sources are broadly consistent.

60 The strike in Donbass began on 16 July as the Donbass miners began to have doubts that the Kuzbass settlement would be applied to them. Gorbachev and his Prime Minister Ryzhkov sent a telegram to all coal-mining enterprises on 20 July advising them that the Kuzbass settlement would apply to all mining regions, taking account of their specific circumstances. However, the Donbass strike was not settled until 23 July following Gorbachev's appearance on nation-wide television in what proved to be a successful attempt to persuade the Donbass miners back to work. Gorbachev aligned himself with the workers' just demands, which he assimilated to perestroika, and blamed local officials hostile to perestroika for what had happened (Rutland, 1990, 359). Vorkuta did not come out until 19 July and all their demands had been met by 21 July.

61 Lyutenko's questions were: 'Will you put forward a common set of demands?' 'Will you discuss your demands together with the leaders of the industry, who are meeting right now?' 'Will you include demands concerning the future of Kuzbass which cannot be realized locally?' Lyutenko's intervention provoked a sharp reaction from the crowd in the square listening to the relay of the meeting. Makhanov spoke to people in the square, appealing for calm and trying to reassure them that only strike committee

members were participating in the meeting in the hall, that ministry and city officials were excluded from participation, and that although the second secretary of the gorkom was there he was just sitting quietly and did not intervene (tape).

62 Golikov said that he felt some antipathy to him from the Prokop'evsk and Novokuznetsk delegates as he came from an unknown city but practically dictated all the points.

63 Vyacheslav Golikov remembered Avaliani's first speech in Prokop'evsk: 'his name just floated over the hall and his surname was pronounced on all sides. I asked Rudol'f who is Avaliani. Rudol'f explained that he is a very good chap who tries to do everything in the interests of the workers.' Golikov was very interested and waited for Avaliani's speech, but when he began Golikov immediately understood that his position was absolutely opposed to the demands put forward by the miners of Berezhovskii and other cities, because Avaliani was clearly against the independence of the enterprise. He said 'what independence are you talking about, what do you need this freedom for, we just need to improve our system and to employ good and honest officials instead of bad ones and to put everything in order. We have to throw out corrupt bastards and to clean the system and everything will work perfectly'. Golikov concluded. 'we talk about freedom, but he talks about keeping the system' (Golikov interview).

64 The meeting received telegrams from a number of metallurgical complexes asking the miners to maintain supplies with dire warnings of the consequences of a shut-down. At the beginning of the strike there were 12 million tons of coal sitting in heaps, many of which were burning; at the end of the strike four million tons had been delivered (Kostyukovskii, 100) – there was not one case of a plant closing for lack of coal, indeed it looks as though deliveries were maintained at pretty well their normal level.

65 There was a lot of discussion of whether it should be a committee or a commission, and whether it should be a strike committee or a workers' committee. There seems to have been a tacit assumption that the strike would be called off once the commission arrived, although the crowd reacted angrily to the suggestion, and it was eventually decided that this would be a matter for the regional committee in agreement with the representatives of the city committees (tape).

66 According to Aslanidi, one of the 'representatives' of Leninsk-Kuznetsk was not a representative at all. Aslanidi and Kirienko, both from Malinovka, were elected to represent Osinniki on the grounds that Aslanidi was 'some kind of engineer' and Kirienko was chief engineer of the motor pool. In general, the most highly educated members of the delegations were selected as representatives on the committee, on the grounds that they would understand the issues. The first committee is listed in Lopatin, 49–50.

67 The commission was sent 'to consider your proposals' and 'to investigate problems on the ground, to take practical measures about urgent questions concerning the development of Kuzbass with a view to preparing proposals together with you and presenting them to the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation and the Government of the USSR'. The commission comprised N.N. Slyun'kov, member of the Politburo, L.A. Voronin, First Deputy Prime Minister, and S.A. Shalaev, President of the Soviet trade union federation VTsSPS. It was by no means clear with whom the commission was supposed to negotiate, since the telegram was addressed not to the strikers, but to the obkom, gorkoms, miners and all Kuzbass workers. Since Mel'nikov and Lyutenko accompanied it wherever it went, they could claim to be a party to the negotiations.

68 Avaliani remained in Kiselevsk and rarely attended meetings of the committee, which were at first held in Kemerovo, most of its documents being signed by Rudol'f, who was effectively the president until Avaliani resigned in January 1990.

69 Enterprise independence in principle lay at the heart of the programme of perestroika, which proposed the replacement of the discipline of the Plan with the discipline of the market, enforced by strict financial control from the centre. However, despite the 1987 Law on the State Enterprise (Association), virtually nothing had been done to implement the strategy. Although the miners' demands for independence were never realized, their attack on the power of the Ministry opened the floodgates in other branches of

production as enterprises threw off the shackles of central control to exploit market opportunities. But at the same time the collapse of governmental authority made it impossible to enforce the strict financial controls which were the essential complement to enterprise independence. It is in this sense that the 1989 miners' strike proved to be the last straw for the Soviet system, its result being its economic and political collapse. However, this collapse owed more to the weaknesses of the system exposed by the miners' action than to the strength of the miners (Clarke et al., *What About the Workers?*, Chapter 2).

⁷⁰ Yurii Anatolevich Gerol'd was a 29-year-old graduate of the mining institute and a Party member. He worked as a combine driver in Baidaevskaya mine and was then a foreman, assistant chief of section and chief of section before returning to the post of foreman in the Polosukhinskaya mine in Novokuznetsk, although his family, all miners, was from Prokop'evsk. He joined the strike to realize the aims of perestroika defined by Gorbachev in 1985, and in 1989 declared his political heroes to be Gavriil Popov and Yurii Afanas'ev (*Stroitel' [Nasha gazeta]*, 62–3, 20 December 1989). After the strike he was elected head of the STK of his mine. He was elected a people's deputy of Russia in spring 1990, but was soon putting most of his energies into organizing in the mine into a Soviet–British joint venture and withdrew from active participation in the workers' movement, leaving the Regional Council in August 1990, although remaining a member of the Novokuznetsk Committee (*Nasha gazeta*, 7 August 1990).

⁷¹ The rise in the coal price, when it was eventually implemented in January 1990, cut into the profits of energy users, such as steel and pulp mills, immediately leading to a fall in bonuses for workers. Threats of strike action, supported or inspired by management, soon led to compensation payments to neutralize the effect of the price rise (Rutland, 1990, 374). Energy price rises were constantly postponed in 1992 so that the mines remained one of the most tightly regulated branches of production.

⁷² Members of local soviets were in general selected by the local Party as trustworthy and worthy voluntary workers. On 18 July *Kuzbass* reported that the Kemerovo gorispolkom had helped organize the collating and reproduction of demands and proposals from various branches of production. Mikhaillets later defended this practice, on the grounds that the workers lacked the knowledge and experience to draw up their demands. The result was that the Kemerovo agreement was more comprehensive than that from other cities. This meant that the Kemerovo agreement was not signed on the spot, but only later in Moscow.

⁷³ The Regional Strike Committee was renamed the Regional Council (*soviet*) of Workers' Committees, the term *soviet* being chosen to emphasize the committee's associative character. The city workers' committees had to register with the local authorities, which in many cases procrastinated.

3. The Kuzbass Regional Council of Workers' Committees

THE STRUCTURE OF THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT

The way in which the workers' movement had been drawn into negotiation with existing structures before it had had an opportunity to develop its own structure and forms of organization had important implications for the form of workers' organization which emerged in the wake of the strike. From the very beginning the movement was divided into three quite distinct levels, with very different forms of activity, and only weak connections between them.

Strike committees in the mines, at least in principle, brought together representatives of the various sections and departments and had the potential to provide the basis for the development of an independent organization of workers built from the bottom up. However, the formation of city committees immediately shifted the focus of the movement away from the workplace, and gave it a predominantly political character. This tendency was further reinforced with the formation of the regional strike committee to negotiate with the visiting government commission, and later to send representatives to Moscow.

The shift of emphasis from workplace mobilization to political organization was reflected in the selection of members of the city and regional strike committees. The mine committees were made up overwhelmingly of workers, and workers were in a substantial majority on the city committees, although the latter tended to be dominated by those who had the educational background and the organizational and leadership experience to serve as political representatives, and it was these people who in turn were selected to serve on the Regional Council.¹

At the regional level, the Regional Council was necessarily a political body, concerned with strategic policy issues affecting the development of the region as a whole that could only be resolved in

Moscow, and in particular the issues associated with regional self-financing and enterprise independence, and this provided the focus of its political work, although day to day it was concerned primarily with co-ordinating the activity of the city committees, monitoring the supply and distribution of goods, dealing with complaints and requests from workers and in 'helping the leaders of the region and of industrial enterprises to resolve problems of material-technical supply, finance and so on with their ministries', traditionally a function of the obkom of the Party (*Nasha gazeta*, 5 June 1991). When the Regional Council was most active, between 1989 and 1991, there were usually between eight and twelve members occupied on full-time committee work, receiving average pay from their previous jobs. The Regional Council was expanded in September 1989, but it had quite a high turnover of membership, with the tendency being for younger and less educated members to leave.²

The political orientation was symbolized by the move of the Regional Council to the regional capital, Kemerovo, far from the seat of the strike movement in the south, where it was allocated offices in the building of the oblispolkom. In the longer term, members of the Regional Council sought access to the corridors of power in Kemerovo or Moscow, by establishing their own political contacts and through the elections to the Congress of People's Deputies of Russia and to the regional soviet, which took place in March 1990, or else looked for commercial opportunities which were opened up by their network of contacts in the coal-mining industry and in the political sphere – the workers' committees could be the stepping stone to a lucrative political or commercial career.

The broad reforms won by the regional strike committee were supposed to define the environment within which more specific advances could be made at a local level. The city committees were responsible for monitoring the implementation of the agreements at local level, and this soon meant that they found themselves monitoring or simply taking over many of the functions of the local soviet, particularly in supervising the distribution of the goods which flooded into the region and handling citizens' complaints concerning everything from the allocation of housing to personal problems.³ The obvious aspiration at this level was to take control of the local soviet by winning municipal elections. However, the city committees found themselves drawn into the local government process long before the elections, which eventually took place in March 1990.

The process of collaboration with the city executive committee and/or the city Party committee had begun in most cities at the point of drawing up concrete demands to present to the Party–Government Commission, as we have already seen, and in many cities close collaboration was established to monitor the implementation of the agreement with the government.⁴ The extent to which this was weakening the political role of the committees is indicated by a resolution sent at the end of September 1989 in which the Regional Council recommended to presidents of city committees that they withdraw from the distribution of manufactured goods within enterprises and from reviewing the individual grievances of citizens, except in relation to victimization, and concentrate on ideological and political work in preparation for the formation of the Union of Kuzbass Workers and for the forthcoming local elections (Lopatin, 128).⁵ However, this was easier said than done. As Aleksandr Antonov, a member of the Leninsk-Kuznetsk city committee, explained to *Kuzbass*, if people come with their complaints ‘do we have the right to refuse to take them up?’ (*Kuzbass*, 24 October 1989). The Leninsk committee had held a meeting the previous week with the gorkom and ispolkom and decided to meet twice weekly to review complaints together.

Within the mines themselves the functions of the workers’ committee tended to overlap with those of the official trade union, which had always been concerned more with monitoring agreements and the distribution of goods and services than with organizing or negotiating on behalf of their members. Thus the initial orientation of activists at mine level was towards contesting union elections to renew the union apparatus, and to monitoring corruption or violations of the agreement on the part of management.⁶ As the mines began to buy and barter imported and deficit goods for coal the workers’ committees, where they had a base in the mine, became very actively involved in distribution.⁷ In general, this was the weakest level of the new workers’ organization. In many mines the workers’ committee simply disappeared, either because it was weak, or, as in Kapital’naya in Osinniki, because it took over the official union apparatus en bloc.⁸

Since the committees were not selected on a delegate basis, the representative on a higher body giving up his position on the lower body, these three levels of organization within the workers’ movement were quite distinct and they had little contact with one another or, for that matter, with the workers whom they were supposed to represent.⁹ There was little communication between the different levels, with no

regular report-backs or mandating of representatives, and the most active members tended to gravitate towards the centre, weakening the mine and city committees.

With only weak connections between the different levels of the movement, and no organized base, the Regional Council was, as we shall see, never a powerful independent force and was largely compelled to accept the political agenda dictated by others.¹⁰ Cutting itself off from the base to become a political movement, the Regional Council really had no option but to attach itself to one or another of the political forces in play in the struggles within the ruling stratum at regional and national level. During 1989 the Regional Council sought to collaborate with the regional elite in pressing its demands on Moscow, but as the political situation polarized this force could only be Yeltsin, to whom the miners looked as their saviour not so much because of their faith in Yeltsin, as because they had nowhere else to look.

The workers' committees also had no financial independence. The workers' committees themselves had very limited funds and no secure source of income of their own, depending for premises and office facilities on the mine, city and regional administrations, while activists depended on the goodwill of their employers, or occasionally their workmates, to be paid for the time spent on committee business. The finances of the Regional Council were reported to the Third Conference of Workers' Committees on 6 September 1989 (Lopatin, 124). The income of the Council amounted to 57,197 roubles, of which 50,000 had come from the Prokop'evsk City Workers' Committee (which almost certainly means from Prokop'evskgidrougol), 5,000 from the regional committee of the official trade union, almost 2,000 from commercial and industrial organizations and 455 from personal contributions from around the country (total expenditure was 3,000 roubles, mostly on travel).¹¹ The lack of any sources of income of their own, or of any membership base, provided a strong incentive for the committees and their members at every level either to compromise with those in power who controlled resources, or to become involved in independent commercial activity, or both.

THE POLITICS OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL: MARGINALIZATION OR RADICALIZATION?

The crucial question that faced the Regional Council was whether it was to become a political organization, whether it was going to become a trade union, or whether it was going to dissolve as its functions and activists were transferred to other bodies.¹² The Communist Party position was clearly the latter. However, for those political activists, such as Golikov and Rudol'f, who were not Party members and whose ambition extended beyond the limits of perestroika, the Regional Council had its own role to play, and even for those who remained within the Party the Regional Council could play an important role in influencing the balance of forces within the apparatus. These issues do not seem to have been debated within the Regional Council, which did not adopt a clear strategy of its own, each of its leading figures using it as a platform for his own ambitions, although each cloaking those ambitions in the common rhetoric of a radical perestroika.

For the first few months of its existence it was Avaliani who publicly defined the political strategy of the Council, stressing the Party line of the need to renew the existing representative organs and to press the regional interests of Kuzbass. The economic strategy of the Council was defined by Kislyuk, who was preoccupied with the issue of regional economic independence which he sought to pursue through co-operation with the regional economic elite. At first the remaining members of the Regional Council, notably Golikov and Aslanidi, went along with this strategy, believing that they could work within the system as the radical wing of the movement for perestroika. However, as the regional elite increasingly sought to marginalize the Council it became clear that the possibilities of change from within were severely restricted.

The mood of the miners in the aftermath of the strikes was one of disillusionment. They had expected a rapid improvement in their conditions, but in fact little had changed. The vast majority of their specific grievances had been lost in the consolidation and negotiation of demands at regional and national level. Little progress was being made in the implementation of Resolution 608, although the rapid deterioration of the economic situation made many of its provisions redundant. In many mines unpopular managers had been thrown out, but the new management usually proved no better.

The workers' committees in the mines were moribund, except where they handled distribution, as the initiative and the activists had passed to the regional and national levels. The city workers' committees were increasingly preoccupied with municipal activity, displacing the 'workers' control' functions of the local soviets in taking up individual citizens' grievances and supervising the distribution of scarce goods, housing and benefits, including inspecting shops and warehouses for hidden stores (which also provided access to private commercial activity and opportunities for corruption for individual committee members). It was not long before they found that they were no more able than had been their predecessors to solve people's housing problems, disputes with the neighbours or long-standing grievances over pension payments. In addition they found themselves the focus of complaints about the inefficiencies and inequities in the distribution of goods for which they had assumed responsibility.¹³ In Leninsk-Kuznetsk workers in the Oktyabr'skaya mine complained that the members of the workers' committee lived well, but did nothing for the workers. The workers' committee in the largest enterprise in the town, the worsted cloth factory, had been disbanded and its functions taken over by the STK (*Kuzbass*, 24 October 1989).

The Attempt to Marginalize the Workers' Committees

During September and October the workers' committees were coming under increasing pressure from the Party authorities at all levels. As the economic situation in the country continued to deteriorate, with local and republican elections due the following March, the miners' movement provided a convenient scapegoat, with dire predictions of the consequences of the proposed increase in fuel prices. The government and regional authorities tried to isolate the miners by depicting them as militantly pressing their own interests at the expense of the rest of the population, a caricature which contained an element of truth since the government had indeed met their demands simply by diverting resources from elsewhere. Gorbachev tried to impose a fifteen-month strike ban, which was rejected by the Supreme Soviet, but the Law on Strikes of 3 October 1989 introduced a complex pre-strike conciliation and arbitration procedure and banned strikes in strategic sectors, including the energy sector, which the Regional Council denounced in an angry telegram (Lopatin, 130). However, the law was

largely ignored by workers, and was neutralized by the courts, which held that it applied only to industrial disputes, not to political strikes.¹⁴

Within Kuzbass, the authorities tried particularly to mobilize the rural population against the miners, with dire warnings of the consequences of a market economy for agriculture, to which the Regional Council responded with a statement published on 23 September in *Kuzbass*. In Belovo, Party members were informed that membership of workers' committees was inconsistent with Party membership (Kubas', 180), and the city workers' committee was thrown out of the building of the city Party committee.

The committees were also coming under pressure from Coal Minister Shchadov. In September a delegation from the Anzhero-Sudzhensk Committee met Shchadov in Moscow and was given the clear impression that Shchadov wanted to destroy the committees. When they published a letter to this effect in *Kuzbass*, Shchadov immediately telephoned around the city workers' committees to reassure them that he had no objection to workers' committees 'which function normally' (*Kuzbass*, 15 September 1989, 22 September 1989). However, at a telephone conference on 14 October Shchadov instructed mines to stop paying the salaries of members of workers' committees, saying 'I don't have the right to break it up, but we will not pay for it any more' (Kubas', 181). The Regional Council denounced this action on the grounds that it violated the Law on the State Enterprise, which gives the Labour Collective Council (STK) of the enterprise the right to decide to pay such salaries, and that it betrays a 'lack of respect and understanding of the aims and tasks of the workers' movement as the people's guarantee of the acceleration of perestroika', demanding Shchadov's resignation (Lopatin, 132; *Kuzbass*, 19 October 1989).

The Third Conference of Workers' Committees was held in Kemerovo on 5 and 6 September, at which a constitution was adopted. Avaliani's speech at the conference, which adopted the typical form of a Party secretary's report, reiterated the themes of the previous conference, stressing the connections between the central demands of full independence for enterprises of the region, the transfer of Kuzbass to regional accounting, the formation of a socio-economic development plan, all linked to the development of a market economy. However, in accordance with the illusions of perestroika, this was not identified with the development of capitalism, but with democratization and decentralization under workers' control. The immediate political tasks were therefore to strengthen the local soviets, STK and trade unions

and get new people into them so as to unite the working-class as a whole around the workers' movement. He argued that the basis of the movement has to be the enterprise headed by the STK, and where the STK is inactive it has to be re-elected. The organizational principles, for Avaliani, should be the principles of democratic centralism at enterprise and city level, and confederation at the oblast level, with the logical culmination of the movement being to unite at the All-Union level.¹⁵

While Avaliani concentrated on the political priorities of the Regional Council, Kislyuk focused on the steps necessary to prepare the basis for the implementation of the strategic economic demands of the Regional Council. The conference also proposed to collaborate with the official trade unions in preparing an alternative draft of the Law on Strikes to the draconian draft law put forward by Gorbachev (Lopatin, 122–3), and decided to establish a newspaper. However, the conference was by no means under the thumb of Avaliani and Kislyuk, also putting forward more directly political demands, based on the reform of the electoral system and the transfer of power to elected bodies, including a resolution to call a Second Congress of People's Deputies in October to remove Article Six from the Soviet Constitution, the article which guaranteed the leading role of the Communist Party in violation of Article Two of the Constitution, which gave all power to the soviets.¹⁶ Finally, the conference decided to put forward its own candidates for the forthcoming local elections and accordingly resolved to establish the *Soyuz Trudyashchikhsaya Kuzbassa* (Union of Kuzbass Workers). It adopted a draft constitution of the union, and transformed itself into a conference of the new union (*Kuzbass*, 12 September 1989).¹⁷

During the first three months after the strike the regional authorities had taken a generally conciliatory attitude to the workers' committees, expecting them to disappear as they were increasingly marginalized and their members drawn into official structures. However, the workers' movement, and it seems the Party apparatus itself, did not prove so easy to control. The situation came to a head in October, when the Mezhdurechensk City Workers' Committee called a two-hour warning strike. The decision to strike was taken at a meeting on 13 October which was also attended by members of enterprise workers' committees and representatives of the gorkom, gorispolkom and trade union organizations to review the implementation of the July agreement with the government.¹⁸ The conclusion was that the agreement had been

badly implemented and the meeting issued a threat that unless measures were taken to implement the agreement by 23 October there would be a warning strike in the city. The main issues were those concerning holidays, the independence of enterprises, the price of coal, the adoption of realistic plan targets and the liquidation of the associations, to which were added the demands for a new law on local elections and, most provocatively, for the removal of Article Six from the Constitution. In response to a telegram from the government it was decided to limit the strike to two hours. The Anzhero-Sudzhensk Committee supported the decision and called strikes and meetings in solidarity, leaving it to particular enterprises to decide for themselves what action to take, although in fact none stopped work (*Kuzbass*, 21 October 1989, 25 October 1989).

The regional Party committee adopted an extremely strong resolution against the Mezhdurechensk action, describing the strike as 'adventurist, provocative, destroying the authority of the Kuzbass workers' movement ... attempts of individual people to realize their personal ambitious aims' (*Kuzbass*, 27 October 1989), and on the evening of 23 October Mel'nikov, Lyutenko and Romanov, the regional trade union boss, all spoke on television, not only denouncing the Mezhdurechensk action, but also turning it against the workers' committees as a whole. Lyutenko in particular threatened a re-registration of workers' committees and their removal from enterprises. An expanded meeting of the Regional Council issued an immediate response, denouncing the obkom for trying to divide the miners from rural workers, intellectuals, ITR and workers in other branches of production, but conspicuously failing to support the workers involved in the 'Mezhdurechensk incident' (Lopatin, 136–7).¹⁹

On 13 October the regional committee of the official trade unions called a 'First Conference of Kuzbass Labour Collectives' for 15 and 16 of November. This meeting, taking place two days before the Fourth Conference of Kuzbass Workers' Committees, was supposedly called in response to a 'spontaneous' letter from a group of workers, but in fact was a transparent attempt of the regional trade union and Party bodies to take back the initiative from the workers' committees following the wave of new elections to STK and trade union committees in the mines, to pre-empt the formation of the Union of Kuzbass Workers and to attack the workers' committees within the enterprise.

The conference was broadcast live and a verbatim report filled the pages of the Party newspaper *Kuzbass* for over a week.²⁰

In his opening speech V.I. Romanov, president of the oblsobprof, surveyed the extent of fulfilment of the July agreement, noting the active opposition of the Coal Ministry and associations to the independence of mines, acclaimed the achievements of the local and regional authorities in the social sphere, and pointed to such problems as falling production and productivity, deteriorating labour discipline and the rise in juvenile crime, but made no mention of the forthcoming conference of the workers' committees. At the end of his speech Romanov argued that 'today there is no need for workers' committees within enterprises', the job of defending the workers' interests being that of the trade union and STK. 'The question of city workers' committees and the Regional Council of workers' committees, whose task is to monitor the fulfilment of the agreement, is another matter' (*Kuzbass*, 16 November 1989).

This issue was taken up in the discussion, in which all the miners' representatives argued that the presence of a workers' committee in an enterprise was a matter for the workers to decide, and questioned the need for a new body which several of them identified as a front organization of the official trade unions, trying to avoid their unpopularity and evade their responsibilities. Several speakers also raised the question of the status of the meeting, which had been called by the oblsobprof and to which the vast majority of delegates had been nominated, not elected. And most of the miners responded sharply to the argument that labour discipline had declined, arguing that the workers were always blamed for everything, but the failures were in management, in the organization of production, and in the system. A.G. Solnyshev, an electrical fitter from the Kuznetskaya mine in Leninsk-Kuznetsk, asked: 'What kind of discipline can you demand of people if they sit for weeks without any work?'. The conference also noted the drawbacks of self-financing, observing the tendency in such enterprises to reduce expenditure on social and welfare needs (*Kuzbass*, 17–23 November 1989).

The Union of Kuzbass Workers

The Fourth Conference of Workers' Committees took place in Novokuznetsk on 18 and 19 November, and was attended by 447 voting delegates, of whom only 77 were members of workers' committees,

with various leading Party figures invited. The first part of the conference was devoted to considering reports on the fulfilment of the agreement with the government and on the future activity of the workers' committees, but the bulk of the conference was devoted to establishing the Union of Kuzbass Workers. The conference also resolved once more to establish a newspaper, which was founded as *Nasha gazeta* (Our Newspaper) the following month.

In the first report to the conference, Petr Pyatenko, a Belovo representative on the Regional Council, detailed the government's failure fully or adequately to implement point after point of the July agreement.²¹ He was followed by Mikhail Kislyuk, who dominated the conference from the chair in a manner which 'some thought too strict and others dictatorial' (*Khimik* [*Nasha gazeta*], 48, 11 December 1989; Avaliani seems still to have been in Moscow, where he met Prime Minister Ryzhkov on 17 November). Kislyuk's opening speech clearly identified the priorities of the leaders of the Regional Council: no mention of building up their organization, or of contesting union or STK elections, or even the forthcoming local and regional elections. Kislyuk focused on attempts to work closely with the regional elite, and on ambitious plans to develop profitable financial activities.

Kislyuk detailed the abortive attempts of the Regional Council to co-operate with the regional authorities in drawing up a plan to implement the transfer to regional self-financing and enterprise independence. The Regional Council had tried to set up a commission to consider the question, but none of the regional authorities would participate, the oblispolkom having set up its own commission to establish a new coal concern. The Regional Council had met with general directors of the coal associations on 3 November, but had found that the latter were not interested in their own independence, and even less in that of the enterprises under their control.

The oblispolkom commission to set up a concern had met on 4 November. On behalf of the Union of Kuzbass Workers, Kislyuk argued that such a concern must be established on a democratic basis, with participation of representatives of the Union of Workers with the right to monitor the activity of the council of the concern, 'including the principles envisaged for the creation and operation of a commercial bank. Participation of the workers' committees in the financial activity of the coal industry will strengthen the material base of the workers' movement. At the same time the Regional Council of Kuzbass Workers' Committees considers that an independent workers' bank must

become the main financial centre of the Union [of Kuzbass Workers], created on the initiative of participants in the workers' movement, above all in industrial enterprises, through the voluntary combination of a part of their own funds. The creation of such a bank will to a considerable extent avoid the material dependence of the workers' movement on administrative structures' (Lopatin, 150).

Kislyuk mapped out the future programme of the Regional Council, which was approved by the conference. This was the by-now familiar programme of the full transition to a market economy, adding the extension of contractual relations to all branches of production, the development of co-operatives, leasehold and joint-stock companies and the transfer of state property to the workers, and the creation of banks, stock exchanges and so on (Lopatin, 150–52, 176–80).

The conference then turned to the question of establishing the Union of Kuzbass Workers, which was introduced by L.N. Lopatin, a Party economist and adviser to the Council. The programme of the Union was a fairly orthodox statement of the programme of radical perestroika, stressing its commitment to the destruction of the command-bureaucratic system and the renovation of socialism on the basis of the development of the market economy, a diversity of forms of property and workers' control – Lopatin's was only one of fourteen variant programmes that had been proposed (Lopatin, 153–70; English translation in *Soviet Labour Review*, 2, 8, August 1990, 8–9).

The key issue in setting up the Union was the question of whether it was designed to be a pressure group for perestroika, or the nucleus of a new political party. It was clear that the ambition of many of the activists in the Regional Council was that it should in effect be a political party, providing a common platform for the forthcoming local elections, but others, and especially Party activists, argued that while in principle they agreed with a multi-party system, the creation of new parties at the moment was premature. The focus of debate was whether the Union should be defined as a 'social' or as a 'social-political' organization, the decision being to adopt the latter designation. This led to a threat of a walk-out by the Kemerovo, Belovo and Tashtagol delegations unless the issue was reconsidered, but after further discussion the decision was confirmed. However, Kemerovo continued to oppose the formation of the Union.²²

The Union of Kuzbass Workers turned out in practice merely to be another name for the Regional Council, both designations being used to describe the conference, the executive bodies of the Union being

simply the existing workers' committees, and its President Teimuraz Avaliani, President of the Regional Council. Over the next six months local branches of the Union were gradually registered, but there were no signs of any other activity.²³ Nevertheless, the obkom of the Party reacted strongly to what it feared was an attempt to establish a rival workers' party, issuing a long commentary on the programme and draft constitution on 19 November. On 24 November it issued a statement recalling its active co-operation in the creation of the Union, but declaring its opposition to the kinds of measures which had been discussed at the conference, including threats to the government and to renew the strike.²⁴ By contrast it welcomed the decision to establish a confederation of STK and reminded Party members of their responsibilities (Lopatin, 180–84).

The Radicalization of the Regional Council

The Regional Council was beginning to realize that it was being squeezed out as the oblast administration, Party and trade union bodies excluded it from negotiations with the government and coal associations over the implementation of the July agreement. As the 1 January deadline for the fulfilment of the main demands approached, the Regional Council began to demand a renewal of negotiations with the government. In a resolution sent to Prime Minister Ryzhkov on 12 December the Regional Council complained that Resolution 608, passed four months before, made no mention of the role of the workers' committees in monitoring the implementation of the agreements. On 26 December the Regional Council called a meeting, to which city committees were invited to send representatives, jointly with the obkom, oblispolkom and oblsovprof, at which a joint statement was prepared declaring that the agreement had not been fulfilled, and calling for the commission to reconvene on 16 January 1990 in Prokop'evsk, the agreement being signed by Rudol'f, Mel'nikov and Lyutenko. Trade union boss Romanov refused to sign, but the official union's own declaration was little different in substance.

The Regional Council insisted that it would negotiate only with the original members of the commission who had signed the July agreement. However, in the event a very large delegation came from Moscow which assembled in Prokop'evsk, and the Regional Council supported by a number of consultants (including Nikolai Travkin,

future leader of the Democratic Party of Russia) agreed to negotiate with it.

On 12 January, immediately before the meeting, the government finally adopted a resolution on the transfer of Kemerovo Oblast to an experimental economic mechanism based on the principles of self-management and self-financing, the draft of which had been published at the end of October. At the Fourth Conference of Workers' Committees on 18 November, Kislyuk had thought it 'a well-drawn-up document aimed directly at the realization of the principles of regional self-financing' (Lopatin, 149), but by now the Regional Council had had second thoughts and argued that the resolution did not establish the basis for self-financing because it did not provide for the independence of enterprises, nor did it establish a sound financial basis for the independence of enterprises or local administrations.²⁵ In its draft statement for the negotiations the Regional Council proposed an alternative development, which would be for the oblast to implement the agreement independently of Moscow by transferring all enterprises to the ownership of the oblast soviet, freeing the price of coal, and establishing contractual relations. This proposal was backed up by the threat of withholding all payments from the oblast to Moscow.

The negotiations dragged on for two weeks in Prokop'evsk and Kemerovo as the government side constantly agreed in principle, only to raise endless bureaucratic objections in practice. The issues raised by the various cities did not cause serious problems, since they mainly concerned the allocation of resources from the centre (mainly at the expense of other regions). However, the issue of the financial and juridical independence of enterprises and the transfer of the region to principles of self-financing and self-management was the real sticking point, the key to which was the demand to abolish the system of subsidy and redistribution linked to the low price of coal, which was the basis of Moscow's power. Nevertheless, the negotiations eventually culminated in a draft agreement.²⁶ The head of the delegation, Deputy Prime Minister L.D. Ryabev, then asked to take the document to Moscow for consultation with experts, ministries and departments for two weeks, when the negotiations could resume in Moscow (Lopatin, 217–37).²⁷

During the negotiations Teimuraz Avaliani published an article in *Kuzbass* (25 January 1990) in which he expressed his fundamental disagreement with the position of the Regional Council on what had become a full-blooded programme of transition to a market economy,

effectively supporting the government position. Kislyuk replied, revealing that Avaliani had for a long time been in a minority of one on the Regional Council, being opposed to enterprise independence and in support of the structure of associations and ministry, a supporter of Minister Shchadov and the single opponent of the Union of Kuzbass Workers, of which he had nevertheless been appointed secretary (*Gornyyak [Nasha gazeta]*, 4–7, 30 January 1990). Avaliani then resigned from the Regional Council, although remaining a member of the Kiselevsk Committee, and was replaced as president by Vyacheslav Golikov (*Nasha gazeta*, 6 February 1990).

The Kuzbass delegation, calling itself the Conflict Commission of the Kuzbass Council of Workers' Committees, flew to Moscow to resume the negotiations on 18 February, accompanied by various consultants, experts, members of the oblispolkom and USSR people's deputies from Kuzbass. When they arrived they found that the bureaucrats and experts had not looked at the draft agreement. The government side tried to break the agreement into parts, splitting the delegation into smaller working groups, while the Kuzbass delegation wanted to discuss the programme as a whole. After ten days of negotiation the government refused to sign anything, and the delegation returned empty handed (*Nasha gazeta*, 6 March 1990).

The experience of the futile negotiations with the government was a decisive moment in the development of the Regional Council, the point at which its leaders realized that the government had never had any intention of meeting the more radical of its demands, so that there was no possibility of realizing those demands within the existing political system. It was at this point that the Regional Council aligned itself with the 'democratic movement', which was pressing for fundamental political change. However, this re-orientation of the Regional Council was not something which happened overnight, and the first opportunity to take the political initiative, the elections of March 1990, was lost.

The negotiations with the government had taken much of the Regional Council's energy out of the campaign for the elections at the beginning of March for city and regional soviets and for the Russian Congress of People's Deputies. However, many members of city workers' committees were elected to the city soviets. Fifty-seven of the one hundred and eight seven oblast deputies eventually signed up as members of the 'group standing on the platform of the workers' committees'.²⁸ Eleven nominees were successful in the election of

twenty Kuzbass candidates to the Russian Congress of People's Deputies (*Nasha gazeta*, 15 May 1990).²⁹

The relative success of the workers' committees in the election was not translated into any fundamental political transformation. Even in cities in which the nominees of the workers' committees formed a majority, the power and patronage of the apparatus was sufficient to undermine their unity and retain control. At the regional level, Aman Tuleev³⁰ was elected chairman of the oblast soviet, and Mikhail Naidov was elected chairman of the oblast executive. Golikov was nominated as deputy chairman, but was defeated. However, Tuleev tried to draw the deputies from the workers' committees into the apparatus by offering them comfortable jobs. Aslanidi and Golovanova categorically refused to accept jobs, in line with the policy of the Regional Council to retain its independence. However, two days later Kislyuk agreed to be one of Tuleev's nine deputies with responsibility for economic reform, which meant resigning his position as a deputy, while Rudol'f was elected a member of the Presidium and chairman of a commission (*Nasha gazeta*, 15 May 1990). The Regional Council considered expelling Kislyuk, but Kislyuk convinced them that it was important for him to work close to the 'dogfish' Tuleev.

Immediately after the election, but before the formation of the regional executive, the Regional Council held a post-mortem with the leading Kuzbass directors of enterprises and associations, after which Kislyuk and Golikov participated in a round-table discussion with three 'captains of industry', including Mikhail Naidov. The general conclusion was the need to unite more closely with the directorate to secure the interests of Kuzbass as a whole. Naidov argued that the issue has to be taken directly to the President and the Supreme Soviet, but only a united effort can achieve it. Golikov remembered that the government representative had asked to see the decisions of labour collectives in support of their plan, which of course they did not have, 'if we can secure the support of the bosses (*khozyaistvenniki*) we can do it quickly'. Naidov: 'time teaches us everything. Today we began to understand that without one another we can achieve nothing in our struggle with the centre. One could say that we are "singing together"' (*Nasha gazeta*, 20 March 1989).

In sharp contrast to this apparent assimilation of the leaders of the Regional Council into the regional apparatus, at the end of April the workers' committees participated in the First Congress of the Inde-

pendent Workers' Movement, held in Novokuznetsk from 28 April to 1 May, at which the Confederation of Labour was established to bring together all the independent workers' groups in the Soviet Union, with a founding congress planned for 20 June in Donetsk.³¹ Although the Regional Council was one of the sponsors of the conference, the initiative had come from a group of Moscow intellectuals from the Moscow Workers' Club, and the conference, much of which was dominated by set speeches from Moscow celebrities, brought together a very diverse collection of individuals and organizations.³² Although the Confederation of Labour was born to a fanfare, it proved to be another initiative that absorbed scarce energies but never got off the ground.³³

Although the hopes of creating a united workers' movement (under the leadership of the fragmented and confused Moscow intelligentsia) came to nothing, the congress was important in bringing diverse groups into contact with one another, in pushing the Regional Council away from its collaboration with the apparatus by establishing contact between the leaders of the Council and liberal democratic Moscow intellectuals, and in legitimating a more radical political position which was put most dramatically at the congress by Nikolai Travkin, who stunned the Kuzbass members of the audience with his open call for the destruction of the Communist Party and the formation of a new Party, the Democratic Party of Russia, whose founding congress he announced for 27 May in Moscow.³⁴

Although some of the most radical resolutions were not passed, and the Kuzbass delegates rejected a call from Vorkuta for a two-hour warning strike on 25–26 May, the congress did pass resolutions expressing a lack of confidence in the government and condemning the CPSU as an anti-democratic barrier to perestroika, expressing little hope in the possibility of its renovation, and demanding the nationalisation of Party property and the removal of its special status in enterprises and all other state bodies (Lopatin, 267–93; *Nasha gazeta*, 8 May 1990, 15 May 1990).³⁵

THE KUZBASS WORKERS' MOVEMENT AND THE 'STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY'

Despite the radical noises coming from Novokuznetsk over the May Day holiday, by early summer 1990 the strategy of the authorities to

neutralize the workers' movement appeared to have been remarkably effective. The Regional Council had thrown in its lot with the leaders of the director's corpus, two of its main leaders had joined the Tuleev–Naidov team on the regional soviet, and many activists had been absorbed into the trade union and STK at mine level and into local soviets at city level, without being able to make any fundamental changes in the activities of either. The loss of so many activists meant that the city and mine workers' committees were seriously weakened, to such an extent that uncontrollable strikes began to break out. The Usinskaya mine in Mezhdurechensk organized a two-hour warning strike on 10 May, on the grounds that Shchadov had not carried out his promises, with an appeal for an all-Kuzbass strike on 11 July, the anniversary of the first strike wave. Taldinskii open-cast mine issued a strike threat over the failure to clear the coal heaps (which were beginning to burn), and Bachatskii open-cast mine refused to accept their wages until the arrival of a commission to investigate the same issue (*Nasha gazeta*, 15 May 1990).

In the face of growing tension in the mines, mine and association directors, with the support of the obkom, decided that they had to encourage the rebirth of the mine workers' committees (*Nasha gazeta*, 15 May 1990), which six months before they had done their best to destroy. The Regional Council took the same view, albeit for different reasons, issuing an appeal to labour collectives to re-establish strike committees published in *Nasha gazeta* under the headline 'All-Kuzbass political strike?'. 'Workers' committees must work out measures to prepare and conduct an all-Kuzbass strike with the aim of preventing it arising spontaneously. Our struggle can only succeed with unity and organization'. The appeal was echoed in resolutions of the Berezovskii and Novokuznetsk Committees (Lopatin, 330; *Nasha gazeta*, 22 May 1990), and a campaign to reconstitute the mine committees got under way.

The attempt (selectively) to revitalize the mine workers' committees on the part of the regional administration was part of a wider move to marginalize the Regional Council, and particularly to isolate its more radical political leadership of Golikov and Aslanidi. At the end of May the regional authorities entered a further round of negotiations with the government on the future of Kuzbass without reference to the Regional Council, while a campaign was conducted in the local media to counterpose the useful role of city workers' committees to the redundancy of the Regional Council (*Nasha gazeta*, 5 June 1989),

depicting the latter as the plaything of a handful of individuals. Meanwhile Tuleev, president of the regional soviet, courted the electorate with a populist programme which saw him surging ahead in the opinion polls.

The success of the attempt of the regional authorities to neutralize the Regional Council was undermined by political developments in Moscow, where a polarization was rapidly emerging between the newly constituted Russian Communist Party, on the one hand, and the 'democratic' forces in the Congress of People's Deputies, with Yeltsin emerging as their figurehead, on the other. The first steps in the politicization of the Regional Council had been the failure of its negotiations with the Soviet government in February. This politicization was first expressed in the Council's declaration of solidarity with the Lithuanian people against the Soviet blockade in April. But it was only with the Regional Council's endorsement of the Mezhdurechensk call for a 11 July strike that it laid its political cards on the table for the first time. At the same time as politicizing the Regional Council, however, this step also shifted the focus of its attention from the regional to the national stage, so that the Council paid less and less attention to local and regional developments and more to the great issues and great events unfolding in Moscow. While this raised the political profile of the leaders of the workers' movement, it did nothing to foster the development of an organized base.

The call for a strike on 11 July had originally come from Usinskaya mine, and it was not clear who had proposed it. However, the idea of an anniversary strike was taken up by the leadership of the movement as a way of revitalizing the Regional Council as a serious political force. The strike call had been endorsed by the first meeting of the council of the Confederation of Labour and the First Miners' Congress, both held in Donetsk in June, so that the strike now covered Kuzbass, Donbass, Vorkuta and Rostov. On 23 June Golikov, Gerol'd, Kislyuk and Pyatenko met Yeltsin and his close associate Burbulis in Moscow, which reportedly found a 'virtually complete coincidence of views' between the two sides, with Yeltsin issuing a statement expressing solidarity with the workers' movement and endorsing the Regional Council's demand for independence for enterprises (*Nasha gazeta*, 26 June 1990). The strike call was only formally adopted by the Kuzbass Regional Council on 26 June, and, not to be outflanked, the regional soviet endorsed it on 28 June (Lopatin, 313), although fears were expressed that an uncontrolled strike could provoke a military coup

(*Soviet Labour Review*, 2, 8, August 1990, 6). It was only at the beginning of July that the Regional Council called for labour collectives to propose demands for the strike, within the framework of its own set of demands for the resignation of the Union government and in support of the democratic decisions of the Russian Congress of People's Deputies (*Nasha gazeta*, 3 July 1990).³⁶

The strike was planned as a controlled affair, coinciding with the 28th Congress of the CPSU at which the dramatic showdown between Yeltsin and Gorbachev was to take place, with Yeltsin leaving the Party the day after the strike.³⁷ Golikov confirmed that the strike was in support of Yeltsin, and that Yeltsin had not opposed the strike when told about it at their meeting two weeks before (*Nasha gazeta*, 10 July 1990).³⁸ Although the strike was initially called as a two-hour strike, according to the Regional Council 88 enterprises in Kuzbass stopped for 24 hours, and a further 43 enterprises stopped for between two and four hours (about two-thirds of mines were claimed to have stopped). Solidarity meetings were said to have been held in 426 enterprises and about 300,000 people to have taken part in them. The Regional Council claimed that 135,000 people took part in the one-day strike and more than 88,000 in two to four-hour strikes.³⁹ In all the coal-mining regions 324 enterprises were said to have struck, 184 of them for 24 hours. However, beyond the mines the strike call met with a very limited response, only the Leningrad metro constructors, one oil enterprise in Tomsk, an enterprise in Shar'ya (Kostroma Oblast) and three factories in Gomel' reportedly joining the strike (Lopatin, 331–3; *Nasha gazeta* 17 July 1990).⁴⁰

The strike, and the increasingly open anti-Communist position of the Regional Council, provoked a reaction from the obkom, which had hitherto been quiet. On 17 July Mel'nikov issued a warning that anti-Communist publications, including *Nasha gazeta*, would no longer be printed on the Party's presses, which implied closure since the Party owned all printing facilities (*Nasha gazeta*, 17 July 1990). However the obkom's authority was already in sharp decline, and on 26 July the regional soviet passed a resolution in support of *Nasha gazeta*, followed by a resolution to prepare an inventory of Party property in the oblast and to carry out a survey of public opinion (*Nasha gazeta*, 28 July 1994).

On 18 August Boris Yeltsin came to pay his respects to his Kuzbass supporters, meeting the Regional Council in Novokuznetsk, where he accepted responsibility on behalf of the Russian government for the

fulfilment of the July 1989 demands for full economic and juridical independence of the enterprise and radical economic reform, which had not been fulfilled by the Soviet government, as well as for the July 1990 political demands, signing an agreement with Golikov to that effect (*Nasha gazeta*, 21, 28 August 1990). Golikov was invited to Moscow to discuss participation in the preparation of Yeltsin's radical 500 days programme, prepared by Grigorii Yavlinskii. The Council agreed to send Petr Pyatenko (Belovo) and Valerii Strokanev (Prokop'evsk) to participate in the preparation of the programme (*Nasha gazeta*, 21 August 1990).

The politicization of the workers' movement in Kuzbass was confirmed at the Fifth Conference of the Kuzbass Workers' Movement called for 29–30 September in Novokuznetsk, which had become the seat of the Regional Council.⁴¹ In an interview with *Nasha gazeta*, Aslanidi defined a principal task as being the establishment of an alternative trade union while transforming the Union of Kuzbass Workers into the basis of a political party, since it was already in effect the political wing of the workers' movement (*Nasha gazeta*, 25 September 1990).

The conference was attended by 309 delegates from 12 cities, of whom 100 were representatives of workers' committees, 81 of the Union of Kuzbass Workers, 128 from enterprises and 37 guests, including leaders of the oblast and Novokuznetsk city soviets, representatives of various political parties and the official unions. After reports and resolutions the main business of the Conference was the re-establishment of the Union of Kuzbass Workers, which was now explicitly defined as the political wing of the workers' movement, defined in another new constitution as a federation with individual and collective members. However, the priority task was now determined to be the strengthening of relations with labour collectives and participation in work to create independent trade unions, following the dismal experience of attempting to work within the official unions. This was something of a surprising development, since the Regional Council had shown little or no interest in trade union developments hitherto. Moreover, although vague programmatic resolutions were adopted about the relations between workers' committees and trade unions, recommending the formation of new independent trade unions, there seems to have been little discussion at the conference, or in the pages of *Nasha gazeta*, of the forthcoming Second Miners' Congress, due to be held in Donetsk three weeks later, at which the Independent Min-

ers' Union was formed on the initiative of the Kuzbass delegation (Lopatin, 348–62, *Nasha gazeta*, 2, 9, 16 October 1990).⁴²

THE EROSION OF THE BASE OF THE MOVEMENT

Although the Regional Council's new emphasis on the development of an independent trade union reflected the experience of frustration of those activists who had entered the official union in the wake of the 1989 strike, it was not motivated primarily by a desire to develop trade union activity as such, but by the growing awareness of the weakness of the links between the workers' committees and the rank-and-file.

The political priorities of the Regional Council meant that activists had paid little attention to the development of workplace organization, or to the everyday grievances of the workers, and even amongst the miners the weakness of independent organization at enterprise level underlay the gap which had emerged between the workers' committees and the rank-and-file workers. The demands of the latter continued to be primarily economic, concerned with the terms and conditions of labour, wages, and supplies, and they showed little inclination for organizational and political activity. Members of the city committees and Regional Council, on the other hand, were preoccupied with political demands and political activities, opening a gulf between the committees and the workers. The weakness of organization in the workplace also gave management considerable power to structure workers' protest, by disciplining and redeploying recalcitrant workers, and by deciding whom to release from work to serve as representatives on workers' committees. The popularity of the committees was not enhanced by the obvious careerism of some of their members, and by a number of scandals involving links with the local mafia.

The official union had the advantage of substantial material resources, and the extensive social, health and welfare benefits which it distributed, to which were now added deficit goods bartered from abroad for coal in the more successful mines. Hopes of reform were encouraged by the fact that many activists had been elected to trade union bureaux and committees in the wake of the strike. However, they soon found that they were not able to make much headway against the bureaucratic structures, partly because the union represented the whole work collective, including managers and ITR. The result was that many dropped out, while others were absorbed into the

apparatus. On the other hand, workers' committees remained weak at enterprise level. Not only did they lack resources, but members got no release from work, so had to organize in their spare time, which was made more difficult by the shift patterns.

An indication of the sorry state of the Kuzbass workers' movement is provided by the minutes of the November 1990 meeting of the Anzhero-Sudzhensk Workers' Committee, the only workers' committee to contribute any money to the Regional Council's funds in 1990 (2,000 roubles). The minutes report that not one 'free' member of the committee (i.e. one who received pay for the time spent on committee work, usually by a vote of the enterprise) remains. The committee had 300 or so roubles in the bank. It had lost touch with nine of its members. Its president Smirnov (member of the obkom) went missing long ago, but had not had the courage to resign. It therefore appealed plaintively for support from labour collectives, pensioners and the population in general. Moreover, the minutes declared, the four city representatives to the Second Miners' Congress which adopted the proposal to establish an independent trade union had been inactive, while the committee needed 1,000 roubles as its contribution to the costs of holding a joint meeting with Berezovskii and Kemerovo to co-ordinate their activity in creating the new union. Finally, the meeting resolved that since it had no money to meet its contractual monthly obligation to *Narodnaya Gazeta* (sic) it would give *Narodnaya Gazeta* its old typewriter valued at 300 roubles (Lopatin, 366–7). The committee collapsed completely soon after.

Things were no better in Mezhdurechensk, where Rospadskaya mine withdrew from the committee as a result of the scandals associated with Kokorin, former chair of the committee, and P. Metelits. The scandal had been long drawn-out, involving allegations of extensive corruption among committee members alongside political inactivity in a city which, dominated by mines and the starting point of the 1989 strike, should have been under the control of the workers' committee, but in which the workers' committee members of the city soviet had stood by as the former first secretary of the gorkom was elected mayor. The workers' committee had lost touch both with the workers of the city and with the Regional Council, whose meetings it rarely attended any more.

Kokorin had been forced to resign as chair of the committee at the beginning of 1990 over his alleged misappropriation of two Japanese TV sets. Eventually a new president was drafted in, Yurii Kasimov,

president of the Lenin Mine Workers' Committee, to clean up the city committee.⁴³ However, as soon as he began to act he was removed on a technicality and the post of president was abolished in favour of having two co-presidents, one of whom was the notorious Kokorin, by now a member of the bureau of the gorkom. The president of the Raskadskaya Workers' Committee was blunt: 'The workers' committee has not fulfilled a single one of our political demands – transfer of the city Party building to the children, conducting a campaign for the elections. Corruption, access to deficit goods, overwhelmed those who remained after Kokorin left. Elevation to local and regional soviets provided them with a wide field of activity' (*Nasha gazeta*, 27 November 1990, 14 December 1990). The dispute continued, amidst accusations that Kokorin was no more corrupt than any other activists in the workers' movement, all of whom had televisions, video-recorders, cars, and spent all their time on trips to Moscow instead of building an independent trade union (*Nasha gazeta*, 8 January 1991).⁴⁴

The 'decline in activity of the workers' movement and reduction in the authority of the workers' committees' was recognized in a report prepared at Yeltsin's request by Golikov, Kislyuk and Lopatin on the eve of the March 1991 strike.⁴⁵ This was explained by the fact that workers were more concerned with immediate economic issues than with higher political questions, that people were disappointed with high-level politics, with which the Regional Council had almost exclusively concerned itself, that there had been a single-minded campaign to discredit the workers' leaders by painstakingly revealing flaws in their personal life, the disorderly behaviour of certain former members of the workers' committees who had used their position to obtain deficit goods, the cowardliness of the Kuzbass intelligentsia, and blunders by the workers' committees in the choice of tactics (Lopatin, 403–7, an updated version, with Aslanidi's name added as an author, was published in *Nasha gazeta*, 5 June 1991).⁴⁶

The Council's decision to focus on the development of an independent trade union organization underlay the Kuzbass delegation's initiative in proposing the formation of the Independent Miners' Union at the Second Miners' Congress in Donetsk at the end of October.⁴⁷ However, the implementation of the new programme was overtaken by the increasingly rapid development of political events at the national level, with Gorbachev's apparent turn to the Right in December 1990, followed by the aggression against Lithuania at the beginning of January. In response to the Lithuanian events, the Regional Council on

15 January decided to activate its pre-strike warning and call an indefinite political strike for 18 January, demanding withdrawal from the Baltics and the resignation of Gorbachev in addition to the normal set of political demands (*Nasha gazeta*, special issue, 18 January 1991).

The strike, called at short notice and with no organization, was a disastrous flop. Although some sections stopped work, not one full enterprise joined the strike and no more than 300 people, less than the nominal membership of the workers' committees themselves, took part. In the evening of 18 January, Golikov appeared on regional television and called the strike off on his own initiative. On 22 January the Regional Council met in Novokuznetsk to consider the situation (*Nasha gazeta*, 18 January 1991, 22 January 1991). The Council defended its decision to call a strike, whose failure it blamed on Communist disinformation, and re-affirmed the pre-strike situation. The Novokuznetsk Committee raised the question of Golikov's responsibility for calling off the strike, but the Regional Council decided that the Council as a whole had to take responsibility for this decision. The Kuzbass Council tried to put a brave face on this failure, but it was certainly a blow to its prestige.⁴⁸

The disastrous failure of the January strike was seized on with glee by the apparatus, TASS declaring that 'the working-class is indignant at the fact that the Kuzbass Council of Workers' Committees is operating in isolation from primary organizations and has called for a strike in support of a demand imposed by higher authorities'.⁴⁹ The obkom had already decided at its December plenum to put pressure on the Regional Council and use all means in the struggle against it, very actively intervening to prevent the strike from taking place. After the failure of the strike there was widespread pressure to throw workers' committees out of the premises allocated to them, with a demand from the oblispolkom that the Regional Council should vacate one of the two rooms allocated to it in the Kemerovo oblispolkom building and should pay rent for the other (*Nasha gazeta*, 12 February 1991), while *Nasha gazeta* also came under renewed pressure, this time from the tax authorities.

THE REGIONAL COUNCIL AND THE 1991 MINERS' STRIKE

The Regional Council leadership was severely chastened by the January disaster and was very wary of taking precipitate action, knowing that their support on the ground was weak. However, the demoralization of miners on the ground was increasingly turning to militancy as the economic situation deteriorated and the gains of 1989 were forgotten or reversed. This growing militancy on the ground presented the Regional Council with a difficult dilemma. On the one hand, if they did not harness the militancy of the workers the latter would turn back to the official trade union, which was itself making increasingly militant economic demands. On the other hand, if they called another precipitate strike, particularly over economic demands, they risked isolating themselves and the miners. The issue soon came to a head.

During February the labour collective of Butovskaya mine in Kemerovo demanded a doubling of their pay. This demand was endorsed by the workers of Berezovskaya mine. The miners of Biryulinskaya mine, also in Berezovskii, declared a pre-strike situation, setting a deadline of 1 March for the Soviet government to meet its demand to triple pay along with other demands concerning taxation, prices and enterprise funds. However, these strike threats were sponsored by the official trade union and Party apparatus, with no involvement of NPG or the workers' committees. There was a strong feeling within the Kuzbass Regional Council that the conservative forces were trying to annihilate the council by provoking it into calling an adventurist economic strike, which would enable them to isolate the miners (Lopatin, 407; *Nasha gazeta*, 26 February 1991, 5 June 1991), and tried unsuccessfully to persuade the workers not to implement their strike call (*Nasha gazeta*, 5 June 1991).⁵⁰ The Rospadskaya miners had also threatened to strike at a meeting on 13–14 February, with their principal demand being to cut their state order, an important issue since it was now a leasehold enterprise.

The Donbass miners had decided to strike for one day on 1 March with demands to the Ukrainian government, under whose jurisdiction they now came, for a General Agreement and the indexation of wages and pensions, with a resumption of an indefinite strike after ten days if their demands were not met. The miners of Vorkuta, Inta and Karaganda decided to follow the lead of Donbass.⁵¹

The Prokop'evsk city strike committee sent a resolution to the Regional Council at the end of February supporting the Donbass miners' demand for a doubling of pay but, noting the failure to achieve anything through economic demands in 1989, called for a political strike defending the sovereignty of Russia, proposing the resignation of the government and temporary transfer of power to the Soviet of the Federation, departyization, an end to censorship and the transfer of mass media to Russian sovereignty, transfer of the means to subsidize the mines to the Russian government and proposed that the Russian government conclude a General Agreement and introduce a law on the indexation of wages. The Regional Council endorsed this resolution on 26 February and called a twenty-four hour strike for 4 March (*Nasha gazeta*, 1 March 1991). The Council received a large number of telegrams in response to this decision, which had nominally been taken to allow time to prepare the strike, in view of the fact that the other regions had decided to hold their strike on 1 March, but it did not change the date of the strike. Meanwhile on 20 February the official miners' trade union had sent a demand to Prime Minister Pavlov for at least a doubling of wages, to which it had received no reply, and on 27 February sent a telegram to its regional offices requesting them to show their strength by holding meetings and sending telegrams, with the threat of a warning strike in the second half of March if their demands were not met (Lopatin, 407–8).⁵²

On 2 March the Regional Council met to review the situation. It was clearly still wary and accused Party functionaries of creating confusion, the example being the action of the secretary of the Mezhdurechensk gorkom in calling on the local mines to strike. The Council decided that if its demands were not fulfilled the strike would be resumed on 12 March, the day after Donbass's deadline (later revised to 11 March). In another sign of its caution, the Council resolved to maintain the supply of coal to those enterprises with a continuous cycle of production (*Nasha gazeta*, 5 March 1991).

On 4 March it looked as though the Council's caution had been fully justified. It was reported that 24 enterprises had stopped work at the first shift, with five more stopping during the day, but others going back to work. Of the 29 enterprises which struck, ten were in Prokop'evsk and at least six in Novokuznetsk. Polysaevskaya mine in Leninsk declared its solidarity, but refused to strike on the grounds of the hardship that would be caused by a strike in winter (*Nasha gazeta*, 5 May 1991; Lopatin, 408–9). It looked as though the strike had been

another disastrous flop. However, despite the cautious recommendation of the Regional Council, six Novokuznetsk mines (Esaul'skaya, Bol'shevik, Polosukhinskaya, Abashevskaya, Yubileinaya and Dimitrova) decided to continue the strike indefinitely on the Regional Council's political demands, a decision retrospectively endorsed by the Regional Council meeting in Novokuznetsk, although in fact only the first three continued the strike the next day and only two mines were on strike on 9 March, with five more not shipping coal.

On 7 March the Regional Council declared that, so as not to inconvenience the population, the Council would limit the number of enterprises on strike at any one time, so that the strike would have the character of a 'rolling wave', with the Regional Council determining the start and end date and the form of each mine's involvement in consultation with city committees.⁵³ Meanwhile, a delegation was sent to Moscow to attend a meeting in Manezh Square in support of Yeltsin on 10 March, at which Anatolii Malykhin declared a hunger strike until Gorbachev met the delegation, dramatically leading a group of journalists from the square to the Kremlin.⁵⁴ The following day the representatives of the Novokuznetsk strikers met Yeltsin, who thanked them for their support and said that he needed it very much (*Nasha gazeta*, 12 March 1991).

The strike seemed to be faltering on the ground, although in Moscow the political situation was polarizing fast. However, on 10 March Soviet Prime Minister Pavlov appeared on TV and spoke of impending price rises which, following the bungled exchange of money at the beginning of the month, designed to liquidate illicit fortunes, was the last straw.⁵⁵ By 14 March the strike had spread, with 30 mining enterprises claimed to be on strike in Novokuznetsk, Prokop'evsk, Kiselevsk, Mezhdurechensk, Leninsk-Kuznetsk and Berezovskii, on 18 March 43 enterprises were claimed to have stopped, on 25 March 59, on 27 March 45, on 1 April, following the price increases, 60, on 4 April 88, on 8 April 71, on April 11 63, on 16 April 67, on 17 April 96, on 18 April 99, on 22 April 86, on 25 April 90, on 1 May 77, on 6 May 71.⁵⁶ On 18 March the Council forgot its decision about a rolling wave and resolved to continue the strike until all its demands were fulfilled, asking all mines not on strike to express their support, an appeal repeated, together with a request to stop coal deliveries, at its meeting on 22 March (*Nasha gazeta*, 15 March 1991, 19 March 1991, 26 March 1991). The Kemerovo Workers' Committee was opposed to the strike, and the strike did not break out in Kemerovo until Butovskaya

was reported stopped on 18 March. At the end of March, Evgenii Lyakin was elected president of the Kemerovo Workers' Committee in place of Gennadii Mikhailets and most of the committee members were replaced (Lopatin, 441; interview Lyakin).

On 26 March a Kuzbass delegation was received by the Russian Prime Minister, Ivan Silaev. At the meeting the delegation made no reference to the demands of the strikers, who had now been out for over three weeks. Golikov started by saying how much they had supported the Russian government, then delivered a letter asking for support for the proposal from the American coal industry and trade unions to restructure the energy sector, signed by the president of the oblast soviet, Tuleev. Kislyuk reminded Silaev that they had spoken about it when he visited Kuzbass, and Silaev had said it deserved government support. Silaev agreed to meet representatives to discuss the American proposals.

Komarov then raised the issue of the transfer of mines to Russian jurisdiction and offered to provide the minutes of the meetings of labour collectives recording their agreement to the proposal. Silaev referred the matter to his deputy.

Golikov then raised the question of delays in preparing the documentation for the creation of a 'joint-enterprise zone' in Kuzbass,⁵⁷ the question of the monopoly control of social insurance by the official trade unions, the tax position of *Nasha gazeta* and proposed co-operation between the workers' movement and the Russian government. Silaev asked them to provide information for the Russian government on the structure and functions of the US trade union movement and supported Golikov's idea of co-operation between the workers' movement and the government of Russia, although he insisted that any agreement had to be concrete, the transfer of the mines to Russian jurisdiction, which he supported, providing a possible starting point. It could start with Rapsadskaya whose delegate was at the meeting.⁵⁸

On 26 March Gorbachev pushed a law through the Supreme Soviet to ban strikes in the coal-mining industry, which was completely ignored. It was only on 27 March, after almost a month on strike with different sets of demands, that representatives of the eleven striking regions decided to set up a co-ordinating council (initially this role had been filled by the NPG Executive Bureau in Moscow, helped out by people associated with the Confederation of Labour), the 'Inter-regional Co-ordinating Committee of Plenipotentiary Representatives

of Workers' (Strike) Committees', on the initiative of the Executive Bureau of the NPG, chaired by Malykhin. However the Kuzbass Council of Workers' Committees, now renamed the Council of Kuzbass Strike Committees, did not take long to dissociate itself from its representatives in Moscow, declaring that it would not be bound by the outcome of the forthcoming negotiations with Prime Minister Pavlov since they concerned only economic demands, while 'the enterprises on strike have put forward only political demands' (*Nasha gazeta*, 5 April 1991). After a series of meetings with Gorbachev and his cabinet on 2 and 3 April, the government announced a pay deal which would double the miners' pay. However, while the deal was acclaimed by the official union, the strikers' representatives merely reiterated their demands and the strike continued (*Nasha gazeta*, 9 April 1991).

The Russian Congress of People's Deputies established an inter-republican group to work out a mechanism for fulfilling the demands of the striking miners. The Kuzbass regional strike committee decided on 9 April to continue the strike and elected a group of representatives to work with the inter-republican group, comprising A. Antonov (Leninsk-Kuznetsk), V. Belov (Novokuznetsk), V. Golikov (Bere-zovskii), A. Kalabin (Mezhdurechensk), Yu. Komarov (Novokuznetsk), A. Malykhin (Novokuznetsk) and S. Sharipov (Kiselevsk). Prokop'evsk was to appoint a representative later. The Kiselevsk City Party Committee, now headed by the leader of the 1989 strike, Teimuraz Aslanidi, issued a very sharp denunciation of the strike, and ordered all Communists to engage in intense political and ideological agitation (*Nasha gazeta*, 12 April 1991).

The strike was now well into its second month, but there was still no movement from the Soviet government. Gorbachev went to Japan and Pavlov to London. From Kuzbass the coal barons and Mikhail Kislyuk sent a telegram to Yeltsin and Silaev warning of the catastrophic situation in Kuzbass and pleading with them to negotiate with the strikers to work out a common programme to resolve the dispute. The miners of Kapital'naya in Osinniki sent a plea to the workers of the country – 'we came out on strike on 20 March. ... We had hoped that the government would meet our demands for love of its own people', but now the only way forward was an All-Union political strike, which the Osinniki Council of Strike Committees called for 30 April, with meetings and demonstrations to take place on 1 May, a call later endorsed by the regional strike committee (*Nasha gazeta*, 16 April 1991, 19 April 1991).

Towards the end of April the miners were growing tired and some drifted back to work. The mood of the 1991 strike was very different from that of 1989. Although there were a few mass meetings, these were poorly attended. While the activists worked all hours to maintain the strike, most strikers simply sat around playing cards at work, stayed at home or, as the weather improved, began to work on their garden plots. There was increasing talk of calling off or suspending the strike, but there was no basis on which to do so without admitting total defeat. The Regional Council had issued a maximalist list of demands which had initially been a rhetorical gesture, but it had subsequently reiterated these as its unalterable and only demands, none of which had been fulfilled or even negotiated over.

The strikers were stunned when it was suddenly announced on 25 April that Gorbachev had signed an agreement with the Republican leaders, including Yeltsin, calling on the strikers to end the strike and go back to work.⁵⁹ Golikov, in Moscow, said that the statement was completely unexpected, but would not comment. Aslanidi said that he was bewildered that they could be asked to stop their political strike with no guarantees and when the government had not even considered the political questions (*Nasha gazeta*, 26 April 1991).

The Novokuznetsk Strike Committee sent Yeltsin a telegram: 'We demand that you explain in the mass media before 28 April 1991 the following questions: 1. Does the signing of the agreement by Boris Yeltsin ... mean that Yeltsin has changed his attitude to the strike movement? 2. What do the phrases "special regime", "strict control of prices", "price reform", "local authorities" and "sovereign states" mean?'. Aslanidi, acting president of the regional strike committee in Golikov's absence in Moscow, sent a similar telegram (*Nasha gazeta*, 30 April 1991). Yeltsin replied 'I have received your telegram. I will fly to Novokuznetsk on 29 April to explain my answers to your questions'.⁶⁰

Yeltsin arrived in Novokuznetsk on 29 April and spoke at meetings around South Kuzbass over the next two days. He praised the strikers, and told them that workers' and strike committees would play a vital role as guarantors of a stable economic and political situation, and perhaps were a prototype of the future forms of state power in the country. He argued that the nine plus one agreement was a great step forward in establishing the sovereignty of Russia because in it, for the first time, Gorbachev recognized that sovereignty. He insisted that he had not come to Kuzbass to call for an end to the strike, that was for

the strikers to decide, but he did promise to transfer to the jurisdiction of Russia the mine associations which wanted to do so, and to increase pay by two and a half times (*Nasha gazeta*, 4 May 1991).

On 5 May the order to transfer the industry to the jurisdiction of Russia was signed. Yeltsin presented a resolution to the Congress of People's Deputies detailing the transfer, and declaring that such a transfer implied the full economic independence of the mines, including the choice of the form of property, and that the republican management structures would play only a co-ordinating and supporting role. However, as Kislyuk noted in his commentary, this resolution was only a start, since it left open all the crucial questions about the economic and financial viability of independent mines (*Nasha gazeta*, 7 May 1991). So far the miners had gained only a piece of paper.

On 8 May the Kuzbass Strike Committee suspended the strike from 10 May after very long and heated discussion, with a warning that it would be resumed on 11 July if the resolutions and agreements were not implemented. At first a substantial majority was in favour of continuing the strike on the grounds that not one of their demands had been met, particularly as they had still not even seen a copy of the agreement on the transfer of the mines to Russian jurisdiction.⁶¹ However, mines were already drifting back to work, and even the most solid, Leninsk-Kuznetsk and Prokop'evsk, were reaching their limit. On the other hand, if the strike were to be continued it would have to be escalated by stopping coal deliveries, and there was a real fear that this would provoke military intervention. It was only after a full day's discussion that Golikov telephoned to Moscow and got the text of the agreement, and it was only the following day that the original decision was reversed and the strike called off (*Nasha gazeta*, 11 May 1991).

THE DECLINE OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL

The miners' strike had played a decisive role in the confrontation between Yeltsin and Gorbachev, and the miners themselves attributed Yeltsin's victory to their determined support. In the wake of the strike the Regional Council continued to subordinate its activity to the political priority of supporting Yeltsin and the reform programme, and with the success of Yeltsin's counter-*putsch* in August expected Yeltsin and the Russian government to return the favour. Their expectations were to be disappointed all too soon, but their unwavering commit-

ment to Yeltsin time and again prevented them from taking effective action on behalf of the miners. This contradiction between their political support for Yeltsin and their opposition to the policies of his government paralysed the Regional Council and underlay its inexorable decline.

At a press conference after the end of the strike Kislyuk, Golikov Aslanidi and Sharipov tried to sell the strike as a great victory, the nine plus one agreement providing the basis for meeting all the political demands of the strike and the transfer of the mines to the jurisdiction of Russia providing the basis for achieving the full economic and juridical independence of the mines. When a questioner asked whether this will not mean the withdrawal of subsidies and mine closures Kislyuk and Golikov evaded the issue, expressing their confidence that the government would work out a programme for the future of every mine, and referring to Kislyuk and Sharipov's visit to the United States, where they had got an agreement that the American trade unions would help them with carrying out the programme for the de-statization of the industry.⁶²

The representatives were also questioned about the relationship between the Regional Council and other social groups, the intelligentsia and entrepreneurs. As to the former, Aslanidi argued that the workers' movement always tries to get close to the intelligentsia, citing Kislyuk, who was not a member of the Regional Council, as an example. Golikov insisted that there was no contradiction between trade unions and free enterprise because entrepreneurs need unions, even if they didn't like them, and they knew that the workers' movement was the guarantee of change in the country. Kislyuk added, 'it might seem a paradox that the workers' movement nurtures the class of entrepreneurs, but today that is how it is'. The question of the disposal of the strike fund was also raised. A large amount of money had been collected from supporters all over Russia, but the strike committee had decided not to disburse the money.⁶³

On the political level, after the strike all attention was turned to the campaign for the 12 June election of the President of Russia, in which the Regional Council supported Yeltsin. Tuleev, who had been one of the signatories of Yeltsin's nomination papers, decided to stand for the post himself on a populist rather than a conservative programme, which brought the political polarization at the national level back home.⁶⁴ The main priority of the Regional Council was to marshal the

'democratic forces' in support of Yeltsin's candidacy in the election and his subsequent confrontation with Gorbachev and Soviet power.

The Sixth Conference of Kuzbass Workers' Committees, attended by around 160 delegates, was held on 7 July in Kemerovo, the day after a 'Conference of Democratic Forces' which established a new bloc 'Democratic Kuzbass' whose main aim was to struggle for power by parliamentary methods.⁶⁵ In his introductory address, Golikov argued that the strike had brought the miners to the centre of the struggle for democracy, but had also provoked a polarization so that there were now strong forces ranged against them.⁶⁶ He proposed that the priorities of the Regional Council should be to strengthen its forces by establishing closer links with labour collectives and 'with those trade unions which will genuinely defend the workers' interests', which appeared to express a new willingness to work with the official trade unions, at least at enterprise level, and secondly to co-ordinate their activity with all democratic forces. He also proposed that it was 'inexpedient' to resume the strike on 11 July, although the committee reserved the right to renew the strike in future, and that the Council of Workers' Committees should join (and finance) the new bloc 'Democratic Kuzbass', but the main business of the conference concerned the technicalities of the transfer of the mines to Russian jurisdiction (*Nasha gazeta*, 9 July 1991, 12 July 1991; KASKOR 61, 1991). At the conference Sharipov, now president of the Kuzbass NPG, was elected to join Golikov as a co-chairman, although he soon dropped out to concentrate on his union activity.⁶⁷

In the wake of the strike the Regional Council appeared to have lost its sense of direction. Yavlinksii invited the Council to nominate representatives to join his group of economists, and the Council nominated Velikanov (Prokop'evsk), Miloserdov (Leninsk) and Obukhov (Kemerovo). The Council also decided to back Viktor Il'in, the enterprise director who had played an important role in attempting to manipulate the meeting which established the regional strike committee in 1989, as its candidate for election as head of the regional executive, but the main issue was a proposal from Kislyuk that the Council should take control of the introduction of a free economic zone in Kuzbass (*Nasha gazeta*, 16 August 1991).

The August 1991 *Putsch*

The *putsch* on 19 August presented a new political challenge to the Regional Council. As soon as they heard of the *putsch* Golikov, Verenkov (by now deputy president of the Regional Council) and Sharipov met at six in the morning (Aslanidi was on holiday, but returned the following day), summoning representatives of the city committees to a meeting in Prokop'evsk later that day, which called for an indefinite general strike. The Executive Bureau of the NPG also issued a long statement in support of Yeltsin (*Nasha gazeta*, 30 August 1991).

A total of 41 mines stopped working to a greater or lesser extent in response to the strike call.⁶⁸ The reaction to the *putsch* was strongest in Mezhdurechensk where members of the city workers' committee went to the railway station and visited the pits as soon as they heard of the *putsch*, and immediately offered to organize detachments of volunteers to go to Moscow to defend the White House, an offer which was accepted by Moscow, although the arrangements to fly them to Moscow were only completed on 21 August and the group of eighteen people arrived too late to have an impact. The city administration lay low during the *putsch*, and the mine directors reacted in different ways. The director of Lenin mine, Golubkov, came to the mine and ordered the workers to stop work, which they had already done, telling them that if the *putsch* succeeded they would lose all the freedom they had gained, including all their new contracts, so there would be no point in working. At Shevyakova, by contrast, the director Feodorov tried to persuade the workers to remain at work and await developments.⁶⁹

The collapse of the *putsch* had a major political impact in Kuzbass. Kislyuk had happened to be in Moscow, and spent the days of the *putsch* at Yeltsin's side. On 27 August he was appointed Chief of Administration in Kuzbass, while Malykhin was appointed Yeltsin's personal representative in the region.⁷⁰ The Regional Council suddenly found its own people appointed as representatives of the President in Kuzbass, and immediately re-evaluated its own political position, calling for an end to conflict in order to reduce social tension and for co-operation with the President's representatives. With the triumph of Yeltsin and the appointments of Malykhin and Kislyuk, the Regional Council was suddenly transformed from virulent opponent to firm supporter of the regional and national governments, while the former

apparatus moved into opposition. However, there were already ominous signs that the government had its own priorities, as Prime Minister Silaev indicated that the subsidies for the mines would be withdrawn at the end of the year, and the mines required to repay all their debts.

The Isolation of the Miners

The Regional Council now had the political support of Moscow and of the regional administration. However the outcome of the strike had reinforced the separation of the miners from the rest of the population of Kuzbass and of the country as a whole. In 1989 the miners had claimed to be striking on behalf of the region as a whole, and their strike was joined by workers in all branches of production, although the main result of the settlement was a very substantial increase in the living standard of miners compared to the rest of the population. In 1991 the miners had claimed to be striking entirely with political demands, on behalf of the country as a whole, but their strike attracted almost no support from workers in other branches of production and the settlement was on the basis of another massive wage increase for the miners.

The miners' pay increase could easily be depicted as being at the expense of the rest of the population of the region, who were having to pay prices inflated by the miners' pay packets, without enjoying any comparable wage increase themselves. The disparity particularly affected workers in 'budget organizations', most notably education and health care, where there was no possibility of raising wages without any increase in budget allocations. The difficulties of the budget sector workers put to the test the claims of the Regional Council and the Union of Kuzbass Workers to represent the interests of the workers of the region as a whole. However, the dilemma faced by the Regional Council was that the budget allocations came from Moscow through the Chief of Administration, Kislyuk, while the demands of the teachers and health workers were backed by the official trade unions and championed by Tuleev. In the conflict between political allegiance and trade union principles it was the former that triumphed as the Regional Council reacted strongly and negatively to the strikes of teachers and medical workers which broke out in the autumn.

The Prokop'evsk teachers came out on strike at the beginning of September with the full support of Tuleev, and faced immediate

denunciation from Kislyuk and the Regional Council, who argued that the teachers had kept silent for two years and just observed the struggle of the miners. Now, although Yeltsin had issued a decree doubling their pay from 1 January 1992, and there was no money to pay higher wages until then, they had come out on strike against the new government in an action which Kislyuk insisted was set up by provocateurs, identified by Golikov as Tuleev (*Nasha gazeta*, 13 September 1991, 17 September 1991; KASKOR 71, 1991). The teachers' strike spread during October and lasted on and off for one and a half months. The health workers issued their list of demands at the end of September (Lopatin, 537–8), but the head of their strike committee was a childhood friend of the chief of the health administration and sufficient concessions were made to restrict the health workers to token strikes in late October, although there was a renewal of the strike in December. The Regional Council continued to reject the demands of the teachers, but supported the demands of the health workers in principle, while rejecting their strike action, arguing that 'money should be earned not demanded' (KASKOR 76, 1991)! At the end of the month the disputes were settled when Tuleev provided funds from the regional budget and appealed to local businesses to subscribe to a fund in support of public services, against which he promised tax concessions. Kislyuk could only sack the conservative chief of the education administration (although he was restored to his post by the courts during the second teachers' strike in 1992). The following month the fire-fighters threatened strike action, and their representatives joined the Kemerovo City Workers' Committee, but Kislyuk firmly rejected their demands, insisting that they show him where to find the means to pay for them (KASKOR 80, 81, 1991).

Although the miners had been firm in their loyalty to Yeltsin and Kislyuk, they were not finding the political changes reflected in the implementation of reforms or in improved economic conditions at the regional level. On 22 November the NPG Kuzbass sent an appeal to Yeltsin about the lack of supplies of food in Kuzbass, arguing that since the miners were still expected to meet their state orders for coal, Kuzbass should receive its allocated supplies of food in return, threatening to cut coal supplies in proportion to the shortcomings in food supply. The following week the presidents of the Kemerovo Workers' Committee and the Kemerovo NPG jointly appealed to Kislyuk and the general director of the coal concern Severokuzbassugol' about the failure to take any steps to establish the enterprise independence

agreed in the wake of the 1989 strike. One week later the Regional Council appealed to the regional administration about the shortage of cash that was leading to non-payment of wages, which created serious problems in the face of the impending price rises (*Nasha gazeta*, 13 December 1991, 17 December 1991; KASKOR 80, 1991), and there was deepening concern that all the gains of the summer would be wiped out at a stroke by the impending inflation. The Council also objected to Kislyuk's appointment of officials of the old regime as chiefs of administration of the various cities in the region (Lopatin, 536, 544; KASKOR 83, 1991).

The leaders of the Regional Council continued to see the Council's primary role as supporting the democratic forces at regional and national level and pressing for the implementation of policies of radical economic reform, which they still saw as the key to improving the material conditions of the miners. At the same time they repeatedly found themselves in opposition to the specific policies and programmes of regional and national governments, which worked in increasingly close alliance with the old nomenklatura and paid scant regard to the miners' demands. However, the political polarization between Kislyuk and Tuleev in Kuzbass and between Yeltsin and the Congress of People's Deputies in Moscow constantly forced the Regional Council back into a position of unquestioning support for the former which prevented it from developing an independent political position or actively representing the interests of the miners. The Regional Council leaders continued to justify their support for a political leadership that had little regard for its interests with the argument that the Council supported not the regional and national governments, which were subverted by Communists and bureaucrats, but Kislyuk and Yeltsin, who would carry through the appropriate policies provided only that they were properly informed and had the miners' support.⁷¹

This contradiction underlay the Regional Council's political strategy, which was to exploit its personal contacts in the government apparatus in Kemerovo and Moscow rather than to organize any political mobilization to press its demands on the government.⁷² Thus, at the beginning of January 1992 the Regional Council rejected 'strong methods' in response to the massive increase in prices following price liberalization, instead sending a delegation of three people to Moscow to negotiate with the government on price increases and on the failure to allow a sufficient increase in coal prices to maintain real wages.

This strategy depended on the leaders of the workers' movement retaining their influence in Kemerovo and Moscow. However, popular support for the democrats and their reforms was rapidly seeping away, so that the continued commitment of the leaders of the movement to Yeltsin and his government progressively undermined their credibility and so their ability to serve as a significant political force. In the *realpolitik* of the struggle for state power neither Yeltsin nor Kislyuk were going to do any favours for those who could give them nothing in return, so the leaders of the miners' movement found their influence in Kemerovo and Moscow and among the mass of the miners caught in a vicious circle of decline.

At the regional level the first year of the new regime was marked by a constant confrontation between Kislyuk and Tuleev, in which the latter rapidly restored his popularity after his indiscretion during the *putsch* on the basis of a broad populist rhetoric. Kislyuk's only political backing in the region came from the workers' committees, but the latter had neither the organizational nor ideological resources to provide effective support, and proved unable to deliver even the mining towns for Kislyuk. Within a year of his installation, Kislyuk had given up all hope of establishing an independent political base in Kuzbass, turning away from the workers' committees to sign a co-operation agreement with Tuleev. In this context the only remaining function of the workers' committees, beyond their commercial activity, was to activate their contacts in Moscow, and to provide shock troops to support Yeltsin in his regular confrontations with the Congress of People's Deputies.⁷³

The commitment of the leaders of the Regional Council to Yeltsin and Kislyuk and to the radical reform programme not only underlay a decline in their popular support, but also the emergence of divisions within the movement itself. At the end of December 1991, the workers' committees held their Seventh Conference in Kemerovo, which was reportedly attended by only thirty delegates, including fraternal delegates from kindred organizations (fewer than the nominal membership of the Regional Council itself), later joined by representatives of the striking fire-fighters. The conference was marked by divisions between the city committees and the Regional Council, some of the former complaining that the Regional Council appeared to issue statements in the name of the workers' movement as a whole, without referring them to the city committees. This was one of the reasons for the adoption of yet another constitution, written by Aslanidi, Golikov

and I. Kitaev, and yet another name, the 'Kuzbass Confederation of Labour (Kuzbass Workers' Committees)' (Lopatin, 545–50), although these changes also reflected the widening of the committee to include representatives of the Independent Miners' Union, who were still effectively members of workers' committees wearing other hats. The Novokuznetsk and Prokop'evsk delegations proposed postponing a decision until consultation with local members, but this was voted down and the Novokuznetsk and Prokop'evsk delegations refused to participate in further discussion, the latter walking out of the conference (KASKOR 84, 1991).

The contradiction between the trade union and political activity of the workers' movement also dictated a clearer institutional separation of the two wings of the movement, the workers' committees and NPG, which had hitherto remained formal, and a shift in the focus of the movement from the former to the latter, so that by 1993 the relationship between the two had been virtually reversed, with the workers' committees a shadow of the NPG. Nevertheless, this institutional separation could not overcome the contradiction faced by the movement, between its political face, which set it in alliance with the liberal reformers against the conservative industrial apparatus, and its trade union face, which increasingly forced it into alliance with the industrial apparatus against the liberal reformist government. The NPG as much as the workers' committees found itself paralysed by the same contradiction.⁷⁴

NOTES

- ¹ There was a substantial turnover in the membership of the strike committees, largely reflecting their changing political role. The membership of the Kemerovo city strike committee turned over twice in the first two days of the strike, the first leaders reportedly being more 'rhetorical' and 'expressive', the second wave of more 'responsible' leaders emerging amid growing fears of repression and recognition of the need for negotiation. In Kiselevsk the committee had to be reconstituted in order to call off the strike. In most cities only a core of the nominal membership regularly participated in meetings, and even at the weekly meetings of the Regional Council attendance was patchy. The membership of the Vorkuta Committee turned over four times in its first year of existence (Rutland, 1990, 367). By 1992 only two of the original members of the Kuzbass Regional Council, Aslanidi and Golikov, remained in place.
- ² G.V. Kubas', 'Opyt deyatel'nosti rabochikh komitetov Kuzbassa (iyul'-noyabr' 1989)', *Ezhegodnik: sotsiologicheskie ocherki*, V.S.K., Moscow, 1991, 176–83.
- ³ Almost as soon as they were established the city committees were being flooded with citizens' complaints that had often been piling up at the door of the city soviet for years. In addition, they took on the function of inspecting shops and warehouses to

control profiteering and the stockpiling of scarce goods, shops displaying signs such as 'This shop is under the control of "names" from "enterprise"', and soon took over the functions of monitoring or organizing distribution. The scale of distribution increased enormously as mines took advantage of the opportunities to sell and barter their above plan coal output and imported goods flooded into Kuzbass. There was obviously considerable scope for personal commercial opportunities, or simply corruption, on the part of members of the city committees, and indeed many soon went into business.

4 The Kemerovo City Strike Committee's statement that it was turning itself into a Workers' Committee on 1 August was publicized in a press bulletin issued jointly with the city Party committee (Lopatin, 89).

5 This statement almost exactly duplicates the statements being sent out by the regional Party committee to its own city committees! A further firm recommendation was sent out on 3 December reminding the city committees that they had to draw up nomination lists and prepare for the forthcoming elections (Lopatin, 189–90).

6 There was a very substantial renewal of both the managerial and trade union apparatuses in the wake of the strike, in part at the instigation of the workers' committees, but more often at the instigation of higher Party or administrative authorities as they sought scapegoats for their failures. Approximately 60 per cent of presidents of trade union primary groups were replaced (Sergeev interview, *KAS-KOR Special Information Bulletin for IIIrd Council of Representatives of NPG*).

7 The workers' committees were well placed to participate in the activities of barter and distribution because of the network of connections they established between mine, city and regional level.

8 As early as December 1989 the leaders of the Regional Council were lamenting the decline at the grassroots. In a series of sketches in the first issues of *Nasha gazeta*, several of the leaders defined the high point of their political lives as the July strike, and the low point as the disillusionment that followed as promises were unfulfilled, problems unsolved, and the mass of miners simply 'retreated into their shells' (Golikov).

9 Nominally all members were elected from below, but in practice anybody who wanted to serve on a committee could secure election, provided that they could get release from work, normally through a vote of a meeting of the labour collective of their enterprise, although such meetings usually remained under management control. This gave mine management, which continued to pay the committee members' wages, a powerful influence in determining who could serve on the committees. Friedgut and Siegelbaum, 1990, present a very optimistic picture of the renovation of the apparatus, which in retrospect seems considerably to underestimate the ability of the apparatus to reproduce itself.

10 The weakness of these connections was already shown in the two-hour warning strike on 3 August 1989 over continued construction work on the Krapivinskii reservoir, which was supposed to have stopped under the agreement. When this was pointed out, the regional soviet sent a special commission immediately to observe, found it still working, and ordered it to stop on 2 August. The strike still went ahead, directed at the fraud and deception in the implementation of the agreement, but Kemerovo decided not to participate, and in fact only Novokuznetsk, Prokop'evsk, Osinniki and Leninsk-Kuznetsk took any part (Lopatin, 97).

11 The income for the full year was 81,000 roubles, most of the additional money coming from enterprises. The income for the first nine months of 1990 was 99,000 roubles, almost entirely from enterprises and dominated by a donation of 75,000 from (or channelled through) the Kemerovo chemical plant Azot, with 2,000 from the Anzhero-Sudzhensk city committee and 5,500 from individuals (*Nasha gazeta*, 9 October 1990).

12 These issues were the basis of a series of divisions within the Regional Council, although they were never clearly and explicitly addressed by the leadership. At a seminar in about February 1990 to define the organizational principles of the Regional Council the discussion just went around in circles, with some emphasizing trade union functions and others political functions, without clearly distinguishing the two. Simi-

larly there was no agreement on the relationship between the workers' committees and the soviets. The division between those who emphasized the trade union activity of the workers' committees and those who saw them as political bodies was linked to a division between those who believed that the priority was to organize against the mine administration and those who believed that the priority was to organize against the state. It is important not to exaggerate the extent of disagreement, since positions were by no means clear-cut, and the over-riding concern was to maintain the unity of the movement (video of seminar/business game, c. February 1990).

13 As Vladimir Makhanov noted, 'when one has to share out one pair of deficit boots among one hundred people, ninety nine will always be dissatisfied' (*Za Bol'shuyu Khimiyu [Nasha gazeta]*, 1–2, 10 January 1990). Makhanov attributed the decline in the authority of the workers' movement to this distributional activity.

14 The law was implemented much more vigorously after August 1991 under the Yeltsin government.

15 The attempt to dissolve the workers' committees back into the STK, which would put them firmly under management control, was clearly the strategy of the obkom, which called a conference of labour collectives in November. Mel'nikov, following a promotion to Moscow, later emerged as a leading figure in a similar initiative at national level, the Union of Labour Collectives, which sought to bring the radical movement for self-management under the wing of the industrial nomenklatura. An indication of the significance of this strategy was given two years later, when in April 1991 the government called a conference of nominees of labour collectives in a vain attempt to resolve the 1991 miners' strike. These nominees turned out to be predominantly mine administrators, bureaucrats and trade union functionaries, with only a small minority of directly elected representatives of the striking miners.

16 Avaliani sent a telegram to the Politburo suggesting that the Politburo itself propose the deletion of Article Six, 'without waiting for people to take to the streets', noting in a further telegram to the Supreme Soviet that at labour collective meetings 90 per cent of participants favoured the removal of this Article (*Stroitel' [Nasha gazeta]*, 62–3, 20 December 1989).

Gavriil Popov, one of the leaders of the Inter-Regional Group of Deputies in the Supreme Soviet, and later Mayor of Moscow (and self-made millionaire), spoke at the conference as an invited guest. The link between the workers' committees and the Inter-Regional Group proved effective in throwing out Gorbachev's strike ban.

17 It was unclear at this stage whether the Council of Workers' Committees planned to dissolve itself into the new Union, or to retain its parallel identity, a confusion which persisted even after its establishment. As late as January the following year Makhanov was characterizing the Union and the workers' committees as parallel structures, for which Rudol'f took him to task, insisting that the Union 'is not a parallel structure, it is the growth of the workers' movement, created on the basis of the workers' committees' (*Za Bol'shuyu Khimiyu [Nasha gazeta]*, 1–2, 10 January 1990). This lack of clarity as to its role was underpinned by the absence of a consensus on the character of the workers' movement and its relation to existing institutions. In the event, as we shall see, the Union was re-constituted at the next conference in October but proved still-born, although the name continued to be used as an alternative title for the workers' committees. In theory the Union was supposed to have a broader base than the Council – the term *rabochii* refers only to blue-collar workers, the term *trudyashchikhsaya* can apply to all employees, and was intended to appeal to workers in all branches of production (and to was the term favoured by the Party). In practice both organizations included managers and neither extended far beyond the mines.

The move to establish a Union of Kuzbass Workers initially provoked a sharp reaction from the regional Party apparatus. The Party newspaper *Kuzbass* published an article 'Why do we Need a Second Party?' on 20 September, which was followed by a series of letters, most of which defended the leading role of the Party. In practice the

Party faced both ways, attempting to prevent the establishment of the Union but also trying to control and neutralize it.

18 The possibility of holding a strike on 1 October over the non-implementation of the July agreement had already been discussed at a meeting of workers' committee representatives in Moscow on 11 September that had been sponsored by the official union.

19 This incident seems to have been decisive in the Party's reconsideration of its relationship to the workers' movement because it represented a clear breakdown in Party control. The Mezhdurechensk City Workers' Committee by this time worked in close alliance with the gorispolkom and the gorkom, the meeting at which the strike had been called was a joint meeting with members of the gorkom, and the workers' committee was still headed by Party member Kokorin. Similarly at regional level, Avaliani attended the obkom meeting at which the Party statement was adopted, the Regional Council statement being signed by Rudol'f.

20 The paper did print critical as well as supportive comments. In general the local and regional newspapers were transformed in the wake of the strike. At the Fourth Conference of Kuzbass Workers' Committees Kislyuk denounced this conference as an attempt to divide the workers' movement and increase the influence of official structures, but argued that members of the workers' committees still needed to participate to turn it to constructive ends. In fact the initiative came to nothing – the Second All-Kuzbass Conference of Labour Collectives did not take place until 16 February 1994 (ASTI, *Profsoyuznoe Obozrenie*, 1994, 2).

21 Petr Pyatenko was a thirty year old Party member, who had worked at Pionerka mine in Belovo since 1982 as a fitter, miner foreman and mechanic.

22 According to Mikhailets the formation of the Union was another move on the part of the obkom to divide the workers' movement, with a leading role in its formation being played by V.A. Lebedev, the obkom secretary for ideology who had headed the Party's press centre during the strike, the whole thing being stitched up behind closed doors. His view was that trade union and political organizations should be clearly distinguished from one another, the Kemerovo city committee concentrating on trade union activity. This was the basis of a split between the Kemerovo branch of the Union of Kuzbass Workers and the Kemerovo Workers' Committee.

23 At the end of December Yurii Chun'kov, a lawyer and academic economist from the Polytechnical Institute, who had been elected president of the Revision Commission at the Fourth Conference of the Union of Kuzbass Workers, reported that the work of establishing primary groups of the Union of Kuzbass Workers was proceeding very slowly, declaring that they were very few and what was really needed was 'initiatives from workers at the base' to form initiative groups, rather than wait for the workers' committees to do it for them. There were other problems – some city workers' committees were not entirely satisfied with the constitution of the Union or its programme, and once a primary group was established it was not clear what it was supposed to do (*Zheleznodorozhnik Kuzbassa* [*Nasha gazeta*], 151–2, 30 December 1989). Two weeks later Rudol'f confessed that the work was going very slowly, as the whole task of organization fell to one person. Moreover, although acting president of the Regional Council, he confessed that he did not know how many workers' committees still existed, as many people had gone back to work in their mines. Rudol'f was particularly outraged that the Prokop'evsk City Workers' Committee had established an executive committee of the Union of Workers before establishing any primary groups, contrary to the Constitution, which included Yefim Ostrovskii, 'a representative of the "New Socialists" and a Muscovite!', risking a degeneration of the movement such as he had seen in Vorkuta (*Za Bol'shuyu Khimiyu* [*Nasha gazeta*], 1–2, 10 January 1990).

24 It is likely that the obkom was shocked by the conference's expression of support for the political strike in Vorkuta, which included a protest at the freezing of the Vorkuta Committee's bank account and threatened a solidarity strike (Lopatin, 173–4).

The Kuzbass Regional Council sent a delegation to Vorkuta from 28 November to 4 December to find out what was happening. The delegation comprised Malykhin,

Gerol'd and the two Komarov brothers. They came back with a stinging report, that the Vorkuta miners were disunited and their movement in a lamentable state. They scrounged financial support, and the person who collected money at the Kuzbass conference claiming to be their representative was not and conned the Kuzbass miners. While the workers were not united among themselves, they linked up with other social groups, and were under the thumb of political agitators from the Popular Front, Democratic Union, Solidarnost' etc., so that there was a sharp antagonism between the Party and the workers' committee, especially in Vorgashorskaya mine (which was the political heart of the strike), whereas in Kuzbass everybody tries to work together. In July, the Kuzbass delegation argued, the economic demands had expressed the interests of the workers, but then the Vorkuta Workers' Committee began to stress the political demands of the Popular Front. The Kuzbass group argued that Kuzbass had put forward the same demands, for example for the abolition of Article Six of the Constitution, but that this is a matter for the Supreme Soviet, not for strike action. 'We focus on economic questions and their practical resolution. They have unstable demands and no clear tactics or strategy', especially Vorgashorskaya, with no method of struggle but the strike. However, the delegation admitted that the Democratic Union had got some real economic points in their programme, which were quoted (Lopatin, 190–93). *Zhelezнодорожник Kuzbassa* [*Nasha gazeta*], 151–2, 30 December 1989 published the Vorkuta demands and an interview with Gerol'd, which largely repeated the points in the report, noting that 'we try to improve the position in the country, starting with real changes in the economic situation in our region, in enterprises, at work. [They] propose to go in the opposite direction – from an abstract improvement in the economic situation of the country which they propose to achieve by means of a change in the government. In practice this line leads to the disruption of normal economic activity of the region, up a blind alley'. Links between the Kuzbass and Vorkuta Committees were not close!

25 It was never clear what 'regional self-financing and self-management' and the 'economic and juridical independence of the enterprise' really meant. It had gradually become clear to the Regional Council leaders that on their own such measures would simply spell bankruptcy for the industry and for the region, since both relied so heavily on state subsidies, so the real issue, as had long been argued by the regional authorities, was not juridical changes but resources. This led the Council into the contradictory position of demanding full independence at the same time as government guarantees of the resources (including a substantial increase in the price of coal) required to increase living standards and to finance the economic and social development of Kuzbass. This contradiction was only half covered up by rhetoric about the resources absorbed by parasites and bureaucrats which would be retained in the region once the bureaucracy was removed. It was this ambiguity which allowed the regional and industrial authorities to collaborate with the Regional Council in attempting to extract resources from Moscow, despite their lack of serious interest in independence and self-financing themselves. In September 1989 Kislyuk's pet demand for a 'free enterprise zone', also called a 'joint enterprise zone' was added. On 9 July 1991 Yeltsin signed Order 1588–1 which laid the foundations for the formation of such a zone, although still nobody was clear what it was, and little progress was made in its implementation.

26 The draft agreement was prepared in collaboration with the obkom and oblispolkom, with the participation of a delegate from Karaganda and regular telephone contact with Vorkuta and parts of Donbass (Lopatin, 242).

27 This was the period of nomination and campaigning for the March elections. It would by no means be far-fetched to see this procrastination as a way of diverting the attention of the Regional Council and its leading activists from the election campaign, which was certainly one of its effects.

28 Thirteen of the nineteen on the workers' committees' nomination list dated 2 January were Party members (Lopatin, 207–11).

- ²⁹ The successful candidates included Kislyuk, Gerol'd, Igor' Zbronzhko, a journalist on the popular TV programme Pulse, Gennadii Nikulin, president of the trade union committee in Shusstalepskaya mine in Osinniki, Valerii Kiselev, a mechanic from the Taldinskii open-cast mine and Aleksandr Bir, from the Dimitrova mine, both in Novokuznetsk, Yurii Shikharev from Shevyakova mine in Mezhdurechensk, Vladimir Makhanov, president of the Prokop'evsk Workers' Committee, and Gennadii Mikhailets from Severnaya mine in Kemerovo. The latter two did not retain their links with the Regional Council. Mikhailets later became deputy president of the regional organization of the official trade unions. Makhanov's election manager had been Mikhail Tkatchev, former head of the organization department of the Prokop'evsk city Party committee (*Nasha gazeta*, 15 May 1990; Lopatin, 267–8). The group of people's deputies was hardly cohesive. A dispute broke out over the election to the Supreme Soviet, for which both Gerol'd and Shikharev put themselves forward with the result that neither was nominated on the first round. The Regional Council then backed Gerol'd (*Nasha gazeta*, 19 June 1990).
- ³⁰ Aman Tuleev was born in the Turkmen Republic in 1944 and had worked all his life in the railways. In 1985 he had been appointed head of the Transport and Communications Department of the obkom, in December 1988 he became head of the regional railway administration and in 1989 graduated from the Academy of Social Sciences of the Central Committee of the CPSU. He was defeated by Yurii Golik in the 1989 All-Union elections, but was elected to the Russian Supreme Soviet in 1990. In 1991 he stood against Yeltsin for the post of President of Russia, defeating Yeltsin in Kuzbass. In December 1993 he secured 75 per cent of the vote in the election for the Federation Council.
- ³¹ For an English language report on the conference see *Soviet Labour Review*, 1, 8, June 1990, 7–8. The title 'Confederation of Labour' (*Konfederatsia truda*) was proposed by Boris Kagarlitsky, and was a compromise between those who wanted to use the term 'workers' (*rabochii*), which would exclude intellectual, technical and managerial staff, and those who proposed the broader term 'labourers' (*trudyashchikhsaya*), which implied that workers had no distinctive class interest of their own (Ikhlov, 1994, 27).
- ³² Kuzbass representatives had attended an organizing meeting in Moscow on 23 to 25 December the previous year, where they offered to hold the congress in Novokuznetsk since none of the Moscow or Leningrad workers' groups were able to host it (*V Boi za Ugol'* [*Nasha gazeta*], 3–6, 16 January 1990). The whole format and atmosphere of the congress was remarkably similar to that of a Party conference, with the leaders ranged on the platform, controlling access to the microphones located on the floor. The resolutions and constitution, which were written by the Moscow intellectuals Leonid Gordon, Boris Rakitskii and Galina Rakitskaya, were presented and adopted in a similar manner, without serious discussion. The Urals Association Rabochii proposed an alternative variant, but Golikov ruled it out of order at the first organizing meeting (Ikhlov, 1994, 26). In general the Kuzbass Regional Council was at this stage still opposed to the politicization of the movement. This also suited the Moscow liberal intellectuals, who hoped to impose their own politics through their personal contacts with the Kuzbass leaders, leaving the latter to concentrate on 'trade union' activity.
- ³³ The Confederation of Labour was formally established at a meeting of representatives of 52 organizations in Moscow at the end of June, with its headquarters assigned to Novokuznetsk, managed by the Novokuznetsk Workers' Committee, with branch offices in Donetsk City Workers' Strike Committee and in Moscow, on the basis of the Commission for Workers' Affairs of the Presidium of Mossoviet, where its secretary would be Il'ya Georgievich Shablinskii (Lopatin, 310; *Nasha gazeta*, 10 July 1990). Shablinskii was a Moscow academic who had been active in the workers' movement since 1987, having been a founder of the Inter-City Workers' Club established in August 1987. He was an organizer of the Novokuznetsk Congress, and an adviser to the miners at the Second Miners' Congress in Donetsk, before becoming editor of the prestigious *Konstitutsionnyi Vestnik*.

Contradictions soon emerged within the Confederation of Labour as a result of the political polarization between the socialist and anarchist groups on the one hand, and the proponents of 'market socialism', who moved rapidly towards a pro-capitalist position, on the other. The latter, in alliance with the Kuzbass leaders, were able to dominate the Confederation of Labour, which was significant primarily as an empty shell through which the Moscow ideologists of Democratic Russia could secure the nominal backing of the workers' movement through the participation of its leaders, although the latter soon lost interest as they turned their attention to building independent trade unions, and in particular the Independent Miners' Union (NPG) and Sotsprof.

The Confederation effectively disintegrated at a meeting of representatives in Moscow in December 1990 (KASKOR 33, 1991). An initiative to recreate it after the strike in the summer of 1991 came to nothing, arguments in the committee indicating the growing rift between the 'democrats' and workers' organizations and later between supporters and opponents of the government. At an organization committee meeting in July 1991 it was decided to organize a congress of free trade unions, with the participation of those strike and workers' committees which aimed to transform themselves into trade unions, a decision reiterated at a meeting of the Council of Representatives in November (KASKOR 77, 1991). The Kuzbass Regional Council agreed in November 1991 to finance the registration of the Confederation of Labour as an international association, following the break-up of the Soviet Union (KASKOR 78, 1991), but this too came to nothing.

³⁴ Golikov, in the chair, resisted the appeals to the congress to endorse any political forces, and the Moscow 'democrats' were at this time opposed to any 'provocative' attacks on the Communist Party. However, *Nasha gazeta* published an appeal on its front page under the headline 'Join the DPR' (*Nasha gazeta*, 3 July 1990).

³⁵ This resolution was adopted by the Novokuznetsk Workers' Committee on 3 July (*Nasha gazeta*, 10 July 1990). The Regional Council endorsed the movement to throw Party committees out of enterprises following the initiative of the Tyrganskaya mine in Prokop'evsk (Lopatin, 312-3; *Nasha gazeta*, 3 July 1990). In August, Abashevskaya mine outside Novokuznetsk threw the Party out, almost certainly with the encouragement of the mine director, and it was thrown out of Kapital'naya in Osinniki after the workers threatened to strike over the issue, and in the Signal mine in Belovo (*Nasha gazeta*, 14 August 1990, 28 August 1990).

Mel'nikov, the regional Party boss, in a long letter to Gorbachev reporting on the Congress, drew on his own experience in Kuzbass to argue that if Communists did not actively participate in the workers' movement and collaborate with it, then new anti-Communist parties would arise to challenge its monopoly (Lopatin, 295-8).

³⁶ The final demands were for the resignation of the Soviet government and transfer of its powers to an Extraordinary Congress of People's Deputies of the Russian Federation, which should conclude a new Union agreement on the basis of which to create new democratic Union organs; create a mechanism for the recall of deputies at all levels, and revocation of the mandate of USSR deputies elected from social and social-political organizations; bring the USSR Constitution into line with the new constitutions of the Republics and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; nationalize the property of the CPSU, VTsSPS and liquidation of the official status of Party committees; and introduce an anti-monopoly law (*Nasha gazeta*, 10 July 1990). The committee also threatened to renew the strike after the Second Congress of People's Deputies if the Congress did not act. These demands duplicated the political demands proposed by the Council of the Confederation of Labour, headed by Gerol'd, at its meeting on 22 June, which had been written by Leonid Gordon, Galina Rakitskaya and the anarcho-syndicalist A. Shubin (Ikhlov, 1994, 30), but interestingly omitted the latter's 'economic' demands for enterprise independence and economic reform (*Nasha gazeta*, 3 July 1990).

- ³⁷ Golikov reiterated that the purpose of the strike was to avoid the emergence of an uncontrollable and explosive situation. Strikers were being asked to remain within their enterprises, and only send delegates to meetings (*Nasha gazeta*, 10 July 1990).
- ³⁸ Yeltsin had met a delegation of miners from all regions after the First Miners' Congress. Yeltsin reportedly asked the miners to give his Russian government a breathing space to introduce reforms, which was one reason why the strike was of restricted duration (*Soviet Labour Review*, 2, 8, August 1990, 6). According to Ikhlov (1994, 30) Yeltsin asked Golikov to postpone the strike, but Golikov replied that if he did so the miners would take no notice, and the leaders would be discredited.
- ³⁹ In many mines listed as participating not all sections came out on strike, and others may not have struck at all. The mood of the strike was very different from the previous year, with the city meetings sparsely attended and most workers spending the day fishing, gardening or with their families (in Tomskaya mine in Mezhdurechensk the strikers were kept amused by a showing of cartoons in the assembly hall!). The government claimed that the strike was a flop in Kuzbass.
- ⁴⁰ *Soviet Labour Review*, 2, 8, August 1990, 6–7, quoting the Info-Vzglad News Agency, refers to a number of other plants which struck in Orsha and Petropavlovsk-Kamchatka.
- ⁴¹ The move to Novokuznetsk was an expression of the re-orientation of the Regional Council away from its earlier focus on collaboration with the oblast apparatus, although the Council retained its office in Kemerovo. It was also an expression of the changing balance within the Council, which was increasingly dominated by Novokuznetsk, which became the seat of the March 1991 strike, with Prokop'evsk, Kemerovo and Mezhdurechensk increasingly distancing themselves from, or opposing, the Council. This process was also reflected in a changing balance of power between the coal concerns, the transfer of jurisdiction over the industry to the Russian government in July 1991 confirming the hegemony of Kuznetskugol', formerly the South Kuzbass Coal Association, based in Novokuznetsk and the decline of Prokop'evskgidrougol'.
- ⁴² The first reference to the congress in *Nasha gazeta* was on 23 October, which reported that it had paid for the plane taking 130 delegates from Kuzbass to Donetsk. However, this news took second place to the information that Golikov had been invited to join the co-ordinating committee established as an advisory body by the Supreme Soviet of Russia. At the end of December, Golikov was appointed to Yeltsin's 'Consultative-Coordinating Council' (Lopatin, 369–71).
- ⁴³ Kasimov was a member of the city soviet. He was originally a rigger, but was then appointed deputy director for supply of Lenin mine – an alternative variant of the corruption of activists.
- ⁴⁴ Kislyuk, Gerol'd and Sharipov were at that moment on a trip to the United States, invited by the AFL-CIO on the basis of contacts established at the Second Miners' Congress, which resulted in a co-operation agreement signed on 1 February between the AFL-CIO and a bizarre selection of 'leaders' of the Soviet workers' movement (in addition to Kislyuk, Sharipov and Gerol'd, the agreement was signed by Sobol' (Belorussia), Nestroev (Vorkutinsk), Shumkin (Karaganda), Krylov and Minenko (Donetsk) and a number of others). The following day a mutual assistance agreement was signed by the Kuzbass representatives with leaders of the US coal industry (Lopatin, 386–7; *Nasha gazeta*, 30 April 1991).
- ⁴⁵ The story of Yeltsin's precise role in the 1991 miners' strike has still to be told. However, we can assume that Yeltsin's interest in the state of the workers' movement was not purely academic.
- ⁴⁶ The estimate was that fewer than 10 per cent of those who joined the strike committees in 1989 remained active, with some workers' committees depending entirely on the free-time activity of their members, and some, such as in Anzhero-Sudzhensk, disappearing completely (*Nasha gazeta*, 5 June 1991). A survey in September 1990 in the Leninsk mines showed that only 26 per cent of workers were satisfied with the leader-

ship of the workers' committee in their mine, with 53 per cent expressing dissatisfaction. On the other hand, the survey provided little consolation for the official unions, with three-quarters of the workers expressing dissatisfaction with their trade union committee, and over 60 per cent of those workers expressing an opinion believing that management exercised the strongest influence over their trade union committee (V.V. Pershin, P.V. Bizyukov and V.D. Khrumchenko, *Sotsial'nye problemy upravleniya na ugol'nykh predpriyatiyakh* (Social Problems of the Management of Coalmining Enterprises), Kemerovo, July 1991). A VTsIOM poll straight after the 1989 strike had shown that 80 per cent of strike participants had confidence in the strike committees, 11 per cent in the traditional power structures and 12 per cent in their People's deputies (Kubas', 179).

47 The Independent Miners' Union did not really get off the ground for over a year after its foundation, remaining in the meantime little more than another name and another hat for members of the workers' committees. We will discuss the NPG in the next chapter, in connection with the reversal of emphasis between economic and political demands on the government in the wake of Yeltsin's counter-coup of August 1991.

48 At the same meeting the committee decided to send 1,000 roubles to the Confederation of Labour and 1,000 roubles to the NPG Executive Bureau as its subscription to the two bodies (*Nasha gazeta*, 25 January 1991).

49 18 January, quoted Sarah Ashwin, 'The 1991 Miners' Strike: New Departures in the Independent Workers' Movement, *RFE/RL Report on the USSR*, 16, August 1991, 2.

50 This is the reason for their reluctance to associate themselves fully with the Donbass strikers and their refusal to co-ordinate the date of their strike with that of Donbass (*Nasha gazeta*, 5 June 1991). This is also the reason why, in stark contrast to the 1989 strike where the workers' committees insisted that they had no political demands, the Regional Council now insisted that its demands were purely political and refused to put forward any economic demands (*Nasha gazeta*, 12 March 1991) – although the political demands included that for a General Tariff Agreement and the indexation of wages to prices, and wage demands were necessarily political since the government provided the money.

51 The Karaganda strike was called jointly by the workers' committee and the official trade union. Inta and Vorkuta had been on the verge of striking earlier, but held back until they could link up with other regions (*Nasha gazeta*, 1 March 1991). Donbass was divided between Western Donbass, in which the lead in the strike was initially taken by nationalist political demands, and Eastern Donbass, where the demands were primarily economic from the beginning.

52 The official union did not support the strike. In retrospect many of the official union's leaders regarded this as a decisive mistake, since it created the space within which the NPG was able to recruit miners who felt betrayed by the official union.

53 This never happened, according to the Regional Council leaders, because the organization was not good enough, and unrest in collectives was so high (*Nasha gazeta*, 5 June 1991). The purpose of the statement was to give the impression that the Council was in control of a situation in which the development of the strike was uncertain and the Council barely even knew which mines were on strike. The strike leaders later admitted that it was only after the first week that they were confident that the strike was not collapsing (*Nasha gazeta*, 5 June 1991).

54 Malykhin was a member of the workers' committee of Baidaevskaya mine in Novokuznetsk; he had been a member of the delegation to Vorkuta in December 1989 and leader of the Kuzbass delegation at the Second Miners' Congress, but held no other position in the Kuzbass Workers' Movement. The hunger strike was Malykhin's own initiative, and was joined by Novokuznetsk miners Boris Yerofeev, Vladimir Belov, Valerii Kuzin, Vladimir Lyubimkin, Viktor Yanin and Russian People's deputy Bella Denisenko (*Nasha gazeta*, 19 March 1991, 5 July 1991). It ended on 27 March, despite no demands having been met. The fact that this tactic was adopted is another indication of the lack of confidence of the Council in the strength of the strike movement, but it

was decisive in raising the profile of the strike in Moscow. The hunger strike, and Malykhin's speeches in Moscow, made him a celebrity, and aroused jealous comments in Kuzbass. Democratic Russia considered him as a candidate for Vice-President, until it was discovered that he was too young to stand. Malykhin became actively involved in the commercial activity of NPG. After Yeltsin's *putsch* in August 1991 Malykhin was appointed his representative in Kuzbass.

55 Although the Regional Council insisted that its demands were purely political, the primary motivation of the workers was a pent-up anger at their abysmal living conditions which, even with their higher wages had barely improved, and with the price increases would fall again. This motivation had a 'political' component, but this was primarily a sense of betrayal by all political structures rather than of positive support for reform, a belief that all managers and politicians were equally adept at robbing the workers. This explains the widespread feeling among the strikers, at least for the first month, that this time they had to strike until victory. (Petr Bizyukov, 'The Miners' Strikes in the Eyes of a Sociologist', unpublished paper, Kemerovo, 1991, reporting on interviews with strikers).

56 Other mines were working with the permission of the city workers' committee, or working but not delivering coal. These figures are an overestimate because certainly some of the mines listed as striking did not join the strike at all. The figures came not from the strikers but from the concerns and the mines themselves (one more indication of the weakness of links between the mines and the Regional Council), both of which had an interest in exaggerating the extent of the strike to pressure the government and ministry. For example, Nagornaya mine in Novokuznetsk was supposedly on strike, although it had no strike committee and nobody had told the workers they were on strike – the administration had decided to work but not deliver coal, although in fact they were delivering. When the workers found out about this, six weeks after the strike began, they were so angry that they struck! Baidaevskaia had voted to strike, but after three days the strike committee decided to return to work, supposedly without supplying coal, although it was in fact supplied. Novokuznetskaia had permission to provide coal for the city power plant, but in fact kept up supplies to all its customers. Bol'shevik continued to supply coal for a Japanese contract (*Nasha gazeta*, 19 April 1991, 5 July 1991). Severnaya in Kemerovo joined the strike towards the end of March. The miners were not sure what the demands were, but the general feeling was simply one of solidarity and a desire to throw out the bureaucrats. After voting through the pit showed 80 per cent in favour, the mine director joined the strike committee (Lyakin interview). After the strike, Soviet Prime Minister Pavlov announced that Kuzbass had produced 70 per cent of planned output during the strike, and that two months of coal stocks remained (*Nasha gazeta*, 11 May 1991). In the 1989 strike, 194 enterprises had stopped (Lopatin, 60–66), but unlike 1989, where non-mining enterprises were rushing to join the strike after the first day or two, in 1991 very few non-mining enterprises joined the strike at any stage, which created some anxiety about the prospects of isolation on the part of the strike leaders.

57 The term 'joint (*sovmestnoe*) enterprise zone' was used by Kislyuk. Although he wrote long articles about it in *Nasha gazeta*, (even at the height of the strike – 23 April 1991) it was never clear what it meant.

58 Raspadskaia, which was already a leasehold enterprise, was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Russian Coal Ministry from that of the association (now a concern) on 15 April. The issue of transfer to Russian jurisdiction was one which attracted much more enthusiasm in the mines than the political demands that supposedly motivated the strike, and was one that the Directorate could comfortably support.

59 This was the so-called '9 + 1 agreement' that played a key role in provoking the August coup. In *Nasha gazeta*, the story was a late addition to the front page, boxed and with a bold headline 'Yeltsin Fraternizing with Gorbachev?!' (*Nasha gazeta*, 26 April 1991) There were reports, denied by Golikov, that he had been involved in prior discussions with Yeltsin about the agreement.

- ⁶⁰ Yeltsin met with Golikov and Malykhin in Moscow before he flew to Kuzbass, but did not respond to the inter-regional strike committee's demand for a meeting.
- ⁶¹ Vorkuta also decided to stop the strike on 10 May, Irina Minaeva, a member of the city strike committee, being reported as commenting 'not one of the economic or political demands of the miners has been taken off the agenda, but it is morally difficult for the strikers to spend a third month without working' (*Nasha gazeta*, 11 May 1991). Yeltsin, however, was well satisfied and proclaimed that the strike 'was one of the decisive factors in the victory of the Third Congress, keeping reform in Russia on course' (*Nasha gazeta*, 11 July 1991).
- ⁶² The agreement was for the exchange of information and provision of advice and training by the United States, with a particular focus on safety issues. However there was clearly a belief in Kuzbass that the United States was going to flood the industry with capital. Kislyuk announced that an AFL-CIO delegation headed by Lane Kirkland was scheduled to visit the Soviet Union between 20 and 26 May. On 16 June a joint union-management delegation from the American coal industry arrived in Kuzbass to conclude a co-operation agreement based on the discussions in Washington in January. The delegation was represented as a trade union delegation, although it included only one officer of the US miners' union, two AFL-CIO officials, two officials of the State Department, two of the Department of Labor, the President of Peabody and president of a coal consultancy (*Nasha gazeta*, 25 June 1991). The visit was followed up with a return visit of fifteen Kuzbass NPG leaders to the US at the end of 1991 and a return visit of an AFL-CIO delegation at the end of March 1992. The Kuzbass regional and coal industry administration ignored the visit, and the NPG Donbass objected to these contacts, although the delegation also visited Donbass, where it signed a similar co-operation agreement to that signed in Kuzbass. Golikov was absent at the time, visiting Britain with Igor Brumel' from Vorkuta as a guest of the scab Electricians' Union, whose conference he attended following an invitation from its leader Eric Hammond who had attended the Second Miners' Congress with a delegation from the 'Union of Democratic Miners', whom Golikov also visited in Britain.
- ⁶³ This had been a contentious issue at the meeting of the strike committee, since, unlike the case in 1989, the strikers had not been paid during the strike (unless, of course, their mine had adopted the interesting form of the 'working strike'). The Vorkuta Strike Committee claimed not to have received a kopek of the millions of roubles collected by the miners' supporters (KASKOR 35, 1991). In fact Yeltsin had transferred 42 million roubles not to the city strike committee, but to the nascent NPG Vorkuta, which at the time had a total of seventeen members (confirmed by several informants in Vorkuta). This money was extracted from the government as the price of maintaining coal supplies to the Cherepovets steel complex, and to encourage the workers to persist in pressing their political demands. Since NPG Vorkuta did not at that stage even have a bank account, the money was channelled through the official trade union federation, FNPR, which at this time was ambiguously supporting Yeltsin, not for political reasons but as part of its struggle to take over the power and enormous wealth of the General Confederation of Trade Unions, the All-Union trade union body (according to one report FNPR topped this money up with an additional 9 million roubles of its own – Sumnitel'nyi, *Alternativy*, 3, 1993, 113). This money was the basis on which NPG Vorkuta built up the commercial activities through which to recruit and service members. NPG Vorkuta only held its first conference on 24–25 May 1991, at which a timberer from Ayachega mine, N.M. Shul'ga was elected president. By this time NPG claimed to have cells in 6 of the 13 Vorkuta mines (KASKOR 55, 1991).
- ⁶⁴ In a TV broadcast, Tuleev called the members of the workers' committees 'murderers, rapists and thieves', for which he was sued by the workers' committees. The case eventually reached court at the beginning of 1993. However, Tuleev's lawyer showed that most of those on a list of members of workers' committees supposedly offended by the charges were not in fact members at that time (an indication of the rapid turnover of

membership). In the end Tuleev agreed to make a personal apology on TV (KASKOR 7, 15 February 1993)

⁶⁵ The Union of Workers continued to exist, or at least the name was still used by some of its local groups, but no mention of it was made at either conference. Instead, the Conference of Workers' Committees proposed a draft workers' committee constitution for discussion by local committees. (*Nasha gazeta's* masthead proclaimed it the Union of Kuzbass Workers' paper from its inception in December 1989 until 18 September 1990, just before the conference at which the two wings of the movement were supposed to divide, after which it proclaimed itself the 'Paper of the Kuzbass Workers' Movement'. In 1992 it was privatized to its editorial collective and from March 1992 proclaimed itself 'the Newspaper of the Kuzbass Labour Movement', although in practice from 1991 it increasingly became the newspaper of the opposition to Tuleev, with less and less coverage of the workers' movement.)

⁶⁶ This fear was certainly justified both nationally and in Kuzbass. The miners attracted no significant support from other groups of workers during the 1991 strike, in marked contrast to 1989, and the intensive propaganda depicting the miners as self-interested money-grabbers had certainly had its effect in isolating them, not helped by the fact that, despite the Kuzbass miners' insistence that they had only political demands, they went back to work with a very large pay rise. The miners' leaders still saw the Party apparatus as its principal opponent, but in Kuzbass it was already a spent force, Tuleev having seized the initiative through his control of the oblast administration. Tuleev had used his position as President of the oblispolkom and of the oblsociety to build up his authority by pursuing a single-mindedly populist line in Kuzbass so successfully that in Kuzbass he out-pollled Yeltsin in the presidential election, and even bounced back from his indiscretions during the *putsch*.

⁶⁷ The Moscow Institute of the Problems of the Workers' Movement conducted a survey of the delegates to this conference, with a response from 83 of the 130 delegates, less than half the number who attended the previous conference. 82 per cent thought that the strike had achieved something, but almost a third that it had achieved no more than stop the deterioration of the situation, while 21 per cent thought that the strike did not enjoy mass support and showed the weakness of the workers' movement (*Nasha gazeta*, 16 July 1991)

⁶⁸ Judging by the telephone logs of the Regional Council there was no contact with the other mining regions during the days of the *putsch* (Lopatin, 507–10, 517).

⁶⁹ Feodorov had replaced the previous director Soroka, who had been removed after a conflict with his shop chiefs who claimed that he spent all his time on his private business. After the *putsch* Feodorov was removed.

⁷⁰ Tuleev had been on holiday in Stavropol, but flew immediately to Moscow. He claimed later that he had been unable to get access to Yeltsin, but had met with Yanaev for over half an hour, claiming later that this was 'so that I could look him in the eye'. He also made a compromising although ambiguous appearance on regional television.

⁷¹ The Regional Council's faith in the local 'democrats' did not last long. At its meeting on 9 December, the Regional Council reversed its July decision to participate in 'Democratic Kuzbass' and decided that it would not support any particular political party or movement, but would support Yeltsin personally (*Nasha gazeta*, 13 December 1991, KASKOR 91, 1991, inadvertently gives the date as 9 November).

⁷² At the meeting of the Regional Council on 24 September 1991, Kislyuk had appealed to the Council to continue to support his pet demand for a free economic zone, and it was decided to send a delegation to Moscow to 'beat out' the relevant documents (KASKOR 71, 1991).

⁷³ On 30 March 1992 the Regional Council decided to send a delegation to picket the Sixth Congress of People's Deputies to support the government and President (KASKOR 14, 3 April 1992. The meeting was attended by a group of AFL-CIO visitors, who provided NPG with a computer network). A delegation of 230 miners was sent on 17 April. However there were some problems, because most of them spent most of the

time shopping and drinking. Golikov sent a trainload of 410 miners to support Yeltsin in his December confrontation with the Congress (KASKOR 48, 27 November 1992). Although formally a decision of the Regional Council, it was in fact Golikov's initiative, financed by the Union of Kuzbass Businessmen, although it was reported that the money actually came from the Fund for Social Guarantees (*Kuzbass*, 17 April 1993). NPG was annoyed that it was not consulted, since the visit coincided with its own proposed strike against the government that Golikov's delegation was going to support. After the previous fiasco it was decided to have a careful selection of delegates by city workers' committees, which would be responsible for their behaviour. In fact there was no selection of delegates, anyone who wanted a free trip to Moscow could go along, and the visit generated as many scandals as the previous one.

⁷⁴ The Regional Council was effectively wound up at a joint meeting with NPG in Prokop'evsk in November 1994, when Golikov resigned, and was replaced by Shari-pov, head of Kuzbass NPG. Before his resignation, Golikov proposed a 'structural reorganization' of the Regional Council (Kuzbass Confederation of Labour), which effectively collapsed what, if anything, was left of the workers' committees into the NPG, with NPG primary groups supposed to serve as the basis for establishing independent trade unions in other branches of production. This move was partly in response to the separate attempts of Aman Tuleev and of Zhirinovskii's Liberal Democratic Party to establish networks of 'workers' committees' in Kuzbass, which had already made headway in North Kuzbass following a strike in Anzhero-Sudzhensk, and the attempt of FNPR to resuscitate the Union of Kuzbass Workers (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 11, 1994; Vadim Borisov, 'Socio-economic conflict in a miners' town', in Simon Clarke (ed.), *Conflict and Change in the Russian Industrial Enterprise*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 1995). Rosugleprof sponsored the formation of a new political movement, Miners of Russia, established in Kuzbass in March 1995, which was designed to unite the coal mining regions and trade unions in basic industrial sectors to press for a policy of regional and industrial regeneration.

4. The Independent Miners' Union in Kuzbass

A number of different forces underlay the creation of an independent miners' union, which gradually coalesced over the first year of existence of the independent workers' movement. On the one hand, those activists who had entered the official trade union through the elections in the autumn of 1989 soon found that they could achieve little through the existing structures, whose limitations were not simply a matter of personnel. It was these people who provided the core leadership of the new trade union. On the other hand, the political polarization between the democratic movement and the existing political and administrative apparatus made it increasingly clear to the workers' committees that they had to develop an independent organizational base in the workplace.

It was not only the independent workers' leaders who saw an advantage in developing an independent miners' union. There is no doubt that there was a strong interest on the part both of the leaders of the industry and of the oblast in dividing the workers' movement. The formation of an independent miners' union would draw activists out of the official union, which would avert the danger of the latter adopting a more independent line. At the same time the limited resources of the new union, and its sectional basis in underground miners to the exclusion of managerial and technical staff and most surface workers, meant that it was unlikely to present a serious challenge to the dominance of the independent union. The leaders of the workers' movement were well aware of this danger, which was one factor inhibiting their formation of an independent trade union.

The fact that the miners' leaders were able to establish an independent trade union at all was a considerable achievement. However, the compromises they had to make in forming the union from a position of weakness marked the future development of the union. The union lacked material resources, so that it was not able to finance even its own congresses, most of which were funded by the Coal Ministry and its successors and so had to be held in collaboration with the official

union, which considerably complicated the initial formation of the union. The limited resources at the disposal of the union made it extremely difficult to recruit members, who could see no advantage in abandoning the wide range of material benefits offered by the official trade union for the nebulous advantage of belonging to the new union.

The leadership was acutely aware of the constraints imposed by its poverty, and the immediate priority of the new union was therefore to establish itself on a sound financial basis. This led it to focus most of its initial energies into developing commercial activity, at both national and local level. Nationally, the scandals associated with the union's first commercial engagements almost destroyed the union in its first year. Locally, the commercial activity of the NPG developed directly out of the already extensive commercial activity of the city and mine workers' committees, which was linked primarily with the proportion of coal sales which were under the control of the individual mines and municipal authorities (20 per cent of coal sales were under the control of the mines, 10 per cent under the control of municipal authorities). At this level commercial activity and membership recruitment were mutually reinforcing, since the more members who could be recruited the greater would be the proportion of barter and distribution under the control of the new union.¹

The other main area in which the new union had to compete with the established union was in the provision of social and welfare facilities and the administration of social insurance. Under the Soviet system, social insurance funds were simply transferred to the account of the trade union, which administered the insurance system. These funds were in practice absorbed into the general funds of the trade union, and could be supplemented either by membership dues or by enterprise funds, or diverted to other sources. The dividing line between the provision of social and welfare facilities, supposedly financed out of enterprise and trade union funds, and social insurance, supposedly financed out of insurance contributions, was accordingly blurred.

Soviet trade union legislation had never envisaged the existence of trade union pluralism, and so accorded the same rights to any properly constituted trade union. This meant that the social insurance contributions of members of the new trade union should be transferred to the new union's own account, and then administered by the union on behalf of its members. If the new union was to be able to match the

benefits provided by the official union it had to compel management to effect this transfer, one crucial prior condition for which was to achieve recognition from management, expressed primarily in management's organization of the check-off and transfer of membership dues on behalf of the new union. The position with social and welfare services provided by the trade union out of its membership dues or enterprise funds was rather more complex, and in this area the new union did not have a legal right to demand the transfer of funds to its own account, not least because it was never clear who actually paid for what. This enabled the official unions to threaten those leaving the union that they would lose a range of union-provided benefits. To counter this the new union demanded the publication and auditing of the accounts of the official trade union, and the transfer of its share of enterprise social and welfare funds to its own account, and also got involved in its own commercial activity to develop such things as holiday and leisure facilities for its members.

The ability of the new union to compete with the official union depended primarily on its ability to develop its own commercial activity, on the one hand, and to exploit its legal rights to claim equal access to resources, on the other. The politicization of the legal system and the ambiguity of the law meant that the enforcement of legal rights depended on the union's being able to retain political support at the appropriate level. Moreover, the union's reliance on the law to establish and enforce its rights meant that legal changes, particularly in the area of social insurance, were of paramount importance to the trade union, and provided the primary focus of its trade union activity at national level, in which it relied heavily on its personal contacts within the presidential apparatus.

The commercial, legal and political priorities of the union leadership left it with little time or energy to devote to building up an organizational base, or to the normal trade union activity of defending the interests of its members. Moreover, at enterprise level, the new union relied heavily on the goodwill of management for access to resources and for admission to the process of collective bargaining, particularly as the restricted membership base of the union meant that it could never represent more than a minority of employees within the enterprise. At enterprise level this meant that all the pressures were for the new union to adopt the priorities, practices and procedures of the old union if it was to expand its membership. And the overlying

political priorities of the union meant that increasing membership, to add to the commercial strength and political weight of the union, was much more important than developing effective trade union activity within the enterprise. Finally, the relative weakness of the union within the enterprise meant that its focus in collective bargaining was the negotiation of an annual tariff agreement at national level. However, getting the government to sign such an agreement was one thing, compelling the government to provide the industry with the means to implement the agreement was quite another question.² It was at this point that the trade union and political priorities of the NPG came into increasingly sharp conflict with one another, its trade union priorities pushing it into an oppositional role, while its political priorities dictated that it maintain its support for Yeltsin's government.³

The problem the NPG constantly faced was that it was not Yeltsin who was running the coal-mining industry, but the old bureaucratic structures in Moscow and Kuzbass, within the limits imposed on the Russian government by the 'stabilization policies' dictated by the Group of Seven and the IMF. The result was that however much Yeltsin might reassure the miners' leaders of his support, in practice the government pursued policies which were dominated by an increasingly explicit concern to break the power of the miners and 'restructure' the mining industry. NPG consistently justified its continued support for Yeltsin on the grounds of a distinction between Yeltsin and his government, so that in fighting the government, at both national and regional levels, it could represent itself as fighting for the realization of Yeltsin's strategy against the subversive efforts of the bureaucrats who still dominated the government apparatus. However, the consistent failure to achieve any tangible results through such channels progressively undermined the credibility of NPG, which was eventually outflanked by the reformed official trade union.

THE FORMATION OF THE INDEPENDENT MINERS' UNION

The possibility of transforming the workers' committees into an independent trade union had been raised by Avaliani immediately after the 1989 strike (*Moscow News*, 32, 6 August 1989) but the movement's initial efforts had gone into the attempt to transform the official

union by a renewal of personnel, which had indeed resulted in a very substantial turnover of the trade union leadership at mine level. However, the new leaders discovered almost as soon as they were installed that the barriers to effective trade union activity were more deeply rooted, lying in both the structural position of the union within the mine, and the centralized and hierarchical structure of the union outside the mine.⁴

One demand of the July 1989 strikes had been for the summoning of a congress to reconstitute the official trade union.⁵ The Miners' Congress, at which the official trade union was reconstituted as the Independent Trade Union of Workers in the Coal-mining Industry (NPRUP) took place from 28 March to 1 April 1990 in Moscow, dominated by bureaucrats and officials (including 43 directors of mines and associations and over 300 full-time trade union officials, 49 surface and 123 underground workers among the 600 delegates), and under the firm control of the existing leadership, with the new chair, Lunev, and his deputies all being former Party bureaucrats.

Bulat Mukazhanov, a member of the Karaganda Workers' Committee, read an appeal to the miners of the USSR and proposed that delegates should leave the hall to discuss the programme and constitution of an independent miners' union and to establish an organization committee to prepare for a congress. Only eleven delegates and seventy guests left the congress, but they decided to organize their own congress in Donetsk on 11 June, a decision endorsed by a city conference of Vorkuta miners on 18–19 April (*Nasha gazeta*, 1 May 1990).⁶

Over 100 Kuzbass delegates were sent to the First Miners' Congress in Donetsk from 11–15 June, which was attended by over 500 delegates from all the mining regions of the Soviet Union, and at which Travkin was again a star speaker.⁷ However, the congress turned out to be chaotic, and achieved nothing more than passing a few resolutions, the decision about the formation of an independent trade union generating heated discussion. A large minority wanted to work in a reformed official union, although two-thirds wanted independent organization in each enterprise, with the centre performing only a coordinating role. The congress passed a resolution in favour of establishing an independent miners' union, but referred a series of questions back for discussion. The most important issues were whether the independent union should be established *ab initio*, or by transfer of labour collectives from the existing official union; which groups of

workers should be admitted to the new union, and in particular whether engineering-technical workers (ITR) should be admitted; whether the union should be based on general membership, or whether it should be formed as an association of unions established on an occupational basis. The decisions were postponed until the Second Congress, originally planned to take place in Moscow in August in place of the congress organized by the ministry and the official union, whose authority it refused to recognize. Representation at the Second Congress would be based on one delegate from each enterprise, drawn from workers up to the level of section chief.⁸

The newspaper of the Regional Council/Union of Kuzbass Workers, *Nasha gazeta*, did not even report on the congress either before or after, beyond publishing its political resolutions on the situation in the country and on relations with the CPSU (*Nasha gazeta*, 3 July 1990).⁹ Nor, it seems, did the Regional Council have any serious discussion of the question of forming an independent trade union. However, following the Fifth Conference of Workers' Committees at the end of September, at which the Union of Kuzbass Workers was constituted as the political wing of the workers' movement, the question of the formation of a parallel trade union wing moved to the top of the agenda, and it seems that it was again Vyachelsav Golikov who took the initiative in drawing up a draft constitution in anticipation of the Second Miners' Congress.

The Second Miners' Congress was eventually held in Donetsk from 22–26 October 1990, attended by 862 delegates from over 600 pits, with well over 100 from Kuzbass. The Second Congress proved as chaotic as the First, although this time much of the chaos was engineered by the apparatchiks who wanted to prevent the formation of an independent union.¹⁰ The brave words about the ministry and the official union at the First Congress had to be swallowed, and the Second Congress was held in conjunction with the official union and paid for by the ministry, primarily because the workers' committees did not have the funds to pay for it. As a result Shchadov was the president of the organizing committee, and invited dozens of ministry and association employees, as well as insisting on giving the opening address which, with the speech of Lunev, the NPRUP boss, filled the whole of the first day. In his address Shchadov tried to split the workers by stressing the impracticality of self-financing and enterprise independence for Donbass because of the reliance of the unprofitable

Donbass mines on state subsidies, and warned of the dangers of unemployment in the transition to market conditions, distributing a leaflet to the Donbass delegation spelling out the impact in detail. The Kuzbass and Vorkuta miners argued that higher prices would remove the need for subsidies, while competition would promote efficiency, and that social security rather than job subsidies was the answer for worked-out mines.

The three members of the Kuzbass Regional Council, Golikov, Sharipov and Aslanidi, were registered only as guests. The Kuzbass delegation therefore raised the question of converting them into delegates, which led to a marathon debate over credentials which was only conditionally resolved at the end of the second day when the agenda was finally established, with the question of the founding of an independent trade union being moved up from the bottom of the agenda.

On the second evening an informal meeting was held in the hotel, attended by those interested in establishing an independent trade union. The following day the Kuzbass delegation called for a break, after which they proposed that the congress should be reconstituted as the founding congress of the Independent Miners' Union (NPG). The majority supported the proposal, but filibustering continued until Malykhin, leader of the Kuzbass delegation, led a walk-out, followed by 130 of the 900 delegates, who decided to gather that evening at the hotel. At the meeting that evening Golikov and Malykhin outlined the proposal for an independent union, and Golikov presented his draft constitution. The proposal to establish an independent trade union with membership restricted to workers (mine foremen, who do not have supervisory duties, could be admitted by a decision of the primary group) with a federal structure in which primary groups retained their autonomy was adopted unanimously, and it was decided that Golikov would present the proposal to the congress the next morning.

The following morning Golikov mounted the platform, announced that the NPG had been formed the previous evening, and read out the Constitution. He then proposed that the Constitution should be put to the vote immediately, and it was approved by 762 votes to 34.¹¹ The congress then elected a co-ordinating committee comprising twenty persons.¹² Aleksandr Sergeev,¹³ Aleksandr Yerokhin, an electrical fitter from the open-cast Sibirginskii mine in Myski,¹⁴ and Vyacheslav Sharipov, President of the trade union committee of the trust Kise-

levskshachtstroi, were elected from Kuzbass. The co-ordinating committee then elected an executive bureau. The first task of the new union was to negotiate a Model General Agreement, adopted by the congress, with the government (*Nasha gazeta*, 30 October 1990, 6 November 1990).¹⁵

The Model General Agreement

It was one thing to declare the creation of a new trade union in a moment of euphoria at a meeting so chaotic that the AFL-CIO observers had left early in despair. It was quite another to create such a union, which had no members, no money and no premises. The executive bureau members of the NPG stayed in a comfortable hotel in Moscow for the first few months, paid for by the workers' committees, where they spent most of their time drawing up documents, despite the fact that the trade union did not yet have any members, and looking for sources of income.

The main issue on the agenda was the negotiation of their Model General Agreement, which they presented to the government on 20 November and under the terms of the law should have had a reply within a month. On 7 December they issued a statement asking labour collectives to refuse to sign collective agreements until the Model General Agreement was signed by the government, and to pass resolutions demanding its signing at shift meetings (KASKOR 33, 1991). Having failed to get their reply from the government they declared a pre-strike situation from 25 December.

Just to confuse matters, the Kuzbass Regional Council had also declared a pre-strike situation on its set of political demands, sending a small delegation to meet Yeltsin at the end of December. However, both strike threats were pre-empted by the disastrous attempt to call a strike over Lithuania in the middle of January. Nevertheless, despite its weakness on the ground, the NPG leaders continued to offer brave words in Moscow. On 13 February a joint meeting of representatives of the Confederation of Labour, NPG and workers' committees was held in Moscow. The meeting demanded that the Union and Republican governments negotiate a General Agreement with the Executive Bureau of the NPG, failing which the meeting threatened 'extreme measures' and resolved to carry out preparatory work in labour collectives for an All-Union strike on 12 March.¹⁶ However, this strike threat

was swamped by the strike called by Donbass and Vorkuta for 1 March and Kuzbass for 4 March.¹⁷

The Struggle for Social Insurance

The other priority of the NPG was to establish a material base on which to attract members from the official unions, and this meant challenging the official unions' monopoly of the administration of social insurance and the distribution of various benefits, including passes for holidays and visits to rest homes. The central issue in relation to social insurance was whether this should be transferred to the state, whether it should continue to be administered through the unions, with the new unions claiming their share, or whether the independent unions should establish or associate with private insurance companies. The dominant position in NPG was that the insurance fund should be transferred to the state, but should be administered by the trade unions on behalf of their members, a position shared with most of the other new trade unions. The Supreme Soviet in December 1991 eventually decided to transfer the social insurance fund, set at 5.4 per cent of the wage fund, to federal ownership, but it did not introduce any new management organs so in practice everything remained the same.

The distinctive feature of the NPG programme was its focus on the provision of personalized insurance accounts, which would effectively be a savings account rather than an insurance system since workers would be entitled to reclaim any unspent benefits. On this basis NPG demanded that workers leaving the official trade unions should be able to withdraw the residue of their contributions to the state social insurance system (Interview of Konstantin Sumnitel'nyi with Viktor Rogochim, KASKOR 35, 4 January 1991). This was the basis on which the leaders of NPG negotiated co-operation with other independent trade unions, joining the pilots, air traffic controllers and the Trade Union of Leaseholders, Co-operators and Entrepreneurs (Birles),¹⁸ to discuss the formation of a 'Confederation of Free Trade Unions' on 14 December 1990 (KASKOR 33, 35, 1991).¹⁹

The issue of social insurance dragged on and on. There were fundamental bureaucratic problems standing in the way of reform, most notably that there was no alternative agency to administer such a complex system, while the official trade unions had the staff and the

experience to do so. The first priority was to discover just what happened to the money which poured into the coffers of the official unions so as to bring it under federal control. Investigations during 1992 found that large sums of money were diverted to other uses, although the losses were probably small in comparison to the sums siphoned off within the state apparatus. Yeltsin issued a decree on 7 August 1992 which established a tripartite commission to administer the system. The FNPR complained about the violation of trade union rights, while Sergeev, on behalf of NPG, defended the decree, although it did not correspond to NPG policy (KASKOR 34, 21 August 1992). The issue dragged on, with further laws and decrees, but in practice still nothing happened. The real battle over social insurance took place at the mine level, with NPG seeking to persuade management to transfer insurance funds to its account, using the promise of personal insurance accounts as its main lever of recruitment of younger workers.

THE NPG IN KUZBASS

The NPG was very slow to get off the ground in Kuzbass, remaining in most places no more than the workers' committee under yet another name, sharing premises and frequently with the same people performing both political and trade union (and commercial) roles. The first NPG group in Kuzbass was established in Kiselevskaya mine on 6 December 1990 with twelve members. An NPG group was established at Severnaya mine in Kemerovo the following week at a meeting attended by at most twenty people, mostly young, and was registered as a city organization to give it a wider base, absorbing the remnants of the mine workers' committee.²⁰ An NPG group was also established in Krasnyi Kuzbass mine in Kiselevsk on 24 January. But these were the only reports of the formation of NPG groups in the first three months of existence of the union in Kuzbass. In January the Regional Council decided to try to accelerate the process by organizing training for activists in the process of establishing primary groups (*Nasha gazeta*, 11 January 1991). However, this initiative was overtaken by the January 1991 strike, called to protest the government's action in Lithuania.

At its meeting at the end of January, the Regional Council heard of the difficulties faced by those trying to establish NPG branches in Mezhdurechensk and Kiselevsk, and it was decided to send one representative from each NPG organization and city workers' committee to a meeting of NPG Presidents to be held in Moscow the following month.²¹ On 6 February a meeting of the labour collective of the Tyrganskaya mine in Prokop'evsk decided to leave the official union and to transfer collectively to NPG (*Nasha gazeta*, 8 February 1991), with the main appeal being the promise of personalized insurance accounts.

Before the NPG could act on the decisions to develop its primary organization the initiatives of the workers' committees had once more overtaken it, with the Donbass-initiated strike of 1 March overwhelming the NPG threat of a strike on 12 March. The strike absorbed all the organizational energies of the activists from March to May, although the opposition of the official union to the strike was the basis on which NPG was able to establish its credibility and to make some headway in recruiting members. It was not until June, almost eight months after the founding of the NPG in Donetsk, that the founding congress of the Kuzbass NPG was held at last in Kiselevsk. Sharipov was elected president of Kuzbass NPG, with Lyakin and Boris Lebedev from Belovo elected as his deputies.

Aleksandr Sergeev, deputy president of the executive bureau, announced to the conference that NPG had 32,000 members (against the 1.8 million members of the official union), and defined the main tasks of NPG as organizing primary groups, campaigning for a new payment system (with wages consisting of a guaranteed basic wage, a premium for difficult working conditions, and a bonus depending on the worker's qualifications, the level of production and the profits of the enterprise),²² and replacing the existing system of social security paid through the official trade unions with a system based on the formation of insurance companies with personal accounts for each worker.²³

Sharipov noted that although Kuzbass had been the main initiators of NPG, very little had been done to establish it on the ground after the brief campaign in January, because the Kuzbass leaders were highly politicized, with no activity at all in Berezovskii or Novokuznetsk where there were strong workers' committees, or in Osinniki or Myski.²⁴ Sharipov argued against the transfer of whole mines to NPG membership, as was happening in some regions (and had already

happened in Prokop'evsk), which violated the principle that only workers should be NPG members. Kislyuk then gave his regular speech on the importance of creating a free enterprise zone and the importance of trade unions in defending workers in the transition to the market economy (*Nasha gazeta*, 18 June 1991).

In spite of all the good intentions, campaigning for the 12 June presidential election took priority over the hard work of forming primary groups of NPG. The pages of *Nasha gazeta* were filled with the election campaign and the struggles of the democrats, with articles on free economic zones and privatization, but nothing on trade union organization until the 5 July issue, which published an NPG organizational leaflet as a two-page spread. Once the election was over, there were the scandals in the NPG leadership in Moscow to be sorted out, and then the August *putsch* and Yeltsin's counter-*putsch*, the limited response on the ground once more showing the need for organizational work.

At the meeting of the Regional Council on 3 September it was resolved 'to draw the attention of the NPG leadership in Kuzbass to the absence of initiatives to widen the influence of NPG in the region', but the Council itself decided to focus on mobilizing and training worker activists to participate in privatization and the transition to new forms of property, while supporting the creation of a network of joint and small enterprises to provide workers' rest facilities in Leninsk-Kuznetsk (KASKOR 68, 1991).²⁵ The NPG organization had only really got off the ground in Belovo and Kiselevsk, where it was reported to the Regional Council meeting on 6 September that NPG now had 1,200 members, with 360 in Kiselevskaya mine alone. Moreover, most of the membership was scattered, with many afraid to declare themselves (and so, presumably, retaining their membership in the official union), and few mines having any NPG organization.

The Kuzbass teachers' strike, which began in early September, threw down the first challenge to the trade union principles of the NPG leadership. Politically their priority was to support Kislyuk in his confrontation with the chief of the regional soviet, Tuleev, and this took priority over any principles of trade union solidarity with the teachers and health workers, although NPG recognized the justice of their case.

TRADE UNIONISM AND COMMERCE

Meanwhile, in Moscow the NPG continued to focus its attention on political activity, exploiting its new political connections in Moscow to revive the demand for the signing of its General Agreement and to press for laws on indexation and on a minimum wage. However, over the summer the union was in danger of being torn apart by a financial scandal involving its President Shushpanov and his fellow representatives of Western Donbass. At its Second Council of Representatives on 9 June the NPG adopted a resolution proposing collegiality in the activity of the executive bureau and elected a revision commission, which began its work on 25 June with an investigation of the financial activity of the executive bureau, which had for a long time been a source of conflict. On 3 July the commission published a provisional report, raising questions about unauthorized signatories of financial documents, payment for accommodation in Moscow, and the whereabouts of funds collected to support the miners, and proposed the urgent convening of the First Congress of NPG. The report was endorsed by a majority of the Executive, but on 8 July this action was condemned by a meeting of the NPG representatives of Western Donbass, which resolved that until the congress executive power should be put exclusively in the hands of Shushpanov and on 13 July demanded the convening of the congress.

There were various accusations, ranging from improper accounting to outright theft and fraud. However, the basis of the principal allegations was a co-operation agreement between the 'Inter-regional Coordinating Council of Strike Committees and NPG' (represented by Malykhin), the NPG Executive Bureau (represented by Shushpanov) and the 'Union of Co-operators and other non-state enterprises of the USSR' (represented by its president, USSR People's Deputy V.A. Tikhonov, and his deputy, I.Kh. Kivelidi, General Director of the Association 'Vneshneekonomkooperatsia'), with the participation of the Party of Free Labour (represented by I.V. Korovikov).²⁶ Under this agreement, Tikhonov and Kivelidi undertook to provide 10 million roubles as an initial contribution to the fund for the support of the families of striking miners and undertook to help enterprises in the striking regions with the creation of 'new economic structures, international economic activity and the development of the agro-industrial complex'.

This agreement was public, but there was a supplementary secret protocol dated 16 April 1991, signed only by Shushpanov and Kivelidi, which referred to the transfer of 10 million roubles to provide a financial base for joint activities and to cover the expenses of NPG in pursuit of its established aims, and which seemed to imply that this money should be repaid through 'mutually profitable' activities. Shushpanov promised to organize the import and export of goods and coal through Kivelidi's association, to transfer the rights to export any additional goods and raw materials at the disposal of NPG to the association, and, 'independent of the trade union or its regional organizations', to create favourable conditions for the investment of the association's funds in joint factories and enterprises, which would seem to imply, for example, the prevention of wage demands or strikes in such enterprises.²⁷

On the one hand, Shushpanov's activities could be seen as nothing less than fraudulent. On the other hand, the conflict reflected two different conceptions of the priorities of the NPG. Shushpanov's strategy was to build up the financial resources of the NPG through commercial activity, so that it would have a foundation, including a strike fund, on which to build its trade union activity. His opponents, on the other hand, saw the priority as building the strength of the union by building up its membership base.

The issue came to the NPG plenum in Moscow, held from 31 July to 3 August. The main features of the plenum, according to *Nasha gazeta's* special correspondent, were 'financial scandal in the hall, hand to hand fighting in the foyer, and a complete change of leadership in the presidium', all caused by the commercial activity of the union activists. The Kuzbass delegation demanded the cancellation of the co-operation agreement which Donbass miners' leader Aleksandr Mril' characterized as nothing more than a device by which 'co-operators try to launder money under the cover of the trade union', but Western Donbass objected and the agreement remained in force, although the plenum proposed that because of discord in the trade union the Union of Co-operators might like itself to end the agreement. Viktor Utkin explained that the secret protocol had only been a device to get the conservative members of the Presidium of the Union of Co-operators to agree to the first agreement.²⁸ Since the money specified in the second agreement had not been transferred, the NPG owed nothing and there was no problem.

Then the Revision Commission revealed a discrepancy of 191,700.25 roubles in the accounts, and established that Pavel Shushpanov had quite properly accepted hard currency donations (for example 2,000 dollars from American colleagues) but had not put a cent into the general funds. The scandal was further compounded by a mystery concerning the transfer of funds to a mine in Pavlograd,

Shushpanov's native city, in which 33 miners were killed in an accident on the eve of the plenum. The executive bureau had given 33,000 roubles to the families of the victims, but Shushpanov had given an additional 300,000 roubles, the source of which was never discovered.

Anatolii Grigor'ev, ex-member of the executive, replied that the accusations were absurd libels and that the Revision Commission had illegally taken documents from his hotel room. It was proposed to send the documents to the public prosecutor, but Nikolai Belobragin, also from Western Donbass, argued that they should not go to the Communist prosecutor but should settle things amongst themselves. The result was that the whole executive resigned. Utkin was elected president of NPG and the new executive comprised Viktor Babaed from Soligorsk, Aleksandr Yerokhin, Yevgenii Lyakin and Aleksandr Sergeev from Kuzbass, Eduard Kinstler from Chelyabinsk, Igor' Lukyanov from Vorkuta, Vasilii Myasnikov from Pavlograd, Igor' Nevedomskii from Novovolynsk, Anatolii Snegurets from Rostov and Vladimir Shtul'man from Donetsk (*Nasha gazeta*, 16 August 1991, KASKOR 64, 1991).

At a press conference following the plenum, Utkin, Tikhonov and Kivilidi explained away the scandal. Utkin argued that there was not yet any evidence of criminal activity, although the investigation would continue, but that the main reasons for the conflict were a lack of executive discipline and bad personal relations within the Executive Bureau, behind which lay the very real difference of principle between those who favoured commercial activity and those who believed that the NPG should concentrate only on trade union affairs. Utkin also explained that the two agreements referred to two different 10 million roubles, the first a gift and the second an investment in collaborative commercial activity. Tikhonov claimed that 5 million of the first sum had been paid (although the Revision Commission only had an account of 3 million having been received), and explained that misunderstandings had arisen because parts of the secret protocol had not been fully worked out. In conclusion, all three spoke about the great future of their co-operation for strengthening business activity in the coal-mining regions, including the creation of joint banks, ecologically clean production and so on (KASKOR 66, 1991). The central issue had not been that of whether or not NPG should engage in commercial activity, but only whether such activity should be accountable to NPG's elected bodies.²⁹

TRADE UNIONS AND POLITICS IN THE NEW ORDER

Immediately after this scandal had been resolved the NPG leadership had to address itself to the consequences of Yeltsin's counter-*putsch*.³⁰ The initial euphoria at the apparent victory soon began to evaporate as the Russian government immediately took a series of measures which appeared to strengthen the grip of the official FNPR over the social insurance funds. In November, the Tripartite Commission was established, with NPG securing only one representative, against nine for the official FNPR unions and three for Sotsprof.³¹ NPG soon found that the new Russian government was no more amenable than had been the Soviet government that it replaced. Although NPG soon found itself opposing the government, it consistently absolved Yeltsin of all responsibility, maintaining its resolute support for Yeltsin and the programme of radical reform.

This issue was one which dominated the founding congress of NPG Russia, held at the end of November in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk in the Far East. At the congress, NPG denounced the official trade unions for their 'moral collaboration' with the attempts of 'government organs at various levels' to load the burdens of transition to a market economy on to the backs of the workers by sequestering social insurance and non-wage funds amounting to 30 per cent of the wage bill, while at the same time state bureaucrats were trying to foist a law on the Supreme Soviet of Russia which would deprive trade unions of all rights to administer social insurance. The NPG reaffirmed its commitment to personal social insurance accounts and a guaranteed minimum level of social security. In this light the congress denounced all attempts to limit the rights of trade unions, at the same time as denouncing the Russian government's confirmation of the monopoly control of social insurance by the official FNPR as a continuation of totalitarian state policies. The congress presumed that this measure had been taken without the knowledge of Yeltsin, since it contradicted the co-operation with the workers' movement to which he was committed both in theory and in practice.³² The congress also reaffirmed the NPG policy of admitting only workers to membership, deciding to allow primary groups to admit foremen, but to exclude foremen from any elected bodies.³³ Aleksandr Sergeev, from Mezhdurechensk, was elected president of NPG Russia.³⁴

On their return to Moscow the NPG leaders' disappointment in the government was compounded when they found that they had been left out of negotiations between the government and the official union NPRUP,³⁵ Gaidar having signed a tariff agreement for the following year with Vitalii Bud'ko, the leader of NPRUP, on 2 December while the NPG leaders were on their way back from their congress.³⁶ The NPG was already distancing itself from Yeltsin's government (although not from Yeltsin): 'PRUP, under the leadership of V. Bud'ko, helps and will help the government of RSFSR to carry out reform at the expense of the people. Thus the official trade unions once again show their true face – servants of any government power'. Sergeev's statement concluded that NPG would not recognize any agreement which they had not signed, and would strive fully to compensate the miners for their hardships in the reconstruction of the economy, and would conduct any action necessary to achieve this (*Nasha gazeta*, 13 December 1991).

Although NPG was sharply critical of the government, it maintained its position of continued loyal support for Yeltsin and the radical reform programme, a position which was reaffirmed at the First Congress of the Inter-Republican NPG, held at Raiki outside Moscow from 17 to 21 December.³⁷ On the first day Khasbulatov, President of the Supreme Soviet of Russia, appealed to the miners to support the Russian government's radical programme of economic reform, a theme taken up by Viktor Utkin, who argued, on the eve of the price explosion, that the priority now was not increasing pay, but radical economic reform, which was the only way in which the miners could secure the fruits of their own labour, strengthen the rouble and protect their interests in the transition to a market economy.³⁸ The congress adopted a comprehensive programme supporting the transition to a market economy, but insisting that such a transition should not be at the expense of the workers. It had extensive discussion of the negotiation of collective agreements at enterprise level, and issued a demand to the governments of the Republics of the former Soviet Union that they should sign a tariff agreement by 25 February, failing which NPG would take decisive action, up to strikes. Utkin was unanimously confirmed in the post of president, with Viktor Babaed from Soligorsk as his deputy (*KASKOR* 83, 1991).³⁹

On 12 December a meeting of the Kuzbass NPG representatives endorsed the resolutions of the founding congress of NPG Russia, and

on its behalf demanded a meeting with Yeltsin by 15 January (amended at its 15 January meeting to 25 January, a date also selected by Vorkuta and Inta miners at their meeting on 17 January – KASKOR 3, 17 January 1992; 4, 24 January 1992) and demanded that government authorities at all levels should be required strictly to observe the existing laws on social insurance, to reverse all acts and decisions restricting the rights of trade unions (this refers to the exclusion of NPG from the tariff agreement), failing which a pre-strike situation was declared for 15 December. The statement concluded with a warning of further strikes if the backlog in payment of wages was not rectified, which was later endorsed by the Regional Council (KASKOR 82; Lopatin, 554–5).⁴⁰

Meanwhile the miners themselves were showing signs of impatience. Two Prokop'evsk mines stopped work at the beginning of 1992 as a result of the non-payment of wages in the face of rising prices and the city workers' committee had appealed to the government with sharp criticism of the reform programme. At its meeting on 14 January the Regional Council of Workers' Committees passed a strong resolution as the basis of its impending meeting with Yeltsin, noting the failure to implement effective reform at the local level and predicting the resignation of the government, having reduced the population to poverty. The council demanded that since the price of coal is fixed the government should revise the accounting price for coal as the basis for subsidies for the extraction of coal, the development of the industry and social expenditure. It demanded: the government should relieve the industry of the pressure of the excess wages tax which arose as a result of the tariff agreement which defined miners' wages as 1.9 times those of other branches of production; a law should be introduced to bring the rural surroundings of cities under the cities' jurisdiction to accelerate agrarian reform (i.e. the distribution of plots to city dwellers); the restriction of the property rights of former ministries and concerns; the definition of the legal status of labour collectives and enterprise directors; the rapid privatization of profitable mines; and the organization of a propaganda campaign in favour of reform in the mass media. The meeting decided to send a three-man delegation to meet Yeltsin the following week (KASKOR 3, 17 January 1992; Lopatin, 551–2). The following day Sharipov sent a statement to Yeltsin on behalf of the regional NPG, noting the repeated violation of the rights of independent trade unions by the government and pressing for

the government to grant equal rights to all trade unions (Lopatin, 552–3).⁴¹

The Kuzbass delegation, comprising Sergei Velikanov, president of the Prokop'evsk city committee, Aslanidi, acting president of the Regional Council,⁴² and Sharipov, president of Kuzbass NPG, accompanied by Kislyuk, met Gaidar on 20 January and Yeltsin on 22 January. In the latter meeting the delegation insisted that the fundamental issue was not pay, but being provided with the conditions in which the miners could earn higher incomes, while Velikanov was outspokenly critical of Yeltsin's recent decrees which, he argued, violated the principles of reform and restored administrative-command methods. On the key issue Yeltsin told them that it was impossible to increase the price of coal, agreeing to a proposal worked out by the miners' leaders with Gaidar that instead of subsidizing the coal price, miners' wages should be temporarily subsidized out of the state budget until coal prices were liberalized.⁴³ Yeltsin stressed that all agreements signed by NPRUP should also be signed by NPG, and instructed the government to begin negotiations with NPG on the tariff agreement. Yeltsin also insisted, in response to the complaints about the slow pace of reform on the ground, that the chief of administration had all the power needed to resolve local political problems, which caused Kislyuk some discomfort (*Nasha gazeta*, 25 January 1992).

At the same time NPG was admitted to the pay negotiations between NPRUP and the government. The unions demanded a fivefold increase in pay, the government offered only to double pay, later offering to triple pay provided the unions agreed to no further increases before April, an offer which was accepted. The government also agreed to the tax concessions demanded by the unions (Lopatin, 553–4). At its meeting on 22 January, the Regional Council carried out a telephone survey of city NPG organizations to find out about the situation in each city, a good indication of how out of touch the Council had become since it should have been attended by at least two representatives from each city. The response was that the miners were not in the mood for striking, except in Belovo where the situation was said to be explosive, but there was still anxiety that some miners might follow a strike call of the official unions (KASKOR 4, 24 January 1992), which were beginning to set up their own strike committees.⁴⁴ In the name of the Russian NPG, Sergeev called off the threatened strike (KASKOR 4, 24 January 1992). However the Kuzbass NPG did

not seem entirely confident in its representative in Moscow, and on 29 January decided to send a delegation of three representatives to monitor the implementation of the agreements reached with the government (KASKOR 5, 31 January 1992).

In offering the miners a large wage increase, having stood out against the demands of the workers in the budget sector, the government was passing the miners a poisoned chalice, as Golikov recognized in a letter to Gaidar written at the end of February.⁴⁵ The World Bank delegation in December 1991 had proposed an 'incomes policy' to the Russian government as a part of its stabilization package, but was firmly told that this was not on the political agenda. However, the fact remained that stabilization depended on containing the workers' movement, and the key to containing the workers' movement was to isolate the miners, a strategy which Margaret Thatcher had deployed to brilliant effect in the early years of her administration in Britain. It may be that the government's policy in the first half of 1992, of paying off militant groups of workers with very large pay rises while holding down the incomes of the rest of the population, was merely an expression of its political weakness, as indeed it had been since 1989. But whatever intention may or may not have lain behind it, it achieved the effect of further dividing and weakening the workers' movement, so that from the second half of 1992 the government could assume the offensive against the more militant workers, such as the miners' and the air traffic controllers. The miners' leaders realized the danger, and tried to broaden the base of the movement by inviting representatives of the teachers and health workers to join their committees at city level, but the damage had already been done.

TENSIONS IN KUZBASS

As in the previous autumn, the wave of strikes in the budget sector was closely linked to the political polarization of the region, which was once more becoming acute, with Tuleev repeatedly playing the populist card to isolate Kislyuk. At the beginning of February, Tuleev tendered his resignation as president of the regional soviet in protest at Yeltsin's reform programme, a gesture which the deputies rejected,

and later in the month the oblast soviet passed a vote of no confidence in Kislyuk.

In the face of the political polarization in the oblast, NPG and the Regional Council maintained their support for Kislyuk and for the programme of radical reform, despite the fact that even amongst the miners the popularity of Yeltsin and his representative was in rapid decline. The Regional Council of Workers' Committees held an expanded meeting, chaired by Golikov and attended by around 200 people including representatives of labour collectives and mine directors, in Novokuznetsk on 27 February to consider the situation. The meeting recognized the unpopularity of reforms, which it still nevertheless considered necessary, and recognized that 'in the difficult times of the transition period confidence in the workers' committees has markedly decreased, so that doubt arises as to whether the workers' committees in their present state are in a condition to stand up to the reactionary forces'. The meeting resolved to call on workers not to reject the government and its reforms, called for the signing of a new tariff agreement (now with a deadline of 10 March), and called for workers to restore the city workers' committees to serve as a force in support of reform (Lopatin, 563–6, KASKOR 9, 28 February 1992).

On 3 March the Regional Council signed a mutual support agreement with the oblast administration, headed by Kislyuk, and Yeltsin's representative, Malykhin, in which the two sides resolved to work together for reform, to settle all disagreements by negotiation, and declared strikes in basic branches of production at the present time to be intolerable, despite the fact that it had endorsed the NPG threat of a strike in support of its tariff agreement only a week before (KASKOR 10, 6 March 1992).

At the root of the new crisis in Kuzbass was the fact that the tripling of the miners' pay, following the large increase the previous summer, had led to an enormous disproportion between the wages of miners and those of the rest of the population, who were having to pay prices inflated by the money in the hands of the one-third of the working population employed in the mining industry.⁴⁶ This had lain at the root of the strikes of teachers and medical workers in the autumn, and lay at the root of a new wave of strikes, led by the official trade unions, which arose in the spring.

On 5 March the official FNPR trade unions called a one-hour warning strike on a wide-ranging series of economic demands, including

pay increases for non-miners to restore their differentials. The following day the Inter-branch Co-ordinating Council of Kuzbass Strike Committees, headed by Gennadii Mikhailets, deputy president of the Regional Council of FNPR, president of the regional committee of NPRUP and former leader of the Kemerovo City Workers' Committee, declared its lack of confidence in Mikhail Kislyuk on the grounds that he had been constantly assuring the government that the situation in Kuzbass was normal and did not require any special attention, and called for a regional general strike on 11 March with a demand for a sixfold increase in pay, following a series of warning strikes, a threat ridiculed by Golikov (*KASKOR* 10, 6 March 1992).⁴⁷

The Regional Council of Workers' Committees gambled on the mood of the miners being against a strike and on 6 March denounced the FNPR strike call as a Communist nomenklatura attempt to exploit the difficulties of the reform period, appealing to workers not to support the strike.⁴⁸ Experience showed, the statement concluded, that all differences with this government could be resolved by negotiation, the only condition being a commitment to the process of economic reform (Lopatin, 565–6).

In the event the general strike was a flop, although a delegation from the Tripartite Commission headed by Burbulis, who had already mediated successfully in Vorkuta, arrived in Kuzbass on 11 March and decided that while the strike was supported only by the leadership of FNPR, the demands which it articulated were supported both by the authorities and by the mass of the population, arising out of the disproportion in pay between the miners and the rest of the population.⁴⁹ The strike was suspended for negotiations and Kislyuk flew to Moscow to negotiate a deal with Yeltsin, who promised to triple the pay of all non-miners in Kuzbass in line with the miners' increase, and to provide one and a half billion roubles in cash by the end of the month.⁵⁰ Gaidar signed an order meeting some of the strikers' core demands on 24 March, but did not provide the money to meet the pay deal conceded by Yeltsin, so that the teachers' and medical workers' strikes were resumed and spread on a national scale, lasting until the government conceded a pay rise from 1 May.⁵¹

By the middle of May the shortage of cash was getting worse and increasing numbers of enterprises were unable to pay their wage bills, some paying the workers in kind or with various kinds of vouchers. Mezhdurechensk was reported on the verge of strike action, and

several Anzhero-Sudzhensk mines were already out. The government promised that Kuzbass would receive 3.8 billion roubles in cash by 1 June but the cash position continued to deteriorate, and on 4 June several Prokop'evsk mines came out on strike (KASKOR 21–2, 29 May 1992; 23, 5 June 1992).

The Second Conference of the Kuzbass NPG was held on 16 June, attended by representatives of 47 primary groups, claiming a total membership of 18,000, and reaffirmed the distancing of NPG from actions initiated by NPRUP and the FNPR unions. Later in the month the Prokop'evsk Federation of Trade Unions (the official union body) called for a general strike of city workers over non-payment and on 19 June held a meeting in town, although reportedly only about 500 people turned up (KASKOR 25, 19 June 1992). The Kuzbass trade union federation followed this up with a call for a strike on 1 July over non-payment of wages. The Regional Council of Workers' Committees held one of its telephone polls, which found little willingness to strike except in Prokop'evsk. The Council therefore resolved not to support the strike and to explain to workers that it was not sensible. The Council at the same meeting decided that it should continue to support the government, but should not be under its thumb.

The mood in the coalfields in the middle of July was that the NPG and workers' committees had lost their way. At regional and city level NPG was still virtually indistinguishable from the workers' committees, while at mine level the NPG was indistinguishable from the official union. Where NPG had established primary groups in mines it was performing the same trade union functions as the official unions,⁵² competing for members on the basis of its claim to represent the sectional interests of underground workers, although in practice its appeal was based on its ability to offer better distribution and, for younger miners, a rebate on insurance payments through personalized accounts. Its membership had certainly increased, but it was unstable as workers tended to move between the two unions depending on what was currently on offer – the arrival of a consignment of TV sets was a more effective draw than a rhetorical statement for or against the government or a proposed amendment to the Collective Agreement. Where NPG did not have active primary groups it tried to make its presence felt by pursuing cases of corruption on the part of senior management, taking some such cases to court.

Ordinary miners had already lost faith in Yeltsin, and could not see that Kislyuk had achieved anything, while they felt that the workers' committees were only interested in their commercial activity. On the other hand, they could see no point in striking because they felt that their previous strikes had achieved nothing, wage increases isolating the miners from other workers while being immediately eroded by inflation.⁵³ The members of the workers' committee in Mezhdurechensk were very depressed. The mine committees were very weak, and mainly pre-occupied with conflicts with the official trade union committee over distribution, for which the two shared responsibility through the mines' distribution commissions. The focus of activity was the city committee, which was also very heavily engaged in distribution, particularly because they were now required to handle the distribution of humanitarian aid.⁵⁴ They were disillusioned with the Regional Council, whose meetings they rarely attended. Their demoralization was increased when Kislyuk visited Mezhdurechensk at the end of June but did not even bother to meet the city committee, although he went out of his way to praise the achievements of the Communist-dominated city administration with which the workers' committee at the time was in sharp conflict.⁵⁵

Valerii Pavlikov, a member of the city workers' committee from Lenin mine summed up the mood:

goddamit we lose a lot of money every month, I lose at least 20,000 roubles a year, and Pavlov [Lev Pavlov, chair of the city committee] even more because the miners at Mezhdurechensk last month received 14,000 and Pavlov only 8,000. We have a lot of trouble at home, and our wives are insulted too.⁵⁶ Yesterday we went to the oblast workers' committee. We got up at 5 o'clock and got back at 9 o'clock in the evening and wasted a lot of time. That is why perhaps in the near future we will say fuck it and leave.

On 28 July Kislyuk spoke very frankly at a meeting of the Regional Council, accusing the workers' committees of having made a mess of the workers' movement. Although they could still mobilize workers in emergencies they were not doing their everyday work. He insisted that as a former member he had a right to call on their support. He suggested that they needed to restore their influence under the slogan 'we are peace-loving people, but our armoured train is standing in the siding'. The Regional Council decided to try to bring together all organizations which had once been part of the Confederation of

Labour and in October to try to organize its Second Congress (KASKOR 31, 31 July 1992).⁵⁷ However, Kislyuk had by now lost all confidence in the ability of the workers' movement to give him effective support, and soon after signed a co-operation agreement with Aman Tuleev, leaving the workers' movement high and dry.

THE MARGINALIZATION OF THE KUZBASS WORKERS' MOVEMENT

In the second half of 1992 the influence of the Regional Council rapidly waned, while at national level the NPG, in common with the other independent trade unions, and in particular the air traffic controllers, came under increasing pressure. NPG activists were also finding that the going was getting tougher on the ground. On 16 August three NPG members out of ten development workers who struck in protest at not being paid for two months at Oktyabr'skaya mine in Leninsk-Kuznetsk were sacked without the permission of union, NPG taking the case to court (KASKOR 36, 4 September 1992). The workers were reinstated, and the director and chief engineer left the mine (Sharipov interview). On 7 September the president of the NPG of Komsomolets mine in Leninsk-Kuznetsk, Aleksandr L'yakov, was brutally beaten up by three people, one of whom was caught and claimed that they were hired by the mine's commercial director (KASKOR 40, 2 October 1992).⁵⁸ In December in the Komsomolets mine in Leninsk-Kuznetsk, management refused to transfer social insurance money to personal NPG accounts. The members sent a dossier detailing financial abuses on the part of the director to the prosecutor, and the money was paid (KASKOR 52, 25 December 1992). On 28 September an NPG meeting in Moscow considered the state of the trade unions and it was recognized that they were coming under a lot of pressure from organs of power, something which had long been a problem in Vorkuta.⁵⁹ Sergeev issued a statement on 1 October itemising a series of attacks on NPG members, 'all of which, in our opinion, are linked to one aim. That the organs of state power are brazenly interfering in our affairs, speculating about our problems and are beginning openly to violate the Constitution of Russia and, consequently, our human rights'.

NPG was also running into resistance in its attempts to expand its membership. At the end of November the Dimitrova trade union

conference voted to leave NPRUP and join NPG. However, this was the second attempt to do so. The first time 700 letters of resignation had been gathered, but were stolen from the trade union office (KASKOR 48, 27 November 1992). When 140 miners from Alarda mine left NPRUP for NPG the NPRUP mine president, Bulykh, issued a statement 'What members of the NPG who leave the trade union will lose', indicating that they would lose sick pay, child and maternity benefits and new year presents for their children. NPG went to court to clarify the uses to which trade union funds were put. One hundred and twenty miners at Rapsadskaya joined NPG, but had difficulty registering as the city tax inspectorate required them to register as a social organization (KASKOR 49, 4 December 1992). Mine directors were increasingly confident, proposing to cut holiday entitlements and changing shift patterns and bonus systems without consulting the unions, and were beginning to talk about restoring the draconian disciplinary code that had applied until 1989.

All Yeltsin's promises to realize the miners' demands of 1989 were also coming to nothing. Yeltsin's privatization law, which eventually appeared in July, excluded the mines from the privatization process, although those mines which had already applied to privatize through transfer to leasehold were allowed to proceed. Yeltsin's decree on external economic activity withdrew the rights which Kuzbass thought it had gained as a 'free enterprise zone' by bringing exports of strategic materials, which covered virtually everything exported by Kuzbass, under government control. On 3 September the Regional Council met and passed a resolution regretting the reversal of economic reform, with enterprises losing their rights rather than gaining independence, and the rights of the free economic zone being curtailed. Golikov went to Moscow to negotiate to no effect. 'It was just like 1989, the same bureaucrats who were there three years ago under Ryzhkov's Union government sat in the same offices, and came out with the same words' (KASKOR 36, 4 September 1992).⁶⁰

The NPG and the workers' committees were paralysed in the face of increasing pressure from the directorate and from Moscow. As in 1989 they found that they could make no headway at mine level because everything was still decided in Moscow, with the mines far more dependent on subsidies than they had ever been, primarily as a result of the fall in revenue with the precipitate fall in production.⁶¹ But at the same time every attempt to confront the government was

thwarted. On the one hand, every time tension rose locally the official trade unions took the opportunity to call protest meetings or strikes, which immediately forced the NPG into immobility as a result of its resolute opposition to the official trade unions, which they saw as a uniformly pro-Communist force. On the other hand, every time tension rose nationally it exacerbated the confrontation between Yeltsin and the increasingly strong forces opposed to him in the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of People's Deputies, forcing the NPG and workers' committees back into line in his defence.

October was a month of rising tension as the FNPR campaign of action to press the government 'to change the course of reform' mounted, with nation-wide demonstrations due for 24 October. NPG and workers' committees held joint meetings in various Kuzbass cities to consider the proposed action, which concluded that little support was expected (KASKOR 43, 23 October 1992).⁶² In the event the demonstration attracted about 4,000 people in Kemerovo, more than the workers' committees had drawn since 1989, although the majority were pensioners and the old Party faithful.

While NPG was increasingly inactive in Kuzbass, events at national level were driving it into the arms of the government. In November an NPG delegation attended an international conference on the role of trade unions in the period of economic reform, organized by the AFL-CIO in Warsaw. According to NPG's international officer, Dmitrii Levchik, the outcome of this conference was a decision of NPG to abandon its position of 'constructive opposition' in favour of a position of positive support for the government, summoning delegates from the regions to join a demonstration in its support at the opening of the Seventh Congress of People's Deputies, a change of position that Levchik attributed directly to the pressure of the AFL-CIO. This change of direction also signified a withdrawal from all political activity, withdrawal of plans to submit candidates for election, and an end to active support for the air traffic controllers (*B*, 27 November 1992). However, Levchik's statement was unauthorized by the NPG leadership, and he was subsequently dismissed. Nevertheless, whatever may have been the influence of the AFL-CIO on the NPG's position, Yeltsin's confrontation with the Seventh Congress of People's Deputies brought NPG smartly into line.

NPG Russia held its Second Congress in Vorkuta between 8 and 11 December 1992 just as the confrontation between Yeltsin and the

Congress of People's Deputies came to a head. The congress was attended by 99 delegates, of 131 who had been mandated from 71 primary groups and 6 city and 6 regional organizations.⁶³ The NPG Congress began chaotically, with delegates complaining that they had received no agenda and that no resolutions had been circulated in advance,⁶⁴ and was dominated by mutual recriminations and complaints between primary groups and regional and national bodies.

Sergeev's opening speech was a self-congratulatory account of the work of the centre over the previous year, with the signing of the tariff agreement as the principal achievement. On the issue of social insurance Sergeev confessed that the biggest problem in resolving the question lay not with the government or the Supreme Soviet but in the failure of NPG to agree amongst themselves on how to dispose of the funds. Sergeev also admitted that little progress had been made on the question of time-wages, which would take a long time to resolve. Turning to the future, Sergeev noted that a new issue had come on to the agenda, that of the restructuring of the coal-mining industry, where Russia could learn from the Polish experience, and NPG could benefit from the recently established 'Coal Project', which Sergeev argued had to become the 'pivot of the restructuring of the coal-mining industry', although the Coal Project's Moscow chief, Marie-Louise Vitelli, laid out a rather less ambitious programme in her address to the congress on the third day.⁶⁵

Sergeev's speech also sought to anticipate many of the complaints that were to emerge over the next three days from primary and regional organizations which claimed that they had not been properly consulted or kept informed of decisions taken in Moscow. Sergeev confessed that this raised the question 'in whose name do we in Moscow speak? Do we really represent the trade union as a whole, or do we represent only ourselves?' The same question arose of the regional and city organizations, with a handful of mines and city organizations (including Belovo in Kuzbass) wanting to by-pass their regional bodies to affiliate directly to NPG Russia, a move that Sergeev firmly rejected as spelling the disintegration of the NPG organization.

Sergeev defended the centre, arguing that it was the responsibility of regional organizations to send their delegates to meetings. The Inta regional organization was the most vociferous in its complaints, the Moskovskaya mine having sent a letter to Moscow demanding that in

the negotiation for the tariff agreement for 1993, NPG Russia should co-ordinate its activity with NPRUP 'to deny the government the possibility of using the tactic of dividing the two unions'. Sergeev was dismissive of the complaint, arguing that the division between the two unions is one of principle, and claiming that Inta had not sent a representative to a single meeting of the executive committee or to a meeting of the Council of Representatives. He went on to address the problem of the limited resources available to the centre, insisting that as a matter of principle all union officers should be funded out of union dues, as was laid down in the Constitution, but noting that the estimated expenditure for 1993 was ten million roubles, while the income from dues to the centre in 1992 had been only half a million. This meant that the Moscow office did not have the money even to employ legal advisers, or to pay for meetings in Moscow to prepare for the congress, including those of the Constitutional Commission and the Revision Commission, or even to meet its wage bill.⁶⁶ The priority for 1993 was therefore to expand membership to provide the means to pay for the apparatus. In the meantime the resources of NPG Russia were fully stretched preparing the draft tariff agreement and lobbying the government and Supreme Soviet over the issue of social insurance. Everything else, including the realization of the tariff agreement at local level, had to be the initiative of primary groups.

Sergeev's report was followed by that of the Revision Commission, which was supposed to monitor the financial affairs of NPG and the activity of its officers, which revealed just how chaotic were the affairs of NPG. The commission had been unable to hold a single meeting, because there was no money to pay for its activity, until it held a hurried meeting on the first day of the congress. It had been unable to find any proper accounts or documentation, or any job descriptions of those employed as NPG officers, nor was there any reference in the NPG Constitution to the question of who would pay for the activity of the commission. The commission proposed the sacking of the secretary-treasurer, Smirnov, who should be replaced by a professional rather than being an elected officer. In reply Smirnov announced the financial figures for 1992: income from dues was 564,306 roubles, of which Vorkuta had contributed 240,000, Kuzbass 158,000, Mezhdurechensk 8,000, while another 343,232 roubles had been received from other sources. Salaries, which had only been paid up to October, had cost 540,326 roubles, 134,053 roubles had been

spent on travel and subsistence, office expenditure 75,006 roubles, communications 10,788 roubles, assistance 8,000 roubles, leaving 14,397 roubles in the bank. The Kuzbass delegate immediately insisted that he had sent not 158,000 but 370,000 roubles plus an automobile to Moscow, which, like other discrepancies, was explained by delays in the transmission of money through the banking system.

Most of the rest of the congress was devoted to a long series of speeches from the floor, finishing off on the third day with the passing of programmatic resolutions which nobody expected to be realized. The tone of most contributions to the congress was strongly supportive of the government, with several speakers welcoming the departure from their movement of the hotheads of 1989. One Kuzbass delegate's speech could have been given at a conference of the official union two years before: now was the time to work not to strike, it was more important to increase investment than wages, it was necessary to work hard and raise productivity. However, there was also a strong undercurrent of criticism of the activity (or inactivity) of the centre, with some arguing that the tariff agreement was not much use if it was not satisfied by the government, that NPG passed endless resolutions demanding new laws, but did not use the legal opportunities that were available to it. Several delegates lamented the lack of information reaching the primary groups from the centre, the phrase 'information famine' appearing time and again, and stressed that like the centre they too were starved of resources. One speaker contrasted the situation at the beginning, when meetings of the Council of Representatives had been well attended and everybody was kept informed, with the current situation when very few attend, indicating that the difference was not one of means but of commitment. There were complaints that there was a duplication of activity at all levels of the organization with no clear definition of the tasks of different representative bodies and individual employees of the union, that there was no financial discipline or control of the organization, that the Constitution was simply ignored, and that there was no clear allocation of responsibility, so that resolutions were passed but ignored because nobody was responsible for their implementation.

The Congress had long discussions of the problems of social insurance, pensions and health and safety, and passed resolutions in support of radical economic reform and stressing the priority of restructuring the coal-mining industry, in favour of the state retaining control of

social insurance while the legal system remained so chaotic, and proposed various structural reforms in the NPG organization to improve communications and accountability, including the establishment of centralized funds for strike pay, training and information, none of which seem to have been realized. Delegates complained that they had had no advance notice of the resolutions, and so had been unable to discuss them in their primary groups, making it impossible to have a meaningful discussion of the issues. The question of joining the Miners' International Federation (MIF) was raised, but Sergeev objected on the grounds that the MIF was willing to accept NPRUP as a member.

The strongest impression of the 1992 Congress of NPG was that the NPG primary groups felt abandoned by the centre, which went its own way without reference to the membership. Although the Kuzbass regional NPG had much greater influence in Moscow than any other regional organization, most Kuzbass primary groups felt equally little allegiance to their regional NPG. Belovo already wanted to break away to affiliate separately to NPG Russia, Prokop'evsk went its own way, with little reference to the regional organization, which was also largely ignored by Mezhdurechensk. This distance between primary groups and regional organization was reinforced by the increasing divergence in the concerns of the two levels. While the regional organization was still preoccupied with political questions and oriented to Moscow, the primary groups had little interest in politics and were more concerned with delays in the payment of wages, the distribution of barter goods, and the establishment of personalized social security accounts.

The Kuzbass Regional Council met in Kemerovo on 11 January and had a heated and at times bitter discussion of its future. Golikov was blunt: 'we have become pretty toothless, we have lost our identity. To some extent this is because we had become rather complacent. Power lay, as we thought, with the President. In the oblast one of our own people was nominated as chief of the administration. This had a considerable influence on our work, on our identity. We must work out a clear programme of activity in the nearest future, with defined trade union work and a defined organizational structure.... We have lost much that we had gained.... The rights of the directors are not less but greater than they were before.... In the transition period, of course, it is necessary to support the President and government, but at the same

time we must not lose our identity and remain in opposition to some degree to all structures of state power' (KASKOR 3, 15 January 1993).

The problem the workers' movement faced was that it was becoming increasingly irrelevant whether or not it supported the government, at regional or at national level, because the movement itself was becoming increasingly irrelevant. NPG membership in Kuzbass may have marginally increased, and at the end of the year it claimed to have 69 primary groups with around 20,000 members,⁶⁷ but it had an effective presence in only a handful of mines, where it worked alongside the official union in close collaboration with management. The workers' committees had largely disintegrated as an independent force, with meetings irregularly held and poorly attended, except where they had been replaced by the local NPG organization.⁶⁸ Kislyuk had long since abandoned any idea of relying on the power of the workers' movement and had settled his accounts with Tuleev in a merger of the new and the old apparatuses. Yeltsin, in whom the workers' movement had put such faith and in whose support they had held their followers in check, had given them nothing in return, the Regional Council's repeated attempts to dissociate Yeltsin from the actions of the government wearing rather thin. This dilemma came to a head in the first few months of 1993.

If the workers' movement was to restore its credibility it had to take some steps to defend the workers' interests in the deteriorating economic situation, with miners' pay lagging far behind inflation, the government not paying the promised subsidies to the mines which, with the cash shortage and build-up of debt, was leading to growing delays in the payment of wages. Moreover, the issue of the pension and social insurance funds had still not been resolved, the Ministry of Labour having agreed temporary provisions concerning the NPG insurance fund, but this had not been signed by the Ministry of Justice or the Ministry of Finance. On 30 December 1992, Yeltsin had issued his long-awaited decree for the privatization of the coal industry, which shocked the miners by excluding the possibility, which had been available to all other enterprises, of transferring the majority shareholding to the labour collective, the controlling interest being left in the hands of the ministerial apparatus in Moscow, apparently reversing the gains which the miners believed they had made in 1989.⁶⁹ If the NPG did not act now, it would never act.

THE NPG STRIKE OF MARCH 1993

On 12 January a joint meeting in Vorkuta of the City Workers' Committee, NPRUP and NPG, STK, the city administration, and the administration of mines and the concern was held, attended by 108 people in total. This meeting considered the problem of pay and the failure to implement the law on its indexation, which the committee had repeatedly raised with the government without getting any reply; the imposition of fines on enterprises for the late transfer of money to the pension fund, which was a result of the failure of the Ministry of Finance to transfer subsidies to enterprises in the first place; and the systematic late payment of wages in violation of the tariff agreement and mine collective agreements. The meeting was also informed by the president of the Council of Directors of the contents of Yeltsin's decree of 30 December on mine privatization, of which it seems the workers had not yet seen a copy.⁷⁰

The Vorkuta meeting decided to establish a working group, financed by the Council of Directors, and resolved to hold the government responsible for the payment for coal delivered according to compulsory orders; to secure advance payment of subsidies; to impose a penalty of 1.5 per cent per day's delay in the payment of subsidy from the Ministry of Finance; to compensate enterprises for penalties imposed as a result of the delay in payments to the pension fund; to provide full compensation for costs incurred by workers leaving the northern regions at the end of their contracts (to the extent of two five-ton containers per family); to amend the law on tax assessment to allow for inflation; to send appeals to the Supreme Soviet demanding that the management of social insurance remain in the hands of the trade unions and demanding the speedy adoption of a Law on the North. Finally the meeting resolved that if the government did not sign a tariff agreement with the coal unions by 1 February the latter would declare a pre-strike situation from that date.⁷¹

The minutes of this meeting were faxed to the NPG office in Kemerovo on 19 January.⁷² Sharipov spoke to Vorkuta representatives, who had already gone to Moscow, a few days later. The Vorkuta demands then became the centrepiece of the meeting of the Council of Representatives of NPG in Prokop'evsk on 26 January, attended by about 150 delegates.

Sharipov began the meeting by reporting Vorkuta's announcement of a pre-strike situation noting, apparently with some surprise, that Vorkuta and Kuzbass had the same concerns. He also noted that Vorkuta was in advance of Kuzbass with both trade unions, enterprise and concern directors and the local administration working closely together. Sharipov read the minutes of the Vorkuta meeting in full and then posed the question of whether Kuzbass should help Vorkuta, and if so how, or whether each should go their separate ways.

The central issue for the miners was the delay in the payment of wages and the absence of full indexation for rapidly increasing prices. The central issue for the mine and concern directors was that of the late payment and non-payment of money due to the industry in the form of subsidies and payment for coal deliveries, which made it impossible for them to maintain wages and social insurance payments. It was these issues that had brought together the various different forces around a common platform in Vorkuta, and which enabled NPG in Vorkuta to consolidate its position as representative of the underground miners while simultaneously working increasingly closely with the official union NPRUP and the mine directorate. In Kuzbass, however, the NPG was still preoccupied with its own institutional interests and with its intransigent refusal to co-operate with the official union.

The central issue for NPG Kuzbass was still that of social insurance, with many mines unable to pay their contributions because of the shortage of money, and with the fear that the Supreme Soviet would take insurance funds away from the unions. There was a general feeling that they should support Vorkuta, but there was a great deal of caution, with serious doubts as to whether the workers would heed a strike call and whether Moscow would take any notice, but also anxieties that the situation could become explosive in the near future, with spontaneous strikes already breaking out. In the end it was decided to declare a pre-strike situation for 1 February in solidarity with Vorkuta, and to prepare for a one-day 'strike', stopping supplies on state orders for a day, although maintaining production so as not to damage the mines further, but on a different set of demands from those put forward by Vorkuta. The meeting expressed disquiet at the privatisation plans for the industry, and in particular the denial of any choice in the method of privatisation, the unrealistic time scale for privatisation, the absurdity of privatising pits at the end of their lives, the

absence of any programme to support mining communities in the case of closure, the absence of any programme for the 're-orientation and re-profiling of closed coal-mining enterprises', and the absence of any programme to provide work for those who would find themselves unemployed as a result of privatisation. It was also decided to hold a referendum to gauge the miners' views of NPG's demands (*Nasha gazeta*, 2 February 1993).

The meeting issued a statement demanding that the Ministries of Justice and Finance sign the temporary provisions on social insurance by 10 February, proposing to send a delegation to Moscow to meet the President and Prime Minister and to work on the draft law on social security, demanding that the Energy Ministry observe the procedure and timetable for signing a tariff agreement, and demanding that by 5 February each NPG city organization should have a separate social insurance fund, to which all primary organizations would transfer their insurance accounts (the full list of demands was published in *Nasha gazeta* three weeks later, 18 February 1993).⁷³

On 1 February Sergeev sent a telegram to Yeltsin, Prime Minister Chernomyrdin and Fuel Minister Shafranik detailing the complaints of the Kuzbass and Vorkuta miners and demanding a personal meeting with the government. To the complaints about non-payment and social insurance were now added problems arising from Yeltsin's privatization decree, the statement noting the failure to resolve the issues of restructuring and privatization of the mines; the absence of any government programme to reprofile and reorient unprofitable mines and secure miners' employment; the absence in the President's decree N1702 of 30 December 1992 of a choice of variants of privatization; and the failure to resolve the problem of price formation in the coal industry (KASKOR 6, 5 February 1993). The demands were repeated in a letter from Sergeev to all NPG organizations, asking them to hold shift meetings and report back by 15 February.

On 4 February a widened meeting of the Kuzbass Regional Council noted the difficult situation in the Republic following Yeltsin's privatization decree, warning that an explosive situation had arisen as a result of 1) delays in the payment of subsidies and so of wages, 2) the absence of any management organs for the coal industry and so no correction of the accounting price of coal, which meant that no wage increases could be paid in the face of rapid inflation, and 3) the absence of any indexation of unpaid wages.

The meeting put forward a new programme of demands for the restructuring and comprehensive state support of the industry, which was in stark contrast to the demands for independence and self-financing for the mines and the destruction of higher management bodies that had provided the focus of the movement in its opposition to the Soviet government. The Regional Council now demanded: the rapid formation of management organs for Russian coal enterprises in accordance with Yeltsin's decree N1702, with the transfer to them of the powers of oblast property committees; a law on social guarantees for miners in the event of closures; the establishment of an accounting price for coal and provision of mines with the means necessary to produce coal, and the reconstruction and development of the social sphere; the indexation of wages; and special attention to be paid to the development of Prokop'evsk and Kiselevsk. These demands were passed to Kislyuk, who had established a working group preparing a draft presidential decree on Kuzbass (KASKOR 6, 5 February 1993).⁷⁴

On 9 February NPG in Moscow gathered together the demands from the various coal-mining regions for presentation to the government, emphasizing the need for a clear programme of industrial restructuring, which should take priority over privatization (KASKOR 7, 15 February 1993). However the NPG representatives were refused meetings with Yeltsin, Chernomyrdin and Shumeiko, having to make do with a meeting with the new Minister of Fuel and Power, Yurii Shafranik, who came from the gas industry, knew nothing of coal, and was unable to answer any of their questions (*Nasha gazeta*, 18 February 1993).

At their meeting in Prokop'evsk on 26 January the NPG representatives had decided to hold a referendum on the proposed strike, although the decision was strongly opposed by several representatives who argued that the decision should be based on decisions of labour collective meetings.⁷⁵ The referendum took place in the week from 15 February, with its results being reported to the Council of NPG Representatives in Kiselevsk on 23 February. Just over 20,000 ballots were returned, 90 per cent of which were in favour of a strike. The referendum covered 34 enterprises, including 27 deep mines, two open-cast and five auxiliary enterprises, in six cities. However, there were no returns from Osinniki, Anzhero-Sudzhensk or Berezovskii, in all of which cities NPG was weak. Prokop'evsk had not completed the

referendum, but had held a meeting jointly with NPRUP and leaders of the industry which had backed the strike call.⁷⁶

Although the ballot papers were distributed through NPG city committees, all miners were invited to complete them and they were not asked to identify their union membership, so it is difficult to judge the significance of the vote. However, the organizers of the referendum estimated that 80 per cent of the 20,000 or so members of NPG Kuzbass voted, with the remaining 4,000 votes being those of NPRUP members. The vote in favour of a strike varied between 60 per cent and 98 per cent, the differences supposedly being closely related to the economic position of the mine, with the less prosperous mines being the most strongly in favour of a strike.⁷⁷

In the light of the referendum results and the failure of the government to give any response to its previous demands, the meeting of NPG Representatives in Kiselevsk on 23 February called a strike for 1 March, initially only stopping deliveries of coal but warning that the strike would be strengthened if the demands were not considered within ten days. Novokuznetsk local NPG added demands to free the price of coking coal, increase pay of underground workers and mine rescue teams, assign coal production quotas, give the locality the rights to license coal exports and the development of coalfields, and to allow labour collectives to choose the form of privatization (KASKOR 9, 29 February 1993; *Nasha gazeta*, 27 February 1993).⁷⁸

NPG regional representatives gathered in Moscow for a meeting with government representatives, headed by First Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Shumeiko, on 25 February. However, Shumeiko was late for the meeting, leaving Yevtushenko, Deputy Fuel Minister, Kudyukin, Deputy Minister of Labour, Molchanov, Minister of Finance Designate, Malyshev, chair of the Coal Committee and Deputy Prime Minister Boris Fedorov to make conciliatory speeches. The miners grew increasingly restive, since only Shumeiko had the power to make any decisions, and when it was finally announced that Shumeiko could not come until ten the next morning, decided to stay in the hall overnight, holding an emergency meeting of the executive, which confirmed the decision to strike on 1 March by eight votes to one (*Nasha gazeta*, 27 February 1993).

The delegates finally met Shumeiko the following day. Shumeiko explained that he had been unable to see them the previous day because of the developing crisis with the Congress. Shumeiko took a

tough line with the NPG delegation, insisting that he could negotiate with every group of workers separately, deploring Sergeev's refusal to participate in the Tripartite Commission, and refusing to consider a separate tariff agreement on the grounds that the government had already signed an agreement with NPRUP, which represented 95 per cent of the employees of the industry. He insisted that NPG either had to unite with NPRUP, or reduce its demands to a reasonable minimum. He went on to explain to the delegation that the government could not meet their demands since, with the escalating budget deficit, it had no money. The NPG delegation tried to explain to Shumeiko that their demands were not simply a matter of money, Golikov insisting that if the government had listened to them in 1992, and paid increases only to underground miners instead of negotiating a general pay rise with NPRUP, then it would have saved a great deal of money. He went on to stress that the miners were a special case, because of their consistent support for the President and his government, but deplored the fact that the government had not been willing to talk to the miners, or even keep them informed of its own thinking. Nevertheless, an agreement was signed in which the government promised to sign a tariff agreement with NPG by 5 March, to reach a temporary agreement on the administration of social insurance funds by 4 March, to agree a series of measures concerning, amongst other things, the development of Kiselevsk and Prokop'evsk, and to enter negotiations over NPG's other demands (*Nasha gazeta*, 2 March 1993, 6 March 1993).

The strike call brought into the open the division between the NPG and the Regional Council, which had been developing for some time as an expression of the growing conflict between the trade union and political priorities of the movement. Although the Regional Council was more or less moribund, it brought together representatives of workers' organisations on a broader basis than the mines, and even included representatives of NPRUP mines.⁷⁹ The Regional Council of Workers' Committees met in Kemerovo on 27 February and noted that the original decision of the regional NPG meeting had called for preparatory work for the strike in mines in which NPG was not organized, but this would involve NPRUP members in an illegal strike since they had not put forward the demands and allowed the appropriate time to elapse. The Regional Council therefore decided to take over co-ordination of the strike and proposed a one-day warning strike on 1

March, with the strike to be renewed on 10 March if the demands were not met.

This move followed the decision of the Volkov mine in Kemerovo, which had no NPG members, to join the strike, and the endorsement of the strike by a meeting of Prokop'evsk labour collectives, which established a co-ordinating committee made up of representatives of NPG, NPRUP and workers' committees. However, the leaders of NPG and the Regional Council insisted that their demands were not against the government or the President, but in support of the implementation of the declared policies of the government and decrees of the President, on which basis even Kislyuk declared himself in support of the strike.

In fact, only 41 enterprises took part in the one day strike, and of these only Lenin mine in Mezhdurechensk and eight mines and four factories in Prokop'evsk (where the strike had the full support of enterprise directors) actually stopped production, the others only halting deliveries for the day (KASKOR 10, 5 March 1993; *Nasha gazeta*, 2 March 1993). This limited response was despite the full support for the strike of mine directors and both trade unions reported from a number of mines.⁸⁰ However, the NPG leaders were furious that the leaders of the Regional Council had unilaterally taken over their strike.

Just as NPG was beginning to take an independent position in pressing the demands of the miners on the government, the situation was complicated by Yeltsin's renewed confrontation with the Congress of People's Deputies. As usual, the NPG found that its display of militancy had got caught up in a larger political crisis in Moscow, and it began to redefine its position so that what had begun as a strike against the government was turned into a threat to strike in its support, on the grounds that while the government was ready to meet all the miners' demands, its hands were tied by the Supreme Soviet's control of the purse-strings.

On 4 March the NPG and Regional Council patched up their differences, noting 'the negative role played by the failure to co-ordinate the activities of the NPG and Council', and receiving a report from its delegation which had been negotiating in Moscow that while agreements were signed they were not confident that they would be fulfilled in the current political situation. Delegates were divided over the demands to put forward, Belovo and Kiselevsk proposing only eco-

conomic and legal demands, while Prokop'evsk, Novokuznetsk and Mezhdurechensk insisted that they had also to put forward political demands. NPG and the Council issued a statement in support of Yeltsin, insisting that the miners' demands should not be harnessed to anybody's political intentions, while giving strong support to Yeltsin in his conflict with the Congress. They also decided to hold a joint meeting on 10 March, to set up a joint team to co-ordinate activity in the course of the strike, and to send a delegation to Moscow to negotiate with the government (*Nasha gazeta*, 6 March 1993).⁸¹

The joint meeting of NPG and the Regional Council on 11 March noted that a series of satisfactory agreements had been signed by the government, but in view of the confrontation between executive and legislative branches they could not be confident that these agreements would be fulfilled, particularly because the financing of the agreements was a matter for the Supreme Soviet. The meeting therefore decided not to cancel preparations for the strike on 15 March, now directed at the Supreme Soviet rather than the government, to co-ordinate their activity with other coalfields, to continue negotiations with the government (including participation in the Tripartite Commission), passing a political resolution which laid the blame for the confrontation between legislative and executive branches on the former, and concluded that 'if the Congress of People's Deputies adopted any decision which restricted the functions of the government or President' the strike would be renewed (*Nasha gazeta*, 13 March 1993; KASKOR 11–12, 19 March 1993).

In fact the strike did not take place, although it was only on 17 March that a joint meeting in Prokop'evsk retrospectively postponed it, noting that resolution of the problem was made more difficult because of the absence of a strong government backed by strong presidential power. Strong feelings were expressed that NPG and the workers' committees had been battering at the government on their own, without the support of Kislyuk's administration or the mine directors: 'We are doing their work, we are demanding from the government what they should be demanding', declared the president of the Kemerovo Workers' Committee (*Nasha gazeta*, 20 March 1993). Workers' representatives, mine directors, and representatives of the regional administration all agreed that they needed to unite their forces, rather than sending separate delegations to Moscow to negotiate over particular issues. The meeting resolved that agreement had

been reached with the government over the issues within its competence, the rest falling to the Supreme Soviet. The meeting invited the regional administration and the leaders of the industry to co-ordinate their activity with that of NPG in the negotiations in Moscow, and demanded that the Supreme Soviet draw up a schedule for meeting their demands by 25 March, failing which the strike would resume on 1 April, co-ordinated from Moscow. The meeting also backed Vorkuta's call for an all-Russian referendum, and called for a meeting with leaders of the oblast on 22 March (KASKOR 11–12, 19 March 1993, *Tomusinskii Gornyyak*, 26 March 1993).

This proposal was confirmed by the NPG Executive in Moscow on 23 March, following which Sergeev put out a whole series of statements in support of Yeltsin and against the Congress of People's Deputies. His statement to the miners argued that 'we are the guilty parties ... because after 1989–91 we became complacent, weakened, did not react in any way to the course of events, resigning ourselves to the belief that nothing could change'; the next guilty party was the administration of the enterprises who did not want to live in a new way, pursued only their own aims and sabotaged reform; then the President and government who started the reforms but stopped half-way. But the main culprit was the Congress of People's Deputies (KASKOR 13, 27 March 1993). That same day a joint meeting of NPG and the Regional Council issued similar statements in support of Yeltsin's stand (*Nasha gazeta*, 25 March 1993).

The political polarization in Moscow extended to Kuzbass following Yeltsin's notorious speech on 20 March, when the Kuzbass small soviet suspended presidential decrees and government instructions in the oblast on 22 March. The Regional Council of Workers' Committees decided to set up agitation points in cities, create two information centres and a network of correspondents to provide an 'objective evaluation' of the situation in the region. The 'Consultative Council of Political Parties and Social Movements of Kuzbass' also issued a statement in full support of Yeltsin. However, the miners were not unanimous in their support for Yeltsin. In Berezovskii it was reported that Pervomaiskaya mine expressed full support for the President, but Beresovskaya was very categorically opposed to both President and Congress (KASKOR 13, 27 March 1993).

On 24 March the NPG leaders met with enterprise directors and representatives of the oblast administration, a meeting which had been

called for by the NPG and Regional Council's resolution of 17 March.⁸² The purpose of the meeting on the part of NPG was to establish a united front with the enterprise directorate and oblast leadership to ensure the fulfilment of the agreements reached with the government, and in particular to work out concrete mechanisms to ensure the transfer of subsidies to Kuzbass and to develop a programme for the development of the oldest coalfield around Kiselevsk and Prokop'evsk. The draft protocol emerging from the meeting noted that 'In difficult conditions it is necessary to work out a united position of Kuzbass miners and enterprise managers. Despite the existence of a significant number of contradictions, we share the common interests of all Kuzbass miners.' According to the minutes, the meeting gave full backing to the NPG demands to the government and Supreme Soviet; offered support and assistance to the activity of the 'Coal Project' on the territory of Kuzbass; approved the creation of an All-Kuzbass medical insurance company to serve miners; and resolved to ask the government to provide tax and customs concessions for the acquisition of production and safety equipment through barter. However, relations were not as cosy as appeared in the minutes.

NPG had been flattered by the supportive attitude of the directors into believing that they were still an important force, whereas the only interest the directorate had in NPG was its ability still to get direct access to Yeltsin. It was only at the meeting that the NPG leaders realized that the directors simply saw them 'as a truncheon with which to beat out money'. NPG had hoped that the directors would take up the baton now that the issues were complex and technical, but the directors were happy to continue to hide behind the skirts of NPG. At this point NPG decided to withdraw from the negotiations in Moscow, having signed a lot more agreements hardly worth the paper they were written on.⁸³ Joint meetings of NPG and the Regional Council on 25 and 31 March noted that negotiations had been disrupted by the political crisis. They expressed confidence that the government would meet the timetable for negotiations, did not want to negotiate with the Supreme Soviet, and recognized that in the difficult situation not all their demands could be met immediately. So the meetings called off the strike (although Prokop'evsk was still in favour of a strike) and in the run-up to the proposed 25 April referendum expressed a lack of confidence in Congress and appealed for a meeting with Yeltsin, a conclusion that was endorsed by Sergeev on behalf of NPG Russia.

The latter meeting also declared that it would support Yeltsin only on condition that he continued to take a firm line with the opponents of reform, reserving the right to renew the strike call at a future date (KASKOR 14, 2 April 1993; *Nasha gazeta*, 3 April, 6 April 1993).

Yeltsin came to Kuzbass on 13 April as part of his referendum campaign, but in a very public humiliation for the NPG and workers' committees, who were putting all their efforts into supporting him in the referendum, he had no plans to meet them during his visit, inviting them instead to a meeting of free trade unions in Moscow on 19 April, which had originally been promised for 24 February. At the meeting, despite a few comradely remarks, Yeltsin was dismissive of the workers' leaders, making it clear that they were on their own.⁸⁴

The withdrawal of NPG Kuzbass from its brief co-operation with the directorate and the rebuff from Yeltsin left it a spent force as the situation in the Kuzbass coal industry continued to deteriorate. Levels of non-payment increased, while material and transport costs were rising fast. Moscow claimed that the money for wages had been sent to Kuzbass, but in June wages were still not being paid. There were also severe shortages of railway wagons. The miners, who had not been stirred by the constitutional crisis, were becoming restless. 'The majority of miners are far from political passions, they are more concerned about production problems which are serious' (Aleksandr Korotkikh, KASKOR 20, 14 May 1993).

NPG Russia held a conference of representatives in Leninsk-Kuznetsk on 27–29 May, at which a bleak picture of the position of the union emerged. Sharipov announced at the opening session that NPG was 'on the verge of paralysis' as a result of the non-payment of dues and the failure of mine and city organisations to send dues to the centre, and there was much talk of the threat of a collapse or self-dissolution of NPG — 'we have a movement, but no organisation'. This problem was linked to disagreements between primary groups and higher bodies — the NPG leader of Butovskaya mine in Kemerovo had simply withdrawn the dues paid by his mine from the Kemerovo NPG account following a disagreement with its leadership — and the fundamental issue of centralisation versus local autonomy, over which the Vorkuta delegation walked out of the conference. The usual resolutions were passed, but nothing was resolved (*Nasha gazeta*, 29 May, 1 June 1993).

In an interview to mark the second anniversary of NPG, Sharipov returned to this theme, noting the problem of developing trade union activity in the primary groups without the money to provide those groups with proper legal and expert advice in, for example, the preparation of collective agreements. The result was that most local NPG leaders sought to attract and retain members by competing with the official union in the sphere of distribution, which NPG had in principle eschewed (*Nasha gazeta*, 15 June 1993). The other side of this concentration on distribution was that in practice NPG left most trade union activity in the hands of NPRUP, even in those mines in which NPG was well-established.

All the problems confronting the coal-mining industry were interconnected, as the NPG representatives had realized in trying to identify clear demands around which to strike in February. What tied them together was the fall in production and the growing pressure on the system of subsidies as the government, under pressure from its foreign bankers, tried to cut back the budget deficit. As government revenue fell far short of the budget projections the government's response was to cover the shortfall by delaying payment of its accounts in all spheres, including the coal-mining industry. The immediate issue was that of forcing the government to fulfil its obligations under the Tariff and General Agreements to make the payments to the industry and its customers that would enable it to pay its wages, and also to cover the costs of development in production and in the social and welfare infrastructure.⁸⁵ However, in the longer term the only solution was a comprehensive programme for the restructuring and development of the coal industry and the coal-mining regions.

RESTRUCTURING THE COAL-MINING INDUSTRY

While the constraints of management pressure and workers' expectations had forced NPG within the enterprise to become virtually indistinguishable from the official union NPRUP, competition from the workers' committees and NPG had been effective in gradually pressing NPRUP to be more attentive to the aspirations of the workers, rather than taking them for granted. NPRUP at all levels continued to work closely with management, but in the context of increasing pressure on the industry from the government in Moscow this collabo-

ration did have an objective foundation in the common interest of workers and management in defending the industry, even if such a common interest was provisional. This had been the basis on which NPG had entered into renewed contact with the leadership of the industry, contact which it broke off not on a matter of fundamental differences of principle, but of political disagreement. This was equally the basis on which there had been a convergence between NPRUP and NPG in their basic programmes for the industry, although in Kuzbass NPG continued to refuse to have any communication with NPRUP, which it continued to denounce as a Communist front, with Kuzbass NPRUP's leader, Gennadii Mikhailets, former leader of the Kemerovo City Workers' Committee, as the principal villain.⁸⁶

The NPG mobilization in March had been a disastrous failure. NPG had gone into the strike with no clear idea of its demands, which were still focused on the issue of the control of social insurance funds while the industry was in danger of collapsing around its ears. The mobilization had first been undermined by the Regional Council and then by NPG's complete identification with Yeltsin in the struggle with the Congress, which was a distraction from the fundamental issue of the restructuring of the coal-mining industry as a whole in which the interests of the miners were increasingly opposed to the activity of President, government and Supreme Soviet, for all of whom the industry was significant primarily for its contribution to the growing budget crisis, subsidies amounting to 1.0 per cent of GDP in 1991, 1.1 per cent in 1992 and 1.4 per cent in 1993.⁸⁷

The main worry of NPG in the wake of its bungled spring campaign was the perennial one of the weakness of its primary groups, which was the principal concern expressed at the meeting of NPG Representatives of Russia in Leninsk-Kuznetsk at the end of May. The problem was becoming even more serious as cash shortages led to increasing lay-offs and redundancy. The meeting heard of a growing number of cases in which NPG members were the first to be selected for redundancy or the first to be sent on 'administrative vacation' (laid-off on basic pay). The meeting demanded that there should be no changes in holiday schedules without the agreement of each individual subject to change and without proper payment, a demand which meant nothing without an organization to enforce it. The meeting also began to turn its attention to the more fundamental issues raised by cutbacks and redundancy, with the lame proposal to prepare a leaflet explaining

their legal rights to members threatened with redundancy and the demand that retraining centres should be established in the coalfields (*Nasha gazeta*, 29 May, 1 June 1993; *Delo*, 10–11, June 1993).

Sergeev, in an interview at the beginning of June, was asked to sum up the achievements of NPG in the three years since the First Miners' Congress and was able to offer very little, beyond his by now ritual tirade against NPRUP. The main achievements identified by Sergeev were, first, the introduction of the idea of a tariff agreement, although some such device was inevitable once central control of wages was abandoned, and Sergeev confessed that it had been NPRUP that had first signed such an agreement. Second, NPG had shown that workers could organize themselves, which indeed is probably the greatest achievement and example of NPG. Third, Sergeev referred to the role played by NPG in the collapse of totalitarian structures, although Sergeev denied the miners' responsibility for the collapse of the Soviet Union, which the miners' leaders already realized had been a disaster.

Looking to the future, Sergeev showed just how far the workers' movement had moved since the insistent demands of its leaders in 1989 for enterprise independence, the choice of forms of property, and the transition to a market economy. Having achieved these demands, albeit in a distorted form, NPG now wanted them reversed. Privatization was a nonsense without a plan for the industry and management organs which could realize that plan. Under the present privatization proposals 'what is really happening is the reconstruction of state capitalism'. Moreover, privatization created sharp divisions within the miners' movement, since more profitable mines were in favour, while those which required subsidy saw privatization as a way of forcing them into liquidation without compensation.⁸⁸ Thus Kuzbass was in general in favour of privatization, with the labour collective holding the majority of shares, while Vorkuta had no interest in privatization but was concerned with defending the interests of the workers as wage labourers.⁸⁹ However, although Sergeev's programme was close to that of NPRUP, he launched into a ritual tirade against NPRUP as merely exploiting workers' dissatisfaction for its own ends (Interview with Konstantin Sumnitel'nyi, *KASKOR* 23, 4 June 1993).

PRUP and NPG had almost identical programmes for the restructuring of the coal-mining industry, both unions recognizing the need for mine closures on both economic and social grounds, working conditions in the oldest mines being appalling. Both unions pressed for closures to be centrally planned, with generous redundancy, resettlement

ment and retraining packages. However, the two unions were poles apart in the means by which they expected to achieve their programmes. While NPRUP worked closely with the leaders of the industry in pressing their interests in Moscow, NPG in Kuzbass continued to put its faith in the goodwill of the presidential apparatus, and increasingly in the World Bank and US-funded Coal Project, strongly supporting their formulation of a restructuring programme for the industry based on extensive closures and mass redundancy in the naive expectation that this would be linked to the provision of massive government and foreign funding of the closure programme and in the naive belief that their members' jobs would be safe, at least in Kuzbass, a position which was hardly likely to appeal to a membership facing mass redundancy, to say nothing of their supposed colleagues in NPG in Vorkuta and Donbass, whom the Kuzbass leaders appeared ready to sacrifice to secure their own future.⁹⁰ This naiveté on the part of the NPG leaders made the terminal decline of the union inevitable as the government on which it had pinned its hopes spelt out its plans for the destruction of the industry.

NPRUP was well placed to displace NPG completely in Kuzbass, but NPRUP had the legacy of its past to overcome. A new leadership had emerged at regional and national level following the substantial turnover in leadership at enterprise level after 1989, but the structural constraints which tended to confine the union within its traditional role remained. Moreover, the union had been damaged in Kuzbass by its participation in the wider campaigns of the official FNPR unions, nominally on behalf of the two-thirds of the working population employed outside the mines, but in reality as dominated by political concerns as was the activity of NPG. If NPRUP was to become a significant force on behalf of the workers it claimed to represent it had to establish its independence on the one hand from the political ambitions of the FNPR leadership and on the other hand from its close identification with management. NPRUP faced the same problem as NPG in reverse: without a committed membership and active primary groups NPRUP lacked a firm basis on which to establish its independence as a trade union. The process of reform, if it was to be achieved at all, would necessarily be slow and long drawn-out. However, the issues surrounding the restructuring of the coal-mining industry provided a framework within which NPRUP could campaign in the short term within its traditional framework of identification with

FNPR and the management of the industry, while in the longer term establishing its independence from both. Whether it could achieve the latter remains an open question.

On 21 June Yeltsin issued his long-awaited decree 'On measures to stabilise the situation in the coal industry'. This decree allowed enterprises to retain their hard currency earnings on above-plan exports, exempted coal from export duties and necessary coal-mining equipment from import duties, provided additional quotas for the export of coking coal and, most important, freed coal prices from 1 July, established a new system of fixed subsidies, and gave the government three months to prepare a plan for 'reorganizing and upgrading' mines (*Nasha gazeta*, 1 July 1993).

Yeltsin's decree at last realized the demands put forward by the Kuzbass regional strike committee four years before. However, at the same time it brought home just how unrealistic those demands had always been for the coal industry. Increased rail costs had already made coal exports from Kuzbass barely economic, so that the concessions on export earnings provided little relief, with the death blow being the more than doubling of rail tariffs on 1 August. Demand for coal was already down about 30 per cent, and the expected massive price increases would compress demand even more since the main customers of the industry were in an even worse position. With such massive surplus capacity, which was spread fairly uniformly across the mines, every mine stood to make substantial losses, so that without guaranteed financial support the industry faced collapse. The decree had already been preceded by the ominous announcement by the Minister of Fuel and Power, Shafranik, of plans to close forty mines, including eleven mines in Kuzbass, by the end of the year. All that the decree gave the industry was a promise for the future, of a new subsidy system and a plan for rationalization.

The NPG Executive reacted immediately to Yeltsin's decree, sending a resolution to Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin complaining that the decree did not include any reference to the measures required to accompany a programme for the closure of unprofitable mines, including the allocation of budgetary funds to preserve the enterprise, maintain the normal functioning of the social infrastructure of mine cities and villages, and create new work places, nor any reference to the northern coefficient, or to the cancellation of debts incurred in relation to the delivery of coal and the non-payment of subsidies for

the second quarter of 1993. The result was that mines would be put in an unprofitable position, so the executive appealed to Yeltsin to suspend the decree (*Nasha gazeta*, 26 June 1993). However, the Kuzbass Regional Council of Workers' Committees responded much more positively to the decree at its meeting on 30 June, and Kislyuk acclaimed the decree as achieving nine-tenths of the Kuzbass programme (*Nasha gazeta*, 3 July 1993). But everything depended on how much the government would pay.

On 6 August Sharipov sent an appeal to Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin on behalf of NPG Kuzbass, noting the very serious impact of the increase in rail tariffs and demanding concessions, particularly for Kiselevsk. However, Sharipov refused to allow NPG to be drawn into the attempt of the directorate to blame the government for the crisis in the industry, insisting that everyone was trying to avoid responsibility. On this basis, in contrast to the position put forward by Sergeev in June, Sharipov declared that privatization was essential to establishing the responsibility of the directors and civilized relations between workers and employers, any attempt to halt privatization being an action aimed at the process of reform.⁹¹ In Moscow the appeal was sent to the Tripartite Commission and disappeared (*Nasha gazeta*, 10 August 1993; 26 August 1993). Sharipov might have hoped that such a declaration would endear him to Yeltsin and to his US sponsors, but it was hardly appropriate in a context in which opposition to privatization was hardening even in those mines which had already privatized and were now regretting it, as privatization was increasingly seen as a device to prepare mines for closure without compensation.

NPRUP, on the other hand, was responding more decisively to the growing crisis in the coal industry as a part of FNPR's 'Plan of Collective Action', which was to build up pressure on the government over the summer to culminate in an All-Russian Conference of Strike Committees to be held in Moscow in mid-September, backed up by action in the High Court to sue the government over non-fulfilment of its agreements. NPRUP was also beginning to wage effective action against the government on its own account, in collaboration with Rosugol', in marked contrast to the ineffective appeals of NPG.

At the end of June, NPRUP had organized a picket of the government buildings in Staraya Ploshad' in Moscow, which was attended by 160 miners, 115 of whom were from Rostov. NPRUP demanded a meeting with the government to discuss the non-fulfilment of the tariff

agreement, and particularly delays in the payment of subsidy. Malyshev announced on 21 June that the government had allocated 50 billion roubles to cover debts related to the payment of wages but NPRUP continued to press the issue. On 23 June the NPRUP leaders met Chernomyrdin, following which the government signed an agreement with NPRUP guaranteeing state support for the coal industry in the face of the freeing of the coal price; promising fully to carry out the 1993 tariff agreement; guaranteeing that subsidies would take account of the indexation of wages for the last two quarters of 1993 and the first quarter of 1994; promising to consider the cancellation of debts, and to prepare a law to create a special tax to establish a fund to support the coal industry. The agreement was signed by Malyshev, Shafrannik, Fedorov (Minister of Finance) and Bud'ko (KASKOR 26, 26 June 1993).

On 12 August the NPRUP plenum declared that neither this nor the tariff agreement had been met and called a pre-strike situation for 13 August, beginning preparatory work with a view to a one-day general strike on 6 September, the principal demands being fulfilment of the tariff agreement and the payment of promised subsidies (KASKOR 32–3, 13 August 1993). The decision to hold an all-out one-day strike was taken at a telephone conference of regional presidents organized by Rosugol' and NPRUP, in which the general directors of coal associations and concerns also participated, on 2 September (*Nasha gazeta*, 4 September 1993).

On 26 August, Kuzbass NPG representatives and the Council of Workers' Committees denounced the forthcoming NPRUP strike, insisting that it was merely a political manoeuvre on the part of FNPR, and reiterating that many of the problems of the industry derived from incompetent and corrupt management which had wasted and misused funds, while in Moscow responsibility was not that of the government but of the Supreme Soviet. The priority, the meeting declared, is to learn to live in market conditions, which is why NPG has joined the government commission to work out a restructuring plan with the World Bank.⁹² Sharipov, on behalf of NPG, insisted that NPG also had demands of the government (which were in fact more or less identical to those of NPRUP), and that a strike may be necessary, but the present time was not appropriate (Sharipov indicated that October/November was more appropriate, without explaining why) (*Nasha gazeta*, 31 August 1993, 2 September 1993).

On 6 September NPRUP claimed that 133 of the 259 Russian deep mines and 39 of the 95 open-cast had struck, with around 400,000 involved in one way or another, claims broadly supported by Rosugol', while NPG claimed that no more than 15 mines had struck – the issue was confused because many mines were not shipping and/or producing anyway as a result of a lack of orders or supplies. According to NPRUP, 31 mines and 20 auxiliary enterprises struck in Kuzbass (*Nasha gazeta*, 9 September 1993; *Kuzbass* 10 September 1993).⁹³ According to the NPRUP claims, the strike was complete in the regions not organized by NPG, but fewer than half the mines stopped in Kuzbass and Vorkuta. It seemed that the money to pay wages for July had been distributed, and that that for August was promised, but the concerns were still waiting for the money for investment. The strike was condemned by the Vorkuta NPG leader, Nikita Shul'ga, who argued that strikes would only accelerate mine closures with no social guarantees (*KASKOR* 36–7, 10 September 1993), and this was indeed becoming an important concern in the minds of the leaders of both unions as the mood in the coalfields became increasingly angry.

If NPG had any intention of modifying its unquestioning support for Yeltsin and the government, the renewed and final confrontation between Yeltsin and the Supreme Soviet in September put paid to them, with NPRUP and NPG adopting the predictable positions in the confrontation.⁹⁴ However, following Yeltsin's *coup d'état*, the situation became somewhat more complex. The problem was that the election was not being contested by Yeltsin but by various political blocs, none of which was close to NPG, and the question of which to support was not so much a matter of principle as of horse-trading. Sergeev was invited to the founding conference of Russia's Choice, led by Gaidar, whom Sergeev denounced for his failure to introduce significant reforms when he was in power, announcing that the rival Russian Movement for Democratic Reforms (Movement for Democratic Reforms) had nominated Sharipov and the President of the Independent Seafarers' Union, Nekrasov, on their list. However, regional NPG organizations were left to make their own decisions about whom to support (*KASKOR* 42–3, 25 October 1993).⁹⁵

Meanwhile, the cash situation in the industry was going from bad to worse as mines fell further and further behind with the payment of wages, and as the increase in transport cost threatened to price Kuzbass coal in particular out of the market. Rosugol' published its

closure programme, envisaging the closure of 42 mines by the year 2000, of which 11 would close over 1993–95, although the only mine listed in Kuzbass was Anzherskaya. However, the mines listed were those which would benefit from the government-funded closure programme. There was good reason to believe that many more mines would be forced to close and they, particularly if they had been privatized, faced the prospect of an unregulated closure without compensation. Moreover, quite apart from the threat of closure, the loss of subsidy threatened a loss of jobs in the existing mines as they were forced to cut their labour force. NPG's continued support for the government was becoming unsustainable.

At the end of October, with the election campaign getting under way, Vyacheslav Golikov sent an open letter to Yeltsin voicing his fears:

...Until now we have had no reason to doubt the fulfilment of the joint agreement between the President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation and the Council of Kuzbass Workers' Committees of 18 August 1990 under which are your and my signatures.

But recent events put us in a very difficult situation.

The most diverse political forces, particularly at the present time, are trying to win the miners over to their side, not shrinking from using any methods, including lies, threats and political promises, to do so.

Political activists like Tuleev are incessantly proclaiming from every platform about the monstrous fraud perpetrated on the miners by the President. Up to now we have managed to find enough arguments and evidence to counter this pressure.

But the recent resolutions of the government, and first of all the decision three months ago to double railway tariffs, cuts the ground from under our feet. To be able to explain and argue one has to be able to understand it oneself. To the question – what is the purpose of the recent decisions, we have not received any clear and satisfactory answer.

All the arguments of the opponents of political and economic reform in Russia acquire a new significance, giving rise to doubts even among my own comrades. When there is no explanation, others appear, even possibly erroneous, close to Communist, which we would not want.... There is a basis for thinking that the aim of these decisions is to remove coal as a competitor in the energy market, both at home and abroad. What better explanation for the Anpilovs, Zyuganovs, Tuleevs.... Most unfortunately it is clear that we have too few specialists able to work in new conditions. This will take time, although such specialists are already appearing. But why force collapse on the industry, in order then to try to reanimate it?

I think that one of the reasons that led to this situation was the loss of direct links with you and the government and the appearance of a large number

of intermediaries readily interposing themselves between us and profiting from this both politically and economically.

Boris Nikolaevich, if we, and with us all coal-miners, do not receive clear and satisfactory answers to these important questions in the near future the country risks facing serious opposition to the current reforms from people who were consciously and with open eyes committed to reform, ready to suffer the unavoidable hardships of this path and to facilitate the reforms carried out by you with all their strength. (*Nasha gazeta*, 23 October 1993)

No reply was received from Yeltsin or his government, but on 10 November the World Bank delivered its draft report to the government, with a much bleaker future for the industry than that depicted by Rosugol', proposing a substantial cut in production capacity, with employment falling by up to 100,000 per year over a number of years.

The miners' support for Yeltsin and reform was wearing very thin. On 1 November, 13 NPG members in Vorkuta began a hunger strike,⁹⁶ demanding the payment of wages, with indexation, due since September; the extension of credit to the metallurgical industry, so that it could pay for coal already delivered; and the resolution of the problem of the northern coefficient, with the principal demand being for a government delegation headed by Chernomyrdin to come to Vorkuta. A joint meeting of NPG and the workers' committee in Vorkuta then decided to call a strike for 1 December, and on 17 November a delegation set off from Vorkuta to explain their decision to the other coalfields (*KASKOR* 45, 10 November 1993, 46–7, 19 November 1993), the same day that a government commission arrived in Vorkuta.

Although the Vorkuta miners were striking directly against the government, there no longer being a Supreme Soviet to serve as scapegoat, they declared that they were still not opposed to the course of reform. This same ambivalence continued to dog the movement in Kuzbass. A joint meeting of NPG and the Regional Council in Prokop'evsk on 10 November considered the question of the forthcoming elections, and in particular whether NPG should support Russia's Choice, the bloc headed by Gaidar and most closely identified with Yeltsin. The meeting was sharply divided, and Russia's Choice came in for a great deal of criticism, although no formal decision was taken. Nevertheless, Sharipov issued a statement after the meeting on behalf of NPG which indicated that there had been a decision not to support Russia's Choice (Sharipov, of course, being on the Movement for Democratic Reforms list). This statement provoked a furious reaction from Golikov, notwithstanding his open letter to Yeltsin only a fort-

night before, who in turn put out a statement in the names of the Prokop'evsk and Novokuznetsk NPG and Workers' Committees, which concluded 'Dirty political games by particular people will not lead us to change our point of view and will not encourage those who trusted us and trust us to support democratic reform', the statement being signed by Golikov, his deputy, Korotkikh; the co-president of Novokuznetsk Workers' Committee, R. Vakhitov; the president of Novokuznetsk NPG, A. Smirnov; the president of Prokop'evsk Workers' Committee, V. Strokapev; and the president of Osinniki NPG, V. Musin (KASKOR, 48, 29 November 1993).

A week later, on 19 November, NPG Kuzbass representatives meeting in Prokop'evsk announced a one-week strike from 1 December, linking up with Vorkuta, on a comprehensive list of demands which bore little relation to the recommendations of the World Bank with which NPG had so proudly associated itself: 1) immediate payment of debts to cover wage payments, indexed for inflation, and investigation of the reasons for delay and the use of funds; 2) stoppage of the closure programme until there has been agreement with the trade unions on financial provision for closures; 3) immediate creation of an inter-departmental commission headed by a vice-premier and involving the trade unions, until which time to cessation of all hidden redundancy, for example on medical grounds; 4) cessation of all redundancy without the agreement of elected trade union bodies; 5) enterprises in collaboration with unions to be ordered to work out and introduce by 1 January a programme of redundancies with social guarantees; 6) all enterprises required to use not less than 25 per cent of the proceeds from the sale of coal to improve working conditions and technical safety; 7) all managers guilty of causing delay in payments to be sacked; 8) all leadership appointments at all levels to be made only with the agreement of the elected union body of the appropriate level; 9) safe conditions of labour to be created; 10) the problem of rail tariffs to be resolved, and tariffs to be increased only in consultation with the miners; 11) finance for reconstruction of existing mines and the opening of new mines and coalfields to be provided (KASKOR 46-7, 19 November 1993).⁹⁷

Gaidar set off from Moscow in a plane literally loaded with crates of money to buy off the miners before the election. On 27 November he signed a deal with the Vorkuta miners, which did not satisfy them, and on 28 November he flew on to Kuzbass, where he met with

regional and industry leaders, cautiously endorsing their proposals to establish a financial-industrial group for the coal industry, delivered large sums of cash, and promised that the rest would be forthcoming within a week. Following further negotiations in the inter-departmental commission in Moscow on 29 and 30 November, NPG Russia postponed the strike to 6 December for further negotiations, although Aleksandr Korotkikh, deputy president of the Regional Council, let it be known that the strike would not take place. The talks did not make progress, and the strike went ahead in Vorkuta, with twelve of Vorkuta's thirteen mines coming out. On 6 December an agreement was signed with the government and NPG Russia called off the strike, a recommendation endorsed by a meeting of NPG in Prokop'evsk the following day, although the strike the previous day had never taken place in Kuzbass. Nevertheless, Kislyuk denounced the strike call as 'populistic and irresponsible action', and Deputy Labour Minister Yurii Shatyrenko described the strike as 'illegal' and some of the miners' demands as 'knowingly impossible'.⁹⁸ The deal in Moscow did not satisfy Vorkuta, which stayed on strike until the government finally signed an agreement meeting the Vorkuta demands, and their strike was called off on 10 December, two days before the election.

CONCLUSION

The outcome of the December 1993 election in Kuzbass, as in Russia as a whole, was a blow to NPG and the Regional Council. However, NPG persisted with its argument that the problems faced by the coal industry were not the result of the reform programme, but of the obstruction to radical reform presented by pro-Communist bureaucrats within the ministerial and branch structures and by an incompetent and/or corrupt mine management.⁹⁹ The problem was not that reform was going too fast, although this was what Golikov had indicated in his open letter to Yeltsin, but that it was going too slowly. A programme of rapid mine closures, mass redundancy and heavy investment in new equipment and new mines would make the industry profitable and make it possible to continue to pay high wages to underground workers. On this basis they retained their increasingly close links with the US-AID-funded Coal Project, the AFL-CIO-

funded Russian-American Fund, and commitment to the World Bank's restructuring programme.¹⁰⁰

The contradiction underlying this approach was that the government and its foreign backers were concerned not with the future of the coal industry, but with the reduction of the government's budget deficit, and for all the talk of compensation and new investment the main thrust of government policy was to delay payment and to reduce the subsidy quarter by quarter. Far from having the resources to pay compensation or finance new investment, the industry still did not have the money to make its immediate wage payments.¹⁰¹ The absence of funds was neither an administrative error, nor simply the result of bureaucratic obstruction and managerial corruption, but was a systematic policy through which the government sought to pressure the industry to hold down wages and reduce employment and to introduce divisions within and between coalfields in the competition for scarce funds.¹⁰² Behind the talk of a civilized restructuring, mines were beginning to reduce the labour force through voluntary redundancy as wages were unpaid, and when paid they had been eroded by inflation, so that workers left to find jobs elsewhere while other jobs were still available.¹⁰³

The result, as far as NPG was concerned, was that once again its ideological rhetoric flew in the face of the everyday trade union realities. The rhetoric was still to back the government (or, to be more precise, the liberal elements in the presidential apparatus and the Ministry of Finance with their foreign backers) against the ministerial and industrial bureaucracies. The reality was that it was the government that was precipitating a deepening crisis in the industry, which could be defended only by the various forces committed to preserving the industry – all the trade unions, the employers and the regional authorities. Such a united front had been established long ago in Vorkuta, which faced the special additional problems of the Arctic region, but in Kuzbass and Moscow the personal and political antipathy of the NPG leadership to that of NPRUP remained a fundamental barrier to unity.

Meanwhile, delays in payment persisted, and unrest within the coal-field increased. Wildcat strikes in February and March were settled with cash injections and further promises from the government, but NPG members were increasingly confused and demoralized, membership falling even in those mines which had formerly been under NPG

control. Divisions were also developing within the Kuzbass NPG organization, with both Kemerovo and Prokop'evsk threatening to secede from the Kuzbass organization at different times, and North and South Kuzbass increasingly going their own ways.

Faced with unrest on the ground the NPG leadership had to take some action. In Prokop'evsk and Mezhdurechensk 32 miners, the majority NPG members, began a hunger strike in protest at non-payment, and similar action was taken in Vorkuta. On 9 February Sergeev sent an appeal to Yeltsin, blaming the failure to implement the agreements reached in November and December on the change in government personnel following the elections (the agreements having been signed by Gaidar, who had now left the government), and requesting an urgent meeting, to which appeal he received no reply.

This appeal was endorsed by the Council of NPG Representatives which met in Moscow on 15 and 16 February to consider the crisis, which took a tougher line with the government than had been taken by Kuzbass. The council considered a request from a representative of the hunger strikers to take immediate strike action, but this was opposed by representatives of those mines facing bankruptcy, which feared that a strike would provide the pretext for closure without compensation. However, the council demanded that the government meet its obligations under the Russian laws and constitution to provide the means to pay wages, to punish those responsible for delays in payment, to resolve the problem of jobs for redundant miners, and to implement the Law on the North. If the government failed to do this NPG would call on its members to take collective action from 1 March, including the picketing of local state and industry bodies and stopping coal deliveries, with the threat of a subsequent strike if these measures were not effective (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 2, 1994).

Meanwhile, NPRUP had been becoming increasingly active in pressing a similar set of demands to those put forward by NPG although, unlike NPG, NPRUP did not absolve Yeltsin from blame, attributing the problems of the coalfields not to the machinations of managers and bureaucrats, but to the policy of the government.

PRUP had held a conference of 350 representatives on 20 and 21 December to review the results of the election and the year's activities, the conference issuing a restrained statement complaining at the failure to implement the various agreements signed by the government in the past year, and at its production and financial plans for the

industry for 1994, which were for substantial cuts in production following the advice of the World Bank (KASKOR 52, 27 December 1993). Delegates also sharply criticized the government for its unilateral negotiations with NPG, which were denounced as a pre-election stunt designed to divide the trade unions. NPRUP had invited NPG to participate in the negotiations for the collective agreement for 1994, but NPG did not reply, although Sergeev wrote to the Ministry of Labour to say that NPG wished to retain the 1993 agreement unchanged.

At its 25 January plenum NPRUP was more forceful, demanding the payment of all budgetary debts to coal enterprises by 1 February, the conclusion of a branch tariff agreement by 27 January, and the rapid resolution of the problem of unpaid debts by customers of the industry, threatening that if their demands were not met they would be forced to abandon their policy of social partnership and take strike action.

On the very day that NPG representatives meeting in Moscow had decided on a programme of action from 1 March, the Second All-Kuzbass Conference of Labour Collectives, summoned by the regional FNPR, declared its lack of confidence in Yeltsin and his reforms, demanding immediate presidential elections. The conference demanded that by 1 March the government present a programme to resolve the economic crisis and sign General and tariff agreements for 1994; resolve the problem of mutual non-payment by the end of February; liquidate government debts, taking account of inflation; control prices of essentials. The conference resolved to support with solidarity action in Kuzbass a proposed call of the miners for an all-Russian strike; to restore the regional tripartite commission (from which the regional administration had withdrawn following a dispute with the unions over the indexation of wages of budget workers and the attempt of the administration to evict the regional union body from its premises – this demand was accepted the following day); to prepare to nominate candidates for the regional elections; and to condemn the Regional Council of Workers' Committees (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 2, 1994).

The following week, on 21 February, the Presidium of NPRUP issued a call for a warning strike on 1 March. This call was endorsed by various mines, but on 26 February the Kuzbass Regional Council declared such a strike premature (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 2, 1994),

and the NPG action for the same day was called off on the grounds that the government had provided money for the south Kuzbass mines, but more importantly for fear that it would be associated with that of NPRUP. NPRUP's one-day strike went ahead, with NPRUP claiming that 80 per cent of enterprises participated, with 500,000 people involved, although in Kuzbass there was little response. Wildcat strikes continued, each time being settled by the release of funds to meet the back payment of wages, but in fact NPRUP was as cautious as NPG about unleashing collective action and followed this up not with further strike action, but with a picketing of the White House at the end of March, in which NPG from Chelyabinsk and Vorkuta, although not from Kuzbass, also participated.¹⁰⁴ Neither union enjoyed the confidence of the miners, and both were afraid that collective action could easily escalate out of their control. The result was that, although levels of social tension grew steadily over the summer in Kuzbass, all parties had an interest in containing conflict.¹⁰⁵

The elections to the regional Duma in March, following the disastrous outcome of the national elections in December, seemed to mark the end of the road for NPG Kuzbass, with Tuleev's candidates triumphing right across the region. The swansong was the Inter-Republican NPG Congress, held in conjunction with the celebrations of the fifth anniversary of the 1989 strike in Mezhdurechensk from 8 to 11 July 1994, although the Congress itself only occupied four and a half hours on the first day. Mikhail Kislyuk did not bother to attend, and Boris Yeltsin did not even send a message of support.

The celebrations, and so the congress, were paid for by Rosugol', which provided 100 million roubles to the Mezhdurechensk city administration. The biggest expense was the chartering of an aeroplane to bring the large Ukrainian delegation to Mezhdurechensk.¹⁰⁶ The ordinary delegates were accommodated in a former Pioneer camp some distance from the town in conditions which were worse than spartan, kept company by Omon troops who were responsible for keeping order during the congress. The leaders of the Russian and Kuzbass NPG, guests of honour and all but one of the foreigners were accommodated in a more comfortable hotel, within which the foreigners were segregated, the whole operation being under the control of the KGB.

The congress itself was attended by 71 delegates, two each from Kazakhstan and Belarus, 18 from Ukraine and 42 from Russia, the

vast majority of whom were from Kuzbass. As at the previous Congress in Vorkuta, nobody had received an agenda in advance. Fortunately this was not a serious matter since the agenda consisted only of speeches, amendments to the Constitution, and new elections, at a time when the coal industry was under concerted attack and NPG appeared to be in terminal decline. Utkin, in his opening speech, declared that there would be no discussion of the restructuring of the industry, because nobody knew what was going to happen and it would not be interesting for the Ukrainian and Kazakh delegations.¹⁰⁷ When someone from the floor asked what they were doing there if not to discuss restructuring, Utkin did not respond. The bulk of the speeches from the floor, especially from Ukraine and Belarus, stressed the importance of re-establishing unity, and for the miners to play a positive role in pressing for the reconstruction of a unified market.¹⁰⁸ Utkin made it clear that Inter-Republican NPG was in a sorry state, with nobody paying their dues, and Alexander Mril', President of NPG Ukraine, having no contact with Inter-Republican NPG. Following the amendment of the Constitution, Sergeev was elected President of Inter-Republican NPG, to combine with his post as President of NPG Russia, and Mikhail Krylov from Donetsk was elected vice-president.¹⁰⁹ A resolution was passed condemning attempts to violate workers' rights through amendments to the labour law throughout the CIS. Having discussed nothing and achieved nothing the miners began to celebrate as only they know how (most of the time being horizontal and semi-conscious). On 11 July was the celebration of the fifth anniversary of the 1989 strike. About two hundred people stood or staggered around the square as dignitaries made short speeches. Not one mine sent a delegation to the celebration.¹¹⁰

NOTES

- ¹ In principle the NPG was opposed to the involvement of the trade union in barter and distribution, but in practice they had to do so because 'it is difficult to explain our position to ordinary workers' (Sergeev, interview; KASKOR 22-3, 4 June 1993).
- ² Tariff agreements were signed covering most branches of production over the next couple of years, replacing, or in most cases simply reproducing, the wage scales and basic working conditions that used to be dictated by the ministries, and including various government guarantees of support for the industry, and usually also the trade union. Some agreements anchored the pay scale to the legal minimum wage, but this just gave the government an incentive to hold down the minimum wage as part of its anti-

inflation strategy. The level of wages was not therefore in practice determined by the tariff agreement but usually by managerial discretion within the framework of the annual collective agreement negotiated at enterprise level. The tariff agreement in the coal-mining industry came to assume much greater significance because it defined the growing levels of subsidy that the government would pay to the industry to cover the costs of housing, welfare, a large part of wage costs, and the costs of redundancy and redeployment. The key issue for NPG in the tariff agreement was that of the payment system, with their proposal being to move away from piece-rates to a guaranteed minimum.

- ³ The official unions, with a large but uncommitted membership, were faced with the same structural dilemma, since they equally depended on the government and enterprise administration for the preservation of their privileges. Although consistently opposing the government, this opposition was largely rhetorical and it took only the hint of new legislation to check any serious oppositional activity. The most dramatic example of this was Yeltsin's threat to remove the official FNPR unions' privileges if they did not withdraw from politics in the wake of his second *putsch* in October 1993. This immediately destroyed the whole strategy of the FNPR, which for over a year had been orientated to an electoral victory as part of a centrist block. The FNPR pulled back, and the centrists were annihilated in the December elections.

The other side of this relationship is the importance of the official unions to the government and employers as the primary means of containing worker unrest in the face of the growing economic crisis. This meant that from the very beginning of the Yeltsin government, for all the oppositional rhetoric on both sides, there was in practice a close collaboration between the two.

- ⁴ Those who became leaders of the Independent Miners' Union had spent the first year after the strike trying to make headway in the official trade union rather than working in the structures of the workers' committees. Aleksandr Sergeev, who became President of NPG Russia, was elected President of the Trade Union Committee of Tomskaya mine in Mezhdurechensk. Vyacheslav Sharipov, who became President of NPG Kuzbass, worked initially in the apparatus of the Regional Council, until he was elected President of the Kiselevsk city committee of the union in November 1989. Yevgenii Lyakin worked in Severnaya mine in Kemerovo until March 1993, when he became Deputy President of the Kuzbass NPG. In the autumn of 1989 he had been elected to the committee of the official trade union in his mine and chair of his section committee, but found that despite the renewal of personnel the union found itself working in the traditional way, drawing up and monitoring the collective agreement in collaboration with senior management. All three soon gave up in frustration as they found that the union worked in the same old way. However, many others who were elected to posts in the official union remained in place, although most lost any radical spark with which they may have entered union activity. Nevertheless, by 1993 the regional and national leadership of the official union was dominated by veterans of 1989.

- ⁵ On 11 September 1989 the official union sponsored a meeting to form an All-Union Co-ordinating Committee of regional strike committees in Moscow, attended by forty representatives of strike committees, and gave the strikers' representatives voting rights at its plenum. However, this initiative came to nothing.

- ⁶ The Kuzbass representatives played a passive role in this congress. The Kuzbass Regional Council had given little consideration to the issue of trade union activity, being preoccupied with its political-economic programme, even after the walk-out from the congress.

- ⁷ At the end of May, Coal Minister Shchadov and union boss Lunev had sent a telegram to all mines reporting a decision of the Second Plenum of the Central Committee of NPRUP that the Congress of Miners called by an initiative group for 11–15 June is untimely. The Coal Ministry had been instructed to conduct organizational work for the congress called by the union for August.

- ⁸ There were suspicions at the First Miners' Congress that proposals for an independent union were being encouraged by the nomenklatura, as a means of dividing the miners. Vladimir Gomel'ski, veteran leader of the Leningrad trade union Spravedlivost', attended the Congress to put his proposal for an independent trade union that would ban dual membership with the official union. Gomel'ski was prevented from speaking for the first four days, but after a vote of the Congress spoke on the last day. The issue of dual membership was decisive since it marked the dividing line between a parallel, but dependent, union and an independent one (interview with Gomel'ski, March 1992).
- ⁹ There was no discussion of the issue of an independent trade union in the pages of *Nasha gazeta*, between the Congress of the official union and the opening of the First Miners' Congress in Donetsk on 11 June, a letter calling for an independent union only being published on 12 June. Even the Second Congress, which established the Independent Miners' Union, was given only half as much space as the programme of the *émigré* Popular-Labour Union (NTS) (*Nasha gazeta*, 30 October 1990), and following its establishment the NPG still received minimal coverage in the Regional Council's own newspaper. More of the congress's resolutions can be found in *Shakterskoe dvizhenie: dokumental'nye i analyticheskie materialy*, Moscow, 1992, Volume One, 51–60. Volume Two contains the results of surveys of delegates at the First and Second Miners' Congresses (June and October 1990), the Sixth Conference of the Kuzbass Workers' Committees (July 1991) and the First Russian and First Inter-Republican NPG Congresses (November and December 1991) and two surveys of miners. Even amongst the delegates to the First Congress, problems of the supply of consumption goods, the worsening ecological situation, the low level of public health and the supply of housing all ranked higher than economic independence of the mines or regional self-financing among the most serious problems facing the coal-mining regions.
- ¹⁰ This account of the congress is based on press reports, conference documents, interviews and the report in *Soviet Labour Review*, 4, 8, December 1990, 8–9.
- ¹¹ The Congress also voted to ban Communist Party members from membership of NPG, although 120 delegates were themselves Party members, to petition the ministry to transfer the assets of the official union to NPG, and to call for an all-union strike if there were not new elections within the next year.
- ¹² Evgenii Vasil'evich Lyakin, who became Deputy President of the Kuzbass NPG in March 1993, was a member of the Editorial Commission which prepared the resolutions for the congress. The commission comprised fifteen to twenty miners from various regions, all of whom had higher education and worked closely together. The commission was advised by Leonid Gordon and Boris Rakitskii, Moscow intellectuals who had been closely involved with the workers' movement, although by now Gordon, a born-again liberal democratic, and Rakitskii, a long-standing follower of the original workers' control principles of the Polish Solidarity, were moving apart. Lyakin insists that their role was simply to help with drafting – and that their drafts needed heavy editing.
- ¹³ Aleksandr Andreevich Sergeev was born in 1960 in Mezhdurechensk. His father was a driver who was killed in a road accident when Sergeev was five. Having completed his higher education at the Novosibirsk Electrotechnical Institute and the Siberian Metallurgical Institute and his military service he went to work as an electrical fitter and then as a face worker at Rospadskaya before transferring to the Tomskaya mine, where he again worked as an electrical fitter. He was elected to his mine strike committee and then to the city workers' committee and was a member of the original Regional Council. He became President of the trade union committee of his mine in August 1989, and went as a delegate to the congress of the official union in March 1990 and to the First and Second Miners' Congresses. During the 1991 strike he was one of a delegation of miners that went to Vilnius to organize solidarity activity. He was elected President of NPG Russia at the founding congress (Russian-American University, *New Labour Movement*, 5, 1992).

¹⁴ Erokhin had higher education and had worked in a series of managerial posts in the metallurgical industry before being transferred to coal-mining (interview with David Mandel in his *Rabotyagi: Perestroika and After Viewed from Below*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1993).

¹⁵ The official union, NPRUP, responded to the threat of an independent union immediately, circulating a letter stating that NPRUP could not guarantee to provide social and welfare benefits to those leaving the union, to which the NPG Executive promptly responded with a statement insisting that the legal position was clear, that benefits were independent of union membership (*Nasha gazeta*, 11 December 1990).

¹⁶ The meeting also demanded labour legislation and proper accounting for trade union fees in order to break the monopoly of the official unions over the distribution of social insurance funds and other privileges. At the same time the Council of Representatives of the NPG, while endorsing the work of the executive bureau, replaced G.E. Osorovskii as President with Pavel Shushpanov from Pavlograd in Western Donbass and elected Sergeev and Aleksandr Mril', an underground miner from Krasnoarmeisk in Donbass, who became President of NPG Ukraine in February 1992, as deputies. The executive membership was confirmed as Yerokhin and Sharipov from Kuzbass, Dashko from Vorkuta, Grigor'ev from Western Donbass, Perepitaïlo from Donbass, Snegurets from Rostov and Cherkasov from Tula (*Nasha gazeta*, 13 February 1991, 19 February 1991).

¹⁷ This saga gives a very good indication of the lack of co-ordination between the different coalfields, and even between each coalfield and its supposed representative in Moscow. NPG did not yet have its own body in Kuzbass, there was still virtually no discussion of NPG matters at meetings of the Kuzbass Regional Council, or reporting of trade union issues in *Nasha gazeta*. The situation in the other Russian coalfields was similar, although NPG was making much more progress in Ukraine. However, the Ukrainian coal industry was already under the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian government, against whom the Ukraine miners declared their strike for 1st March.

The General Agreement, which was only published in *Nasha gazeta* on 8 March 1991, was never signed. In the negotiations with Prime Minister Pavlov on 2 and 3 April 1991, in which striking mines were in a minority, there was a commitment in principle to sign an Agreement, but Pavlov would only admit NPG to the negotiations if it abandoned the strike. In July the NPG proposed the resumption of negotiations, but the government rapidly signed a tariff agreement with the official union. However, by this time the NPG's draft Agreement was out of date, not least because the mines had been transferred to republican sovereignty.

NPG finally signed a General Standard Agreement, covering all branches of production, on 25 March 1992 through the Tripartite Commission. The Agreement was signed by three FNPR unions, NPG, Sotsprof, the pilots and air traffic controllers, but the remaining FNPR unions did not sign (KASKOR 13, 27 March 1992).

¹⁸ Birles was the trade union arm of the Kazakh Republican Association of Co-operators Soyuz, established to provide social insurance for private enterprises. The hope, unfulfilled, was that Birles would finance the activity of the new confederation, which soon collapsed amidst financial scandals concerning the leadership of NPG and of the Independent Journalists' Union headed by Sergei Grigor'yanets.

The formation of insurance companies was the principal activity of most of the new trade unions, particularly in the co-operative sector where workers did not participate in the state insurance system, and the principal source of income for such unions (and their officers!), although within NPG there was some disagreement as to whether to base social insurance on private or state companies. In Tula the NPG established a social insurance fund in collaboration with the local coal association, to be financed by 5 per cent of enterprise profits (KASKOR 61, 1991), while in October 1991 in Kiselevsk the NPG branch of the Krasnyi Kuzbass mine took over the administration of the state social insurance system from the official trade union (KASKOR 76, 1991). Personal ac-

counts were very attractive for younger workers who did not expect to fall sick, and proved to be the main appeal of NPG when it eventually began to organize on the ground in Kuzbass. However, by 1993 it was backfiring amid complaints that the insurance funds were not able to meet their obligations. The first personalized accounts seem to have been those introduced at Oktyabr'skaya mine in Leninsk-Kuznetsk (*Left and Workers' Movement in the ex-USSR*, 1, 23).

19 This body should not be confused with the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Russia (KSPR), which had emerged on the basis of the ultra-radical Democratic Union, and rejected the NPG position on social insurance because of KSPR's refusal to have any relationship with the state. NPG's main ally in this matter later became Sotsprof.

20 The NPG group at Severnaya reconstituted itself as a strike committee during the March 1991 strike.

21 Petr Bizyukov records an interview in April 1991 with a member of a mine workers' committee who was also a member of his city soviet. This miner denounced the official trade union, and praised the NPG, but when asked whether he had joined NPG himself he expressed amazement and dismay at the question – it had not even occurred to him to leave the official union (Petr Bizyukov, 'The Miners' Strikes in the Eyes of a Sociologist', unpublished paper, Kemerovo, 1991).

22 The demand for time wages was an important one for workers, when they could lose heavily from production losses which were not their fault. The NPG demand envisaged 70 per cent of the wage being the basic time payment.

23 In an interview in KASKOR published at this time, Sergeev claimed that the membership had soared from 25–30,000 before the strike to 100,000 (KASKOR 54, 1991). In August 1992 he told us that they had 55–60,000 of the 214,000 Russian underground miners in membership, declaring that the old unions would collapse with privatization. He also claimed that they had never allowed dual membership. (This meeting took place by chance in the office of the air traffic controllers' union just before their strike. Sergeev had not called on a matter of solidarity, but in pursuit of an air ticket to Kuzbass!) However, in his speech to the Second Congress of NPG Russia in December 1992 he claimed that membership had increased from 16,500 in December 1991 to approximately 50,000 in December 1992, although later in the congress he agreed with other delegates that membership was stagnant. In January 1993 Sharipov claimed that NPG had 80 per cent of the underground miners in membership in the towns in which NPG was strong (Kiselevsk, Leninsk-Kuznetsk, Belovo and Prokop'evsk), and Lyakin that it had 1,320 members in four of the Kemerovo mines (but none in Volkov mine). (*Nasha gazeta*, 6 February 1993).

24 The conference was attended by 44 delegates representing 24 mines, with between 13 and 320 members each, apart from Tyrganskaya mine, which had transferred en bloc from the official union, which claimed 2,700 members, although the mine officially had fewer than 2,400 employees in total. Sharipov claimed 6,500 members in Kuzbass, although the delegates to the conference supposedly represented 8,410 members. This was made up of 1,103 from five of the six deep mines in Belovo, 959 from six of the ten Kiselevsk mines, 434 from two of the five Kemerovo mines, 345 from four of the eight Leninsk-Kuznetsk mines, 345 from two of the five mines in Mezhdurechensk, 202 from one of the eleven mines in Novokuznetsk, and 2,700 from Tyrganskaya and 73 from two other of the thirteen mines in Prokop'evsk. There were no representatives from Anzhero-Sudzhensk, Berezovskii or Osinniki, nor any members in open-cast mines, although there were 50 members in one mine construction enterprise. The only city committees were in Belovo and Prokop'evsk (Lopatin, 474–5). In general these were mines without a record of militancy or a strong workers' committee – in the stronger mines the militants already controlled the official union and were reluctant to cede that control by establishing an NPG branch, unless they could take the whole branch with them, as in Tyrganskaya, or Dimitrova in Novokuznetsk at the end of

1992. Since NPG allowed dual membership, even these low figures have to be taken with a pinch of salt since not all members necessarily paid dues.
- 25 The Regional Council was equally active in developing commercial ventures, deciding at its meeting on 19 November to be a co-founder of the joint enterprise 'Baltkuzbass' which would barter coal for consumer goods with the Baltic states (KASKOR 79, 1991). On 28 July 1992 it considered a proposal that the Fund for Social Guarantees should organize a construction-investment fund to build workers' housing (KASKOR 31, 31 July 1992).
- 26 The Party of Free Labour had been established on 8 and 9 December 1990, initially sponsored by the Democratic Party of Russia. It was a trade union primarily for private sector workers and was heavily involved in commercial activity.
- 27 KAS-KOR *Special Information Bulletin for IIIrd Council of Representatives of NPG* and various issues of KASKOR.
- 28 Viktor Utkin was Secretary of the Supreme Soviet's Committee for Economic Reform, which gave him a suite of offices in the White House which became the headquarters of the Inter-Republican NPG (NPG Russia was housed in the former Coal Ministry, which became Ugol' Rossia and then Rosugol'). Born in 1958, he worked in Leninsk-Kuznetsk from 1977 to 1981 before being sent to the Leningrad Mining Institute, from which he graduated in 1986, and then worked as a foreman and section head at Tsentral'naya mine in Vorkuta. In the 1989 strike he chaired the Tsentral'naya Strike Committee and was a member of the city strike committee. He was one of the leaders of the walk-out from the 15th Congress of the official miners' union in the spring of 1990 and was one of the organizers of the First and Second Miners' Congresses in Donetsk. In 1990 he was elected a people's deputy of Russia from Vorkuta and originally joined the Democratic Russia bloc.
- 29 When we interviewed Sergeev in September 1992 he was full of NPG Russia's plans to develop a bank, insurance companies and holding companies. Similarly, when we interviewed Viktor Utkin all he really wanted to talk about was the Inter-Republican NPG's plan for a huge financial and construction conglomerate that would build housing for miners to be re-settled from the north, tapping the funds from the government's northern programme..
- 30 NPG does not seem to have been active in co-ordinating the response to the *putsch*. Only two calls from NPG were logged in the office of the Kuzbass Regional Council, one warning that the Odessa Airborne Division was being sent to Kuzbass, and one reporting the collapse of the *putsch* (Lopatin, 507–10, 517).
- 31 Participation in the Tripartite Commission gave the independent unions some official recognition, but the price they paid, in principle, was that participation in tripartite arrangements was supposed to imply a no-strike guarantee.
- These setbacks in Moscow were in addition to the problems at the regional level noted above, of poor food supplies, a growing cash shortage leading to delays in payment of wages, the failure to do anything to realize the independence of enterprises, and Kislyuk's appointment of old bureaucrats to head local administrations over the heads of the workers' committees.
- 32 A government telegram sent to all Russian banks on 19 March 1992 confirmed the FNPR monopoly control of social insurance in requiring the banks to close all trade union social insurance accounts (including those of the new trade unions) and to transfer the balance to the account of the new Social Insurance Fund which, while now separated from trade union funds, was to be administered by the official FNPR unions. Needless to say NPG reacted strongly to this move on the part of the government (KASKOR 13, 27 March 1992)
- 33 On the eighteen-hour flight back from Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk the President of the MAKKIP association of free trade unions, Federov, President of the Yakut Republican Association of Trade Unions, Loginov, President of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of the Vorgashorskaya mine in Vorkuta, Guridov, and President of the NPG

Prokop'evsk, Trashchenko, founded the Confederation of Industrial Trade Unions of Russia (KASKOR 81, 1991). On 14th November 1992 a separate NPG organization was set up for ITR, apprentices and office workers as a breakaway from NPRUP, with primary organizations in Vorkuta, Belovo, Kiselevsk, Berezovskii and Pechora (KASKOR 47, 20 November 1992).

³⁴ Sergeev's appointment confirmed the domination of NPG Russia by Kuzbass, which used NPG Russia as a channel primarily for its political demands. The Inter-Republican NPG, headed by Viktor Utkin from Vorkuta and also based in Moscow, was the channel through which the Vorkuta Workers' Committee and NPG exerted pressure in Moscow, primarily to represent the specific interests of their remote northern coal-field, as well as developing their commercial activity connected with the government's Northern Programme.

³⁵ The official trade union, which had been reconstituted in March 1990, was reconstituted again as NPRUP Russia at a founding congress in May 1991, with most of the leadership being renewed subsequently. NPRUP declared itself willing in principle to work with NPG, but condemned trade union pluralism as divisive and harmful to the workers, and rejected political strikes. Its president tried to claim credit for the spring strike wave, insisting that the workers supported the economic demands, which NPRUP had been the first to put forward, and not the political demands of the workers' committees, and claiming that in some areas the strike had actually been led by NPRUP (KASKOR 54, May 1991).

³⁶ This replaced the agreement signed between NPRUP USSR and the Soviet Coal Ministry in June, in the negotiations for which the NPG was supposed to have taken part, but they claimed that they did not receive the draft in time (KASKOR 61, 1991). According to Bud'ko, the NPG had been invited to join the negotiations for the December signing well in advance, but had never replied, 'perhaps because they were preoccupied with organizational questions' (*Delo*, 14-15, July 1993). According to Sergeev's report to the Second Congress of NPG Russia, he met Gaidar on 12 December and asked him why, when there were two trade unions in the industry he had signed an agreement with only one, without even informing the other. Gaidar replied 'Oh, I thought that they were you' (Transcript of congress). The NPG tariff agreement had been drawn up at the Miners' Congress, using the German miners' collective agreements as their example, and focused on the move from piece-rates to time-wages (Aslanidi, *Nasha gazeta*, 23 January 1993).

³⁷ The Congress almost did not take place, many delegates objecting to the decision to move it to an out of the way location where it would attract no attention from politicians or the mass media. The congress was attended by 203 delegates from 111 primary groups. At the congress, NPG membership in Russia was declared to be 36,000, including 10,200 members in Kuzbass. A representative of the AFL-CIO attended the congress and donated six thousand dollars for new year gifts for miners' children. This led into discussion of the Report of the Revision Commission on the missing funds, which it was eventually decided should be referred to the courts, although nothing more was heard of it.

³⁸ On the eve of the congress, Utkin had spoken at a meeting of the Confederation of Labour. He argued that demands for pay increases led up a blind alley. He noted that discussions about the General Agreement had got nowhere, the Finance Minister insisting that he had no legal power to sign such an agreement, so the way forward was to press for new laws to establish basic social guarantees (KASKOR 77, 1991). The miners themselves were not so convinced of the uselessness of seeking higher wages. The miners of Biryulinskaya mine in Berezovskii declared a pre-strike situation in pursuit of higher wages in November (KASKOR 80, 1991).

³⁹ The first act of the new Inter-Republican NPG was not to launch an organization campaign, but to participate in the founding of a bank, Rosdombank, which would engage in credit operations for commercial activity with a view to providing social

- protection for miners, and would finance social programmes in the coal-mining regions (KASKOR 83, 1991).
- 40 NPG and Sotsprof refused to endorse FNPR's demand for the government's resignation at their regular consultative meeting with the FNPR leadership at the beginning of December (KASKOR 81, 1991). While the FNPR unions were opposed to the government because it was too radical, NPG and Sotsprof were criticising it for being not radical enough.
- 41 On this document Yeltsin wrote 'To Ye.T. Gaidar and A.N. Shokhin: I want to support this. Prepare an agreement and come to the discussions.'
- 42 Golikov temporarily withdrew from the chair of the committee after being removed blind drunk from a plane taking him from Kemerovo to Moscow (*Kommersant*, 41, 1991).
- 43 Within a year this had set the miners up for governmental attack as spongers on the state, whose greed was the main contributor to the budget deficit, and the main target of the World Bank's attack on the industry.
- 44 In February, the Belovo City Workers' Committee denounced NPRUP's initiative in setting up a strike committee in the city, which was demanding the implementation of the tariff agreement signed between the government and NPRUP and the indexation of wages, for deluding the workers by pressing demands which were not in their best interests (KASKOR 7, 14 January 1992)
- 45 Golikov wrote to Gaidar on behalf of the Regional Council noting some of the criticisms raised at the Council's meeting of the consequences of the threefold increase in miners' pay, in particular that it violated the preliminary agreement with Yeltsin about the direct subsidization of the wages fund and so violated the proportional relation to pay in other branches of production; that there was no regulation of accounting for wages, so that in some cases wages could be raised five times, pay increased for underground and open-cast workers, and investment funds used for the payment of wages; and that there must be more favourable conditions for investment (Lopatin, 565).
- 46 According to Vitalii Bud'ko the tripling of wages was a mistake! He negotiated a doubling of wages with Gaidar, but as a result of a lapse of communication with the NPRUP offices the papers were prepared referring to a tripling of wages. Gaidar nevertheless signed the agreement, presumably without reading it. When he discovered what had happened, Gaidar challenged Bud'ko: 'Why did you present me with an agreement to triple wages, when we had agreed only to double them'. Bud'ko replied, 'Why did you sign an agreement to triple wages, when we had agreed only to double them.' And there the matter rested.
- 47 The close identification of Mikhailets and the official miners' union with the FNPR call for the restoration of differentials with the miners did not go down well with many of the miners, boosting the recruitment of new members by NPG.
- 48 The Regional Council carried out one of its telephone polls on 10 March and found that few workers beyond the teachers and medical workers and a few retail shops were willing to strike, with the main issue provoking strikes elsewhere being the backlog of pay.
- 49 In the wake of the failure of the FNPR strike call in Kuzbass the Regional Council published its most histrionic attack on the official unions, calling for workers to leave the official unions and form free trade unions (Lopatin, 567).
- 50 Kislyuk denounced the teachers as one of the most conservative groups in society and insisted that the teachers' strike was not economic, but political, being used by the Communists. He would be quite happy for the teachers to strike indefinitely, 'to stop them poisoning our children's minds with Communist propaganda'. Nevertheless he got the money to triple their wages, and used the strike to extract a planeload of cash from Yeltsin, although it was not he but Tuleev, who had again backed the strikers, who got the credit (interview with Kislyuk, Moscow, 15 March 1992).

51 The Regional Council of Workers' Committees declared its support for the demands of the teachers but rejected the form of action they had chosen, using almost exactly the same words as those used by the Regional Communist Party Committee of the 1989 miners' strike (KASKOR 16, 17 April 1992).

52 There is no doubt that competition from NPG was effective in making the leaders of the official union more assiduous in carrying out their duties, although neither union was in a position to survive a confrontation with management on behalf of its members.
53 We spent two weeks in July 1992 visiting Kemerovo, Mezhdurechensk, Novokuznetsk and Kiselevsk.

54 On 11 February the Regional Council had addressed this problem. Foreign donors had insisted that aid be distributed through the channels of 'democratic' organizations, rather than through the state bureaucracy (in the naive belief that it would be more likely to reach those in need through such channels). The Council decided to nominate only members of workers' committees to head the city distribution commissions (KASKOR 8, 21 February 1992).

55 At the end of the year the city workers' committee wrote to the regional administration and the Russian Supreme Soviet complaining at the inaction of the mayor, Shcherbakov (former second Party secretary), in the face of a growing crime wave, a plea dismissed out of hand by Kislyuk's administration (*Nasha gazeta*, 16 February 1993).

Kislyuk had enjoyed a net positive poll rating in Kuzbass until he grabbed the post of chief of administration after Yeltsin's counter-*putsch*, although Tuleev was far ahead of him in the polls with a positive rating of 86 per cent. By July 1992 Tuleev was backed by 77 per cent of the Kemerovo population, with only 6 per cent backing Kislyuk, and Tuleev scored over 50 per cent even in the mining towns, where Kislyuk had a net negative rating (in terms of net ratings Tuleev had 79 per cent positive and 13 per cent negative, while Kislyuk had only 15 per cent positive and 66 per cent negative). Yeltsin also had a net negative rating, with 41 per cent support but 47 per cent against, compared with a positive rating of 55 per cent and a negative rating of 25 per cent the previous year (although Tuleev had comfortably defeated Yeltsin in Kuzbass in the presidential election in June 1991). The workers' committees enjoyed more support than Kislyuk, with 15 per cent putting their faith for the future in the Union of Workers, 8 per cent in workers' committees, but 60 per cent in no social and political organizations (and 24 per cent could not even name an organization), while the regional soviet was the only state structure which enjoyed significant support (Kemerovo public opinion centre, unpublished data; and KASKOR 34, 21 August 1992).

56 On the attitude of workers' leaders' wives to their activism see Ye.B. Gruzdeva, 'Otnoshenie shakhterskikh semei k uchastnikam rabochego dvizheniya', in *Shakhterskoe dvizhenie*, Moscow, 1992, Volume Two, 296–309.

57 On 11 August it was decided to hold this congress not in Moscow in October but in Novokuznetsk at the beginning of November, later postponed by the Kuzbass Regional Council to the end of November, but the attempt to revive the Confederation of Labour came to nothing, although the remnants of the organization were used as the framework for organizing trade union co-operation in the wake of the air traffic controllers' disputes. The Confederation of Labour Council of Representatives met in Moscow on 22 August and invited various independent trade unions from around the country. The meeting regretted the failure of the air traffic controllers to consult other unions in advance of their strike, but gave them support and endorsed an appeal to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) to use its influence to counter pressure on their trade union FPAD. It also decided to establish a Consultative Committee of Free Trade Unions of Russia (KSSPR) and called a meeting for 31 October, which actually took place on 13 November, although only NPG, Sotsprof, the Russian trade union of seafarers, the dockers and KOPR signed, others only wanting to sign if the organization really got off the ground. They also signed a resolution to the government, Yeltsin and the Procurator complaining about violations of the rights of independent

unions, particularly in attempts to regulate their financial activity, and a resolution in support of FPAD, which was also signed by RKSP (Russian Confederation of Free Trade Unions - formerly part of Sotsprof), Spravedlivost', the loco drivers, and two other tiny unions (KASKOR 34, 21 August 1992; 46, 13 November 1992; 47, 20 November 1992). NPG supported the air traffic controllers again at the end of November, but advised them against striking (KASKOR 45, 6 November 1992).

58 Beatings up and even assassinations of union activists were becoming increasingly frequent. However in the majority of cases these assaults were not motivated by concern at their trade union or political activity, but came out of commercial rivalries.

59 Zapolyarnaya mine in Vorkuta struck for a day in protest at the murder of the co-President of the Soviet of the Enterprise, Anatolii Pozdhyakov, which took place during the Second NPG Congress on 9 December (KASKOR 50, 11 December 1992).

60 Zaidenvarg, the head of the coal corporation Ugol' Rossii, had been Shchadov's deputy who accompanied him on his tour of Kuzbass in 1989.

61 Subsidies increased from \$102 million in 1991 to \$844 million in 1992 and over \$1 billion in 1993. This was not primarily the result of increased wages, but of increases in 'material costs' and falling production without cuts in the labour force. Kuzbass output fell from around 150 million tons in 1988 to 115 million tons in 1992, with the drop hitting the deep mines disproportionately hard. The coal price was increased sharply in January, May and September 1992, but was then held in check until July 1993, when it was very sharply increased once more (World Bank, *Restructuring the Coal Industry*, Draft Working Group Report, 10 November 1993). The World Bank report of August 1994 marked an about turn on the draft blaming the deficit, with no evidence, on pay increases.

62 The meetings also considered the question of the postponement of the forthcoming Congress of People's Deputies, at which an attempt to remove the government, and even perhaps Yeltsin, was expected. Belovo, Prokop'evsk and Leninsk-Kuznetsk supported the proposal, and Golikov and Sharipov sent a memo to that effect. In fact the congress went ahead as planned, and Golikov sent a trainload of 410 miners to support Yeltsin (KASKOR 48, 27 November 1992).

63 Sergeev in his opening speech claimed that membership had increased to 50,000 from 16,500 at the time of the founding congress one year earlier. However, later in the congress he endorsed a delegate's observations that membership was stagnant and the union was not developing, 'and how can it develop when we ourselves cannot decide who must be responsible for what'. This account is based on Vadim Borisov's notes and interview, and his transcript of the Congress proceedings.

64 Sergeev insisted that the agenda had been received by groups in Kuzbass, because he had seen them there himself. The Kuzbass Council of NPG primary groups had met in Prokop'evsk at the end of November to consider amendments to the NPG Constitution prior to the congress, but does not seem to have had copies of resolutions to be submitted to the congress (KASKOR 49, 4 December 1992).

65 The 'Coal Project' was directed by Partners in Economic Reform, an agency backed by the US coal industry and trade unions with funding from the US government, which later worked closely with the World Bank. It had developed out of the links established in 1990 and 1991, and was finally set up on the basis of a mission to Kuzbass in July and August 1992. The project targeted NPG and focused on providing technical assistance in the area of health and safety (and the sale of equipment), and training for NPG leaders in the Western way of life, including peaceful trade unionism. NPG did not in fact withdraw from co-operation with the Coal Project, although the latter was rapidly discredited primarily because it could not meet up to the expectations it had aroused.

In addition to the support from the Coal Project, NPG and its leaders received considerable support from the AFL-CIO in the form of 'training', trips to the United States, and computing and communications equipment (KASKOR 31, 31 July 1992 and previous notes above).

⁶⁶ The congress planned for December 1993 had to be cancelled because there were not the funds available.

⁶⁷ Sharipov claimed in an interview at this time that NPG organized 75–80 per cent of the underground workers in 80 per cent of the mines, which is a considerable exaggeration.
⁶⁸ In 1989 there had been about 40–50 full-time workers in the workers' committees. By the end of 1992 this was down to two or three, with city committees surviving only in Mezhdurechensk, Novokuznetsk, Belovo, Prokop'evsk and Leninsk-Kuznetsk, but NPG was organized in most cities, with the Council of NPG Representatives meeting at least every two months and the executive meeting every two weeks (Sharipov interview, January 1993).

⁶⁹ The 'privatization' of the mines was nothing of the kind, since the controlling interest remained in the hands of the government. NPG supported privatization in principle, but only as part of a long process of planned restructuring, including full compensation for redundant miners. The priority was therefore not privatization but the formation of appropriate structures to manage the industry. With the abolition of the Coal Ministry the industry came under the twin jurisdiction of the Coal Committee of the Ministry of Fuel and Energy, headed by Malyshev, former General Director of Yuzhkuzbassugol', and Ugol' Rossii, headed by former Deputy Coal Minister Zaidenvarg, with no clear demarcation of responsibilities. In March 1993 Ugol' Rossii was abolished, and Malyshev moved over to head a private corporation, Rosugol', which took over the distribution of subsidies, marketing of coal, and planning of the industry. The NPG only heard about this plan by chance (KASKOR 8, 22 February 1993).

The NPG plan at this time, prepared in collaboration with the regional administration and economists, was to establish a state coal company in Kuzbass to take over all rights from Moscow and manage the industry as a whole on a regional basis, with shares distributed between workers, management and local authorities. This plan was strongly opposed by the Fuel Ministry, but NPG believed that it had the support of both the Kuzbass directorate and the government (KASKOR 39, 25 September 1992). In the end the latter both let them down, Yeltsin's plan strengthening the existing concerns and preserving them from subordination to a regional body, since the government planned to vest part of its shareholding in the concerns. However, the NPG proposal had not met with unanimous support from NPG organizations. A conference of labour collectives of the mines of Kuznetskugol' voted unanimously to create Ugol' Kuzbassa as an open joint-stock company which could be joined on a voluntary basis by the mines of South Kuzbass. However, they would not join a unified Kuzbass coal company because their mines had better conditions than others and they did not want to share their profits with other less profitable mines (KASKOR 48, 27 November 1992). It is ironic that one of the main complaints of the workers' movement was becoming the absence of a management body able to develop a comprehensive plan for the industry, when the destruction of just such a body had been the main achievement of the 1989 strike.

⁷⁰ This account is based primarily on unpublished NPG documents, interviews and reports by Petr Bizyukov, Olga Pulyaeva and Kostya Burnishev.

⁷¹ The Vorkuta dispute was complicated by the simultaneous strike of the independent Vorgashorskaya mine in Vorkuta in support of the workers' idiosyncratic leader, Ivan Guridov. The Vorkuta leaders went immediately to Moscow, returning with the leaders of the coal industry to report back to a large meeting in Vorkuta on 2 February, but the matter did not develop further. Donbass was also involved in a long series of strikes through February and March, led jointly by NPRUP and NPG with the tacit backing of the directors. However, there seems to have been no co-ordination between the Russian and Ukrainian miners.

⁷² According to Sharipov this was the first he knew of Vorkuta's proposals, although it was only a month after the NPG Congress.

⁷³ The demands were also supported by the Urals, Sakhalin, Rostov and Podmoskve.

⁷⁴ Sharipov and Lyakin held a press conference following this meeting, the first ever given by NPG Kuzbass. They stressed the worsening situation in the mines as a result of non-payment, with increasingly frequent local strikes — the previous day miners in twelve Kiselevsk mines, some of whom had not been paid since October, had refused to come to the surface, demanding that their pay be brought to them at the face. Sharipov and Lyakin expressed their dismay that the government, and even Yeltsin himself, failed to adhere to their own laws and decrees (*Nasha gazeta*, 6 February 1993).

⁷⁵ This objection was somewhat vindicated by the outcome — some mines in which up to 95 per cent of respondents voted in favour of the strike in fact did not come out at all.

⁷⁶ The ballot paper asked miners whether they would strike on a call from NPG Kuzbass until they achieved the full satisfaction of the demands put forward. The ballot listed a number of grievances: late payment of wages, excessive rates of income tax, attempts to prevent NPG forming its social insurance fund, the imposition of the first variant of privatization, and delays in signing the tariff agreement, but it did not specify what the demands on which the strike might be called would be.

⁷⁷ This conclusion does not seem to be borne out by the data, which if anything would seem to indicate the reverse, although the figures are not very reliable. Eight thousand of the twenty thousand votes were cast in only five mines, including (exactly) three thousand in Rapsadskaya alone, which was already privatized and dominated by NPRUP (*Itogi predzabastovochnogo referendum, Kiselevsk, February 1993*). Volkov mine in Kemerovo participated in the referendum, even though it had no NPG members.

⁷⁸ Although all coalfields backed the strike, clear differences between the coalfields emerged in this meeting, with the question of subsidies being most important for the high cost pits of Prokop'evsk and Kiselevsk, while the price of coking coal was decisive for the already privatised pits of Novokuznetsk. Mezhdurechensk reported that it could not produce coal without delivering, since it had no stockpiles, but loaded directly into rail wagons (*Nasha gazeta*, 27 February 1993).

⁷⁹ Technically the Kuzbass Council of Workers' Committees had been renamed the Kuzbass Confederation of Labour, but this title was rarely used. The Union of Kuzbass Workers also continued in existence, holding its Sixth Conference, attended by 46 delegates from seven cities, on 27 March 1993, at which it adopted a new constitution and programme and elected a new leader, an oblast people's deputy, Vasilii Degtyarev, who declared its aim to be the formation of a strong regional parliamentary party. The meeting, attended by Golikov and Korotkikh, was the first since the Fifth Conference at the end of September 1990.

⁸⁰ Two mine directors, of Lenin in Mezhdurechensk and Seventh November were threatened with the sack by Malyshev because of the participation of their mines in the strike, provoking a strong response from NPG (*Nasha gazeta*, 6 March 1993). The strike in Lenin is interesting because a small number of NPG activists led a strike of overwhelmingly NPRUP members. Olga Pulyaeva and Kostya Burnishev observed the strike in Lenin.

Lenin mine had voted 95 per cent in favour of the strike in the referendum, with 240 NPG members and 307 NPRUP members voting out of the 3,500 employees (2,550 underground workers). NPG had grown in Lenin over the first two months of 1993, and the director had provided it with an office, a safe and a telephone and arranged to check off its membership dues. When the strike was announced the NPG leaders had long discussions with the director about their general demands and they worked out various problems together which NPG could press in its negotiations with the government. In relation to the strike itself NPRUP and the management adopted a neutral position.

On the morning of the strike, NPG activists visited each section and assembled the workers in front of the mine, where the NPG President explained the purpose of the strike. The miners then met in sections to elect representatives for the strike committee

(there were only five people left on the old committee) and to discuss the form of the strike. When the representatives gathered again it was decided to have a complete stoppage, although the primary motive was solidarity with other mines, since Lenin had already chosen the first variant of privatization so this was not an issue for them. At eight in the morning the regular weekly telephone conference of mine directors took place, and the Lenin director discovered that his was the only mine in the concern on full strike. After the conference the director joined the strike committee in the information hall. At 12.30 the second shift arrived and after discussions confirmed the decision of the first shift. During the meetings a series of specific demands arose, including cuts in the managerial apparatus, complaints against specific managers, demand for free food in the canteen, and the payment of wages in cash and on time. The strikers were kept informed all the time by means of their section notice boards. At 15.00 a fax arrived from Kemerovo, through the city committee, calling off the strike. The end of the strike was announced over the loudspeaker system, and the second shift went down the mine, the NPG President himself chasing up about 20 people who had sneaked off (cf. *Nasha gazeta*, 6 March 1993, report on the strike in Butovskaya mine).

81 The Prokop'evsk City NPG and Workers' Committee issued an appeal to the miners which was a diatribe against the Congress, but which began, disingenuously, 'Politics is not our business, but if our "leaders" of the country engage in political squabbles instead of business we must stop it'.

82 The directors had also been pressing the government. On 12 March the directors of eighteen of the Kuznetskugol' pits sent telegrams to Yeltsin, Khasbulatov and Chernomyrdin, endorsing similar telegrams sent by the open-cast concern Kuzbassrazrezugol', demanding prompt payment of the subsidy and debts owed for coal supplied and the indexation of the coal price, with the demand for free coal prices if the budget could not support this. The telegram gave a deadline of 20 March for the complete cessation of the production and distribution of coal as the result of the absence of money (*Tomusinskii Gorniyak*, 19 March 1993, 26 March 1993).

83 Aleksandr Korotkikh, Deputy President of the Kuzbass Council of Workers' Committees recalled soon after: 'We withdrew our delegation from the negotiations in Moscow because when we met the directors and specialists we said to them "we have breached the walls with our heads and made this breach into a gate. Please senior specialists, go in, sit down at the table with the government, you will be better able to express our problems", but the mine directors got up and said they did not want to get involved. They just saw the workers' committees as a club to beat out money. They did not want to look in depth into the problems, so we decided to withdraw our delegation, just leaving observers to discuss implementing the protocol of demands, and pressed the demand that senior specialists of coal enterprises should be included in these negotiations.' (Interview with Eduard Vakhmin, KASKOR 20, 14 May 1993) Lyakin also felt that the strike had been provoked by the directors, who were much more interested in it than were the workers (interview).

84 The meeting was organized by Utkin, President of the Inter-Republican NPG, but it was only arranged on 17 April, so the delegates from thirty organizations had no time to prepare, and they had no common position on such things as social insurance or representation on the Tripartite Commission. The result was that Yeltsin exploited their differences to run rings round them. Khramov, leader of Sotsprof, asked Yeltsin to meet leaders of the ICFTU, which he was at that time trying to join, and stressed the need for links between democrats and the workers' movement. Sergeev made Yeltsin an honorary member of NPG. Kochur gave him a list of names of people in civil aviation who should be punished (*Delo*, 7, April-May 1993; KASKOR 17, 23 April 1993; interviews).

85 The issue of delays in payment was a complex one. First, there was the question of the payment of the various subsidies to the industry under the terms of the government's own programme and agreements. Second, there was the question of payment of na-

tional and local government obligations to the customers of the mining industry to enable them to pay for coal. Third, there was the general crisis of mutual non-payment and accumulated debt which arose primarily from the government's restrictive credit policy. Fourth, there was the issue of delays in the transmission of funds, which arose because of the extremely high rates of interest to be earned on short-term deposits which gave every intermediary a strong incentive to hold on to funds for as long as possible, and an incentive to proliferate links in the chain so that as many intermediaries as possible could share in the feast. Finally, there was the issue of the improper allocation or straightforward misappropriation of the funds. Thus the government's agreement to release the funds directly owed to the coal industry was only a small part of a much wider problem.

⁸⁶ Kuzbass was the only region in which NPG continued to refuse to co-operate with NPRUP. NPG and NPRUP in the other coalfields were by now working closely together, and in increasingly close connection with management, to press the interests of their coalfields and the industry as a whole in Moscow (as the two unions were in Donbass, to press their interests in Kiev). However, in Moscow, NPG Russia, in the hands of Sergeev and relying on its liberal Russian and foreign friends for funding, still reflected the position of Kuzbass.

⁸⁷ World Bank, *Restructuring the Coal Industry*, Draft Report, 8 August 1994, p. 9.

⁸⁸ This was the link between privatization and the restructuring of the industry. Sergeev's position, which was broadly identical to that of NPRUP, was that a systematic restructuring programme should precede privatization. This programme would involve the planned closure of the highest cost mines, with substantial redundancy payments and retraining and resettlement allowances, and the continued subsidization of the majority of mines on a formula basis, with subsidy perhaps shared with major coal users. Once the industry had been restructured the question of privatization could come on to the agenda.

⁸⁹ In fact, opinion in Kuzbass was hardening against privatization, with even some of the mines already privatized wanting to reverse the process. Privatization made slow progress, with management stalling the process by all the means at its disposal.

⁹⁰ The Coal Project, in common with the AFL-CIO, refused to have any contact with the official trade unions, pinning its hopes for the future on NPG. The NPG leaders were also becoming increasingly dependent financially on the various US assistance programmes, including the newly established Russian-American Fund. Meanwhile NPG in the other regions was continuing to work closely with NPRUP and the directorate. The ultimate irony came when the World Bank produced the second draft of its report in August 1994, in which it was anticipated that Kuzbass would be the region which would be much the hardest hit by closure as a result of its high transport costs, with the report anticipating a 70–75 per cent cut in employment in Kuzbass, proposing that workers should be forced out of the industry by sacking working pensioners and pushing down wages.

⁹¹ The leaders of NPG and Sotsprof maintained their commitment to the priority of privatization on the grounds that trade unions were impossible without private owners with whom they could negotiate, enter into relations of 'social partnership' and establish genuinely tripartite bodies. There was no doubt that the directors were exploiting the situation to their own advantage, but there was no avoiding the fact that responsibility lay with the government which was trying to squeeze the industry by withholding payments.

⁹² It was reputedly at Gaidar's insistence that NPG was invited to join the commission.

⁹³ According to *Kuzbass*, at a telephone conference on 2 September the General Director of Kiselevskugol' told the president of the local trade union committee that they should not start with the demand to fulfil the tariff agreement, which made no difference to the future of the industry, but should press the political demands adopted at the Council of Directors, namely the resignation of the President and the government (*Kuzbass*, 7 Sep-

tember 1993). Of the Kuzbass mines claimed to be on strike, NPG reported that in Novokuznetsk Yubileinaya was working, while Baidaevskaya, Novokuznetskaya and Bungurskaya were working but not delivering coal, not because they were on strike but because they had no railway wagons. In Mezhdurechensk one section of Tomskaya was not working, because it was flooded. In Belovo, where all mines were claimed to have stopped, *Nasha gazeta*, reported that all had been working. Nevertheless *Nasha gazeta* confirmed that the situation was serious – that even if they did not strike, the majority of mines supported the NPRUP demands, and meetings were well attended (*Nasha gazeta*, 9 September 1993).

⁹⁴ On 22 September NPG, MAKKIP, FPAD, both pilots' unions, the union of ITR in the coal industry and the seafarers signed a statement supporting Yeltsin and arguing that the election of a federal assembly followed by presidential elections was the only way out of the crisis. The following day a similar group, including Sotsprof, established the United Centre 'Trade Unions for Reform and Elections' (KASKOR 39, 27 September 1993) to be a united bloc in the forthcoming elections, an initiative which came to nothing.

⁹⁵ Apart from the Movement for Democratic Reform, none of the 'democratic' blocs were prepared to give any of the leaders of the workers' movement a realistic position on their party lists for the election. The result was that in Russia as a whole not one single leader of the independent workers' movement secured election to the Duma, a source of considerable recrimination after the election.

⁹⁶ NPG presented the method of the hunger strike as a tactical decision, taken because in the current situation an all-out strike could be used as the pretext for closing a mine. However, while such an argument might hold good of a strike in one mine, it was hardly valid in relation to a strike across the whole coalfield. In fact, at least in Kuzbass, the tactic of the hunger strike was chosen because NPG had no confidence that any call for wider action would meet with any response.

⁹⁷ The Kuzbass demand for an inter-departmental commission was immediately adopted by the government as a tripartite institution which the government hoped would head off opposition, with its first meeting set for 29 November. The official union NPRUP complained that the inter-departmental commission was a nonsense because it was dominated by people who knew nothing of the industry, and was merely a means of attempting to implicate the trade unions in the government's decisions. At its January plenum, NPRUP noted the inactivity of the commission (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie* 1, 1994). However, the World Bank liked its political complexion and in its August 1994 report proposed that it should be responsible for administering the distribution of the coal subsidy, perhaps unaware that it was little more than an *ad hoc* committee, which had virtually no staff, administrative apparatus or premises!

⁹⁸ ITAR-TASS, 6 December 1993, quoted BBC, *Summary of World Broadcasts*, SU/1866 C/7. There were widespread allegations that the Kuzbass action was set up as a pre-election publicity stunt, to raise the standing of the leaders of the workers' movement and allow Gaidar to present a populist face. If that was the case, the stunt was unsuccessful since Russia's Choice secured only 11.9 per cent and the Movement for Democratic Reforms only 5.5 per cent of the party list vote in Kuzbass, while Zhirinovskii's Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) took 25.6 per cent of the vote. Moreover, it was in the mining towns facing the greatest threat of closures, Anzhero-Sudzhensk and Kiselevsk, that Zhirinovskii polled the best, securing almost 40 per cent of the valid votes. Tuleev took 75.7 per cent of the vote for the Federation Council, followed by Aslanidi, who had withdrawn from the Regional Council having returned to his original job as a miner sometime before, who took 19.5 per cent of the vote. Zhirinovskii visited Anzhero-Sudzhensk during the strike in November 1994, in the course of which the miners besieged the city administration building and blocked the trans-Siberian railway. By the end of the strike Zhirinovskii had an LDPR organisation established with an estimated 90 per cent support in the town (Vadim Borisov, 'Socio-economic

conflict in a miners' town', in Simon Clarke (ed.), *Conflict and Change in the Russian Industrial Enterprise*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 1995).

⁹⁹ The Kuzbass NPG Council met on 12 February 1994 to discuss the financial problems of the industry, focusing on inter-enterprise debt, rather than the non-payment of subsidy, and on the role of the banking system and enterprise managers in delaying payments. However, the government could not be absolved of responsibility in either of these cases. The problem of inter-enterprise debt arose as the direct result of the government's attempt to control inflation by squeezing liquidity in an economy where enterprises have virtually no working capital. The delays in the banking system arose because the Ministry of Finance routed payments through a chain of commercial banks, which could earn fat interest payments for every day's delay. The Council meeting also endorsed the World Bank's criticism of Rosugol', demanding that Yeltsin ban Rosugol' from engaging in commercial activity, as recommended by the Bank, and threatened unspecified collective action if its demands were not met (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 2, 1994).

¹⁰⁰ On our visit to Kuzbass in May 1994, apart from Sharipov, none of the NPG leaders had actually read the World Bank's draft. On our visit in July a seminar to discuss the programme was attended by only one NPG representative, although the NPG Executive the previous week had instructed all cities to send representatives.

¹⁰¹ The bulk of the funds earmarked to finance mine closures was directed to the resettlement of the population of Khalmer Yu, a mining community to the north of Vorkuta.

¹⁰² Such a strategy of divide and rule became the centrepiece of the second draft of the World Bank Report, issued in August 1994, which finally set the alarm bells ringing in NPG.

Funds were not distributed uniformly to the mines. Some mines would be three or four months behind with wage payments, while others were right up to date. A number of factors affected this differentiation. The most productive mines, which received the lowest government subsidies, tended to be the worst off because commercial debtors were even more reluctant to pay up than was the government. However, the subsidy was also distributed very unevenly, going first to those mines favoured by the concern, second to those which displayed most militancy, and in the last place to those neither favoured nor militant, which tended to be those with the worst prospects, in which the workers were already demoralized and afraid that a strike would merely provoke closure. Within each mine the payment of wages was not evenly delayed. Personal appeals to the trade union or management on grounds of hardship could secure payment in advance of other workers, and dealing with such appeals became a major preoccupation of union officials.

¹⁰³ One Kuzbass mine, slated for closure in June 1993 although not on any of the closure lists, had already cut the labour force by 35 per cent in the first half of the year, but only 6 per cent of the reduction was accounted for by compulsory redundancy. Almost half went voluntarily, a quarter for disciplinary reasons, 14 per cent were transferred and 7 per cent retired. The loss of skilled workers from mines scheduled for closure is often so great that they have to recruit (Petr Bizyukov, unpublished research findings).

¹⁰⁴ NPG in Vorkuta pursued a more militant line, working more closely with NPRUP. Shul'ga, still leader of NPG Vorkuta, arrived in Moscow at the head of a delegation to demand the resignation of the government and early presidential elections, only to be denounced by Sergeev, who declared that he had no sympathy with the Vorkuta miners' 'collective political action', warning that their 'extremist stand' might only serve further to destabilise the national situation (RIA News Agency, BBC Monitoring, SU/1949 C/7, 18 March 1994).

¹⁰⁵ Sharipov explained the failure of NPG to advise its members of the content of the World Bank's recommendations for the industry on the grounds that to do so would be to provoke a social explosion. It was only in the spring of 1994, having attended seminars in Moscow, that Sharipov read the World Bank report and realized that it had to be

taken seriously and presented a threat to the industry. With other 'leaders of the industry' he went on a junket to the United States in May 1994 for seminars organized by the World Bank to explain their proposals, the highlight of which was a somewhat misleading presentation of the levels of redundancy payment which had been available to British miners. .

¹⁰⁶ The closeness of connections between Donbass and Kuzbass is indicated by the fact that the Donbass NPG had to send a message to us in England asking us for the telephone number of NPG in Kuzbass! Vadim Borisov attended the congress. After the first day he was able to change his accommodation from the Chaika pioneer camp to the Fantasia hotel.

¹⁰⁷ The issue would have been very interesting, but somewhat contentious since Russia hoped to grab the Ukrainian and Kazakh coal markets for itself.

¹⁰⁸ The only significant criticism of NPRUP came from Golikov, whose tirade was two years behind the times and failed to catch the mood of the delegates. In July, NPRUP in Prokop'evsk invited NPG to join them in a round table discussion at which everybody seemed to agree that unity was a priority, and the only barriers to unification were those of personality.

¹⁰⁹ Utkin had by now established himself in the presidential apparatus, as a deputy of Filatov, having failed to secure election to the Duma.

¹¹⁰ In November 1994 Sharipov was elected in place of Golikov as president of the Regional Council of Workers' Committees, completing the assimilation of the latter body to NPG. By December 1994 the growing grass-roots pressure for co-operation with NPRUP (now known as Rosugleprof) in defence of the industry was widely expressed at the third congress of NPG Russia, held in Chelyabinsk, with NPG and NPRUP working closely together in all the coalfields but Kuzbass (in Vorkuta this co-operation had paid off for NPG, where it organised a majority of the underground miners). Although the issue of co-operation between the two unions was not directly addressed by the congress, and NPG continued to stress its customary political commitments, the ritual denunciations of NPRUP were absent (see *Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 12, 1994, for the resolutions of the congress).'

5. Sotsprof

Sotsprof is generally considered, along with the NPG, to be the largest and most significant of the new trade union organizations. It was originally established in 1989 and soon became known in the West through publicity generated on its behalf by Boris Kagarlitsky. In fact Kagarlitsky dropped out of Sotsprof soon after its formation, and the organization split at the end of 1990, the Sotsprof name being retained by the faction that was closely linked to the Social Democratic Party.

Sotsprof really got off the ground only following the March 1990 elections, when Sotsprof was able to acquire premises and political backing from the democratic deputies on Mossoviet, but it became a significant force only following Yeltsin's counter-*putsch*, when its Social Democratic allies took control of the Ministry of Labour, ensuring Sotsprof a majority of the seats assigned to the independent unions on the Tripartite Commission. The leader of Sotsprof then drafted the Law on Collective Agreements of March 1992, which Sotsprof immediately used as the basis of its campaign to recruit and organize primary groups.

Although Sotsprof initially had some dramatic successes in negotiating collective agreements from a small membership base (the first had been in Novosibirsk in 1991, before the new law), its collective agreement campaign during 1992 and into 1993 took place more often in the courts than around the negotiating table, as Sotsprof sued directors who would not negotiate, usually without success. Meanwhile, Sotsprof's political position was being undermined as it became increasingly preoccupied with a campaign against the official trade unions, directed primarily at getting hold of their property, while the government was moving towards an accommodation with the official unions. At the end of 1992 it lost its foothold in government, with the removal of its backers from the Ministry of Labour, and lost its representation on the Tripartite Commission. Through 1993 and 1994 the Sotsprof leadership continued to make a lot of noise, and looked around for allies and backers at home and abroad, but it became increasingly difficult to conceal the fact that the emperor had no clothes.

Many of its opponents consider Sotsprof to have been a bubble blown by the Social Democrats and relying entirely on their political support for its existence. However, Sotsprof did have its own primary groups, even if its membership claims were extravagant. In this chapter we are more interested in the reality of the life of Sotsprof groups on the ground, rather than in the machinations of its leadership.

In the first phase of its existence, Sotsprof sought to make contact with workers by following up reports of industrial unrest and rushing to offer its services. What Sotsprof could offer workers was legal registration, providing a group of workers with all the necessary documentation for them to establish themselves formally as a trade union. In addition, Sotsprof could provide elementary legal advice, although it did not have its own lawyer, and limited material support. However, the centre could not and did not attempt to offer much more, and the tendency was for its primary groups either to dissolve or to break away. Nevertheless the publicity attracted by the Sotsprof leadership meant that the office was soon being approached by groups of workers wanting to establish their own Sotsprof groups so, although there was a fairly rapid turnover, Sotsprof did manage to grow through 1991 and 1992. However, the fact that Sotsprof offered so little to its members meant that it was not able to get off the ground in cities which already had established workers' organizations, such as St Petersburg, Samara or the mining regions, its main centres being Moscow and Novosibirsk, although in the latter city it was engaged in little more than a battle for survival.

Sotsprof enjoyed more success in Moscow, where it was able to exploit its political backing in Mossoviet and in the government, and where in 1992 Sotsprof groups negotiated collective agreements in a handful of plants, including the giant AZLK auto factory. However, as the leadership fell out of political favour and conditions for independent workers' organization became more difficult, Sotsprof's record was increasingly one of failure: failure to negotiate agreements and, more importantly, failure to protect victimized members. By 1993 it seemed that the only thing that Sotsprof membership provided was to put its members first in line for dismissal in the event of redundancy.

THE ORIGINS OF SOTSPROF

The idea of establishing an independent trade union federation arose out of a meeting in a workers' hostel of the giant Zil auto plant in Moscow in January 1989 when a group of workers, including Lev Volovik, decided to form their own independent trade union since they felt that the official union did nothing to defend their rights.¹ Soon after the meeting the workers met Sergei Khramov, who was also thinking of forming a trade union, having spoken in favour of such a plan at the congress of the Democratic Union the previous year.² Together they prepared for a meeting.³

The founding meeting of the Association of Socialist Trade Unions (Sotsprof) took place on 1 April 1989, at a meeting in a Moscow co-operative restaurant attended by 31 representatives from 10 towns, together with 5 consultants and 5 press representatives.⁴ The meeting elected a co-ordinating committee of three, Sergei Khramov, V. Korolev and Lev Volovik, and charged them with preparing a founding congress and with the official registration of the association.⁵

Sotsprof's first public activity was the organization of an All-Russian Congress of Informal Workers' Organizations, called jointly with the official union centre, VTsSPS, in Moscow for 8 and 9 July 1989, which coincidentally took place only two days before the 1989 miners' strike broke out in Mezhdurechensk. This meeting was controversial in accepting official union sponsorship, which aroused some suspicion among informal activists, but it provided a forum in which the fundamental debate between those who favoured the creation of independent unions and those who favoured the democratization of the official unions took place for the first time.⁶

Sotsprof was one of the first of the 'informal' organizations to register legally with the Interior Ministry, on 28 July 1989, although it argued that under the ILO (International Labour Organization) Convention, signed by the USSR in 1977, trade unions did not require the permission of the state to exist. Nevertheless, it was its registration, which was no doubt eased by its willingness to co-operate with official structures, which was the key to Sotsprof's initial success, since it enabled Sotsprof to provide an umbrella under which other independent organizations could establish their legal status without going through expensive and time-consuming legal formalities on their own

account, and through which they could nominate candidates for the local and republican elections which took place in March 1990.

The trade union activity of Sotsprof developed only slowly. One member of the Moscow Popular Front, Yefim Ostrovskii, happened to be in the Kuzbass when the miners' strikes broke out in July 1989, and he and Boris Kagarlitsky visited the Karaganda coalfield in Kazakhstan, while the miners of the Vorkuta and Rostov coalfields contacted Sotsprof in Moscow.⁷ On 16 November 1989 Sotsprof organized a meeting between representatives of the miners' strike committees and the Polish Solidarity movement.

The first trade union groups established by Sotsprof, on 3 August 1989, were the Moscow trade union of intellectual workers, headed by Garold I. Temkin, an engineer, and the Zaporozh'e (Ukraine) trade union of workers and engineers, headed by Ye.A. Parshakov. A Ukrainian Republican Co-ordinating Council was established in Dnepropetrovsk under the leadership of Strelkov two weeks later. The intention was to create an independent trade union organization which extended to all branches of the economy, including the self-employed and workers in co-operatives.

The latter groups of workers, who were not organized by the official trade unions, were the prime targets for the first independent trade unions in the Soviet Union, which were essentially commercial organizations set up to provide social and medical insurance for private sector employees, usually at the instigation of their employers, who were at the same time able to take advantage of the tax concessions enjoyed by trade unions. This was a lucrative business, and one in which Sotsprof was keen to become involved. In September 1989, Sotsprof joined with the USSR Union of Production Co-operatives in calling the constituent congress of the USSR Association of Trade Unions of Workers in Co-operative Enterprises, although this initiative seems to have come to nothing.

The Moscow Regional Organization of Sotsprof was established on 24 December 1989, with twelve Moscow trade union organizations represented. The president of the Moscow Co-ordinating Committee was Nikolai Solov'ev, and the deputies were Garold Temkin, A.O. Ostrovskii and G.V. Deryagin. By the end of 1989 Sotsprof had a total of 21 primary organizations, including the 12 in Moscow, 4 more in Russia (in Voronezh, Volgograd, Kaluga and Leningrad) and 5 in Ukraine.⁸

Sotsprof USSR was formally established at its founding congress in Moscow on 17 and 18 February 1990, attended by more than 150 people from 37 cities, representing 33 primary organizations (20 in Moscow, 6 more in Russia and 7 in Ukraine) and about 10 initiative groups. The congress adopted a constitution and expanded the Coordinating Committee to seven members, adding R.S. Mal'ginov, a refrigerator worker, S.A. Naideinov, a former miner, Solov'ev, a former geodesist and now a journalist with the Postfactum news agency, and Temkin, with Khramov as president.⁹

Sotsprof defined itself as a 'non-party' organization, seeking to realize the 'classical' trade union function of fighting for the interests of wage labour as intermediary with those who pay for it, rejecting state subsidies,¹⁰ and seeking a wage constrained not by the size of the wages fund, but corresponding to market prices, 'on mutually advantageous terms'. The question of social insurance was of fundamental importance, since the insurance functions of the official trade unions underpinned the hold of the state over those unions, and the hold of the unions over their members. The founding conference of Sotsprof therefore pressed for the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to transfer social insurance from the trade unions to the state.

Politically, Sotsprof initially defined itself as socialist, but non-party, including in its ranks members of the Communist Party, Social Democrats, Socialists, Christian Democrats, Anarcho-Syndicalists, and other parties. It defined its socialism as 'human and democratic', neither Communist nor anti-Communist, with an emphasis on the principles of self-management of production and the administration of the enterprise by its labour collective.

Sotsprof defined itself as an *association* of independent trade unions, each of which would be established on the basis of a particular trade or profession.¹¹ This distinguished Sotsprof from the 'democratic centralism' and the branch principle of organization of the official unions, although in principle managers could also belong to Sotsprof within their own professional groupings, as they could in the 'co-operative' unions, in contrast to most of the other independent unions which defined themselves as workers' organizations.

The structure of the organization was very simple. Individuals belonged to Sotsprof through membership of a primary group formed on an occupational basis.¹² Primary groups were then linked on either a branch or a territorial basis (such as the Association of Sotsprof Trade

Unions of Medical Workers, or the Novosibirsk Regional Association of Sotsprof Trade Unions) and sent representatives directly to Sotsprof congresses at various levels, which elected the officers. Unlike many other independent unions, Sotsprof does not prohibit dual membership, and most of its members seem to remain members of the official trade union as well.¹³ Initially, Sotsprof was willing in principle to work with the official trade unions on the basis of democratic pluralism, again unlike most other independent bodies. However, following the split at the end of 1990 and the *putsch* of August 1991, Sotsprof waged an increasingly virulent campaign against the official unions in the struggle for political power, but at the same time has stood aloof from the other independent unions and the leadership has in practice not been averse to accommodation with the official unions.

Affiliation fees were set at 3 per cent of salary, to be paid to the local organization, which had complete disposal of its own finances to create 'non-profit-making functional apparatuses' (such as legal advice, a mutual aid fund, medical services, an insurance fund, unemployment benefit and a strike fund), and to engage in profit-making commercial activity, the profits to be spent on other union purposes. Primary groups related to the centre on a contractual basis, paying the central offices for those services that they required, most notably the provision of legal advice and documentation, a relationship which did not please some of the primary groups which often did not even have the money to buy paper to make leaflets. In practice, so far as we have been able to discover, typical members of active Sotsprof primary groups pay little or nothing in fees, do not hold membership cards, and do not engage in any ancillary activities.

The Co-ordinating Committee of Sotsprof was defined as an exclusively executive body, with no powers of its own, elected by a full vote of the congress. This body manages Sotsprof commercial activities, whose profits were to support its administrative apparatus, provide experts and consultants, and give credit to local organizations.

THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF SOTSPROF

A struggle for control of Sotsprof was joined almost as soon as the Association was formed. On 23 March 1990, an Association of 'Solidarity Trade Unions of Ukraine' and a second Ukrainian Co-ordinating

Committee were established (so that Ukraine had three co-ordinating bodies for only seven primary groups), while a month later Khramov dissolved the first committee on the grounds that it had been improperly constituted (hardly surprising since it had been formed before Sotsprof had a constitution). Over the following three months Khramov was very energetic in establishing Sotsprof primary organizations (between May and July personally registering Primorski Krai Regional Sotsprof with five primary groups, Tambov with five and Krasnodar Krai with four), many of which were alleged by Khramov's opponents to be primarily commercial organizations.

The struggle for control of Sotsprof was over the same issue as the struggle which almost destroyed NPG a year later, the issue of commercial activity. The story is difficult to disentangle amid the mass of allegations on both sides, but the outlines are fairly clear. Khramov in particular was heavily committed to the strategy of building the organization on the basis of commercial activity, through his association with a Moscow businessman, Viktor Panov. The Moscow Co-ordinating Committee resolved on 15 June 1990 that no commercial enterprises of Sotsprof could act in Moscow without the permission of the Co-ordinating Committee. Nevertheless, according to Temkin and Solov'ev, on 20 June Panov secured a letter from Musikanski, Deputy Chair of the Moscow City executive committee, authorizing Panov to conduct commercial activities on behalf of Sotsprof, provided that they were authorized by the 'Economic Association of Sotsprof', a body that was established on 25 June over the names of Khramov, Panov, Krupenin and Solov'ev.¹⁴ Khramov and Panov established a series of more than fifty commercial organizations under the umbrella of Sotsprof, taking advantage of the tax privileges enjoyed by trade unions at the time, with a wide range of ambitious projects, from social insurance funds, through legal protection, unemployment insurance, strike funds, support for the underprivileged, special factories for the disabled and unemployed, to a research institute and publishing and bookbinding enterprise, although the Moscow Co-ordinating Committee claimed that these were all established without reference to it.

The First Congress of Sotsprof had planned a conference for the autumn of 1990, but in its place a 'seminar' was held in a hotel at Istra just outside Moscow on 14 October 1990. By now Sotsprof had 123 registered primary organizations, of which 45 were in Moscow, 39 in

the rest of Russia (including 5 in Primorsk, 6 in Tambov, 5 in Krasnodar), and 39 in Ukraine, of which 30 were in Kiev, although there was little sign of any actual trade union activity on the part of any of them.¹⁵ Some of the delegates gathered in the bar on the first evening and decided to organize separate Republican structures for Sotsprof, primarily to bring Khramov's activities under some kind of control. The following day Khramov denounced the plan from the platform, but representatives of trade union groups from Krasnodar, Tambov, the Urals and Moscow gathered in the foyer and approved a protocol establishing the organization which had been written by A.N. Yel'shin from Krasnodar. That evening the 'Russian Co-ordinating Committee' of Sotsprof was established, comprising Yel'shin, V.M. Panchenko and A.K. Semenov from Tambov and Solov'ev and Temkin from Moscow, charged with calling a congress. At the same time a Ukrainian proposal to turn Sotsprof USSR into an inter-state partnership was adopted.

Three weeks later, on 11 November, Khramov held a meeting of Moscow trade union organizations, without consulting or informing the Moscow Co-ordinating Committee, attended by about twenty people, the bulk of whom, according to Khramov's opponents, either represented nobody or represented organizations established in violation of the Sotsprof Constitution which were not registered with the Moscow Committee (the latter claimed that in addition to the 46 Moscow primary organizations, and one which had been expelled for violating the Constitution, there were an additional twenty groups improperly registered by Khramov).

On 7 December, the All-Union Co-ordinating Committee met in the offices of the Commission for Workers' Affairs of Mossoviet and demanded a report from Khramov on his activity, which he refused to give on the grounds that he was not answerable to it but to the congress. Khramov refused to participate any further in the meeting. The committee discussed his position and eventually decided to dismiss him from his post, Volovik abstaining. Temkin was delegated formally to inform Khramov, who had remained in the room, of his dismissal, which provoked an angry exchange.¹⁶ However, Khramov left the meeting, taking with him the organization's stamp, required to authorize all official documents. According to Solov'ev, on 27 December a plenary meeting of Khramov's own local trade union of intellectual labour expelled Khramov from Sotsprof, but Khramov had taken the

stamp and documents away with him so that the decision could not be formally ratified.

Although Solov'ev and his supporters had a majority in the official structures of Sotsprof, and probably a majority of the active trade union groups, in practice most of Sotsprof's activity during 1990 was commercial and political rather than trade union, and these aspects of its work were dominated by Khramov. The emphasis on commercial activity was justified on the usual grounds of the need to secure an economic basis for its organization.¹⁷ Khramov was very active in providing a roof for co-operatives across Russia and he himself held a management post in one of the Krasnodar co-operatives.¹⁸ Although Sotsprof established an information agency, it confessed that this aspect of its work was poorly organized.¹⁹

The two Sotsprof factions held competing congresses in February 1991. Solov'ev and Temkin held the First Congress of the Russian Confederation of Sotsprof Trade Unions of Russia on 8 February, with delegates from 47 organizations from 12 regions taking part, which Solov'ev claimed represented 85 per cent of the real Sotsprof groups (excluding from the 86 Sotsprof primary groups 20 which he claimed were illegally registered, 7 which had fictitious addresses, and 4 which did not exist). The meeting abandoned the Sotsprof name, renamed itself the Russian Confederation of Free Trade Unions (RKSP) and adopted a new constitution, expelling A.K. Semenov from the Coordinating Committee 'for provocative actions and forgery of documents'. The RKSP tried to establish itself as a breakaway from the All-Union Sotsprof, but was unable to do so, and so registered itself as an independent organization with the Ministry of Justice on 13 May 1991.²⁰ When the registration of Sotsprof USSR expired at the end of 1991, RKSP tried unsuccessfully to establish itself as its legal successor.

Although Khramov's Social Democratic faction of Sotsprof failed to retain control of the executive bodies of Sotsprof, it was Khramov who had both the material resources and the political contacts. His faction had made considerable headway in penetrating the corridors of power following the election of March 1990, from which the 'democrats' emerged with a majority of seats on the Moscow City Council (Mossoviet) and strong positions within the Russian government, where the Ministry of Labour became a Social Democratic fiefdom. A former establishment economist (and future multi-millionaire), Gavriil

Popov, was elected chairman of the Moscow City Executive, but soon found himself opposed by the majority of Mossoviet. Following the election, Khramov established a close working relationship with the Commission on Workers' Affairs of Mossoviet, which was a consistent backer of Popov. Sotsprof also had close contacts with the Mossoviet Commission on Legislation and its Commission on Social Affairs. Through its connection with the commission on Workers' Affairs, Sotsprof was allocated two rooms in the Mossoviet buildings, on condition that it work closely with the commission. This relationship provided Sotsprof not only with office space, which in Moscow is scarce and extremely expensive, but also with access to powerful political support, and access to legal services. In 1991 Sotsprof's trade union status was recognized by Mossoviet as it was brought into the negotiations between Mossoviet and the official Moscow Federation of Trade Unions. Through his Social Democratic Party connections Khramov was also appointed to the commission of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation responsible for drawing up the Russian Law on Trade Unions.

In order to re-establish his constitutional position, Khramov established the 'Russian Association of Trade Unions – Sotsprof' at the Second Congress of the USSR Sotsprof in Donetsk on 11–13 February.²¹

SOTSPROF UNDER KHRAMOV

The Sotsprof Programme

The Second Congress of Sotsprof on 11–13 February 1991 in Donetsk was dominated by Khramov's supporters, 145 delegates to the Congress claiming to represent 119 organizations.²² Twenty new trade union organizations in various cities were established at the congress. On the basis of the supposed 'de-ideologization' of Sotsprof, the Congress removed the term 'socialist' from its name. Although it still retained the name 'Sotsprof', this was reinterpreted as an abbreviation for 'Social Trade Unions'. It removed its commitments to self-management, but it reaffirmed its adherence to the principles of non-party trade unionism on which it had been founded.²³ Its 'Ethics

Commission' also expelled the dissident members of the Co-ordinating Committee for 'discrediting Sotsprof'.

Despite its 'de-ideologization', the main concerns of the congress were political. Resolutions were passed condemning the political trials of people's deputies, students and priests in the Ukraine; condemning intervention in the Baltics and in inter-national conflicts; backing the activity of the Democratic Russia movement, and suggesting an agreement on joint activities; sending a letter to Gorbachev on the Gulf War; and endorsing the agreement signed earlier in the month in Washington with the AFL-CIO on the reciprocal exchange of information and mutual assistance.²⁴

The only specifically trade union business reported at the congress was the nominal establishment of a social insurance fund and the decision that 'strikes must be used as the last resort, when other means are exhausted. Sotsprof unions must basically aim at a search for a reasonable balance of interests with the employer by means of collective bargaining in the framework of the existing structures provided for the regulation of labour conflict'. An extraordinarily presumptuous resolution was also passed affirming that 'it is vitally necessary to consolidate the effort of the new trade unions and [Sotsprof] is willing to provide colleagues in the unions of miners, pilots, air traffic controllers, and other autonomous trade unions with specialist advice and materials, and to share our experience of practical trade union work'. The resolution only brought home the point that Sotsprof had virtually no experience of practical trade union work, and had played no part in the formation of the independent trade unions which had emerged. Nevertheless the resolution concluded, 'Sotsprof will also in future help with the formation of such unions' (*Rabochaya sila*, 1, April 1991, and 2, May 1991).

The programmatic resolution of the 'Russian Republican Co-ordinating Committee' of Sotsprof was also dominated by liberal political concerns, recommending Sotsprof organizations to campaign for support for Yeltsin, for the sovereignty of Russia, for the demonopolization of the economy, for the transfer of enterprises to Russian jurisdiction, and for the establishment of the elected post of Russian President. The only trade union matters referred to were support for the demand of the Independent Miners' Union for the conclusion of a general agreement on wages, and the proposal that

Sotsprof should introduce into the Soviet parliament a draft law on trade union rights (*Rabochaya sila*, 1, April 1991).

The second issue of the Sotsprof newspaper, dated May 1991, was like the first printed on very high-quality paper with sophisticated equipment, and maintained the liberal political themes, leading with support for Yeltsin, Moscow's Mayor Popov and the Sotsprof President Khramov, who was a candidate in a forthcoming by-election for the Russian Congress of People's Deputies.²⁵ The front page also featured a resolution of the Plenum of the Co-ordinating Committee of USSR Sotsprof 'On the Activities of Strike Committees', which stressed Sotsprof's commitment to responsible trade unionism, in contrast to the activity of Workers' (Strike) Committees. Independent trade unionism was identified as a necessary part of the radical reform of labour relations which accompanied democratic political reforms. Independent unions engaged in a 'constructive dialogue' with enterprise administrations, achieving a material increase in pay and improved living conditions for the workers by mutual agreement. Permanent strike committees, on the other hand, 'change the workers' movement into a destructive force' and 'hinder the achievement of a reasonable agreement', in declaring their exclusive power and threatening to break the system. The plenum resolution went on to recognize the justice of the demands of the 'honest and courageous' miners, but questioned their methods as counter-productive, condemned strike committees, and insisted that the workers' movement must take the form of the new trade unions, arguing that 'the fate of radical reform depends on the constructive positions of the professional organizations of workers and managers'.

In the same issue of the paper, Khramov again stressed the primacy of collective bargaining, although he recognized the possibility of recourse to strike action if agreement could not be reached. He stressed that the basic interests of workers were to reduce working hours, increase pay and improve living conditions, while in all 'civilized' countries all the other interests of the worker lay outside the sphere of work. It was for the employer to worry about the profitability of the enterprise. This did not mean that the interests of workers and management were opposed, because the competent manager could increase real wages without exceeding the limits of the budget, while the key to a real improvement in the workers' conditions was im-

proved training. According to Khramov, Sotsprof built on 'universal human principles of common sense'.

Sotsprof declared itself opposed to workers' participation in management, believing that the role of the trade union was simply to represent workers in bargaining over the terms and conditions of work, so Sotsprof welcomed the development of the market economy and privatization as creating the conditions for the purchase and sale of labour power.²⁶ The leadership saw the role of Sotsprof not simply as defending workers in the new capitalist economy, but more fundamentally as seeking to accelerate the process of privatization and marketization, and to mobilize workers against the more conservative managers.

Sotsprof's Trade Union Strategy

Despite the bold rhetoric, the separation of the Russian and Ukrainian Sotsprof organizations and the splits in 1990 left Khramov's Sotsprof with a negligible trade union base, with the majority of the industrial unions in Russia apparently remaining with Solov'ev and RKSP. At first there was fierce competition between Sotsprof and RKSP for the affiliation of the existing groups, with each trying to capitalize on spontaneous strikes to establish primary groups.²⁷

Khramov's priorities were primarily political, seeking to establish his position by penetrating the corridors of power, the role of Sotsprof's trade union groups being little more than to provide some legitimization for Sotsprof's claim to be a trade union. Khramov therefore explicitly denied that the Sotsprof centre had any role to play in the organization of primary groups or the recruitment of members,²⁸ justifying such a position on the grounds that the task of the centre was to facilitate the activity of independent trade unions by pressing for an appropriate legal framework and by contesting the political, legal and financial privileges of the official trade union movement.

The result of this orientation was that in its trade union activity Sotsprof operated much more as an advice centre than as a trade union, and it was the legal, political and (to a lesser extent) material resources at the disposal of Sotsprof, rather than its liberal politics and its conciliatory trade union rhetoric, that gave it its appeal to workers seeking to organize outside the official structures. This is the main reason why Sotsprof has had most success organizing relatively weak and isolated

groups of workers, why it has had very little success in competition with other independent trade unions (in cities such as St Petersburg, Samara, Yekaterinburg, Perm' or the coal-mining regions), and why Sotsprof groups have a relatively short life-cycle – the vast majority either wither and die, or break away from Sotsprof.²⁹

Sotsprof was able to help workers set up trade union groups by exploiting the protection accorded by the law, and later by exploiting the opportunities created by the new laws which Sotsprof had itself helped to draft, particularly the Law on Collective Agreements. Thus Sotsprof provided a framework within which a group of workers could legally register their trade union as a public organization, providing them with the right to have a stamp and a bank account. Sotsprof could then provide them with the documentation required to claim their legal right to receive facilities from their employer, including the transfer of social insurance funds to their accounts.

Once the union was recognized, it became illegal for its officers to be dismissed, or for members to be dismissed without the union's approval (a protection which was annulled if the member also belonged to the official union, which could approve the dismissal in such a case). Sotsprof could provide legal support to fight cases of illegal dismissal, which were not uncommon, especially following strike action. Finally, the Law on Collective Agreements, in the drafting of which Sotsprof leaders had played a very active role, established the obligation of management to negotiate a collective agreement with any established trade union, on pain of fairly severe legal sanctions. This meant that as soon as a handful of people had established a Sotsprof group they could compel management to negotiate with them, and could take legal action in the event of refusal. Sotsprof's collective agreement campaigns therefore provided both a powerful mobilizing and recruiting lever, and a means of pressuring conservative managers.

A Sotsprof group would typically be formed when a group of workers heard about Sotsprof, often from the newspapers or television, and arrived at or wrote to the Sotsprof offices to ask for help. Sotsprof was then able to provide advice and support. In the first instance this advice was to establish a Sotsprof group, which would give the workers the protection of the law on trade unions, and which the Sotsprof office could achieve with the minimum of facilities. The office could then advise the workers of their legal rights, transmit their demands to the management on imposing writing paper and, if necessary, provide

legal representation for the workers in court.³⁰ The next stage was to try to persuade the workers to enrol in one of the Sotsprof health and welfare insurance schemes, which were the main focus of its commercial activity, and were heavily promoted in its propaganda. It is our impression that few workers have taken this step – once a Sotsprof group is established there is little further contact with the office, except in the event of litigation, so that the Sotsprof affiliation is essentially formal.

During 1991, Sotsprof made slow but unspectacular progress in attracting primary groups. At this stage the main way of forming such groups was to follow up rumours or news reports of industrial conflict to make contact with the small group of independent activists leading the dispute.³¹ Before the August *putsch* about two dozen Sotsprof primary groups were established in Moscow, including bus, truck, railway and metro drivers, and groups of workers in a textile factory, two watch factories, a hairdresser and two auto plants, although none had more than a handful of members. By December 1991 Sotsprof claimed to have 70 primary groups in Moscow, including a large influx of construction workers and restaurant musicians, with fears about privatization and unemployment stimulating a growth in workers' organization.³² Outside Moscow a small number of Sotsprof groups were established during 1991, often on the initiative of local members of the Social Democratic Party, with Novosibirsk most active (on both commercial and trade union fronts).³³

Sotsprof in the Corridors of Power

Sotsprof was active in the resistance to the *putsch* of August 1991, publishing a special edition of its paper on the first day of the *putsch*, attempting to establish and co-ordinate strike committees and spreading Yeltsin's appeal for a general strike, although in the event only the Sotsprof groups in four shops of the Second Moscow Watch Factory and on the track at the AZLK auto plant came out on strike, and these shops appear to have struck spontaneously rather than in response to any call from Sotsprof. However, with Yeltsin's counter-*putsch* the Sotsprof leadership was well placed to move further into the corridors of power, both in the Moscow government and in Russia.

Sotsprof had close links with the new Russian Minister of Labour, Shokhin, through the Social Democratic Party, and Pavel Kudyukin,

the Deputy Minister, was a Sotsprof member. Sotsprof also had representatives on the commissions drafting the new Russian laws on trade unions, collective agreements, working hours, strikes, social defence and medical insurance. In Moscow, Sotsprof backed the Popov government, and opposed the attempts of the official Moscow Federation of Trade Unions to organize strikes against the liberalization programme.

Sotsprof also began to secure recognition from various European trade union bodies as its leaders began to travel abroad, and it received foreign delegations, including one from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in February 1992. When the Scottish oil workers went on strike for recognition, Sotsprof sent them a message of support, with the empty promise of organizing solidarity action on the part of the Russian oil workers' union. Khramov even promised to control the emigration of Russian workers, to remove the competitive threat that they might present to Western workers (Interview, September 1991)!

At the end of 1991 Sotsprof managed to outflank even the Independent Miners' Union, using its close connections with the Ministry of Labour to get three of the 14 trade union seats on the 'Tripartite Commission for the Regulation of Social and Labour Relations', set up by Yeltsin as a pseudo-corporatist body to draw up a General Agreement with the trade unions.³⁴ In 1992 the official unions had nine seats on the commission, Sotsprof had three seats, while the Independent Miners Union had one, and the pilots' Trade Union of Flying Staff (PLS) had one, representing the rest of the independent workers' movement – a composition designed to ensure that the official FNPR had less than a blocking two-thirds majority. Sotsprof was represented by its chairman, Khramov, and two co-presidents of Russian Sotsprof, Mokhov and Semenov.³⁵

Sotsprof's political success was not matched by success in maintaining unity in its own ranks. Conflict between Khramov and his renovated Moscow organization broke out in November 1991, this time involving Khramov's deputy, Aleksei Ryzhov. On 5 November Khramov organized a joint meeting of the USSR and Russian Co-ordinating Committees of Sotsprof, together with representatives of Moscow groups, which introduced revisions to the Sotsprof Constitution which effectively eliminated the Moscow Co-ordinating Committee and abolished its apparatus, including the post of Ryzhov,

whose activity was adjudged to be 'objectively undermining the unity of Sotsprof'. However, Ryzhov continued with his work, which at that time mainly involved negotiating to resolve the conflict between the strike committee and administration of the Moscow metro, and the Moscow Committee called a conference for 23 November (KASKOR 78, 1991).

At the 23 November conference, 39 of the 74 Sotsprof groups active in Moscow city and region were represented. Khramov opened the conference with a report on the growing influence of Sotsprof in the new Russian government, in which Social Democrats were participating, on his own heroic struggle with the official trade union federation to secure places for Sotsprof on the Tripartite Commission and for a share in the property of the official trade unions. However, the real issues arose with the report of the president of the Moscow Co-ordinating Committee, Nikolai Nikolaev.³⁶

Nikolaev and Ryzhov argued that the Moscow Co-ordinating Committee had been registered before Sotsprof USSR, and so was an independent body not accountable to the latter, while Khramov insisted that not only was it accountable, but it was subordinate to the USSR Committee. Questions then arose about the activities of each committee. Fourteen people had originally been elected to the Moscow Committee, but for one reason or another more than half had been removed by the president. Khramov accused Nikolaev and Ryzhov of unconstitutional activities, involving trading in alcohol and consumer goods, of misappropriating money transferred from Sotsprof USSR to a joint enterprise, of failing to pay salary to the workers of the recently created Sotsprof Social Defence Fund for the previous three months,³⁷ the fund itself having no money as a result of errors of management. In a secret ballot the meeting decided to reconstitute the Moscow Co-ordinating Committee, although the old committee refused to accept its dissolution and formed a breakaway union.

The Sotsprof leadership was falling over itself to ingratiate itself with the Yeltsin and Popov governments to establish a political position and to secure material resources. Sotsprof, alone among the independent workers' organizations, unequivocally backed the government and rejected strike action in favour of conciliation through tripartite bodies.³⁸ Khramov appealed to Popov for premises for Sotsprof in an ingratiating letter sent on 6 January 1992 (English text in *Russian Labour Review*, 1, 1993), in which Khramov declared his support

for radical economic reforms and Sotsprof's commitment to resolving conflict without strikes, and claimed credit for the abandonment of the general strike which had been called for 25 December by the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions.

As the centre became increasingly pre-occupied with its political activity, it grew increasingly out of touch with the more mundane concerns of its primary groups. In its anxiety to curry favour with the Yeltsin and Popov entourages, the leadership unequivocally backed their liberal reforms, and rejected not only strike action to press the interests of workers on the government, but rejected even the formulation of political demands on the part of the workers. *Rabochaya sila* reported in February 1992 that Andrei Yefremenko, President of Moscow Regional Sotsprof, had agreed with Yeltsin's representative for Moscow, V. Kamchatov, that, as hired labourers, workers must achieve an improvement in their living conditions through their employers, and not make demands on the Russian government – this despite the fact that the vast majority of Sotsprof members were in jobs (municipal transport, health care, education) where the money for wages came directly or indirectly from the government.

Dissatisfaction with the leadership came to a head once more at Sotsprof's Second Congress, held in Moscow on 23–6 February, 1992, at which a resolution supporting the Yeltsin–Gaidar reforms was passed, and at which Khramov announced a moratorium on strikes except in defence of victimized Sotsprof members. Various constitutional amendments were proposed, but rejected on Khramov's recommendation, including a proposal to prohibit dual membership, which was rejected when Khramov pointed out that two members of the Co-ordinating Committee were still members of the central committees of their official branch trade unions! Proposals that the leaders of Sotsprof should be banned from organizing trade unions on their own initiative, and that they should only be permitted to belong to elected bodies of one level of the organization were also rejected, the conference approving a proposal to form four more trade unions on the basis of small meetings (each attended by between six and eighteen people) held during the conference.

In a row over the finances of Sotsprof there was a demand from the floor that an auditing commission be established, a demand which was firmly, and successfully, rejected by Khramov, who insisted that 'even the state has no right to audit the financial activity of a trade union'.³⁹

There was also an acrimonious row over affiliation fees, with Khramov demanding a fixed monthly fee of 100 roubles to be paid by each affiliated organization. This was opposed by groups with a small number of members, who were firmly told by Khramov that Sotsprof was not a charitable organization. The issue led to a walk-out by delegations from Novosibirsk, Magnitogorsk, Kaluga, Bashkiria and Lithuania, leaving the remaining 140 delegates (out of 220) to vote approval by the requisite two-thirds majority, a vote later annulled as invalid (KAS-KOR Information Bulletin, English-language edition, 2, February 1992).⁴⁰ At the meeting Khramov was re-elected president without opposition and Vasilii Mokhov and Dmitrii Semenov were elected co-presidents (KASKOR 9, 28 February 1992).

The main priority of the Sotsprof leadership during 1992 was its role in preparing legislation within the government apparatus and its continued struggle to get its hands on the assets of the former official trade unions, while the main focus of its trade union activity was its collective agreement campaign, which had been initiated in Novosibirsk in 1991 and was taken up on a national scale in 1992.⁴¹ The Novosibirsk collective agreement was circulated and used as a model for other enterprises. The main feature of the Sotsprof collective agreements was that, by contrast to the very long and bureaucratic agreements drawn up by management and the official unions, they were short and concentrated on the issues of pay and conditions, which were not a significant part of the traditional agreements. This meant that the collection of signatures in support of the Sotsprof collective agreement provided an excellent means of building up a Sotsprof group, while the ability of Sotsprof to use the law to force management to negotiate over the agreement gave it credibility in the eyes of the workers.⁴²

Apart from the collective agreement campaign, the main trade union activity of Sotsprof during 1992 was simply defending its own victimized members in court, a job which largely fell to Andrei Yefremenko, although he was not trained as a lawyer.⁴³ Sotsprof had a small number of enterprises in which, for one reason or another, it was well established, but by now new independent unions had emerged in Moscow which were often more attractive to workers involved in militant action,⁴⁴ while employers were showing a greater readiness to victimize active workers. In Moscow it seems that Sotsprof member-

ship was not growing, and the number of active groups was probably in decline.⁴⁵

Sotsprof in Decline

The high point of Sotsprof's political influence, as that of the miners' movement, was in the months following Yeltsin's counter-*putsch*, when Yeltsin's entourage was looking for support from the independent workers' movement. Through 1992, Sotsprof's position was weakening as it fell relatively out of favour in both the Moscow and Russian government circles, with a widespread feeling that Khramov was getting a little too big for his boots, waging an increasingly virulent campaign against the official Moscow Federation of Trade Unions and FNPR, just at the time at which the city and national governments were moving in a more conciliatory direction towards the official unions.⁴⁶ Sotsprof lost its main source of influence on the government when Kudyukin and Shokhin both left the Ministry of Labour, which worked increasingly closely with the official unions. The deterioration in Sotsprof's position was clearly signalled at the end of 1992 when it lost all three of its places on the Tripartite Commission, which reverted to the official unions, and did not secure representation on the Moscow City Tripartite Commission.⁴⁷

During 1993, Sotsprof's position at the base did not improve. On the one hand, it was difficult to recruit new members or to form more groups when the main thing that Sotsprof could offer was a promise to fight for the reinstatement of the activist when he or she was sacked, as was becoming the normal fate of independent agitators as enterprise bosses' self-confidence was restored. On the other hand, while the collective agreement campaign of 1992 had caught management and the official unions on the hop, in 1993 the latter were ready to respond by revising the traditional agreement on their own initiative and by freezing Sotsprof out by forcing their own agreements through meetings of the labour collective. For these reasons Sotsprof's trade union activity declined even further during 1993, although violations of workers' rights in the process of privatization provided some new scope for Sotsprof's intervention, particularly in Moscow where it could still use its political contacts to assist the workers.

During 1993 Sotsprof was involved in actions focused on the issue of privatization in at least five Moscow enterprises: AZLK and the

First Moscow Watch Factory, which we will look at more closely later, the cinema Mir, Danilovski market and, most dramatic, the cigarette factory Dukat.

The cinema Mir in central Moscow had been transferred by the Mayor of Moscow, Luzhkov, to a French firm, against the protests of the workers and the Sotsprof group. The court ruled the transfer illegal, but nothing happened and the workers appealed. On the eve of the appeal, on 27 January 1993, the president of the cinema's Sotsprof group, I.A. Marsakova, was beaten up (KASKOR 7, 15 February 1993).

A similar dispute arose in Moscow's Danilovski market, which was reorganized and closed from 19 April 1993. The following day the new management arrived and asked all the workers to resign, with the promise of re-employment in the new market. The workers, who had been expecting that they would be able to privatize the market for their own benefit, had established a Sotsprof group to defend their interests, but the new management threatened them with complete closure of the market, and tried to force the Sotsprof leader Kosatonova to negotiate a deal on her own, which she refused to do despite threats that she would regret it. When Luzhkov was asked about it he claimed that he had not given any instructions about the market (KASKOR 17, 23 April 1993).

The biggest conflict centred on the Dukat cigarette factory in the centre of Moscow, which was sold to an American real estate company Brook Mill, which had already taken over two buildings owned by the Dukat housing fund, and which planned to build a business centre on the Dukat site, while building a new cigarette factory, in association with the tobacco company Ligett, in Tushina on the edge of Moscow over the next five years. The deal had been put together by the Industry Department of the Moscow city government, but the Director of Dukat had refused to sign the papers and was sacked. Sotsprof moved in on Dukat and established a Sotsprof group, in close collaboration with management.

On 9 December 1992 a trade union conference of Dukat decided to join Sotsprof *en masse*, and declared a pre-strike situation with the demand for the restoration of the director to his post (KASKOR 50, 11 December 1992). A meeting on 29 December called a strike for the following day. On 29 December a Conciliation Commission, including Moscow Sotsprof chief Yefremenko and the president of the trade union committee of the factory, negotiated with the Moscow Minister

for Industry, who agreed not to nominate a new director immediately. On 5 January the Industry Minister promised that an investigation of the factory would be completed by 12 January and if it turned out that there were no violations on the part of the director, Vladimir Tyumentsev, he would be returned to his job. On this basis the local Sotsprof decided to end the strike on 9 January and await the outcome of the inquiry (KASKOR 1–2, 10 January 1993).

On 25 January Mossoviet withdrew all resolutions concerning the transfer of the property and land of Dukat to Brook Mill, referred the case to the organs of state security to find out who was guilty of issuing such illegal resolutions, and resolved to allow the labour collective to privatize the whole enterprise, not just to take a minority 30 per cent shareholding as envisaged by the Moscow Department of Industry. At the same time the head of the Department of Industry took the workers to court to get their strike declared illegal, although it was not clear whether it was Sotsprof or the Dukat labour collective which was the plaintiff (KASKOR 5, 29 January 1993).

On 5 February Sotsprof claimed that there was an attempt on the life of the chief of Dukat's Social Development Department, who was an active member of the Sotsprof group, following frequent telephone threats to him, the Director of Dukat, its commercial director and the president of the local Sotsprof group, N.G. Chesnokov. The TV news that evening reported on the Dukat case, but its report focused on the virtues of Brook Mill, claiming that the problems had arisen because they had not bribed the director (KASKOR 7, 15 February 1993).

The cases of the Mir cinema, Danilovski market and Dukat, like those of AZLK and the First Watch Factory, were taken up by the Moscow leadership because of their political significance in relation to the conflict between 'democrats' and 'conservatives' within the Moscow city administration and the Russian government.⁴⁸ However, apart from these special cases, the Sotsprof leadership was looking increasingly towards social insurance and international contacts as its most promising lines of development, while joining the majority of the other independent unions in supporting Yeltsin in his confrontations with the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of People's Deputies.⁴⁹

Khramov was very active in cultivating international contacts in the hope of consolidating his position by securing international recognition and, at least as important, money. In the spring of 1993, Khramov asked the AFL-CIO to use its good offices with Clinton to arrange a

visit of Yeltsin's supporters to the United States (KASKOR 13, 27 March 1993). In April he went to Italy to meet with an Italian fascist trade union (KASKOR 18, 30 April 1993), which led to an agreement to exchange information and created a furore when Khramov returned to Russia, being one reason why the ICFTU rebuffed Khramov's attempts to secure their recognition.⁵⁰

Sotsprof's main hope remained the AFL-CIO, from which it received indirect support through the Russian-American Foundation, which also funded the newspaper *Delo*, and, from the beginning of 1994 the ASTI bulletin *Profsoyuznoe obozrene*, which replaced the KASKOR bulletin, both of which gave Sotsprof a very good press.⁵¹ *Delo* reported on Khramov's attempt to displace FNPR as Russia's representative on the International Labour Organization, reporting that Khramov had written to the director of the ILO before the election to its administrative committee, traditionally represented by the head of the national trade union movement. Khramov argued that Klochkov, then president of FNPR, is the president of a trade union which

is a barrier to the system of real tripartism and social partnership in the Russian Federation ... with his active participation FNPR established a political coalition with the employers and the political party Civic Union ... FNPR publishes a daily newspaper, *Rabochaya Tribuna*, with the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs ... creating a risk that Klochkov and the representatives of the employers will reach an agreement behind the back of the workers and blackmail workers through dismissal, reduction of payment and social guarantees in conditions of economic reform and privatization (*Delo*, 9–10, 1993, 4).

If Khramov's grandiose statements bore little relation to the reality of his trade union's activity on the ground, he was not alone in his detachment. At the end of 1993 a VTsIOM poll reported that when asked whether they belonged to a trade union 66 per cent said that they were members of a union, 30 per cent that they were not and 4 per cent couldn't say, which accords quite closely with membership estimates. But when asked which union they belonged to only 17 per cent said they were in FNPR, 42 per cent said they were members of Sotsprof, 9 per cent of others and 32 per cent couldn't say, yet FNPR affiliated unions claimed to have about 65 million members (60 per cent of the population of working age), NPG had about 30,000, and Sotsprof perhaps 5,000 members.⁵²

Sotsprof's level of activity declined further during 1994, most reports being of court actions involving the attempt to reinstate members

dismissed for illegal strikes during 1993. The only significant actions reported in 1994 were of a small strike in a factory in Novosibirsk, and of strikes in the AZLK auto plant in Moscow and the VAZ autoplant in Tol'yatti, each involving a small number of workers, all three over delays in the payment of wages. The plenum of the Federal Coordinating Council of Sotsprof on 1–3 September 1994 discussed the matter of non-payment of wages, supported the formation of a social democratic block to contest elections and to participate in executive political bodies dealing with labour relations and social policy. The plenum congratulated a number of groups for their activism (AZLK, Moscow metro, First Moscow Watch Factory, Orekhovo-Zuevo medical workers, transport workers in Tula, Lipetsk and Novosibirsk, Polet, VAZ, Tyazhstankogidropress, Segezhabumprom, the Buzuluskii furniture factory and the Tambov metal-construction factory). Most of these groups had sunk into passivity by this time, their total membership, by our estimates, amounting to no more than a few hundred (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 9, 1994).

SOTSPROF PRIMARY GROUPS

Sotsprof's claim to be a part of the workers' movement rests on the composition and activity of its primary groups. We have already indicated the detachment of the Sotsprof leadership from the base, which is far greater than that already observed in the case of NPG. We would now like to turn our attention to the real life of Sotsprof, which is far from the activity of its leadership, and which is interesting not so much because it is a part of Sotsprof, since the affiliation of most Sotsprof groups is a matter of chance, but because it is quite typical of the experience of independent worker activists in general. To look more closely at the problems faced by such primary groups can perhaps convey some of the difficulties faced by the attempt to develop an independent workers' movement in Russia.

While Khramov had secured the political domination of right-wing Social Democrats in Sotsprof, and committed it to a conciliatory programme of trade union development, the workers enrolled in its primary groups lived in a very different world in which the Sotsprof leadership's model of Western-style conciliatory trade unionism was completely unrealistic, and this underlay the considerable distance,

and some tension, between the centre and the primary groups. Sotsprof provided initial support in carrying out the legal formalities required to establish a group, but did nothing to help develop an organization, so most Sotsprof groups rested on a very insecure foundation.

The lack of contact between Sotsprof groups and the centre meant that the Sotsprof leaders had very little information about the real world of Sotsprof activity, even if they were willing to divulge the information. In order to get a clearer picture of the grass-roots activity of Sotsprof we carried out three pieces of research. First, we monitored the development of three very different Sotsprof organizations in Moscow: one of the earliest Sotsprof groups, established in a Moscow bus park at the end of 1990; one of the largest Sotsprof groups, established in the giant AZLK auto factory; and one of the most successful, established in the First Moscow Watch Factory. Second, in the spring of 1993 we conducted a survey of the organizers of all the Sotsprof primary groups in Moscow which had been included in the list of Sotsprof groups dated 6 September 1991, in order to discover what had happened to those groups over the intervening eighteen months. Third, we conducted a series of interviews with the organizers of Sotsprof-affiliated groups in the Urals, and collected reports of Sotsprof activity in the provinces from various sources, and most particularly from KASKOR's weekly information bulletin.

The Bus Drivers' Sotsprof

On 15 December 1990, Moscow Sotsprof became involved in its first real industrial action, with a dispute involving the drivers at the Moscow No. 16 Bus Park, serving a population of half a million in the Krasnogvardeiskii district. One thousand bus drivers, led by the Labour Collective Council but against the opposition of their trade union, threatened to take the buses out but to block off the ticket machines so that the enterprise would lose its revenue from fares. The workers were concerned as much with the demand that management should ensure that the buses were in full working order as with the demand for higher wages.

Sotsprof and the Mossoviet Workers' Commission helped the workers to formulate their demands, which they achieved without having to strike, securing the director's resignation and a doubling not only of their pay, but also of that of all Moscow's bus, train and trolleybus

drivers.⁵³ As a result of the strike the Sotsprof office claimed to have established a primary organization in the bus park with 80 members, although there is no record of the existence of this organization in subsequent lists of Sotsprof groups. However, soon after, but quite independently, a Sotsprof organization was set up by a group of drivers from Bus Park No. 5, whose history seems to be fairly typical of that of Sotsprof groups.

We first interviewed Aleksandr Tolstikh, President of the Sotsprof of Bus Drivers in Moscow Bus Park No. 5 in December 1991. He told us that he had been an activist all his life, having worked as a driver in the bus park since 1970. He had been president of the trade union committee of one column of buses from 1981–83, and had also been secretary of the Party Bureau of the column for a long time. He had always pressed the interests of the workers against the Party Committee of the Park and against the administration, which he felt was common under the old system, but, just as typically, they never did anything. He had left the Party in 1989, and was active in establishing the Sotsprof organization in the park, becoming de-facto president when the founding president left to work in the adjoining government car garage.

The Moscow bus drivers work under very difficult labour conditions. Driving in Moscow is hazardous at the best of times, but the drivers work long shifts, with tight schedules, overloaded buses, and inadequate maintenance and repair. The bus drivers are responsible for the safety and repair of their buses, and are held responsible for any accidents which they suffer. In theory the administration is responsible for carrying out repairs. At the end of a shift the driver can report any failures or breakdowns of the bus, which should be fixed in the workshops. The incoming driver is supposed to check that the repairs have been carried out properly, but normally he finds that nothing has been done. Although in theory he can appeal to the administration, and refuse to take the bus out, this would mean waiting for perhaps one or two weeks for the bus to be fixed, so in practice the drivers take their bus to the repair zone and fix it themselves.⁵⁴

The attitude of the administration is shown by the example of one driver who appealed to the senior mechanic that his wheels needed repair. The next day the repair shop told the incoming driver that they had repaired it, but told him that he needed to check it out at lunch-

time. When he did so he found that nothing had been done. The administration always denies responsibility.

The maintenance and repair situation had got steadily worse since 1989 as supplies of parts and replacement buses had become scarcer. Moscow's buses, and all the necessary parts, were made in Hungary by Ikarus. Since Ikarus had not been paid for eighteen months they stopped deliveries, leaving the buses to rely entirely on low-quality parts made by local co-operatives, and the supply situation got even worse after the *putsch* of August 1991. The result was that Moscow's buses were rapidly falling to pieces, while Ikarus, with mounting stocks, faced bankruptcy, and Hungarian workers were laid off. For the bus drivers it meant more time spent on repair, more buses off the road, and more overloading and aggravation for those who were working. On Aleksandr's column there were sometimes only four out of 22 buses in working order.

The situation was also made considerably worse by an acute shortage of labour, which led the administration to force the drivers to work double shifts. For example, a driver working a shift from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. would normally then have the next day off, but the administration could demand that he work the next day as well.

A lot of the drivers had left the Party at the end of 1990. The Sotsprof group was founded by workers on one shift. The first meeting of the workers arose spontaneously at Filofsky Park, which is at the end of the route, where about fifteen drivers stop for their lunch break. There had been a lot of talk about the need to change the situation, and one day one of the drivers, Rudoinovich, said 'that's enough playing dominoes, let's talk about doing something'. They decided to get themselves organized before putting forward any demands in the belief that it was nonsense to make demands without any organization. There was no real leader of the group, but one of the drivers had heard about the independent trade unions through the mass media, and contacted Khramov. The group visited Khramov in the Sotsprof offices twice, and he helped them to draw up the papers necessary for registration as a Sotsprof union, and to call the official founding meeting on 1 April 1991, in accordance with the law.

They had no problems with any Soviet bodies in establishing their Sotsprof group, but the deputy director responsible for social affairs was irritated when the workers delivered a formal letter demanding recognition, an office, and a notice board on the territory of the park,

according to the law. He ridiculed them, telling them that nobody would take them seriously. However, he acknowledged receipt of the letter, and there were no threats made against them.

The Sotsprof group recruited about 15 members, out of a workforce of 1,200, from two columns of buses (there were seven columns in the park, with between 20 and 50 buses in each). Some were former Party activists, but most were ordinary drivers. However, they made very slow progress, and had virtually no guidance or support from the Sotsprof office after their initial contact. Initially they retained their membership of the official union, but later decided to leave, although before they could do so the *putsch* struck, and they changed their minds again. The 'decentralization' of Sotsprof, which gives autonomy to local groups, meant that there was no horizontal contact between Sotsprof primary groups, other than on a personal basis. This meant that there was no contact between the workers in the different Moscow bus parks, and there was very little contact even between workers in different columns in the same park.

The *putsch* led to a number of big changes. On the morning of the *putsch* the defenders of the White House came and asked for buses to build barricades, but the director refused to supply them. That morning the usual five-minute meeting of foremen, administration and secretaries of Party Bureaux lasted for four hours. At the meeting they concluded that the democratic process was finished, presenting them with new possibilities, so that they could get tough with workers. With the defeat of the *putsch* the worker activists at first thought that the future looked brighter, but this illusion did not last long as their situation deteriorated rapidly.

As noted above, the supply situation became much worse, but so did the labour shortage. The garage of the Central Committee of the CPSU was next door to the bus park, and was closed immediately after the *putsch*. When it reopened as the Russian government garage there were a lot of vacancies, and a lot of bus drivers left. Although the work was not as well paid (700 roubles as against 1,000 for bus drivers at the time) it was much easier. As a result of this the Sotsprof group lost fifteen of its twenty members, including the then president.

By the autumn of 1991 the Sotsprof group had virtually ceased to exist, but discontent among the workers was rising. The fact that they were next door to the government car garage brought home to them just how bad their situation was. While the numbers of drivers fell,

and their workload increased, there was no cut in the administration, which outnumbered the drivers and did nothing. On 11 November 1991, just after they had received their fortnightly wages, the drivers of a column of 50 buses decided to stop work in a spontaneous action which received wide publicity, although the action was called without informing the drivers of the other columns, who would have supported them. Nevertheless, one raion was practically brought to a standstill, and workers in some other bus parks declared their pre-strike readiness. The reaction of the administration was swift: the next day the leaders of Mostrans organized a meeting of the drivers at the last stop. The next day they organized a meeting of the labour collective in the bus park. The net result was additional money for everyone who was not on vacation to compensate for their extra work. Aleksandr received 400 roubles, but those who were covering for colleagues on holiday received double that.

After this action a group of drivers decided to organize a new meeting, and invited those who had proved the most active agitators in the previous two meetings. They did not attempt to reconstitute the Sotsprof organization, which died a silent death, but instead set up a strike committee and a committee for the protection of workers' rights. The strike committee was much broader and larger than the old Sotsprof group, comprising 61 people, including some from repair and maintenance. Aleksandr refused to accept nomination to the chair of the strike committee because he had a flexible work schedule, so another driver from his column, who had studied at the institute and was very well educated, was elected to the chair. The strike committee immediately demanded an office from the administration. The administration offered them the former Party committee office, but they refused it because the administration could overhear everything that went on in there, so they were offered a new office when reconstruction work was complete. The first action of the strike committee was to demand a rationalization of bus routes to cope with the reduced number of buses and drivers, cutting the service from 120 to 58 routes by removing those which were little used, and the administration immediately agreed to this proposal. They also sought the re-election of the Labour Collective Council of the bus park, which had hitherto been dominated by management, in order to increase workers' representation.

The bus drivers had moved ahead of other workers in December 1990, but had then got left behind. However, after the November

strike the wages of all bus drivers were increased, although through the payment of unpredictable bonuses rather than through increased basic rates. Aleksandr received 3,000 roubles in his pay-packet the month following the strike, as against 1,200 before the strike, but no announcement was made about the basis of the increase. The administration had promised a rise, and the workers found more money in their pay-packets, but they did not know whether it was a one-off payment, or whether it would be repeated.

We interviewed Sasha again in February 1993. He was still driving his bus, but was completely demoralized and had abandoned all his trade union activity, his fellow activists all having left the park – ‘they were sick and tired of it, there was nothing to fight for’. He felt that there was no longer any sense of collectivity amongst the drivers, and in the absence of a stable work collective it was impossible to fight for workers’ rights. Long-serving drivers were just keeping their heads down for fear of losing their pension rights, while younger drivers just stayed long enough to get their full driving licences. Almost all the senior managers, as well as the leaders of the official trade union, were working pensioners or were close to the pension age, and so they had no long-term perspective. Wages had fallen behind the Moscow average once again as the Moscow transport administration was starved of financial resources and faced escalating costs for fuel and spare parts. The supply situation, the condition of the buses, and the working conditions had all deteriorated further. All that kept Sasha working was a continued sense of duty to the public – ‘if I leave, who will drive the bus? How will people get from place to place?’, and the thought that he had only two years to go to qualify for his full pension – he was now the ‘veteran of labour’ of his bus park, although this no longer gave him any privileges.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF SOTSPROF GROUPS

How typical is the experience of the Sotsprof group in Bus Park No. 5? The Sotsprof All-Union list of unions in September 1991 included about 200 affiliated organizations registered up to July 1991, with much the largest number in Moscow and Kiev, although most Kiev contacts give only a telephone number and the most recent Kiev group had been formed in November 1990 (at the February 1992 Congress

separate Sotsprof organizations were set up for Russia and Ukraine). Although the trade unions are defined by profession and geographical area, it is striking that most are identified by named individuals with their home addresses. Apart from Moscow, in cities with more than one Sotsprof primary group those groups seem to have been formed in a brief spate of activity. For example, the six groups listed for Vladivostok were all formed between May and July 1990, and three of the four Sverdlovsk groups were formed in the space of two days in May 1991. There is also some duplication, with the same person listed as contact for several different trade unions – in Samara all three groups were co-ordinated by the same person, a private car park owner. There is evidence of sustained activity in the period to September 1991 only in Moscow, Novosibirsk and possibly Tambovsk.

Where the date of registration was given, 24 groups were listed as having been formed before the March 1990 elections for which Sotsprof provided an umbrella. The vast majority of these groups had generic titles, such as the union of 'workers and employees', 'rural workers', 'intellectual workers', 'students and aspirants', 'workers and engineers'. Only four groups had more specific titles: refrigerated train workers in Moscow and Dnepropetrovsk, welders in Nizhni Novgorod, and building workers in Tashkent. Sixty of the 94 groups established over the following year to April 1991 were clearly organizations of professional and intellectual workers. It is only from April 1991 that workers' organizations come to predominate, 14 of the 17 groups registered between April and July 1991 appearing to be groups of workers.

There were 60 trade union organizations listed in Moscow, 22 local and 38 city-wide. Three had been formed in 1989, 33 in 1990 and 24 in 1991. Svetlana Krasnodemskaya tried to contact each group by telephoning the listed contact several times during February and March 1993.

Of the total number of groups four had no telephone listed, three had an incorrect number, five of the contacts were not known at the number given and seven had moved away. A further fifteen could not be contacted after repeated phone calls – there was no reply, or they were out and did not return calls. Eighteen were interviewed by telephone and the remaining five were visited for extended interviews.

Not surprisingly it was more difficult to make contact with those organizations which had been longer established. Of those formed in

1989 two had gone away, and one could not be contacted. Of those formed in 1990 one-third had no number listed or had moved away, one third could not be contacted, and one-third were interviewed. Over half of those established in 1991 were interviewed. It was also more difficult to make contact with local unions than with city-wide organizations. Other sources provide no evidence of any activity on the part of any of the organizations with which we were unable to establish contact, and the likelihood is that the vast majority were still-born or are defunct.

In addition to the list of primary groups in September 1991 the early issues of Sotsprof's newspaper, *Rabochaya sila*, reported on militant industrial action which, like that of the bus drivers, hardly accorded with the conciliatory rhetoric of the Sotsprof leadership. The second edition, dated May 1991, reported on three actions for which Sotsprof claimed credit, but none of the groups in question was recorded on the September 1991 listing. The paper reported that workers of the Moscow railway junction locomotive brigades had held a meeting in defence of their social and economic rights, and condemned the 'treacherous politics of the leadership of the sectoral trade union, which in practice collaborates with departmental officials to promote the intensification of the complete exploitation of the workers for a song. In order to defend their rights to a better life and safe conditions effectively the Moscow engine drivers decided to create a Sotsprof city trade union organization.' However, train drivers went on to form their own independent trade union, outside the framework of Sotsprof.

The newspaper also reported that Mosavtotrans had sacked five experienced control-inspectors, responsible for checking up on taxi-drivers, to reduce staff. Sotsprof intervened, providing its members with free legal aid for their court cases, which they won, and the court restored all five to their previous jobs. This group was included in a December 1991 listing of Moscow Sotsprof groups, but appeared at the time to be inactive. The final example was that of the Lyublinskii mechanical-foundry, where Sotsprof competed with RKSP (see above note 27) and the group apparently collapsed.

Of the ten trade unions contacted which had been established in 1990 all but two were defunct. One had been established purely for electoral purposes, three were unions of psychologists, at least one of which had been established simply to provide a tax shelter.

Only one of the ten unions reported that it had been destroyed as a result of victimization. This was the 'Moscow city trade union of passenger transport', which had been led by Yevgenii Kirin. Kirin's career is not atypical of one kind of organizer of independent trade union groups, an individualist with higher education, who had ended up as a worker as a result of a long history of dissidence. He had graduated from Moscow University as a lawyer in 1961, and from 1962 to 1974 had worked as a cipher officer in the security services. In 1974 he fell foul of the minister and was sent to a penal settlement in Eastern Siberia, where he worked in the local militia. In 1974 he decided to leave the militia, without Moscow's permission, and worked as a parquet floor layer, linoleum layer, a salesman and a loader, and from 1987 as a tram driver at the Baumanski depot in Moscow. A meeting was organized at the depot at which Kirin met a representative of Sotsprof, to whom he suggested organizing a trade union of passenger transport. Sotsprof organized a meeting attended by 23 people from six depots, at which Kirin was asked to be the chairman of the new Sotsprof group once it was discovered that he had higher education. Kirin tried to attend the Moscow regional conference of the official trade union, but was denied an invitation. He visited Sergei Stankevich, at that time chairman of Mossoviet, who had been invited to attend the conference, but Stankevich said that he could do nothing to help. Kirin visited other bus and trolleybus depots, but at the same time he was in conflict with the administration of his own depot, where he claims to have recruited fifty people into the Sotsprof group. Eighty per cent of the workers in his depot were women who had set up their own initiative group, but were not interested in joining Sotsprof. Kirin organized a strike in association with that which took place in the No. 16 Bus Park in December 1990, which won a large pay rise but he was almost immediately sacked, supposedly for drinking at work, and was unable to win reinstatement. When he left the Sotsprof group collapsed. Kirin went to see Khramov, who offered him a position as a legal consultant to Sotsprof, which he did during 1991, but the pay was so low that he left. He has been unemployed ever since, and now only dreams of being a farmer.

The two Sotsprof groups which still exist are the Tushinskyi raion union of intellectual workers and the trade union of Moscow musicians. The former organizes thirteen people in a sports rehabilitation centre, most of whom also have a second job. Their Sotsprof organiza-

tion still exists, although it hasn't grown and has no connection with the centre. 'We are absolutely independent of Khramov and so on'.

The trade union of Moscow musicians has been concerned primarily to raise the incomes of musicians by freeing them from bureaucratic control, and to provide social insurance for its members. The co-chairman, Vladimir Antoshin, is a manager and former member of the official trade union committee. The group does not appear to undertake any other trade union activity.

Nine of the thirteen trade unions contacted which had been established in 1991 were found to be defunct by the spring of 1993. The Krasnogvardeiskii raion union of intellectual workers organized three people working in a youth travel service, but collapsed when the organizer left. The Moscow trade union of social workers lasted for a year, and had about 40 members in one bureau. The union collapsed when the bureau was closed and all the workers dismissed. The Moscow City union of intellectual workers lasted for two years before its chairperson decided to leave. 'I understood that it was only words, not serious, and I left. There are a lot of *agents provocateurs* in Sotsprof, and I experienced some unpleasant moments. The organization is not large, people come and leave because they do not see any results, only words. We help only morally, when they feel bad. Last year we rehabilitated one woman from Zelenograd. It has to be admitted that the years 1990–91 were the peak in our trade union activity. We involved engineers, teachers, educators, but now there is a recession in trade union activity.' The Union of Scientific Workers of NIKTI lasted for two years, originally with almost 30 members, but had declined with staff reductions, its leading activist going to the USA.

The union of the Babushinskaya knitting factory homeworkers was established in July 1991 following a well-publicized dispute at the factory where the administration proposed to make 165 women homeworkers redundant. Although they were skilled workers making an expensive product they were being paid only 100 roubles a month, well under a third of the average Moscow pay rate at the time. In the absence of support from their union the women turned to Sotsprof, which helped them to organize a meeting of the workers, which had to be held outside the enterprise in the Red Hall of Mossoviet because of opposition from management, and explained to the workers their right to appeal to state bodies. Sotsprof then helped represent the workers in court, securing their reinstatement. However, after a year the organizer

was sacked on the grounds of redundancy. Although she was paid until she found another job, she was disappointed by the experience. 'I was the organizer and the agitator of our Sotsprof organization then, but I don't see any reason to be involved in any trade union activity'.

The Moscow ambulance drivers' union had nearly fifty members. Although nobody was sacked for their trade union activity, they came under pressure by losing a whole range of privileges, and being subjected to various spot fines, while the leader was offered bribes. The union collapsed when he left his job for health reasons, disillusioned with the 'lumpenization' of the drivers – 'they only worry about a piece of sausage, a bottle of drink and a woman' – and the deterioration of their working conditions.

Workers of the First Moscow Metallogalenteria factory set up an independent Sotsprof organization outside the official trade union. The director refused permission for a meeting on factory premises, so the workers met in their raincoats out in the fields around the factory. However, the Sotsprof activists were all sacked, and the union collapsed.

The example of the ambulance drivers and metal workers brings out the strong contrast between Sotsprof groups which organize intellectuals and those which organize workers, the latter almost always facing more or less severe management repression and victimization. Two striking examples of this repression are the cases of the trade union of Moscow shipbuilding and ship repair, which was destroyed by repression, and the trade union organization at the First Moscow Watch Factory, which will be described more fully later.

The trade union of Moscow shipbuilding and ship repair was formally established in June 1991, growing out of a public organization set up by Bogdanov, a mechanic, under the slogan of Democratic Russia which campaigned for Yeltsin's election in 1991. Wages were very low, the official trade union was in the pocket of management and involved in a whole range of corrupt activities. Working conditions were extremely bad, with cold, noise, dirt and fumes – 'in one shop conditions were so bad that nobody survived long enough to draw their pension'.

Bogdanov had come back from the Second Congress of Sotsprof in Donetsk in February 1991 fired with enthusiasm, and called a meeting which was attended by 30 of the 1,300 workers in the plant, although only six joined Sotsprof, four of whom attended the organizational

meeting held subsequently in Bogdanov's room in the hostel at which Bogdanov was elected chair of the local committee. However, Bogdanov was sacked for absenteeism two months later. Although all his absences from work had been agreed with management, such agreements were, as usual, purely informal so that he had no documentary evidence to support his case against dismissal.

When Yeltsin forbade the activity of social organizations in enterprises they decided to constitute their group formally as a Sotsprof trade union. However, as soon as they informed the management of the establishment of the Sotsprof group (just after the August *putsch*), its chairman, Yurii Dubinsky, a painter who had worked there for fifteen years, was sacked 'as though I had come from the barricades', under the pretext of redundancies. Dubinsky prepared to take the case to court, since it was illegal to sack him as a trade union activist, but the management threatened that if he did so they would sack his friend, a painter with two children who was a non-union member, and so Dubinsky gave up the case. The one manager who supported them was also sacked. Faced with such repression the Sotsprof group collapsed, although its leaders maintained membership secretly. The problem was that all the workers depended in one way or another on management, for flats, a place in a hostel, a pension, or little perks and benefits.

Meanwhile, Bogdanov attempted to secure reinstatement through the courts, although all his fellow workers believed that he did not have a chance because of the close links between the factory administration and the local judiciary. The district court turned down his plea, but he then went to Khramov, who provided legal support, Yefremenko attending all his subsequent court appearances. He secured a court ruling in his favour in the city court, which fined the director the maximum penalty of 500 roubles, a decision which was endorsed by the higher courts, but the management simply ignored the ruling to reinstate him, and every time he visits the site the security guards throw him out. The workers meanwhile had been granted a wage increase, because the director needed their support in the privatization process, so that 'now people have no desire either to work or to protest'.

Since losing his job Bogdanov had had occasional odd jobs as a welder, loader, salesman and worked on the harvest, but was destitute and lived on bread and potatoes. He still kept his place in the hostel

but the administration had been trying to evict him, which would leave him homeless too.

Only four of the Moscow Sotsprof groups which had been established in the first nine months of 1991 appeared still to be active as trade union organizations in the spring of 1993, the most important of which were the groups in the First Moscow Watch Factory and AZLK which will be discussed more fully later. The two other groups were those of alternative education workers and of metro workers.

The union of alternative education workers was formally established as a Sotsprof group in July 1991, although it had been in existence since 1988. The group originally had 6 or 7 members, and by the spring of 1993 had grown to have 30–40 members, linking teachers, educators and school workers, despite difficult relations with management. However, there was no evidence of any significant trade union activity on the part of the group.

Sotsprof was well placed to represent the Moscow metro workers because of its connections with the Moscow city government, with whom the metro ultimately negotiated its fares and subsidies, but the metro workers' Sotsprof has stagnated. The Moscow metro workers were first organized by Sotsprof in 1991. The Sotsprof group started in the power supply section of the metro, where it signed an agreement with the official trade union but had growing problems with management which 'showed a furious determination to destroy the first living growth of the democratic unions' (*Rabochaya sila*, 2, May 1991). Lyudmila Drozhdova, the metro organizer, was heavily pressured by the director until she left to become a Sotsprof full-timer.⁵⁵ In the Vladikhino metro depot the mobile repair workers set up an independent Sotsprof group,⁵⁶ and there was also a small Sotsprof group of drivers. In the autumn of 1991 the Sotsprof of train drivers and energy supply workers decided to appeal to the Moscow government about the dangers of their work. However, at the end of September a conference of the labour collective, dominated by management representatives, followed the metro director's lead and voted against the appeal. The Sotsprof group called a strike for 27 September, but it came to nothing.

The metro workers' Sotsprof made some progress during 1992, successfully negotiating a collective agreement with the management of the energy supply section, but Sotsprof membership remained small and in other depots Sotsprof was not able to achieve recognition. By

the middle of 1993 the metro workers' Sotsprof had a total membership of around 200, although it attracted more support in the course of a dispute with the metro authorities. On 21 July 1993 a conference of loco brigades of the Moscow metro depots at Fili, Vladykhino and Ismailovo was held, with 43 delegates supposedly representing 460 drivers and assistants. The workers had sent demands for improved pay and working conditions to the metro authorities on 21 May, with no response – because of labour shortages the drivers were expected to work twelve consecutive days with only a twelve-hour break between shifts. The conference decided on an escalating wave of strikes if the authorities continued to refuse to negotiate, with a half-hour warning strike on 11 August, a three-hour strike on 18 August and unlimited strike from 25 August. The strike organizers appealed to the local committee of Sotsprof, which had been campaigning for a tariff agreement which would include the questions of wages and health and safety.

The strike did not take place, but on 20 September negotiations between the Moscow metro and Sotsprof began on behalf of the drivers and assistants, with an arbitration commission with five representatives from each side, although two representatives of the official trade unions – rail transport and the Moscow Federation – sat on the employers' side of the table. The commission decided to postpone consideration of the question of pay pending a report of experts on the financial situation of the metro. The drivers never got their pay rise, although the metro authorities signed an agreement linking metro wages to the legal minimum wage. However, this agreement was soon ignored and on 9 December 1993 the president of the Moscow metro Sotsprof, Svetlana Razina, announced a strike for 12 December demanding the fulfilment of the agreement, although the strike threat again came to nothing (KASKOR 30–1, 30 July 1993; 32–3, 14 August 1993; 38, 22 September 1993; 50, 10 December 1993).

The general impression of Sotsprof primary groups is that Sotsprof helps them to register, but provides little or no further support, beyond legal advice for dismissed activists. A survey of Sotsprof groups probably exaggerates the difficulties faced by independent worker activists, since Sotsprof tends to attract small groups of vulnerable workers who look for outside help precisely because they are not able to gather support to press their interests within their own enterprise. However, Sotsprof itself tends to compound their difficulties by giving

them exaggerated expectations, and sometimes by encouraging them to engage in actions for which they are not adequately prepared, simply to attract publicity for Sotsprof.⁵⁷

SOTSPROF IN THE PROVINCES

Sotsprof has claimed groups in a wide range of Russian industrial cities, but there have been very few reports of sustained Sotsprof activity in the pages of Sotsprof's paper *Rabochaya sila, Delo*, the weekly KAS-KOR bulletins or the monthly ASTI bulletins. The only cities with a significant number of reports of activity since 1991 are Novosibirsk, Chelyabinsk, Yekaterinburg, Tula, Komsomol'sk-na-Amure and Lipetsk, and the majority of such activity is in the sphere of public transport.⁵⁸ However, these sources are less likely to report the activities of Sotsprof's unions of professional workers, which it claims are particularly active.⁵⁹ In this section we will look at what were two of the most active regional groups, in Novosibirsk and Yekaterinburg, the former based on published reports, the latter on interviews.

Novosibirsk

Novosibirsk is the capital of Western Siberia, with a large technical intelligentsia centred on its academic complex, linked to advanced military production. It has never been a strong base of the workers' movement, and indeed a number of enterprise directors have thrown even the official union out of their plants. Nevertheless, it seems to have been the most active site of Sotsprof trade union activity outside Moscow.

Novosibirsk was the site of one the most successful actions undertaken by a Sotsprof group, at the Experimental Factory of the Siberian Section of the Academy of Sciences, which is a defence plant employing 1,600 people.⁶⁰ A group of workers, led by Valentin Rupets, formed a Sotsprof group (the Trade Union of Industrial Workers – PPP) in March 1991 which recruited about 40 members on the basis of a proposed alternative draft of the annual collective agreement, which expressed the principle that the administration are the employers, and the workers are hired wage-labourers.⁶¹ The draft was signed by 300

people and presented to the administration as the basis for negotiation on 14 April. A long period of negotiation with the official trade union followed, in which the Sotsprof group sought a compromise on the basis of which to sign a joint agreement, but in the end the official trade union broke off the negotiations and presented its own agreement to a meeting of the labour collective for approval and signature on 26 June. However, at this meeting the general director himself declared that there were two trade unions in the factory and there would be two collective agreements. The Sotsprof group therefore continued its negotiations with the administration, without having to waste any more time discussing the matter with the official union.

In these negotiations the Sotsprof leaders were able to exploit the divisions within the administration, but still had to go through endless legal arguments backed up with the threat of taking the issue to the courts. The Sotsprof group called a factory conference of their union for 6 August to consider and adopt their collective agreement. The administration asked them to postpone the meeting on the grounds that they were not yet ready, but Sotsprof decided to go ahead in any case, inviting the director or his representative to attend, but the director immediately went on holiday. The meeting on 6 August endorsed the collective agreement, but the administration was not willing to sign, raising various difficulties. Sotsprof proposed that a conciliation commission work on the draft, a proposal which the administration accepted, and a final draft was agreed on 20 August, but the general director continued to raise objections.

On 23 August the Sotsprof committee wrote to the director threatening a strike if the text was not signed by 26 August. Receiving no reaction, they decided on 26 August to call a short warning strike for the following day, which they publicized widely. The initial reaction of the administration was very negative, threatening to sack the leaders, but when they realized that they had no legal grounds to do so they became conciliatory and, following demonstrative stoppages and meetings on 27 and 28 August, the director agreed to sign the document the following day, which he did after a long meeting with the Sotsprof leaders.

The final Sotsprof collective agreement was then published in full in the newspaper of the official Novosibirsk Regional Trade Union Committee, with the introductory comment that 'our aim is not to knock together two alternative tendencies, but the common aim,

shared by Sotsprof and FNPR of improving the social and legal guarantees and the living standards of workers' (*Doverie*, 29 November 1991, 1). This agreement was widely circulated by the Sotsprof centre as a model for other Sotsprof groups to use, and was taken up by the Sotsprof group at AZLK in 1992, but the following year the management of the Experimental Factory refused to negotiate with Sotsprof.⁶²

The Novosibirsk City Sotsprof organization was established on the basis of the Union of Workers, which had united various primary groups of the workers' movement before it broke up, in part at the instigation of Sotsprof.⁶³ The First City Conference of Sotsprof was held in Novosibirsk in the middle of July 1991, and included the Union of Industrial Workers (PPP), Union of Students and trade unions of literature distributors and others (*KASKOR* 59, 1991).⁶⁴ Thereafter, Sotsprof enjoyed an effective monopoly in the organization of the independent trade union movement in Novosibirsk, actively keeping out other organizations.

The leaders of Sotsprof in Novosibirsk were firmly committed to the commercial road to trade unionism and had an extensive network of commercial contacts with entrepreneurs, including one initiative which involved establishing a 'trade union of invalids' who would be employed as homeworkers. As in Moscow, Sotsprof in Novosibirsk was marked by its opposition to strikes. On 9 June 1992 the official trade unions called a day of action, backed by the directors of military-industrial enterprises and supported by strikes and a large mass meeting of 15,000 people. Sotsprof ignored this action (and also seems to have stood aside from the strikes of teachers and medical workers), holding a city conference on the same day which united the four largest Sotsprof groups in a co-ordinating council (*KASKOR* 24, 12 June 1992).

Meanwhile, scandal was brewing in the Novosibirsk Sotsprof organization over the summer of 1992. The leaders of Sotsprof groups had been demanding a city conference and new elections for four months, with a number of serious questions being raised about both the personal and Sotsprof activities of the President, Leonid Borozdin. The central issue was that the leadership of the association was made up of entrepreneurs who were using the trade unions as a cover for money-making. This group was opposed by the industrial unions who were trying to clean up the association. Borozdin called a conference

for 19 August, but the opposition called an alternative conference for 12 August.

Ten of the twenty-one Sotsprof trade unions were represented at the opposition's re-election conference which was attended by Khramov, who acknowledged its authority and endorsed its decision to disband the regional co-ordinating committee. Only two or three of the remaining eleven unions were said to be organizations of industrial workers, the rest being commercial or paper organizations (KASKOR 33, 14 August 1992). The new co-ordinating committee demanded a re-registration of primary groups. The entrepreneurs protested, and on 25 August launched an offensive to try to get their hands on the office, led by a young leader of the Novosibirsk 'democrats', leader of the local Democratic Russia bloc and Travkin's Democratic Party of Russia, Yakov Savchenko. The attack was beaten off and the co-ordinating committee pressed the city soviet, which owned the building, to lease the office to the union (KASKOR 35, 28 August 1992).

Thanks to the support of people's deputies, Sotsprof was allocated a room in the building of the city soviet, but during 1992, Sotsprof appears to have made limited progress in Novosibirsk. Its activists came under considerable pressure from management, and the Sotsprof trade union groups remained very small, working primarily through legal channels. On 12 February 1992 the teachers' strike committee decided to establish an independent trade union, and the formation of teachers' and medical workers' Sotsprof groups was reported to be under way (KASKOR 7, 14 February 1992). However, on 27 February the head of the Sotsprof teachers' trade union committee was sacked for absenteeism on his return from the Sotsprof Congress, with the official union agreeing to the dismissal even though he was not a member (KASKOR 14, 3 April 1992), and no more was heard of this union.⁶⁵

Although the law was on the side of the victimized Sotsprof activists, the courts were consistently unwilling to rule in their favour.⁶⁶ The president of the Sotsprof group in the chemical concentrate factory, Aleksandr Pushkarev, had been illegally sacked at the end of 1990. However, the local court refused to accept his plea and referred it to a military court. Although not one Sotsprof member in the factory was a serviceman, there was a special military prosecutor in the factory (KASKOR 34, 21 August 1992).⁶⁷ A long case defending Valerii

Pan'kov of the Tyazhstankogidropres against victimization was eventually successful.⁶⁸

Similarly the directors of the factories in which Sotsprof was organized (the Experimental Factory, Kuz'min metallurgical plant, Tyazhstankogidropres) refused to negotiate over the collective agreement in 1992, and in the Kuz'min plant refused to give Sotsprof information about privatization. The Sotsprof leader in the Tyazhstankogidropres factory, City People's Deputy Viktor Popov, took the matter to the raion court, but the court would not even consider the matter (KASKOR 41, 9 October 1992). The local Sotsprof leaders (city deputies Popov and Yevgenii Kovalev and the president of the group in the Experimental Factory, Pavel Taletskii) met with the deputy president of the oblast court to discuss the violation of Sotsprof's legal rights, particularly with regard to the refusal of management to conduct collective agreements (KASKOR 44, 30 October 1992), but apparently to little effect. On 22 February 1993, Sotsprof members picketed the Regional Court in protest at its inactivity, and in response to the large publicity the court allowed two appeals to proceed.

One example that brings out the limited ability of Sotsprof to develop any collective action in industrial enterprises is the individualistic and legalistic protest of Viktor Popov. The Tyazhstankogidropres plant director changed the starting time of the day shift from 7.30 to 7 a.m., but Popov claimed that this was illegal because the workers were not consulted, and insisted on continuing to go to work at 7.30. According to the KASKOR report, groups of fitter-assemblers sometimes kept him at the gate and tried to make him late for work (and so subject to disciplinary sanctions), but he hung a placard on his chest with the various labour laws on it and stood on picket. Quickly, supporters would gather around him so that the administration had to threaten strict disciplinary sanctions to let the workers through the gate. This went on for four months, until in November 1993 Popov was given special permission to go in at 7.30 (KASKOR 45, 50, 1993).⁶⁹

Novosibirsk Sotsprof had a little more success organizing in the service sector, two examples of which provide a good indication of typical Sotsprof activities in this sphere. The first concerns a struggle against the privatization of a hairdressing salon, the second concerns transport workers.

Men's hairdressers' shop number five was owned by a leasehold enterprise 'Diana' which decided to reconstruct the building and open a commercial shop. The director claimed to be transforming it into a high-class hairdressing salon, with a small shop to sell accessories, but the workers did not believe him and resisted his proposal – the workers of another salon had returned from their summer holiday the previous year to find that their salon had been replaced by a commercial shop with room for only two hairdressers, so that eight of the hairdressers had been sacked. As a result of the inactivity of the official trade union the hairdressers of shop number five left the official union and formed a Sotsprof group in the spring of 1993, and then began a round-the-clock occupation to protect their building. The occupation continued for several weeks until on 1 June the head of administration of the district changed the constitution of Diana, giving every worker a vote as a co-founding partner. On this basis the workers voted out the director and replaced him with their own leader.⁷⁰

As throughout Russia, the most active group of workers in Novosibirsk has been the transport workers, although it seems that their activity did not really get under way until the end of 1992. At the beginning of November 1992 the drivers of Bus Park No. 4 spontaneously stopped work demanding a pay rise, and a few days later joined Sotsprof following an attempt of the director to sue nine participants for damages. In mid-November the labour collective put forward a series of demands, all of which except that concerning pay were resolved in long negotiations. The Sotsprof group decided to work to rule from 12 January 1993 in support of the pay demand, but on 11 January the director of the park, supported by the official union, put pressure on the workers, going into the garage and watching their every step. The workers decided to postpone their action to 26 January and declare an unlimited strike, but on 25 January won their pay demands (KASKOR 5, 29 January 1993).

Similar disputes broke out in other bus and taxi parks through 1993, although there appears to have been little co-ordination between the Sotsprof groups,⁷¹ or between the different managements, who pursued a range of strategies from conciliation to repression, paying wage increases on the eve of strikes on three occasions. Taxi drivers from two parks struck in October over fare increases and were taken to court, sixteen drivers were sacked, with around one hundred Sotsprof activists losing their jobs in a subsequent wave of redundancies.

Sotsprof failed to reverse the sackings, but settled out of court so that the workers would be registered as voluntary leavers, not as having been sacked. Subsequently fifteen drivers were reinstated, while in court action the management was compelled to reinstate a further thirteen drivers. However, Sotsprof itself was gradually normalizing relations with management, establishing groups in five transport enterprises, and in one case agreeing with management and the official union to co-operate in drawing up plans to rationalize routes and increase the income of the park. On 26 October 1994 transport workers picketed the Mayor's office demanding a pay rise, which was awarded following a meeting with the local administration (KASKOR, various issues; *Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 2, 5, 6, 10, 1994).

After its initial success, Sotsprof found it virtually impossible to make headway in industrial plants in Novosibirsk, barely able to defend its existing members.⁷² Viktor Popov noted towards the end of 1994 that 'the level of development of many [of the independent trade unions] has not got beyond the stage of survival', the majority of their primary groups typically have 'tens, more rarely hundreds, of members'. Five of the twenty Novosibirsk Sotsprof groups had collapsed in the course of 1994, and only two of the remaining fifteen had more than 100 members (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 8, 11, 1994). Despite its failure to defend the taxi drivers, there had been one report that it was making progress in organizing public transport workers. However, if other examples are a guide, if such groups do establish themselves successfully, they are more than likely to break away from Sotsprof and link up with public transport workers in other cities.

Yekaterinburg

Sotsprof in Yekaterinburg was organized by Sergei Belyaev, who is a historian who was Deputy Director of Krayevedchesky City Museum. Like many Sotsprof activists, his main trade union activity has been contesting his own dismissal, having been sacked three times from this post, twice securing reinstatement through the courts, the third time leaving to become full-time trade union chairman.⁷³

Yekaterinburg is, like Novosibirsk, a military-industrial city and capital of its region, the Urals. However, Yekaterinburg, unlike Novosibirsk, had been a centre of the workers' movement since 1987, when the union *Rabochii* was established, as well as having had a

flourishing informal movement in the early years of perestroika (and being the home base of 'Tsar Boris' Yeltsin, who had been its Regional Party secretary before his move to Moscow). Rabochii was a revolutionary syndicalist organization which had played an important role in the early period of the workers' movement,⁷⁴ but by the time of Sotsprof's emergence it was racked by scandal and conflict and was in decline. Its strongly anti-intellectualist ideology, its apparent links with the Party, and after the *putsch* its contact with the red-browns ensured that it would have no appeal to the intellectual workers who formed the core of Sotsprof.

The Yekaterinburg organization was little more than nominally affiliated to Sotsprof, and was expelled for violation of the Sotsprof Constitution at the Sotsprof plenum in December 1993. It derived from a trade union of museum workers which Belyaev had established the first time he was sacked, which was established under the roof of Sotsprof because this was the only way to secure registration, Belyaev having heard about Sotsprof through Khramov's appearances on the radio. Belyaev sent a constitution and newsletter by post to Khramov and he received a registration form by post from Khramov acknowledging their registration.

It was only during the August 1991 *putsch* that Belyaev established contact with other groups of workers through the meetings which took place in the centre of the city. On this basis he established the Yekaterinburg Tovarishchestvo Svobodni Profsoyuzi (ETSP — Yekaterinburg Fraternity of Free Trade Unions), separately from Sotsprof because at that time Khramov had not established Sotsprof Russia, while the local courts were reluctant to recognize the legitimacy of USSR organizations, which would have created serious problems since many workers were facing court proceedings. It still took them six months to manage to register as ETSP which, although independent of Sotsprof, did not contradict the Constitution of the latter since the Constitution permitted dual membership. Nevertheless, relations between the Sotsprof centre and the Yekaterinburg organization soon became strained mainly because, according to Belyaev, Moscow had nothing to offer the Yekaterinburg organization. The Yekaterinburg unions did not need Moscow's legal advice, since they had their own lawyers, and increasing costs of travel and communication made contact with Moscow and attendance at meetings prohibitively expensive. In Belyaev's view, Sotsprof was useful only to help establish very weak

primary groups which had no idea of the law or of procedures for registration, but now the cost of communications is such that these kinds of groups do not have the money to keep in regular contact with Moscow, and so they register under the roof of regional trade union associations whatever might be the affiliation of the latter.

This does not mean that links with Khramov were not useful for Belyaev:

Russia remains Russia, it is almost the same as the USSR, everything is concentrated in Moscow. Organs of power, Ministries. Only those who get hold of information can be successful. We need this organ [Sotsprof] as an information source. Frankly, Khramov does not work very well. He is a chap who knows to whom he can give this information and to whom not.... We need somebody who can just go to the Ministry of Labour and fetch documents.

In principle, they could establish themselves as a national trade union, which would give them the right to propose legislation,

but in reality we know what legislative initiative means. If you do not visit the ministry or the Supreme Soviet every day, or if you prepare a draft law yourself as a participant, you have no guarantee that this law will be signed. This is why it is useless to spend time on this.

However, they do not need Khramov to do this,

we have our own perfectly good mechanism for resolving our problems, we are Yekaterinburg and we have our own lobby in every office in Moscow, and we have stable relationships which were established in the old days. Some were democrats, some were somebody else, but we keep everything. There are people's deputies who reflect on reality objectively, and work in the Supreme Soviet. We can even use Vladimir Isakov [an opponent of Yeltsin]. All have to work for the trade unions if they want to be members of the trade union. People want to be members of the trade union because political organizations are so weak.

However, it was difficult to discover exactly what Belyaev's organization actually did.⁷⁵

The impression given by reports of Sotsprof activity in the Urals is reinforced by similar accounts from everywhere else reported in *Rabochaya sila*, the KASKOR bulletins and in *Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, all of which are of the establishing of Sotsprof groups and associations, the struggle through the courts to compensate victimized and dismissed members,⁷⁶ threats and violence against Sotsprof activists,⁷⁷

splits and squabbles,⁷⁸ the failure of management to negotiate with Sotsprof over collective agreements or over privatization,⁷⁹ or to transfer subscriptions or social insurance fees,⁸⁰ with virtually the only successful actions being those in public transport,⁸¹ and, from late 1993, demands for the payment of unpaid wages.⁸² However, not all Sotsprof groups have a history of consistent and unmitigated failure. It is therefore worth looking in some detail at the two most successful Sotsprof groups (perhaps the only two successful groups), those in the First Moscow Watch Factory and AZLK.

THE FIRST MOSCOW WATCH FACTORY

The First Moscow Watch Factory was a prime target for Sotsprof from the start because its director, Aleksandr Samsonov, was a notorious conservative USSR people's deputy who had led the battle against co-operatives, and was a supporter of the neo-Stalinist 'United Front of Toilers' (OFT). The Sotsprof office therefore had strong political reasons for providing encouragement and support for the Sotsprof groups in the factory, through whom it eventually succeeded in removing Samsonov from his post. The factory had two independent Sotsprof groups, one of skilled machine-setters, who belonged to the Taganskaya District Sotsprof, and one of assembly workers, who established their Sotsprof group at a meeting in the assembly shop on 12 September 1991. There was little contact between the two, the interests of the different groups of workers being rather different, and the latter was much the most active in the factory.

The assemblers' Sotsprof originally comprised seven members in the shop assembling the cheap quartz watches, with another 20–30 of the 150 workers in the shop supporting them but being afraid to join. Working conditions in the shop were very bad, wages were low, and conditions continued to deteriorate as sales fell and workers left to find better jobs elsewhere. By the spring of 1993 there were only 84 workers left, against the full complement of 150, and assembly workers were expected to produce at almost three times the norm. However, in the face of problems of lack of demand, shortage of money and uncertain supplies the level of work fell, hitting the assembly shop especially hard since any disruption in the factory stopped their work. The impact of the uneven pace of work was intensified by

the management reforms introduced by Samsonov, which were based on dividing the factory up into self-financing divisions, with internal transfer prices between the divisions and profit-related pay.⁸³ This not only considerably increased pay differentials in favour of management, but also led to wide differentials between one shop and another (the assembly of expensive watches paid five times the wage of the assembly of cheap watches). Within the shops the wide differentials between foremen and workers, whose pay had previously been more or less equal, created serious tensions, to the extent that some shops had become virtually unmanageable, leading the foremen in one shop to reduce differentials on their own initiative by combining their payment fund with that of the workers. Thus grievances of both workers and managers focused on the new system of management and payment.⁸⁴

Samsonov was an extremely autocratic director, who resisted any interference from either the official engineering union or the Sotsprof group. He was one of those enterprise directors who tried to use Yeltsin's 1991 decree that 'social and political organizations' should be removed from the premises of industrial enterprises to try to throw out both trade unions, and many workers left the official union at that time.⁸⁵ However, the official engineering union and the Sotsprof group successfully resisted Samsonov's attempt to force them out, pointing to a statement by Yeltsin's adviser Sergei Stankevich that the law did not apply to trade unions at all and reaffirming that the Law on Trade Unions gave all unions equal rights. Samsonov continued to try to keep Sotsprof out of his factory, preventing the Sotsprof group from spreading information in the enterprise, and stopping a visit of Sotsprof leaders and Mossoviet deputies to the plant. The women assemblers were particularly vulnerable to threats of dismissal, although the setters were in a more powerful position because of the shortage of skilled labour. Samsonov used the factory newspaper, 'Watch Plant', and the national press against the workers, and sacked one of the Sotsprof organizers, N.K. Kireev, who was eventually restored to his job, with compensation, by the local court.

In May 1992, the Sotsprof groups took the offensive using the new law on collective agreements to demand that Samsonov sign an agreement with them. Samsonov refused to negotiate with Sotsprof on the grounds that he had already signed a collective agreement with the official union in December 1991,⁸⁶ and that the Sotsprof groups were

not a properly constituted trade union. Meanwhile another of the Sotsprof leaders was sacked for allegedly trying to smuggle alcohol into the factory, a sacking subsequently reversed by the court on the grounds that the evidence was inconclusive. Sotsprof took Samsonov to court over his refusal to enter into negotiation for the collective agreement, which led to his being personally fined 100,000 roubles in the Taganskaya court at the end of December 1992, but he paid the fine rather than sign a collective agreement (KASKOR 52, 25 December 1992).

The struggle over the collective agreement was waged through the courts and had little impact within the factory. However, in 1993 dissatisfaction with Samsonov's new management structure came to a head. The Sotsprof group submitted demands for the abolition of this system and announced a pre-strike situation in accordance with the Russian law on labour disputes. The director failed to respond to their demands within the statutory three days, after which Sotsprof sent a second warning letter. At the same time the administration sought to sack a number of workers, the majority of whom were Sotsprof activists. The conflict situation was inflamed by the circulation of leaflets which gave details of the pay and benefits of the director and his close associates, information which could only have come from an opposition faction within the senior management.⁸⁷ As a result of this the Sotsprof group saw an influx of new members, so that almost all the skilled workers in the assembly shop joined the Sotsprof group. On 28 July the main assembly line came out on strike, supported by some of their foremen and by a faction of senior management, and some workers from other shops joined them, although it seems that those shops which had work did not join the strike.⁸⁸

Samsonov called a plant-wide referendum of confidence in himself on the third day of the strike which backfired, with 87 per cent of those who voted voting against him. The next day this result was confirmed at an emergency conference of the labour collective, at which only one worker abstained. The strike lasted five days, the wage of assembly workers was radically increased, and the administration started to negotiate about the reinstatement of some of the workers. The eventual outcome was that Samsonov was removed from his post through a vote at the shareholders' meeting, although the decisive vote came not from the worker shareholders, but from the State Property Committee which held the residual 30 per cent of the shares.⁸⁹

The new director of the Watch Factory was nominated by Sotsprof, which gave the Sotsprof leaders a special position in the enterprise and transformed the situation of their union. For Sotsprof, the Watch Factory provided the opportunity to demonstrate the benefits of labour relations based on principles of social partnership. The Director gave Sotsprof office accommodation and was always available to see the Sotsprof leaders, much to the annoyance of middle managers who did not enjoy such a privilege, an annoyance compounded by the Sotsprof leaders' populist demand that the numbers of engineering-technical workers (ITR) should be reduced. Sotsprof sought to use its new position to attack the official union and to attempt to drive it out of the plant, but it did this through its connections with management rather than on the basis of organizing the workers.⁹⁰ At a meeting of the labour collective on 20 April 1994, it was resolved that the activity of Sotsprof would be financed out of the profits of the enterprise, while the activity of the official engineering union had to be financed by the city committee of the union. Although the two unions signed the collective agreement for 1994 jointly, the Sotsprof leaders persistently sought confrontation, sticking up posters at the time of the labour collective conference calling on workers not to trust the official union, a tactic which backfired because it alienated many workers.

Meanwhile the situation in the factory was becoming critical, with sales difficulties and a shortage of money leading to falling wages, and growing social tension in the enterprise. In 1994 the financial position had become so bad that the enterprise was placed under the control of the tax inspectorate, who froze all financial operations and diverted all revenue, beyond that required to meet wages,⁹¹ to pay the enterprise's debts to the government. Skilled workers left the enterprise for jobs elsewhere and dissatisfaction with the new director increased sharply, with a wave of nostalgia in favour of Samsonov's autocratic paternalism. Sotsprof's close connection with the new director meant that its popularity fell sharply and people left Sotsprof, although the official union was not the beneficiary of this, workers becoming equally disillusioned with both unions.⁹² People complained that there was no money for funerals or anniversary gifts, but the director gave Sotsprof two million roubles (covering the wages of Sotsprof's leaders).

AZLK

AZLK has much the strongest, most militant and longest lasting of the Sotsprof primary groups. However, its connection with Sotsprof was almost incidental, and it was only when a long-established informal workers' leader decided to adopt the Sotsprof group as the shell for his own activity that Sotsprof got off the ground in AZLK. However, the interest of AZLK is not so much that it is typical of Sotsprof primary groups, as that it is a typical, if well-developed, example of the conditions under which the stronger groups of independent workers operate, particular in large engineering plants. Many of these groups affiliate to no outside bodies, and for those which do so the affiliation is essentially formal and opportunistic.

The Prehistory of Sotsprof

AZLK is a large autoplant in the south-east of Moscow, which in 1991 employed 30,000 people making the Moskvich range of automobiles, 40 per cent of whom were women, and 20 per cent of whom were unskilled manual workers. There were 15,000 production workers, 5,000 engineers and 10,000 service and supply workers. The plant was established in 1930 as a Ford assembly plant, and the first Moskvich was produced in 1947. The model produced today is based on the 1961 Opel Kadet, when the plant was re-equipped with German machinery, although there was a major redesign in the 1970s, and more modern equipment has been bought from Renault. The failure to innovate had long been a source of dissatisfaction among the design engineers, who were to form the nucleus of the engineers' Sotsprof group. According to the administration, the plant produced 200,000 units in 1987, but the target output for 1992 was down to 120,000.⁹³ The plant had 300 outside suppliers, who provided 3,000 of the 13,000 components. It claimed to export 20,000 units a year. In the face of falling demand for their automobiles, the AZLK management began to diversify, producing children's cars, prams, car seats, carpet strips, wheelbarrows and trolleys, which were sold in special shops.

The plant is on a split site, the 'old' and the 'new' territories. The latter plant has been partially modernized over the last few years with a lot of equipment, such as welding robots, coming from Renault, but the various bits of machinery are incompatible with one another, so

that the plant is not properly integrated. The plant on the old territory is antiquated.⁹⁴

AZLK employed large numbers of *limita* (workers recruited from outside Moscow and accommodated in factory hostels who are tied to the job because they have no residence permits) to make up for labour shortages, exacerbated by the heavy work and low pay, but recruitment stopped in 1987 when the system was abolished. Since then labour shortages had been made up by recruiting contract workers, lured by the promise of a cheap automobile after a certain period. However, this system resulted in a high labour turnover, as workers tended to leave the plant as soon as they had secured an apartment or an automobile. The assembly shop was the most heavily reliant on *limita* and contract workers, who could be forced to work weekends and illegal overtime to make up production in the face of losses caused by stoppages resulting from supply difficulties. Officially the assembly shop only worked two shifts, but the chairman of the official trade union had signed a decree agreeing to their working three shifts, on a rolling shift system, as required.

Although the assembly workers were the most insecure, they had tended to be the best paid and most intensively exploited group of workers in the factory.⁹⁵ Pay in the factory had tended to lag behind inflation, being increased following the April 1991 price rises, but only by the 60 roubles minimum decreed by the state, and even that only after a delay. Pay rates were increased again in the summer of 1991, following Yeltsin's decree, but again only by the minimum. The workers also received compensation for increased prices in the canteen, and a 400 rouble one-off compensation payment in November 1991, a payment which was not repeated in December because the administration claimed not to have the money. When we interviewed Boris Pervov, founder of the workers' Sotsprof group in AZLK, in December 1991, he was still earning only 350 roubles a month (enough to buy two kilos of sausage at the market prices), against 230 roubles a year before. Low pay meant that a lot of workers left the enterprise during 1991, especially from the assembly shop, which was as a result staffed almost entirely by *limita* and contract workers. Although AZLK continued to suffer from labour shortages into 1992, the administration tried to put the workers on the defensive by publicly claiming that they had no problem recruiting workers.

The General Director of AZLK had ruled the plant as an autocrat for many years, but had very good connections at the highest level so that AZLK had no problems in securing supplies and finance. The administration of AZLK as a whole was authoritarian and was regarded by the workers as incompetent and corrupt, involved in the usual rackets. For example, workers were forced to work unpaid Saturdays, and the vehicles produced were then bartered by the administration. Middle managers also had a network through which they would reject parts as defective, and then sell them through a co-operative. In theory a quota of the output was sold to the workers at factory prices, which by the end of 1991 were about one-eighth of the black market prices, but in practice all such cars were allocated to foremen, shop chiefs, members of the administration, and their stooges.

The enterprise had had a Labour Collective Council (STK), but under the revised Law on Enterprise this was replaced by a Soviet of the Enterprise, which was completely controlled by the Party and the administration. Kolomnikov, the general director had wanted to be the chairman of the soviet, but the Party committee put up somebody else. The official trade union was a traditional pocket trade union, only acting with the agreement of the administration, although rhetorically presenting itself as independent.⁹⁶ The union president, Solomatin, was an astute politician, who sought to represent himself as the champion of the workers while retaining his close links with the administration. The union had enormous powers of patronage because it had become increasingly involved in barter and distribution, on top of its traditional welfare and social insurance functions, so few people were willing to speak out against it because everybody had something to lose, while there was ample scope for the corruption and enrichment of trade union officials.

Discontent had been rumbling at AZLK for a long time. In the early 1980s resentment at being forced to work 'voluntary' Saturdays boiled over when 100 workers refused to report for work, amid threats from the administration. The protest came to nothing, and the young worker who organized it was isolated and eventually forced out of the plant (Mandel, Interview with 'Kolya Naumov', July 1988).

In the late 1980s there was a simmering dispute within the administration over production targets and the plant modernization programme, which involved the purchase of large quantities of West-

ern technology. In 1987 a group of engineers wrote an open letter to Pravda complaining about the amount of money being wasted on investment to no effect, as a result of which they were all sacked. In 1988 the deputy director, backed by the STK, proposed a target of 80,000 units for 1989, while the director insisted on a target of 120,000. The director prevailed, and sacked the deputy, but in fact only 74,000 cars were built in 1989. Nevertheless, the higher target secured the plant additional resources needed for its modernisation programme, and the director was able to use his connections to persuade the ministry to 'correct' the plan, so that everyone got their bonuses in any case.⁹⁷

The modernization programme was surrounded by scandal, with allegations of mafia involvement in the construction programme, which was lagging behind and disrupting production. There were also major problems with the new machinery imported from the West. The machines were not compatible with one another, and they did not fit into the available buildings properly, so that it was impossible to create an integrated production system. They also required setting to high tolerances, and there were shortages of appropriate tools, so that production was regularly disrupted by breakdowns (Don Filtzer, Interview with 'Kolya Naumov', June/July 1991). At the conference of the labour collective in 1989 it was alleged that these defects were the result of the general director having sent his son to purchase the machinery in the West, although the director claimed that his son had not even been in post at the time (Mandel, Interview with 'Kolya Naumov', July 1988).

The disputes between 1987 and 1989 seem to have been largely internal to the administration and senior engineering staff, but at the end of 1989 the conflict spread to the shop-floor. The first conflict arose over a contract signed with a German firm under which AZLK was to prepare a sports car, but AZLK did not supply the materials, which pushed the German firm into bankruptcy. As a result of this AZLK was fined 9 million DM, and the workers were expected to bear the consequences of this loss. A woman assembly worker, Yelena Mal'tseva, had tried to organize an independent trade union with a group of friends, including Boris Pervov, who later helped to establish the first Sotsprof group in AZLK.⁹⁸ They wrote to the German workers to say that they supported them, insisting that the money must be paid by the administration, because they didn't want the workers to suffer.

Six months later, when this dispute had died down, Yelena was sacked. She took her case to court, but the general director won with the support of the official trade union, and she was still continuing her struggle for reinstatement in 1992. Her independent union was denied registration in Mossoviet because its constitution insisted that only workers could be members, and referred to 'members of the criminal organization of Communists'.

Conflict came to a head again in the assembly shop at the beginning of 1990 because there had been problems with the supply of parts to the assembly line. In the wave of enthusiasm for democratic change a group of activists led by Sergei Novopolski, head of the shop committee of the official union and of the shop STK, decided that they wanted to change the general director.⁹⁹ Novopolski organized a small strike in the assembly shop to press the issue and back their alternative candidate, and they held a large meeting in January 1990 at which the workers pressed their demands. The director could not afford to antagonize the workers because at the time he was a candidate for people's deputy in the forthcoming elections. He was on holiday at the time, but when he returned he agreed to resign if the workers supported the resignation demand in a referendum. The director put up slogans, leaflets, wall newspapers, and made endless promises with big plans for the future, which was basically his programme for election as a people's deputy. The ballot for the referendum posed the question 'are you for or against the programme of the general director?' 'The programme described a dream-world, and nobody could oppose it' (Novopolski).¹⁰⁰

The ballot was organized through the shops. In Boris Pervov's press shop he organized the election and explained the consequences to the workers, but in other shops the foremen and shop leaders organized it, exploiting the vulnerability of the *limita* and contract workers, so the result was over 60 per cent in favour of the general director's programme. Boris Pervov and his friends visited a lot of departments and discussed the issue at lunch-time, before the working day and between shifts. At first they were just a group of friends and colleagues acting on an informal basis, but after this campaign they decided that if they were to represent their own interests they had to separate formally from the official trade union, because while they remained members they were very vulnerable to dismissal, which required union approval. Following a short strike in the shop, Pervov and his friend

Vladimir Novikov decided to visit Khramov, as a result of which they set up a Sotsprof group for the workers, which was registered by Sotsprof in May 1991.¹⁰¹

The Formation of Sotsprof in AZLK

The workers' Sotsprof was organized on the basis of the press shop, where most of the workers had very heavy jobs, hammering and shaping the metal. They organized firstly as an initiative group because of the hard working conditions and very low levels of pay. They stopped work for three days in a very bitter conflict with the administration, and Sotsprof was organized on the basis of this group of strikers. Alexeev of the Sotsprof Co-ordinating Committee came to AZLK to meet the initiative group to help them set up the Sotsprof, and Sotsprof helped them to print the bulletin announcing the formation of their group. The meeting at which the Sotsprof group was officially formed was called by Novopolski, although he had not joined himself 'for tactical reasons'. The following day he was denounced on the factory trade union committee as a member of Sotsprof, but he denied that he was such. The group numbered about 16 or 17 members, who were all shop-floor workers, without any brigadiers or foremen, but none of them were really supporters of the ideology of Sotsprof – Sotsprof was only a roof for their protection and a more or less official channel through which they could try to realize their interests.¹⁰²

When they registered at the plant they sent a letter to the general director of AZLK and asked him to give them an office, as specified in the law on trade unions. The general director told them that he was pleased that they had set up a Sotsprof, that he approved of their position, and told them to give all the documents to the deputy director, Davidof. He also sent them to the chairman of the factory trade union, Solomatin, who explained that the administration had asked him to look after Sotsprof, and to supervise the process whereby the administration would give them an office. He said they would work together and the official trade union would help them. The administration offered them an office outside the territory of the plant, at the next stop on the metro. When they visited this office the people who worked there told them that two days before the general director had signed a decree authorizing plant security to organize their department.

So it went on, as they were sent to one bureaucrat after another, until they got back to the deputy director, who was very irritated, but sent them to the senior official who was responsible for the distribution of offices and services on the territory. He was out, but his secretary told them that the Sotsprof documents had been there for the past two months, and proceeded to fetch them from his office. When they looked through the documents, they saw a note attached to them from Davidof, which said simply : ‘Prolong this process as far as possible’. When they saw this they decided to go to court, and told the secretary that this was what they were going to do. She called her boss again, who invited them to a meeting the following day. At the meeting he began to ask them how many members they had, and what they were going to do in the office, so that he could calculate the space to be allocated to them. Finally they got an office on the old territory of the plant, where they worked, although it had no chairs or telephone and needed redecorating. However, they never worked there because they didn’t really need the room at all, it was simply a matter of principle. In practice they usually met over lunch.

Unlike most enterprises, the AZLK administration accepted the existence of Sotsprof, and the official union expressed a willingness to co-operate, although both did their best to ignore Sotsprof and to keep its representatives off all the official bodies of the enterprise. Pervov worked on time rates and continued to receive his pay when he took time off for union business, but he found it very difficult to organize and expand the Sotsprof group. Workers were not usually willing to attend meetings after work, so that all union activity had to take place during working time. However, with the brigade system of organization of labour, when anybody takes time off their fellow workers must cover for them, and they were reluctant to do this, particularly because people were still not confident that Sotsprof had the power to protect them in the event of victimization.

The Sotsprof group had no objection to the official union continuing to perform what had become its primary function as the branch of the administration responsible for the distribution of goods acquired by barter, because this would leave the new organizations free to perform the trade union role.¹⁰³ However, the official union’s control of distribution made it very difficult for Sotsprof to organize independently. When they announced the establishment of a new Sotsprof a lot of workers were interested, and asked Pervov and Novikov

whether they would distribute food, sausage and such things. When Novikov and Pervov said that they would not, and explained that they wanted to realize the real function of trade unions, the workers lost all interest in Sotsprof. For this reason Sotsprof members kept up their membership of the official union, mainly to get access to distribution, even though this made them more vulnerable to dismissal.

The first activity of Sotsprof was to take up the question of the preparation of the annual collective agreement for 1992, with the question of holiday entitlement as a major issue because although the workers had a right to 21 days vacation, they didn't actually get it. Sotsprof also proposed a move away from the collectivism of existing social and welfare provision with the proposal that those who did not have time off sick, who did not use the holiday resorts and other social and welfare facilities, should receive financial compensation. The collective agreement was usually drawn up by the general director of AZLK on his own, and the director and trade union were used to living in a situation in which the workers never showed any initiative. In the shops the shop chiefs would complain to the workers, 'comrades, workers, why did you not send us your ideas and suggestions for the collective agreement', but when the Sotsprof group did come forward with its own initiative the trade union and administration did their best to suppress it.

Pervov and the local group of Sotsprof prepared a draft collective agreement which they gave to the leader of Pervov's shop, who was positive about it and agreed to support it in the negotiations. At the same time Pervov and Novikov went to see Solomatin, the president of the official union, and explained to him that the law gave them the right to put forward their own draft of the collective agreement. Solomatin tried to persuade them not to do it, but then offered to work together with them, because they have a common aim, and so on and so forth. Solomatin promised to call the chairman of the commission preparing the collective agreement, which Pervov and Novikov were invited to join. However, the official union office is on the new territory of AZLK, while they worked on the old territory, so that they did not get to find out about the meetings of the commission, and they were never once invited. When Pervov tried to contact the chairman of the commission his secretary simply replied that he was very busy, but they could see him if they could catch him.

The Conference of the Labour Collective to ratify the collective agreement took place in November 1991, under the chairmanship of the official trade union, but the meeting was packed with administration representatives. Invitations to the conference are distributed through the trade union, via the shops, to people the administration knows it can rely on. The administration knew every member of Sotsprof in AZLK, and made sure that none of them were invited. However, Novikov produced a document, prepared for him by the Coordinating Committee of Sotsprof, confirming that the primary group of Sotsprof in AZLK was registered, and that Novikov was its representative. He was allowed in by the controllers on the door, but when he rose to speak he was shouted down as soon as he identified himself, and couldn't make himself heard.

Meanwhile, the August *putsch* marked a turning point in the workers' organization in AZLK. On the day of the *putsch* Novikov was sent copies of Yeltsin's decree, which was distributed from Mossoviet through Sotsprof, and the Sotsprof members distributed the copies among the workers and posted them in prominent places. However, the foremen and shop leaders all ripped them down, and tried to frighten the members of Sotsprof.

On 20 August a special official plant committee was organized, although none of its members were identified by name. The committee repudiated Yeltsin's decree in the name of the workers, and refused to strike. Mossoviet sent Novikov and a Mossoviet people's deputy to AZLK to spread propaganda: Novikov had left AZLK by then, but still had his security pass. When they arrived at the gates the AZLK security guards would not allow them in, and told them 'you democrats can fuck off'. They then fetched a policeman from the metro station to support their legal right to be admitted, but the security guards said 'fuck off democrats' to all three of them. Other workers were threatened with the sack for pro-Yeltsin activity if their shop leaders saw them with the Yeltsin decree in their hands.

After the *putsch*, on about 26 August, Novopolski organized a meeting of two shifts on the territory of the plant, and they adopted a resolution condemning the behaviour of the plant administration during the *putsch*. They listed all the actions of the administration which proved that they had opposed the Russian government and supported the *putsch* leaders, and denounced the general director as the main enemy of Boris Yeltsin. The Lublinsky raion soviet had

supported the *putsch* and Kolomnikov, the general director, had supported all the decisions of the local Lublin soviet, providing cars for the supporters of the *putsch* in the raion. However, with the collapse of the *putsch* nobody would admit to having been involved in the special committee or its activities – all the trade union representatives claimed that they had been invited but had been too busy to go. After the *putsch*, Yeltsin appealed to the workers not to strike so as not to damage the economy. The general director boasted that he supported the decision, but had done so rather earlier!

Some of the engineers from the design department had taken time off work to go to defend the White House during the resistance to the *putsch*. When they returned to work after the defeat of the *putsch* the administration began to victimize them, and so they decided to get together and organize their own Sotsprof union, led initially by Mikhael Kutusov. The design engineers wrote a letter to the government, reiterating the 1987 complaints about the failure of the management to invest in a new model, and contacted Novikov, who introduced them to the Sotsprof office.¹⁰⁴ Solomatin and the general director both attended the organizing meeting of the engineers' Sotsprof.

The Struggle over Privatization

The main issue confronting the workers of AZLK from the end of 1991 was that of privatization, an issue which had long been under discussion, with rumours circulating about various privatization schemes. The general director had written an article in *Argumenti i Fakti* outlining his privatization plan, which would allocate one-third of the shares to the workers, and the administration had also published an article in the factory newspaper on their programme, according to which Austrian consultants had valued AZLK at 1.2 billion roubles. The administration proposed to allocate 400 million roubles worth of shares to the workers, half to be transferred free of charge, the other half to be distributed by the management as bonuses. The administration insisted that shareholdings would be personal, and that AZLK would be a closed company with no outside shareholders. To carry through the privatization plan the administration needed the support of the Labour Collective Council (STK), which effectively did not exist. Nevertheless, when the administration decided to create a holding company, which needed the signature of the chairman of the STK, the

general director simply appended the signature of the former chairman of the STK, I. Orlov, a fitter from the main assembly line. Novopolski collected a lot of evidence about breaches of the law in the preparation of the privatization programme, with which he confronted the general director, threatening to send the materials to the Prosecutor General.

Novopolski took the initiative in drawing up a counter-plan to that of the general director, in association with various lawyers and experts who provided advice without charge, which he presented through Sotsprof. However, the figures provided by the administration were completely ambiguous, so they could not work out the profit of the enterprise, and had no basis for making a proper valuation, although the plant on the old territory had long been written off in the books, so that was worthless.¹⁰⁵ The Sotsprof plan proposed to sell 35 per cent of the shares to foreigners to raise capital. These would be 'privileged shares', which would be non-voting shares with a guaranteed return of 12 per cent, which they believed would be attractive to foreign investors, and could be paid regardless of the profit of the enterprise, even if it goes bankrupt! The alternative plan also proposed to take advantage of the Russian law which gives the STK the right to privatize parts of the enterprise separately, so that they could privatize individual shops, and one of Sotsprof's first demands was for the establishment of such a plant STK with each shop or department being represented by the chairman of its STK, which would comprise 33 representatives. Once such an STK was established it would also have the right to receive all official documents, and so would be able to unravel the finances. This, and the fear that such a committee would be out of its control, gave the administration very good reasons for opposing the formation of such a plant-level STK.

Together with the Sotsprof groups Novopolski called a meeting, held outside the territory of the enterprise, on 6 November 1991. This meeting was chaired by Novopolski and attended by trade union president Solomatin, who provided them with a microphone and so on. The meeting was attended by 7–800 workers, and demanded that the administration programme of privatization be halted, and a new commission established to include worker representatives. The meeting also set up an initiative group, which included representatives of the two Sotsprof groups and of the official trade union, but the administration had a very negative response.¹⁰⁶ The factory administration refused to print the Sotsprof privatization plan in the

factory newspaper, and tried to prevent the Sotsprof group from circulating it. The group did not have the money to pay to publish their plan themselves. Although they could print it using the facilities of the design department, they did not have any paper.¹⁰⁷

According to Boris Pervov, the workers were on the whole in favour of privatization at that time, but they were opposed to the administration's plans. However, the vast majority of the workers did not care who owned the enterprise, what they were most concerned about was their wages. They were simply not interested in politics – when two people's deputies tried to explain the political situation to the November meeting the crowd started whistling and jeering and people began to leave. Thus Sotsprof's involvement in the privatization campaign had diverted it from concentrating on what should have been its main task of building up the union. By the end of 1991 Pervov was very irritated that the Sotsprof centre seemed only to be interested in the struggle for political power, and was afraid that this would destroy the authority of Sotsprof because workers don't like political struggle, 'they have had it up to here'.

By the end of 1991 the Sotsprof of workers had about 100 members, all on the old territory of AZLK, and had acquired an office, although it still had no telephone and no chairs. The Sotsprof group continued to be oriented to achieving its aims through legal processes, to force the administration to carry out its legal responsibilities. However, they did not endorse Khramov's opposition to strikes, although they were opposed to wildcat strikes on the grounds that strikes should be well organized and supported by a strike fund. Indeed they had proposed that the official union fees should be used to set up a strike fund rather than supporting the union bureaucracy. The Sotsprof group had its own bank account, but its fee was purely symbolic and it had no money even to buy paper to prepare leaflets, let alone to support a full-time organizer. They relied on the Sotsprof Co-ordinating Committee to give them legal support, but felt that the Sotsprof centre was mainly concerned to get its hands on the money, property and position of the official trade union centres, and provided its own groups with little support. Since the formation of their group their contact with the centre had been almost entirely by telephone, although Novikov had sometimes attended meetings of the Moscow Co-ordinating Committee.

The administration tolerated their existence, but they had still not secured representation on the plant trade union committee, as was their legal right.¹⁰⁸ The administration still put them under pressure: for example, when Novikov, who had by then left the plant, visited the shop to meet with Boris Pervov the foreman would follow him around, and tell Boris to work and not to stand around talking. Various managers had threatened to sack him, although without ever giving a reason, and he still felt confident that Khramov provided him with adequate protection. Three of the most outspoken critics of the administration had been punished with a formal warning, which meant that with two more warnings they could be sacked, although the Sotsprof lawyer advised them that the warnings were unlawful.

Contract Workers – Novopolski's Reconstitution of Sotsprof

Alongside the privatization campaign, the two other issues that dominated 1992 were the campaign for the new collective agreement, and the campaign for the rights of contract and *limita* workers. Khramov had provided the Sotsprof group with a copy of the collective agreement that had been proposed at the Experimental Factory in Novosibirsk to use as the basis of their own alternative agreement. They had also asked the administration for the relevant financial documents, because they had discovered to their amazement that the official union had never bothered to get this information from the administration. However, before the collective agreement campaign got under way a more pressing issue arose which provided Sotsprof with an opportunity to expand: the issue of the supply of cars for contract workers.

With the end of the *limita* in 1987 AZLK had increasingly recruited contract workers, whose fixed-term contracts gave them the right to buy a car at the relatively low factory price after a certain period of work. With the rise in the price of the car at the beginning of 1992 they suddenly found that they could not afford to buy the cars, while inflation had wiped out their savings. However, these workers are in a very precarious position, in relation both to the prospect of unemployment and to the possibilities of privatization, since they had given up their rights at their former place of work, but as contract workers had no rights at AZLK. These workers were considered to be the most conservative, because of their precarious position and because many

of them still had links in the countryside, through which they could get food, but they had reached the point at which they had nothing to lose, and had now become the most revolutionary of the workers.

Their contracts did not specify the price at which they would be able to buy a car, since at the time nobody imagined that the price would rise. At the end of December 1991 the price of a car was 21,000 roubles, but in January 1992 it rose to 200,000. The administration claimed that workers were able to buy the cars for 42,000 roubles, and that they allocated about 3,000 a year to workers, whose distribution was determined by the labour collective, but according to the workers most of the cars went to the administration and its stooges. Most of the rest of the output was bartered, so few if any cars were sold at the 'market' price.

The issue was taken up by Sotsprof, which organized a meeting in front of the administration building to press the workers' demands, and Khramov wrote a letter to the general director, who agreed to put it in the collective agreement for 1992. However, the workers' discontent continued to mount, and Novopolski and the Sotsprof groups decided to call a mass meeting, at which they planned to establish a Sotsprof for the contract workers.

The meeting was called by posting notices all around the plant, and took place at the end of the Friday shift, in a hall attached to the assembly shop. The meeting was attended by about 200 workers, mostly men, and predominantly skilled workers, since this is the area in which labour shortages have been made up by contract labour. The workers were angry, articulate, attentive and lively, and the meeting was handled brilliantly by Novopolski, who chaired the meeting, and diverted the specific grievances of the contract workers towards wider demands for pay increases and negotiation of a new collective agreement.

Novopolski opened the meeting by reading extracts from a recent newspaper report which was based on information from the administration. The newspaper reported that there were 400 people on contract at the factory, who had the right to purchase a car at the old state price as part of their contract of employment. However, Novopolski said that there were in fact 3,200 contract workers in the plant and that the cars were being sold to workers at the commercial price of 200,000 roubles, not at the fixed state price. Moreover, with rises in fuel and electricity prices on the horizon, this price was bound

to rise again. He then went in detail through the price of the car and the levels of wages over the past three years. Three years ago the car had cost 26 times the monthly wage, last year 30 times the wage, and now it was 100 times the monthly wage, while workers' savings had been wiped out by inflation. He then argued either that the car should be available to workers at a price of 62,000 roubles, to keep the relation to pay levels, or, more importantly, that pay should be raised to 4,400 a month, from 2,400, to keep the relationship. Novopolski then moved on to the question of pay, demanding that it should be linked to the profit of the enterprise, but the administration refused to reveal the profit, claiming that it was a commercial secret.

After about ten minutes a young worker came to the front to speak. He argued that if all the contract workers left the whole plant would come to a standstill, because they were the skilled workers, spread throughout the plant. According to the newspaper there was no shortage of labour at AZLK and there was strong competition to get jobs, but this was a lie – the other workers laughed as he read the claim out from the newspaper. He proposed that TV, radio and newspapers should be given true information.

Another worker then handed Novopolski a typed statement, which was a collective letter from the contract workers. Novopolski read out the letter, commenting as he went along, while the audience listened attentively, and added comments from the floor. The statement was basically a long-winded exposition of the workers' grievances. The workers argued that their contract was worthless, because the administration did not respect it, but Novopolski pointed out that the contract did not specify a price. He had consulted a lawyer, and there was no basis for legal action. The workers noted that they were highly skilled, and could earn far more working in the private sector as car mechanics, but stayed only because of fears of unemployment. Novopolski noted that although AZLK was profitable at that time, there was a danger that rising energy prices would make AZLK unprofitable. He stressed that the main problem was the wage: with low wages it was impossible to buy a car at any price. Novopolski argued that the workers should call a new conference to revise the collective agreement, which would include figures and the principle of a 40 per cent discount on cars for workers. He also proposed that all representatives at the conference must be selected by a quota system, to ensure that all social strata were properly represented (to prevent the administration

packing the meeting with managers). One worker then raised the problem that different contract workers signed up at different times, so there should be differential prices according to the time spent at work. The meeting gradually got more heated, with increasing numbers intervening from the floor. Novopolski then made a firm proposal that there should be a conference, but the workers were very impatient and demanding, and were becoming more angry.

At this point Kalyuga, deputy president of the official union, came to the platform in his work overalls. He put the administration position, claiming that until the previous day not one car had sold for more than 42,000 roubles, which is why the plant was not making any profit, because the cars at that time cost between 70 and 90,000 roubles to produce. According to him the administration had distributed 1,000 cars to workers in January, and Novopolski had simply been lying to them about the figures. The workers became increasingly angry with Kalyuga, regularly interrupting his speech, but soon quietened down to allow him to continue. Kalyuga said that there was a conflict of interest between the *limita* and other workers, but some yelled from the floor that they are not *limita*. He then referred to the workers as 'comrades', to which people from the floor shouted 'we are not comrades'. Kalyuga tried to put the conflict down to misunderstandings, because people did not yet understand prices, although as an economist he understood all the details. He then argued that these problems had come about because of government policies. One person shouted that he had to take responsibility for his own actions, the problems were because of the activity of the union as well as the government. Another person shouted that in another car plant these problems had been foreseen by the administration and there they had worked for three months producing cars for their own workers. Another suggested that AZLK should do the same for one or two months, a suggestion greeted with overwhelming approval by the meeting.

Novopolski intervened again, to say that the enterprise was not selling its cars to anybody, but was simply bartering them for metal, rather than selling them to the workers. Kalyuga insisted that the administration had no right simply to sell the cars. They had already had to fight with the tax inspectors to sell the cars below cost, for 42,000. The barter deals were justified: it was on the basis of past barter deals that they were still receiving supplies at last year's prices. Moreover, all

these matters can only be decided by a conference of the labour collective, and this meeting had no right to decide anything.

The workers on the floor became increasingly angry, demanding that the recording of the meeting that we were making should be broadcast over the factory radio, while Kalyuga looked nervously at our tape recorder from time to time. The meeting was still very disciplined though. Kalyuga then got into a big argument with Novopolski about the price of cars to the plant, with Kalyuga claiming that the administration wanted to sell cars for 42,000. Novopolski then asked him what was the position of the trade union in this matter, but Kalyuga refused to answer, since it was the STK that signed the contract, not him or the union, and pointed out that Novopolski had been a delegate at all the conferences. A worker then got up from the floor and asked what was the principle of selection of delegates to the STK meeting. Kalyuga walked off, to whistles and catcalls.

Novopolski returned to the question of a meeting of the collective to endorse a new collective agreement, demanding that this should be held in the palace of culture, but Kalyuga replied that it was not up to him to make any promises. His position on this was the same as on everything else, he could only explain the position of the union. Novopolski then introduced the Sotsprof representative, Andrei Yefremenko, President of the Moscow Regional Co-ordinating Committee, noting that Sotsprof had a great deal of experience in signing collective agreements.¹⁰⁹

Yefremenko almost killed the meeting dead. Instead of addressing the workers' grievances he argued the need to have a collective agreement, and referred to the Novosibirsk case, where a small Sotsprof group had got an alternative agreement accepted. He then went on to argue that the workers should not demand higher wages, because the enterprise would then have to pay higher taxes; it was much better for the enterprise to pay part of the wages in kind, by giving workers car parts. According to the new Russian law, the trade union had a right to receive all financial documents from the administration, but must keep the information a commercial secret.

Novopolski cut Yefremenko off before he could do any more damage, and immediately proposed establishing a new Sotsprof group of contract workers. He argued for a Sotsprof organization simply on the grounds that it made it unnecessary to register, and proposed that workers retain dual membership. Some workers intervened to say that

if they organized their own Sotsprof the papers could say that this was the basis for division between workers. Novopolski then introduced the president of the engineers' Sotsprof group, in response to questions about whether other Sotsprof groups existed. (Boris Pervov was also present, but did not speak.) The proposals to negotiate a collective agreement and set up a Sotsprof were then put to the meeting, and carried *nem con.* There was then an appeal to join Sotsprof, and perhaps 100 came forward to do so. Some were still calling for more militant action – strike, surrounding of the White House — but Novopolski argued that although in the past he had himself proposed that they surround the White House to make their case known, he now wanted to realize the same objective via the law. He said this would be a working group to represent the concerns of the workers, which according to the law must be paid for by the administration.

One person commented from the floor that this was like a circus. They should all leave the official union and join Sotsprof. There was widespread approval and laughter.

In general the mood of the meeting was militant and angry, but disciplined and thoughtful. The workers were certainly ready to go on strike, and would have done so if called. However, Novopolski was concerned to channel the workers' anger into building an organization and negotiating a new collective agreement. This was rather different from the emphasis of the Yefremenko, who was extremely legalistic in his approach, and didn't really engage with the workers' mood at all.

As the meeting closed, those wanting to negotiate with the administration stayed behind. About a dozen came forward and had a short discussion, Yefremenko explaining the legal position, and went over the Novosibirsk example. However, he was mostly concerned to advertise Sotsprof's social and health insurance fund — he came over more as an insurance salesman than as a trade unionist. Mikhail Voroshilov, a design engineer who was the president of the engineers' Sotsprof, then explained to the remaining workers that everybody was led to believe that it was the official trade union that paid for social and welfare benefits, but the money came out of the state budget and was simply administered by the union. Novopolski then proposed that the committee should take up the issue of privatization, and distribute publicity material throughout the workshops. The group decided to call a meeting for the following week to discuss privatization. The issue of cars for the contract workers seemed to have been forgotten.

What would happen next, as Novopolski said, ‘depends on the workers’.

As a result of this meeting the membership of the Sotsprof group increased to around 300 by the end of March, although the vast majority retained their membership of the official union.¹¹⁰ However, the alliance between Novopolski and Sotsprof was very heavily weighted in favour of the former, who used Sotsprof as the base from which to wage his own campaigns, while remaining a member of the various official structures. As far as he was concerned it was necessary to have an independent trade union base to make it possible to campaign within the law, and take grievances to the courts, and it was convenient to establish a Sotsprof group because it saved the time and effort of organizing an independent trade union from scratch. However, Sotsprof remained merely a cover, and Novopolski never had any illusions that it could be anything more – ordinary workers only looked to the trade union for the distribution of consumer goods so that, although the official union structures were largely discredited in the eyes of the workers, they could be replaced only over a long period.

The Collective Agreement Campaign

The Law on Collective Agreements was signed by Yeltsin in March 1992, and Novopolski decided to use the Sotsprof group as the basis on which to propose an alternative collective agreement, although Solomatin, president of the official union, tried to shut them out by signing his own collective agreement. The factory refused to print their draft agreement, so the Sotsprof group printed it themselves and posted a hundred copies of it around the plant. The draft agreement included such points as the indexation of pay, guarantees of employment, pay increases, improved working conditions and compensation for harmful conditions, guarantees of employment in the event of redundancy, privileges for workers in the event of privatization, distribution of cars at heavily subsidized prices (including the protection of the rights of contract workers), guarantees of trade union rights after privatization, and quotas for workers’ representation on all committees.¹¹¹ The agreement also included the demand for a guaranteed minimum wage, which was important for piece-rate workers in conditions in which production was being cut because of problems

with supplies and, later, sales. At the request of the general director a point was added, specifying that managers who provided false information in their reports to higher levels of the administration were liable to dismissal.

The Sotsprof group then circulated a petition in support of their collective agreement and rapidly gathered 2,500 signatures, mostly from the assembly shop. Novopolski took the collective agreement to Solomatin and told him that under the law these people would not be covered by the official union's collective agreement, so that it would be illegal for Solomatin to sign on their behalf. However, before the negotiations over the collective agreement could get under way, the general director, Kolomnikov, died suddenly, opening up the latent divisions within the administration, which had hitherto always been dominated by the conservative faction.

When Kolomnikov died, each faction in the administration had its own candidate, leaflets were circulated, and there was a lot of propaganda in favour of holding a genuine election for the director's post. However, the ministry visited AZLK and made it clear that an election would be inopportune, so that in the end there was only one candidate presented to the conference, Yurii Pavlovich Borodin, the technical director, who came from the democratic wing of the administration, while a progressive manager, Polikov, who had been demoted to the department of civil defence after the conflict in 1989, was appointed first deputy director.

The new general director summoned Solomatin and Novopolski to a meeting in May, and told them that he wanted a single collective agreement and it was up to them to sort it out. The two negotiated, together with representatives of the two Sotsprof groups, Solomatin's deputy and the deputy director for economics. The result was a compromise agreement, which included the full section of the Sotsprof draft on privatization, the demand for the monthly indexation of wages, and a vague reference to the representativity of labour collective meetings. The agreement was signed by the general director, Vyacheslav Churikov and Solomatin on 22 July and approved by the labour collective conference on 28 July.¹¹² Solomatin and Novopolski also decided that the following year they should sign a three-year agreement as the basis for a long-term programme – the problem with annual agreements was that each year management sought to exclude points on the grounds that they cannot afford them this year. This

would be combined with biannual revision conferences of the labour collective with social quotas regulating representation.¹¹³

The Privatization Struggle Continues

The collective agreement campaign was closely tied to the issue of privatization, which had been hanging over AZLK for a long time. The death of Kolomnikov put a stop to his privatization plans, and Borodin had his own ideas, which were not coincident with those of the government. However, the activists in the motor industry had also got a fuller understanding of what privatization would involve following visits to Western auto plants, and in particular the scale of lay-offs that would be implied if the industry was to be bought by foreign investors and had to compete with Western producers.¹¹⁴ The central issue became that of retaining the controlling interest in the hands of the labour collective, with restrictions on the right to sell shares to prevent them from falling into mafia hands, which was seen as the only way of preserving social guarantees, particularly of employment.

Novopolski had long-standing contacts with activists in VAZ, the giant Lada plant at Tol'yatti on the Volga which the government was hoping to sell to foreign investors, who had also been waging a long campaign over the issue of privatization. A privatization conference was held at VAZ at short notice in the middle of July 1992, attended by Chubais, the minister responsible for privatization. VAZ worked out its own privatization proposals, which deviated substantially from the alternatives offered in the government's privatization programme primarily in giving employees a controlling interest effectively without payment, and in assigning all privatization revenues to the development of VAZ. Chubais was reportedly furious, but after some amendment the proposal was approved by Yeltsin. Novopolski took the VAZ scheme as the basis for his own proposals for AZLK.

Novopolski's own position was by now considerably strengthened, not so much because he had the backing of the Sotsprof group, which remained minuscule, as because he (temporarily) had the confidence of Borodin, the new general director. Novopolski was appointed to the AZLK Privatization Commission established in July 1992, alongside Solomatin and three senior managers, joined later by one of Chubais's deputies as chair of the commission. Novopolski had few illusions about what he could achieve through participation in the commission,

but at the very least it gave him access to information so that he could publicize any underhand moves. Nevertheless, he had high hopes that they could secure agreement over a programme similar to that put forward at VAZ, which would appeal to senior management because it provided the best guarantees not only of the workers' security, but also of their own.

In fact things turned out rather differently. The deputy director for economics was very experienced, having been trained in Germany for two years at Volkswagen and Siemens, and persuaded Novopolski that his proposal, based on the government's second variant of privatization, was not the best for AZLK or its workers, primarily because if the shares were distributed to the workers through a closed subscription they would rapidly fall into the hands of the mafia as workers sold them to realize their gains, while workers' share ownership has nothing to do with self-management when there were no effective organs of worker representation. Novopolski was persuaded by these arguments, and examples from elsewhere, to back a modification of the first variant along the lines of the VAZ proposal, in which the majority of shares would be retained by the State Property Committee and controlled by the labour collective as a whole. His view was now that workers did not want to be shareholders, they wanted to earn a decent wage, and this was the first priority. A compromise was eventually reached in December, with agreement on a plan similar to that of VAZ, based on the first variant under the privatization law, with special privileges for senior management. However, although the VAZ privatization plan had been approved by Yeltsin a similar way forward for AZLK was suddenly blocked when Yeltsin lost the relevant powers in his confrontation with the Congress of People's Deputies in December 1992.¹¹⁵

Implementing the Collective Agreement – Sotsprof and the Official Union

If Novopolski had no illusions about the potential of Sotsprof as an independent trade union, he had few illusions about what he as an individual could do within the official union. We saw a graphic illustration of this when we attended a meeting of the factory trade union committee at the end of September 1992. By this time the situation in the factory was becoming increasingly difficult as a result of supply

problems, from which workers were losing a lot of pay and which was giving rise to increasing unrest – when we arrived at 3.15 p.m. the workers from the 3 p.m. shift were going home because there was no work.¹¹⁶

The meeting of the factory committee had been called to approve the indexation of wages for September under the collective agreement, based on the inflation figure for August. The central issue was that of the inflation figure to be used. Novopolski's proposal was that indexation should not be based on the subsistence level, but should take account of the special needs of car workers. The most important point was the demand that the workers should be compensated for the recent massive increase in the price of petrol, since many lived a long way from the plant and many have their own cars.

After a brief introduction by Solomatin the meeting was addressed by the chief of the Department of Labour and Wages (OTZ) of AZLK, who read (or rather mumbled) his way through an extremely long bureaucratic report for about twenty minutes. The report had not been made available to the members of the committee in advance, although Novopolski had got hold of a copy, and was incomprehensible even to the handful of the 45 committee members who appeared to be listening to it. The conclusion was that the administration proposed a 50 per cent pay rise for September, although the speaker pointed out that the enterprise did not have the money to cover such an increase.

As soon as the chief of the OTZ finished speaking, Novopolski leapt to his feet and went through examples of agreements at various other plants, and particularly at VAZ. He made his point that indexation should be based on the cost of the typical consumer basket of AZLK workers, not of subsistence, and noted that this had been agreed at the previous conference of the labour collective. On the problem of finding the means to pay for the rise, Novopolski insisted that it was the administration's job to find the money, and he proposed that the trade union and administration should write a joint letter to the government complaining about their high costs and high tax burden. Novopolski was eloquent and animated, speaking loudly and firmly, but it was a set-piece speech presented to a dead audience. Although this was supposed to be the trade union committee, nobody paid much attention to Novopolski or indicated any support for his position.

The head of the OTZ replied to Novopolski that adequate statistics were not available to do anything more than take the Moscow Statisti-

cal Department's inflation figures, and stressed the cost to the enterprise of food subsidies in the canteen, of pay increases and of lay-off pay in the event of stoppages, arguing that the situation would soon arise in which the Moskvich would cost the same as Japanese imports. Novopolski leapt in with an angry intervention, but Solomatin cut him off, insisting that they had to use the official figures because there was nothing else. There was then an argument between Novopolski and the head of the OTZ over whether a car was a luxury or an essential for AZLK workers.

The ubiquitous Kalyuga,¹¹⁷ deputy president of the union, then stood up and agreed that there must be a proper consumer basket, but then insisted that everybody knew that inflation in August had been less than 50 per cent and so he proposed ratification of the administration's over-generous proposal. Arguments continued, but in general the union leaders became more conciliatory towards Novopolski, agreeing with the proposal to complain to the government over the high levels of taxation of cars, with Solomatin proposing that the complaint should be made jointly with other enterprises. Solomatin also agreed that they had to define a special consumer basket, and announced that a draft already existed which would be discussed the following week.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, the whole meeting was no more than a formalistic ritual, in which Novopolski was listened to but ignored, in which the administration's proposals were nodded through without serious discussion, and in which all criticism of the administration was immediately turned against the government. As the meeting ended, Novopolski gestured to the meeting room and said to us that it was very difficult to make any real changes in the trade union committee, although with elections pending some members did recognize that without the support of the workers they risked losing their positions.

From Accommodation to Resistance

Behind the scenes, Novopolski's membership of the Privatization Commission was only a part of a process of courting by the new administration. Solomatin let it be known that he would be leaving his trade union post in the near future, and indicated to Novopolski that there was a vacancy as deputy president of the union, the implication being that he would be able to step into Solomatin's shoes. Solomatin also indicated that the other Sotsprof leaders could be found places in

the leadership of the official union, which Novopolski saw at the time as offering significant opportunities for progress.¹¹⁹ Novopolski met with Solomatin and Borodin on a number of occasions to discuss the problems of the structure of trade union activity. Borodin had also offered Novopolski a comfortable job as head of a production department. However, Novopolski was becoming increasingly disillusioned with the possibilities of permeation as it became increasingly clear that he faced a choice between becoming a pocket leader and moving back into opposition.

The issue came to a head at the end of 1992 over a series of issues, beginning with privatization, where the situation had changed radically in the previous three months.

The attempt to reach a consensus within the Privatization Commission ran into difficulties over the issue of the integrity of the enterprise. The plant representatives wanted to privatize AZLK as a whole, but the State Property Committee wanted to break it up and to privatize the parts separately. At a meeting at the end of December, at which Novopolski made a fairly innocuous intervention, the general director came up to him in the break and told him not to speak in the commission without clearing it in writing with the general director in advance, in case he says something damaging to the future of AZLK. Novopolski insisted that he had a right to speak as representative of his labour collective and independent trade union.¹²⁰

More crucially for Novopolski, a lot of rumours were circulating in the plant that the administration was involved in discussions around the setting up of a joint venture, most likely with the South Korean newcomer Daiwoo, although none of this was reported to the Privatization Commission. In preparation for the privatization conference held at the end of December, Novopolski worked closely with his TIE contacts to draw up a special issue of the Moscow TIE Bulletin denouncing the proposed Daiwoo connection in the name not of Sotsprof but of the assembly shop, primarily on the grounds that Daiwoo was alleged to be planning to offer the outdated Opel Kadett engine.¹²¹ There was a heated exchange between Novopolski and the general director at the conference, with the general director denouncing Novopolski's 'dirty leaflet' and claiming that as a result the Koreans had pulled out of the deal.

Meanwhile, Solomatin's hints about Novopolski's future position in the official union came to nothing. Solomatin was indeed appointed

Deputy Director for Social Questions on 20 December (which would enable him to participate in the privileged distribution of shares to senior managers under the privatization plan). A meeting of the factory trade union committee was hurriedly called at which Solomatin announced that Gubanov, deputy chief of a large shop and former Party secretary of the plant, had just been delegated by his labour collective to serve on the factory committee, then announced that he would be leaving his union post and proposed Gubanov as his replacement.¹²² Novopolski could only shake Gubanov's hand, although he told him that constitutionally he had to be elected by a conference of the labour collective.¹²³

The collapse of Novopolski's hopes of taking over the official union led to a growing confrontation between Sotsprof and the union. The Sotsprof group had launched a recruitment campaign, spreading leaflets appealing to workers to write to the chief accountant asking her to stop the check-off of dues to the official union.¹²⁴ A few people did so, but the official union then responded with a re-registration campaign in the middle of January 1993, distributing a print-out of the entire labour force around the shops, and giving people two weeks in which to sign up as members of the official union, with shop chiefs and trade union officers being instructed by the administration to ensure that everybody signed. At the same time, the union waged a publicity campaign explaining how fees were spent, listing the advantages of union membership, and warning of the dire consequences of non-membership, although the general director continued to insist that as far as he was concerned all unions were equal and his priority was to preserve a unified body of workers.

Despite these tensions, Novopolski was one of the small group of people invited to the general director's new year champagne party, at which the general director told him not to get upset, and reassured him that everything was all right. But more trouble was looming, over the question of pay and lay-offs, and within a month relations had broken down completely.

The administration announced that because of a shortage of engines the Christmas break would be extended for four days, without making any mention of payment. According to the collective agreement workers are paid for lay-offs if the administration is at fault. Novopolski went to Gubanov, who simply replied that it was a matter for the general director to decide. Novopolski insisted that workers had to be

paid, since it was an administrative stoppage, but Gubanov answered that this would be unfair because some workers had already taken the days in question as part of their holiday entitlement. When people returned to work on 15 January they found that they had large pay packets, and were not upset, but a few days later they were told that the track would be stopped again until 8 February.

Another argument then arose over compulsory Saturday working, when the general director ordered some shops to work an illegal double Saturday shift to make up a shortage of parts for other shops. Novopolski went to the general director and told him that it was crazy to work a double shift and then to stop.¹²⁵ In the end the Saturday working was cancelled because of the shortage of engines.

The question of lay-off pay continued to simmer as the plant was closed. At the end of January, Gubanov announced to the factory trade union committee that the general director had decided to pay the Russian minimum wage (a derisory sum) for the days the plant was closed, a decision backed by Gubanov on the grounds that the closure was the result of the disruption of links with the engine suppliers in Ufa, and so not the fault of the administration. Novopolski insisted that the workers were not responsible for the stoppage and so should be paid two-thirds of their basic pay, as laid down by the Russian law. There was a heated discussion in which Novopolski's position was eventually carried. Gubanov responded by announcing that he would have to see the general director to explore the real possibilities, and so the meeting was adjourned to the next day.

The following day the general director arrived at the re-convened meeting forty minutes late, and merely re-stated his position. Novopolski argued that AZLK had a permanent representative in Ufa, so it was their responsibility for not having anticipated the problem. If the fault was with Ufa and not with AZLK then the administration had to petition Yeltsin to solve the problem before he left for his trip to India,¹²⁶ or get Chernomyrdin to sort it out. If the plant had no money it should give the workers an indexed IOU, and appeal to the government for relief from taxation. Wherever the fault lay, it was not with the workers, so according to the law they had to be paid. If the administration did not sort it out, then Novopolski would, through Yeltsin's representative in Moscow city, who was an old friend of Novopolski's.

Borodin replied that he had not meant to imply that they would pay only the minimum wage, but that this would be a guarantee – if the

enterprise could afford it it would pay more, but may not be able to pay the whole sum. The meeting again backed Novopolski's position that the administration had to pay for the stoppage, although the administration still did not assume responsibility. Immediately following this meeting Novopolski's privileges were withdrawn and he found himself once more unequivocally in opposition.

Towards Crisis – for AZLK and for Sotsprof

The financial situation of AZLK continued to deteriorate and production fell, with periodic lay-offs. At the insistence of Borodin, Sotsprof and the official union collaborated in drawing up the 1993 collective agreement, which involved little change from the previous year although Sotsprof had to block a management proposal, backed by the official union, which would have allowed workers to be laid off without pay. Nevertheless the official union endorsed a management-imposed pay freeze, in violation of the collective agreement, in February and March 1993.¹²⁷

In June, Sotsprof put forward demands for a wage increase and payment of the indexation supplement, which had not been paid since January, but the administration rejected the demands out of hand, insisting that AZLK workers were well paid, and refusing to negotiate over Sotsprof's demand for the introduction of time wages with quality bonuses, which would have ensured that pay was maintained during periods of slack production. Sotsprof, in return, claimed that management was siphoning off funds into its pocket bank and various daughter companies, with irrelevant projects absorbing the money which should have gone to pay wages. Nevertheless, management increased wages by 35 per cent in June, when the official inflation rate was less than 20 per cent, although over the year as a whole AZLK wages lagged substantially behind the general rate of inflation. According to Sotsprof the average real earnings being almost halved between January and December 1993.

However, the mass of workers remained passive, not only because their pay remained higher than that in other enterprises, but also because of the increasingly real fear of unemployment. Thus the Sotsprof group reverted to the traditional form of Sotsprof action, trying to secure the payment of due wages and enforcement of the collective agreement through the courts. Eventually the local court

ruled that the Sotsprof members should receive their compensation for October, although the general director was still in no hurry to pay.

The financial position of AZLK deteriorated sharply over the summer of 1993, with further problems with the supply of engines from Ufa and VAZ, and with falling sales. The plant was stopped for four days in October and three days in November. In December management promised that lay-off pay would be paid when the financial position improved, although it never was paid. At the same time the question of privatization continued to be stalled, with management claiming that the fact that AZLK was still a state enterprise frightened off potential foreign investors, without which AZLK could not hope to get the money needed to modernize and develop, with its priorities being plans to develop light commercial vehicles, invest in the modernization of the Ufa engine plant and in the development of a dealer network (*Finansovye Izvestiya*, 11, 72, 17–23 March 1994, v).

The situation in January 1994 went from bad to worse, with the factory stopped for most of the month. The administration did not make any promise of lay-off pay and they and the official union accused Sotsprof of dividing the labour collective and trying to destroy the factory by demanding compensation for the period of closure. The issue was still the same as it had been a year ago, the administration and the official union blaming the government for the difficulties and demanding increased subsidies and tax relief, while the Sotsprof group insisted that the stoppages and financial problems were the result of the incompetence of management, which therefore was legally obliged to pay for lay-offs. In the end the January lay-off was partly paid at the rate of two-thirds of the previous October's basic, with a maximum of 50,000 roubles, and with an unfulfilled promise of more money to come. The assembly shop passed a resolution of no confidence in Gubanov and the factory trade union committee.

At the beginning of February the administration proposed changes to the collective agreement which were unilaterally endorsed by the official union on 3 February, and pushed through a hastily convened meeting of the labour collective the following day. The principal substantive amendment was to change the eight-hour working day and forty-hour working week for a working day of *up to* eight hours and a working week of *up to* forty hours, which would allow the administration to lay off workers without any guarantee of compensation. The other main amendment was to replace the clause which required the

agreement of both trade unions to amendments to the agreement with a clause requiring only the agreement of the official union. These changes were later ruled illegal by the local prosecutor, but his formal statement produced no response.

In February 1994 the AZLK Sotsprof group took up the challenge and issued a trial issue of its own factory newspaper *Vo Ves' Golos* (At the Top of One's Voice), which was devoted to a denunciation of the administration and official union, and calls to the workers to leave the union. The paper also reported on a meeting of independent unions in the motor industry held on 2 February, bringing together Sotsprof groups from AZLK, ZiL, Rostsel'mash, the Lipetsk tractor factory and the trade union Yedinstvo from VAZ. According to the report, the administration in all the auto plants were playing the same tricks, stopping the plant without consultation, selling cars through very profitable intermediaries, screwing subsidies out of government, and doing nothing to develop production. The meeting passed a wide-ranging resolution, and proposed to set up a co-ordinating organ to collect and distribute information.¹²⁸

On 5 March the track was stopped until the middle of the month and the factory moved on to a three-day week with reduced pay. The assembly workers of the main track threatened a strike, demanding full pay from September the previous year on the grounds that the stoppages were management's fault; the inclusion in the collective agreement of a clause prohibiting mass redundancies; and the reversal of the illegal changes to the collective agreement pushed through in February. They also demanded the auditing of AZLK, its affiliates and commercial structures.

On 12 April a one-hour strike on the track was followed by a one-day strike in the paint shop over the issue of payment for lay-offs. The Sotsprof groups on the track and in the paint shop called an indefinite strike from 27 April, demanding the linking of auto workers' pay to the price of cars; the incorporation of December's indexation into basic rates and the continuation of indexation in future; full payment for lay-offs since September 1993, with indexation; payment of the 13th month bonus for 1993; payment of wages in good time by the administration; unconditional fulfilment of point 2.1.1 of the collective agreement, providing for indexation from January to April 1994; introduction of guaranteed employment into the collective agreement; rejection of illegal changes to the collective agreement, and a ban on

changes to the collective agreement without the workers' approval (*Delo* 17, 51, April 1994).

The strike was postponed to 12 May, following a ballot, and involved only the assembly shop and the main track, with additional demands for time wages for production line work, agreement on the pace of the track, the provision of adequate safety equipment, and a just privatization. On 14 May negotiations began, and on 17 May Borodin signed a protocol under which he began to fulfil the strikers' demands, the strike ending that day (*Delo*, 20 May 1994). However, a few days later the administration took the strikers to court, and on 1 June the strike was declared illegal (*Moscow TV News*, 23 May 1994; *Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 5, 1994).

By the beginning of 1995 the Sotsprof organization in AZLK had been effectively marginalized.¹²⁹ Management refused to check-off Sotsprof subscriptions, which made it difficult to maintain membership since the handful of activists had to travel around the extensive territory of the plant to collect fees from the scattered membership. Sotsprof continued to be excluded from the collective agreement, although a management order allowed Voroshilov and Churikov to spend eight hours a week on union business. However, since this was not included in the collective agreement, they depended on their supervisors' discretion to allow them to take the time off. Voroshilov was a member of the factory's Labour Disputes Commission, but the administration paid little attention to the body. However, Sotsprof still had some leverage because of its contacts outside the factory and the fear of the administration, increasingly dependent on state privileges and subsidies, of bad publicity. Moreover, the Sotsprof group received considerable financial and material support from the Sotsprof centre, which enabled it to publish its factory newspaper, of which five issues appeared in 1994, and to represent workers in court actions, for example over the unpaid lay-off of 234 people, not all Sotsprof members.

Within the plant Sotsprof claimed to have sixty four members in the chassis shop, with other groups on the main track, in the press shop and in the experimental shop, but most of the membership was scattered and the only organised cell was in the chassis shop. The members were virtually all men in the 30–45 age group. Sotsprof activists tried to represent their fellow workers regardless of union membership, primarily in the hope of recruiting new members by example. However, this created problems in its turn. For example,

Vladimir Mikhailovich Kulakov, leader of the Sotsprof group in the chassis shop and deputy president of the AZLK workers' Sotsprof, recruited twelve of the fourteen members of his brigade into Sotsprof. However, the fellow members of his brigade have to cover for him while he is working on Sotsprof business, which leads to tension within the brigade (similar problems in his previous brigade in another shop eventually forced him and a Sotsprof colleague to move to this job).

Nevertheless, the AZLK Sotsprof group had a very high profile in the national organisation, Voroshilov editing the resurrected Sotsprof newspaper, and the AZLK activists being wheeled out for conferences, seminars and meetings with foreign delegations.

CONCLUSION

The examples of the two most successful Sotsprof mobilizations confirm our analysis of the rise and fall of the less successful groups, in that in both cases Sotsprof's success was the result of exceptional circumstances. In the case of the First Moscow Watch Factory, the Sotsprof group was initially a tool in the hands of Sotsprof's struggle against Samsonov. However, despite the support of the Sotsprof centre, it was only when Sotsprof linked up with the opposition faction within senior management, on the one hand, and Mossoviet and the State Property Committee on the other, that it was able to make progress, replacing the director with its own nominee (reproducing the very similar experience at Dukat). However, once the new director was in place the Sotsprof group was elevated to the position of a pocket trade union, so that the workers saw it as no better than the official union. Indeed, Sotsprof was even more in the pocket of management than had been the official union, since where the latter could look to external union bodies for support, the Sotsprof centre provided no significant assistance for its primary groups, so the existence of the Sotsprof group depended entirely on the whim of the director. Sotsprof's attempt to turn the Watch Factory into a model of social partnership came to nothing as the enterprise faced collapse.

In the case of AZLK, the Sotsprof group was taken over by Sergei Novopolski as a cover for his oppositional activity within the official trade union as representative of the workers on the track, a position he

had established on the basis of his own informal activity within and beyond official structures over a period of some years. However, as in the Watch Factory, Novopolski owed his position neither to the strength of the Sotsprof group nor to support from the Sotsprof centre, but to his own authority as informal leader of the track workers and to his ability to exploit divisions within management, assisted by the special relationship between AZLK and Yeltsin.¹³⁰ When the conservative director, Kolomnikov, died and was replaced by Borodin, representative of the 'democratic' faction in management, a brief period of 'social partnership' ensued, with Borodin signing a collective agreement with Sotsprof, inviting Novopolski to join the Privatization Commission, and hinting that he could take over the official union. Nevertheless, it gradually became clear that Novopolski would have to choose between assimilation into the apparatus and opposition from a position of independence, with privatization proving the critical issue. Once Novopolski chose the latter course he and the Sotsprof group faced concerted opposition from management, which marginalized them in negotiations over the collective agreement in 1993 and excluded them in 1994, and Novopolski's room for manoeuvre was considerably reduced. The result was that during 1993 Novopolski was forced back to the position from which he had begun, as leader of the track workers using their pivotal position in the plant to negotiate in their own interests. However, the deepening crisis of AZLK, with regular lay-offs through 1993 and 1994 as production and sales fell, and with bankruptcy and a forced privatization and restructuring looming, progressively weakened the bargaining position of the track workers, who came under growing pressure through 1994.¹³¹

The overall conclusion of our investigation of Sotsprof must be that Sotsprof has never been a workers' organization, its primary groups serving no other function than to legitimate Sotsprof's claim to represent workers (and not only its own members, but workers as a whole), while Sotsprof itself provides little or nothing to its primary groups. Indeed, in its legalistic emphasis on registration as the basis of a trade union group and the law as the foundation of trade union rights, Sotsprof positively encourages its primary groups to neglect the difficult work of organization and recruitment, and encourages them to act prematurely, leading to the victimization of members whom Sotsprof is not able to defend. Nevertheless, while Sotsprof itself may have little claim to leadership of the workers' movement, many of the

primary groups attached to it are undoubtedly led by brave and dedicated activists, whose primary commitment is to their fellow workers, and whose experience provides an insight into the problems and possibilities of developing independent workers' organisation in Russia.

NOTES

- ¹ Volovik was a scientist and associate of Boris Kagarlitsky who emigrated to Israel soon after the founding of Sotsprof. There does not ever seem to have been an active Sotsprof group in Zil, which later had a militant branch of Zashchita, which also organized in the Moscow Helicopter plant and a Chemical Machinery Building research institute.
- ² Sergei Khramov, who was born in Moscow in 1954, was President of the Co-ordinating Committee of Sotsprof from its inception, being redesignated Chairman of the Russian Co-ordinating Committee at the 1992 conference. According to his 'official biography' he worked as a turner in an instrument-making enterprise for one year after leaving school, before serving for three years in the Navy from 1972–75, based in the Mediterranean during the Arab-Israeli war. From 1975 to 1989 he worked as an engineer in the research laboratories of the USSR Institute of Oceanology, and studied for a degree in night-school, losing his job in 1989 as a result of his political activity. He claims that his political activity dates back to 1979, when he began distributing banned literature, although he belonged to no organization until he joined the Democratic Union in December 1988, attempting to form a 'faction of co-operative socialism', and participated in the founding congress of the Social Democratic Confederation in February 1989. He left the Democratic Union in April 1989 and joined Oleg Rummyantsev's Social Democratic Association (Party from May 1990) in January 1990, and was a member of its Board until its Third Congress in April/May 1991. Since 1989 he has worked full-time in Sotsprof. Since 1990 he has been more or less close to the Ministry of Labour, and was one of the authors of the drafts of the Soviet Law on Trade Unions, and the Russian Law on Collective Bargaining and Labour Agreements.
- ³ L. Volovik, *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, 2, 1990, 82; Khramov, Interview, December 1991.
- ⁴ The meeting was moved to a restaurant after Yurii Afanas'ev, Komsomol boss turned democrat, reversed his earlier permission to use a hall in his Institute after his Party Committee complained. Kagarlitsky claims that this initiative was 'closely linked' with the efforts to form a new Socialist Party (Kagarlitsky, 1990, 188–9) which was inaugurated in December 1989, and it was through Kagarlitsky that Sotsprof first attracted publicity and funds in the West with a solidarity committee being established in Britain and Ireland, although Kagarlitsky dropped out of Sotsprof very early, and Khramov claimed that none of the funds reached Sotsprof.
- ⁵ Korolev was a worker from the Ordzhonikidze factory in Moscow. Korolev was absent from the founding congress in February 1990, apparently because he was not informed of it, and later dropped out of Sotsprof. The organization committee which set up the original meeting was chaired by Sergei Peterski (a pseudonym, his real name is Skripka), whose co-operative provided the finance. Peterski's partner at that time, Yelena Apraksina, became secretary of Sotsprof and later moved in with Khramov. Peterski was to complain that Khramov had taken everything from him, including his co-operative and Apraksina.

This account of the early period of Sotsprof's activity is based on the 'official' history, published in the directory *Rossiia: partii, assotsiatsii, soyuzy, kluby. Spravochnik*, RAU-Press, Moscow, 1991, edited by V.N. Berezovskii, N.I. Krotov and V.V. Cherviakov; interviews with Khramov, Temkin and Solov'ev, a leaflet produced by Solov'ev, *Tol'ko fakty*, distributed by RKSP dated 30 September 1992, an unpublished account by Solov'ev dated 10 December 1993, and various published and unpublished Sotsprof documents.

- ⁶ Party and security organs were very active between 1987 and 1990 in penetrating and even sponsoring social and political organizations so as to be able to monitor the situation, to control and divide the main channels of opposition and to collect compromising evidence against its leaders. It was extremely difficult for bodies which did not have the tacit support of such organs to secure rooms for meetings, let alone registration, so compromise was the necessary price of ambition. However, this provoked a high degree of suspicion of individuals and organizations which were successful in establishing themselves.
- ⁷ Kagarlitsky, *Farewell Perestroika*, Verso, London, 1990, Chapter 11. Kagarlitsky played a significant role in the early stages of the workers' movement in using his Moscow resources to establish connections between scattered workers' groups. In 1988 he had provided Irina Prisekina from Sverdlovsk (Yekaterinburg) with a list of workers' organizations, including brief characterizations of their position, which was used by the Sverdlovsk group Rabochii as the basis for inviting delegates to a conference which took place outside Sverdlovsk in August 1988, and out of which emerged several small left and syndicalist workers' organizations.
- ⁸ Sotsprof claimed the Independent Journalists' Union as an affiliate, but according to the latter negotiations had broken down at the beginning of 1990 because of its disagreements with the Sotsprof leadership. Vilkov-Belenko claims that the first trade union was the union of doctors established in January 1990 (Interview, June 1993), which would seem to confirm Solov'ev's story that the original groups left Sotsprof for RKSP.
- ⁹ According to Solov'ev, Khramov had been elected president only on the second round of voting, after he promised to carry out the organizational work 'because I have got a lot of girls to help me'.
- ¹⁰ Sotsprof initially rejected acting as an agent of the state social insurance system, a position in keeping with the position of the Democratic Union on non-co-operation with all state structures. This position was maintained by the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Russia (KSPR), but Sotsprof's position on social insurance later converged with that of NPG: social insurance should be managed by the state but monitored by the trade unions, with additional private social insurance arrangements negotiated with the employer. KSPR had been established by Aleksandr Alexeev, a former political prisoner and leading member of the Democratic Union, in June 1990. KSPR followed the Democratic Union's radical abstentionist position, seeing free trade unions as parallel power structures which would erode the authority of Soviet institutions and provide the basis for new democratic power structures. KSPR had very tenuous links with the few primary groups it claimed to have around Russia (KSPR attempted to 'buy' existing groups, several of which vigorously denied the KSPR connection), with the most significant being a fairly large group in the huge Cherepovets steel works, although this group split in October 1993 when Alexeev introduced a new centralist constitution, which defined all KSPR members as simultaneously members of his new National-Labour Party (On the events at Cherepovets see V.V. Komarovskii, 'Krizis v organizatsii svobodnykh profsoyuzov Cherepovetskogo Metallurgicheskogo Kombinata', Russian-American Fund, *Soobshcheniya Korrespondentov Fonda*, 1994, 1, 89-94; *Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, various issues, 1994). KSPR does not appear ever to have had any primary groups in Moscow.

¹¹ Khramov's philosophy was that 'the narrower the definition of the union the stronger it is' (Interview, December 1991).

¹² The Sotsprof leadership has always insisted that it issues individual membership cards to all members of Sotsprof trade unions. However such cards have not been issued to the members of any of the primary groups that we have researched. Few Sotsprof members seem to pay a membership fee to their local groups, which themselves are supposed to pay a small lump-sum affiliation fee to the centre unrelated to the number of members or fees received.

¹³ Dual membership, which is also permitted by NPG, is very risky for the members since, although it provides access to union-administered benefits, it enables the official union to authorize their dismissal, which Sotsprof could otherwise prevent (at least in theory) if the individual was a member of Sotsprof alone. Most of the small independent unions, including Sotsprof, spend most of their time fighting unfair dismissal cases in the courts, whether or not they permit dual membership.

¹⁴ Solov'ev says that he only found out about his supposed involvement in this Association a year later when criminal proceedings were launched against him.

¹⁵ Many of these affiliations were 'paper affiliations', using the legal status of Sotsprof either as a cover for commercial activity or as a means of registering for the elections of March 1990, in which in Moscow alone about 300 people were nominated under the Sotsprof umbrella. Problems arose when the Moscow City Electoral Commission refused to recognize Sotsprof nominations, although some district commissions proved more accommodating. The affiliated groups included the 'Moscow Professional Organization of Priests and Monks', which was recognized as a constituent part of Sotsprof in July 1990 following the visit of a number of priests to the mining regions to declare their 'support for the spirit of the miners' strikes', and the 'Union for the Social Defence of Servicemen'. Most of the unions established in the first period of Sotsprof's existence have generic titles, such as unions of workers and employees, unions of workers and engineers, or unions of intellectual labour.

¹⁶ According to the deposition prepared for the prosecutor at the time by Solov'ev, Temkin, Mal'ginov, Panchenko and Pakhomov 'on the hooligan behaviour of S.V. Khramov', Khramov 'grabbed a pile of visiting cards from the table and, with the words 'you scum (Akh ty mraz)'' threw them at Temkin's face. After this Khramov tried to grab a stone fitting but was stopped'. It was alleged that Khramov scratched Temkin's face, and threw a broken fragment of a massive glass tray at Temkin, which missed.

¹⁷ 'We believe that it is possible and necessary for the trade union to provide a cover for enterprises which will give part of their profits to the trade union for the needs of its members' (Khramov, Interview, December 1991). At this time Sotsprof employed thirty people in its Moscow headquarters, the same number as, for example, the official coal-mining union Rosugleprof employed in its Moscow headquarters in 1994. While Rosugleprof had about 800,000 members, Sotsprof at that time cannot have had many more than 1,000.

Khramov proudly described the typical method of forming a Sotsprof branch organization. For example, in the Moscow-Sortirovochnaya depot they formed a co-operative in the factory and called it a 'trade union organization of auxiliary workers' which gave the members at least the illusion of control of the co-operative (Khramov, *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, 2, 1990, 83). The trade union form of organization not only provided the co-operative with tax privileges, but also with some guarantee against the risk of strikes. Kagarlitsky at this time accused the neo-liberals of having 'bought' Sotsprof by bribing members of the co-ordinating committee to get it to support the government's proposed 'austerity programme', to oppose strikes, and to purge the socialists from its ranks (Boris Kagarlitsky, 'Moscow Gangsters', Interview with Rick Simon, *Catalyst*, November 1990, 11).

- 18 After the split in Sotsprof, Yel'shin, chair of the Krasnodar Sotsprof organization, was imprisoned for three months in connection with a criminal investigation into financial and commercial activity of Sotsprof in Krasnodar, before being released without charge. Aleksandr Bukanov, the leader of Perm Sotsprof, was also arrested three months after breaking with Khramov and joining RKSP in March 1991 and was sentenced to eight years in jail in September 1991, apparently for fraudulently securing large bank credits for trading in timber products. In both cases, according to Solov'ev, the credits were taken out at Khramov's instigation, although no proof of Khramov's involvement in these activities was put forward.
- 19 Khramov and another Sotsprof representative visited a Leningrad refrigerator depot in 1989, where the Leningrad union Spravedlivost had already recruited about 100 members, and went to a meeting attended by about 300 workers at which the leaders of Spravedlivost', Gomel'skii and Sharapov, were also present. The latter, who knew nothing about Sotsprof, grilled Khramov about his trade union activity in front of the workers. They asked about membership of employers and about dual membership and decided that Sotsprof was not a trade union at all, noting that the Sotsprof Constitution violated Article 98 of the ILO Convention in allowing employers' membership, and denouncing the Sotsprof representatives as semi-Communist (Interview with Gomel'skii, 12 October 1993). Sotsprof never managed to get a foothold in St Petersburg.
- 20 Khramov's Sotsprof was not registered until 9 September 1991. Initially both organizations included the Tambov and Krasnodar associations in their lists, but these were subsequently deleted from Sotsprof's.
- 21 Solov'ev claimed that this congress was unconstitutional, since a congress could only be called by the co-ordinating committee or by an appeal of one third of the members.
- 22 This is somewhat implausible, since the full list of Sotsprof unions dated 6 September 1991 lists fewer than 90 unions as having been registered before February 1991, about half of which attended Solov'ev's Congress, and a significant number of which had already disintegrated. Solov'ev's claim that 30 Russian and 10 Ukrainian Sotsprof primary groups (20 of which he claims were illegally registered) were represented is more likely to be accurate. He claims that the rest of the representatives were from commercial and political organizations.
- The congress, supposedly based on direct representation of primary groups, had an interesting social composition. Although 37 per cent of the participants were workers, 23 per cent were 'unproductive' workers, 19 per cent were engineers, 3 per cent from the army or police, 16 per cent were trade union workers, 2 per cent pensioners and students, and 12 per cent were people's deputies at various levels. All the delegates had at least completed secondary education, 48 per cent had higher education and 3 per cent were Candidates of Science, while among the population as a whole 12 per cent have higher education and 49 per cent completed secondary education (*Rabochaya sila*, 1, 1991).
- 23 The first draft of the constitution of Sotsprof was highly politicized, and included a ban on Communist Party members. This was rejected by Mosssoviet, which initially refused to register Sotsprof.
- 24 Sotsprof is formally a non-political non-party organization. However, Sotsprof had an agreement with the Social Democratic Party which defined Sotsprof as the trade union wing, while delegating political rights to the Social Democratic Party. This agreement does not seem to have been common knowledge amongst Sotsprof members. By 1994 the Social Democratic Party was in disarray, splitting into various factions, and Sotsprof began to distance itself from the Party.
- 25 The title of the paper reflects the ambiguity of Sotsprof's role: *Rabochaya sila* can equally mean labour-power or workers' strength. The paper was nominally a weekly. However only five issues appeared between April 1991 and February 1992, and a total

of nine issues before publication was suspended in 1993, to be resumed in 1995, under the editorship of the AZLK ITR Sotsprof leader, M. Voroshilov.

²⁶ Although Sotsprof did not have an official position on the forms of privatization, in December 1991 the leadership supported privatization to the labour collective without payment, which was at that stage the radical liberal plan for privatization in Moscow. This was not on any socialist grounds, but on the grounds that this was the only way of achieving a rapid privatization which would limit the opportunities for nomenklatura privatization. They expected that there would then be a second stage in which labour collectives sold the enterprise to 'real owners' (interviews). However, Khramov later denounced this form of privatization as 'pure bolshevism' (*Panorama*, 1, 1992, quoted in *Russian Labour Review*, 1, 1993), only to come round to endorsing it subsequently. In a letter to Anatolii Chubais, chairman of the State Property Committee, dated 24 October 1992, Khramov offered full support for a programme of rapid privatization, offering Sotsprof's services to publicise the government's programme (*Russian Labour Review*, 1, 1993).

²⁷ According to Solov'ev a typical example was the case of the Lyublinskii mechanical-foundry in Moscow where a few shops stopped work in January 1991 in protest at safety violations, with the active participation of RKSP. However, Khramov arrived and called for a strike of the whole plant, promising to pay strike pay to those who followed him. In this way he froze out RKSP, although the outcome was that the union split and soon collapsed. *Rabochaya sila* reported the formation of this Sotsprof group, despite the 'treacherous double-dealing positions of the trade union committee and the central committee of the sectoral trade union', and 'a conspiracy of officials from the Party-nomenklatura nest' (*Rabochaya sila*, 2, May 1991). Although Solov'ev and Temkin continued to play a role in the workers' movement, there was not much evidence of RKSP activity on the ground.

²⁸ 'Our task is not to recruit members or to organize, but to facilitate the rapid growth of trade unions, so we just service them on a contractual basis' (Khramov, Interview, December 1991).

²⁹ It would be a mistake to underestimate the importance of the services provided by Sotsprof in an environment in which it is extraordinarily difficult for groups of workers to organize when even such basic materials as pens and paper to produce posters, let alone duplicating machines to produce leaflets, are unavailable or beyond the means of ordinary workers, and where workers have no knowledge of their legal rights.

³⁰ On a visit to the Sotsprof office in September 1991, we met a group of four women workers representing the labour collectives of aerospace plants in Moscow, who had come for their first meeting with Sotsprof to seek advice on their response to privatization. They had read about Sotsprof in the papers and told us that Sotsprof is the only organization which can protect the rights of ordinary workers because the usual function of trade unions is just the distribution of goods, not dealing with real problems. Their workers knew nothing about privatization or the market, and felt that their union was not really a trade union at all. On a visit in December 1991, Khramov was preparing the documentation for another group of women workers who had come to set up a Sotsprof group.

³¹ Such groups tended to be stronger than those established on the initiative of one or two individuals who approached Sotsprof for help with a specific grievance. In the latter case the new Sotsprof activist was often disciplined or dismissed, and the main activity of Sotsprof was to secure reinstatement through the courts.

³² In an interview at the time, the Moscow leadership claimed to represent 30 per cent of Moscow construction workers. However, the Sotsprof group of construction workers had already joined with others to form the separate independent trade union federation 'Moscow Builders' on 5 October (KASKOR 73). According to Mokhov, co-president of Russian Sotsprof, at this time Sotsprof had 10,000 members in Moscow, 200,000 members in Russia, and 2.8 million members in the former Soviet Union. The vice-

chairman of the Moscow Sotsprof at the time, Vladimir Koshkin, gave a more realistic estimate, of 1,500 in Moscow and 40,000 in Russia, which is still almost certainly a considerable overestimate. (In an interview in September 1991 they had claimed 3,000 members in Moscow and 10,000 in the Soviet Union. In an interview in October 1992, Khramov claimed 250,000 members).

Vladimir Koshkin had been a refrigerated train mechanic on the railway transportation system. He was never active in the official trade union, but he had been a member of the CPSU for 23 years because membership was a precondition for holding any responsible position on the railways, but stopped paying his dues in 1990.

³³ See David Mandel, *Rabotyagi: Perestroika and After Viewed from Below*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1993, for an interview with Tatyana Markova, an SDP activist who established a postal workers' Sotsprof in Kaluga in July 1991.

³⁴ The General Agreement notionally included a commitment to conciliation and 'social partnership' and a no-strike pledge, but this was conditional on the government keeping to its side of the bargain. In practice, the Tripartite Commission was used by the government to try to tie the unions into a commitment to passivity while giving nothing in return. The commission also functioned as a fire-fighting conciliation body, its representatives being dispatched to deal with the Kuzbass strikes in March. The independent trade unions were thrown off at the end of 1992, but this was no more than a symbolic blow to their prestige.

³⁵ Vassili Sergeievich Mokhov was president of the commission for Social Affairs of Mossoviet, and co-president of Russian Sotsprof along with Semenov and Khramov. He had worked in the Zil auto plant in Moscow for 23 years. He was an activist from childhood – he was in amateur theatre and until 1988 held the trade union post of running the sports complex, but as an activist he became disappointed with the CPSU and the official trade unions and joined the democratic movement (he was one of the 80 Mossoviet people's deputies who left the Party with Stankevich in 1990). He became the co-ordinator of the election club in his district in 1989 – he was 'embraced by democratization' – and was part of the support group for Sergei Stankevich (who had once been associated with Kagarlitsky in the Moscow Popular Front, and later became Yeltsin's political adviser before falling from favour at the end of 1993). He was proposed as a people's deputy for Mossoviet in the 1990 election, and won in his district. When he arrived at Mossoviet he says that he found that only 12 of the 500 deputies were workers, so they decided to organize a workers' commission, and he was elected president of it. At first they planned to try to organize a democratic workers' movement in Moscow, but it proved very difficult, and it was at this point that they linked up with Sotsprof.

Dmitrii Vassilevich Semenov was born in 1950, trained as a mathematician, and later became an economist. He started at Moscow State University, and then worked in a closed military enterprise but soon left, moving to a new accounting centre. He says that his career was successful until he came into conflict with the trade union of the enterprise when the previous administration was replaced. After a big battle he was sacked and was unemployed for six months. He then worked in an institute, GIAP, but he didn't find the work satisfying, although his career was again successful and he has kept a close relationship with the institute. It was at GIAP that he came into contact with the problem of the social defence of workers, and worked out his own methods of assessment of labour conditions. When perestroika came in 1985 he saw the opportunity to find some fulfilment, which he tried to realize by becoming active in the old trade union structure, without getting anywhere. He had never been active in the trade union before, nor had he ever been a member of the CPSU, as a result of his first conflict, or of any other social-political organization. When Sotsprof was established he saw the opportunity to realize his ideas, and felt that Sotsprof needed such ideas. He drafted the Russian law on social protection of workers, and became a member of the collegium of the Russian Ministry of Labour as their specialist on labour protection

(Interviews, September 1991). According to Khramov (Interview, June 1993) Yeltsin had promised Semenov the post of Minister of Labour after his 1991 counter-*putsch*, but eventually appointed Shokhin instead. It seems that the over-representation of Sotsprof on the Tripartite Commission was in part a pay-off for this disappointment.

³⁶ Nikolai K. Nikolaev had worked all his life as a driver, having completed higher technical school, and had constantly fought for justice against the administration, but had only been a 'latent informal and revolutionary' until 1989. Like the majority of workers, he was very naive, and thought that it was enough to re-elect the trade union bosses to achieve real change, although the results were very disheartening. In 1989, when democratic elections first became possible, he threw himself into working in the election campaigns of El'tsin and Zaslavskii, both of whom were successful. As a result of this he became known in his Moskovskaya District and in the 1990 election he was elected to Mosssoviet as a people's deputy. As a deputy he took it on himself to organize to protect the working-class of Moscow, and he was elected Deputy President of the Commission for Workers' Affairs. In this capacity he worked directly with representatives of enterprises, and on the basis of this experience the commission decided to link up with Sotsprof. When the city transport drivers' Sotsprof was established at his workplace he joined and was elected to the local committee of drivers. At the 1991 conference of Sotsprof he was elected to the Moscow Regional Committee, and at their meeting was elected president (Interview, September 1991).

³⁷ This issue, which involved payment for 45 nursing staff who had not been paid since April 1990, went to court at the end of the year when the workers got fed up with being asked to wait by Khramov because of the complicated financial position of the fund. On three occasions Khramov failed to attend the court hearings, eventually being ordered to pay the salaries on 5 March 1992 (KASKOR various issues).

³⁸ Even its political mentor, the Social Democratic Party, did not go as far as Sotsprof. In the middle of February 1992 the SDP commission on relations with the workers' movement and trade unions, at a meeting attended by Khramov, rejected the government's policy of 'pauperizing the population as the basis of the primitive accumulation of capital' (*KAS/KOR Information Digest*, 2, 92).

³⁹ Boris Ikhlov, *Ocherki sovremennogo rabocheho dvizhenie na urale* (Outline of the Contemporary Workers' Movement in the Urals), Perm', 1994, 34.

⁴⁰ Khramov denied that there was any such mass walk-out, insisting that the opposition had only come from the leader of the Novosibirsk Association, who sought unsuccessfully to challenge Khramov for the leadership, and who was later removed by the Novosibirsk Association for his commercial activities. Khramov also denied that he had declared any moratorium on strikes, only that he, together with the aviation unions and the miners, had signed an agreement with the government which included the provision that, if the government kept to its side, the unions would not call a general strike (Interview, June 1993).

⁴¹ In an interview in October 1992, Khramov argued that the task of Sotsprof was to use its contacts with government bodies to press on the enterprise directors, while FNPR saw its role conversely as to use its contact with the directors to press on the government.

⁴² The results of the collective agreement campaign were reported to the conference of the Moscow Regional Sotsprof held on 13 November 1992. The campaign had been successful in the giant AZLK auto plant, in the Second Watch Factory and in the Moscow metro energy supply department. Sotsprof was taking legal action over the refusal of management to sign collective agreements in the First Watch Factory, the Moscow Mayor's garage, and the factory Respirator. At this conference, Andrei Yefremenko was unanimously elected president of the Moscow Regional Sotsprof in a secret ballot. The conference also passed a resolution of support for the air traffic controllers facing dismissal in the wake of their strike (KASKOR 47, 20 November 1992).

- ⁴³ Andrei L'vovich Yefremenko was a scientist and teacher, although he handled all but the most technical of the legal cases. He seems to have had a very busy couple of days at the end of November: on 19 November Yefremenko persuaded the local Taganskaya court to restore the president of the Sotsprof of assembly workers in the First Moscow Watch Factory, Viktor Papin, to his job and secured compensation to be paid by the director from his own pocket. The following day he got the Moscow City Court to reverse the decision of a lower court not to reinstate the electrician Vladimir Novikov, co-president of Bauman raion Sotsprof (and the founder of the AZLK Sotsprof group before he left the plant), who had been made redundant without the agreement of the union. The same day Yefremenko also got the Moscow Regional Court to restore to work the president of a local trade union of interior decorators (KASKOR 47, 20 November 1992).
- Rabochaya sila*, 5, dated February 1992, reports no trade union activity beyond a vague reference to proposed draft collective agreements in various cities, two successful court cases over illegal sackings (in Nizhni Novgorod and that of Kireev of the First Moscow Watch Factory), and the formation (at least on paper) of a few more primary groups. Instead the bulk of the paper is devoted to virulent attacks on the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions, the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (KAS) and the proposed Party of Labour, and reports of Sotsprof's contacts in the government and with the visiting ICFTU delegation.
- ⁴⁴ These included Sotsprof breakaways such as RKSP and Solidarnost'-Moskva, formed out of the dissolved Moscow Committee in January 1992, the left syndicalist grouping Zashchita, and various independent unions of transport workers. In some areas, especially when conflict was directed at the government rather than the direct employer, as in the budget sphere, the official unions were more ready to encourage militant action.
- ⁴⁵ There was more activity in the provinces, although mostly on a very small scale. Sotsprof sought to link together its tiny and isolated primary groups in new sectoral and regional organizations. On 22–23 October 1992 a Sotsprof conference of workers in the service sector was held with 50 delegates representing 40 branches and, supposedly, 22,000 members (covering Moscow, Serpukhov, Orekhovo-Zuev, Kaluga, Tula, Tambov, Lipetsk, Voronezh, Nizhni Novgorod, Yekaterinburg, Orenburg, Novosibirsk and Vladivostok). On 23 October it created an association of transport workers from Moscow, Tula, Lipetsk, Orenburg, Novosibirsk and Vladivostok, the co-presidents of which were A.N. Grigor'ev, a driver from the Moscow Mayor's garage, and V.V. Shul'ga, a leading specialist in a transport research institute. An association of trade unions in social services was also set up (KASKOR 43, 23 October 1992; 44, 30 October 1992). The Extraordinary Congress of Sotsprof on 25 and 26 September 1993 included representatives from Moscow, Yekaterinburg, Vladivostok, Komsomol'sk-na-Amure, Novosibirsk, Ust'-Ilimsk, Chelyabinsk, Kopeisk, Orenburg, Astrakhan, Saratov, Tambov, Lipetsk, Voronezh, and Orekhovo-Zuevo, although Yekaterinburg was expelled in December. However, the vast majority of these groups appear to have been represented by one or two individuals and never to have engaged in any significant trade union activity.
- ⁴⁶ Khramov threatened mass demonstrations and strikes for the end of October 1992 in protest at the failure of the government to implement Yeltsin's 7 August Decree on the Social Insurance Fund, in violation of the General Agreement signed between the trade unions and the government, in protest at which he withdrew his signature from the General Agreement (KASKOR 39, 25 September 1992).
- ⁴⁷ Sotsprof, together with NPG, walked out of the negotiations over the composition of the Tripartite Commission for 1994.
- ⁴⁸ In an interview in May 1993, Svetlana Krasnodemskaya asked Yefremenko to identify the most important Sotsprof groups in Moscow. He identified the Second Watch Factory, AZLK, the physicians, the metro and a first-aid substation as the groups which had managed to sign collective agreements, and two other groups in which they had

some hopes: a group in a mill-laundry with 80 people, and the Constitutional Court, where Sotsprof had 16 members and faced very strong opposition from management, but demanded that the chairman of the court, Zorkin, later removed by Yeltsin, negotiate with them. Sotsprof at this time also had groups in the First Moscow Watch Factory and a Moscow oil equipment plant, Kapote. Yefremenko did not mention the cinema Mir, Dukat or Danilovski market, and we have heard nothing of the activity of these groups since the beginning of 1993.

49 On 25 March 1993, Khramov issued a statement of active support for Yeltsin and promised that Sotsprof would provide juridical and other support, including compensation for material losses, of activists who took action, including striking, in support of Yeltsin. At the meeting of independent workers' leaders with Yeltsin on 2 April Khramov stressed the importance of links between the democratic movement and the independent workers' movement, complaining about the FNPR's increasing monopolization of links with the government and laying out a programme of proposals for Yeltsin's attention (including reviewing the leadership of the Ministry of Labour, and a suggestion that he meet representatives of the ICFTU) (KASKOR, 17, 23.04. 1993)

On 23 September Sotsprof participated with most of the other independent trade unions in establishing the united centre 'Trade Unions for Reform and Elections' (KASKOR 39, 27 September 1993) to be a united block in the forthcoming elections. However this disintegrated almost at once as trade union leaders negotiated with various blocks for places on their lists of candidates. On 25 and 26 September 1993 Sotsprof held an extraordinary congress which revised the constitution, changing the distribution of membership fees and imposed an obligation on members to participate in strikes called by Sotsprof (a device to transfer legal responsibility in the event of a strike from individual members to Sotsprof). The congress also resolved that Sotsprof groups would abstain from participation in any general strike or other collective action not directly related to the labour relations of Sotsprof members, and to leave the matter of political activity to constituent unions (KASKOR 39, 27 SEPTEMBER 1993).

50 Having failed to secure ICFTU affiliation, Sotsprof launched a campaign to affiliate its constituent unions to various international secretariats (Interview with Semenov, *Novoe rabochee i profsoyuznoe dvizhenie*, 2, 1994).

51 The AFL-CIO connection created serious rifts in the independent workers' movement as the leaders of various little groups tried to get their hands into the honey pot, only to find that most of the money was going to the Moscow intellectuals who administered the fund. This led to an outburst from KSPR, which denounced the AFL-CIO in a statement on 17 January 1994 for splitting the movement and buying its leaders to create 'bubble' trade unions (the source of KSPR's own funding was never clear). This in turn led NPG to withdraw from an agreement signed with Sotsprof and KSPR to create a 'National Association of Russian Trade Unions of Hired Labour' (Sotsprof had signed a comprehensive co-operation agreement with KSPR on 10 June 1993). On 27 January a joint statement in support of co-operation with the AFL-CIO was signed by the main beneficiaries of its (meagre) largesse: Sotsprof, NPG, the Seafarers, loco drivers, *Rossiyanka*, KSP of Severstal' Cherepovets (a breakaway from the former Cherepovets branch of KSPR), the deputy president of FPAD – Glazov – and the metallurgical union (*Profsoyuznoe Obozrenie*, 1, 1994).

52 This is almost certainly an overestimate of Sotsprof's membership, and the numbers were almost certainly falling. However, Semenov was optimistic about the prospects of Sotsprof in 1994: 'if we are able to resolve a number of organizational problems we expect to have recruited around one and a half million members by the end of this year' (*Russko-Amerikanskii Fond, Novoe rabochee i profsoyuznoe dvizhenie*, 2, 1994). Khramov always claims that the 'real' membership of Sotsprof should be measured by the numbers who vote for Sotsprof policies. For example, when Sotsprof proposes a draft collective agreement typically ten times as many people vote for the draft as be-

long to Sotsprof. It is certainly true that Sotsprof activists enjoy widespread support, but passive support is a poor substitute for an active membership.

53 The Sotsprof central office claimed that pay was tripled. In fact it went up from 400 roubles a month to between 700 and 800. The dispute was exemplary for the Sotsprof leadership because it supposedly showed that workers can achieve their aims without striking.

54 People often cite the bus driver's responsibility for maintaining his bus as the reason why bus drivers are (almost) exclusively male, while trolleybus and tram drivers are frequently female. The demand that buses be properly maintained crops up as a central demand in many bus drivers' strikes.

55 Lyudmila Drozhdova left her job to become a full-time member of the co-ordinating committee of the Moscow Regional Sotsprof in the summer of 1991, remaining president of the metro workers Sotsprof. After finishing technical secondary school she had worked as an engineer-technologist in a closed military enterprise before moving to the metro, where she worked as a mechanic in the power supply section for twenty years. She had never been an activist, had never even attended a meeting until 1988 when her friends, who knew her point of view and knew her as an energetic person, put her forward for election as an informal leader against her will, from which time she worked to build up the union. She proved to be one of Khramov's loyal supporters on the Sotsprof Co-ordinating Committee.

56 In May 1993, the Vladikhino depot Sotsprof had 36 members (none of whom had membership cards) and 2,000 roubles (less than two dollars) in their bank account. The leader had just got married and had a small child, but the official trade union would not provide him with passes to the rest home (information from Marina Kiblit'skaya).

57 Dmitrii Semenov confessed at a seminar held by the Russian-American Fund on 14 September 1993 that one of the biggest problems in establishing a new trade union was the contradiction between primary groups and the union as a whole, citing as an example Sotsprof's attempt to encourage the metro workers to strike to get publicity and attract new members, but the metro workers thought it was much more useful to achieve their demands through negotiation with management, so the strike did not take place. Semenov also noted the problem of the weakness of the organization, which he attributed to the fact that every Sotsprof activist soon found him or herself a leader (KASKOR 38, 22 September 1993).

58 Most reports of Sotsprof activity are of failures: failure to secure recognition, failure of strike action, failure to reinstate sacked activists, failure to secure negotiation over collective agreements, failure to secure participation in the privatization process. Towards the end of 1993 the main, or only, dynamic element in Sotsprof activity appeared to be in metallurgy, with actions at the end of the year reported in Chelyabinsk and Lipetsk, but even in Chelyabinsk in February 1994 Sotsprof only had about 400 members spread across five factories employing a total of around 55,000 people (Russko-Amerikanskii Fond, *Soobshcheniya korrespondentov fonda*, 1994, 1). Membership in its other principal centre, Novosibirsk, was about the same. Sotsprof in Magnitogorsk was reported to have 4,000 members working in public catering and retail trade, against 3,000 members of the official union, in connection with problems which arose as a result of the collapse of the Chelyabinsk regional NPG social insurance fund, which held the Sotsprof members' contributions (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 7, 1994). This would seem to imply that Magnitogorsk Sotsprof was a commercial insurance operation rather than a trade union.

The first conference of the Russian Sotsprof metallurgists' union, initiated at the Second Congress of Sotsprof in February 1992, was held in Chelyabinsk on 1 and 2 May 1993. The union reportedly co-ordinates 31 trade union organizations in Moscow, Lipetsk, Volgograd, Rostov-na-Donu, Nizhni Novogorod, Ul'yanovsk, Chelyabinsk, Perm', Yekaterinburg, Orenburg, Omsk, Novosibirsk, Komsomol'sk-na-Amure etc. Pavel Teletskii (Novosibirsk Experimental Factory of the Academy of Sciences) Alek-

sandr Markelov (Chelyabinsk) and Mikhail Voroshilov (AZLK design engineers, Moscow) as co-presidents. The conference was attended by Khramov, who wrote the report for KASKOR, but interestingly the conference decided that the union's constitution would take precedence over that of Sotsprof, and it contradicts the latter in several ways, including describing strikes not as an extreme measure but as an instrument of trade union work. It also stressed organizational and agitational activity over legal representation and centralises part of the union fees (KASKOR 19, 7 MAY 1993)

⁵⁹ Vilkov-Belenko, a close associate of Khramov and a leader of the Association of Sotsprofs of medical workers claimed that the latter had 2,500 members in the Moscow region, 8,000 in the whole of Russia, all of whom had membership cards. He said that these are mostly specialists who wanted to get higher wages, 'only specialists can allow themselves to disagree with the employer, as less qualified workers are completely dependent on their employer' (Interview, June 1993), and appeared to see the future of Sotsprof as a union of such professional and intellectual workers.

⁶⁰ This enterprise seems to be highly politicized. The Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the First Congress of Working People of Novosibirsk, a neo-Stalinist organization established in October 1991, was an electrician in the same factory. In 1992 the administration decreed that 7 October, formerly a holiday, would still be such. Sotsprof objected that the workers should be paid, and not suffer from the Director's 'Communist ambitions' (KASKOR 41, 9 October 1992).

⁶¹ This account is based mainly on P. N. Taletskii, *Eto trudnoe profsoyuznoe remeslo*, Sotsprof, Moscow, 1992, which Sotsprof issued as a propaganda tract, extolling the patience of the Novosibirsk group in continuing to negotiate despite endless prevarication on the part of management, until they had no other option but to call brief demonstrative strikes. The pamphlet also included instructions on establishing a Sotsprof group.

⁶² None of the Sotsprof accounts make any reference to the August *putsch*, although it is most likely that the change of heart of the director and short-lived conciliatory attitude to Sotsprof was directly related not to the strength and resolution of Sotsprof, but to the uncertainty following the collapse of the *putsch*.

⁶³ Chelyabinsk Sotsprof also grew out of the local Union of Workers, which itself had been formed in January 1990 out of Klub Rabochikh.

⁶⁴ Earlier a Sotsprof member, Igor Korchuganov, had been active in the 'tobacco strike' of September 1990, for which he and six other workers were victimized, subsequent court action dragging on into 1992 (KASKOR 1-2, 10 January 1992). There was a wave of such strikes in different cities at this time, caused by the disappearance of tobacco from the shops.

⁶⁵ This was the congress at which Borozdin challenged Khramov and led a walk-out of his delegation. Novosibirsk sent 19 delegates to the Sotsprof Congress in Moscow on 20 February 1992, and according to its then leader Leonid Borozdin had 3,000 members, including groups in the large Kuz'min metallurgical and Tyazhstankogidropres plants, as well as the new organizations of teachers and medical workers. This is certainly a wild overestimate of membership. *Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 6, 1994 reported that the Tyazhstankogidropres group, one of the largest, had 200 members in basic shops.

⁶⁶ One successful case was reported: a woman retired on health grounds from a factory which had no Sotsprof group, and should have had an enhanced pension for working in unhealthy conditions, but did not receive the enhancement. She turned to the trade union president in her factory, who refused to help, and then went to the Sotsprof city organization, which took her case through the court and won her the supplement (KASKOR 47, 20 November 1992). This case was cited as one of the few achievements of Sotsprof in a eulogistic article by Albert Speranskii in the Russian-American University English language publication *New Labour Movement (informational and analytical bulletin)*, 1992, 5. Speranskii also indicated Sotsprof's idiosyncratic concep-

tion of trade union work, emphasising recourse to the courts against collective organization, despite the fact that he acknowledged that the courts were stacked against them since 'the judges ... are pre-programmed to defend the administration': 'A faith in collective letters and appeals is a rudiment of the communist totalitarianism. This is not the way to deal with presumptuous bosses. The latter can only be handled through laws and by people who are able to use laws' (p. 17)!

⁶⁷ Pushkarev continued to press his case, but became increasingly aggrieved at Sotsprof's failure to defend him. In August 1993 the Regional Association of Sotsprof expelled him. The management of this enterprise used other methods of intimidation. In February 1993 the door of the hostel bedroom of Sotsprof committee member Anatolii Karpov was broken down, his room having been given to a commercial bank of which the enterprise was a co-founder. Sotsprof also had a dispute with the management of the plant over privatization in 1993, which it planned to take to court.

In August 1993 Pavel Taletskii, now President of the Regional Sotsprof, was physically attacked by the director of a heating station when he asserted that the late payment of wages was a result of managerial incompetence. The workers defended Taletskii, and signed a statement denouncing the provocative behaviour of the director.

⁶⁸ By the middle of May 1993 Sotsprof had nine cases before the courts in Novosibirsk, but according to KASKOR's correspondent even the Sotsprof activists were not happy with Sotsprof's willingness to fight all cases – "'Should the trade union really defend drunkards?'" I have heard more than once from its opponents', referring to a case of a worker who apparently had a bad disciplinary record and whose appeal was lost (KASKOR 27–8, 9 July 1993). The commitment of the small independent unions to protect all their members from dismissal meant that they did tend to attract those threatened with the sack for disciplinary violations, as well as various cranks.

⁶⁹ Although this was said to be one of the larger groups, only two collective actions were reported from this plant. On 17 November 1993 Sotsprof workers in shop five threatened to strike over late pay and their pay arrived the next day. The other shops, with only isolated Sotsprof members, kept quiet and did not get the payment (KASKOR 50, 10 December 1993). A meeting of the Sotsprof members in June 1994 achieved the same effect (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 6, 1994).

⁷⁰ It was reported that a construction firm 'Delis' had given 50,000 rubles to support the strike. We can only guess at its motives.

⁷¹ The trade union organization of one transport enterprise which was involved in a strike over privatization and pay left the official union and established direct links with the Kuzbass Workers' Committee. Golikov proposed on 13 August that they join the 'Association of Free Trade Unions of Kuzbass'. The Regional Sotsprof also declared its support for the strikers (KASKOR 32–3, 13 August 1993).

⁷² A sign of its desperation was the establishment of a pensioners' group at the end of 1993 which, in addition to defending the legal rights of pensioners, was expected to mobilize pensioners to engage in mass action to defend Sotsprof members (KASKOR 52, 27 December 1993). In June 1994 the Mayor moved Sotsprof out of its office in the city soviet building to less congenial accommodation (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 6, 1994). Most activity during 1994 involved the attempt to reinstate dismissed members through the courts. A short strike at Tyazhstankogidropress around June 1994 secured the payment of delayed wages for the Sotsprof members (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 6, 1994).. A lone member at Stal'konstruktsia in November twice sought payment of his back wages through the courts. The same month the Sotsprof group in Sibelectroterm, also in Novosibirsk, threatened a strike in pursuit of a doubling of wages. The director of the enterprise invited Novosibirsk Sotsprof leader, Taletskii, to 'man-to-man' negotiations, which failed, and then established a conciliation commission. Sotsprof guaranteed to seek the reinstatement through the courts of any members dismissed as a result of what would be an illegal strike, the alternative being to postpone the strike until all legal procedures had been complied with (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 11, 12,

1994). Viktor Popov, on behalf of the Tyazhstankogidropress group, successfully pursued the administration of the enterprise, which had paid only 20 instead of 24 days holiday pay, through the courts. Similar threats of court action on the part of Pavel Taletskii were successful in securing payment of back wages at the closed military enterprise, aircraft factory number 401 and at a Planning Institute. On 29 December 1994 Sotsprof was included in the signing of a regional tariff agreement between the employers' association, regional administration and the official unions (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 12, 1994).

⁷³ This account is based mainly on an interview with Belyaev in February 1993.

⁷⁴ Its leader, Viktor Burtnik, was very active in the Confederation of Labour and in the Union of Labour Collectives.

⁷⁵ During 1994 the Tovارشchestvo initiated a series of court cases against the leaders of the regional security services, resulting in the dismissal of the head of the regional branch of the Interior Ministry and the restoration to his job of the dismissed leader of the police trade union. Following this a concerted press campaign was launched against the union, its bank account frozen and Belyaev charged. The campaign intensified following a court case charging the regional chief of administration with unconstitutional activities at the end of May. Belyaev's thirteen year old daughter died in mysterious circumstances, his son was beaten up, and an attempt was made to abduct the daughter of the former president of the Yekaterinburg city soviet, Yurii Samarin (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 6, 1994).

⁷⁶ *Tomsk*: Nadezhda Makarovskaya, a member of the Tomsk branch of Sotsprof, was persuaded to resign from her job for complaining about the misuse of resources by her boss. Anarcho-syndicalist and member of Sotsprof, Igor' Kuznetsov, persuaded her to withdraw her resignation, but she was not permitted to do so. As a result Kuznetsov began a hunger strike in the building of the gorispolkom in protest (KASKOR 7, 14 February 1992).

Tula: the court had ruled a strike of tram and trolleybus drivers in April and May 1992 illegal, a ruling reversed on 5 August by the Russian Supreme Court which backed Sotsprof's claim that the strike had been provoked by administration which violated the law on strikes (KASKOR 8, 1992) and in October three leaders who had been sacked were reinstated by the court (KASKOR 43, 23 October 1992). On 13 November 1992 a Sotsprof conference agreed to compensate Tula drivers in the event of victimization following a strike demanding the removal of the chief of the column as a protest against the attempt on the life of their leader, Vladimir Kozlenkov (KASKOR 47, 20 November 1992). Two drivers, activists in Sotsprof, were sacked in the summer of 1993 because they conducted an Italian strike in the interests of their workers – they would not go out on the line because they believed that the instructions for the use of buses were being violated. The case went to court, but was postponed for Yeltsin's visit to Tula. The workers began a hunger strike on 15 November (KASKOR, 46–7, 19 November 1993).

Petrozavodsk: 23 November 1992. Railway machinist and Sotsprof representative Aleksei Gotovtsev wrote an article in a local paper critical of the depot management, was failed his re-examination, and transferred to low-paid work. The case was taken up by Sotsprof, who secured him a re-examination (KASKOR 47, 20 November 1992).

Kopeisk, near Chelyabinsk: six activists of the Kopeisk independent trade union of transport drivers were sacked for a strike in December 1993 over pay and working conditions. They were supported in court by a Sotsprof lawyer from Novosibirsk and a lawyer sent by the AFL-CIO from Moscow (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 1, 1994). Some drivers were reinstated, but not the leaders. However, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of reinstatement of the leaders in May 1994. This was not originally a Sotsprof affiliated union – it is not unusual for Sotsprof to claim the affiliation of groups to which it may provide occasional support — although Khramov claimed in the Supreme Court hearing that it had now joined Sotsprof (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 5, 7, 1994).

Chelyabinsk, 14 May 1993, the court reinstates Sotsprof member Vladimir Karasev to Chelyabinsk Metallurgical Kombinat (KASKOR 21, 21 May 1993). 22 November 1994, deputy president of the Sotsprof group at the rest home of the Stankomash factory reinstated (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 11, 1994).

Ivanovo, 12 August 1994, two activists deprived of bonuses for collecting signatures demanding payment of due wages during working time. The case was sent to court (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 8, 1994).

77 *Tula*: 16 October 1992, Grazhdanskaya Solidarnost' established, the committee includes local Sotsprof president, G. Malinin, and Kozlenkov. 7 November 1992 at 4.35 a.m. the president of the local Sotsprof committee of autocolumn 1809 (city passenger transport) Kozlenkov was beaten up by two large people on his way to work. Other members of the council of Grazhdanskaya Solidarnost' have received telephone and mail threats (KASKOR 44, 30 October 1992, 46, 13 November 1992). See also above page 232 for Moscow cases of intimidation.

78 The second conference of the Association of Free Trade Unions of the Chelyabinsk region, formed in November 1993, took place on 20 May 1994, bringing together the regional NPG, Sotsprof and FPAD. The regional Sotsprof leader proposed that the agenda be amended to allow a five-minute discussion of changes to the constitution. This turned out to be a proposal to change the Association into a federation of trade unions, and to abolish the post of president. After a three-hour discussion the former president and the NPG and FPAD delegations walked out, the conference then being reconstituted as the regional Sotsprof conference (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 5, 1994)..

79 *Komsomol'sk-na-Amure*: 28 October 1992, a labour collective conference at an auto-transport equipment factory on privatization ignores the demands of the Sotsprof local committee and workers of shop 9, which were not even put to the vote (KASKOR 44, 30 October 1993).

Chelyabinsk: 9 February 1993, the primary group of the holiday base of Stankomash proposed an alternative collective agreement through the union Yedinstvo, which is part of Sotsprof, signed by 31 members of the union and 14 members of the labour collective, but they were not allowed into the collective meeting. Sotsprof referred the case to court (KASKOR 7, 15 February 1993).

Komsomol'sk-na-Amure: August 1992. Shop 9 of the auto-transport equipment factory proposed a collective agreement, the administration refused to negotiate, Sotsprof went to court but the court referred the case back. At the beginning of 1993 the Sotsprof local committee of the Sotsprof trade union of industrial workers (PPR) tried to negotiate a collective agreement for the whole factory, but management and the courts ignored it (KASKOR 9, 26 February 1993).

Orenburg: Sotsprof avtomobilizt proposed a collective agreement, the director refused to negotiate, Sotsprof went to court, and the director was personally fined 400,000 rubles (KASKOR 7, 15 February 1993).

Kopeisk, near Chelyabinsk: transport workers' union formed 24 June 1993, within a month had 218 of the 500 workers and proposed a collective agreement for 1993 (there hadn't been one in the past). The administration refused to negotiate, so Sotsprof took them to court (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 1, 1994).

80 *Komsomol'sk-na-Amure*: 5 January 1993, the transport drivers' administration refused to transfer subscriptions, Sotsprof went to court (KASKOR 9, 26 February 1993).

Chelyabinsk: 11 January 1993. Trade union committee of the instrument factory objected to the director's sale of houses. The director responded by declaring that he would end check-off. The leader of the factory Sotsprof, formerly leader of the official union, Kozinskii, took the case to court (KASKOR 3, 15 January 1993).

Chelyabinsk: end January 1993, the General Director of Polet refused to transfer social insurance funds for January to Sotsprof, apparently under pressure from the official union. The local Sotsprof committee of metallurgical unions had decided to give one and a half thousand roubles a month from the social insurance fund for each mem-

ber to pay for health measures. Sotsprof took the case to court (KASKOR 5, 29 January 1993).

Novosibirsk: September 1994, workers of Elsib, a subsidiary of the Experimental Factory left the official union over a dispute with management and many joined Sotsprof. The enterprise director and trade union president ordered the medical centre to deny medical services to Sotsprof members, but they refused. At the same time a dispute over the transfer of social security funds arose at a local medical centre (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 9, 1994).

⁸¹ *Tula*: 1 December 1992. Bus drivers of 1809 column (again) took warning action by refusing to repair their buses at the end of the day, with all 30 drivers taking part, demanding more pay for drivers who repair their own buses. The city administration supported their demands, but hoped that they would not inconvenience the public any more. 3 December, Kozlenkov, President of the drivers' Sotsprof, experimented with a work to rule (KASKOR 50, 11 December 1992).

⁸² Such successes were claimed from Tyazhstankogidropres (Novosibirsk), Polet (Chelyabinsk), AZLK (Moscow), VAZ (Tol'yatti), in all of which plants Sotsprof was, at best, on the defensive. Sotsprof leaders claimed that these successes proved that delayed payment of wages was not the result of government policy, but of the misappropriation of enterprise funds by directors (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 6, 7, 9 1994). However, the number of workers involved was a very small proportion of the total workforce. There was a general tendency for management to pay delayed wages selectively, for example to skilled workers to prevent them leaving, or to those individuals who pleaded need, or to those who protested, whether that protest was organised or not. A similar dispute at Polet in Chelyabinsk on 17 October 1994 (a two hour forty five minute stoppage — technically not a strike under Russian law) was unsuccessful, management claiming that it had no money (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 10, 1994).

⁸³ Despite Samsonov's conservative politics, he embraced the new capitalism with some enthusiasm. His factory was one of the first to privatize and to establish a 'pocket bank', headed by Samsonov, in which the enterprise's funds were lodged, and to which the enterprise soon found itself up to the ears in debt.

⁸⁴ In addition to press reports (KASKOR, various issues; *Trud*, 21 January 1993; *Delo*, 18–19, August 1993, 8) this section is based on interviews by Svetlana Krasnodemskaya and research in the factory by Galina Monousova.

⁸⁵ The decree was directed at the Communist Party, although it also hit Travkin's Democratic Party of Russia which had set up factory branches.

⁸⁶ According to the union leaders themselves no such agreement was signed.

⁸⁷ Another issue raised by Sotsprof was that of the form of privatization of the enterprise, in which 70 per cent of the shares were vested in the labour collective conference, rather than being issued to individual workers.

⁸⁸ Even workers who benefited from the new payment system supported its reform because of the injustice of the pay differentials that resulted. A lot of workers who signed petitions in support of the demand to reform the management and payment system did not join the strike. The strike was not even supported by the setters' Sotsprof.

⁸⁹ There is plenty of evidence that this strike was exploited, if not stage managed, by the internal management opposition to Samsonov, who saw it as an opportunity to remove Samsonov and his new management system. Samsonov was not universally unpopular among the workers, his authoritarian populist style appealing to those who benefited from his methods. He lost his post only by a narrow margin, and may even have held on to a majority of the workers' votes. The coverage of the referendum and meeting which expressed an overwhelming lack of confidence in Samsonov during the strike is not clear — certainly his supporters did not attend the meeting.

⁹⁰ In the spring of 1994, Galina Monousova found workers' attitudes to Sotsprof in the shop making the watch mechanisms varying from those who knew nothing about it to

those who had a very negative attitude, seeing it as a group of incompetent and unconstructive people. The workers said that while Sotsprof had asked them to sign in support of their strike the year before, nobody had ever tried to recruit them to the Sotsprof group. Most strikingly, she found that even one of the Sotsprof leaders in the assembly shop had no conception of the trade union functions of the organization, saying that if she had a problem with her pay she would take it not to the union but to the foreman.

⁹¹ There was frequently not even enough to pay wages, so that the director tried to solve his sales problems by paying the workers in watches.

⁹² In the words of one worker 'We don't trust our trade unions, neither Sotsprof nor the engineering union. Sotsprof is simply not serious. It is a small group of people who look after their own personal interests under the cover of defending the interests of the workers. We never got anything from the engineering union either.... These trade unions cannot defend our interests, they are tied to the administration.' (Interview of Galya Monousova with a group of workers).

⁹³ Figures for targets and output from different sources are inconsistent (see below and David Mandel, 'The Struggle for Power in the Soviet Economy', *Socialist Register*, London, 1991, 105, reprinted in his *Perestroika and the Soviet People*, Black Rose, Montreal and New York, 1991). Capacity in 1994 was reported to be 160,000 units (*Finansovye Izvestiya*, 11, 72, 17–23 March 1994, p. v), but the plant was producing at only about half capacity.

⁹⁴ This account is based on two interviews with Boris Pervov, four interviews with Sergei Novopolski, two interviews with Kalyuga conducted by Veronika Kabalina, two interviews with Voroshilov and Churikov, one 'official' visit to the AZLK plant, attendance at a meeting of contract workers called by Sotsprof, attendance at a negotiating meeting of the trade union committee, informal discussions and various documentary sources and research on shop floor relations in Sotsprof conducted by Veronika Kabalina and her colleagues. Solomatin was always 'unavailable' for interview. Additional background material was drawn from press reports, and from transcripts of interviews by Don Filtzer and David Mandel with a foreman at AZLK, the latter since published in his collection of interviews *Rabotyagi: Perestroika and After Viewed from Below*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1993.

⁹⁵ In general, within the Soviet system the best-paid workers were those who produced a finished product, rather than those who were the most highly skilled, partly as a result of the Soviet ideology of productive labour, but also as a result of distortions of the piece-rate payment systems. Thus in the press shop the press operators were higher paid than the skilled toolmakers.

⁹⁶ For example, after the price increases of April 1991, the trade union declared that they had achieved a great victory in their struggle against the administration and the workers would receive 60 roubles compensation, although everybody knew that this compensation had been a decision of the Soviet government. The administration was happy to see such displays of independence. In the middle of 1991 the general director of AZLK even wrote an article in the factory newspaper urging the plant trade union to work better because there was now a Sotsprof group competing with it.

⁹⁷ David Mandel, 'The Struggle for Power in the Soviet Economy', *Socialist Register*, London, 1991, discusses these events.

⁹⁸ Boris Pervov is a top-grade toolmaker, working in the press shop. He was born in 1946, and started work at the age of 14. He was arrested in 1965, for 'street problems' not politics, and spent 5 years in prison and 5 years in village exile. He then worked on a collective farm for four years, and in 1974 got a *propiska* to work in a military plant in Moscow, where he stayed for 13 years. In 1987 he decided to exchange flats and come to work at AZLK. He spent three years as chairman of his section trade union organization but then resigned after unsuccessfully challenging the chair of the shop trade union committee. He had never been politically active in the past, but was stirred

into action by Gorbachev and perestroika, becoming a great enthusiast for self-management. He acted as an election agent, and was on his district and house self-management committees, where people called him 'President' because he was so active. He was pressed to stand for election as a people's deputy for Mossoviet but he refused because of his past, which would be raked up and used against him. He was later invited to go and work in the Moscow administrative apparatus, but by then had lost his faith in politics – 'communists and democrats are all the same'.

⁹⁹ Sergei Novopolski was a brigadier of mechanic-assemblers in the assembly shop. Novopolski had long had a reputation as a man who fought for the workers' rights, and as something of an individualist, although he was a Party member because he believed that it was best to work through official structures. In doing so he had acquired many hats. He was not only chairman of the AZLK Strike Committee, but also chairman of the STK for the assembly shop, vice-chairman of the enterprise STK, chairman of his shop trade union committee, member of the factory trade union committee responsible for production questions, and was identified politically with Democratic Russia. Novopolski depended for his influence on his popularity with the workers in the assembly shop, rather than on any of his official positions, and within the official bodies he tended to be marginalized although, as we shall see, at times he established close connections with senior management. He co-operated with the Sotsprof groups from the beginning, but initially rejected Sotsprof as weak and ineffective, although the Sotsprof groups backed him, and they began to work more closely together in 1992, the new legal framework enabling Novopolski to use Sotsprof to launch independent initiatives. Nevertheless, he continued to feel that he could be most effective if he kept his official positions while pursuing an independent line and encouraging the growth of workers' organization. Novopolski also developed international links, via the Transnationals Information Exchange, which established a group in Moscow following a meeting in June 1992, and has visited the GM plant at Ellesmere Port in Britain, and attended a TIE conference in Brazil.

¹⁰⁰ The disruption of production due to supply difficulties and the bad organization of labour led to another strike in the assembly shop in early 1991. The administration tried to fine the workers four million roubles for the loss of production, although the official Moscow Federation of Trade Unions stepped in to defend them. Nevertheless the action had its effect, making the workers more wary of striking without going through the proper bureaucratic procedure.

¹⁰¹ Vladimir Novikov was the first president of the workers' Sotsprof but left AZLK soon after, and his place was taken by Boris Pervov. Novikov was later sacked from his new job for his Sotsprof activity, seeking reinstatement through the courts. At this time there was also another independent trade union, with no outside connections, which excluded Communist Party members, and a strike committee, headed by Sergei Novopolski, still existed nominally.

¹⁰² 'For me it did not matter what kind of trade union I formed or with whom. I needed the organization to be free and independent of the factory trade union committee. I needed a roof in order to express my opinion openly and to get support. I know that if I apply to Khramov I will be protected.... He doesn't impede us.... As for me, I have never struggled for any power, and my relation to people who struggle for power is always negative. I am overloaded with letters from Novosibirsk and from the First Moscow Watch Factory where they have tried to form trade unions covering a branch or industry.... I am not interested in that, I am interested in Sotsprof only because it is a cover' (Boris Pervov, Interview, February 1993).

¹⁰³ The chairman of the official trade union in Boris Pervov's shop was registered as a fitter, but he was really a distributor, and dressed like a foreman, At the end of 1991 he was in Germany on a business trip supposedly as a worker, paid by the administration.

¹⁰⁴ There seems to have been no contact with Pervov and the workers' Sotsprof at this stage. Until the collective agreement campaign in April 1992 the engineers' leaders

- came under strong pressure from management, with Churikov being threatened with the sack, and Voroshilov and Churikov losing their bonuses for attending the Sotsprof Congress in February 1992.
- 105 Valuation for privatization purposes is normally based on the written-down book value of assets at historic cost.
- 106 The engineers' Sotsprof group was particularly concerned about the issue of privatization because the design engineers faced a serious threat of unemployment if the method of privatization proposed by the administration went through.
- 107 A leaflet put out by Novopolski at this time was published in English translation in *Alternatives*, 1, 2, Spring 1992, 98–104.
- 108 In theory the enterprise had a plant trade union committee, on which all unions had a right to representation, and a committee of the official trade union, although in practice the two had always been the same thing, because there had never been more than one union.
- 109 According to Pervov all their contacts with Sotsprof were through Yefremenko – Pervov had never met Khramov. The AZLK workers' Sotsprof did not pay anything to the Sotsprof centre, although at that time they were meant to pay 450 roubles a quarter for legal advice, but since no serious issues had arisen they had not paid.
- 110 Novopolski estimated membership at 300 at the end of March, following a re-registration of union membership. Pervov claimed that the workers' Sotsprof had about 550 members, although almost all retained their membership of the official union, paid no dues to Sotsprof and had no membership cards. According to Kalyuga, on 1 April 297 people were not members of the official union, and he estimated Sotsprof membership as at most 350. Churikov gave the same figure in November 1992, of whom he estimated 25 were engineers and most of the remainder were contract workers in the assembly shop, many of whom had higher education.
- 111 Novopolski defined the distinguishing feature of the Sotsprof collective agreement as the principle that pay should be tied to profits, although there were problems implementing this because the administration illegally refused to give them financial information (Interview, April 1992). Khramov, by contrast, defined the distinguishing feature of Sotsprof as the principle that pay should be determined by work done, with the principle of linking pay to profits the defining feature of the FNPR position to which he was adamantly opposed (Interview, October 1992).
- 112 Churikov was president of the combined Sotsprof groups. He was an engineer-technologist in the experimental shop, who had worked at AZLK since 1978. Pervov had by now been completely marginalized, although he still considered himself president of the workers' Sotsprof, his links with the Sotsprof centre being through Churikov and Voroshilov and links with the official union and the administration being through Novopolski.
- 113 According to Novopolski, the typical labour collective conference has the first ten rows reserved for management, then a few rows for spectators, then quiescent workers, with a small number of activists at the back. He wanted to move from a composition of about 60 per cent managers, 25 per cent engineers and 15 per cent workers to 10 per cent managers, 40 per cent engineers and 50 per cent workers.
- 114 Novopolski himself went to Britain, a VAZ delegation had been to Italy, and others to Germany. On this basis, a series of meetings and consultations between activists in various large auto plants was held to discuss the problems of privatization.
- 115 During 1994 a new path to privatization came on to the agenda, privatization through bankruptcy, which appeared the most attractive route to management. The latest programme was due to be presented to the labour collective in the spring of 1995.
- 116 Pay levels at AZLK, however, were the highest of any car plant in Russia, and were double those of the nearby ZiL plant.
- 117 Kalyuga was a traditional trade union leader, and the principal opponent of Sotsprof. His view was that 'the trade union has never opposed itself to the administration. We

believe that one should not consider the trade union and the administration as two opposing forces. Our tasks are the same as those of the administration: the rhythm of work, pay and working conditions. In this chaos we must persuade the labour collective not to reduce the pace of work and, by various means, be a buffer between the administration and the workers' (Interview, May 1992).

118 The consumer basket was introduced some time later, but it proved to have been a tactical mistake as the resulting calculation of the compensation index lagged behind the general rate of inflation during 1993.

119 Novopolski's strategy at the time was to take over the official union organization in the plant, and then to declare the union independent of all higher union bodies, as the Independent Trade Union of AZLK Workers.

120 Yeltsin paid a dramatic visit to Novopolski's AZLK assembly shop during his confrontation with the Congress of People's deputies in December 1992. This visit had not been arranged in advance, but Yeltsin had long-standing contacts with AZLK from his days as Moscow Party boss, and Borodin had close connections with Gaidar. Solomatina telephoned Novopolski the night before the visit and told him that Yeltsin would be coming at 12 the next day (later changed to 2), so that Novopolski should be at the trade union building at 10 to prepare for the meeting. Solomatina and the editor of the plant newspaper both offered to tell Novopolski what to say in his speech, advice that he rejected. The conveyor was stopped, the old platform erected, without the old banners and slogans. Yeltsin arrived, to be greeted first by the Communist leader Vladimir Rubakov, who also made the first (nervous and cautious) speech in response to Yeltsin's appeal to the Russian people, declaring that although a Communist he supported Yeltsin's appeal. Borodin also backed Yeltsin with a speech about the difficulties of transition. Novopolski was one of the last to speak, breaking with protocol to appeal for compensation for pensioners, especially for the cost of funerals (the part of his speech shown on TV), demanding that the mafia should be driven out of government, supporting Gaidar as a real scientist pressing for real change and denouncing Rutskoi. This meeting enhanced Novopolski's prestige in the eyes of the administration: when Yeltsin arrived Novopolski said 'hello' to him, and Yeltsin spontaneously replied 'hello', which led Borodin to assume that they must be old friends. This impression was confirmed when at the end of his speech Yeltsin turned by chance to Novopolski and said 'they don't allow me to work', to which Novopolski replied, 'you have to resolve this problem'.

121 AZLK had long had problems with the supply of engines, since it did not have its own engine plant. The engine fitted to the Moskvich for the domestic market was outdated and unreliable, having been designed in the early 1970s, and with the deepening economic crisis supply problems became chronic because the Moskvich engine was a low priority for the Ufa military plant which supplied it. The Moskvich was also fitted with a more powerful engine from VAZ, particularly for export models, but this was also in short supply. There had been a government decision in 1987 to build a Moskvich engine plant with a capacity of 240,000 units to come on line in 1991, but the plan never came to fruition as financing was cut off with the deepening crisis of the Soviet economy.

122 Gubanov was a well-respected manager who had started at AZLK as a worker before becoming a shop chief and then at the age of only 33 became Secretary of the Party Committee, which at that time made him second only to the General Director in the plant. He had been a local people's deputy together with Novopolski, where he had been able to use his Party position in AZLK even to press the first secretary of the local Party committee. He had a reputation as an honest and outspoken man, but had fallen out with the old general director and had been transferred to be director of a projected affiliate in Krasnoarmeisk (the standard type of non-appointment for removing people), returning as deputy chief of one of the largest shops.

- ¹²³ In the past there had been no difference between a union conference and a labour collective conference. Novopolski and the Sotsprof group decided that at the next conference they would announce that all members of Sotsprof should leave the hall since the official trade union had to discuss its own internal problems.
- ¹²⁴ The check-off of 1 per cent of salary was automatic, unless workers specifically requested not to be members of the official union. According to Pervov, the initiative for re-registration came from the chief accountant at a meeting of the collective agreement commission.
- ¹²⁵ Novopolski still had direct access to Borodin at this time. Borodin had told him earlier that if he had anything to say he should say it to him face to face, with nobody else there. On this occasion one of Borodin's deputies was in the room, and Borodin angrily told Novopolski not to try to tell him how to do his job. Novopolski replied that he was only protecting the wages of his colleagues, and as a parting shot said that even a general director cannot break the law.
- ¹²⁶ The general director of the Ufa plant was scheduled to accompany Yeltsin on this trip, so it was important to get the appeal in before. Borodin had accompanied Yeltsin on his trip to Korea.
- ¹²⁷ It turned out later that AZLK had the money to pay an increase, but the management preferred to use it for other purposes, including the establishment of a bank, Aleko, which quietly went bankrupt a few months later (*Delo*, 17, 51, April 1994, 3), and the development of a tourist complex in Crimea.
- ¹²⁸ Kalyuga, who had by now become head of a commercial retail subsidiary, although still a member of the trade union committee, represented the administration in the Conciliation Commission set up during the strike. He sued the Sotsprof leaders for slander and defamation for having called him a 'union-slave', 'union-Judas' and 'Janus-faced' in its report in *Vo Ves' Golos*.
- ¹²⁹ This part is based on research in AZLK by Veronika Kabalina's group, and her interview with Churikov and Voroshilov in February 1995.
- ¹³⁰ Novopolski represents a particular type of worker activist who operated under the old system, holding positions within the formal Party and trade union structures while retaining his independence on the basis of his position as informal leader of the workers whom he represented. In this respect he is very similar to several of the leaders of the miners' movement, such as Aleksandr Aslanidi in Kuzbass, or Vyacheslav Tukan in Vorkuta, and to the leaders of the air traffic controllers. Such activists could have an influence far beyond that indicated by their formal position as an ordinary worker holding posts at the base of the official structures, for example enjoying privileged access to the general director, party secretary or trade union president of the enterprise, as well as to the raikom or gorkom. Their participation in official structures had a symbolic significance, indicating their willingness to act on behalf of workers within the limits of the system, and so providing them with more security than that enjoyed by comparable activists, such as Klebanov, who worked outside the official structures. A common feature of such activists is their rugged individualism, their reliance on informal structures and networks and correspondingly dismissive attitude to all formal structures and decision-making procedures, winning positions through the force of their personality more than through consultation and argument, and frequently obtaining formal validation of their actions and decisions only in retrospect. This can prove very confusing to their followers, who are rarely kept informed of their activities, particularly if they suddenly change their position (as, for example, Novopolski did over privatization, and the air traffic controllers did repeatedly over striking). This role of informal structures and relations is not only characteristic of leaders of the workers' movement, but extends to the very top of the decision-making structures of the state, as can be seen most dramatically in the relationship of Yeltsin himself to legal and constitutional processes, on the one hand, and to his entourage, on the other. This dismissive attitude to formal processes, to the law, the constitution, formal agreements and under-

takings on the part of all those in power is similarly a recurrent theme of the interaction between the workers' movement and state bodies that recurs throughout this book. It is also something that foreign consultants and advisers find it very difficult to come to terms with!

¹³¹ In the summer of 1994 the core activists of the comparable group representing track workers at the giant VAZ plant in Tol'yatti, who organized as the independent trade union Yedinstvo, were dismissed following an illegal strike in June, which nevertheless secured the immediate payment of back pay. This plant had a long history of informal opposition extending back to a series of major strikes in the late 1970s which had played an important role in the introduction of the brigade system of work organization. It appears that following this strike Yedinstvo, which had close links with Novopolski in Moscow, affiliated to Sotsprof. On 4 October Yedinstvo took the administration to court for refusing to include it in the collective agreement, which included a clause allowing the administration to delay the payment of wages, but the hearing was postponed since no representative of the administration turned up. A further strike, reportedly involving about 2,000 people, broke out on 27 September. When this strike was also declared illegal, a further thirty activists were sacked, about eight of whom were members of the official trade union. By the end of the year all of those sacked had been reinstated by the courts, supported by the official union as well as Yedinstvo, on the grounds that their dismissal had been illegal. The VAZ administration had initially claimed that the event, which lasted for two weeks, had been not a strike, but a work stoppage, securing a court ruling that the stoppage had been an illegal strike only at the end of November, following abortive attempts at conciliation which had also involved management, official union and Sotsprof representatives from AZLK (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 10, 11, 12, 1994).

6. The Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Unions

With few exceptions, the basis of independent workers' organization in Russia has been the sectional interests of groups of workers with relatively high levels of skill and autonomy at work, but relatively low levels of pay and authority, such as transport drivers and underground coal-miners. The official trade unions were not able to represent the interests of these workers, not only because of their subordination to management and the Party, but also because of the branch principle of organization which prevented workers from combining on a sectional basis. Thus the principal distinguishing features of alternative trade unions and workers' organizations have been:

- 1) their declaration of independence from political organizations and from management
- 2) their refusal to admit management, above a certain level, to membership of the union
- 3) their adoption of strict decentralization with primary groups having a very high degree of autonomy
- 4) their adoption of profession or occupation as the basis of union membership and organization, against the branch principle.

The independent trade unions in the aviation industry are similar to the other alternative trade unions that have grown up over the past four years in these respects. However, the distinguishing feature of these unions has been that, unlike the other alternative unions, they have grown out of the official union, and not in direct opposition to it, and this has enabled them to organize the overwhelming majority of the professional groups they claim to represent. Thus they were originally established as separate professional associations within the official union in November 1989. Although they separated into independent unions in October 1990, it was only in May 1992 that the Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Unions (FPAD) prohibited dual membership, once it had secured a very favourable tariff agreement that

applied only to its own members. The pilots' union, by contrast, prohibited dual membership from the outset.

The story of the attempt of the air traffic controllers to develop a sectional trade union, similar to forms of trade unionism familiar in the West, and contrasting sharply with the re-assimilation of the pilots as a labour aristocracy, highlights the difficulties faced by the attempt to develop independent trade unionism in Russia.¹

Air transport in the Soviet Union was always very heavily subsidized, both directly and through substantial fuel subsidies, so that air travel was very cheap and the network of flights was very extensive. The aviation industry was organized as a single branch of production, with airports, airlines and air traffic control all coming under the Ministry of Civil Aviation of the USSR, with the whole industry planned and controlled from Moscow.

Like the coal-miners, workers in the aviation industry, and particularly the skilled pilots and air traffic controllers, had seen a steady erosion of their privileged position since the late 1960s, so that unrest among these groups of workers had been growing from the early 1980s, particularly as they had more contact with the West than most groups of workers, and had information about the wages and living conditions of their Western counterparts.

Aviation has probably been hit as hard as any other branch of production by the collapse of the Soviet economy and the rapid withdrawal of subsidies from the industry. Reforms over the past few years have led to a decentralization of the industry, and more recently to disintegration, with facilities assigned to privatized enterprises based on airports, each of which is supposed to be self-financing, so that a unified aviation system has suddenly been replaced by literally hundreds of under-financed and under-regulated enterprises providing aviation services, with only a few of the busiest routes able to show a profit.

Enormous increases in fares have choked off traffic, although they have not matched even larger increases in the cost of aviation fuel, so that most aviation enterprises are making very substantial losses, and are forced into economies which compromise safety. They try to cover their losses by becoming involved in all kinds of commercial activity, including providing aviation services on contract abroad, with many pilots working in Africa and the Middle East. In this situation there are

moves to separate potentially profitable air traffic control and operational facilities from the aviation enterprises.

As in other branches of production, the collapse of a centralized system has freed local managers from any effective regulation or control of their activities. It should not be surprising to find that senior managers, who control enormously valuable resources, have taken every opportunity to enrich themselves, however difficult the financial position of their own enterprise may be, leading to widespread suspicion of the motives of all managerial activity. Privatization has only served to intensify and legitimate such self-seeking on the part of management.²

UNIONS IN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY

According to the traditional branch principle of Soviet trade unionism, all the workers in the industry belonged to the same trade union, the Union of Workers in Aviation Enterprises (PRAP), whose structure mirrored that of the industry, with the airport as the basic unit of trade union organization. In common with all Soviet trade unions, the union was essentially an instrument of management and the Party, carrying out various social and welfare functions and endorsing managerial authority.

The official union at a typical airport continues to cover over 100 jobs and as with other unions there does not seem to have been much change in the way it organizes or the objectives it pursues. As one chair of a primary organization at an airport reported, his main concern remained social distribution – kindergartens, rest houses, pioneer camps. Complementing this work, he was in daily contact with the general director of the airport about labour discipline and related items, as well as sitting on a number of commissions dealing with such matters as old equipment and safety.

The last few years have seen a major shift in the fortunes of the official union. There has been little change of personnel in the leadership of this union, either in the airports or nationally. At the airport level they continue to work closely with the airport administration, retaining control over welfare and distribution activities. However, increasingly this union has played a low-key role either in airport activity or in the wage negotiations at a national level, where they have generally

followed the lead set by the pilots. The result has been very inactive forms of unionism at an airport level, with remote leaderships concerned to secure their personal futures rather than opening up opportunities for members to play an active part in the union.

Within the trade union the pilots had always constituted a 'labour aristocracy', both because of their high pay, and because of the integration of their career structure with that of management, the majority of senior managers being former pilots. This meant that pilots were also expected to be active members of the Communist Party, which was almost essential if they were to advance in their careers.³

The air traffic controllers were, like the pilots, predominantly male, highly qualified workers, trained in a small number of semi-military establishments, so that they formed a well-organized, well-educated and relatively tight-knit group. However, by contrast to the pilots, they have relatively low status, their occupation has a low visibility, they have limited career prospects, relatively low incomes, and work in cramped and technically inadequate conditions, so that they feel a strong disparity between their own estimation of themselves and their objective social and economic position. Moreover, the air traffic controllers have a strong sense of solidarity, with a very restricted hierarchy, no social division of labour and, despite their relative isolation, they are in regular radio contact with one another as part of their job, so that information rapidly passes from one workplace to another, including information about enormous disparities in pay and working conditions between airports.

There was also a direct basis for conflict between pilots and air traffic controllers, since pilots' pay was based on the number of miles flown, which gave them an interest in flying regardless of safety considerations. Air traffic controllers, by contrast, were paid on time rates, and faced very severe sanctions, including criminal prosecution, in the event of an accident. This conflict has increased recently as airport administrations, under pressure to maximize income, have pressed pilots to fly under all conditions, brushing aside concerns of safety.⁴

THE FORMATION OF THE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS' UNION

The roots of FPAD lie in the establishment of an association within the official trade union in November 1989. The initiators of the association were two air traffic controllers at Domodedovo airport, Moscow, Sergei Yevsyukov and Vladimir Konusenko, and a friend in the Ukraine. They formed a group of five Moscow air traffic controllers who met together out of work and developed the idea of organizing a separate section within the official union to represent the specific interests of air traffic controllers. They then established contacts across the Soviet Union with former friends from student days at the Academy of Civil Aviation, so that the core leadership of FPAD was and remains a relatively -knit group of former class mates.⁵ Their initial aim was to create an organization that would be free of Party control and where the disciplinary constitution of the union was removed, but Konusenko, who was the driving force, always had the intention of establishing an independent trade union. This strategy enabled them eventually to take the overwhelming majority of the Soviet Union's 15,000 air traffic controllers into the new union. However, their initiative was personally and politically difficult because the management of airports was organized along military lines with its own code of discipline. As part of the defence complex civil aviation was still subordinated to the military and security apparatus through the 'political administration', which made it risky to act contrary to the wishes of the Party personnel.

The founding conference which resulted in the establishment of the association was held in Ul'yanovsk in October 1989, funded by the Ministry of Civil Aviation. The intention from the start was to establish an independent trade union, but as the first step the initiators established the All-Union Association of Civil Aviation Air Traffic Controllers (VAAGA) which was registered under Stalin's 1932 Law on Associations, usually used for the formation of sport and leisure organizations, which allowed it an organizational framework, although it could not legally carry out the trade union welfare functions. Nevertheless it opened its own bank account, acquired an official stamp, and functioned effectively as a trade union.⁶ The ministry's decision to support the air traffic controllers was a political decision taken at a joint meeting of the leadership of the ministry and its political admini-

stration. The ministry was not happy with the attempt of the air traffic controllers to assert their independence, but wanted to keep the air traffic controllers under their control.⁷

According to Konusenko, the main grievance of the air traffic controllers was that they received very low pay, and had no privileges in recognition of the difficulties of their job, while the official union did nothing to defend their particular interests. The initial focus for the activity of the association was the campaign to have their occupation included on 'List Number One', the list of occupations with particularly harmful or dangerous working conditions, which would give them a shorter working week, longer holidays, and the right to retire early on full pension. This had been an issue which the controllers had been pursuing without success since the 1970s, but the new association developed the case with vigour. They submitted their demand to the ministry on 16 April 1990, and then to the Supreme Soviet, since the issue was a legislative matter. In support of their campaign they compiled a large dossier on the stress levels on air traffic controllers, backed up by several medical institutes and endorsed by the Ministry of Health, and presented it to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, as well as publicizing their case via the press in an attempt to elicit general public support, and submitting it to the President.⁸

The association made little headway with this claim throughout 1990, beyond a reduction in the length of service to secure a pension from twenty to fifteen years, and announced for the first time that they would hold a strike to pursue their claims. Although the association took steps to prepare for the strike by holding a ballot and encouraging regional support for the decision, Igranov postponed the strike shortly before it was to begin, to the surprise of the regional leadership, having come under a lot of pressure from the ministry to call off the strike, influenced by the fear that the government may respond to an air traffic controllers' strike in much the same way as the American government had in 1981, when 12,217 air traffic controllers were sacked.⁹

Following this failure, the leadership of the association decided that the time had come to reorganize as a trade union, which would give them trade union rights and better legal protection. This time the ministry was not involved in the founding of the organization; the Association of Air Traffic Controllers organized the founding conference on 27–28 October 1990 without outside support, although in the

climate of considerable union activity in the mines and elsewhere.¹⁰ The conference established the Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Unions (FPAD), with Igranov being elected president with Yevsyukov and Brodulev as his vice-presidents. The conference was presented with three draft constitutions, that of Konusenko, a second proposed by Shevchuk of Ukraine and a third proposed by St Petersburg. Eventually it was decided to composite the three into one, which was achieved during the congress.

FPAD retained the organizational principles of the original association. It was established as a federation of independent trade unions, to which unions formed at individual airports as well as those formed on a regional basis can affiliate. At the end of 1992 the union comprised 29 regional bodies, whose leaders met on a monthly basis as the Central Council of the union. The congress, held at least every two years and attended by 500 delegates, elects the president and four vice-presidents, who comprise the executive committee of the union. Unusually for Russian unions, official and independent, all the leaders must continue to work at their jobs as air traffic controllers as well as undertaking their union duties.¹¹ The Moscow office is looked after by the secretary to the executive committee who together with the treasurer are the only full-time employees of the union. The executive committee cannot decide policy or make decisions about action. Nor do the members of the executive committee have a vote on the Central Council, which is the sovereign body between congresses, electing its own chairperson each year.

The union adopted the principle of a rotating leadership, with all elected officials only permitted to hold office for two successive terms each of two years, while in the official unions the term of office for elected posts is usually five years, with no limit on the number of terms a person can hold the office. Having noted this, there is an unacknowledged impetus for the president and at least one of the vice-presidents to be based at one of the Moscow airports since the union has no national full-time leaders. Moreover, Konusenko has been the driving force of the union throughout its history, regardless of his official position. He served as *de facto* president for two years when the elected president, Yevsyukov, moved to a job in the Department of Air Transport, and was then formally elected to the post in 1992 and re-elected in 1994, decisively defeating Brodulev. Nobody above the rank of administrator of flights (brigade leader) can hold office in the

union. In contrast to NPG and Sotsprof, FPAD has never engaged in commercial activity as a matter of principle (although their occupation gives them few opportunities in that direction!).

The association had recruited most air traffic controllers into membership from the beginning. Forming the new union involved some risk, since it presented the members with a choice between the old and the new union, although initially FPAD permitted dual membership. The transfer to the new union was determined at the local level, where air traffic controllers had to decide whether to move *en masse* to the new union, or whether to transfer on an individual basis. It seems that in the vast majority of cases, at least in the larger airports, there was a transfer *en masse*, with FPAD's successive strike threats playing an important role in forging solidarity among air traffic controllers, and its early victories drawing them into membership. By the time of the first air traffic controllers' strike in August 1992 the union had an estimated 7,000 of the 8,000 Russian air traffic controllers in membership, with an additional 2,000 or more members in the former Republics.¹² Despite its high membership, this did not mean that the union was organized or, indeed, recognized throughout the USSR. The member unions had extensive autonomy and many faced problems in setting up the union in their region or airport.

The union constitution requires a ballot of the membership before any form of industrial action, which is in accordance with Soviet and Russian law. In the case of a strike the requirement is that two-thirds of all air traffic controllers at each airport must vote with at least 50 per cent of those voting in favour of the action for a strike to be agreed. Although the union is decentralized in its administration, its constitution imposes strict collective discipline on its members. 'Members are obliged to support the federation in the realization of its aims and tasks; to fulfil decisions of the elected organs of the federation that are not in contradiction with the Constitution' and can be expelled from the union for 'refusal to participate in trade union action', and for 'strike-breaking' (Constitution, II.2.6, II.2.4).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FPAD

In the spring of 1991, with the miners' strike raising the sights of independent workers' organizations, FPAD and PALS put together a

set of demands, backed up by a call for a one-day strike on 21 May 1991 which seems to have been initiated by the pilots of Moscow-Vnukovo and Krasnoyarsk airports. The pilots' statement noted that the average pay of pilots was now half that of Moscow passenger transport drivers, and demanded a lowered retirement age, improved pension, and doubling of the wage (KASKOR 52, 1991). The FPAD Central Council demanded a lowering of the retirement age, a reduction of the length of the working day, a tripling of wages, continued indexation of pay to the cost of living, and transfer of hard currency payments for the fees charged to international airlines for the use of Russian air space (*Nasha gazeta*, 21 May 1991, 1).¹³

As in the case of the previous strike threat, the FPAD leadership came under strong pressure from the government, which claimed that the one-day stoppage would impose a loss to the industry of \$150 million. The Soviet Prosecutor General took the unprecedented step of formally protesting the decision of the Soviet Minister of Justice, Sergei Lushchikov, to accept the registration of FPAD, even though this registration had been fully in accordance with the law (*Nasha gazeta*, 21 May 1991), arguing that the union was using 'means of struggle' which invalidated its registration, including meetings and strikes which violated the 1989 Law on Strikes and the 1991 Law on Trade Unions.¹⁴ The pre-strike situation was also very difficult for the regional leaders who faced their first serious test as independent union leaders. One of the methods whereby the centre remains in contact with the regional leaderships and these leaders in turn contact their memberships is through the Ministry's telegraph system. Before the strike, access to this system was denied some of the regional leaderships as the result of the action of a minor official in the aviation ministry. Other FPAD activists were victimized in various ways, by demotion, loss of bonus or transfer to other posts, although such victimization was usually legitimated by reference to inadequate work performance.¹⁵

The government responded to the demands of the pilots and air traffic controllers with Resolution 257 of the Cabinet of Ministers 'On additional measures for the stimulation and improvement of labour conditions in enterprises of the Ministry of Civil Aviation of the USSR', issued on 17 May 1991, two weeks after the settlement of the miners' strikes with massive pay rises. This resolution gave the ministry the right to give aviation enterprises the means to increase pay by

an average of up to 40 per cent for the second half of 1991, with the recommendation that the pay of pilots and air traffic controllers should be increased by an average of 50 per cent; added air traffic controllers with intensive work to List One, and granted them improved holiday entitlement and shorter working hours. Management also came off well, as the resolution encouraged aviation enterprises to develop their own sources of revenue, promised to improve the supply of aviation fuel to civil aviation, and to divert former military resources to the technical improvement of repair and safety. The ministry was also required to reach a tariff agreement for 1992 by 1 August 1991. This resolution, which had been negotiated between the ministry, the official union and the PLS, did not entirely satisfy the air traffic controllers, who continued to negotiate with the ministry on their own. On 20 May the ministry agreed to include a 60 per cent pay rise for pilots and air traffic controllers in the forthcoming tariff agreement, and with Goskomtrud promised to bring forward legislation to add the air traffic controllers to List One within a week and to draw up a list of those eligible within three months. On this basis the air traffic controllers' leaders called off the strike, the executive sending a telegram to the regional leaders calling off the strike only half an hour before it had been due to begin.

It was one thing for the government to concede the air traffic controllers' demands, but it was quite another for these demands to be implemented. On 29 May the air traffic controllers were added to the list of those entitled to shorter working hours and improved holidays, but the ministry and aviation enterprises simply ignored the government's recommendations, continuing to victimize FPAD activists, while the government and ministry prevaricated in further negotiations about the implementation of the agreement.

On 1 July 1991 FPAD announced another pre-strike situation, for a strike on 10 August 1991. The details of Resolution 257 and the other agreements were only officially transmitted to aviation enterprises by the Ministry of Civil Aviation in an Order of 18 July, while the privileged pension rights for air traffic controllers engaged in intensive work was only incorporated in a Council of Ministers' Resolution (No. 497) on 23 July, and transmitted to aviation enterprises by a Ministerial Order on 29 July. On 2 August a telegram was sent by the Minister to all aviation enterprises, noting that it had come to his attention that the agreements were only slowly being implemented and holding

enterprise directors personally responsible for their speedy implementation, the telegram being signed by Minister Panyukov, his deputy, Zamotin, and the heads of all relevant departments. Negotiations continued and in a fifteen-minute meeting FPAD extracted further concessions, embodied in a telegram to aviation enterprises signed jointly by Panyukov and Konusenko on 9 August, and an agreement to set up a joint commission to review cases of victimization and to annul punishments if they could be shown to be linked to trade union activity. On this basis the strike was called off at the last minute and a tariff agreement involving all the trade unions was subsequently signed to cover 1992.

Ten days later, on 19 August, the *putsch* was launched. Like the rest of the alternative trade unions, FPAD strongly supported Yeltsin's resistance to the *putsch*, but they also played a very active role in the resistance by providing information to the White House on the movements of air traffic. However, the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union meant that the government with which FPAD had signed all its agreements had disappeared, so that they had to start all over again trying to reach agreement with the Russian government, and with the reorganized Russian Ministry of Transport and Department of Air Transport. After the *putsch*, FPAD tried to establish a good working relationship with the new Russian government, although the bureaucracy they dealt with in the ministry was exactly the same as before.¹⁶

GROWING CONFRONTATION

Having secured its original demands, at least on paper, FPAD turned its attention in 1992 to signing its own tariff agreement with the new government, and to pressing its demand that a unified air traffic control system, covering the whole of the former Soviet Union, should be established under civilian control.¹⁷

The issue of the tariff agreement brought FPAD into direct conflict with the pilots, with whom they had hitherto been working closely, because the air traffic controllers' main ambition was to erode the traditional differential which had placed them well below the pilots on the industry's pay scale. The normal practice in the Soviet Union had always been for uniform scales and conditions to be applied throughout a particular branch of production, embodied in the collective

agreements signed by management and unions in each enterprise, and more recently in industry-wide tariff agreements signed between government and unions. The existence of competing unions clearly complicates this process.

The issue of a unified civilian air traffic control system was even more complex. The demand had two distinct purposes. First, and most strongly emphasized in the rhetoric of FPAD, was the issue of safety. More than forty different bodies had the right to control air space, with no overall co-ordination of the system. The military had priority rights, but the burden of managing the system falls on the civilian controllers. Moreover, the technology available to the controllers was limited, antiquated and unreliable. Second, and more important, was the question of the revenues generated by air traffic control, which could be used to finance improved pay, technology and working conditions if it was not diverted to subsidizing the rest of the industry. Thus FPAD demanded that the air traffic control system should come under the President or the Council of Ministers, with none of the revenues being diverted to the ministry or any of its departments.

This demand brought FPAD into direct conflict with very powerful interests. First, the Ministry of Defence, because the demand challenged the military control of air space head on. Second, air traffic control is potentially much the most lucrative part of the aviation industry. On the one hand, as a monopolized essential service, there are no limits to the fees that the air traffic control system can demand from domestic users. On the other hand, the air traffic control system brings in very large fees in hard currency from foreign airlines for both landing and overflight. With the collapse of the rouble and the parlous state of the finances of the aviation industry the income from air traffic control has become increasingly important.

FPAD demanded that responsibility for air traffic control should be taken out of the hands of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and handed to a state committee which would come directly under the President. This demand challenged the interests of the ministry, for the obvious reason that 'whoever decides and receives this fee will have no further financial problems. These organizations know that this is the Klondike!' (Brodulev, Interview, 4 August 1992). However, the ministry was not so opposed to separating air traffic control from other functions, provided this remained within the ministry. As the industry began to

disintegrate through 1992, the appeal to the ministry of holding on to the revenues of a centralized system of air traffic control increased.¹⁸

FPAD pressed its demands through the declaration of another pre-strike situation at the beginning of 1992, with the strike planned for 21 February. After a series of meetings with government representatives, agreement was reached on all these demands just forty minutes before the strike was due to begin, although the joint protocol signed by Yevsyukov and Vice-Premier Shokhin at 11.20 p.m. gave the impression that the concessions wrested from the government were being granted enthusiastically and on its own initiative.¹⁹ On 27 February 1992, Yeltsin authorised the establishment of a state committee, *Rosaeronavigatsiya*, to administer a unified air traffic control system (Presidential Decree 200), although in its implementation under Government Order 271 of 24 April it was placed under the Ministry of Transport by Minister Yefimov, apparently in collaboration with the apparatus of Vice-President Rutskoi, in apparent violation of Yeltsin's decree.²⁰ An inter-state committee set up under the CIS was equally ineffective, but also coveted the air traffic control fees.²¹ Despite the various orders and decrees to implement the agreements reached over the previous year, implementation was once more stalled by bureaucratic obstruction, as Department officials claimed that they required a range of additional instructions before the agreement could be implemented.

These issues continued to simmer before coming to a head in the negotiations over the tariff agreement which began in April 1992. FPAD and the pilots' union PLS had an agreement that they would not sign tariff agreements separately, but in the end the PLS joined the official PRAP in signing an agreement on 3 April,²² FPAD having refused to join the negotiations on the grounds that the odds were stacked against them, a view confirmed by the agreement which left the air traffic controllers in their traditional low position on the industry pay scale, while confirming the dominance of the pilots.²³

FPAD refused to recognize the agreement signed by the other unions, insisting that their members were not bound by it, and managed to secure an alternative agreement signed by the government on 19 May 1992, which gave them substantially higher wages and better conditions than that signed in April.²⁴ It also guaranteed the union office facilities, furniture, fax, telephone, transport, and air tickets to monitor the fulfilment of the agreement and to participate in the

activity of international organizations.²⁵ By Soviet standards the agreement was extraordinary not only in the benefits won by the workers, but also in giving nothing to management in return. The trade union agreed to co-operate with the government in monitoring and implementing the agreement, to monitor management in the area of safety, and to support the need for a high level of qualification for specialists in the occupation, conceding only the right of management to act to fulfil this obligation.²⁶

The air traffic controllers could hardly believe what they had won, but the euphoric sense of victory did not last for long. The pilots' union, PLS, regarded the erosion of their differentials in the new agreement as an outrageous affront to their status, 'violating the norms accepted in all civilized countries', and threatened the government that if the air traffic controllers' agreement was implemented then the pilots would be 'forced' to strike to preserve their traditional differentials.²⁷ The pilots in Syktyvkar warned that if the air traffic controllers' agreement was implemented, they would 'turn the branch upside down', although they had benefited from the FPAD actions in 1991 and 1992. The air traffic controllers' leader's response was to say 'we risked our arses but everyone received the money', although he issued an appeal to the pilots on 4 June expressed in more moderate language.²⁸

The resulting position was extremely confused, because the aviation industry was now covered by two conflicting tariff agreements, with a third, revised agreement, being signed by the official union and PLS on 11 June.²⁹ Although the air traffic controllers' agreement was signed in May, it was not implemented at local airports, where air traffic controllers continued to be paid according to the April scales. Airport directors refused to implement the agreement on bureaucratic grounds, claiming, for example, that they had not received official notification, even when presented with copies of the agreement by local union leaders, or on the grounds that they did not have the money to pay.³⁰ As a result, the air traffic controllers began to campaign again for the implementation of their tariff agreement. They were increasingly finding themselves trapped between a government, which had willingly accepted all their demands, and departmental and local management which did not have the resources to pay for the implementation of their agreements. While the buck passed to and fro, FPAD was losing patience. However, it was not the air traffic control-

lers, but a group of pilots at Aldan in the eastern Siberian Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), who acted first. The struggle of the Aldan pilots gave a foretaste of the difficulties the air traffic controllers were to face.

THE ALDAN PILOTS' HUNGER STRIKE

Sakha, the main centre of diamond production in Russia and the coldest inhabited place in the world, had declared itself an independent Republic within the Russian Federation, which implied that tariff agreements signed by the government of the Russian Federation did not apply in Sakha until or unless they were endorsed by the government of Sakha. On these grounds the republican aviation company Yakutavia refused to recognize the agreements, and on this basis the commander of Aldan airport in Yakutia, Parshchikov, refused to implement them.

On 2 February 1992, 120 pilots established the Aldan Independent Trade Union of Flying Personnel, led by Mikhail Berezovskii (only five pilots who were part of management did not join). The pilots came under pressure from management and left the official union, setting up a workers' committee. In May the pilots met and elected a strike committee of three pilots (Fedor Yamaldinov, Vladlen Tokarev and Grigorii Frolov), which demanded the implementation of the April tariff agreement; demanded a collective agreement, which had not existed for the past three years; demanded that their work schedule should conform to the Labour Law; demanded the removal of Genadii Vasil'ev, the commander of the aviation division of the airport, in support of which they raised a petition signed by a majority of the pilots in the airport; and demanded that their share (5.4 per cent) of the social insurance fund should be transferred to their bank account.³¹ They announced that if their demands were not met then they would begin a strike on 15 June 1992. In the meantime they attempted to secure their demands through legal channels. They appealed to the administration of the raion and referred to the Arbitration Court as well as to a conciliation commission comprising the head of the raion administration, Nikifor Yablovskii, his financial deputy, Zavarzin and the director of Yakutavia, Pinaev.

The workers' committee and the strike committee negotiated with the conciliation commission in another room, while the remaining

pilots waited in the meeting room. As each decision was made in the course of the negotiations, one of the pilots' representatives came out to report to the other pilots. The commission supported the pilots' demands, and on 8 June, the director of Yakutavia, Pinaev, told the pilots 'Lads, all your problems are settled', and signed all the relevant documents, agreeing to all their demands, except for the resignation of the commander of the aviation division.

The pilots decided that it was not worth continuing the strike to pursue this one remaining issue and called it off. However, the following week they faced a new set of problems. Parshchikov, the commander of the airport, flew to the headquarters of Yakutavia in Yakutsk. When he returned he refused to sign the initial order, telling the pilots, 'Lads, the agreement will not be implemented. You will not achieve anything'.

The pilots approached Malinovskii, leader of the pilots' trade union PLS, for support, but it turned out that the Aldan pilots were not members of the PLS, having remained with Kochur's ALS when the organizations divided in 1991 – in fact the Aldan pilots had heard nothing about the formation of the PLS. In the event Malinovskii was not prepared to give them support unless they joined PLS, and the pilots in turn were unwilling to delay everything while this was sorted out, so they turned to Kochur and Semenov, who were prepared to help them.

On 15 June 1992 at 8 a.m. local time the pilots came out on strike. To protect themselves from victimization, all the pilots were made members of the strike committee. At 8 a.m. all the aircrews gathered together, including those who were not scheduled to work. Those who were scheduled to work took the medical test to confirm their readiness to fly, and then went through the pre-flight preparation (receiving orders from the administration) but they did not board the aeroplanes. Instead, they remained in the meeting room with the rest of the pilots. The head of the raion administration and the prosecutor arrived at the airport, where the prosecutor confirmed that they were acting within the law. Six hours later, the commander of the airport realized that the pilots were serious about their strike, and counter-signed the agreement. The pilots returned to work.

The pilots worked according to the new schedule they had agreed, which meant that pilots for the first time knew when their rest days were scheduled and were able to plan their work and social lives

accordingly. However, Parshchikov, the commander of the airport, flew to Yakutia two weeks after the signing of the agreement to discuss the situation with the Director of Yakutavia, Pinaev, who agreed to revoke the agreement which he had signed earlier on the grounds that the pilots had subsequently gone on strike. This revoked the agreement on rest and work schedules as well as the 24 per cent bonus for harmful working conditions. Pinaev also endorsed Parshchikov's refusal to implement the tariff agreement unless it was signed by the Sakha government. Parshchikov was delighted with this outcome and signed his own order endorsing the decision.

Following this, the airport administration began to enforce these new arrangements with vigour, and pursued union activists with threats of redundancy. Sergei Timofeev and Sergei Oplachko, two young pilots who had completed their training as aeroplane commanders, were prevented from flying, which meant that the completion of their training was not confirmed and they could not be up-graded. The commander of the pilots' division said

Lads, do not think that this is because of your participation in the strike. It is just that we do not need any more pilots... How can I sign a document confirming the suitability of people to command aeroplanes when they signed a letter which criticized me?

The administration refused to recommend another pilot, Nikolai Semenov, for further study and training. Two navigators, Mikhail Berezovskii, the chairman of the union, and Yurii Alpen were threatened with the sack (to take effect in two months time) on the grounds that there was no longer any need for their services.

The pilots met again on 28 June and warned the administration that they would stop work on 13 July. However, just before the strike was due to begin the Sakha government passed a law prohibiting strikes by transport workers. Nevertheless, the pilots decided to continue with the strike, stating that in their view the administration was responsible for this illegal strike. They resurrected their previous demands, with the additional demand that Parshchikov resign as commander of the airport, as well as the head of the department of labour and wages, Pykhteeva.

At 8 a.m. local time on 12 July the pilots stopped work, although ironically the weather was so bad that no planes could fly anyway. Nobody from the administration was willing to meet and negotiate

with them. Parshchikov went on vacation leaving his deputy Kuznetsov in charge.

Three days into the strike, the director of Yakutavia, Pinaev, and his deputy flew into the airport. They decided to transfer aeroplanes from other airports to break the strike. They used an AN24 to fly the passengers; however, this was very dangerous because the landing strip was too short for such aeroplanes and because the flight path into the airport was only suitable for much smaller and more manoeuvrable planes. Pilots from Yakutsk and crews from Neryungri arrived in Yak40s.³²

The airport administration established a troika (as in 1937), comprising Valerii Kuznetsov (acting commander of the airport), Vasil'ev (commander of pilots), and Nikolai Bel'skii, to pressure the pilots. They invited the pilots to visit them one at a time, asking each individually whether or not they were willing to fly, and on their recommendation on 19 July Pinaev announced the sacking of four pilots for their participation in the first strike on 15 June, although he dated the order 15 July 1992 to keep within the legal time limit for such a dismissal. The decision was announced by the Transport Prosecutor, who was asked by the pilots whether it was possible to sack people who were already on vacation. 'Of course not', he replied. The pilots then informed him that three of the four people named in the order were already on vacation and the fourth, Fedor Yamaldinov, was on sick leave. For this reason the prosecutor decided that he could not implement the order, which then lapsed.

On 21 July, 16 pilots and two drivers (who drove the fuel tankers and decided to join the pilots in both strikes) were sacked on the order of Valerii Kuznetsov, on the grounds that the strike was illegal under Sakha law, although of course it is for the courts not for management to implement the law. Other pilots were sacked on disciplinary grounds – the strikers were rostered every day, so that for each refusal to fly they could be given an official caution and, the third time, could be dismissed, although dismissal still required the approval of the trade union. In this was 32 pilots were sacked over a 57-day period.

Despite continued escalation by management the pilots still flew medical and emergency flights, for example fighting forest fires in the region. One of the pilots, who came from Gelenzhik in the Caucasus, died, and it was decided to send his body home for burial. Yamaldinov was included by the commander of the airport as one of the crew on

this flight. Yamaldinov asked Mirko (deputy director of Yakutavia), who happened to be at the airport at the time, how he could fly if he was supposed to be sacked? Mirko simply answered, 'Oh forget about it. The order is revoked'.

The flight left the airport at 9 p.m. (Moscow time) on 21 July 1992 and Yamaldinov was sacked again at 11 p.m. at the end of the shift, although he was in the air at the time.

The pilots sent representatives to Moscow to the Department of Air Transport for a meeting with Zaitsev (deputy director of the flying department), and to counter the campaign of disinformation waged by Yakutavia from the beginning of the strike, including the false claim that the pilots wanted to increase their wages by three and a half times. On 18 August Berezovskii, leader of the Aldan pilots, and Zaitsev drew up a document to provide the basis for a resolution of the dispute, which included not only the issues of the implementation of the tariff agreement and revised work schedules, but also a guarantee of withdrawal of all punishments and reinstatement of the sacked pilots, the restoration to Aldan of flights which had been transferred to other airports, and consideration of the issue of privatization of the airport. The document was passed to Yakutavia by the Department of Air Transport, with a recommendation that they settle the dispute on this basis. On the same day the Sakha Republic signed the tariff agreement,³³ cutting the ground from under the feet of Yakutavia, which still did not implement the agreement on the grounds of a lack of cash, and then of its huge indebtedness, although the money to implement the agreement came not from Yakutavia's existing budget, but from the department in Moscow.

Pinaev rejected the proposed agreement and threatened further sackings, in response to which on the 26 August, over six weeks into their strike, sixteen pilots began a hunger strike demanding the reinstatement of the striking pilots, sacking of three senior managers, and support for the future of the airport from the regional government.

The sixteen pilots prepared for their hunger strike by erecting several tents in the front of the airport building. They displayed a number of posters on the tents, listing their demands and appeals, including an explanation of the hunger strike. A telephone was installed in one of the tents and they telephoned to Moscow from there. In effect the tents became the headquarters of the strike. They gave interviews to the local television station as well as the Moscow correspondent of the

Los Angeles Times (who arrived at the airport by chance). They also explained their problems to the passengers who were still turning up at the airport. One innovation was that they opened a visitors' book so that passengers, in particular, could write about their reactions to the strike; the majority supporting the actions of the pilots. Throughout the hunger strike they drank only boiled spring water.

The pilots sent information about their strike to the Department of Air Transport, stating that Yakutavia had ignored the decisions of the department. A copy of this was sent to Kochur's union and to IFALPA.³⁴ At the beginning of the hunger strike the Assistant Transport Prosecutor of the Sakha Republic came to Aldan to interrogate the pilots. When they arrived at his office the pilots asked him, 'What is your aim? Are you looking for truth and justice?', to which he replied, 'No. I want to find the initiators of the strike and punish them'. He went on to ask each of the pilots four questions:

- Did you take part in the first strike?
- From which day did you participate?
- Why did you stop your work?
- Who, in your opinion, is the organizer of the strike?

Upon learning that these were the questions, the pilots met and decided that they would all give the same answers to the prosecutor. They all said:

The real organizer of the strike who provoked everything is the commander of the airport, Parshchikov.

There were a lot of hints and rumours that all strikers would be arrested and punished, probably put in prison and all their property confiscated.

On 27 August Sergei Semenov, deputy president of the ALS, and their lawyer, also called Semenov, arrived at Aldan in response to a request for help from Berezovskii, accompanied by officials of the Department of Air Transport from Moscow. On 31 August they flew to Yakutsk to meet with the director of Yakutavia, who signed an order sending Parshchikov, the commander of Aldan, his deputy, Kuznetsov, and the pilot's commander, Vasil'ev, on an extended vacation while the dispute was settled.³⁵ The deputy commander of the pilots, Vladimir Koslov, was made the acting commander of the air enterprise, with

instructions to settle the strike and to implement the agreements in line with the laws of the Sakha Republic and the Russian Federation.

The pilots called off the hunger strike on 4 September 1992 and backed the promotion of Koslov. A period of collaboration between pilots and administration followed as they tried to repair the damage caused during the strike – in one case literally: Kuznetsov had done nothing to repair the heating system in preparation for winter, the hot water pipes still lying in open trenches, which if left would have frozen and damaged the whole heating system. The pilots volunteered to help out by covering up the pipes themselves.³⁶

THE CHELYABINSK PILOTS' WIVES' STRIKE

On 22 June 1992, a group of military pilots' wives organized a strike in Chelyabinsk, when the military pilots of ChVVAKUSh (Chelyabinsk Higher Military Navigators' School) did not receive their wages, the majority not having been paid since March. The officers sent a letter to the President, which was sent by the Secretariat to the Ministry of Defence, which in turn referred the case to the Volga-Ural Military Command. However, despite this flurry of correspondence, nothing happened and the pilots remained unpaid.

The commanders of the higher school explained to the pilots that they had not received any wages because of a shortage of cash at the bank. They also warned that the pilots could not take part in strikes or other political activity because they were military officers, subject to military rules.

ChVVAKUSh is a small military establishment cut off from the surrounding city by a large fence. However, there are a number of holes in the perimeter fence and between May and September it was common for local residents to go through the fence and take a short-cut across the military aerodrome on their way to tend their potato crops.

This is a small community, consisting of a few tens of houses. The military pilots' wives met with each other, visiting each other in their houses, talked outside their houses and in the local stores, and complained about the lack of cash. They decided that 'enough was enough' and that the only way to draw attention to their difficulties was to occupy the aerodrome, which they did on 22 May 1992.

They stood on the aerodrome for five hours, talking with each other and accompanied by their children. This action prevented planes landing or taking off which wrecked the airport's schedule of work for the day, although they did allow a weather plane to land, which they later regretted as they would have gained publicity if it had had to make an emergency landing elsewhere. Having made their point, they then left the airport via the holes in the fences through which they had entered.

One of the women, Yelena Bugaeva, said:

We hesitated for a long time before we decided to strike. All of us are dependent on the school commanders. Some of us are in queues for flats; others for cars or allotments. The situation has become even more difficult because some of the commanders tried to frighten our husbands, saying "You will have nothing to do in the army if you cannot control your wives". Nevertheless, we decided to strike because otherwise nobody will know about our problems. It seems to us we are the only people who can protect our husbands.

Another woman, Tat'yana Il'chenko, said:

I understood very well that activity could harm our husbands, but we were not prepared to suffer any longer. All of us are deep in debt. Some families have sent their children to their relatives because they can no longer feed them. When we were in the aerodrome the commanders of the school ordered our husbands to remove us. My husband, Volodya, said to me, 'This is your right and your choice. You can go or you can stay here. I support you, but you should know that this will finish my career'.

Another woman, Tone Druzhinnina, who participated in the strike was pregnant. She had spent a lot of time in hospital, but her husband had been unable to buy her fruit and other goods.

Despite this action, the school did not receive any cash to pay the pilots' wages. The commander of the school's headquarters, Vladimir Shikhov, declared the strike illegal but nevertheless promised not to use 'force' against the women in any future activity. However, the women remained troubled about the possible effects of their action on their husbands. This was a well-grounded worry, because as Tat'yana Il'chenko said:

My husband, Vladimir, worked as an acting assistant navigator of one of the divisions at the school. After the strike he received an order to return to his previous job as a navigator of a sub-division.

When questioned by a journalist about this, Vladimir Shikhov denied that it had happened and further promised that he would not carry out a vendetta against the strikers' husbands. Moreover, he claimed that such rumours were simply the 'fruits of women's fantasies' (L. Panfilova, *Chelyabinskii Rabochii*, 24 June 1993, 26 June 1993).

TOWARDS THE AUGUST STRIKE

Meanwhile FPAD was feeling increasingly frustrated at the failure to make headway. On 3 July 1992 they wrote to Yeltsin, warning that the government's failure to monitor the implementation of its own laws and resolutions risked leading to the militarisation of air space, leaving the government in ignorance of the activity of the military, as it had been at the time of the August *putsch*, and reporting that they had information that Yefimov and Rutskoi's apparatus had drawn up a draft decree to reverse Yeltsin's Decree 200 putting air traffic control directly under the President, threatening to strike if this was put into effect. The following day FPAD wrote a second letter to Yeltsin, threatening to strike on 15 August 1992 with three demands, fulfilment of Yeltsin's Decree 200, implementation of the tariff agreement and dismissal of those officials who had provoked the strike.³⁷

FPAD informs you that under the pressure of the military-industrial elite and conservative mentality of the departmental nomenklatura [the various agreements, decrees, resolutions and laws] are not being fulfilled. This is a trend towards a return to the past and old structures, to those who acted on the side of the *putschists* in August 1991. This leads to high tension in labour collectives of air traffic controllers.

To draw public attention to the threat to democratic transformation and to stop legal chaos our executive committee decided on 4 July 1992 to declare a pre-strike situation.

These demands were sharply criticised by the leadership of the PLS, who accused the air traffic controllers of wanting to 'privatize the sky' so that they would become rich from the fee income that Rosaeronavi-gatsiya would generate.³⁸ As the President of the Union of Flying Personnel said:

They want to establish the Rosaeronavigatsiya committee. They have their pockets open and they are waiting for money to fall from the sky. (Alfred Malinovskii, Interview, 21 September 1992)

These verbal attacks gave little warning of the onslaught to come. The Russian procuracy declared the air traffic controllers' strike illegal on 11 August 1992 and began legal proceedings. This threat was reinforced by Deputy Minister of Labour Pavel Kudyukin, who stated:

If the unions do not understand the impossibility of fulfilling many of their demands and do not step back from strike action, we will have to use measures of force. In that event, we will proceed on the basis of the outcome of the forthcoming legal proceedings. (BBC, *Summary of World Broadcasts*, Soviet Union, SU/1459 B/2 Itar-Tass, Moscow World Service, 12 August 1992)

On 13 August the prosecutor and the Ministry of Transport both sent telegrams to all aviation enterprises advising them that the strike was illegal. At Moscow's Vnukovo airport the air traffic controllers were all asked to put their attitude to the strike in writing, which they refused to do (KASKOR 33, 14 August 1992).

These threats were accompanied by a comprehensive press and television campaign to present the air traffic controllers as wholly unreasonable money-grabbers, not persuaded either by rational argument, fair comparisons, or national interest. All the emphasis in the press campaign was on the exorbitant wage demands of the air traffic controllers, although the latter insisted that their principal demand was for a unified air traffic control system under the President's control, which they presented as an issue at the heart of the struggle for democracy against the threat of military dictatorship. However, the union side of the argument did not get heard at all, the media being advised not to publish the FPAD statements.

The air traffic controllers were shocked by this sudden onslaught, which came like a bolt from the blue, and was clearly a well-orchestrated campaign. It seemed that the 'democrats' had decided that this was the ideal opportunity to make their move against the independent workers' organizations, and against the right to strike, which they had been unable to do against the miners or other groups of transport workers. FPAD was a small union, isolated within its industry and even from the other independent unions. Reagan had already shown in the USA how military controllers could be used as strike-breakers. If FPAD could be destroyed, this would serve as a warning

to others. Moreover, with Yeltsin and Gaidar out of Moscow and Rutskoi in the front line, the 'democrats' could keep their noses clean. FPAD sent repeated telegrams to Yeltsin and Gaidar in the run up to the strike, but got no reply.

Despite having been warned on 4 July of FPAD's intention to strike, and FPAD's repeated requests for a meeting, FPAD got no response from the government until 12 August, on the eve of the strike, when Vice-President Rutskoi, a former military pilot and headstrong populist, who had clearly received orders to 'deal with the air traffic controllers' while Yeltsin was out of Moscow, phoned Konusenko personally to propose a meeting. Konusenko replied that according to a decision of the Central Council he was not allowed to attend negotiations alone. Rutskoi replied that it was not a negotiation, only a business meeting with the Director of the Department of Air Transport, the Acting Minister of Transport and the Deputy Attorney General.

In fact it turned out to be a large meeting, with Konusenko facing eighteen people on the government side, including in addition the Ministers of Defence and Labour, two vice-premiers, and the Deputy General Prosecutor, in a meeting which lasted for two and a half hours. The government tried to persuade Konusenko to sign an agreement to delay the strike for one month to allow a commission to consider the union's demand. Konusenko agreed, provided that he was given some guarantees of progress in dealing with their problems, even though the government had already had six weeks to consider their demands. The government side would give no guarantees, but Konusenko promised to discuss the question with his committee and to resume negotiations on 14 August, the eve of the strike.

The executive had a long meeting on 13 August, which only finished at midnight, at which some representatives were ready to call off the strike in the face of Rutskoi's intimidation, but were persuaded by the majority to stand firm, although the meeting decided that they were ready to make some compromises.

On 14 August, the day before the strike, there was a series of further meetings with the government. At 10 a.m. a delegation led by Konusenko was presented with an ultimatum by Rutskoi either to call off the strike, or the President would use his powers to suspend it for two months with the threat of dissolution of the union. As Konusenko recalled, the meeting lasted for twelve minutes. Rutskoi spoke for

eleven minutes, the Deputy Prosecutor General for 30 seconds, and Konusenko took 30 seconds to explain that he could not sign the document, then Rutskoi said simply 'you are free'. As Konusenko left the room Rutskoi shouted after him 'Konusenko, it is your personal responsibility. I will immediately give an order to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and to the Security Ministry to prepare their staff for battle'. Konusenko and his colleagues were deeply shocked by this Stalinist behaviour (KASKOR 33, 14 August 1992 and our interviews). As Konusenko commented afterwards: 'It was not a negotiation'.

At 4 p.m. the Moscow City Court responded to the prosecutor's plea by declaring the strike illegal, and at the same time the FPAD leaders had another meeting with Rutskoi in the Kremlin, at which they were presented with the same ultimatum as before. They told Rutskoi that they did not have the right to sign it, but they took it back to a meeting of their Central Council, which continued until 8.45 p.m. Nevertheless, the government announced that following a preliminary agreement about many of the issues raised by the air traffic controllers, the strike would be postponed, a claim which was immediately rejected by the union leaders.

The most dramatic event was a carefully orchestrated televised press conference, at which Rutskoi claimed that air traffic controllers were the instigators of an unreasonable strike, in pursuit of extortionate wage demands, which would create dangerous conditions for passengers. Rutskoi held up a wage slip claiming that it showed that controllers earned nearly 40,000 roubles a month and he claimed that they were demanding 70,000 roubles (trumped by the Minister of Labour, who claimed that they were demanding 100,000). The air traffic controllers were not given the opportunity to explain that the pay slip shown by Rutskoi included two and half months back pay, which had not been paid earlier because of the shortage of cash, and that the claim was for a basic minimum of 15,000 roubles a month, corresponding to the provisions of the tariff agreement signed by the government itself in May. Nevertheless, Rutskoi's claims were repeatedly reproduced unchallenged by press and TV in the run up to the strike.³⁹

The final meeting with Rutskoi took place from 11 p.m. to just after midnight, with Rutskoi again simply demanding the postponement of the strike for a month while the air traffic controllers' demands were considered by the government. As the delegation left, Rutskoi said to

Konusenko once again, 'Konusenko, it is your personal responsibility'. On 15 August, 1992, the air traffic controllers held their first ever national strike.

THE AUGUST 1992 STRIKE

In the past the air traffic controllers had been successful in securing acceptance of their demands through the mere threat of a strike, achieving spectacular victories in their agreements with the government in February and May, without ever having had to put their resolve to the test. The FPAD leadership still believed up to the middle of August that the Russian government, whom they had helped to save in August 1991, were their allies in their struggle against the bureaucracy of the industry which was resisting the implementation of their agreements.⁴⁰

The leadership had expected that the August strike threat would have the same outcome as those which had preceded it, once the attention of the government had been drawn to their problems. As a result, FPAD did not make the preparations that would have been required for the kind of battle in which they now found themselves engaged. They were not only taking on the employers, backed by the trade unions that purported to represent the other workers in the industry, but also the government and, in their demands for control of air space, the military. Yet they made little attempt to publicize their own position or to build alliances, even amongst the other independent unions that might be expected to be sympathetic to their cause.⁴¹ They did not even make any particular effort to inform their own members of developments, being content to issue telegrams and newsletters, leaving any organization and propaganda to the initiative of largely inexperienced local organizers.

The public campaign against the air traffic controllers in Moscow was reproduced in every airport. On 30 July Yefimov, Minister of Transport, issued a directive to local airports instructing the airport management to call meetings of airport employees to condemn the strike.⁴² These meetings were typically addressed not only by representatives of the official union, but also by leaders of the pilots' union PLS, who by now were taking the lead in vilifying the air traffic controllers. The air traffic controllers also came under strong pressure

from the management not to participate in the strike, with strong hints of severe disciplinary action. One hour before the strike FPAD was denied access to the telegraph, and two days later its right to use the department's telegraph links was permanently withdrawn. On 15 August Rutskoi sent a telegram to local bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs ordering them to take control of the local trade union organizations.

The strike began at 10 a.m. on 15 August 1992. Although 96 airports had indicated their willingness to participate in the strike, only about half this number actually stopped work as the pressure came on the shift on duty at the time set for the strike to begin. Nevertheless, FPAD estimated that about 40–50 departments were fully on strike.⁴³

At 10.12 a.m. the FPAD leaders met with Rutskoi, who announced that criminal proceedings would be instituted against all participants in the strike and that they would all be sacked (obviously modelling himself on that great democrat Ronald Reagan). He told them 'I will not allow this disorder to continue. You will discover the power of the Vice-President'. Rutskoi warned the leaders of the strike that if they did not sign a protocol prepared by his office he would sign a decree that the strike is illegal on the grounds of the damage caused to the economy. 'I will crush your trade union and the leaders of the union will be sentenced to jail', he concluded. At 10.24 the 'negotiations' ended, with nobody but Rutskoi getting a word in.

The leaders of the strike had difficulty co-ordinating the strike. Initially, as a result of press and media disinformation many of the air traffic controllers thought the strike was collapsing. During the day the government attempted to present the strike as a failure, claiming that very few airports were closed and that air traffic controllers were starting to work again, which was indeed the case because they were being forced to resume work by threats of legal action, and blackmail with passengers' lives. One TV report stated that twenty airports supported the strike, with only twelve airports on strike and that the military controlled seven flight control areas.⁴⁴

In addition, the withdrawal of telegraph facilities made communication with the regions and individual airports very difficult. It was only when the union managed to establish a telephone information chain from one airport to another that there was a renewed wave of strikes at airports as the afternoon shifts joined the action, and as news came through, some later proving to be untrue, of widespread intimidation

and prosecutions. Nonetheless, the strike started to crumble as the leadership found it increasingly difficult to co-ordinate and encourage the regions to continue against the back-drop of continued government disinformation and open intimidation of strikers.

During the day pressure built up on the government to try and end the strike. The Kuzbass miners appealed to Rutskoi to open negotiations with the air traffic controllers to settle the dispute (BBC, *Summary of World Broadcasts*, SU/1461 B/2). By early evening, on instructions from Rutskoi, Aleksandr Larin, Director of the Department of Air Transport, proposed an end to the strike and the resumption of talks with FPAD. Rutskoi promised that there would be no victimization against strikers. After consultations with the regions, the national leaders issued an instruction calling off the strike, which ended officially at 9.45 p.m. (Moscow time) on 15 August, although some airports refused to resume work until there was a written no-victimization guarantee.

In the middle of the strike the FPAD leaders issued a letter appealing to Yeltsin, Khasbulatov and Gaidar to meet with them as soon as possible to resolve the problems and end the strike. A major concern of FPAD was the issue of safety, with airport directors putting flights in the air without any concern for the safety of passengers, to force the controllers to resume work. Although the strike was due to begin at 10 a.m. many planes were put into the air earlier without any guarantee of air traffic control on landing, and there were several reports of near misses.⁴⁵ In Chelyabinsk the management did not inform other airports that Chelyabinsk was closed until an hour after the strike began, and at 6 p.m. declared the airport open again, warning the controllers that they would be held legally responsible for any consequences so that they had no choice but to return to work. At Samara airport the head of the pilots' division directed planes from his car which was parked on the lead-in to the main runway at the airport, while at Syktyvkar airport pilots were told to take off and fly low, following the contours of the ground!

In many airports the air traffic controllers were replaced by military controllers, who were unfamiliar with civil aviation procedures, although in at least three airports the military refused because they believed they could not handle the complexity of civilian air traffic, because their job is normally to arrange for planes to intercept one another so that they 'are not used to keeping planes apart from each

other'. The inadequacy of military controllers meant that civilian air traffic controllers often stood behind the military controllers to advise them, and felt obliged to take over once planes were in the air. In some cases, police and Omon riot troops stood behind the controllers in turn, and in others prevented air traffic controllers who supported the strike from entering the airport. In Kemerovo strike-breakers were reported to have been paid 15,000 roubles for the day, and similar payments were reported in Moscow.

In all the larger airports of which we have direct knowledge, except for Syktyvkar, passengers were allowed or even encouraged to vent their anger on the striking controllers. The militia allowed angry passengers into the control hall at Vnukovo (Moscow), fights took place in Tomsk and Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, in Samara and Yekaterinburg the controllers were protected by Omon troops, and in Magnitogorsk the controllers had to build a barricade to protect themselves from angry passengers.

At some airports the city prosecutor, sometimes accompanied by Omon, visited the air traffic controllers' buildings and ordered them to work, with threats of very serious punishments if they failed to do so. The chairman and deputy at Pulkovo airport in St Petersburg were held by the police for three hours, in Novosibirsk two air traffic controllers were sacked (the sacking was eventually ruled illegal by the local court on 21 October), in Chelyabinsk the head of the air traffic control section was sacked, in Rostov controllers were held at gunpoint and in Yekaterinburg it was reported that all 70 controllers from three shifts were pulled in for interrogation and the union's bank account seized (Interviews, 17 September 1992, 23 January 1993, various KASKOR bulletins).

But these fragmentary reports give only a hint of the problems faced by air traffic controllers working on the ground. To see these problems more clearly we will look at four different, but strategically important, airports.

St Petersburg

St Petersburg played a leading role in the establishment of FPAD, providing one of the vice presidents of the original association, Andrei Romanov. The St Petersburg air traffic controllers had been organizing themselves for some time within the official union: Vladimir Terent'ev

and his friends Igor' Avdeev and Aleksandr Maiorov had already established a framework within the official union which brought together controllers from the strategically crucial north-west sector. However, the St Petersburg air traffic controllers had been preoccupied with their own local action at the time of the founding congress of the association in October 1989. The government had issued a resolution increasing the pay of air traffic controllers and technicians during the summer, transferring the appropriate funds to the local enterprise, but the money seemed to have disappeared.

The air traffic controllers set up a strike committee to press their claim, and two of them (Terent'ev and Aleksandr Bizyukov) collected various documentary and statistical information together and drew up a staff list with an amended pay scale, distributing the funds to their own advantage. They presented their demand, backed up by a strike threat, to a conference of the labour collective of the whole enterprise, which supported their demand. However, this was a somewhat inauspicious beginning because it immediately threatened to isolate the air traffic controllers by opening them up to accusations of being 'money-grabbers', so that they soon found themselves coming under pressure from the administration.

The St Petersburg controllers participated in the actions of 1990, and brought their own draft of a constitution to the FPAD founding congress in October. However, they did not immediately transfer membership to FPAD because their association had already been established on a regional basis, without separate local groups. Rather than destroy the existing association they decided to establish FPAD as a trade union alongside it. FPAD in St Petersburg was established by a group of four, Maiorov, Bizyukov, Terent'ev and Aleksandr Borin, who called a founding conference, attended by 17 people, on 14 December 1990, where they were elected as its first officers. On 24 December they held a conference of the labour collective to consider disbanding their section of the official union and transferring *en masse* to FPAD. By February 1991 they had brought about 70 per cent of the controllers into membership of their union, and by the end of 1993 they had about 95 per cent membership.

In keeping with the federal character of FPAD, local unions could add their own demands to those of the federation in pre-strike calls and could negotiate locally. In the August 1991 conflict the St Petersburg union reached an agreement with local management on 2 August,

which largely anticipated the national agreement sealed one week later, although FPAD in St Petersburg did not abandon its threat to participate in the national strike. In the February 1992 strike the St Petersburg union added their own demands to their local airport administration, including the demand that 20 per cent of foreign currency receipts should be devoted to paying bonuses to air traffic controllers to compensate for the increased volume of work, to bring the staff of specialists up to full strength, to pay a bonus of 24 per cent to compensate for harmful working conditions and 20 per cent for evening shifts. The Labour Collective Council of the enterprise supported the controllers' demands of the Russian government, but opposed their plan to strike in support of their local demands on the grounds that they had not exhausted the negotiating procedures, denouncing their proposed strike as illegal and their demands as destructive, motivated by their own ambition and worsening the position of the labour collective as a whole. Nevertheless, in a secret ballot in which 210 controllers out of a staff list of 264 people voted, 192 voted in favour of the strike, with only 10 against and 8 abstaining. However, there were clear disadvantages in linking local demands to a national strike, and there was some ill feeling when the national strike was called off when the controllers had not secured any of their local demands.

These demands came up again in consideration of the collective agreement for 1992, which had been drawn up by the administration and the official union before the signing of the 1992 tariff agreement and took no account of the demands put forward by the air traffic controllers on 7 February – the only item fully resolved had been that concerning the supply of drinking water to air traffic controllers on duty! The executive reported that management was not willing to negotiate on the other demands, and that they had not been informed of meetings of the STK considering the collective agreement, and had not attended any STK meetings.

By the summer of 1992, the St Petersburg FPAD group had built up a lot of experience, and as a result the August strike in St Petersburg was very carefully planned and organized, with the leaders taking elaborate precautions to protect the strikers from pressure and victimization. The controllers decided not to establish a strike committee to avoid anybody having to take personal responsibility for participation in the strike and moreover they held their conference to consider the

strike in two stages. On 27 July they held a meeting at which they expressed their support for the FPAD demands, but did not consider the issue of striking, which they resolved to discuss at a second meeting to be held at 9 a.m. on 15 August, one hour before the strike was due to begin. On 2 August they advised the airport administration that they supported all the FPAD demands, but they did not make any statement about their participation in the strike, nor did they send any telegrams to FPAD in Moscow to announce their intention to participate, to forestall the kind of repression they had experienced on previous occasions, when some of the leaders had been transferred to low-paid work on the evidence of such documents (all telegrams going through the department's own system).

On 12 August the commander of the air division invited the air traffic controllers to send a representative to meet with him. Aleksandr Maiorov, president of the Pulkovo FPAD, was in Moscow taking part in the negotiations with the Russian government so Terent'ev met with the Commander, but again could tell him nothing about any strike plans.

The following day the city prosecutor asked Terent'ev, 'Am I going to have to take you to court?', to which Terent'ev replied 'You can try, but what will you charge me with?', 'With participation in an illegal strike'. However, the strike could only be declared illegal by a decision of the court. Terent'ev showed the prosecutor the minutes of the July conference and said 'where does it say that we are going to strike?'. He replied, 'Yes, if I take this statement to the court no judge will agree with my request to ban the strike. I do not know what to do. Will you strike or not?' Terent'ev said 'Everything depends on the decision of the conference and on the decision of the government'. The administrator who was present at this meeting asked Terent'ev whether he should sell tickets for 15 August or not, to which Terent'ev replied, 'Judging by the way the negotiations are going, I would not recommend you to sell tickets. It is most likely that there will be a strike'.

On 14 August Terent'ev met privately with his commander, who was going to be off duty the following day. The commander agreed that Terent'ev and Maiorov, who were both on the night shift, could be in their workplace for the duration of the strike, but the following morning an order was issued prohibiting anybody not working from

being there. Terent'ev raised the matter with the head of the department, who knew of the agreement and allowed them to be present.⁴⁶

At 9 on the morning of the strike, the controllers were scheduled to hold their meeting to decide whether or not the strike was to go ahead. At the last minute they were forbidden to hold the meeting in the room where they normally met before work to receive their instructions, being offered a room elsewhere, but instead they held their meeting on the grass outside their building. They decided to strike after a short meeting and Terent'ev wrote up the minutes and announced the decision to strike to the airport administration twenty minutes before it was due to begin. This procedure, they hoped, would absolve any individual of personal responsibility, everybody being obliged to implement the collective decision of the conference.

Soon after this the police, representatives of the Omon and representatives of the prosecutor's office, including the chief city prosecutor, arrived at the airport. The prosecutor and senior police officers invited individual controllers to an office to press them into rejection of the strike call.

The controllers began their strike at 10 a.m., but Moscow was still at work and sending planes into the St Petersburg sector. However, St Petersburg refused to control the planes. Aleksandr Maiorov phoned the senior controller in Moscow and warned him that he would be criminally responsible if he sent any planes into the St Petersburg zone, after which all flights from Moscow ceased.

At about 11 a.m. military controllers took over control of the St Petersburg sector. No foreign aeroplanes crossed the air space over St Petersburg after this because of a lack of confidence in the abilities of the military controllers by international airlines. In the first twenty minutes the military controllers created a situation where three aeroplanes were placed on intersecting flight paths. Seeing this the civil air controllers took up their workplaces again and rectified the flight paths thereby avoiding a crash.

Terent'ev immediately reported all this information to the media. This information was also passed on to the Moscow army commander who contacted the head of the St Petersburg military centre, to ask what was going on and why was an accident-prone situation created. The civil air controllers helped avoid a further accident when the military controllers gave two planes, one of which was a medical

plane, flight paths in such a way that one would have landed on top of the other. At 12 midday all air movement over St Petersburg stopped.

The administration continued to intimidate the civil air controllers in every way possible. They allowed a lot of passengers to come to the work areas to complain. This created a potentially dangerous situation where the air traffic controllers were forced to argue and answer questions rather than supervise the work that was being done by the military controllers.

The second shift arrived as usual, approximately 40 minutes before the beginning of their shift at 4 p.m., and were unsure whether to join the strike, with the administration pressing them and insisting that they should work. By this time the telephone network had been established, so the controllers knew that the strike was holding solid elsewhere. The two shifts met and discussed the strike, with many pointing out that if the second shift worked then the first shift would be punished and hence arguing for the continuation of the strike. This was agreed by all the controllers and the second shift also refused to work.

The Deputy Mayor of St Petersburg arrived at about 7 p.m. and was taken into the air traffic controllers' work area where he insisted on addressing the controllers. The controllers were sitting at their workstations, monitoring the flight information that was coming in on their consoles, where they were still controlling medical and emergency flights. The deputy mayor began screaming in an increasingly hysterical tone at the controllers, who partly listened but continued to monitor their work.

I have come here to take decisions, to talk with you and to take decisions. I repeat, I have full authority ... I am ready to lead these several thousand people [the passengers] HERE. Do you understand? I will lead them here and they will do everything they want with you because you are scorning people. You do not want to go to them so I will go and talk to them and bring them straight back here. I will bring them back here at once, and they will come with me. I will bring the passengers and you will see what they will do to you. Go and look at what is going on in the city, what is going on in the airport! Do you understand that your airport is the only one on strike? Do you understand or not? What is the point *my dears*? What? You cannot even predict the situation. What will happen tomorrow? Do you really think that you are the only fish in the sea? We [the St Petersburg mayoral department] are already 14 billion roubles in debt and we will spend another 5 billion roubles to close the airport for two or three months and then find other people to replace you. Do you understand that you have entered into conflict with the Russian Federation, with the STATE!

Not simply with the mayor's department, or somebody else but with the STATE. Do you know what the economic situation of the state now is? Think about the consequences because now neither the President nor anybody else has anything to lose. Nor does the mayor's department, which is 14 billion in debt. I tell you once again that we will throw in 5 billion roubles to close the airport and pay off the debts and you will be completely isolated. *My dears* think about it a bit. Can you really not understand that you are ALREADY completely isolated and you are making your position worse and worse.... And now I will consider what to do with you. Maybe I will do a very simple thing, just let the people deal with you while I close my eyes.... We will allow journalists to come here so that they will see what the people do to you. And now I think that is the best thing to do. Let people accuse me later, but then everything will be in order here AT ONCE.

The air traffic controllers started to shout that they are not scorning the people but that they had to strike because their demands for the implementation of the government decrees and the tariff agreement had not been recognized. But the deputy mayor replied:

No. No. What does it mean to scorn us? We are state people. What right do you have to scorn us? We can scorn you as well and we have a much better chance to scorn than you do. I have been waiting all day and I have been waiting all this time and I have been receiving information about what is happening and I thought that eventually you will see sense. Now we have reached the point at which we will have to take the most decisive measures. I remind you once more that I have FULL authority, full authority in the name of the President ... but I will not be indecisive, I will be firm. I give you THIRTY minutes, thirty minutes. Gather who you want together, discuss the problem and vote. And then I reserve the right to announce my own decision. Agreed?

There was silence in response.

It is now 7.55 p.m. At 8.25 p.m. I will be here to hear your decision and after that I will announce my decision.

The deputy mayor then left the work centre.

The controllers discussed this outburst by the deputy mayor and while some of the controllers expressed doubts, Maiorov convinced them that they should continue with the strike. He pointed out that many airports were on strike and that the mayor lied in suggesting that they were the only airport on strike. After some limited debate the controllers agreed to continue the strike despite the threats from the

deputy mayor. Although there was no vote in favour of continuation, the general consensus was to continue.

In half an hour the deputy mayor, accompanied by the city prosecutor, returned to the work centre. On their arrival the controllers announced that they planned to continue the strike. In reply, the prosecutor announced that Terent'ev and Maiorov would be arrested not for being on strike, but for organizing the blockade of transport at Pulkovo.⁴⁷

After this arrest the deputy mayor (imitating a Roman emperor) proposed that he 'throw' Terent'ev and Maiorov to the angry crowd of passengers. However, the city prosecutor was more cautious and advised against this course of action. Terent'ev and Maiorov then agreed to accompany the deputy mayor and the prosecutor by car to go to the city to the city criminal investigation office. Upon arrival there, the investigators could not find the law relating to the wilful blockade of air transport (it was Gorbachev's Law of 23 October 1990), so the two leaders were interrogated as witnesses. Since no charges had been laid, they had to be released after three hours, at 11 p.m.

Following the arrest of these two leaders, one of the remaining controllers rang the president of the union, Konusenko, to tell him about the arrest. The controllers had no idea where Terent'ev and Maiorov had been taken so that as far as the union was concerned they could have been held anywhere, as guests of the KGB or wherever. The news of the arrests was sent to all striking airports stating that the strike had to continue until these leaders were released and that the union required guarantees from the government that participants in the strike would not be punished. This announcement was also released to the media as part of the campaign to build up support and sympathy for the by now beleaguered union.

At 9 p.m. Ruskoi gave his guarantees about non-victimization and signed a telegram to all airports announcing this decision, and at 9.45 p.m. the strike was called off, although still nobody knew what had happened to Terent'ev and Maiorov, who only arrived at Terent'ev's flat at 11 p.m. They then rang the airport and Konusenko and told them that they were all right. Only after they rang the airport did the St Petersburg air traffic controllers return to work.

After the strike the senior air traffic controller, Sergei Morozov, was punished for exceeding his authority in closing the St Petersburg air zone. In fact the air traffic controllers did not close the zone, but only

announced that they would not control the flights. As a result the punishment order was revoked a month later, following a court appeal.

The airport administration also sued the air traffic controllers for damages, claiming a financial loss of three million roubles and \$50,000. Terent'ev sent a letter of protest to the court, in which he explained that the income lost by the airport could not be seen as damage to the airport. The claim was recalculated and the damage was then deemed to be 43,000 roubles, which the trade union paid through the arbitration court (the union's total resources at the time of the strike amounted to 58,000 roubles).

While Maiorov was not punished officially after the strike, he had been near the top of the queue to receive an apartment and the administration refused to give him one. He and his wife have three children and they live in a communal flat with only two rooms.

Samara

FPAD in Samara had a less militant history than in St Petersburg, and worked quite closely with the official union at the local level, although the two unions would have nothing to do with one another at national level. Nevertheless, the air traffic controllers in Samara were a tightly knit group with a high level of solidarity.

The Samara air traffic controllers had no local demands for the August 1992 strike, but fully supported the national demands and the decision to strike. Although they set up a strike committee, they did not hold any local meetings in preparation for the strike, but simply talked about it informally at work. The airport management held a meeting of the labour collective to condemn the strike, the director waving in his hands the telegrams from Moscow demanding that he call the meeting. The air traffic controllers were allowed to speak at the meeting, but it was packed with management supporters and voted to condemn the strike, although not one pilot in Samara supported the resolution.

The distinctive feature of Samara in the August strike was not so much the behaviour of the civilian air traffic controllers as that of their military counterparts, who refused to replace them. On the eve of the strike the administration of the airport had contacted the commander of the military air traffic controllers, who had received an order from the Ministry of Defence instructing them to control the air space in

place of the civilian air traffic controllers, carrying out civic duties rather than military ones.⁴⁸ The military air traffic controllers had no alternative but to comply with this order, although in this region they supported the action of the civilian controllers. However, after a discussion with their commander about the order the military controllers sent two people out to buy vodka. After drinking the vodka they reported to the medical centre for the usual tests and were prohibited from working by the doctor on duty.⁴⁹

This left nobody responsible for air traffic control at this airport. However, the controllers accepted that if any aeroplanes were in the air before the beginning of the strike and they were on a flight path to land then the civilian air traffic controllers would direct the aircraft into the airport. This they did, with a number of aeroplanes landing in the first part of the strike. In the absence of air traffic control the commander of the pilots' division took it on his own responsibility to control flights taking off, not from the control tower but from his car parked by the runway, allowing flights to take off in the (correct) belief that once planes were in the air the controllers would service them, although the planes which flew East were forced to return when Yekaterinburg refused to accept them.

The other method by which the administration sought to break the strike was by inciting passengers by not announcing the strike to them, allowing them to check in and board the planes, where they were left in their seats for twenty to thirty minutes before being told that the plane would not be leaving as a result of the air traffic controllers' strike.

The reaction of the passengers was as expected: they were irritated by these announcements, with many passengers shouting their annoyance. Initially the anger was directed towards the administration, who very quickly told the passengers that they could not do anything because it was an air traffic controllers' strike over which they had no control. Some passengers then shouted that they wanted to go to the air traffic control centre to talk 'man-to-man' with the controllers and were directed towards the centre by administrators, although most were unable to get through the barriers that bar access to the public – while some did get through, not one off-duty air traffic controller was able to get through to see his colleagues, although all have passes which authorize access at any time. One who tried to do so was arrested and taken to police headquarters for several hours.

The most dangerous moment occurred after a chartered commercial aeroplane from Groznyi, the capital of Chechenia, carrying 'mafia' businessmen and their goods, landed at Samara to refuel on its way to Yekaterinburg. When the passengers realized that they would not be able to take off they were directed to the air traffic control to make their complaints. When they reached the centre they saw that standing by the door were the Omon, blocking the way to the air traffic controllers. The passengers shouted but did not force their way through. The administration told the air traffic controllers that they, the administration, were really protecting the controllers from the wrath of the passengers and that they might withdraw the police if the air traffic controllers did not cooperate.

The military air traffic controllers who were seated in the adjacent military control room saw an ugly situation developing, and with the threat of the administration to withdraw the police protection they called in special military forces, who arrived in two helicopters soon after to provide protection.

The mayor of Samara visited the airport and saw the air traffic controllers. This was an amicable visit, unlike the actions of other mayors during the strike, although he asked the controllers to call off the strike. This was, however, a special case, since he was a former secretary of the Communist Party organization of the aviation division in the airport and knew the controllers. By contrast, the Samaran mafia came to the airport to warn the air traffic controllers that they should resume work. Equally worrying to the controllers was that they saw the city prosecutor, who was at the airport, meet with and shake hands with a number of the godfathers who controlled various districts of the city. The air traffic controllers ignored these threats.

The Samara controllers stayed out beyond the end of the official strike. When Konusenko phoned to call off the strike they asked him if he had a written guarantee from Ruskoi that there would be no repression, and he replied that he did not, it had been purely verbal. The Samara controllers had been under severe pressure from the police, the administration and the City Transport Prosecutor, and did not call off their strike until a quarter to one the next morning. Following the strike, legal proceedings were instituted against five of the leaders.

Syktyvkar

Syktyvkar is the centre of the Komi regional trade union of air traffic controllers, which includes about 90 per cent of the 400 controllers in the Republic. Members pay 1 per cent of their salary in dues, a quarter of which goes to the regional organization. Syktyvkar is an important airport, handling both domestic and international flights, including polar flights which bring in a lot of foreign currency. Air traffic controllers are expected to handle between ten and twenty aeroplanes at any one time, with old equipment and no computer backup. This is especially difficult for the international flights, most of the foreign pilots not speaking Russian and being used to computerized flight paths elsewhere in the world.

The strategic importance of Syktyvkar meant that the union came under strong administrative pressure from the beginning. The leader of the regional union, Valerii Grishov, regularly came under pressure at work, and in the run up to the May 1991 and February 1992 strikes this pressure was intense, with his home telephone sometimes being switched off. His immediate management was unsympathetic to the air traffic controllers' claim and put pressure on him in the course of his work. Unlike the other unions, FPAD has no facilities provided by management, and was not able to secure the transfer of social security funds to its account. In 1992 the management persisted in claiming that it had not received a copy of the tariff agreement throughout June and July, and did nothing to implement it.

In the run-up to the August strike the official union and the pilots' union PLS worked closely with the administration in enthusiastically carrying out Yefimov's instruction to conduct a propaganda campaign within the labour collective to isolate the air traffic controllers. A meeting of the labour collective, which was not attended by the air traffic controllers, voted heavily against the strike, which the administration then declared would be postponed. FPAD was denied access to official fax machines, telephones and related facilities. This was overcome by using domestic telephones as well as using airport equipment unofficially.

The administration's stance was reinforced by the Komi republican government which was worried about the example of a successful strike to other workers as well as the economic impact of a strike in the aviation industry. The president of the Council of Ministers visited

the local leadership and tried to persuade them against the strike. According to Grishov, the president was polite although he played the role of the 'strong political leader'. The FPAD leaders turned down his request that the strike be called off.

In the lead-up to the strike, Grishov was officially on holiday but he worked through this period preparing the membership for the strike. Despite the rejection of the strike by the labour collective as a whole, the air traffic controllers voted in favour of striking. Similar votes supported the strike in other airports in the Republic.

On the day of the strike, as elsewhere, the military controllers were co-opted in an attempt to undermine the strike. However, not only were the military controllers completely inexperienced in handling the volume and complexity of the traffic handled by Syktyvkar, but also there were only two military air controllers based at Syktyvkar and they had to replace the four to six civil air controllers normally on duty, depending on the air traffic for that particular shift. This created a grave moral and political dilemma for the civil controllers: they did not want to weaken the strike but they were also very anxious that passengers would become victims if the military controllers were left in charge. Two of the leaders expressed the view that this was their most worrying moment, so they decided that controllers should sit behind the military controllers to advise and assist them. One of the leaders said that: 'We cannot be morally responsible for victims'. On more than one occasion when the air traffic built up the civilians were forced to move the military to one side and take over. The controllers were very angry that in their view the administration, supported by local political powers, had chosen a potentially very dangerous course of action by insisting that flights should continue in this air sector as a way of forcing the controllers to resume their work.

The airport director ordered pilots to take their planes into the air, although there was no air control. The response of the pilots surprised the air traffic controllers' leaders who thought that they would refuse to fly since, as pilots, they obviously knew the dangers. Together with the suspension of the normal rules applying to air safety, this created a situation in which the controllers were under intense pressure.

While there was no victimization after the strike, the controllers still felt under pressure from the administration. Nonetheless, the experience of the strike, its lead-up and aftermath, served to reinforce both the sense of isolation these workers had from others as well as

strengthening their solidarity with each other. Because of this experience and the small numbers involved, they were all familiar with each other and were willing to support each other in quite hostile circumstances.

Perm'

Perm' seems fairly typical of airports in which FPAD is active, but not particularly militant, and not facing a specially aggressive management. Nevertheless, FPAD in Perm' was facing the same problems of isolation as the air traffic controllers faced in other airports. In Perm' the air traffic controllers had not had particular problems with management or with the other trade unions, although it had taken them a long time to get their own bank account and to arrange the transfer of union dues to their account.

The Perm' controllers had organized the February strike very carefully, because two weeks before the strike the leaders were visited by the Transport Prosecutor and given a warning. As a result they were very careful to do everything within the law. On the night of the strike, which for them was due to begin at 2 a.m., all the air traffic controllers, not just those on duty, went to the airport and sat around chatting with the prosecutor and their commander even after the strike had been called off, their commander even providing a special bus to take them all home.

When the air traffic controllers in Perm' received a copy of the 1992 collective agreement, they discovered that it did not apply to them since they were no longer members of FPAD as they were inadvertently in arrears with their union dues (82 of the 90 controllers were FPAD members). They held an urgent meeting four days before the strike, which backed the strike call, but they discovered that as non-members they had no legal right to participate in the strike. They telephoned Brodulev in Moscow, who confirmed that they were not members, but told them how much they owed. They gathered the money together and sent it to Moscow with a courier, who returned with the appropriate papers the day before the strike.

They did not even have time to call a meeting, but held a secret ballot in which the majority voted to provide material support for the strike, but not to take part in it. Three of the four surrounding sectors were closed, but planes came from the south-west. The problem was

what to do with them, since there was nowhere for them to go, so they just brought them in to land in Perm'. The result was that planes started to pile up at Perm' airport, which was filled to bursting point, with the toilets filthy, no room even for people to sit down, and an increasingly angry crowd, although the controllers explained that it was not their fault because they were not on strike, so they were left alone. The situation only eased as neighbouring airports gradually opened.

ASSESSING THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE STRIKE

The government moved very quickly to prevent a repetition of the disruption caused by the strike. On 17 August, Rutskoi ordered that steps be taken to establish an inter-departmental commission to organize civil and military air traffic control during emergencies, which of course includes strike situations (BBC, *Summary of World Broadcasts*, SU/1463 B/2). In this sense there was a tacit admission that the strike had been effective. The government was also anticipating the possibility of future action by the air traffic controllers' union, presumably because there was no intention of implementing the agreements.

FPAD held an extraordinary meeting of its plenum on 24–25 August to consider the outcome of the strike. Local representatives were sharply critical of the inadequate preparations for the strike, the failures of co-ordination and communication, the virtual inaction of the main Moscow airports,⁵⁰ and the failure to get access to the mass media. The meeting reaffirmed the demands for a non-departmental air traffic control service and for implementation of the tariff agreement. In debate about these issues and the threat of victimization, local union leaders spoke of the distinct possibility of wildcat strikes protesting against the actions by local administrations. The director of the Department of Air Transport, Larin, was invited to the meeting and promised to 'petition' Rutskoi to stop the investigations of air traffic controllers and to drop any charges that had been laid against controllers. However, the meeting decided to begin preparations for a resumption of the strike in order to defend members against repression, and to collect data on breaches of air traffic rules by management on the day of the strike.

The general feeling was summed up by the leader of Chelyabinsk FPAD, Sergei Belyaev:

They have dragged us into politics. It is not what we wanted, but we are forced to get involved. They are playing a dirty game with us.... In the autumn they are expecting other trade unions to act, and they are working out their tactic of isolating the trade union movement on us. That is the policy of the state.... We cannot withstand it on our own.

The meeting decided to send a series of resolutions to Yeltsin, Khasbulatov, Larin and Prosecutor Stepankov demanding an end to repression of FPAD members and the initiation of an inquiry into the events of 15 August and of legal proceedings against those responsible, backed up by the threat of renewed strike action if the repressive acts were not withdrawn. Despite everything, FPAD retained its faith in Yeltsin, its letter to him insisting that 'we trust in you' and that

your reforms are going in the right direction, although not all your Decrees are being completely fulfilled, leading to the paralysis of executive power.... We did not want to go to the extreme measures of a strike, but we were forced into it.⁵¹

Nonetheless, the union leadership saw the strike as a partial victory, in two important senses. First, the strike demonstrated that the air traffic controllers were able to organize and act as a collectivity in the face of considerable hostility and obstacle from both airport administrators, the ministry and the government.⁵² For the union president this was the main achievement, as indicated in his words:

[Air traffic controllers were able to] take control of themselves and overcome their slave psychology, having exerted significant influence through collective action. (BBC, *Summary of World Broadcasts*, Soviet Union, SU/1465 B/2)

Second, there was a resumption of negotiations, which met some of the objectives of the union, although on the crucial issue of the tariff agreement the parties were unable to agree at the Conciliation Commission on 16 September. The union rejected a suggestion that these issues be referred to a tripartite commission or be referred to an arbitration tribunal. Nonetheless, in view of moves by the government against the leadership of union and the victimization of air traffic controllers, the resumption of negotiations was a very qualified

achievement. The dispute was referred to the Tripartite Commission, which spent 25 minutes considering the issues at its meeting of 2 October, and decided to establish an independent commission to try to regulate the conflict.

THE BEGINNING OF LEGAL REPRESSION

The assurance by Rutskoi that there would be no victimization or retribution against the strikers was soon exposed as a rather empty promise. On Monday 17 August, the public prosecutor's office of the Russian Federation authorised legal action against participants in the strike, instructing local Prosecutors to draw up charges, which was immediately done in Bykovo (Moscow), St Petersburg, Magnitogorsk, Kursk, Samara, Yekaterinburg, Ul'yanovsk and other cities. Air traffic controllers, and in some cases their managers, were disciplined in a large number of airports, with threats of sackings at Bykovo, Omsk, Kursk, Lipetsk and Yekaterinburg, while the leader of the Volgograd air traffic controllers was killed in a car crash under suspicious circumstances. The president of the St Petersburg air traffic controllers union reported that he was already under criminal investigation, while other controllers in the city were told by the general director of the St Petersburg air transport enterprise that they had been removed from waiting lists for housing and that they would not receive payment to cover the cost of having their children in kindergartens. Three controllers were demoted for three months at Yelysta for participation in the strike, and many received official reprimands or claims for damages. Air traffic controllers at Bykovo, including Brodulev, were censured and illegally deprived of their bonuses, and on the instructions of management the official trade union committee removed one from his place in the housing queue. At Arkhangel'sk the management tried to impose heavy fines on striking controllers. Two traffic controllers had been sacked at Novosibirsk airport. In mid-September one of the national union leaders was given a final warning about his work performance, as part of the build-up of pressure against the union. Konusenko sent a stream of letters to Larin complaining about these violations of the agreement which had ended the strike, but Larin replied that none of these proceedings were in relation to controllers' striking, but only concerned 'activities in the period of the air traffic

controllers' strike that caused disorganization and violated the established order and technology of the work of the air traffic control department' (Letter, Larin to Konusenko, 23 September 1992). Those sacked in Novosibirsk, for example, were supposedly guilty of 'dangerous work practices'.⁵³

Nonetheless, building on the earlier authorization of the Russian government, the Department of the Interior in mid-September began to investigate the national leaders of the union, with a view to laying charges of economic sabotage against them on the basis of Gorbachev's 1990 law prohibiting the disruption of transport, a charge which carries a term of imprisonment of up to four years. This investigation was led by a senior investigator, Vladimir Mazurski, chief investigator for cases of 'special importance', and three assistants.

On Wednesday 16 September at 1 p.m. police investigators arrived at the FPAD office and took scores of documents from the office, threatening to take them by force if they were not handed over voluntarily. This included the union constitution, letters referring to disagreements with the tariff agreement that was the subject of dispute in August, the tariff agreement itself, telegrams relating to the strike, and reports of meetings on the strike. All the documents were numbered and listed on four pages. The police obtained copies of the telegrams from the telegraph office. The seizure of these documents took two hours, during which time the police investigator allowed no outside contact with the staff in the office. While in the office the investigators grilled the secretary of the union office, asking about the social background of the leadership, the establishment of the union, the finances, who decided wages of the staff, who was full-time, and 'does the treasurer go to the bank alone?'

The following day at about 5 p.m., during a meeting involving union President Konusenko, Vice-Presidents Brodulev and Kovalev, the office secretary, a lawyer, a journalist and two researchers, a rather incongruous-looking man in a tatty blue suit entered the union office and served a notice on Brodulev and Konusenko to attend a committee of enquiry at the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 21 September. The police messenger was made to wait as the union leaders discussed the notice, passed it around, and ignored him. Eventually he went away after being told that it was an unacceptable request, since nobody knew what 'criminal process 81667' was or whether 'warm clothes'

might be needed. Initially, the two union leaders continued to ignore these summonses, which were issued on a number of occasions.

The criminal investigation into the activities of Konusenko and Brodulev continued until 27 November, when Konusenko received a telephone call to say that the criminal investigation had ended because the senior investigator could find no evidence of guilt. However, on 14 October the Supreme Court had rejected FPAD's appeal against the decision of the Moscow court to declare the August strike illegal. With this confirmation of the illegality of the strike, on 17 November the Prosecutor General, Valentin Stepankov, produced a 29-page deposition laying charges against the union that it should be 'liquidated' (a word not in official use since the days of Stalin) for systematic violations of the Russian Constitution because it had broken Russian laws by striking and, furthermore, by planning to strike again. This renewed attack on the union was not unconnected with the fact that it had called another strike to secure the implementation of its earlier demands. In recognition of the seriousness of the situation the trial began on 26 November, with the strike due to take place on 30 November, although the police had not returned the confiscated documents the leadership required for its defence.

THE NOVEMBER 1992 STRIKE

On 28 and 29 October the second congress of the Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Unions was held in the Department of Air Transport building, attended by about 180 delegates representing 90 primary organizations, amid feelings of frustration and a growing sense of isolation. The congress addressed two main questions: an assessment of the 15 August strike and the preparations for a new strike.⁵⁴

Delegates felt that they had been defeated on 15 August by the comprehensive media disinformation before and during the strike. This fostered a situation where the public was encouraged to oppose the strike. In addition, delegates pointed to the problems of co-ordinating the strike at a regional level. Specifically, delegates said that the air traffic controllers at airports had been unsuccessful in developing links with each other. This created a rather fragmented approach to and involvement in the strike. However, there was no discussion of the most important factor lying behind the failure, which

explained why the air traffic controllers had failed where others had succeeded, which was their isolation. There was no discussion of how FPAD might re-establish an element of unity with the other unions in the industry, which had themselves discussed the formation of a new federation at a meeting sponsored by the PLS at the beginning of the month,⁵⁵ or strengthen its links with the other independent unions, as had the Ukrainian air traffic controllers who had established close links with the miners and loco drivers, who had supported one another in a joint strike at the beginning of September.⁵⁶

The decision to strike was almost a foregone conclusion, an unquestioned continuation of the previous strategy. As one delegate said, 'why was there no hesitation about the strike? Because we decided to strike two years ago'. Discussion concentrated on the demands to put forward, but here again there was little thought. The demand to implement the tariff agreement was repeated, but as one Moscow centre delegate said outside, 'what is the point of striking for the implementation of an agreement which has only one more month to run? People will only say that air traffic controllers have a very high level of wages and are trying to get even more. For a simple citizen I am just a money-grabber. I can't get people involved in a strike on this demand'. Another agreed, adding 'economic demands are crazy while we are earning 20–25,000 roubles a month'. Only one person disagreed with the suggestion of dropping the economic demands, and leaving only the no-victimization demand, indicating that for him the strike was an end in itself by arguing that 'the tariff agreement has not been fulfilled. We cannot drop this demand. They will restore the three sacked air traffic controllers to their old posts, and we will be forced to stop our preparations for the strike'.

The second demand that was reasserted was that for the creation of Rosaeronavigatsiya independent of the ministry, a demand that some leaders suggested was more important than the wage demand, although it was barely discussed, and many delegates did not even understand why it was important. As a delegate from Moscow centre said, 'I can't explain to people why we need Rosaeronavigatsiya'. The chairman of one of the congress sessions even had to ask delegates whether or not Rosaeronavigatsiya existed yet, and nobody from the floor answered, so there was not even any discussion of whether or not this demand had been fulfilled.

The one demand that united everybody was the demand that the repression that air traffic controllers were now experiencing should be stopped, it being announced that there were nineteen cases before the courts and 69 people subject to various kinds of repression. Many delegates argued that this should be the only demand, because only this would secure mass support from the membership. The chairman of FPAD at Moscow centre said 'people must believe that we will defend them 100 per cent'. A delegate from Chelyabinsk agreed, adding 'we must have a victory. Let us be realistic. People are tired. Now we can only involve them in a solidarity strike. Are we men or not?' This macho sentiment was endorsed by another delegate, saying to applause from the hall, 'the main problem is whether our trade union will survive or not. So our main aim is solidarity. Then everybody will think that we play men's games.' Even on this issue there was no discussion as to whether a strike was the most effective way of ending repression, and no consideration of the possibility of negotiation, but rather the argument was that the issue of no repression was the best way to have a strike.

The platform position that the strike should be on the full set of demands had been voted through without any discussion the previous evening, when all the delegates were tired and there was a certain amount of disorganization, but the feeling was forming almost unanimously that the strike should be on the single issue of an end to repression, when Konusenko, who had been sitting at the back, strode to the front of the hall to make a typically decisive intervention.

Please forget about any idea of changing public opinion by means of the mass media. Wages in our branch are three and a half times those of workers in other branches. For other workers our wage is a miracle.

Now about the tariff agreement. We cannot drop this demand. The Gromov Institute struck only for this demand.... The wage demand is not an economic demand, it is a legislative demand for the fulfilment of the law of the Russian Federation. We must support this demand.

What does it mean that the agreement has only one month left to run? If we reach our goal this year the agreement will automatically be extended next year because the presidential decree states that new agreements cannot be worse than old ones.

To resolve our problems is a very easy matter for the government. Let us press one more time.

Konusenko's intervention ended the discussion, although one delegate rushed to the microphone and cried 'We must have a victory. But we can only achieve it with the one demand'. Konusenko proposed a compromise,

Let us write in our resolution that FPAD renews the strike in connection with repressions, leaving all the earlier demands, then anyone who doesn't agree can strike on the one demand.... Let's not vote again. We voted yesterday.

Nevertheless, congress wanted to have a vote. Although many delegates privately had their doubts about the willingness of their colleagues to strike again, the congress supported Konusenko almost without question, and backed the proposal to strike on the full package of demands, with 117 delegates voting for the strike and 23 against with 13 abstentions. The strike was scheduled for 30 November and due notice of this was given to the department, the ministry and government. The congress also demanded the sacking of Larin as head of the Department of Air Transport. At the end of the congress Konusenko was re-elected president by 159 votes to 4, and Brodulev was re-elected vice-president.

Intimidation by the government and by management was lower key than it had been in August, but was no less effective.⁵⁷ The Ministry of Transport and the Department of Air Transport sent a newsletter to the airports, the air traffic controllers and representatives of the official unions informing them of the illegality of the strike on the basis of the decision of the Moscow City Court. This newsletter also reported that there were a number of criminal investigations in process following the 15 August strike and warned that the 30 November strike would be the same as the earlier strike and that the air traffic controllers would be punished even more seriously if the strike went ahead. Individual air traffic controllers were warned that they would be sacked if they struck this time, and communications were again interrupted. Alongside the stick, the authorities applied the carrot. In some strategic airports the administration implemented the tariff agreement, and in others controllers received pay rises, including the crucial Moscow centre, where workers were said to have received a rise of between 25 and 30 per cent and as a result refused to join the strike.

FPAD continued to look for a negotiated settlement, appealing to the Tripartite Commission, at its meeting on 6 November, to establish a group to consider the problems (nothing seems to have come of the

commission's earlier decision to do this) and to propose to the government that it establish a government commission. The same day FPAD sent a telegram to Gaidar with the same proposal and appealing for a meeting. The executive also proposed a separate commission to be formed by Larin, Yefimov and themselves, and issued a statement to passengers laying out their case.

The Central Council of FPAD met on 23 November and it became clear that a similar situation had arisen in many regions, including St Petersburg. There was some feeling among the provincial representatives that the FPAD leadership had been less than conscientious in building support for the strike in Moscow, which was the key to traffic movements throughout the country, but where only the small Bykovo airport had agreed to join the strike.⁵⁸ The possibility of postponing the strike was raised, because of the fear that the union would be liquidated as a result of Prosecutor Stepankov's charges laid the week before. Tom Bradley, Moscow representative of the AFL-CIO, advised them not to strike, citing the precedent of the US air traffic controllers, and arguing that if they were defeated it could be the first step in the liquidation of the independent unions. The Central Council decided not to call off the strike, but to continue making preparations for it, and to organize a new vote before discussing its results, on the grounds that they had only threatened to strike as a last resort, and that to pull out now would be to admit defeat. Nevertheless, many of the delegates were openly admitting that the strike would not take place, but arguing that they should pretend it would to the last minute to keep up the pressure.⁵⁹

This created considerable difficulty for local union organizers, who had to keep their members on edge, in a high state of tension, because they could not tell them that the strike would not in fact take place, and this was a cause of some recriminations after the strike. The authorities were also kept in some tension: in Syktyvkar the local Omon commander asked the FPAD leader for information because his men were already working at full stretch, and he had none to spare to police a strike.

Despite the strike threat, timed for the eve of the Congress of People's Deputies, the authorities showed no sign of wanting to negotiate. Transport Minister Yefimov invited the FPAD leaders to meet him, but when they phoned his office they were told that nobody knew anything about any meeting. When they phoned Minister of Labour Melik'yan

on 27 November to request a meeting of the Tripartite Commission, his secretary told them that he was busy with the head of FNPR Klochkov. They approached Gaidar and proposed Shokhin as president of a conciliation commission, but again got no response.

On 25 November the Moscow City Court declared the strike illegal, in a hearing boycotted by the union, and on 26 November proceedings against FPAD began in the Supreme Court. It was only at this point that the FPAD leadership realized that they were in deadlock with the Ministry. They decided in these circumstances that they should make only one demand, that prosecutions and victimization for participation in the August strike should be withdrawn, and negotiations over this issue began just before midnight on 26 November.

On 27 November the union leaders decided to change the date of the strike from 30 November to 1 December, because of the decision of the Moscow City Court to declare the strike illegal, and to hold a new ballot. The decision was formally adopted by the executive committee on 28 November, but some local representatives were not informed until 30 November. The idea of the leadership was that this move would not allow the court time to declare the new strike illegal, but it threw the local unions into even more confusion.⁶⁰

On the evening of 27 November a meeting of the Consultative Council of Independent Unions, which had been established in September, was held in the White House, at which FPAD explained its situation to the other independent unions fully for the first time.⁶¹ Brodulev contrasted the lack of active support they had received from the independent unions to the backing FPAD had received from the official FNPR, whose demand that repression of FPAD should be stopped, and that FPAD should call off its strike and enter civilized negotiations had been published in several newspapers. A message of support for FPAD's no-victimization demand was sent to the Congress of People's Deputies, the Supreme Soviet and Yeltsin, signed by representatives of various independent unions (NPG, RKSP, RPLBZh, KOPR, MAKIP, PIUSUPR, ROP Solidarnost', FPAD Russia and SP Spravedlivost'). However, this support could not mask the continued isolation of FPAD, and the independent unions gave no practical support.⁶²

Meanwhile, the negotiations with the ministry on 27 November seemed to have reached the point of agreement over a six point reconciliation protocol proposed by the ministry, and the controllers'

demands that the minister should instruct local airport directors to withdraw administrative and disciplinary sanctions against controllers, as well as writing to the Prosecutor General and Ministry of the Interior asking them to drop criminal investigations and withdraw all charges. However, when the leadership arrived to sign the agreement with Transport Minister Yefimov the following day he began to alter the draft, and handed out a revised protocol, demanding in addition a no-strike pledge covering the whole of 1993. When the FPAD leaders asked him why the change since the day before, he replied simply, 'yesterday was yesterday, today is today'. The FPAD leaders walked out, convinced that Yefimov merely wanted to provoke a strike, and shortly after the executive agreed to move the strike to 1 December.

Barry Gibbs, of the ITF and PSI, arrived in Moscow on the evening of 28 November to offer his services as a mediator, through the ICFTU. The following day Gibbs advised FPAD that a strike was not the best way to achieve something as complex as a unified air traffic control system, and that FPAD should negotiate with whoever the government chose to appoint as its representatives. Although he met with a co-operative reception, Konusenko did not accept his offer of mediation and by now was preoccupied with the organization of the strike. On 30 November Gibbs met with Deputy Labour Minister Kudyukin, who appeared sympathetic to FPAD's demands and attributed the problem with implementing the tariff agreement to the conflicts between the unions (*Poptel*, ICFTU, 7 December 1992).

On the evening of 30 November the TV news reported that Yefimov had agreed to FPAD's no victimization demand, although Konusenko had refused to attend any further negotiations, and from 21.30 telegrams went out to all the airports. Despite this announcement, the executive committee of FPAD decided to call off the strike only half an hour before it was due to begin at 10 a.m.⁶³

This did not allow enough time to inform all airports that the strike had been called off, particularly because the department did not make its telegraph facilities available to FPAD. As a result, two airports in the Far East went on strike briefly.⁶⁴

The November Strike on the Ground

Initial preparations for the strike involved sending information to the regional and airport unions announcing the strike decision, and leaving

further preparations to the local organizers.⁶⁵ Each airport held meetings, usually by shift, at which the controllers voted whether or not to participate in the strike. However, the membership on the ground was confused, divided, demoralized and intimidated.

Despite the relatively efficient communications between the centre and the constituent unions of FPAD, some airports had a much closer relationship to the centre than others. This is not just a matter of the personality of local leaders or the size of the airport, but is also a matter of structural factors. The best integrated airports are those with regular communications with the centre, membership of and regular attendance at meetings of the Central Council, high levels of information about events at the centre and payment of membership fees direct to Moscow, and it is these airports that tended to support the August and November strikes. Other airports, some fairly large, were linked only indirectly to Moscow through regional centres, through which they sent and received information, union dues etc. This relative isolation made it much more difficult for them to resist pressure from management, and these airports tended not to support the August or November strikes.⁶⁶ Those airports in which there had been victimization in August, such as Bykovo, Tomsk and Novosibirsk, were the most solid in support of the strike.

FPAD reported on 29 November that 57 out of 135 airports had voted in favour of the strike. This was an impressive figure, given the extent of pressure from government and management on the air traffic controllers, which appeared to have been counter-productive, but it was not as significant as it sounded, since those who voted in favour were not necessarily those who would bear the brunt of the strike. Some airports don't work at night, and so would not have to participate in the strike, scheduled to begin at midnight, until they had been able to sniff the wind. Similarly, those working on the shifts which would not have to initiate the strike were much more enthusiastic about it than those who would be in the front-line, particularly where this was the same shift as had had to take the lead in August (although according to Brodulev at Bykovo this shift asked specifically to be in the front-line once again). On the evidence of the August strike, and the subsequent demoralization of the rank and file, it is almost certain that the strike would have crumbled within hours. The leadership was aware of this, and this is why they were desperate to find some way of calling off the strike without losing face.

St Petersburg

Following the August strike the St Petersburg leaders, as in most regions, were aggrieved at the failure of the main Moscow centres to join the strike, the feeling being that if Moscow had come out the union would have won all its demands in a matter of hours. As a result the St Petersburg controllers made their participation in the November strike conditional on Moscow also participating. In November the St Petersburg leadership followed similar tactics to those in August, taking even more care to make no official statements that could be used against them, and voting on the strike shift by shift, a majority of whom backed the strike, while the leaders spoke individually to the controllers. However, they decided that they would not join the strike at the beginning, but would join it if others were coming out.

Syktyvkar

In Syktyvkar the air traffic controllers were able to make few preparations for the strike, as they were now severely isolated and under considerable pressure. Once the November strike was announced management began to threaten to sack the leaders on the basis of their participation in the August strike. There were difficulties in organizing a vote or even meetings of the strike committee, because of management pressure and shift patterns, but also because the FPAD leadership could see the way things were going and was stalling for time. A meeting of the controllers at the beginning of November refused to delegate its powers to the strike committee. Fewer than half the members of the strike committee came to its meetings, and there were divisions within the committee itself. Valerii Grishov judged that there was a bare majority in favour of the strike, and indeed only two of the five shifts held a vote. These two narrowly supported the strike, but the shift which would be on duty at the start of the strike, which was the same shift that had been called on to strike in August, refused, having been warned by management that they would be sacked if they struck. Ukhta, where the controllers had had a pay rise, and Vorkuta, where the organization of the union was very weak, both refused to strike. Usinsk, which was closed at night, promised to join the strike at 6 a.m., although the commander of the airport issued a statement that Usinsk did not support the strike. It was clear that if the strike went

ahead in the Komi Republic the union would be destroyed.⁶⁷ Valerii Grishov told his closest associates that the strike would not take place, and this subsequently created some ill-feeling amongst those who had not been informed.

Perm'

Before the November strike in Perm' a secret ballot of the strikers produced a vote in favour of the strike. At a meeting following the ballot the controllers voted out the president of their trade union committee who was opposed to the strike. However, an open vote at the meeting was against the strike. The management then drew up a list of those who had voted against the strike on the basis of which they created an operational group of those who would be called to work on the day of the strike, also giving the list to the Omon, who were to cordon off the airport on the day of the strike and not allow those who had voted openly for the strike into the airport. However, the local management were not particularly bothered whether the controllers struck or not, because they were confident that they had already won the battle by isolating the controllers, and that a strike would only deepen that isolation.

PROSECUTIONS AND VICTIMIZATION CONTINUE

The Prosecutor General's attempt to liquidate FPAD through the Supreme Court started on 26 November, and continued alongside the drama of the strike preparations. The initial case of the prosecution team, which included a representative of the ministry, was that the union should be wound up because of its participation in the strike. However, the emphasis of the prosecution case changed so that by the third day of the trial it was arguing that FPAD's demand for an air traffic control system was illegal, because it was a political matter beyond the competence of a trade union, and that the tariff agreement between the union and the government on 19 May was itself illegal. They argued that the government had been forced to sign because of the threat of a strike by the air traffic controllers (although the May agreement was not preceded by a specific strike threat). In addition, the financial consequences of the strike were emphasized. The repre-

representative of the Department of Air Transport spoke of the 'harmful' financial consequences of the strike, although the witness was unable to substantiate this claim, especially because of uncertainty about the 'real' financial arrangements of the air industry.

The FPAD leadership continued to insist that they did not recognize the legitimacy of the legal proceedings, and rarely attended the trial, primarily because they wanted to stall for time while they decided what to do. On the first day, Brodulev arrived at the courtroom and told the judge that he did not have an advocate so that the case should be delayed. The judge refused this request stating that this was a problem for the union, not the court. FPAD then pointed out that the charge sheet was in error, since it charged the Union of Air Traffic Controllers, which did not exist since each airport had its own union, rather than the federation. The court was adjourned to give the prosecutor a day to revise the charges, and a new and shorter charge sheet was entered the next day. On the second day, Brodulev and Konusenko, accompanied by Matthew Boyce, a second secretary of the American Embassy, convinced the judge to suspend the hearing because they still did not have an advocate. The judge responded by suspending the hearing until noon on 30 November, the day originally set for the strike.

Meanwhile Nikolai Solov'ev, chairperson of the Russian Confederation of Free Trade Unions (RKSP – the original Sotsprof), had been attending the hearing on behalf of the Co-ordinating Committee of Independent Trade Unions, and took it upon himself to speak on behalf of the air traffic controllers, although they had not asked him to do so. On the third day of the trial Konusenko asked Solov'ev to stop because his participation was only legitimating the trial. Konusenko rather naively believed that he could defeat the charges by refusing to recognize the legitimacy of the court, although Konusenko and Brodulev were nervous, because they realized how serious were the implications of the charges for them personally and for their union.

The court case dragged on through December, with local FPAD organizers giving evidence, and various procedural wrangles. Deputy Labour Minister Kudyukin told the court that it was pointless liquidating the Federation, since they could simply re-establish themselves the following day under a new name. The union leadership had already discussed this possibility, and even suggested inviting the judge to the launch. By this time public attention was focused on the conflict

between Yeltsin and Khasbulatov at the Congress of People's Deputies, and the FPAD leaders felt that the uncertainty might have helped the judge to rule in their favour. On 10 December the court threw out the petition of the prosecutor, criticized the government, and also criticized the union for not always keeping within the law. However, the ruling implied that if the union called a further strike it would be dissolved.

At the same time, airport administrations had begun to persecute individual FPAD members once more, creating an atmosphere of intimidation and thereby weakening the union locally. This was occurring even at airports where the local FPAD did not take part in the 15 August strike. For example, at Kemerovo airport the commander initiated dismissal procedures against five air traffic controllers who supported the strike plus two senior air traffic controllers. The impetus for this was that the commander decided to reduce the number of shifts from six to five, increasing the number of hours that individual controllers work. One of the air traffic controllers faced a discipline charge and was thus 'chosen' while the others were selected for dismissal on the grounds that they were the most recent entrants to the air traffic control staff. With the reduction of shifts the administration reduced the number of senior staff posts from eight to six. While all the senior staff had to re-apply for their positions, it was made clear that the two senior staff who supported the union would not be re-appointed. In addition, the commander had taken to attending the air traffic controllers' meetings even though he clearly was not an air traffic controller. The pilots as well as senior administrators at the airport refused to acknowledge or greet the air traffic controllers when they met. Not surprisingly, the air traffic controllers at the airport felt themselves isolated and pressured by the management.

THE 1993 TARIFF AGREEMENT

FPAD was severely chastened by its experience of the August and November strikes. Until 1992 the threat of strikes had played an important role in drawing attention to the specific features of their profession and in raising the profile of their union within the industry and within the workers' movement. They had managed to secure recognition of their case that air traffic control work was difficult and

took a lot of 'moral, physical and psychological responsibility' (Brodlev). The approach of FPAD during 1993 shifted from an emphasis on strikes as the means of achieving their goals to a recognition that negotiation and bargaining had a part to play in building and securing their union, particularly in the face of management pressure and of opposition from the other unions in the aviation industry. At the beginning of the year the senior leadership of FPAD felt that by 1993 there was an appreciation of the position of the controllers, which allowed the union to begin a dialogue with the management of the industry. For the union this represented progress because they felt that nobody had listened to them previously. The leadership also thought they were now more experienced and flexible as trade unionists. Nonetheless, they recognized that they continued to face continuing bureaucratic problems, but they attempted to deal with these through discussion and bargaining, both nationally and locally.

In making this judgement, the leadership emphasized that despite the pressure that had been brought on the union membership during the strike, no members had resigned from FPAD, so the union was still in a strong position to bargain on behalf of its members.

While FPAD continued to press for the withdrawal of administrative and judicial victimization, the main focus of its activity during 1993 was once more the issue of the tariff agreement. A joint commission of FPAD and representatives of the Department of Air Transport to negotiate the agreement was established at the end of 1992. The members of the commission were Konusenko, Brodlev, and Kovalev for FPAD, Olga Popova-Zavrazhnaya (head of the labour relations department of the Air Transport Department), and Valentin Zamotin, Acting Director of the Department of Air Transport.⁶⁸ The first meeting took place on 6 January 1993.

At a meeting of the Russian Tripartite Commission on 14 January 1993, a protocol was agreed which prolonged the 1992 agreement until the signing of the 1993 agreement. This was signed by Pavel Kudyukin, Deputy Minister of Labour, the Acting Director of the Department of Air Transport, Valentin Zamotin, and the President of FPAD. Four days later, Zamotin confirmed the commission's decision to all airports by telegram.

The tariff agreement commission held more than ten meetings over the first three months of 1993, with FPAD accusing the department of trying to annul the key points of the previous agreement.⁶⁹ However,

FPAD announced on 2 April that an agreement had been reached which preserved all the gains of the previous year. On 5 April 1993 the air traffic controllers' tariff agreement was signed by Zamotin and Konusenko, with all documents sent to the ministry for confirmation.

Meanwhile, the other three unions had been negotiating the 1993 branch tariff agreement, which was signed on 15 April with the Ministry of Labour.⁷⁰ The leaders of the three unions immediately sent a letter to Zamotin and Yurii Shatyrenko, the new Deputy Minister of Labour.⁷¹ The letter read:

It has become common knowledge in civil aviation collectives that a draft tariff agreement has been prepared and signed by the administration of the Department of Air Transport and the leaders of FPAD. This agreement radically changes the relationship between the wages of the main groups of air transport specialists.

This disproportion in the earnings of air transport workers, who are paid from one source, gives rise to just indignation in labour collectives and cannot be accepted by the trade unions of aviation workers, flying staff, and the aero-engineering service.

An unjustified change in the relation between the wages of specialists in air transport in favour of one or several categories of workers, the attempt of these categories to resolve the question of pay by the use of strong methods at the expense of the results of the labour of the whole collective, violating established domestic and international practice and the branch pay scale elaborated in the tariff agreement for 1993 concluded on 15 April 1993, cannot be justified.

We demand the adoption of the appropriate decision.

On 16 April, Yurii Shatyrenko sent an official letter to Konusenko, saying:

The Ministry of Labour, together with representatives of the Ministry of Transport and the Department of Air Transport has considered the draft tariff agreement for 1993 signed by you with the Department of Air Transport of the Ministry of Transport and informs you of the following.

Considering that on 15 April this year a branch tariff agreement for air transport was signed and that the air traffic control service is a constituent part of aviation enterprises and an inseparable part of the technological cycle, the Ministry of Labour sees no reason to sign a separate tariff agreement with the air traffic controllers.

Moreover, when they discussed this draft it became clear that the Department of Air Transport and the air traffic controllers disagreed on a number of fundamental points. Taking this into account, the Ministry of Labour invites you, in accordance with current legislation, to include specific separate matters in a

supplement to the branch tariff agreement for air transport which was signed earlier.⁷²

On 19 April, Zamotin wrote to Konusenko and Shatyrenko informing them that he had withdrawn his signature from the draft collective agreement, justifying his change of mind by reference to the letter from the three other trade unions. Konusenko met Zamotin to discuss the matter, but the latter was just off on a visit to China and suggested that Konusenko run through the agreement with the labour relations department, reassuring him that there was nothing to get agitated about and all would be sorted out on Zamotin's return. However, he left no instructions with the labour relations department, who could see no point in running through an agreement which had already been signed.

On Zamotin's return he told Kovalev and Brodulev that the withdrawal of his signature had had nothing to do with the letter from the other trade unions, but was because he had supposedly not paid any attention to the calculations and figures underlying the calculation of the wage, although there had been more than ten negotiating sessions over the agreement. Zamotin insisted that he personally could see no problem, promising to sign the agreement once the labour relations department had looked over it. Again the labour relations department received no instructions, so could do nothing. A couple of days later Zamotin signed the tariff agreement, but only once he had changed the occupational coefficient which determined the controllers' pay to correspond to that in the branch agreement.⁷³

Brodulev saw this as a deliberate attempt to drag out the negotiations, the ulterior motive of which was to show that the independent trade unions could not conclude such agreements on their own. In aviation enterprises, managers were openly telling air traffic controllers that they would only raise the pay of those who were members of the state trade unions, advising members of FPAD to go cap in hand to the official union if they wanted a rise. The head of Bykovo airport, Gennadii Sytnik, transferred surplus money in the social insurance fund, to which members of all the trade unions had contributed, to the state trade unions alone.⁷⁴

On 25 May, Konusenko replied to the Deputy Minister of Labour's letter, stating that they did not want to be part of the common tariff agreement, in accordance with the decision of the second congress of FPAD (28–29 October 1992) to sign a separate tariff agreement on an occupational basis, according to the law of the Russian Federation on

collective agreements.⁷⁵ In addition, Konusenko said that there were no principled disagreements between the Department of Air Transport and FPAD and that the pay scale for air traffic controllers was prepared according to the recommendations of the Russian Tripartite Commission. Konusenko described the letter from the three state trade unions as 'openly lying' and contemptuous of the air traffic controllers. He condemned such interference in the negotiation of the air traffic controllers' agreement as a violation of the Law on Collective Negotiations and Agreements. He proposed that they meet rather than rely on a continued exchange of letters.

The leaders of FPAD were outraged at Shatyrenko's behaviour, particularly as he had not bothered to meet with them to discuss the issues at all. At their request they met Shatyrenko on 3 June 1993. They took a large dossier of documents and laws along to the meeting to support their case but were not able to convince Shatyrenko, who simply reiterated his argument that it would be better for them to establish a joint commission with the other trade unions and for them to sign a joint agreement. The leaders of FPAD were staggered by this and pointed out to Shatyrenko that the law on collective agreements entitles every trade union to sign a separate collective agreement with their employers. Such agreements should also be signed and supported by the Ministry of Labour. In reply, Shatyrenko noted that according to the law the Ministry of Labour *can* take part but there was no explicit instruction to require them to participate in these agreements. It was for this reason that the Ministry of Labour had refused to sign a separate agreement with the FPAD.

The FPAD leaders were astonished by Shatyrenko's intransigence and demanded that he give them an official letter confirming that he refused to sign a separate agreement with them. They drafted the letter themselves, and refused to leave the Ministry of Labour building until Shatyrenko had signed it, fearing that if they left with only a promise there was little chance of ever seeing the letter. Shatyrenko re-wrote the draft letter in a bureaucratic style, more or less reproducing his original letter, and then signed it.

Following this meeting the leadership of FPAD sent several letters, to the Legislative Commission of the Supreme Soviet, to the commission on Social Policy of the Supreme Soviet, and to the Ministry of Labour, to ask whether an agreement signed by two parties (union and employer) was of equal status to one signed by three parties (union,

employer and the Ministry of Labour). The two commissions did not reply, but Shatyrenko replied that they did have a right to sign a two-party agreement, 'taking into account the interests of the various professional groups in the branch' which would have juridical force. With this advice, the FPAD signed a tariff agreement for 1993 with Rosaeronavigatsiya on 31 August, but the agreement covered only seven enterprises, the air traffic control services which had left the airport structures and joined Rosaeronavigatsiya.⁷⁶ As a result, the tariff agreement of 1993 did not apply to the overwhelming majority of the air traffic controllers in Russia, who were still covered by the 1992 tariff agreement, which was still not being implemented locally.⁷⁷

On 7 July FPAD wrote to Yeltsin and his chief of administration Filatov (since it was a long time since Yeltsin had replied to any of their letters), as well as to Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, advising them that Zamotin and Shatyrenko refused to sign a tariff agreement, demanding that the Law on Collective Agreements be fulfilled. In response to these letters Vice-Premier Shumeiko sent an urgent instruction on behalf of the government to Yefimov on 4 August, 'You are urgently requested to investigate and take measures to sign an occupational tariff agreement', reinforced by a less urgent note from Vice-Premier Soskovets to the Ministries of Transport and Labour to look into the matter. Since copies were also sent to FPAD this may have been no more than a cosmetic exercise.

Still there was no progress. On 6 August 1993 FPAD sent yet another letter to the government asking for a tariff agreement, receiving no reply. In the meantime, however, the government's attitude to the independent trade unions had hardened in relation to the two central issues of collective agreements and social insurance. On 12 August the government had issued Resolution 647, prepared by the Ministry of Labour, 'Regulations for the conclusion of general and branch tariff agreements', the very title of which indicated its contents, since it excluded occupational agreements which the independent unions sought to secure, reproducing the branch structure of the official trade unions. These regulations declared that in the event of there being several trade unions they should work within one commission and conclude a single agreement.

This was followed by Yeltsin's decree on the social security fund, which transferred the management of the fund to the state, as the independent unions had long been demanding. However, the first steps

in the implementation of the decree were already ominous, as Minister of Labour Melik'yan appointed Shatyrenko to head the fund. Shatyrenko immediately assembled representatives of the official trade unions to work out methods of implementation of the decree, producing a document 'Questions of the Social Insurance Fund', which the independent unions only got hold of by chance, discovering that the plan was to establish a strict regional and branch structure of administration of the fund, which would thereby exclude the independent unions.

On 14 September FPAD received a letter inviting them to participate with the other unions in negotiations for the 1994 tariff agreement. On 20 September Kovalev replied that he would be ready to discuss a 1994 agreement once the 1993 agreement was signed, referring to the instructions of Shumeiko and Soskovets. The following day Zamotin wrote to Konusenko, reaffirming his willingness to sign a two-party tariff agreement, but with the reduced occupational coefficients, reiterating his refusal to disturb the existing differentials in the industry and now citing the government resolution of 12 July and a subsequent decision of Shumeiko of 17 August in his support. On 7 October Konusenko replied on behalf of the Central Council rejecting Zamotin's offer, pointing out that the proposed coefficients differed not only from those in the agreement signed earlier, but also from the earlier recommendations of the Tripartite Commission on which the negotiations had been based, and would reduce the pay levels of air traffic controllers well below those even of pilots on fall-back pay. He added that air traffic controllers were being discriminated against in many airports both through the non-implementation of the 1992 agreement, and in the payment of differential increases following the revision of the minimum wage on 3 July,⁷⁸ concluding with a request to resume negotiations with Zamotin personally heading the commission.⁷⁹

Still FPAD made no progress with the tariff agreement. On 28 and 29 October the plenum of FPAD expressed its lack of confidence in Zamotin and Melik'yan and decided to send a letter to Yeltsin calling for their resignation, proposing their own candidate for the director of the Department of Air Transport, Anatolii Kochur (now President of the Confederation of Free Transport Trade Unions of Russia).⁸⁰ There was no reply to this request. The plenum also proposed that social insurance should be administered through associations of trade unions,

another proposal to which they received no reply from the government. However, FPAD still retained its faith in the 'democrats', and decided to support Russia's Choice in the election campaign.

On 9 November FPAD received a letter from Shatyrenko, on his notepaper as deputy minister, in reply to their question whether the 1992 tariff agreement was still in force, following Olga Popova-Zavrazhnaya's letter to aviation enterprises declaring that it was not. Shatyrenko argued that, on the strength of Resolution 647 of 12 August 1993, the period of a previous agreement could be extended during negotiations for a subsequent one for a maximum period of three months, and consequently the tariff agreement, which had been extended by a resolution of 12 January, had expired on 13 April.

Much the same story could be told of the protracted negotiations over the tariff agreement for 1994, with the Department of Air Transport and individual airports seeking further to erode the earlier gains of the air traffic controllers, in collusion with PLS and the official unions. FPAD withdrew from the negotiations, and did not sign the agreement. FPAD similarly refused to join the negotiations for the 1995 tariff agreement, now demanding the inclusion of PLS in the negotiations as well. However, structural change in the industry gathered pace during 1994, as an increasing number of air traffic control facilities were brought under the jurisdiction of Rosaeronavigatsiya, with which FPAD had altogether more friendly relations, so that by the end of 1994 about half the facilities, and probably considerably more than half the FPAD members, came under the jurisdiction of the tariff agreement signed between Rosaeronavigatsiya and FPAD. A new agreement with Rosaeronavigatsiya for 1995 was signed on 12 December 1994.

At the same time as the transfer of jurisdiction, air traffic control facilities were detached from airports and re-organised on a regional basis, which again accorded well with the de-centralised organisational principles of FPAD, opening the possibility for regional federations of primary groups to negotiate with regional air traffic control bodies, by-passing both airport administrations and Moscow ministries which had formerly been the main obstructions to the development of FPAD trade union activity. The FPAD leadership identified itself closely with these structural changes in the industry, which promised to put it in the position of being the established trade union within the newly constituted branch, backing the demand for

change with threats of industrial action (the Ust'-ilimsk controllers went on hunger strike to demand the subordination of their centre to Rosaeronavigatsiya. The priority during 1994 was therefore fully to support these structural changes, and to develop its own organisational structure accordingly. By the Third Congress of FPAD in December 1994 regional groupings had already been formed for the important North Western, Tyumen and Western Siberian regions (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 12, 1994).⁸¹

FPAD ON THE GROUND

Local FPAD groups through 1993 had to live with the legacy of the strike, in which there was no escaping the fact that the union had had its bluff called and had been soundly beaten, but for the union's activists survival alone was a victory. Valerii Grishov, leader of the Komi air traffic controllers summed up:

I thought that it was a victory when I heard the decision of the Supreme Court. Nobody expected it, but we managed to organize a strike in August, it was another of our victories. We managed to save our trade union, to protect it from liquidation. The government is moving towards an air traffic control system. I can't say that this is the general mood, but I haven't seen anybody who was depressed by the events or who has threatened to leave. (Interview, 23 January 1993).

But the union had to do more than exist. Activists had to find new ways of doing their business, without staggering from strike threat to strike threat in the hope that the government would give them all that they asked. Attempts to reverse the victimization of activists continued, but quite apart from the legacy of victimization it was difficult for local groups to make progress in local negotiations when they had been very effectively isolated, and had no way of bringing pressure to bear on local management. The fact that they had no tariff agreement only compounded the problem because it meant that there was nothing around which to negotiate local collective agreements. At the same time the dismemberment of the industry meant that national negotiations were becoming much less significant, setting minimum terms and conditions around which negotiations had to take place with local management and, as we have seen, in some places local management

was refusing to negotiate with FPAD members unless they returned to the official union, although more often the problems seemed to be more with the other unions than with management. The result was that on the ground FPAD was losing its distinctiveness as it became increasingly involved in regular trade union activity as an independent sectional union trying to defend its past gains, but with its isolation making it difficult to progress. However, not all was gloomy. Rosaerо-navigatsiya had been established at last, if not in the form that FPAD had wanted, and the government had made a major commitment to update the air traffic control system, essential if it was to attract overflights and the associated fees. This meant not only that working conditions would be likely to improve, with up-skilling of air traffic controllers, but also that job losses among controllers were likely to be far less than among pilots, where the collapse of civilian transport was compounded by the demobilization of military pilots. The separation of air traffic control from aviation enterprises also provided FPAD with a new negotiating framework, within which it would be the dominant union. Thus its efforts during 1994, at local as well as a national level, came to focus on allying with the leaders of Rosaerо-navigatsiya in pressing through this reorganisation, simultaneously securing the position of FPAD.

Following the attempt of the Prosecutor General to liquidate the union through the Supreme Court in December 1992, St Petersburg decided that the priority was to preserve the trade union and not engage in provocative strike threats. The main issue in 1993 was to keep what they had through local negotiations, with the main problem being not the administration but the other trade unions. However, they could not negotiate a collective agreement because this depended on the tariff agreement being signed in Moscow first.

The St Petersburg union was one of the best placed – it had a long history of organization, its leaders were part of the core group of FPAD leaders, the airport was financially one of the strongest in Russia, while its air traffic control service brought in a large amount of foreign currency. Moreover, the union in St Petersburg had good international contacts, with close links with Finnish trade unions and material support from the AFL-CIO, who provided them with a fax, xerox and office equipment. Nevertheless, even in St Petersburg it was an uphill struggle for the air traffic controllers even to hold on to the gains achieved in 1990 and 1991, let alone to advance beyond them.

The St Petersburg played a leading role in the formation of the first regional FPAD grouping, covering the North Western sector, in connection with the formation of new regional air traffic control systems.

In airports less well placed than St Petersburg, things were much more difficult and pressure for local strikes was building up during 1993, with the FPAD centre trying to provide support. In April, Volgda was on strike, on 13 November 1993 Ufa was reported to be close to striking, and we have already seen the threatened strike at Bykovo on 4 December. However, FPAD was doing all it could to persuade controllers to go through the proper procedures and take their case to court, rather than risk a strike that, whatever the law, would almost certainly be deemed illegal.⁸²

One of the problems that emerged for FPAD during 1993 was the move towards the individualization of employment conditions, following a decree from the Ministry of Transport which stated that 'all staff should be re-examined to determine their level of skills and that personal contracts should be signed'. This decree carried a double threat. First, of the move to sign personal contracts with air enterprise staff, thereby breaking down the basis for collective agreements, and such contracts have already been introduced on a large scale in Moscow, with almost all the Sheremetevo stewards on individual contracts.⁸³ Although the Law on Collective Agreements states that no individual contract can impose terms worse than those in the collective agreement, and that no collective agreement should impose conditions worse than the previous agreement, in conditions of rampant inflation there is plenty of room to erode the agreement so that it sets only minimum terms and conditions. The second threat was that the re-examination itself could be used to remove trade union activists, as Kochur has warned (*Delo*, April–May 1993, 4).

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that some of the failures of FPAD can be put down to tactical mistakes, although these are understandable since the union was moving into unknown territory. The most fundamental mistake was probably an excessive reliance on strike threats, which the union made without ensuring that it had the resources to back them up. This tactic had proved very successful until August 1992, when the gov-

ernment called the union's bluff. It then became clear that FPAD had underestimated the forces that it was up against, and had not prepared itself to confront them by mobilizing effective support from its own membership, from other trade unions, and from international bodies.⁸⁴

Until August 1992 the leadership still believed naively that their association with the 'democrats', their support for Yeltsin at the time of the *putsch*, their opposition to the old union and managerial apparatus, would ensure that they received the support of the government, and so FPAD was not ready to mobilize and support its membership as effectively as it might when they found themselves on strike in August 1992, and then facing subsequent victimization, and did little to improve the situation in the lead-up to the November strike.

A related feature of the activity of FPAD has been its reluctance to pursue its aims through negotiation, its unwillingness to recognize the authority of the courts, and its strong reliance on the charismatic leadership of Konusenko. This has surprised and frustrated the representatives of Western trade union organizations who have attempted to advise FPAD and to mediate in its disputes. However, this is not so much a weakness of FPAD as a feature of the Russian system in which an agreement is not worth the paper it is written on, and in which it is more important with whom you reach an agreement than what you actually agree. FPAD has repeatedly won its demands on paper, only to find them ignored in practice because of jurisdictional conflicts and bureaucratic obstruction. In such a situation there is no space for workers to represent their interests through independent trade union activity within an industrial relations framework of negotiation and conciliation. The union can only advance the interests of its members either on the basis of a permanent mobilization, or on the basis of contacts and patronage.

It is hardly possible for workers to maintain a state of permanent mobilization in the face of constant pressure from management, from the government, from the law, and from the other unions in the industry, and this presses even independent workers' organizations back towards the traditional framework of Soviet trade unionism. This diagnosis is strikingly confirmed by a comparison of the development of FPAD and that of the independent pilots' union PLS, which judged correctly the moment at which, from the point of view of the sectional interests of their own members, the time had come to re-integrate themselves into the traditional trade union structure. The air traffic

controllers, however, were not content to settle for what they had already achieved, which was a great deal, but instead continued through 1993 to fight in isolation for their sectional interests.

Not only were the air traffic controllers fighting on in increasing isolation, but they were fighting a battle that was increasingly irrelevant, as the wages, terms and conditions of employment were not being set by the tariff agreement, but at individual airports, within the framework of local collective agreements from the negotiation of which the air traffic controllers were excluding themselves by taking an aggressive position which did not correspond to their real strength. Moreover, with the collapse of the industry and its dismemberment in preparation for privatization, there was far more to unite workers in the industry than there was to divide them. The differentials in pay between airports dwarfed the small advantage that the air traffic controllers still sought to achieve through the tariff agreement.

FPAD's long battle for an independent air control system had been based on the tacit assumption that the revenues from such a system would be available to improve the pay, technical and working conditions of the air traffic controllers. However, in practice it became increasingly clear that the revenues would merely continue to be siphoned off, either by the department, or by the ministry, or by the government as a whole. In 1993 privatization seemed to provide an opportunity to take the issue up again at a local level, with the air traffic controllers proposing a functional division of the aviation industry in which air traffic control would be an independent self-financing service. The air traffic controllers on their own had no bargaining position in such local negotiations, and so could only hope to advance their case if they could find powerful patrons through whom to overcome their isolation, particularly local and regional authorities.⁸⁵ However, this route also seemed to be cut off by the government's strongly centralist programme for air traffic control drawn up in 1994.

The new government programme, centred on the reorganisation of air traffic control within the framework of *Rosaeronavigatsiya* and regional air traffic control organisations, threw a lifeline to FPAD by detaching air traffic control from the management structures of the industry as a whole, within which it had been swamped by PLS and the official trade unions. This meant that through 1994 FPAD could take a militantly independent position in relation to the Department of

Air Transport and local airport management, withdrawing from the negotiations for the branch tariff agreement for 1994 and 1995 on a maximalist programme, while pursuing a much more conciliatory and managerialist line with the new structures of Rosaeronavigatsiya. Thus, by the end of 1994 it appeared that the final outcome of the air traffic controllers' long struggle to establish itself as an independent trade union was to have followed the lead of the pilots' PLS in securing itself a position as a sectional trade union, representing the interests of the air traffic controllers as a labour aristocracy within the bureaucratic patronage structures of official trade unionism thanks largely not to its own efforts, but to the managerial changes which had constituted air traffic control as a separate branch.

NOTES

- ¹ The data for this chapter comprises press and documentary sources, and extensive interviews with members of the Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Unions in Russia. This includes a series of long interviews with the President, Vice-President and other members of the union headquarters at regular intervals since August 1992, as well as extensive informal discussion with air traffic controller leaders. Interviews have also been conducted with regional leaders and representatives from Syktyvkar, Chelyabinsk, Perm', Kemerovo, St Petersburg and Samara. In the case of the regional leader of Komi Republic, based at Syktyvkar, a series of interviews has been conducted, beginning in July 1992, and continuing at periodic intervals since. Vladimir Il'in attended the Congress of FPAD in October 1992. During the lead-up to the December strike, Vadim Borisov was based in the union headquarters and recorded the events from 27 November 1992 until 1 December 1992. Olga Rodina and Svetlana Krasnodemskaya attended the trial of the union from 27 November into December 1992. We have also interviewed national and regional leaders of the official Trade Union of Workers of Air Enterprises (PRAP, later FPAR), Union of Flying Personnel (PLS), Association of Flying Personnel (ALS), and the Union of Air Engineers and Technical Workers (PRIAS). In addition, Vadim Borisov attended a national meeting of these three unions on 1 October 1992 (Moscow) to establish a Federation of Trade Union of Air Specialists and Air Workers. Representatives of the pilots and the air workers' unions have been interviewed at Syktyvkar, Moscow, St Petersburg and Samara, while representatives of the Aldan pilots were interviewed in Moscow. In addition, we have had open access to the headquarters' archives, as well as some of the regional archives and union newsletters. We have been sparing in giving detailed references since most of the information derives from a number of sources, supported as far as possible by access to documentary evidence.
- ² The issue of privatization is a very live issue and focus of considerable conflict, given the enormously valuable property that is available. It is also extremely complex and difficult to research because of the extent of criminal and semi-criminal activity involved. When the leader of the air traffic controllers at Samara airport, with heavy alleged mafia involvement in its privatization, asked one of the representatives of the labour collective whom they preferred he was told 'It does not matter what kind of ma-

fia rules us, former Communist or this one. We will vote for those who guarantee the creation of new jobs and the best labour conditions'. However, the issue is not directly relevant to the air traffic controllers, since there has never been any question of privatizing air traffic control – even the Russian government is not so crazy as to do that (unlike John Major), and we will not consider the issue here.

3 In the Komi Republic the pilots' Party branch was renowned for its radicalism and independence. In Vorkuta in 1990 the pilots struck, successfully demanding the removal of the airport director.

4 The 1992 tariff agreement somewhat eased the pressure on pilots by giving them a guaranteed minimum fall-back pay. It is much easier for management to divide and control the pilots than it is the air traffic controllers by controlling access to promotion, but also through the allocation to more or less favoured routes, which can have a substantial impact on a pilot's income.

5 The first president was Dmitrii Igranov, with Konusenko, Yevsyukov, Zashikhin and Andrei Romanov from St Petersburg as vice presidents. Igranov was later succeeded by Yevsyukov, with Konusenko as vice-president. Konusenko replaced Yevsyukov as president in 1992. Yevsyukov is now Deputy Chairman of Rosaeronavigatsiya, the body set up to establish a unified air traffic control system in response to the demands of the air traffic controllers.

6 The pilots formed their association at the same time. Their leader, Alfred Malinovskii, was a keen reader of *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniya*, in which he found the constitution of the Soviet Sociological Association which he used as the model for the constitution of his own organization. Malinovskii is a strong leader, a 'buffalo'. Leaders of the air traffic controllers like to tell an anecdote: Malinovskii was a pilot in Kazakhstan and landed in the steppe. The second pilot got out of the plane to relieve himself, but on exposing himself was bitten by a snake in a delicate part of his anatomy. They took off and the second pilot asked Alfred to contact the air traffic controllers, who asked a doctor for advice. They told Malinovskii to suck the poison from the place that was bitten. The second pilot was by now screaming in pain, pleading with Malinovskii to tell him what the doctor had said. Malinovskii kept silent, and just looked ahead with a gloomy expression. The second pilot pleaded again, 'Alfred, what did the doctor say?'. Malinovskii turned to him and said firmly, 'The doctor says you will die'.

7 Covert KGB and Party support for independent workers' organizations was common in the period 1987–89. Although registered trade unions have a legal right to office and information facilities provided by the management, it is very difficult to enforce this right. Nevertheless, it is the norm for independent workers' organizations readily to be granted facilities by the employers. Thus both the pilots' and the air traffic controllers' unions have suites of offices in the building of the Department of Air Transport, just as the Independent Miners' Union of Russia has offices provided by the former Coal Ministry. (The International NPG was unique in having offices in the White House, thanks to its chairman, who was a people's deputy and Vice-Chairman of the Commission for Economic Reform of the Supreme Soviet of Russia.)

8 The air traffic controllers issued a statement to people's deputies seeking to correct errors in a speech by the President of Goskomtrud, Shcherbakov, to the Supreme Soviet on 21 April 1990, insisting that the working week is 41 and not 31 hours; that only two airports and the Moscow centre have up-to-date automatic equipment, the majority of other centres using equipment dating back to the 1950s and 1960s; that air traffic controllers in Western countries have a lowered pension age, and contesting his claim that the job did not harm the health of the controllers.

In support of the latter argument the union circulated a letter from Yevgenii Igranov, first President of the VAAGA, to the People's deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR which read:

What is the background to the proposals from the Air Traffic Controllers about Retirement?

Those few air traffic controllers who have worked directly controlling aircraft movements until 45 to 50 years of age, sometimes hiding their sickness from the doctor, try and continue working until 55 years, which is the retirement age for this class of workers according to the outdated law on retirement. Medical research has shown that people who work as air traffic controllers for a long time have poorer memories, lower attention spans, and slower reaction times. This is well known in civil aviation circles and their mistakes are corrected frequently by their younger colleagues.... It is impossible to create any system guaranteeing against these types of mistakes because these are the problems of age and the controllers cannot be held responsible for the difficulties created in situations where there is a marked increase in air movement.

Deputies, please look at this list written in blood:

1974 – Kharkov: accident of aeroplane AN24.

1976 – Anapa: two aeroplanes, AN24 and Yak40, collided in the air.

1980 – Liepaya: accident of TU134.

1984 – Omsk: accident of TU154.

1985 – L'vov: AN24 and TU134 collided.

This is not a full list of the accidents which have occurred because of errors by air traffic controllers who were more than 50 years of age. One of the latest accidents happened at Berdyansk airport in 1987, involving a Yak40. The air traffic controller was 51 years old.

⁹ A. Shostak, 'Second Thoughts on the PATCO Strike', *Journal of Social Policy*, 16, 3, 1986.

¹⁰ The Independent Miners' Union (NPG) and the pilots' Union of Flying Personnel (PLS), led by Alfred Malinovskii, were established in the same month. Unlike FPAD, the pilots' association split. The vast majority of the pilots followed Malinovskii into PLS, but some remained in the Association of Flying Personnel (ALS), led by Anatolii Kochur and Sergei Semenov, which also recruited military pilots, although the two unions had a combined body, the Trade Union-Association of Flying Personnel (PALS). During the August 1991 *putsch*, Kochur was 'near Yeltsin's leg, if not between his legs' (Malinovskii) in the White House, and after the coup spoke on behalf of the pilots on TV, where he built up Aleksandr Larin, a senior pilot and member of the ALS, as a hero of the resistance. Larin was rewarded for his activity by being appointed Director of the Department of Air Transport, and repaid Kochur with his patronage. Pilots, particularly in the more remote regions, have considerable opportunities for independent 'commercial' activity, including buying furs, precious stones and valuable metals, and provide foreign contacts for such activity.

At a conference on 2 and 3 November 1991, PALS was formed into the Inter-State Federation of Trade Unions of Civil Aviation Flying Personnel (MFPLSGA), which claimed 160 affiliated organizations and 40,000 members in the Soviet Union (KASKOR 77, November 1991). The following day PALS Russia (PALSGAR) was established. PALS Russia was only registered in July 1992, and its constitution revised at its conference at the end of December 1992.

¹¹ A delegate queried this provision at the Second Congress of FPAD in 1992, but Konusenko insisted that it was a matter of principle, because a leader could not understand the problems of rank-and-file members if he did not work regularly in the airport. It is also essential if the principle of rotation is to be applied, since an air traffic controller or pilot loses his or her occupational qualification if he or she fails to practice for one year. The union probably could not afford to support a body of full-time officials in any case, since its only income is from members' dues, but its reliance on lay

officers does make union organizers vulnerable to disciplinary action on the grounds of their work performance rather than their trade union activity.

12 Some of those not belonging to FPAD were in supervisory positions, while others tended to be in more remote airports. The Central Council of FPAD banned dual membership in May 1992, but the fact that some controllers still belonged to the official union allowed the latter to claim that it continued to represent air traffic controllers.

13 Since FPAD was a federation, its component unions could put forward their own demands and could negotiate over the demands with their local management, which could in principle meet at least some of the demands from their own resources. The national negotiations essentially established the legal and financial basis for local settlements, in particular providing local airports with the necessary funds.

The Kyrgyzian controllers also added a set of political demands, calling for the resignation of Gorbachev and the depoliticization of their enterprise, with the removal of the Communist Party committees.

14 These two laws were panic measures rushed through during the strike waves of 1989 and 1991 which established a rigorous procedure to be followed by potential strikers, and banned strikes in the transport sector, although they did not define the penalties which would ensue in the event of violation of the law. The Ministry of Justice initially accepted the Prosecutor's plea, and cancelled FPAD's registration. However, the decision was later reversed and FPAD's registration restored, with Lushchikov recognizing that the annulment of the registration had been a political rather than a legal act (*Izvestiya*, 14 August 1991). The Ministry demanded that FPAD amend its constitution, but it simply added a clause stating that it would act in accordance with the law.

Barry Gibbs, the ICFTU mediator in the November 1992 dispute, was asked to provide the Ministry of the Interior with examples of foreign laws which would 'enable the authorities to apply criminal punishment to illegal strikers', since 'the law contains no provisions to bring criminal charges against the organizers' of an illegal strike (*Pop-tel*, 7 December 1992).

15 On 14 May the pilots and air traffic controllers appealed to the NPG, whose representatives were meeting in Moscow, for support. NPG responded very cautiously, promising to do no more than send solidarity telegrams (KASKOR 53, 1991). However, on 21 May the Kuzbass Regional Council promised its full support to the air traffic controllers (KASKOR 54, 1991).

16 In January 1992 FPAD established separate republican organizations, although FPAD Russia was not formally constituted until October 1992. FPAD Russia did not have a separate apparatus from the inter-republican FPAD which continued to exist alongside it, with several of the former Republics still having representation on its council. However, in practice the different federations went their separate ways: the Kazakh Federation made progress through direct negotiation with Kazakh President Nazarbaev, and the Ukrainian Federation established close links with the independent miners' and railwaymen's unions, with whom they co-ordinated their action.

17 The union also became concerned with the question of social insurance since the official union retained the insurance funds, as well as welfare benefits such as holiday passes, access to kindergartens, pioneer camps, housing allocation, etc., to which air traffic controllers had access only through the official union.

18 With privatization the struggle for control over air traffic control fees became increasingly important in conflicts at the level of local airports, and between local airports and the ministry.

19 The protocol accepted the demand for a unified system of air traffic control directly under the President, promising to agree a draft decree with FPAD within one week; promised to put to the meeting of the Tripartite Commission the following day the question of increasing its membership so as to include a representative of FPAD (one of the five seats assigned to independent trade unions was held by Malinovskii representing the aviation unions — FPAD never did get a seat); an order to the ministry and

department to negotiate a tariff agreement with FPAD; government support for the proposal before the Supreme Soviet that all registered unions should have the right to sign collective agreements with employers (the Sotsprof-initiated law which was passed the following month); an order to the ministry to implement previous agreements on a shorter working week and longer holidays within one month; a promise to introduce legislation within one week raising pensions to 75 per cent of the wage after 20 years service; a promise of financial resources for air traffic control centres in Moscow and the North Caucasus; and a promise to establish proper inter-state co-ordination of air traffic control. The government also nominated representatives to negotiate the tariff agreement. The government side comprised four vice-ministers (Shapkin – Justice, Kudyukin – Labour and Employment and Kozyrev – Social Security), a representative of the Ministry of Finance (Molchanov) and the director of the Department of Air Transport A.A. Larin. It was not until 19 March that Larin issued an order implementing this agreement with the government.

- 20 On 28 February Deputy Premier Shakhrai was put in control of the commission on behalf of the government. On 2 March FPAD and the department agreed to nominate A.A. Pyshnyi to the post of president of the commission, and this nomination was accepted. Rosaeronavigatsiya turned out initially to be no more than a renamed successor to Gosaeronavigatsiya, a committee of the USSR Ministry of Civil Aviation established in early 1991 by the Ryzhkov government as an experiment. Yeltsin's decree 1148.3, issued on 4 November 1992, amended his earlier decree, bringing it line with Yefimov's unilateral decision to place Rosaeronavigatsiya under the Ministry of Transport.
- 21 This committee had been established in late 1991 by former officials from the Upravlenie Vozdushnogo Dvizheniya (a section of the ministry) who were responsible for air traffic to replace their section which was dissolved with the collapse of the USSR. Although they had no function, they tried to elicit the support of the 'black colonels' (Rutskoi's supporters) in the Ministry of Defence to take over Gosaeronavigatsiya as a source of hard currency. In July 1992 the payment for an overflight by an international airline was said to be \$24 per 100 kilometres.
- 22 The pilots and PRAP had issued their own strike threats demanding the conclusion of a tariff agreement, with the pilots also demanding improved working conditions and pensions, their own inclusion in List One, the demonopolization of the branch, giving air enterprises the status of state enterprises with the right to privatize independently, and the transfer of social insurance funds to the union. In the end, however, they settled for a pay rise.
- 23 The air traffic controllers at Moscow's Bykovo airport struck at 8 a.m. on 14 April demanding that their airport's management sign a collective agreement. Negotiations began immediately, and the strike was called off at 12.30 p.m. (KASKOR 16, 17 April 1992), although no agreement was ever signed.
- 24 The air traffic controllers' agreement increased their pay by between 10 and 100 per cent, including special bonuses, over the April agreement, depending on their grade and category of work.
- 25 Valerii Grishov, from Syktyvkar, attended the 1992 meeting of the International Federation in Strasbourg, but his ticket was only confirmed hours before he left, and the local management would only give him roubles for expenses. His comment on his return: 'Now I have seen a normal life and I know what we can struggle for', but FPAD could not afford the subscription to the International Federation. However, it did join at the conference in New Zealand the following year.
- 26 The question of English language training, included in the agreement, is extremely important, since most controllers have only very basic English.
- 27 The pilots' grievance was not entirely unjustified, since the air traffic controllers' tariff agreement concerned only the grading and the terms and conditions of the air traffic controllers themselves, all other aspects of the negotiations being included in the branch agreement. Moreover, in inflationary conditions the level of pay was set not by

the tariff agreement, which concerned the pay scales, but in separate negotiations at industry and airport level from which the air traffic controllers excluded themselves. Nevertheless, the pilots' way of expressing their discontent was hardly an expression of the principles of trade union solidarity.

28 On 7 July a conference of the Ul'yanovsk PLS sent a resolution to FPAD dissociating itself from the activity of its own leadership and supporting FPAD, insisting that only through their combined forces could they achieve improved conditions of life and work.

29 In July 1992 in the Komi Republic, 76 air traffic controllers were members of FPAD and 10 were members of PRAP. Because they were covered by two agreements there was a differential between the wage levels for FPAD members compared with PRAP members, even though they did exactly the same work. According to Valerii Grishov, the regional FPAD leader, this caused division and animosity between the two groups of workers.

On 7 September 1992 the Rostov court sent a plaintive letter to Kudyukin, Larin and Konusenko asking which tariff agreement applied, the question arising in response to legal proceedings initiated by Rostov PAD to secure implementation of the tariff agreement.

30 At some airports, such as Kurumoch (Samara), the new agreement was implemented, only to be withdrawn later on instructions from above (Interview, Konusenko, 17 September 1992, although Brodulev later told us that the agreement at Samara was withdrawn as a punishment for striking in August). Even with the best will in the world, it was not clear how the agreements should be reconciled. The May agreement applied only to air traffic controllers who were members of FPAD, while those who belonged to the official union were covered by the April agreement. The Prosecutor General ruled that the tariff agreements were both illegal, because in both of them the benefits applied only to union members, a device which the unions had each introduced to encourage membership.

31 Before the strike the majority of people at the airport were very unclear about the tariff agreement, and the pilots had to explain to them that it defined the basic pay scales and bonus rates, which turned out to be between two and three times what the Aldan workers were earning. This account is based on documents and interviews with the pilots' leaders.

32 The Aldan pilots had regarded those brought in as strike-breakers from Yakutsk as their friends, most having studied together at the flight training institute. However, the Yakutsk pilots faced the sack if they refused to work, having been called in one by one and asked whether they wanted to work or to go. In contrast, the pilots from Magan airport, near Yakutsk, were told by their commander that it was their decision whether or not to fly out of Aldan. In the event, these pilots flew into Aldan, spoke with the striking pilots, and flew back to Magan, having decided that the pilots' case was a 'just' one.

The administration did not have to rely only on pilots from other airports. They found local pilots to make up two air crews during the strike. Parshchikov described these pilots on television as the most 'responsible' workers in the enterprise. Moreover, even though the enterprise claimed it did not have enough money to pay the ground staff, Parshchikov authorized the payment of special bonuses to the strike-breaking pilots of the order of 3,000 to 10,000 roubles for each pilot. Those who acted as strike-breakers were those with the worst disciplinary records, who were the most vulnerable to dismissal threats, at least four of them having been punished previously for drunkenness while at work. One of these 'best' people had taken a plane to Minsk, where he went on a drinking spree so that the plane had to return without him, although his colleagues collected him a week later.

33 The Aldan pilots' leaders believed that it was only as a result of their strike that the agreement was signed by Sakha, it being no coincidence that it was signed on the very

day that the department pressed a settlement on Yakutavia. The Aldan air traffic controllers did not strike on 15 August – it is only a small airport, and the controllers are responsible for no more than fifteen aeroplanes and helicopters per day. Because of the northern coefficient these controllers were relatively well paid, earning more than equivalent controllers in Moscow as well as the pilots who flew 70 hours a month. According to the pilots, in June 1992 the average wage of the pilots at Aldan was 25,500 roubles a month and the air traffic controllers received 27/28,000 roubles a month, with the chief air traffic controller receiving 30/35,000 roubles per month.

34 Semenov, deputy head of the ALS, had met with Larin, the director of the Department of Air Transport in Moscow, and invited the president of IFALPA to Moscow to make representations to Larin on the strikers' behalf. The IFALPA delegation met with Larin in June with the result that Larin also began to pressure Yakutavia to settle the dispute.

35 At the end of their strike the pilots had organized a referendum of all workers at the airport to express their lack of confidence in Parshchikov and Pykhteeva (head of the department of labour and wages). The manual workers involved in supply and distribution work at the airport proposed adding Kuznetsov (deputy director of the airport responsible for supply and distribution services). Many people were on vacation and only 75 per cent of the workers took part in the referendum, although Pykhteeva and Kuznetsov had visited all the airport services and warned that all those who participated in the referendum would be sacked. Nonetheless, the workers voted in large numbers, including many who had a rest day. Three hundred and eighty-nine people voted and 311 voted against Parshchikov; 327 against Kuznetsov; and 356 against Pykhteeva. The ballot was supervised by local deputies, representatives of the administration of the enterprise, and the president of the official trade union, Kulaga, a typical 'pocket' trade union leader, whose role during the negotiations had been 'to make the coffee'.

Three years earlier, Parshchikov had been elected by the labour collective and before the contract was signed had said 'Lads I will only work here if you have confidence in me. I will resign and leave with honour if you have no confidence in me'. However, even faced with such a vote he had not resigned. This prompted one of the pilots to say: 'We only stopped the hunger strike because of the agreed Order and many of us were prepared to go on to a dry hunger strike. How many victims does Parshchikov need before he resigns with honour?'

36 This situation did not last long, as Koslov ran into opposition from his colleagues. Under Parshchikov, money saved out of the wages fund as a result of sickness and vacation was distributed amongst the administration, under the table, with the largest slice going to senior managers. Koslov ended this system, and immediately faced attempts on the part of his colleagues to restore Parshchikov to his position.

37 The leaders of FPAD still firmly believed that they would have Yeltsin's support, but that he did not know what was happening. When they got no reply to their letters they presumed that they must have been intercepted by Ruskoi's apparatus.

38 Kochur's Association of Flying Personnel (ALS) gave full support to the air traffic controllers.

39 The tariff agreement linked the guaranteed minimum to the state's minimum wage, in a formulation that had been proposed by the government side. However, two weeks after the tariff agreement was signed, the minimum wage had been increased on 1 June from 342 roubles to 900 roubles a month. Under the tariff agreement this implied a minimum for the air traffic controllers of 15,120 roubles. According to the PLS, the air traffic controllers had refused to join the other unions in signing a revised tariff agreement on 11th June to take account of the increase in the minimum wage (not surprisingly, since that would have eroded the gains they had made in May), and that the air traffic controllers were now earning about 70 per cent of a pilot's wage, against the world practice which they claimed to be 55 per cent (Eduard Vakhmin, Interview with Eduard Bychkov, President of PLS Executive, KASKOR 33, 14 August 1992).

However, FPAD claimed that the best-paid air traffic controllers (at Moscow's Domodedovo airport) were receiving 22,800 roubles, whereas the equivalent pilots were earning 40,000 (KASKOR 33, 14 August 1992). The pay of air traffic controllers elsewhere was claimed to be in the range 7–10,000 roubles (in Samara it was claimed to be between 7,000 and 8,000, although in Perm' the controllers were earning between 17,000 and 23,000 in August). Yefimov's telegram of 30 July to all aviation enterprises quoted the average pay of controllers at the Moscow centre for June as 35,000, 23,500 at Mineral'nye Vody and 27,000 at Khabarovsk, with the latter being claimed to be typical wages in all regions. One explanation of the discrepancies could be the payment of special bonuses and back pay to some groups of workers.

40 This account is based on documents and our own interviews. See also the interviews with Konusenko and Brodulev by Kyrill Buketov (KASKOR 34, 21 August 1992). The strike and its aftermath were very thoroughly covered by KAS-KOR, who realized how crucial the conflict was to the future of the entire independent workers' movement. When we interviewed Sergeev at this time about NPG's attitude he was relatively complacent, although he said that he regarded the forthcoming negotiations about representation on the Tripartite Commission as a decisive indicator. In the event the government removed the independent workers' representatives, but NPG did not get the message.

41 Solidarity and support was promised by the NPG, the loco drivers (RPLBZh), KSPR, RKSP and KOPR, but in the event nobody had expected a strike to happen and no support was forthcoming, the miners claiming that they were not ready for action because they were preparing for their own action in the autumn.

42 The main argument presented by Yefimov was that the aviation industry was in a very difficult financial position with the collapse in traffic as a result of increased fares, and was already receiving very large state subsidies, so that the air traffic controllers, whose pay had increased thirty-fold since 1991, would only receive their increase at the expense of the public and of other (lower-paid) workers in the industry.

43 FPAD had agreed to allow emergency and medical flights. The executive also agreed to provide air traffic control cover for the plane on which Yeltsin was due to return from a trip abroad on 15 August.

44 Subsequently, a committee of enquiry into the strike by the Ministry of Interior reported that the work of 42 of the 136 airports in Russia had been stopped and that aircraft timetables and movements of 247 flights had been disrupted, with a financial loss of R77 million and more than \$40,000 (*BBC Monitoring*, SU/1496 B/4).

45 Near misses were reported from Rostov, Volgograd, Arkhangel'sk, Ust'-ilimsk and St Petersburg (twice). The language barrier made foreign planes especially vulnerable.

46 Maiorov returned from the negotiations in Moscow on 14 August. The local radio that evening falsely claimed that there was a division within the leadership and that Maiorov had returned to call off the strike.

47 Apparently this was in response to a secret telegram from the Prosecutor General to charge the ring-leaders of the strike. The case dragged on until December 1992.

48 This was an order to all military commanders in the Russian air service. Russian air space is divided between the military and civilian air transport, each with its own controllers. The scale of military air movement is much less than that of civilian air transport, which means that military air traffic controllers carry out their work in a different way from civilian controllers. The military controllers control the flight of one plane as it takes off, flies and lands, with very little information provided about other flights because each flight has its own level and space with little prospect of intersection. Often the military controllers are responsible for no more than three flights at any one time. In contrast, the civilian air traffic controllers are responsible for a large sector through which many planes will be flying at any given time, including both domestic and international airlines. This creates a situation where civilian air traffic controllers

work more intensively than the military and where the civilian air traffic controllers are regarded as more skilled than the military controllers.

⁴⁹ All military and civilian air traffic controllers have to visit the medical centres for a check-up before every shift to determine whether they are fit to work or not.

⁵⁰ The failure of the strike in Moscow was decisive for its outcome. No executive member visited the Moscow air traffic control centre to explain the reasons for the strike, although 600 controllers work there and it is the hub of the entire aviation system. The reason for this failure was simply that the FPAD leadership had assumed that the government would meet their demands ten minutes before the strike, as they had done in response to every previous strike threat. The administration, on the other hand, had prepared carefully for the strike, buying off the strikers. The first shift decided not to join the strike, and they worked. When the second shift arrived they declared their intention to strike, but were told 'You can go to the Personnel Department and get your cards. Your colleagues will work instead of you and we shall pay them 3,000 roubles per hour'. As a result the second shift decided to work after all.

The threat of dismissal was much more real in Moscow than elsewhere, since it would be easy to recruit replacements who wanted to work in Moscow, whereas in other cities replacing sacked controllers would be much more difficult. The Moscow controllers also enjoy better pay and working conditions, with more advanced equipment, than controllers elsewhere. Nevertheless, the failure of the strike in Moscow contrasts sharply with the determination shown by the controllers in the second city, St Petersburg.

⁵¹ On 1 October, having received no acknowledgement from Yeltsin, Konusenko sent another pleading letter, which began 'FPAD, fully and completely supporting the course of deep reforms in Russia, earnestly asks you not to set aside the present appeal without giving it your attention'. On 29 October Konusenko tried again, referring to their conflict with the 'reactionarily inclined part of the Russian government, supporting pro-Communist local administrations', and affirming their full support for Yeltsin in their common struggle to enforce the laws and decrees of the Russian Federation, itemizing the repression of air traffic controllers and informing Yeltsin of their latest strike threat.

⁵² It is important to stress that FPAD has been the only trade union in Russia which has demonstrated that it is able to call a national strike, and that its membership will respond to that call. Strikes called by the official trade unions have tended to be purely formal, with the response determined by local management rather than the union. As we have seen, even the 1991 miners' strike was not under the control of the union or the strike leadership.

⁵³ Sixty-eight air traffic controllers at the Raminskoe aerodrome of the Gromov Flying Research Institute in Zhukovskii (Moscow region) went on strike on 9 October, although they continued to report for work and to handle emergency flights, having postponed their strike from 15 August, with the demand to implement the tariff agreement (only the most senior controller did not join the strike). Their wages were only 2,500–3,200 roubles, two to three times less than those of air traffic controllers at other Moscow airports. The head of the institute initially refused to negotiate. A conciliation commission was established, which met the strike committee on 12th October. The commission tried to persuade the controllers that the Department of Aviation had not signed the tariff agreement, which applied only to the Department of Air Transport, and so the government had not given the management any money to pay the air traffic controllers. The strike committee insisted that the agreement was a trade union agreement that covered all members of FPAD, independently of the branch or the source of enterprise finance, and negotiations broke down. On 20 October the strike committee received an order from the commandant of the institute, Konstantin Vasilchenko, excluding the strikers from the institute pending the start of legal proceedings against them to secure compensation for damages. The order was enforced on 21 October. The

senior controller, assisted by volunteer pilots, controlled emergency flights for the next three days. At this point the commandant asked the strikers to return to work, but they refused. On 29 October the FPAD Congress sent an appeal to the government warning of the dangers for the whole Moscow zone of uncontrolled flights from Gromov, and the demand to stop repression of the Gromov strikers was included in FPAD's letter to Yeltsin of 5 November, telling him that despite Rutskoi's promises repression continued, and warning him of the 30 November strike. On 18 January the Gromov strikers were brought to court in a plea for their strike to be declared illegal.

54 This section is based on a report of the congress and interviews with delegates prepared by Vladimir Il'in.

55 About 90 delegates of the three other unions, PLS, PRAP and the newly formed union of aviation-engineering workers (PRIAS) had met on 1 October to discuss the fulfilment of the tariff agreement and preparation of a new one, the issue of privatization, and the proposal to unite in a single federation. According to Malinovskii, leader of the pilots' PLS, the air traffic controllers were also invited, but declined to attend. Malinovskii saw the new federation as the basis of an expanded independent union under his leadership, with the pilots firmly established as the labour aristocracy of the industry.

The proposal to form a federation was adopted at the beginning of the meeting as a declaration of intent without any discussion. However, it soon became clear that there was still a fundamental difference of opinion over the question of affiliation to the official union body, FNPR. Malinovskii, leader of PLS, insisted that he could not unite with any organization which remained affiliated to FNPR, since that organization would be accountable to another structure. Boris Kremnev, leader of PRAP, declared that FNPR was now harmless, his union's membership of FNPR was purely formal, they paid no affiliation fees and it merely served as an information network. While there was clearly strong feeling in support of unification from the ordinary delegates, the leaders had rather different and conflicting ambitions, and in practice the declaration implied no more than co-operation in the negotiations over the tariff agreement for 1993 due to begin on 10 October. The meeting also heard from Zamotin about the difficulties of implementing the tariff agreement with the shortage of cash, the failure of the autonomous Republics to ratify the agreement (Sakha only ratified it after the Aldan pilots' hunger strike), and the fragmentation of the industry. 'I will be as brief as possible' said Larin as he introduced his one and a half hour speech on the difficulties of the department, with shortages of aviation fuel and the enormous increase in its cost, unreliable and inefficient aeroplanes, and conflicts over privatization as each group tried to seize the most profitable assets.

56 In Novosibirsk, where two sacked air traffic controllers had just been reinstated by the court, Sotsprof and PLS held a meeting with FPAD to offer their support for repressed activists, but FPAD refused any kind of help, although they continued to meet with the other unions.

57 Press coverage was also more balanced than it had been in August, with *Izvestiya*, *Rabochaya tribuna* and *Nezavissimaya gazeta* providing the fullest reports.

58 According to Konusenko 20 airports could paralyse all traffic movements, but Moscow could do most of the damage on its own.

59 It is indicative of the depth of the legacy of the old system that this meeting was attended by a representative of the ministry, in front of whom the delegates laid bare all the union's weaknesses and all its plans, making the idea of a pretence a vain one.

60 Some airports refused to join the new strike on the grounds that only the Congress of FPAD can call or change a strike, but many other airports decided to join the strike in response to Stepankov's attempt to liquidate FPAD.

61 On 10 November the council had declared its solidarity with FPAD in the face of the victimization of its members and in defence of union rights, sending a statement to Yeltsin, the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of People's deputies, threatening to call out

their members in acts of solidarity if the government did not enter into constructive dialogue with FPAD. Brodulev had reported to the next meeting a week later, which decided to send a representative to the Supreme Court to support FPAD. Solov'ev, leader of RKSP, volunteered to go, as he was a lawyer.

62 Solov'ev suggested that a speaker from FPAD should address the meeting of Kuzbass miners which would be picketing the opening session of the Congress of People's deputies, and lead a march to the Supreme Court. Utkin, President of the International NPG, offered to arrange a meeting with Gaidar, others proposed to arrange for FPAD to address the congress, but nothing at all was done. FPAD received stronger messages of support from KOPR, the Seafarers' Union of Russia, and the Russian Union of Railway Locomotive Brigades.

63 The delay was because the leadership did not put much store by Yefimov's signature, since he did not have the power to interfere in the prosecutions. The official telegrams did not go out until 13.00.

64 The following day on television, Yefimov claimed that this proved that only two airports supported the FPAD demands. He repeated this claim in an interview in the industry newspaper *Vozdushnii Transport*, 50, December 1992.

65 FPAD issued a leaflet, adopted by the Second Congress, warning passengers of the strike and appealing to them not to buy tickets. The leaflet warned of the serious implications of grossly inadequate equipment and working conditions, and growing pressure on the air traffic controllers from the ruling stratum for the safety of passengers. As an indicator of the danger, they noted that whenever top officials fly, air space is completely cleared until they have passed. Once they have gone through, civil traffic is released, leading to serious congestion.

66 For example, Syktyvkar airport is the regional centre for the Komi Republic, in close contact with Moscow and participating actively in union activity, but outlying airports like Vorkuta refused to participate in the November strike. Chelyabinsk airport is not a regional centre, but still affiliates directly to Moscow and is very active. Kemerovo airport is larger than Syktyvkar, and equal to Chelyabinsk in size, but affiliates through Novosibirsk. Although Kemerovo did not participate in the August or November strikes, FPAD activists have faced large-scale sackings and repression, without receiving support from the centre, which was not even aware of their plight.

67 It was at this stage that Grishov was called in to the militia offices, where he was asked politely to let the militia know as soon as possible whether or not the strike would take place, as their resources were very stretched with a large Congress of Finno-Hungarian Peoples in Syktyvkar and the Congress of People's Deputies in Moscow taking place at the same time, and they would like to be able to stand some of the militia down.

68 Zamotin originally came to the Ministry of Civil Aviation from the bureaucracy of the Central Committee of the CPSU as deputy minister responsible for personnel questions. After August 1991 the Minister of Civil Aviation, Ponyukov, was sacked for supporting the *putsch* and the ministry absorbed into the Ministry of Transport as the Department of Air Transport, with Aleksandr Larin appointed as director until his removal by Yefimov, apparently encouraged by Rutskoi, to make way for Zamotin at the end of 1992 (Larin's sacking had been demanded by the FPAD Congress, but some reports indicated that Larin had been dismissed for signing the May tariff agreement). Although Zamotin had no training in civil aviation he was appointed the director of the department. This represented an important departure in practice since it had long been the case that former pilots were appointed to the senior positions in the Department of Air Transport. As a non-professional, Zamotin suits Yefimov, Minister of Transport, who frequently says: 'I am a professional manager and I do not know your speciality'. In this case, Zamotin, who is unfamiliar with the aviation industry simply does whatever is asked of him by Yefimov; there is no possibility of his arguing on the basis of specialist knowledge, as had been the case with Larin, a former pilot who 'knew' the industry.

⁶⁹ The FPAD plenum on 25 and 26 March declared its resolute support for Yeltsin in his confrontation with the Congress of People's deputies, despite his persistent failure to reciprocate. The plenum also decided to affiliate to the international federation, IFATCA, and to send a delegation, including Maiorov, to New Zealand, and reiterated an earlier request for every member of the union to contribute 500 roubles to a solidarity fund. FPAD's affiliation to IFATCA was accepted on 20 April, greatly enhancing its prestige by giving it international recognition as representative of the air traffic controllers.

At the end of March the air traffic controllers at Vologda had a brief strike, supported by FPAD – Maiorov went to Vologda to give advice, and FPAD provided a lawyer. Vologda was a very small and unprofitable airport, which had seen big cutbacks in flights, but it had a very busy air traffic control centre that also handled international flights. However, the controllers were being paid only 7,500 roubles, when those at the Moscow Centre were earning 100,000, and housing conditions in particular were appalling. The strike lasted two hours and was settled when the city administration came up with some money. After the strike the leader was sacked, although the agreement had included a no-victimization clause. Konusenko got Zamotin to phone the airport and the sacking was withdrawn.

⁷⁰ These negotiations had been held up by disagreements over the size of the coefficient which would link the pay scale to the national minimum wage. Unions from large airports, which considered themselves to be profitable, were seeking a pay coefficient of 3.5, while the department, supported by the unions representing the smaller airports, had been offering a coefficient of 1.7, with a likely compromise being a figure of 2.5. Needless to say, such calculations were based on managerial concerns and made no reference to the union membership. However, they were also somewhat formalistic, since the coefficient would define the minimum for the industry, with scope for local negotiations to achieve higher wage levels within the limits of the financial viability of the aviation enterprise. These local negotiations would necessarily provide scope for a trade-off between pay increases and cuts in employment, which have the potential for opening divisions between workers. The fragmentation of the industry and the withdrawal of subsidies has already led to the emergence of very large differentials between airports.

⁷¹ Shatyrenko had replaced Kudyukin as part of a shake-up of the Ministry of Labour as the basis for an increasingly close relationship with the official trade unions. Kudyukin, a former dissident, was a leading member of the Social Democratic Party and a supporter of the independent unions.

⁷² There were four minor points in the tariff agreement at which remaining disagreements were registered. These disagreements were subsequently itemized in a joint statement signed by Zamotin and Konusenko on 26 May. These points concerned the inability of the department to cover the costs of participation of FPAD delegates in a conference in Ireland, and FPAD's insistence that a clause be included stating that benefits under the 1993 agreement would not supersede superior benefits in the previous agreement. According to the minutes of this meeting Kovalev had advised the meeting that the FPAD representatives would be unable to attend as they had to clarify various points about the agreement with Zamotin. The FPAD leaders adamantly denied this.

⁷³ The changes involved downgrading those air traffic controllers (the vast majority of operational controllers) who were included on List One of hazardous occupations, with an ordinary controller cut from a coefficient of 5.4 to one of 4.6, a senior controller from 5.2 to 5.2 and a chief controller from 6.2 to 5.4 – a 16 per cent cut in pay over that originally agreed.

⁷⁴ Problems at Bykovo, which was the base of Brodulev, FPAD vice-president, continued through 1993. In April FPAD took the director, Sytnik, to the local court for refusing to negotiate a tariff agreement for the third successive year, although the court as usual protected the director. On 9 September the local court did rule that the removal of air

traffic controllers from their place in the housing queue a year earlier had been illegal, although the director and official union at the airport did nothing to implement this ruling. FPAD took the issue to the Conflict Commission, but still Sytnik did not cooperate. It was only when the controllers voted by 77 votes to 13 to strike on 4 December that Sytnik agreed to negotiate. However, once the strike was called off negotiations continued for two weeks without result. The controllers then referred the dispute to an arbitration commission at ministry level, into whose bureaucracy the case vanished.

⁷⁵ Article Six of the Law on Collective Agreements gave any trade union or other body representative of employees the right to demand negotiations over a collective agreement, requiring the employer to respond to such a request by starting negotiations within seven days. In the event of there being several such bodies, each and every one is entitled to conduct negotiations. Article Seven specified the requirement for the parties to the negotiation to establish a commission to conduct negotiations and draft a collective agreement. Article Eight laid down the procedure in the event of a failure to reach agreement, the first step being for the Negotiating Commission to form a Conciliation Commission from its own membership within three days of submission of a statement of disagreement, and if agreement could not be reached to submit the disagreement to arbitration by an agreed body, either of which has to make recommendations within seven days. If these recommendations are not accepted it is permissible to conduct a strike, in accordance with the law. Article Twelve specified that in the event of there being several trade unions or bodies representative of employees they should form a combined representative body for the conduct of negotiations to draw up a single draft and conclude a single collective agreement which should be put to a meeting of the labour collective and signed by all parties. In the event of disagreement between the representative bodies alternative drafts should be put to the labour collective meeting, which should choose one draft to form the basis of further negotiations to be conducted in the name of the whole labour collective by that body which drew up the selected draft. In addition, any representative body has the right independently to enter negotiations and conclude a collective agreement or add an appendix to a unified collective agreement touching on the specific interests of workers it represents on a professional basis. Once the collective agreement is signed, the employer should send it to the corresponding organ of the Ministry of Labour for registration. Article Seventeen gives responsibility for monitoring the fulfilment of the collective agreement to the immediate parties to the agreement or their representatives and to the appropriate organ of the Ministry of Labour.

⁷⁶ Rosaeronavigatsiya was considerably expanded during the first half of 1993, with several key installations being transferred to it and a wide range of duties being defined under a decree of the ministry of 31 May, with promises of large amounts of money to be spent on upgrading the air traffic control system. Although this was merely a re-organization of responsibilities within the ministry, in the usual Soviet way Chernomyrdin signed a government resolution on 8 May adding one hundred people to the ministry staff and giving the head of Rosaeronavigatsiya the status of Deputy Minister. V.G. Shelkovnikov was appointed to the post, in place of Pyshnyi, leading to vehement protest from FPAD, since Shelkovnikov had been one of the most ardent opponents of the initial proposal. FPAD proposed Yevsyukov, their former president, and now First Deputy President of Gosaeronavigatsiya, to the post. At the beginning of 1994 the Ministry of Transport came up with a plan to divide the air space with the upper level controlled by the state and the lower level (up to 6,000 metres) controlled by airports, including their associated commercial interests — it is at the lower level that take-offs and landings which give rise to lucrative fees take place. This proposal was opposed by the air traffic controllers on the grounds that it led to yet further fragmentation of air space, particularly as the Ministry of Defence also remained in control of its own air

space under this proposal. It was only in 1994 that a systematic reorganisation of air traffic control under the jurisdiction of Rosaeronavigatsiya took place.

77 The relationship with the pilots was particularly complicated, because while the pilots insisted on maintaining their differentials, a large proportion of them were on fall-back pay with the sharp reduction in the number of flights. The air traffic controllers were particularly indignant that they were being paid less for a full month's work than pilots were being paid who did nothing.

78 Konusenko reported that Olga Popova-Zavrazhnaya, head of the labour relations department of the Department of Air Transport, had informed aviation enterprises that the 1992 agreement was no longer in force, although several courts had ruled on the basis of the decision of the tripartite commission in January that the agreement did remain in force. He also reported that at Bykovo airport air traffic controllers received an increase of 48 per cent, and at Domodedovo controllers received a 60 per cent rise, while all other workers at these two airports had a rise of 81 per cent.

79 FPAD again gave Yeltsin their full support in his confrontation with the Congress of People's deputies, sending him a telegram on 22 September 'thanking you for your manly decision'.

80 The Confederation had been established in March 1993, comprising FPAD, Kochur's Association of Flying Staff (ALS) and the Trade Union of Railway Locomotive Brigades (chaired by Kurochkin), all of whom faced the common problem of concluding a tariff agreement. Representatives of the Confederation participated in the annual conference of the ALS on 3 and 4 December 1993, attended by 55 delegates, which also nominated Kochur to replace Zamotin (the ALS claimed a large membership, but outside Sheremetevo and the corridors of the Department of Air Transport it is difficult to find it. Kochur had enjoyed the patronage with Larin, but when Larin was removed his union had to make its own way). The conference called on members not to vote for candidates of Russia's choice unless the government met the demands of the pilots of Sheremetevo concerning the privatization of the airport. Sotsprof, NPG, and the loco drivers also signed an appeal to the Russian government calling for the resignation of Melik'yan in December 1993.

81 The Northwestern regional association was headed by Maiorov with Terent'ev as his deputy (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 10, 1994). The Congress introduced the principle of 'associate membership' for those employees of air traffic control enterprises who were not directly involved in air traffic control functions (bookkeepers, drivers etc.). In a clear indication of the leadership's view of FPAD as a union of labour aristocrats, such associate members enjoyed all the benefits of union membership but were forbidden to hold office (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 12, 1994).

82 The recourse to the courts was partly the result of the influence of Kurochkin, president of the loco drivers' union. Kurochkin argued strongly in favour of referring cases against individual managers to the courts rather than striking. This seemed to be on the basis that this was less threatening to the union as well as the appropriate way to deal with such problems. The loco drivers had faced the same barriers to signing a collective agreement through 1993. On 7 December 1992 they had written to the Ministry of Transport proposing negotiations for a 1993 tariff agreement, but on 21 December the Ministry replied that it was not the appropriate authority, referring them to the Ministry of Railways. On 11th January 1993 they wrote to the Ministry of Railways, which informed them that it did not have the right to sign such a professional agreement since it was not the employer or representative of the employers, and, somewhat contradictorily, that it had already signed a tariff agreement covering all railway employees on 24 December 1992. In reply to the loco drivers' objection, the Ministry insisted that it had received no objections to the original agreement from any trade union or labour collective and reiterated that it had no right to sign a professional agreement. The loco drivers then referred the case to the Prosecutor General and to the Ministry of Labour, which ruled against them, the former on the grounds that their request to enter negotia-

tions was sent after the 1993 tariff agreement had been signed, the latter proposing that the loco drivers negotiate an appendix to the tariff agreement to deal with their specific interests, but also advising them that workers of the same profession could not be covered by two agreements with different conditions. The loco drivers appealed to the local court, which ruled three months later that the time limit for such an appeal had expired, rejecting a further appeal at the beginning of June, with appeals to the Prosecutor General and Minister of Justice also being referred back. On 4 July the loco drivers appealed directly to Yeltsin, again without result, and at their plenum on 21 and 22 October declared a pre-strike situation, which again elicited no response.

⁸³ A sociological survey of radio and communications specialists in Moscow airports in June and July 1992 found that individual contracts were the preferred form of wage system for all groups except telegraphists. This survey was designed to discover the causes of dissatisfaction in this service, which had begun to show militancy in the wake of the pilots and air traffic controllers. The survey found that the level of pay was the greatest source of dissatisfaction, and the main interest of all groups, with relatively low levels of support for their strike committees (except at Bykovo) and high levels of support for their management (except at Sheremetevo). Although the survey's authors were confident that conflict could be resolved internally, they noted a tendency for management to try to pass the buck, deflecting conflict upwards rather than trying to resolve it on the ground (AERON Sociological Research Centre: *'Sotsiologicheskii analiz i prakticheskie rekomendatsii po stabilizatsii proizvodstvennoi situatsii v aviakollektivax*, (Sociological Analysis and Practical Recommendations for the Stabilization of the Production Situation in Aviation Collectives), Moscow, 1992).

⁸⁴ This was not universally the case. In Chelyabinsk, for example, FPAD belongs to the regional Coordinating Committee of Independent Trade Unions, which mobilized support for FPAD, sending letters to local and national authorities. The Chelyabinsk controllers have been militant, but have not faced any disciplinary sanctions.

⁸⁵ The Komi air traffic controllers held a Republican conference to discuss this question on 29 January 1993, with financial support from the Komi government. Their position is particularly strong, because they derive large foreign currency revenues from the inter-continental polar flights which they handle.

7. Is There a Workers' Movement in Russia?

The story of the workers' movement in Russia can easily be interpreted as a story of failure. However, it is important to situate the story in its context. Workers in Russia have been systematically exploited and oppressed by a system which effectively contained workers' resistance not only by direct repression, but also by the fragmentation of the workforce and the deflection and diffusion of discontent. Workers were almost universally dissatisfied with their condition, but without any institutional channels through which they could articulate and express that dissatisfaction, and without any easily identifiable agents of their exploitation and oppression, they tended to accept their condition with a fatalistic resignation.

Each agent of the system at every level was constrained by the level above, so that it was the system as a whole that was the source of their dissatisfaction. Unable to challenge the system as a whole, they were constrained to express their discontent within the system. Their managers and their trade union and Party representatives might be good or bad managers or representatives, but they were just a part of the system. Shop-floor relations between workers and managers were highly individualised, based on informal bargaining between the worker and his or her immediate superior, which provided an immediate barrier to any collective organisation of the workers, even at the level of the brigade or the shop.¹ This was why protest was confined largely to relatively privileged and secure skilled workers, who have for similar reasons constituted the core of the new workers' movement.² Workers could express their dissatisfaction with their managers or representatives, within quite narrowly defined limits, and could even enforce their removal by direct or, more often, by indirect protest. But at the same time their managers were the only representatives of their interests in relation to superior levels of the system, so that workers looked to their managers to secure their share of the meagre resources redistributed by the system. Thus, not only could they not mobilize or organize to transform the system within which they were

confined, their attempt to realise their most modest aspirations served only to reproduce the system that, as they were well aware, was the source of their oppression.

Glasnost and perestroika opened up the contradictions within the system and, in permitting the open expression of conflicting interests, unleashed a struggle for power between contending factions within the apparatus at all levels. However, the workplace itself was barely changed by the unfolding process of reform, the structures of management and control remaining in place. The erosion of the authority of the Party, trade union and associated social organizations was not to the benefit of the workforce, for whom these institutions, for all their repressive character, had provided channels through which, within the limits of the system, workers could register complaints, but for the benefit of senior management, which could now rule the enterprise without regard to the decisions of the Party. The disintegration of the administrative-command system of economic management and the processes of de-statization and privatization removed the administrative constraints on management from above so that every enterprise director became a little Tsar in his own kingdom.

Like every Tsar, the director could not rule by whim, but had to ensure that he was surrounded by loyal courtiers, and many a little Tsar fell victim to a palace revolution, in which the workers could on occasion be mobilized in defence of the incumbent or in support of the insurgents, but the outcome was a change in personnel, not a change in the system or its priorities. And there was no more effective force than a threatened insurrection to re-establish the unity of the managerial corpus. Thus the experience of worker activists, at the level of the brigade or the shop as much as at the level of the Soviet Union, was that every apparent victory was turned into defeat as a new face and a new rhetoric replaced an old face and an old rhetoric in a system which, as far as the ordinary workers were concerned, was fundamentally unchanged. The result of the struggles of the years of perestroika was not a sense of victory or even a sense of progress, but a sense of demoralization, of fatigue and of purposelessness.

In this context it should be no surprise to find that many of the leaders of the workers' movement at all levels soon fell by the wayside. Some simply gave up their activism and returned to their former jobs. Others, who had established political or commercial connections, were happy to exploit the opportunities to advance their own personal

interests. In both cases, withdrawal from commitment was legitimated by reference to the fatalism and passivity of the workers, who were ready to rise in an upsurge of spontaneous and angry protest, but who then retreated back into their shells, expecting their new leaders to transform the situation on their behalf. However, this was not so much an expression of an inherent passivity as a realistic response to a situation in which no single group of workers could transform the system as a whole. For the workers to be empowered, organizational frameworks had to be developed through which the workers' aspirations could be articulated and transformed into an effective and united force. The development of such organizational frameworks necessarily takes time, and time was not on the side of the activists of the workers' movement.

The reality on the ground was that management had innumerable well-tried levers through which to impede the development of effective workers' organization at shop-floor and enterprise level, primarily through its control over the distribution of work, social and welfare benefits and scarce goods and resources. In the last resort, management could rely on the support of the official trade union in dismissing worker activists, usually for breaches of work discipline, and in the support of the courts to endorse such dismissals.

Between 1987 and 1991 the political divisions within the ruling stratum provided some space within which worker activists could organize and mobilize without serious repercussions. The Party and KGB saw the workers' movement as a useful counter-balance to the emerging strength of the democratic intelligentsia, and sought to channel it into appropriate directions rather than to drive it into the arms of the democrats through repression. At the same time, in most cities worker activists could look to the democratic movement for support in the form of legal advice, material resources and political contacts, particularly after 1989 when the democratic movement sought to broaden its popular base in preparation for the forthcoming elections. Where democrats assumed power locally in 1990, as in Moscow and St Petersburg, workers' leaders were able to use their political contacts to provide them with further resources, including office accommodation in municipal buildings, to put recalcitrant managements under political pressure, and to secure reinstatement or compensation for dismissed activists through the courts. At the same time, while political uncertainties made management cautious about

disciplining workers, worker activists could provide management with useful connections with the new political (and sometimes commercial) class, while managers were becoming increasingly adept at harnessing workers' protests to their own attempts to extract resources from municipal and national authorities.

The collapse of the system with the *putsch* and counter-*putsch* in August 1991 appeared at first to herald a new dawn for the workers' movement. The leaders of the workers' movement believed that the new government had come to power on the back of the workers' movement, and was committed to the principles which motivated the majority of the workers' leaders. Although managers and ministries were very slow to accord recognition to the new trade unions and to engage in meaningful negotiations, although the government was very slow to implement reforms which would challenge the dominance of the official trade unions, and although the courts were still proving at best obstructive and at worst antagonistic to their pleas, the workers' leaders could put all this down to continued resistance from the old apparatus, and such resistance only served to strengthen their commitment to the President and the reform process, a commitment that was sealed in the first year of the new regime by the inclusion of the new unions in the Tripartite Commission, the adoption of the Law on Collective Agreements which gave legal backing to their struggle for recognition, and Presidential statements and decrees on social insurance.

Although the leaders of the workers' movement received no support from the executive in their struggle against the continued resistance of the government bureaucracy to their claims through 1992, they persisted in the belief that this was not an expression of the convergence between the new and the old apparatus, but of the President's ignorance of their plight. Their faith in the President survived the law on privatization of July 1992, which handed enterprises to their directors on a plate, the showdown with the air traffic controllers in August, the victimization and criminal prosecution of the air traffic controllers' leaders through to December, the failure to reform the system of social insurance or to redistribute the property of the official trade unions, the failure to support a re-registration of trade union membership, and the increasingly close relationship between the government and the official unions, signalled by the removal of the new unions from the

Tripartite Commission in December, followed by the removal of the social democratic ministers from the Ministry of Labour.

The workers' leaders' faith in the reformers survived the refusal of the government to back the rights of the new unions to sign separate tariff agreements through 1993, rights removed by government resolution in the summer, the continued failure to remove the system of social insurance from the control of the official unions, the repeated failure of the President even to reply to letters, let alone to meet with the leaders of the workers' movement who felt that they had put him in power. Despite all the evidence, despite the catastrophic impact of the 'reforms' on the economy, the national leaders of the new workers' movement retained their faith in Yeltsin, and their belief that the failure of reform was the result not of the reforms themselves, but of bureaucratic and managerial resistance and subversion, not of the emergence of a market economy, but of monopolistic barriers to competition. And every time they began to have their doubts, every time that pressure from the ground in the face of the deepening crisis pressed them towards confrontation with the government, if not with its chief, another round in the confrontation between Yeltsin and the legislature forced them back into a position of unconditional, if impotent, support for the President and his reform programme.

Yeltsin's confrontation with the Supreme Soviet in September 1993, the shelling of the White House, and the subsequent elections, removed the scapegoat which had hitherto prevented the national leaders of the workers' movement from establishing their independence from the government and their President. The refusal of Gaidar, to whom both the NPG and the air traffic controllers had looked for support, to include any leaders of the workers' movement on his party list, and the removal of Gaidar and his associates from the government after the election, deprived the workers' leaders of their last illusions that they could look to any part of the governmental apparatus for support. However, instead of using the time and space to build up an independent organizational base, the strategy of calling in their political debts from Yeltsin and the democratic movement now left the workers' leaders in a position in which they had little base to turn back to.

Moreover, Yeltsin's relative disengagement from the activity of his government through 1993, and his construction of alternative governmental structures within the presidential apparatus, continued to foster the illusion that the struggle for democracy and reform was being

conducted not in the country, nor any longer in the confrontation between legislature and executive, but within the executive itself. Although the workers' leaders received no support from the Presidential laager, and indeed had virtually no communication with it, their commitment to 'democracy and reform' was reinforced by the growing infusion of money and resources from the United States, channelled particularly through the AFL-CIO and the Russian-American Fund. Indeed, at national level the principal struggle in which the new unions were involved through 1994 was the individual and collective struggle for access to US funds. The key index of success and failure was whether the union and its leaders had been put on the payroll of the Russian-American Fund.

If we identify a workers' movement with its national leadership we have to conclude that there is no significant workers' movement in Russia. The only national organizations which can even claim to have a significant membership, Sotsprof, NPG and FPAD, have been marginalized from the political process and isolated from their own membership. The prospects for each are somewhat different.

Sotsprof is almost certainly in terminal decline, having largely lost its influence in national and Moscow government circles, and being supported only by patronage from Moscow and abroad. By the end of 1994 Sotsprof was most active in Novosibirsk, where its activity came down to the efforts of Viktor Popov and Pavel Taletskii in taking enterprise directors to court. In Chelyabinsk, VAZ in Tol'yatti and AZLK in Moscow the Sotsprof groups continued to play a role in linking a handful of activists, and these grass-roots activists certainly enjoyed influence and reputation, but membership was minimal, there was virtually no organisation, and the groups were on the defensive against enterprise management, most of their activists' energy being channelled into legal proceedings, while Sergei Khramov, increasingly isolated even from the other leaders of the new workers' movement, tried to establish new Sotsprof mini-groups in Ivanovo, the city hardest hit by the collapse of production, and to find new political allies and financial backers.

By 1994 NPG in Kuzbass was seriously divided and losing membership, with its national leadership lacking credibility even in the eyes of its own members, but in the other coalfields NPG was still a significant and effective force, working increasingly closely with the coal concerns, the official trade union NPRUP (now calling itself

Rosugleprof to avoid confusion with NPG) and regional authorities to present a united front pressing the interests of the industry and the region in Moscow. This meant that NPG in these regions had had to compromise its independence,³ but in Kuzbass that independence had long been spurious at mine level, and at regional level had become a dogmatic commitment to isolation. Moreover, of all the official trade unions Rosugleprof is the one which has moved the furthest down the path of reform, in part as a result of the pressure from NPG, with almost all of its regional and national leadership having emerged from the strikes of 1989 and 1991.

NPG nationally was also finding it increasingly difficult to continue to pursue an independent path during 1994, as little money came in from its regional organisations and it came to rely increasingly heavily on the financial support of the AFL-CIO-sponsored Russian-American Fund. The response of the centre was to press for constitutional reforms that would establish NPG as a strictly centralised organisation, a proposal adopted at the meeting of the Council of Representatives in Severoural'sk on 30–31 May, and referred for endorsement to the congress to be held in December (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 5, 1994). Although the proposal brought a strong reaction from many of NPG's primary groups, the leadership was able to push the constitutional change through the congress.

If the closer local relationship between NPG and Rosugleprof is reproduced at national level, then NPG may have a chance to reconstitute itself as an effective trade union or as a sectional branch of a wider federation. The signs at the beginning of 1995 were that co-operation between the two unions was developing fast, as the miners struggled to secure payment of the monies owing to the industry from the government and to defend the subsidy in the 1995 budget. At the NPG congress in Chelyabinsk in December 1994, and at the subsequent plenum of Rosugleprof, the talk was increasingly of the need for the two unions to co-operate. NPG Russia resolved to allow regional bodies to decide whether or not to participate in strike action called by other unions, and in fact NPG on the ground participated in the strikes called by Rosugleprof in February and March 1995 in every coal-mining region, including Kuzbass, although the regional leadership, outside Vorkuta, kept quiet.⁴

FPAD is in a similar position to NPG. At local level air traffic controllers faced the choice between marginalization and collaboration

with the other trade unions in the negotiation and monitoring of collective agreements at airport level. It is difficult to be sure which of these two tendencies, incorporation or marginalization, is prevailing, since the national leadership continues to assert its absolute independence of the official unions, while at local level it is only the cases of conflict which receive publicity. Nevertheless, the development of Rosaerоnavigatsiya provides a way around this dilemma by opening up a channel through which FPAD can be reintegrated into the system as a sectional trade union representing a particular 'labour aristocracy' within the industry, without having to abandon its independence.⁵

In sum, then, the only prospects for the survival of the leading organs of the 'workers' movement' that emerged from the struggle against the Soviet system would seem to be their transformation into sectional trade union bodies pursuing the specific occupational interests of their members within the framework of the wider trade union movement. This is not to say that these organizations should or will *reduce* themselves to sectional bodies, but that they should strengthen their trade union activity so as to be able to link their political activity more closely to their trade union demands. The leaders of the Russian workers' movement, and particularly of the miners, have repeatedly stressed that theirs is not a movement in defence of the sectional interests of particular groups of workers, but a movement which expresses the interests of the working class as a whole. But the 'interests of the working class as a whole' is a pure abstraction if it does not emerge from the democratic self-organization of workers, within which the sectional interests of different groups of workers can be articulated, expressed and reconciled, rather than being repressed in the name of some 'higher' goal, whether that be the radiant future of state socialism, or the Greater Russia of the new chauvinists.

If the prospects of the new workers' movement are limited, what is the chance of a democratization of the former 'official' trade unions? We have not considered the development or prospects of the official trade unions in this book, but at the national level the prospects do not appear favourable. Since Yeltsin assumed power, the official unions have maintained the traditional distance between rhetoric and reality, their rhetoric representing them as the bastions of defence of the interests of the working-class, the reality being that they have continued to be bastions of the defence of whoever happens to be in power. The government realized from the earliest days of its rule that it

needed the official trade unions as a powerful stabilizing force in the period of reform, and that, however radical the rhetoric of the official unions might be in opposition to reform, the unions were absolutely dependent on the government for retaining their power, privileges and wealth. The government only had to hint at removing social insurance from the trade unions, or at a re-registration of union membership, or at the repeal of union privileges, or, most dangerous of all, at a redistribution of union property, for the official unions to step into line. And although the government did nibble away at the edges of the empire of the official trade unions, the government and the official trade union apparatus have in practice continued to support one another in the traditional way. The mass strikes and campaigns of action of FNPR have had no more significance as manifestations of the power of the working-class than the traditional May Day demonstrations that they have replaced, while sectoral strikes have been almost exclusively at the behest of and under the control of management seeking to extract resources from municipal, regional and national authorities.

This is by no means to say that there has been no change in the official trade unions. They are no longer merely the craven followers of the Party line that they once were, and they have increasingly been developing as representative institutions. But what they represent is still the interests not of workers at work, but of the branch of production that they represent, while at the workplace they are still firmly under management control. Conflicts within FNPR, including withdrawals such as that of the metallurgists, have not been over the issues of trade union organization or trade union strategy, but have represented the conflict of interests between branches of production, with a tendency to the formation of sectoral coalitions uniting unions organizing in light industry, heavy industry, metallurgy, energy and the budget sector. Thus, even the leaders of Rosugleprof confess that theirs is not yet a trade union, and that they are only beginning to learn how to be trade unionists.

The prospects for more radical change in the official trade unions are limited while their alliance with management continues to have an objective foundation in the system of distribution and redistribution of resources which has been carried over, in a superficially new form, to the pseudo-market non-monetary economy. The wages which an enterprise can pay, and the level of employment which it can sustain,

are still determined primarily not by its market success, except in those rare cases in which an enterprise is indeed successful in the market, but on the support it receives, directly or indirectly, from Moscow or from regional or local power centres, in the form of direct subsidies, the preservation of monopoly powers, the allocation of government-controlled orders, tax concessions and the distribution of credit. In this situation there is a strong incentive for the trade union to unite with management at every level to press for the greatest possible share of resources, and to suppress any conflict which might undermine the bargaining power of management in this process. This is one of the reasons why the leaders of the independent workers' movement have retained their commitment to radical reform, effective privatization and the transition to a liberal market economy, because only under such conditions do clear lines of division between management and workers emerge. But the idea that the workers' movement should seek to develop by putting its forces into a struggle to create a capitalist class is Menshevism gone mad.

If the future does not lie with the leaders of the new workers' movement in Moscow, nor in the radicalization of the leaders of the official unions in the face of a full-blooded transition to a market economy, what are the prospects of a renewal of the workers' movement from below?

Within the enterprise the official trade union apparatus is no longer subordinate to the Party, but it remains dependent on management for recognition, for facilities, for the resources that it is able to distribute to its members, and for the personal advantage of its officers. It has been above all this dependence on management at enterprise level that has tied the official unions into the management apparatus and impeded the advance of independent workers' organization. Where an independent workers' group has been able to establish roots in the workplace, as has NPG in Vorkuta and Chelyabinsk, as have the air traffic controllers in Rosaeronavigatsiya, and as did Sotsprof briefly in Ducat, the First Moscow Watch Factory and AZLK, it has been by allying itself with management, or with one faction of management.

One reason for the weakness of the independent workers' movement is the weakness of Russian capitalist development. As and when the much heralded 'transition to a market economy' does get under way, there is no doubt that conflict within the enterprise will increase dramatically, and that workers and worker activists will have an

important role to play in such conflict. However, all the indications to date are that, for the foreseeable future, the space for worker activists to play such a role will continue to be created by divisions within management, and that the possibility of their playing an effective role will depend on their allying with one or another faction of management. At the same time, if worker activists are not to follow the well-trodden path of absorption into the system, they have to retain their independence. If they are able to tread the narrow line between accommodation and resistance, the prospects of a renewal of the workers' movement, both within and against the institutions of the official trade union movement, are more promising.⁶ However, we should not underestimate the barriers that independent worker activists face.

We have already noted that the relatively favourable conditions faced by worker activists between 1987 and 1991 did not long survive Yeltsin's counter-*putsch* in August 1991. Once the democrats had seized power they had no further use for the workers' movement, which could only prove a destabilizing force both politically and economically, at both local and national levels. The immediate consequence on the ground was that workers' groups, whether or not they were affiliated to wider organizations, found themselves deprived of political and material support. The relative consolidation of the power structure meant that management was increasingly willing to victimize worker activists, and the courts were increasingly ready to support such dismissals. Moreover, with the deepening crisis of production from the end of 1991, the threat of dismissal on grounds of redundancy loomed increasingly large over the workforce as a whole, with strikers and activists usually finding themselves the first to go. Although continued shortages of skilled labour meant that skilled workers were in a relatively more favourable position, we have already seen in looking at the primary groups of Sotsprof and NPG that even their members faced the threat of summary dismissal through 1993.

The conditions under which workers try to organize today are in many respects less favourable than they were in the years of repression. Under the old system the limits within which workers could organize to represent their own interests were very narrow, but within those limits, on the basis of informal structures and relationships, workers were able to press their grievances against their managers.

Today even the most modest assertion of the workers' rights and interests makes the protester liable to disciplinary action and dismissal, with much of the legal protection enjoyed by workers under the old regime having been removed, however much it might have been neglected and abused in the past, and the drafts of the new strike law promising effectively to ban industrial action altogether. Where workers in the past did have channels through which they could take grievances, even if those grievances only disappeared upstairs, today there are none, apart from the courts which are costly, tardy, and operate with little regard for the law. True, there is no gulag, nor confinement in psychiatric hospital, to greet the protester. But, increasingly, worker activists are being threatened, beaten up, and on occasion assassinated.

It would be expecting a great deal to expect that in such conditions a mature workers' movement could appear overnight, particularly when the workers' movement is in such a sorry state in the West. It would correspondingly be over-hasty to judge any of the leaders of the workers' movement too harshly, whether it be to criticize the compromises made by those who have sought to reform the official unions or the compromises made by those who have sought to rely on political alliances or even commercial activity.

The temptation to take short cuts on the part of the leadership of the workers' movement was very strong, particularly in a situation in which the factional conflicts within the ruling stratum provided an opening for workers' leaders to form alliances, whether to the left or to the right, through which they could hope to constitute themselves as a significant historical force. Without such alliances, as we have seen in the case of the Sotsprof primary groups, it is extremely difficult for a workers' organization to survive, let alone to advance.

Nevertheless, with or without compromise, small groups of worker activists are still engaged in struggling for their rights in virtually every large enterprise in Russia, and the new workers' organisations have put these activists in contact with one another, at enterprise, city and even national level, whereas before 1987 even communication between activists in neighbouring shops in the same factory was rare and dangerous. Conflict is still endemic on the shop floor, with the new issues of privatization and redundancy joining the old issues of job control, the allocation of work and the distribution of benefits. We ourselves have suggested in the past, somewhat over-optimistically,

that privatization could provide an issue around which such conflicts might coalesce, giving a new impetus to the development of the workers' movement. Although in some cases privatization has indeed been a stimulus to worker mobilization, it has not in general proved to be such as workers have shown themselves to be too demoralized, divided and fatalistic to believe that they have the power to influence such major decisions. In the absence of effective workers' organization, it is more likely that redundancy and the restructuring of production relations will foster further divisions within the workforce, rather than providing an effective focus for collective action.

The absence of a basis for collective action does not mean that workers are resigned to their fate. They may seek predominantly individualistic ways out of the crisis, following their own private survival strategies at home and at work. But the corollary of the fragmentation and demoralization of the working-class, of workers' resignation in the face of remote forces which they feel themselves unable to affect, of their growing anger and disgust at the corruption that pervades public life and the criminalization of the young that destroys all hope for the future, is the longing for a powerful leader, the faith in a saviour who can purge the Augean stables, who can drive out the money-changers and reimpose order and discipline on society. In the absence of a workers' movement through which workers can articulate their anger, through which they can have some hope of changing the system in ways that can improve their own lives, they will vote for populist demagogues. Not in hope, nor in expectation, but in frustration and in despair. This is precisely why the struggles described in this book are so important, and why it is important to continue to support workers in their struggles, however difficult those struggles might be.

NOTES

- ¹ Simon Clarke, ed., *Management and Industry in Russia: Formal and Informal Relations in the Period of Transition*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 1995, and Simon Clarke, ed., *Conflict and Change in the Russian Industrial Enterprise*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 1995.
- ² Not only the organized new workers' movement, but also the tiny groups of activists in plants around the country, have been dominated by skilled workers, and particularly by those groups of workers who formerly had relatively high status and privileges guaran-

teed by the Party, who have to fight to preserve those privileges now that the Party rule, against which they themselves had struggled, has collapsed.

- ³ In September a one-day strike was called in Vorkuta by a joint meeting of NPG and Rosugleprof representatives on the issue of non-payment of wages, demanding that wages should have first call on all funds of the enterprise, and also declaring themselves opposed to the course of reform. NPG Russia endorsed this strike, and called for shift meetings in support in all Russian mines. On 22 October NPG Russia called for a one-day warning strike over the issue of the non-payment of wages (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 9, 10, 1994). A strike in Chelyabinsk in December was similarly a joint effort of NPG and Rosugleprof (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 12, 1994).
- ⁴ The Rosugleprof and NPG leaders had reached an informal agreement around the end of 1993 to refrain from attacking one another in public. However, the meeting of the NPG Council of Representatives on February 18–19 1995, attended by Kislyuk, issued a statement attacking the strike as a directors' strike, and Rosugleprof for stirring up dangerous political emotions. On the other hand, during the negotiations over the subsidy for the coal industry with Deputy Prime Minister Chubais in Moscow earlier in the month, Sergeev reportedly turned to Chubais and said, 'We have supported you since 1992, but you have betrayed us. From now on I am supporting Bud'ko [president of Rosugleprof]!'
- ⁵ Through 1994 all the aviation unions made noises about unity, but little progress was made, although both FPAD and ALS supported the demands of the PLS pilots, who struck in what seems to have been an ineffectual action on 18 May. The pilots demands concerned safety and pensions. PLS claimed that pilots from 45 of 140 airports struck, the Ministry of Transport claimed that 38 crews refused to work, delaying a few flights. The strike was called off after ten hours, and declared illegal the following day under Gorbachev's law banning strikes in the transport industry (*Profsoyuznoe obozrenie*, 5, 1994). PLS did not reciprocate such an expression of solidarity, joining the official union in continuing to exclude FPAD and ALS from the branch collective agreement.
- ⁶ On union renewal see Peter Fairbrother, 'Workplace Trade Unionism in the State Sector' in C. Smith, P. Ackers and P. Smith (eds.) *The New Workplace and Trade Unionism*, London: Routledge, 1995.

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