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the Bolsheviks & Workers' Control

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1917 to 1921

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Introduction

This pamphlet has two aims. It seeks to contribute new factual material to the current discussion on 'workers' control'. And it attempts a new kind of analysis of the fate of the Russian Revolution. The two objectives, as will be shown, are inter-related.

Workers' Control

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

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

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

The confusion about workers' control (at least in Britain) is partly terminological. In the British movement (and to a lesser extent in the English language)

a clear-cut distinction is seldom made between 'control' and 'management', functions which may occasionally overlap but are usually quite distinct. In French, Spanish or Russian political literature two separate terms ('contrôle' and 'gestion', 'control' and 'gerencia', 'kontrolia' and 'upravleniye') refer respectively to partial or total domination of the producers over the productive process. A moment's reflection will make it obvious why one must make this distinction.

Two possible situations come to mind. In one the working class (the collective producer) takes *all* the fundamental decisions. It does so directly, through organisms of its own choice with which it identifies itself completely or which it feels it can totally dominate (Factory Committees, Workers' Councils, etc.). These bodies, composed of elected and revocable delegates probably federate on a regional and national basis. They decide (allowing the maximum possible autonomy for local units) what to produce, how to produce it, at what cost to produce it, at whose cost to produce it. The other possible situation is one in which these fundamental decisions are taken 'elsewhere', 'from the outside', i.e. by the State, by the Party, or by some other organism without deep and direct roots in the productive process itself. The 'separation of the producers from the means of production' (the basis of all class society) is maintained. The oppressive effects of this type of arrangement soon manifest themselves. This happens whatever the revolutionary good intentions of the agency in question, and whatever provisions it may (or may not) make for policy decisions to be submitted from time to time for ratification or amendment.

There are words to describe these two states of affairs. *To manage* is to initiate the decisions oneself, as a sovereign person or collectivity, in full knowledge of all the relevant facts. *To control* is to supervise, inspect or check decisions initiated by others. 'Control' implies a limitation of sovereignty or, at best, a state of duality of power, wherein some people determine the objectives while others see that the appropriate means are used to achieve them. Historically, controversies about workers' control have tended to break out precisely in such conditions of economic dual power.

Like all forms of dual power, economic dual power is essentially unstable. It will evolve into a consolidation of bureaucratic power (with the working class exerting less and less of the control). Or it will evolve into *workers' management*, with the working class taking over all managerial functions. Since 1961, when '*Solidarity*' started advocating 'workers' management of production' others have begun to call for 'workers' *direct* control', 'workers' *full* control', etc.—so many

tacit admissions of the inadequacy (or at least ambiguity) of previous formulations.

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

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

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

(1) *R. V. Daniels. The Conscience of the Revolution, (Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 81.*

to challenge their ossified beliefs).

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

The question of self-management is not esoteric. Its discussion—in the sharpest possible terms—is not sectarian. Self-management is what the revolution of

(2) *Not all Trotskyist tendencies practice this kind of deception. Some are unambiguously reactionary. For instance K. Coates and A. Topham state 'it seems sensible for us to speak of "workers' control" to indicate the aggressive encroachment of Trade Unions (sic!) on management powers, in a capitalist framework, and of "workers' self-management" to indicate attempts to administer a socialised economy democratically'. (Industrial Democracy in Great Britain, Macgibbon and Kee, 1968, p. 363.)*

Trotsky himself was just as straightforward. Although not making of workers' control a function to be exercised by the unions he distinguished clearly enough between 'control' and 'management'. 'For us the slogan of control is tied up with the period of dual power in production which corresponds to the transition from the bourgeois regime to the proletarian. . . . In the language of all mankind by control is understood surveillance and checking by one institution over the work of another. Control may be very active, authoritative and all-embracing. But it still remains control. The very idea of this slogan is an outgrowth of the transitional regime in industry, when the capitalist and his administrators can no longer take a step without the consent of the workers, but on the other hand, when the workers have not as yet . . . acquired the technique of management, nor yet created the organs essential for this'. (L. Trotsky. What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat, 1932).

our time is all about. This in itself would justify a pamphlet such as the present one. A study of this period (Russia, 1917–1921) has, however, deeper implications. It could provide the basis for a new kind of analysis of the fate of the Russian Revolution, a task to which we will now briefly turn.

The Russian Revolution

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

Over the last 50 years all the existing organisations of the left have elaborated a whole mythology (and even a whole anti-mythology) about the Russian Revolution. The parliamentary fetishists of Social-Democracy see 'the failure of Bolshevism' in its 'antidemocratic practices'. The original sin, for them, was the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. The self-styled 'communist' movement (Stalinists, Trotskyists, Maoists, etc.) talks with filial pride of the 'glorious, socialist, October Revolution'. They seek to vaunt and popularise its original achievements while differing in their appreciations of what happened subsequently, when it happened, why it happened and to whom it happened. For various anarchists the fact that the State or 'political power' were not immediately 'abolished' is the ultimate proof and yardstick that nothing of fundamental significance really occurred. (3) The SPGB draw much the same conclusion, although they attribute it to the fact that the wages system was not abolished, the majority of the Russian population not having had the benefit of hearing the SPGB viewpoint (as put by spokesmen duly sanctioned by their Executive Committee) and not having then sought to win a Parliamentary majority in the existing Russian institutions.

On all sides people seek to use the Russian Revolution with a view to integrating it into their own propaganda—only retaining of it those aspects which happen to

(3) *An example of such an over-simplified analysis of the fate of the Revolution can be found in Voline Nineteen Seventeen (Freedom Press, 1954). 'The Bolshevik Party, once in control, installed itself as absolute master. It was quickly corrupted. It organised itself as a privileged caste. And later it flattened and subjected the working class in order to exploit it, under new forms, in its own interests'.*

conform with their own particular analysis of history, or their own particular prescriptions for the present. Whatever was new, whatever seemed to contradict established theories or break out of established categories, has been systematically 'forgotten', minimised, distorted, denied.

Any attempt to re evaluate the crucial experience of 1917–1921 is bound to evoke opposition. The first to react will be the 'apparatchiks' who for years have been protecting 'revolutionary' organisations (and 'revolutionary' ideology) from the dual threats of subversion and renewal. Opposition will also be found however in the minds of many honest militants, seeking the road to genuinely revolutionary politics. One isn't dealing here with a simple psychological resistance but with a much deeper phenomenon which cannot be explained away by reference to the reactionary role and influence of various 'leaderships'. If the average militant has difficulty in understanding the full significance of some of the problems raised in the early stages of the Russian Revolution it is because these problems are amongst the most important and difficult (if not *the* most important and difficult) ever to have confronted the working class. The working class made a revolution that went beyond a mere change in the political personnel at the top. It was able to expropriate the former owners of the means of production (thereby profoundly altering the existing property relations). But to what extent was it able to go beyond even this? To what extent was it able—or prepared—to revolutionise the relations of production? Was it willing to destroy the authority structure which the relations of production embody and perpetuate in all class societies? To what extent was it prepared itself to manage production (and thereby the whole of society), or to what extent was it inclined to delegate this task to others? And to what extent was the dominant ideology to triumph, compelling the working class to substitute for its avowed enemies a Party that claimed to speak 'on its behalf'?

To answer these questions is a major task, beset with pitfalls. One of the dangers confronting anyone seeking dispassionately to analyse the 'heroic period of the Russian Revolution' is the danger of 'retrospective identification' with this or that tendency or individual then active on the political scene (Osinsky, Kollontai, Maximov, Makhno or Miasnikov, for instance). This is a pointless political pastime. It leads rapidly to a state of mind where instead of seeking to understand the broad course of events (which *is* a relevant preoccupation) revolutionaries find themselves asking such questions as 'what should have been done at this or that moment?'; 'was this or that action premature?'; 'who was right at this or that Congress?'; etc. We hope to have avoided this snare. When, for instance, we study

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the struggle of the Workers' Opposition against the leadership of the Party (in 1920 and 1921) it is not for us a question of 'taking sides'. It is a question of *understanding* what the forces in conflict really represented. What, for instance, were the motives (and the ideological and other limitations) of those who appeared to be challenging the drift to bureaucratisation in every aspect of social life?

Another danger (or another form of the same danger) threatens those venturing into this field for the first time, while still befuddled by the official mythology. It is the danger of becoming entangled in the very legend one is seeking to destroy. Those, for instance, seeking to 'demolish' Stalin (or Trotsky, or Lenin) may successfully achieve their immediate objective. But they may 'succeed' at the expense of not seeing, sensing or recording the most fundamental new features of this period: the autonomous action of the working class seeking totally to alter the conditions of its existence. We hope to have avoided this trap. If we have quoted at some length the statements of prominent individuals it is only insofar as they epitomize the ideologies which, at a given point in history, guided the actions and thoughts of men. Throughout the account, moreover, we have felt that the only way seriously to deal with what the Bolsheviks said or did was to explain the social role of their utterances and actions.

We must now state our own methodological premisses. We hold that the 'relations of production'—the relations which individuals or groups enter into with one another in the process of producing wealth—are the essential foundations of any society. A certain pattern of relations of production is the common denominator of all class societies. This pattern is one in which the producer does not dominate the means of production but on the contrary both is 'separated from them' and from the products of his own labour. In all class societies the producer is in a position of subordination to those who manage the productive process. Workers' management of production—implying as it does the total domination of the producer over the productive process—is not for us a marginal matter. It is the core of our politics. It is the only means whereby authoritarian (order-giving, order-taking) relations in production can be transcended and a free, communist or anarchist, society introduced.

We also hold that the means of production may change hands (passing for instance from private hands into those of a bureaucracy, collectively owning them) *without this revolutionising the relations of production*. Under such circumstances—and whatever the formal status of property—the society is still a class society, for production is still managed by an agency other than

the producers themselves. Property relations, in other words, do not necessarily reflect the relations of production. They may serve to mask them—and in fact they often have. (4)

This much of the analysis is fairly widely accepted. What has not been hitherto attempted is to relate the history of the Russian Revolution to this overall conceptual framework. Here we can only indicate the broad lines of such an approach. (5) Seen in this light the Russian Revolution represents an unsuccessful attempt by the Russian working class to break out of relations of production that were proving increasingly oppressive. The massive upsurge of 1917 proved strong enough to smash the political supremacy of the bourgeoisie (by shattering the economic base on which it was founded: the private ownership of the means of production). It altered the existing system of property relations. But it did not prove strong enough (despite heroic attempts in this direction) to alter the authoritarian relations of production characteristic of all class societies. Sections of the working class (those most active in the Factory Committee movement) certainly attempted to influence the Revolution in this direction. But their attempt failed. It is worth analysing the causes of this failure—and seeing how new masters came to replace the old ones.

What were the forces pitted against those seeking a total transformation of the conditions of industrial life? First, of course, there was the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie had *everything* to lose in such a total social upheaval. Confronted with workers' management, it stood to lose not only its *ownership* of the means of production but also the possibility of *privileged positions* vested in expertise

(4) *For a full discussion of this concept—and of all its implications—see 'Les rapports de production en Russie' by P. Chaulieu, in issue No. 2 (May-June 1949) of Socialisme ou Barbarie. Although the concept may surprise many 'marxists' it is of interest that Engels had clearly perceived it. In his letter to Schmidt (October 27, 1890) he wrote: 'In a modern state law must not only correspond to the general economic condition and be its expression, but must also be an internally coherent expression which does not, owing to its inner contradictions, reduce itself to nought. And in order to achieve this, the faithful reflection of economic conditions suffers increasingly. . . The reflection of economic relations as legal principles is necessarily a topsy-turvy one'. (Marx-Engels—Selected Correspondence, pp. 504-5)*

(5) *That such an analysis might be possible was suggested in an excellent short pamphlet Notes pour une analyse de la Révolution Russe (n.d.) by J. Barrot. (Obtainable from Librairie 'La Vieille Taupe', 1 rue des Fossés-St.-Jacques, Paris 5).*

and in the exercise of decisional authority. No wonder the bourgeois breathed a sigh of relief when they saw that the leaders of the Revolution would 'go no further than nationalisation' and were keen to leave intact the order-giver/order-taker relationship in industry and elsewhere. True, large sections of the bourgeoisie fought desperately to regain their lost property. The Civil War was a protracted and bloody affair. But thousands of those who, through custom and culture, were more or less closely attached to the expropriated bourgeoisie were very soon offered the opportunity to re-enter the 'revolutionary stronghold'—by the back door as it were—and to resume their role as managers of the labour process in the 'Workers' State'. They seized this unexpected opportunity eagerly. In droves they either joined the Party—or decided to co-operate with it, cynically welcoming every utterance by Lenin or Trotsky in favour of 'labour discipline' or 'one-man management'. Many were soon to be appointed (from above) to leading positions in the economy. Merging with the new political-administrative 'elite', of which the Party itself formed the nucleus, the more 'enlightened' and technologically skilled sections of the 'expropriated class' soon resumed dominant positions in the relations of production.

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

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

shaken.

Why did the Party act in this manner? To answer this question would require a much fuller analysis of the Bolshevik Party and of its relation to the Russian working class than we can here attempt. Again one would have to steer clear both of mythology ('the great Bolshevik Party', 'the weapon forged by Lenin', 'the spearhead of the revolution', etc.) and of anti-mythology ('the Party as the embodiment of totalitarianism, militarism, bureaucracy,' etc.), seeking constantly to understand rather than to rant or rave. At the superficial level both the Party's ideology and its practice were firmly rooted in the specific historical circumstances of Tsarist Russia, in the first decade of this century. Illegality and persecution partly explain (although they do not justify) the Party's organisational structure and its conception of its relationship to the class. (6) What is more difficult to understand is the naivety of the Bolshevik leaders who don't seem to have appreciated the effects that this type of organisation and this type of relationship to the class would inevitably have on the subsequent history of the Party.

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

(6) *Both explicitly outlined in the theory (c.f. Lenin: 'What is to be done' and 'One step forwards, two steps back') and in the practice of Bolshevism, between 1901 and 1917.*

(7) *L. Trotsky. Stalin (London, 1947), p. 61. The Congress referred to is the 3rd Party Congress (April 25—May 10, 1905).*

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

This separation between the Bolsheviks and the masses was to be revealed repeatedly during 1917. It was first witnessed during the February revolution, again at the time of the 'April Theses', and later still at the time of the July days. (11) It has repeatedly been admitted that the Party made 'mistakes' both in 1905 and in 1917. But this 'explanation' explains nothing. What one should be asking is what made these mistakes possible? And one can answer only if one understands the *type of work* undertaken by the Party cadres, from the creation of the

(8) *L. Trotsky. ibid., pp. 64-65.*

(9) *P. Broué. Histoire du Parti Bolshevik. (Editions de Minuit, Paris 1963), p. 35.*

(10) *The same attitude was to be found within the Party itself. As Trotsky himself was to say, this time approvingly: 'The statutes should express the leadership's organised distrust of the members, a distrust manifesting itself in vigilant control from above over the Party'. I. Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, O.U.P. 1954), p. 76.*

(11) *No, we are not saying that the military overthrow of the Provisional Government was possible in July. We are merely stressing how out of touch the Party was with what the masses really wanted.*

Party right up to the time of the Revolution. The Party leaders (from those on the Central Committee down to those in charge of local groups) had been placed, through the combined effects of the conditions of the struggle against Tsarism and of their own organisational conceptions, in a situation which allowed them only tenuous links with the real workers' movement. 'A worker-agitator' wrote Lenin, 'who shows any talent and is at all promising *should not work in the factory*. We must see to it that he lives on Party support . . . and goes over to an underground status'. (12) No wonder the few Bolshevik cadres of working class origin soon lost real contacts with the class.

The Bolshevik Party was torn by a contradiction which helps explain its attitude before and after 1917. Its strength lay in the advanced workers who supported it. There is no doubt that this support was at times widespread and genuine. But these workers could not control the Party. The leadership was firmly in the hands of professional revolutionaries. In a sense this was inevitable. A clandestine press and the dissemination of propaganda could only be kept going regularly by militants constantly on the move and at times compelled to seek refuge overseas. A worker could only become a Bolshevik cadre on condition he ceased work and placed himself at the disposal of the Party, which would then send him on special missions, to this or that town. The apparatus of the Party was in the hands of revolutionary specialists. The contradiction was that the real living forces that provided the strength of the Party could not control it. As an institution, the Party totally eluded control by the Russian working class. The problems encountered by the Russian Revolution after 1917 did not bring about this contradiction, they only served to exacerbate it. The attitude of the Party in 1917 and after are products of its history. This is what rendered so futile most of the attempts made within the Party by various oppositions between 1918 and 1921. They failed to perceive that a given ideological premise (the preordained hegemony of the Party) led necessarily to certain conclusions in practice.

But even this is probably not taking the analysis far enough. At an even deeper level the very conception of this kind of organisation and this kind of relationship to the mass movement reflect the unrecognised influence of bourgeois ideology, even on the minds of those who were relentlessly seeking to overthrow bourgeois society. The concept that society must necessarily be divided into 'leaders' and 'led', the notion that there are some born to rule while others cannot really develop beyond a certain stage have from time immemorial been

(12) *Lenin. Sochineniya, IV, 441.*

the tacit assumptions of every ruling class in history. For even the Bolsheviks to accept them shows how correct Marx was when he proclaimed that 'the ruling ideas of each epoch are the ideas of its ruling class'. Confronted with an 'efficient', tightly-knit organisation of this kind, built on ideas of this kind, it is scarcely surprising that the emerging Factory Committees were unable to carry the Revolution to completion.

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

An analysis of the Russian Revolution shows that in allowing a specific group, separate from the workers themselves, to take over the function of managing production, the working class loses all possibility of even controlling the means of producing wealth. The separation of productive labour from the means of production results in an exploiting society. Moreover, when institutions such as the soviets could no longer be influenced by ordinary workers, the regime could no longer be called a soviet regime. By no stretch of the imagination could it still be taken to reflect the interests of the working class. *The basic question: who manages production after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie? should therefore now become the centre of any serious discussion about socialism.* Today the old equation (liquidation of the bourgeoisie=workers' state) popularised by countless Leninists, Stalinists and Trotskyists is just not good enough.

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

group whose specific task it became. The bureaucracy organised the work process in a country of whose political institutions it was also master.

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

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

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

is largely a question of documentation. The masses make history, they do not write it. And those who do write it are nearly always more concerned with ancestor worship and retrospective justification than with a balanced presentation of the facts.

Other charges will also be made. The quotations from Lenin and Trotsky will not be denied but it will be stated that they are 'selective' and that 'other things, too' were said. Again, we plead 'guilty'. But we would stress that there are hagiographers enough in the trade whose 'objectivity' (like Deutscher's for instance) is but a cloak for sophisticated apologetics. There is moreover another reason for unearthing this material. Fifty years after the Revolution—and long after its 'isolation' has been broken—the bureaucratic system in Russia clearly bears little resemblance to the model of the Paris Commune (elected and revocable delegates, none receiving more than a workingman's wage, etc., etc.). In fact Russia's social structure has scarcely any anticipation in the whole corpus of marxist theory. It therefore seems more relevant to quote those statements of the Bolshevnik leaders of 1917 which helped determine Russia's evolution rather than those other statements which, like the May Day speeches of Labour leaders, were for ever to remain in the realm of rhetoric.

Notes on Dates

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

1917

February

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

February 27

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

March

Factory and Shop Committees (1), Workers' Councils and Councils of Elders appear in every major industrial centre of European Russia. From the onset, their demands are not limited to wages or hours but challenge many managerial prerogatives.

In several instances Factory Committees were set up because the previous owners or managers had disappeared during the February turmoil. Most of those who later drifted back were allowed to resume their positions—but had to accept the Factory Committees. 'The proletariat' wrote Pankratova* 'without legislative sanction, started simultaneously to create all its organisations: soviets of workers' deputies, trade unions and Factory Committees'. (2) A tremendous working class pressure was developing all over Russia.

March 10

First formal capitulation by a significant body of employers. Agreement signed between Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet and Petrograd Manufacturers' Association, granting the 8-hr day in some enterprises and 'recognising' some of the Committees. Most other employers refused to follow suit. For instance

* *Anna Mikhailovna Pankratova joined the Bolshevik Party in 1919 as an Odessa University student. She wrote a number of books on the history of the Russian labour movement and later became a professor at Moscow University and at the Academy of Social Sciences. In 1952 she was elected to the Central Committee of the Party and the following year became editor-in-chief of the Party journal Voprosii Istorii (Questions of History). She died in 1957.*

Published before the era of systematic historical distortion, her pamphlet on the Factory Committees contains interesting material. Her scope and vision are however seriously limited because of her endorsement of two fundamental Bolshevik assumptions: (a) 'that the role of the Factory Committees ends either with the ebb of the revolutionary tide or with the victory of the Revolution' and (b) that the 'demands and aspirations arising from the depths of the working class are given formulation, and provided with ideological content and organisational cement through the Party. . . The struggle for workers' control took place under the leadership of the Party, which had allowed (sic!) the proletariat to take political and economic power'.

(1) Fabzavkomy: short for *fabrichno-zavodnye komitety*.

(2) A. M. Pankratova. *Fabzavkomy Rossii v borbe za sotsialisticheskuyu fabriku* (Russian Factory Committees in the struggle for the socialist factory). Moscow, 1923, p. 9. Parts of this important document were published in the December 1967 (No. 34) issue of the French journal *Autogestion* (page numbers refer to the French version).

on March 14 the Committee for Commerce and Industry declared that 'the question of the 8-hr day cannot be resolved by reciprocal agreement between workers and employers, because it is a matter of state importance'. The first major fight of the Factory Committees took place on this issue.

The 8-hr day was soon imposed in Petrograd, either with the reluctant consent of the employers or unilaterally, by the workers. The 'recognition' of the Factory Committees proved much more difficult to impose, both employers and State recognizing the threat to them inherent in this form of organisation.

April 2

Exploratory Conference of Factory Committees of Petrograd War Industries, convened on the initiative of the workers of the Artillery Department. This Conference was to proclaim what were, at that time, the most advanced 'terms of reference' for any Factory Committee. Paragraphs 5 to 7 of the proclamation stipulated:

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

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

'The Factory Committee controls managerial activity in the administrative, economic and technical fields . . . representatives of the Factory Committee must be provided, for information, with all official documents of the management, production budgets and details of all items entering or leaving the factory . . . '(3)

(3) *ibid.*, pp. 12—13.

April 7

Publication of *April Theses*, shortly after Lenin had returned to Petrograd from abroad. Only reference to workers' control is in Thesis 8: 'Our immediate task shall not be the "introduction of socialism" but to bring social production and distribution of products . . . under the control of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies.'

April 23

The new government had to make some verbal concessions. It passed a law partially 'recognising' the Committees but carefully restricting their influence. All the key issues were left to the 'mutual agreement of the parties concerned'—in other words there was no *statutory* obligation on the employers to deal directly with the Committees.

The workers however showed little concern about the provisions of the law. 'They commented, in their own fashion, on the law of April 23 . . . They determined their own terms of reference, in each factory, steadily

expanding their prerogatives and decided on what their representatives might do, according to the relation of forces in each particular instance.' (4)

April 23

Lenin writes: 'Such measures as the nationalisation of the land and of the banks and syndicates of capitalists, or at least the immediate establishment of the *control* of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies over them (measures which do not in any way imply the "introduction of socialism") must be absolutely insisted on and whenever possible introduced by revolutionary means'. Such measures were 'entirely feasible economically' and without them it would be 'impossible to heal the wounds of the war and prevent the impending collapse'. (5)

To Lenin's basic ideas of workers' control as a 'curb on the capitalists' and 'a means of preventing collapse', a third was soon to be added with recurs in much of Lenin's writing of this period. It is the concept of workers' control as a 'prelude to nationalisation'. For instance: 'We must at once prepare the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, the Soviet of Deputies of Bank Employees, etc., to proceed to the adoption of feasible and practicable measures for the merging of all the banks into one single national bank, to be followed by the establishment of the control of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies over the banks and syndicates and then by their nationalisation'. (6)

May 1917

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

May 17

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

May 20

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

(4) *ibid.*, p. 12.

(5) V. I. Lenin. *Tasks of the Proletariat in our Revolution. Selected Works*, vol. VI, p. 62.

(6) V. I. Lenin. *Political Parties and Tasks of the Proletariat. ibid.*, p. 85—6.

(7) V. I. Lenin. *Materials on Revision of Party Programme. ibid.*, pp. 116—117.

competent worker’.

At the same time Lenin calls for the ‘unconditional participation (my emphasis) of the workers in the control of the affairs of the trusts’—which could be brought about ‘by a decree requiring but a single day to draft’.

- (8) V. I. Lenin. *Ruin is Threatening*. *ibid.*, p. 142.

May 29

Kharkov Conference of Factory Committees.

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

- (9) I. Kreizel. *Iz istorii profdvizheniya g. Kharkova v 1917 godu* (On the history of the Trade Union Movement in Kharkov in 1917). Referred to by Pankratova (*op. cit.*, p. 15). Kharkov, 1921.

May 30–June 5

First full Conference of Petrograd Factory Committees.

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

- (10) A. Pankratova, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

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

- (11) *ibid.*, p. 19.

The Conference was widely attended. Even M.I. Skobelev, Menshevik Minister of Labour in the Provisional Government was to address it. His contribution was of interest as a sort of anticipation of what the

Bolsheviks would be saying before the year was up. Skobelev asserted that 'the regulation and control of industry was a task for the State. Upon the individual class, especially the working class, lies the responsibility for helping the state in its organisational work'. He also stated that 'the transfer of enterprises into the hands of the people at the present time would not assist the Revolution'. The regulation of industry was the function of Government, not of autonomous Factory Committees. 'The Committees would best serve the workers' cause by becoming subordinate units in a state-wide network of trade unions'. (12)

A similar viewpoint was put by Rozanov, one of the founders of the Professional Workers' Union. His assertions that the 'functions of the Factory Committees were ephemeral' and that 'Factory Committees should constitute the basic elements of the unions' were sharply criticized. Yet this is exactly the role to which—within a few months—the Factory Committees were to be relegated by Bolshevik practice. At this stage, however, the Bolsheviks were critical of the idea (the unions were still largely under Menshevik influence).

Lenin's address to the Conference contained a hint of things to come. He explained that workers' control meant 'that the majority of workers should enter all responsible institutions and that the administration should render an account of its actions to the most authoritative workers' organisations'. (13) Under 'workers' control' Lenin clearly envisaged an 'administration' other than the workers themselves.

The final resolution, supported by 336 of the 421 delegates, proclaimed the Factory Committees 'fighting organisations, elected on the basis of the widest democracy and with a collective leadership'. Their objectives were the 'creation of new conditions of work'. The resolution called for 'the organisation of thorough control by labour over production and distribution' and for 'a proletarian majority in all institutions having executive power'. (14)

The next few weeks witnessed a considerable growth of the Factory Committees. Wherever they were strong enough (both before but especially after the October Revolution, when they were abetted by local Soviets) the Committees 'boldly ousted the management and assumed direct control of their respective plants'. (15)

June 16

First All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

June 20–28

A trade union Conference held in Petrograd passed a resolution which stipulated that 'the trade unions, defending the rights and interests of hired labour... cannot take upon themselves administrative-economic functions in production'. (16) The Factory Committees were relegated to the role of seeing to it 'that laws for the defence of labour were observed and that collective

(12) *Pervaya rabochaya konferentsiya fabrichno-zavodskikh komitetov*, (First Workers' Conference of Factory Committees) Petrograd, 1917.

(13) V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniya*, XX, 459.

(14) S. O. Zagorsky, *State Control of Industry in Russia during the War*. (New Haven, 1928), pp. 174–5.

(15) R. V. Daniels. *The Conscience of the Revolution*. (Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 83.

(16) *Tretya vserossiiskaya konferentsiya professionalnykh soyuzov: Rezolyutsii prinyatiya na zasedaniakh konferentsii 20–28 Iyunya 3–11 Iyulya 1917 g.* (Third All Russian Conference of Trade Unions: Resolutions adopted at the sessions of the Conference of June 20–28/July 3–11, 1917). Petrograd, n.d., p. 18.

agreements concluded by the unions were also observed'. The Factory Committees were to agitate for the entrance of all workers of the enterprise into the union. They should 'work to strengthen and extend the trade unions, contribute to the unity of their fighting action' and 'increase the authority of the unions in the eyes of unorganised workers'. (17)

(17) *ibid.*, para 6.

This Conference, dominated by Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries, had considerable misgivings concerning the Factory Committees. It expressed these by advocating that the Committees should be elected *on the basis of lists drawn up by the trade unions*.

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

(18) *ibid.*, p. 323.

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

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

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

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

(19) I. Deutscher, *Soviet Trade Unions*. (Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1950), pp. 1—2.

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

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

It is important to realise that from the beginning of the Revolution the unions were tightly controlled by political organisations, which used them to solicit support for their various actions. This explains the ease with which the Party was able—at a later date—to manipulate the unions. It also helps one understand the fact that the unions (and their problems) were often to prove the battleground on which political differences between the Party leaders were again and again to be fought out. Taken in conjunction with the fact that the Party's whole previous development (including its tightly centralised structure and hierarchical organisational conceptions) had tended to separate it from the working class, one can understand how heavily the cards were stacked against any *autonomous* expression or even voicing of working class aspirations. In a sense these found a freer expression in the Soviets than in either the Party or the trade unions.

Be that as it may trade union membership increased rapidly after February, workers taking advantage of their newly won freedom. 'During the first months of 1917 (union) membership rose from a few scores of thousands to 1.5 million . . . But the practical role of the trade unions did not correspond to their numerical strength . . . In 1917 strikes never assumed the scale and power they had in 1905 . . . The economic ruin of Russia, the galloping inflation, the scarcity of consumers' goods, and so on, made normal "bread and butter" struggle look unreal. In addition the threat of mobilisation hung over would-be strikers. The working class was in no mood to strive for limited economic advantage and partial reforms. The entire social order of Russia was at stake'. (20).

(20) *ibid.*, p. 13.

June–July

Persistent efforts of Mensheviks fully to subordinate the Factory and Plant Committees to the trade unions. These were successfully resisted by a temporary alliance

* *We are not here 'denouncing' the fact that the unions were being influenced by political parties. Nor are we advocating anything as simplistic as 'keeping politics out of the unions'. We are simply describing the real state of affairs in Russia in 1917, with a view to assessing its significance in the subsequent development of the Russian Revolution.*

of anarchists—objecting on grounds of principle—and of Bolsheviks acting on the basis of tactical considerations.

- (21) See Statistics on political strikes in V. L. Meller's and A. M. Pankratova's *Rabocheye dvizheniye v 1917 godu* (The Workers' Movement in 1917), pp. 16., 20. Also M. G. Fleer's *Rabocheye dvizheniye v godu voiny* (The Workers' Movement in the War Years), Moscow 1925, pp. 4—7.

- (22) *Shestoi s'yezd RSDRP* (b): *Protokoly*. (The Sixth Congress of the RSDWP (b): *Protocols* [1917]) Moscow: IMEL, 1934, p. 134.

- (23) *Oktyabrskaya revolyutsiya i fabzavkomy: materialy po istorii fabrichno-zavidskikh komitetov* (The October Revolution and the Factory Committees: materials for a history of the Factory Committees). Moscow 1927—1929. 3 vols. I, pp. 229, 259. These volumes (henceforth referred to as *Okt. Rev. i Fabzavkomy*) are the most useful source on the Factory Committees.

- (24) *ibid.*, p. 190.

- (25) *ibid.*, p. 171.

- (26) These are described in great detail in *Okt. Rev. i Fabzavkomy*.

The autonomous Factory Committee movement found its highest development and most militant expression in the engineering industry. (21) This is of particular relevance as it explains the drastic measures the Bolsheviks had to resort to, in 1922, to break the independent organisations of the engineering workers.

July 26—August 3

Sixth Party Congress.

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

(22)

August 7—12

'Second Conference of Factory Committees of Petrograd, its Environs, and Neighbouring Provinces', held at the Smolny Institute.

The Conference resolved that $\frac{1}{4}$ % of the wages of all workers represented should go to support a "Central Soviet of Factory Committees", thus made financially independent of the unions. (23) Rank and file supporters of the Factory Committees viewed the setting up of this 'Central Soviet' with mixed feelings. On the one hand they sensed the need for co-ordination. On the other hand they wanted this co-ordination to be carried out from below, by themselves. Many were suspicious of the motives of the Bolsheviks, on whose initiative the 'Central Soviet' had been bureaucratically set up. The Bolshevik Skrypnik spoke of the difficulties of the Central Soviet of Factory Committees, attributing them 'in part to the workers themselves'. Factory Committees had been reluctant to free their members for work in the Centre'. Some of the Committees 'refrained from participation in the Central Soviet because of Bolshevik predominance in it'. (24) V. M. Levin, another Bolshevik, was to complain that the workers 'didn't distinguish between the conception of control and the conception of taking possession'. (25)

The Second Conference adopted a whole number of statutes, regulating the work of the Committees, the duties of the management (sic!), procedures for electing the Committees, etc. (26) 'All decrees of Factory Committees' were declared compulsory 'for the factory administration as well as for the workers and employees—until such time as those decrees were abolished by the Committee itself, or by the Central Soviet of Factory Committees'. The Committees were to meet regularly *during working hours*. Meetings were to be held on days designated by the Committees themselves. Members of the Committees were to receive full pay—from the employers—while on Committee business. Notice to the appropriate administrative personnel was to be deemed

sufficient to free a member of the Factory Committee from work so that he might fulfil his obligations to the Committee. In the periods between meetings, selected members of the Factory Committees were to occupy premises, within the factory, at which they could receive information from the workers and employees. Factory administrations were to provide funds 'for the maintenance of the Committees and the conduct of their affairs'. Factory Committees were to have 'control over the composition of the administration and the right to dismiss all those who could not guarantee normal relations with the workers or who were incompetent for other reasons'. 'All administrative factory personnel can only enter into service with the consent of the Factory Committee, which must declare its (sic!) hirings at a General Meeting of all the factory or through departmental or workshop committees. The 'internal organisation' of the factory (working time, wages, holidays, etc.) was also to be determined by the Factory Committees. Factory Committees were to have their own press and were 'to inform the workers and employees of the enterprise concerning their resolutions by posting an announcement in a conspicuous place'. But, as the Bolshevik Skrypnik realistically reminded the Conference 'we must not forget that these are not normal statutes confirmed by the Government. They are our platform, on the basis of which we will fight'. The basis of the demands was 'customary revolutionary right'.

August 3

Campaign launched by Provisional Government against 'Factory Committees' in the Railways. Kukel, Vice-Minister for the Navy, proposes proclamation of martial law on the Railways and the creation of commissions entitled to 'dissolve the Committees'. (This is the voice of the bourgeoisie in August 1917—not of Trotsky, in August 1920! *See August 1920*).

At a Government-sponsored 'consultation with the rank-and-file' held in Moscow on August 10 the catastrophic condition of the Railways was to be attributed to the existence of the Railway Committees. 'According to an enquiry conducted at a meeting of Railway Managers, 5531 workers had been nominated to participate in these Committees on the 37 main lines. These people were absolved of all commitments to work. On the basis of an average minimum of 2,000 rubles, this little business was costing the Government 11 million rubles. And this only concerned 37 of the 60 main lines. . . ' (27)

At about the same time Struve, a well-known bourgeois ideologist and economist, was writing that 'just as in the military field the elimination of officers by soldiers leads to the destruction of the Army (because it implies a legalisation of revolt incompatible with the very existence of the Army), so in the economic field: the substitution of managerial power by workers management implies the destruction of normal economic order

(27) A. Pankratova. *op. cit.*, p. 25.

(28) *ibid.*, p. 25.

and life in the enterprises'. (28)

A little later in the month a Conference of Employers was held in Petrograd. It set up a Union of Employers' Associations. The main function of the new organisation was described by its president Bymanov as 'the elimination of interference by the Factory Committees in what are managerial functions.'

August 11

First issue of *Golos Truda*, published in Russia under banner of the Union of Anarcho-Syndicalist Propaganda.

August 25

Golos Truda, in a famous article headed '*Questions of the Hour*', wrote: 'We say to the Russian workers, peasants, soldiers, revolutionists: above all, *continue the revolution*. Continue to organise yourselves solidly and to unite your new organisations: your communes, your unions, your committees, your soviets. Continue, with firmness and perseverance, always and everywhere to participate more and more extensively and more and more effectively in the economic life of the country, continue to take into your hands, that is into the hands of your organisations, all the raw materials and all the instruments indispensable to your labour. Continue the Revolution. Do not hesitate to face the solution of the burning questions of the present. Create everywhere the necessary organisations to achieve these solutions. Peasants, take the land and put it at the disposal of your committees. Workers, proceed to put in the hands of and at the disposal of your own social organisations—everywhere on the spot—the mines and the subsoil, the enterprises and the establishments of all sorts, the works and factories, the workshops and the machines'. A little later, issue No. 15 of the same paper urged its readers to 'begin immediately to organise the social and economic life of the country on new bases. Then a sort of "dictatorship of labour" will begin to be achieved, easily and in a natural manner. And the people would learn, little by little, to do it'.

During this period there were a number of important strikes (tannery and textile workers in Moscow, engineering workers in Petrograd, petrol workers in Baku, miners in the Donbas). 'There was a common feature to these struggles: the employers were prepared to make concessions through increased wages but categorically refused to recognise any rights to the Factory Committees. The workers in struggle... were prepared to fight to the bitter end not so much on the question of wage increases as on the question of the recognition of their factory organisations'. (29) One of the main demands was the transfer to the Committees of the rights of hiring and firing. The inadequacies of the 'law' of April 23 were by now widely realised. Demands for the Soviets to take the power were beginning to evoke an echo. 'During its struggle for a "factory constitution" the

(29) *ibid.*, p. 29. So much for the workers 'only being capable of trade union consciousness'.

working class had become aware of the need itself to manage production'. (30)

(30) *ibid.*, p. 36.

August 28

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

(31) *Novy Put (New Path)*, October 15, 1917, Nos. 1—2. *Novy Put* was the organ of the Central Soviet of Factory Committees.

September

Bolshevik Party wins majorities in both Petrograd and Moscow Soviets.

September 10

Third Conference of Factory Committees. On September 4, another circular from the Ministry of Labour had stated that the right of hiring and firing of workers belonged to the owners of the enterprise. The Provisional Government, by now very alarmed at the growth of the Factory Committees, was striving desperately to curtail their power.

The Menshevik Kolokolnikov attended the Conference as the representative of the Ministry of Labour. He defended the Circulars. He 'explained' that the circulars did not deprive the workers of the right of *control over* hiring and firing . . . but only of the right to hire and fire. 'As the Bolsheviks were themselves to do later Kolokolnikov defined control as supervision over policy, as opposed to the right of making policy.' (32)

(32) F. I. Kaplan. *Bolshevik Ideology*. (P. Owen, London, 1969), p. 83.

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

(33) *Okt. Rev. i Fabzavkomy*, II, 23.

September 14

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

September 26

Lenin writes: 'The Soviet Government must immediately introduce throughout the state workers' control over production and distribution'. 'Failing such control . . . famine and catastrophe of unprecedented dimensions

(34) V. I. Lenin. *The Aims of the Revolution, Selected Works*, VI, p. 245—6.

(35) V. P. Milyutin. *Istoriya ekonomicheskogo razvitiya SSSR, 1917—1927* (History of the Economic Development of the USSR), Moscow and Leningrad, 1927, p. 45.

threaten the country from week to week'. (34)

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

October 1

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

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

No one disputes the importance of keeping reliable records but Lenin's identification of workers' control, in a 'workers' state', with the function of accountancy (i.e. checking the implementation of decisions taken by others) is extremely revealing. Nowhere in Lenin's writings is workers' control ever equated with fundamental decision-taking (i.e. with the *initiation* of decisions) relating to production (how much to produce, how to produce it, at what cost, at whose cost, etc.).

Other writings by Lenin in this period reiterate that one of the functions of workers' control is to prevent sabotage by the higher bureaucrats and functionaries.

'As for the higher employees . . . we shall have to treat them as we treat the capitalists—roughly. They, like the capitalists, will offer resistance . . . we may succeed with the help of workers' control in rendering such resistance impossible'. (36)

Lenin's notions of workers' control (as a means of preventing lock-outs) and his repeated demands for the 'opening of the books' (as a means of preventing economic sabotage) referred both to the immediate situation, *and to the months which were to follow the revolution*. He envisaged a period during which, in a workers' state, the bourgeoisie would still retain the formal ownership and effective management of most of the productive apparatus. The new state, in Lenin's estimation, would not be able immediately to take over the running of industry. There would be a transitional period during which the capitalists would be coerced into co-operation. 'Workers' control' was seen as the instrument of this coercion.

October 10

Fourth Conference of Factory Committees of Petrograd and its Environs. The main business on the agenda was the convocation of the first All-Russian Conference of Factory Committees.

October 13

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

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

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

As already pointed out, the Bolsheviki *at this stage* still supported the Factory Committees. They saw them as 'the battering ram that would deal blows to capitalism, organs of class struggle created by the working class on its own ground'. (38) They also saw in the *slogan* of 'workers control' a means of undermining Menshevik influence in the unions. But the Bolsheviki were being 'carried along by a movement which was in many respects embarrassing to them but which, as a main

(36) V. I. Lenin. op. cit., pp. 265—7.

(37) G. P. Maximoff. *Syndicalists in the Russian Revolution*. ('Direct Action' pamphlet No. 11), p. 6.

(38) A. Pankratova. op. cit., p. 5.

(39) E. H. Carr. *The Bolshevik Revolution* (Penguin Edition). II, 80.

(40) I. Deutscher. op. cit., pp. 15—16.

(41) G. P. Maximoff. op. cit., p. 11—12.

(42) *Okt. Rev. i Fabzavkomy*, II, 114.

(43) *ibid.*, II, 188.

(44) *ibid.*, II, p. 190.

(45) *ibid.*, II, p. 180.

driving force of the revolution, they could not fail to endorse'. (39) During the middle of 1917 Bolshevik support for the Factory Committees was such that the Mensheviks were to accuse them of 'abandoning' Marxism in favour of anarchism. 'Actually Lenin and his followers remained firm upholders of the Marxist conception of the centralised state. Their immediate objective, however, was not yet to set up the centralised proletarian dictatorship, but to decentralise as much as possible the bourgeois state and the bourgeois economy. This was a necessary condition for the success of the revolution. In the economic field therefore, the Factory Committee, the organ on the spot, rather than the trade union was the most potent and deadly instrument of upheaval. Thus the trade unions were relegated to the background. . . ' (40)

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

October 17—22

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

According to later Bolshevik sources, of the 137 delegates attending the Conference there were 86 Bolsheviks, 22 Social-Revolutionaries, 11 anarcho-syndicalists, 8 Mensheviks, 6 'maximalists' and 4 'non-party'. (42) The Bolsheviks were on the verge of seizing power, and their attitude to the Factory Committees was already beginning to change. Shmidt, future Commissar for Labour in Lenin's government, described what had happened in many areas. 'At the moment when the Factory Committees were formed, the trade unions actually did not yet exist. The Factory Committees filled the vacuum'. (43) Another Bolshevik speaker stated 'the growth of the influence of the Factory Committees has naturally occurred at the expense of centralised economic organisations of the working class such as the trade unions. This of course is a highly abnormal development which has in practice led to very undesirable results'. (44)

A different viewpoint was stressed by a delegate from Odessa. He declared that 'the Control Commissions must not be mere checking commissions but must be the *cells of the future*, which even now are preparing for the transfer of production into the hands of the workers'. (45) An anarchist speaker argued 'the trade unions wish to devour the Factory Committees. There is no popular discontent with the Factory Committees, but there is discontent with the trade unions. To the worker the trade

union is a form of organisation imposed from without. The Factory Committee is closer to them'. Returning to a theme that was to recur repeatedly he also emphasised that 'the Factory Committees were cells of the future... They, not the State, should now administer'. (46)

(46) *ibid.*, II, p. 191.

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

(47) G. K. Ordzhonikidze. *Izbrannye statii i rechi 1911—1937* (Selected articles and speeches) Moscow, 1939. p. 124.

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

(48) A. Pankratova. *op. cit.*, pp. 48—49.

October 25

Overthrow of Kerensky's Provisional Government. Proclamation of Council of Peoples Commissars (Sovnarkom) during opening session of Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

October 26

At second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, Bolshevik spokesmen proclaimed: 'The Revolution has been victorious. All power has passed to the Soviets... New laws will be proclaimed within a few days dealing with workers' problems. One of the most important will deal with workers' control of production and with the return of industry to normal conditions. Strikes and demonstrations are harmful in Petrograd. We ask you to put an end to all strikes on economic and political issues, to resume work and to carry it out in a perfectly orderly manner... Every man to his place. The best way to support the Soviet Government these days is to carry on with one's job'. (49) Without apparently batting an eyelid Pankratova could write that 'the first day of workers' power was ushered in by this call to work and to the edification of the new kind of factory'. (50)

(49) *ibid.*, p. 50.

(50) *ibid.*, p. 51.

Publication of '*Decree on the Land*'. Lands of nobility, church and crown transferred to custody of peasants.

November 3

Publication in *Pravda* of Lenin's 'Draft Decree on Workers' Control'. (51) This provided for the 'introduction of workers' control of the production, warehousing, purchase and sale of all products and raw materials in all industrial, commercial, banking, agricultural and other enterprises employing a total of not less than five workers and employees—or with a turnover of not less

(51) V. I. Lenin *Selected Works*. vol. VI, pp. 410—411.

than 10,000 rubles per annum’.

Workers’ control was to be ‘carried out by all the workers and employees in a given enterprise, either directly if the enterprise is small enough to permit it, or through delegates to be immediately elected at mass meetings. Elected delegates were to ‘have access to all books and documents and to all warehouses and stocks of material, instruments and products, without exception’.

These excellent, and often quoted, provisions in fact only listed and legalised what had already been achieved and implemented in many places by the working class in the course of the struggles of the previous months. They were to be followed by three further provisions, of ominous import. It is amazing that these are not better known. In practice they were soon to nullify the positive features of the previous provisions. They stipulated (point 5) that ‘the decisions of the elected delegates of the workers and employees were legally binding upon the owners of enterprises’ but that they could be ‘annulled by trade unions and congresses’ (our emphasis). This was exactly the fate that was to befall the decisions of ‘the elected delegates of the workers and employees: the trade unions proved to be the main medium through which the Bolsheviks sought to break the autonomous power of the Factory Committees.

The Draft Decree also stressed (point 6) that ‘in all enterprises of state importance’ all delegates elected to exercise workers’ control were to be ‘answerable to the State for the maintenance of the strictest order and discipline and for the protection of property’. Enterprises ‘of importance to the State’ were defined (point 7)—and this has a familiar tone for all revolutionaries—as ‘*all enterprises working for defence purposes, or in any way connected with the production of articles necessary for the existence of the masses of the population*’ (our emphasis). In other words practically any enterprise could be declared by the new Russian State as ‘of importance to the State’. The delegates from such an enterprise (elected to exercise workers’ control) were now made answerable to a higher authority. Moreover if the trade unions (already fairly bureaucratised) could ‘annul’ the decisions of rank-and-file delegates, what real power in production had the rank-and-file? The Decree on Workers’ Control was soon proved, in practice, not to be worth the paper it was written on.*

November 9

Decree dissolving soviet in the People’s Commissariat of Posts and Telegraphs. (52)

(52) *Sobraniye Uzakonenii* 1917—18. (Collection of Statutes 1917—18). No. 3, art. 30.

* *It is quite dishonest for those who should know better (see article by T. Cliff in Labour Worker of November 1967) to trumpet these decrees on workers’ control as something they never were—and were never intended to become.*

The concept of workers' control had spread even to the Civil Service. A soviet of Employees had taken control of the People's Commissariat of Posts and Telegraphs and another had established itself in the Admiralty. On November 9 an appeal was issued by the People's Commissar for the Ministry (sic) of Posts and Telegraphs which concluded 'I declare that no so-called initiatory groups or committees for the administration of the department of Posts and Telegraphs can usurp the functions belonging to the central power and to me as People's Commissar'. (53)

November 14

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

Despite heated protests from the rank and file—and after nearly two weeks of controversy—a 'compromise' was adopted in which the trade union—now the 'unexpected champions of order, discipline and centralised direction of production' (55)—had clearly won the upper hand. *The new text was adopted by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets (V. Ts. I.K.) on November 14 (by 24 votes to 10), ratified by the Council of People's Commissars on November 15 and released the following day.* Milyutin, who presented the 'revised decree to the V. Ts. I.K. explained somewhat apologetically that 'life overtook us' and that it had become urgently necessary to 'unite into one solid state apparatus the workers control which was being operated on the spot'. 'Legislation on workers' control which should logically have fitted into the framework of an economic plan had had to precede legislation on the plan itself'. (56) There could be no clearer recognition of the tremendous pressures from below and of the difficulties the Bolsheviks were experiencing in their attempts to canalise them.

In the revised decree Lenin's 8 original points had now increased to 14 (57): The new decree started with the

(53) E. H. Carr. op. cit., II, p. 77, fn. 1.

(54) A. Lozovsky. *Rabochii Kontrol (Workers' Control)*. Socialist Publishing House, Petrograd 1918, p. 10.

(55) E. H. Carr. op. cit., p. 73.

(56) *Protokoly zasedanii V Ts I K 2 sozyva* (1918), p. 60.

(57) See Appendices to vol. XXII of Lenin's *Sochineniya*. Also article by D. L. Limon on 'Lenine et le Controle Ouvrier' in the December 1967 issue of *Autogestion*.

ingenious statement that: 'In the interests of a planned regulation of the national economy' the new Government 'recognised the authority of workers' control throughout the economy'. But there had to be a firm hierarchy of control organs. Factory Committees would be 'allowed' to remain the control organ of each individual enterprise. But each Committee was to be responsible to a 'Regional Council of Workers' Control', subordinated in turn to an '*All-Russian Council of Workers' Control*'. (58) The composition of these higher organs was decided by the Party.

- (58) Sbornik dekretov i postanovlenii po narodnomu khozyaistvu (25 oktyabrya 1917 g—25 oktyabrya 1918 g), Moscow 1918, pp. 171—172.

The trade unions were massively represented in the middle and higher strata of this new pyramid of 'institutionalised workers' control'. For instance the All-Russian Council of Workers' Control was to consist of 21 'representatives': 5 from the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, 5 from the Executive of the All-Russian Council of Trade Unions, 5 from the Association of Engineers and Technicians, 2 from the Association of Agronomists, 2 from the Petrograd Trade Union Council, 1 from each All-Russian Trade Union Federation numbering fewer than 100,000 members (2 for Federations of over this number) . . . and 5 from the All-Russian Council of Factory Committees! The Factory Committees often under anarcho-syndicalist influence had been well and truly 'cut down to size'.

- (59) V. I. Lenin. *Selected Works*, vol. VI, pp. 27—28.

Long gone were the days when Lenin had asserted 'the source of power is not a law previously discussed and passed by parliament, but the direct initiative of the masses from below, in their localities—outright 'seizure', to use a popular expression'. (59)

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

- (60) E. H. Carr. *op. cit.*, p. 75.

Bolshevik propaganda, in later years, was constantly to reiterate the theme that the Factory Committees were not a suitable instrument for organising production on a national scale. Deutscher for instance claims that, almost from their creation, the 'anarchic characteristics

of the Committees made themselves felt: every Factory Committee aspired to have the last and final say on all matters affecting the factory, its output, its stocks of raw material, its conditions of work, etc., and paid little or no attention to the needs of industry as a whole' (61). Yet in the very next sentence Deutscher points out that 'a few weeks after the upheaval (the October revolution) the Factory Committees attempted to form *their own* national organisation, which was to secure their virtual economic dictatorship. The Bolsheviki now called upon the trade unions to render a special service to the nascent Soviet State and to discipline the Factory Committees. The unions came out firmly against the attempt of the Factory Committees to form a national organisation of their own. They prevented the convocation of a planned All-Russian Congress of Factory Committees and demanded total subordination on the part of the Committees'.

(61) I. Deutscher. *op. cit.*, p. 17.

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

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

A Bolshevik spokesman (62) described the situation, as

(62) I. I. Stepanov-Skvortsov. *Ot rabocheho kontrolya k rabochemu upravleniyu* (From workers' control to workers' management), Moscow 1918.

seen through the eyes of those now in power. 'Instead of a rapid normalisation of production and distribution, instead of measures which would have led towards a socialist organisation of society, we found a practice which recalled the anarchist dreams of autonomous productive communes'. Pankratova puts the matter even more bluntly: 'During the transitional period one had to accept the negative aspects of workers' control, which was just a method of struggle between capital and labour. But once power had passed into the hands of the proletariat (i.e. into the hands of the Party, M.B.) the practice of the Factory Committees of acting as if they owned the factories became anti-proletarian'. (63) These subtleties were however above the heads of most workers. They took Bolshevik propaganda about workers' control at face value. They didn't see it as 'something transitional' or as 'just a stage towards other methods of normalisation of economic life'. (64) For them it was not just a means of combating the economic sabotage of the ruling class or a correct tactical slogan, decided in committee as 'appropriate' to a given stage of the 'developing revolution'. For the masses 'workers' control' was the expression of their deepest aspirations. Who would be boss in the factory? Instinctively they sensed that who managed production would manage all aspects of social life. The subtle difference between 'control' and 'management' of which most Bolsheviks were deeply aware* eluded the masses. The misunderstanding was to have bloody repercussions.

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

There is unfortunately little detailed information available concerning this most interesting period. The data available usually come from sources (either bourgeois or

(63) A. Pankratova. *op. cit.*, p. 54.

(64) *ibid.*, p. 54.

(65) N. Filippov *Ob organizatsii proizvodstva* (On the organisation of production), *Vestnik metallista* (The Metalworker's Herald), January 1918, pp. 40, 43.

(66) P. Avrich. *The Russian Anarchists*, (Princeton, 1967), p. 162.

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

bureaucratic) fundamentally hostile to the very idea of workers' management and solely concerned in proving its 'inefficiency' and 'impracticability'. An interesting account of what happened at the Nobel Oil refinery has been published. (67) This illustrates the fundamental tendency of the working class towards self-management and the hostility it encountered in Party circles. Other examples will doubtless come to light.

November 28

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

The previous disagreements reappeared. (68) Larin, representative of the Bolshevik fraction in the unions, declared that 'the trade unions represent the interests of the class as a whole whereas the Factory Committees only represent particular interests. The Factory Committees should be subordinated to the Trade Unions.' Zhivotov, spokesman of the Factory Committee movement, declared: 'In the Factory Committees we elaborate instructions which come from below, with a view to seeing how they can be applied to industry as a whole. These are the instructions of the work shop, of life itself. They are the only instructions that can have real meaning. They show what the Factory Committees are capable of, and should therefore come to the forefront in discussions of workers' control'. The Factory Committees felt that 'control was the task of the committee in each establishment. The committees of each town should then meet . . . and later establish co-ordination on a regional basis'.

The setting up of the All-Russian Council of Workers' Control by the Bolsheviks was clearly an attempt to bypass the Committee movement. The attempt proved partly successful. The Factory Committees continued their agitation. But their voice, silenced by administrative means, only evoked a feeble echo within the All-Russian Council itself, dominated as it was by Party nominees. 'In January 1918 Riazanov was to declare that the body had only met once (and in May 1918 that it had never really met at all). According to another source it "tried to meet" but couldn't gather a quorum. (69) What is certain is that it never really functioned at all. It is difficult to say whether this was due to systematic Bolshevik boycott and obstruction, to lack of understanding on the part of non-Bolshevik revolutionaries as to what was actually happening, or whether it was due to the genuine weakness of the movement, unable to burst through the bureaucratic straitjacket in which it was being progressively incarcerated. All three factors probably played a part.

November 28

Decree dissolving Soviet in the Admiralty. (70)

December 5

Decree issued (71) setting up a *Supreme Economic Council* (Vesenka) to which were assigned the tasks of

(67) Voline. *Nineteen-Seventeen*. (Freedom Press, 1954), pp. 139—145. Voline's section of 'personal experiences' is well worth reading.

(68) See D. L. Limon, op. cit., p. 74.

(69) E. H. Carr. op. cit., II, p. 75, fn. 3.

(70) *Sobraniye Uzakonenii* 1917—1918, No. 4, art. 58.

(71) *ibid.*, No. 5, art. 83.

(72) *Natsionalizatsiya promyshlennosti v SSSR: sbornik dokumentov i materialov, 1917—1920 gg* (The nationalisation of industry in the USSR: collected documents and source material) Moscow, 1954. p. 499.

(73) E. H. Carr. op. cit., p. 80.

(74) V. I. Lenin. *Sochineniya*, XXII, 215.

(75) E. H. Carr. op. cit., II, p. 80.

working out 'a plan for the organisation of the economic life of the country and the financial resources of the government'. The Vesenka was to 'direct to a uniform end' the activities of all existing economic authorities, central and local, including the All-Russian Council of Workers' Control. (72) The Vesenka was to be 'attached to the Council of Peoples Commissars' (itself made up entirely of members of the Bolshevik Party).

The composition of the Vesenka was instructive. It comprised a few members of the All-Russian Council of Workers' Control (a very indirect sop to the Factory Committees), massive representation from all the new Commissariats and a number of experts, nominated from above in a 'consultative capacity'. The Vesenka was to have a double structure: a) the 'centres' (Glavki) designed to deal with different sectors of industry, and b) the regional organs: the 'local Council of National Economy' (Sovnarkhozy).

At first the 'left' Bolsheviks held a majority of the leading positions on the Vesenka. The first Chairman was Osinsky and the governing bureau included Bukharin, Larin, Sokolnikov, Milyutin, Lomov and Shmidt. (73) Despite its 'left' leadership the new body 'absorbed' the All-Russian Council of Workers' Control before the latter had even got going. This step was openly acknowledged by the Bolsheviks as a move towards 'statisation' (ogosudarstvleniye) of economic authority. The net effect of the setting up of Vesenka was to silence still further the voice of the Factory Committees. As Lenin put it a few weeks later, 'we passed from workers' control to the creation of the Supreme Council of National Economy'. (74) The function of this Council was clearly to 'replace, absorb and supersede the machinery of workers' control.' (75)

A process can now be discerned, of which the rest of this pamphlet will seek to unravel the unfolding. It is a process which leads, within a short period of 4 years, from the tremendous upsurge of the Factory Committee movement (a movement which both implicitly and explicitly sought to alter the relations of production) to the establishment of unquestioned domination by a monolithic and bureaucratic agency (the Party) over all aspects of economic and political life. This agency not being based on production, its rule could only epitomise the continued limitation of the authority of the workers in the productive process. This necessarily implied the perpetuation of hierarchical relations within production itself, and therefore the perpetuation of class society.

The first stage of this process was the subordination of the Factory Committees to the All-Russian Council for Workers' Control in which the unions (themselves already strongly under Party influence) were heavily represented. The second phase — which almost immediately followed the first—was the incorporation of this All-Russian Council for Workers' Control into

the Vesenka, even more heavily weighted in favour of the unions, but also comprising direct nominees of the State (i.e. of the Party). The Vesenka was momentarily allowed to retain a 'left' communist leadership. A little later these 'lefts' were to be removed. A sustained campaign was then launched to curb the power of the unions which, albeit in a very indirect and distorted way, could still be influenced by the working class. It was particularly important to curb such power as the unions still held in relation to production—and to replace it by the authority of direct Party nominees. These managers and administrators, nearly all appointed from above, gradually came to form the basis of the new bureaucracy.

Each of these steps was to be resisted, but each fight was to be lost. Each time the adversary appeared in the garb of the new 'proletarian' power. And each defeat was to make it more difficult for the working class itself directly to manage production, i.e. fundamentally to alter the relations of production. Until these relations of production had been altered the revolution could not really be considered to have achieved its socialist objective, whatever the pronouncements of its leaders. This is the real lesson of the Russian Revolution.

The problem can be envisaged in yet another way. The setting up of the Vesenka represents a partial fusion—in a position of economic authority—of trade union officials, Party stalwarts and 'experts' nominated by the 'workers' state'. But these are not three social categories 'representing the workers'. They were three social categories which were already assuming managerial functions—i.e. were already dominating the workers in production. Because of *their own* antecedent history each of these groups was, for different reasons, already somewhat remote from the working class. Their fusion was to enhance this separation. The result is that from 1918 on, the new State (although officially described as a 'workers' state' or a 'soviet republic'—and although by and large supported by the mass of the working class during the Civil War) was not in fact an institution managed by the working class.*

If one can read between the lines (and not be blinded by words such as 'workers' state' and 'socialist perspective', which only reflect the false consciousness so prevalent at the time) the following account by Pankratova as to what was at stake in the formation of the Vesenka is most informative: 'We needed', she said 'a more efficient form of organisation than the Factory Committees and a more flexible tool than workers'

* *It is not a question of counterposing, as various anarchists do, 'the movement of the masses' to 'dictatorship by the state' but of understanding the specific form of the new authority relations which arose at that particular point of history.*

control. We had to link the management of the new factories to the principle of a single economic plan and we had to do it in relation to the socialist perspectives of the young workers' state . . . the Factory Committees lacked practice and technical know-how . . . The enormous economic tasks of the transition period towards socialism necessitated the creation of a single organism to normalise the national economy on a state-wide basis. The proletariat understood this. (This was wishful thinking, if ever there was. M.B.) Freeing the Factory Committees of their mandates, which no longer corresponded to the new economic needs, the workers delegated authority to the newly created organs, the Council of National Economy'. She concludes with a telling sentence: 'The Petrograd Factory Committees, which in May 1917 had proclaimed the need for workers' control, unanimously buried the idea at the time of the 6th Conference'. (76)

(76) A. Pankratova. *op. cit.*, p. 59.

Subsequent events were to show that although these were the aims and perspectives of the Party leadership, they were far from being accepted by the Party rank and file, let alone by the masses, 'on whose behalf' the Party was already assuming the right to speak.

December (early):

Publication of Lenin's *State and Revolution* (which had been written a few months earlier). In this major theoretical work there is little discussion of workers' control and certainly no identification of socialism with 'workers management of production'. Lenin speaks in rather abstract terms of 'immediate change such that *all* fulfil the functions of control and supervision, that *all* become "bureaucrats" for a time, and that *no-one* therefore can become a "bureaucrat".'

This was part of the libertarian rhetoric of the Bolshevism of 1917. But Lenin, as usual, had his feet firmly on the ground. He spelled out what this would mean in practice. The development of capitalism created the 'economic prerequisites' which made it 'quite possible, immediately, overnight after the overthrow of the capitalists and the bureaucrats, to supersede them in the control of production and distribution, in the work of keeping account of labour and its products by the armed workers, by the whole of the armed population'. 'The accountancy and control necessary for this have been so utterly simplified by capitalism that they have become the extraordinarily simple operations of checking, recording and issuing receipts, which anyone who can read and write and who knows the first four rules of arithmetic can perform'. (77) There is no mention of who will initiate the decisions which the masses will then 'check' and 'record'. *State and Revolution* includes the interesting phrase: 'We want the socialist revolution with human nature as it is now, with human nature that cannot dispense with subordination, control and managers'. (78)

(77) V. I. Lenin. *Selected Works*, vol. VII, pp. 92—93.

(78) *ibid.*, p. 47.

The year 1917 certainly saw a tremendous social upheaval. But it was a utopian dream to assume that socialism could be achieved without a large proportion of the population both understanding and wanting it. The building of socialism (unlike the development of capitalism, which can safely be left to market forces) can only be the *self-conscious and collective act of the immense majority*.

December

Publication, by the Central Council of the Petrograd Factory Committees of the famous '*Practical Manual for the implementation of Workers' Control of Industry*'. To the intense annoyance of Party members this was widely distributed in the suburbs of Petrograd.

The main value of this pamphlet is that it deals with how 'workers' control' could rapidly be extended into 'workers' management'. Neither in Lenin's view—nor in that of the authors (despite the title)—was there any confusion between 'control' and 'management'. Lenin was advocating 'workers' control' and his whole practice, after the revolution, was to denounce attempts at workers' management as 'premature', 'utopian', 'anarchist', 'harmful', 'intolerable', etc. It would be tragic if the ahistoricism and anti-theoretical bias of much of the libertarian movement today allowed new militants to fall into old traps or compelled them again to take turnings that at best lead nowhere—or at worst onto the grounds of previous defeats.

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

The functions of the 4 commissions were to be: a) the organisation of production; b) the reconversion from war production; c) the supply of raw materials; and d) the supply of fuel. The proposals are developed in considerable detail. It is stressed throughout that 'workers' control' is *not* just a question of taking stock of the supplies of raw materials and fuel (c. f. Lenin's: 'Socialism is stocktaking; every time you take stock of iron bars or of pieces of cloth, that is socialism') (79) but that it is intimately related to the transformation of these raw materials within the factory—in other words with the *totality* of the work processes culminating in a finished product.

The 'production commission' should be entrusted with the task of establishing the necessary links between the different sections of the factory, of supervising the state of the machinery, of advising on and overcoming various deficiencies in the arrangement of the factory or plant, *of determining the coefficients of exploitation in each section, of deciding on the optimum number of shops,*

(79) Speech of November 4, 1917 to the Petrograd Workers and Soldiers' Soviet.

and of workers in each shop, of investigating the depreciation of machines and of buildings, of determining job allocations (from the post of administrator down) and of taking charge of the financial relations of the factory.

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

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

December 13

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

The first 4 sections deal with the organisation of workers' control in the factories and with the election of control commissions. The next 5 sections decree the duties and rights of these commissions, stressing which functions they should undertake and which should remain the prerogative of the owner-managers. *Section 5* stresses that insofar as the Commissions play any real role in the management of enterprises, this role should be confined to supervising the carrying out of directives issued by those Central Government agencies 'specifically entrusted with the regulation of economic

(* *Both the 'Manual' and the 'Counter-Manual' should be translated into English. An idea of their contents can be obtained from the interesting article by D.L. Limon in the December 1967 issue of 'Autogestion', although the article degenerates in places into sophisticated Leninist apologetics.*

activity on a national scale.' *Section 7* states that 'the right to issue orders relating to the management, running and functioning of enterprises remains in the hands of the owner. The control commissions must *not* participate in the management of enterprises and have no responsibilities in relation to their functioning. This responsibility also remains vested in the hands of the owner'.

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

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

December 20

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

The same issue of the paper carried an article by the Bolshevik Lozovsky protesting against the Bolshevik

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

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

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

December 23

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

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

(80) E. H. Carr, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 82-83.

1918

January 6

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

January 7-14

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

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

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

According to Lozovsky (a Bolshevik trade unionist) 'the Factory Committees were so much the owners and masters that three months after the Revolution they were to a significant degree independent of the general controlling organs'. (2) Maisky, then still a Menshevik, said that in his experience 'it was not just some of the proletariat, but most of the proletariat, especially in Petrograd, who looked upon workers' control as if it were actually the emergence of the kingdom (tsarstvo) of socialism'. He lamented that among the workers 'the very idea of socialism is embodied in the concept of workers' control'. (3) Another Menshevik delegate deplored the fact that 'an anarchist wave in the shape of Factory Committees and workers' control was sweeping over our

(1) P. Avrich. *op. cit.*, p. 156.
(Several secondary references given.)

(2) Pervy vserossiiski s'yezd professionalnykh soyuzov, 7-14 yanvarya 1918 g. (First All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions, 7-14 January, 1918), Moscow 1918, p. 193. (Henceforth referred to as First Trade Union Congress.)

(3) *ibid.*, p. 212.

(4) *ibid.*, p. 48.

(5) *ibid.*, p. 235.

(6) P. Avrich. *op. cit.*, p. 168.

(7) First Trade Union Congress, p. 85.

Russian Labour movement.' (4) D. B. Ryazanov* a recent convert to Bolshevism, agreed with the Mensheviks on this point and urged the Factory Committees 'to commit suicide by becoming an integral element of the trade union structure'. (5)

The few anarcho-syndicalist delegates to the Congress 'fought a desperate battle to preserve the autonomy of the Committees... Maximov** claimed that he and his fellow anarcho-syndicalists were "better Marxists" than either the Mensheviks or the Bolsheviks—a declaration which caused a great stir in the hall'. (6) He was alluding no doubt to Marx's statement that the liberation of the working class had to be brought about by the workers themselves.***

Maximov urged the delegates to remember 'that the Factory Committees, organisations introduced directly by life itself in the course of the Revolution, were the closest of all to the working class, much closer than the trade unions'. (7) The function of the Committees was no longer to protect and improve the conditions of the workers. They had to seek a predominant position in industry and in the economy. 'As the offspring of the Revolution the Committees would create a new pro-

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

** *Gregori Petrovich Maximov, born in 1893. Graduated as an agronomist in Petrograd in 1915. Joined the revolutionary movement while still a student. In 1918 joined the Red Army. When the Bolsheviks used the Army for police work and for disarming the workers he refused to obey orders and was sentenced to death. The solidarity of the steelworkers' union saved his life.*

Edited anarcho-syndicalist papers Golos Truda (Voice of Labour) and Novy Golos Truda (New Voice of Labour). Arrested March 8, 1921 during the Kronstadt uprising. Released later that year following a hunger strike, but only after the intervention of European delegates attending Congress of Red Trade Union International. Sought exile abroad.

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

*** *It is interesting that as great a 'Marxist' as Rosa Luxemburg was to proclaim, at the founding Congress of the German Communist Party (January 1919) that the trade unions were destined to disappear, being replaced by Councils of Workers and Soldiers Deputies and by Factory Committees. (Bericht über die Verhandlung des Gründungparteitages der KPD (1919), pp. 16, 80).*

duction on a new basis.' (8) The unions 'which corresponded to the old economic relations of tsarist times had lived out their time and couldn't take on this task'. (9) Maximov anticipated 'a great conflict between state power in the centre and the organisations composed exclusively of workers which are found in the localities'. (10) 'The aim of the proletariat was to co-ordinate all activity, all local interest, to create a centre but not a centre of decrees and ordinances but a centre of regulation, of guidance—and only through such a centre to organise the industrial life of the country'. (11)

(8) *ibid.*, p. 239.

(9) *ibid.*, p. 215.

(10) *ibid.*, p. 85.

(11) *ibid.*, p. 85.

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

(12) *ibid.*, p. 221.

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

(13) P. Avrich. *op. cit.*, pp. 168-169.

The anarcho-syndicalist resolution calling for 'real workers' control, not state workers' control', and

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

(14) G. P. Maximov. op. cit., pp. 12-13.

(15) Quoted by A. S. Shlyapnikov, *Die Russischen Gewerkshaftern* (The Russian Trade Unions), Leipzig, 1920. (In German.)

(16) First Trade Union Congress, p. 374.

(17) *ibid.*, pp. 369-370.

(18) *ibid.*, p. 369.

(19) *ibid.*, p. 192.

(20) *ibid.*, p. 230.

(21) *ibid.*, p. 195.

(22) *ibid.*, p. 369.

urging 'that the organisation of production, transport and distribution be immediately transferred to the hands of the toiling people themselves and not to the state or some civil service machine made up of one kind or other of class enemy' was defeated. [The main strength of the anarcho-syndicalists was among the miners of the Debaltzev district in the Don Basin, among the port-workers and cement workers of Ekaterinodar and Novorossiysk and among the Moscow railway workers. At the Congress they had 25 delegates (on the basis of one delegate per 3,000-3,500 members). (14)]

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

The Congress, with its overwhelming Bolshevik majority, voted to transform the Factory Committees into union organs. (16) The Menshevik and Social-Revolutionary delegates voted *with* the Bolsheviks for a resolution proclaiming that 'the centralisation of workers' control was the task of the trade unions'. (17) 'Workers' control' was defined as 'the instrument by which the universal economic plan must be put into effect locally'. (18) 'It implied the definite idea of standardisation in the sphere of production'. (19) It was too bad if the workers read more into the term than this. 'Just because the workers misunderstand and falsely interpret workers' control is no reason to repudiate it'. (20) What the Party meant by workers' control was spelt out in some detail. It meant, *inter alia*, that 'it was not within the competence of the lower organs of workers' control to be entrusted with financial control function... this should rest with the highest organs of control, with the general apparatus of management, with the Supreme Council of National Economy. In the sphere of finance everything must be left to the higher organs of workers' control'. (21) 'For workers' control to be of maximum use to the proletariat it was absolutely necessary to refrain from atomising it. Workers of individual enterprises should not be left the right to make final decisions on questions touching upon the existence of the enterprise'. (22) A lot of re-education was needed and this was to be entrusted

to the 'economic control commissions' of the unions. They were to inculcate into the ranks of the workers the Bolshevik conception of workers' control. 'The trade unions must go over each decree of the Factory Committees in the sphere of control, explain through their delegates at the factories and shops that control over production does *not* mean the transfer of the enterprise into the hands of the workers of a given enterprise, that it does *not* equal the socialisation of production and exchange'. (23) Once the Committees had been 'devoured' the unions were to be the intermediate agency through which workers' control was gradually to be converted into state control.

(23) *ibid.*, Adopted Resolution, p. 370.

These were not abstract discussions. Underlying the controversies, what was at stake was the whole concept of socialism: workers' power or the power of the Party acting 'on behalf of' the working class. 'If workers succeeded in maintaining their ownership of the factories they had seized, if they ran these factories for themselves, if they considered the revolution to be at an end, if they considered socialism to have been established—then there would have been no need for the revolutionary leadership of the Bolsheviks'. (24)

(24) F. Kaplan. *op. cit.*, p. 128.

The bitterness with which the issue of the Factory Committees was discussed highlights another point. 'Although the Bolsheviks were in a majority at the first All-Russian Conference of Factory Committees—and although as representatives of the Factory Committees they could force resolutions through this Conference—they could not enforce resolutions against the opposition of the Factory Committees themselves... The Factory Committees accepted Bolshevik leadership only so long as divergences in goals were not brought to the test'. (25)

(25) *ibid.*, p. 181.

The First Trade Union Congress also witnessed a heated controversy on the question of the relation of the trade unions to the state. The Mensheviks claiming that the revolution could only usher in a bourgeois-democratic republic, insisted on the autonomy of the unions in relation to the new Russian state. As Maisky put it: 'If capitalism remains intact, the tasks with which trade unions are confronted under capitalism remain unaltered'. (26) Others too felt that capitalism would reassert itself and that the unions should do nothing that would impair their power. Martov put a more sophisticated viewpoint: 'In this historic situation' he said 'this government cannot represent the working class alone. It cannot but be a *de facto* administration connected with a heterogeneous mass of toiling people, with proletarian and non-proletarian elements alike. It cannot therefore conduct its *economic* policy along the lines of consistently and clearly expressed working class interests'. (27) The trade unions could. Therefore the trade unions should retain a certain independence in relation to the new state. It is interesting that in his 1921

(26) First Trade Union Congress, p. 11.

(27) *ibid.*, p. 80.

controversy with Trotsky—when incidentally it was far too late—Lenin was to use much the same kind of argument. He was to stress the need for the workers to defend themselves against ‘their own’ state, defined as not just a ‘workers’ state, but a workers and peasants’ state’ and moreover one with ‘bureaucratic deformations’.

(28) *ibid.*, p. 364.

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

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

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

(29) *ibid.*, preface.

The Bolsheviks did not unanimously accept Lenin’s views on these questions. While Tomsky, their main spokesman on trade union affairs, pointed out that ‘sectional interests of groups of workers had to be subordinated to the interests of the entire class’ (29)—which like so many Bolsheviks he wrongly identified with the hegemony of the Bolshevik Party—Ryazanov argued that ‘as long as the social revolution begun here has not merged with the social revolution of Europe and of the whole world . . . the Russian proletariat . . . must be on its guard and must not renounce a single one of its weapons . . . it must maintain its trade union organisation’. (30) According to Zinoviev, the ‘independence’ of the trade unions under a workers’ government could mean nothing except the right to support ‘saboteurs’. Despite this Tsyperovich, a prominent Bolshevik trade unionist, proposed that the Congress ratify the right of unions to continue to resort to strike action in defence of their members. A resolution to this effect was however defeated (31).

(30) *ibid.*, p. 27.

(31) *ibid.*, p. 367.

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

January 15–21

First All-Russian Congress of Textile Workers held in Moscow. Bolsheviks in a majority. The Congress declared that 'workers' control is only a transitional step to the planned organisation of production and distribution'. (32) The union adopted new statutes proclaiming that 'the lowest cell of the union is the Factory Committee whose obligation consists of putting into effect, in a given enterprise, all the decrees of the union'. (33) Even the big stick was waved. Addressing the Congress. Lozovsky stated that 'if the local patriotism of individual factories conflicts with the interests of the whole proletariat, we unconditionally state that we will not hesitate before *any measures* (my emphasis. M.B.) for the suppression of tendencies harmful to the toilers'. (34) The Party, in other words, can impose *its* concept of the interests of the working class, even against the workers themselves.

(32) *Vsesoyuzny s'yezd professionalnykh soyuzov tekstilshchikov i fabrichnykh komitetov* (Moscow 1918), p. 8.

(33) *ibid.*, p. 5.

(34) *ibid.*, p. 30.

January 23–31

Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets

February

Bolshevik decree nationalising the land.

March 3

Signature of *Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty*.

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

(35) Sbornik dekretov i postanovlenii po narodnomu, khozyaistvu (1918), pp. 311-315.

(36) E. H. Carr. *op. cit.*, II, 86-87.

under some kind of control from below).

The decree laid down the principle that 'in nationalised enterprises workers' control is exercised by submitting all declarations and decisions of the Factory or Shop Committee, or of the control commission, to the Economic Administrative Council for approval'. 'Not more than half the members of the Administrative Council should be workers or employees'. (35)

During the early months of 1918 the Vesenka had begun to build, from the top, its 'unified administration' of particular industries. The pattern was informative. During 1915 and 1916 the Tsarist government had set up central bodies (sometimes called 'committees' and sometimes 'centres') governing the activities of industries producing commodities directly or indirectly necessary for the war. By 1917 these central bodies (generally composed of representatives of the industry concerned and exercising regulatory functions of a rather undefined character) had spread over almost the whole field of industrial production. During the first half of 1918 Vesenka gradually took over these bodies (or what was left of them) and converted them—under the name of *glavki* (chief committees) or *tsentry* (centres)—into administrative organs subject to the direction and control of Vesenka. The 'chief committee' for the leather industry (Glavkozsh) was set up in January 1918. This was quickly followed by chief paper and sugar committees, and by soap and tea 'centres'. These, together with Tsentrotekstil were all in existence by March 1918. They 'could scarcely have come into being except on foundations already laid before the revolution or without the collaboration of the managerial and technical staffs. . . A certain tacit community of interests could be detected between the government and the more sensible and moderate of the industrialists in bringing about a return to some kind of orderly production.' (36)

This raised a question of considerable theoretical interest. Marxists have usually argued that revolutionaries could not simply seize the political institutions of bourgeois society (parliament, etc.) and use them for different purposes (i.e. for the introduction of socialism). They have always claimed that new political institutions (soviets) would have to be created to express the reality of workers' power. But they have usually remained discreetly silent on the question of whether revolutionaries could 'capture' the institutions of bourgeois economic power and use them to their own ends—or whether these too would have first to be smashed, and later replaced with a new kind of institution, representing a fundamental change in the relations of production. The Bolsheviks in 1918 clearly opted for the first course. (see p. 41.) Even within their own ranks this choice was to give rise to foreboding that all energies would now be directed to the 'reinforcement and development of productive capacity, to organic construction, involving a

refusal to continue the break up of capitalist productive relations and even a partial restoration of them'. (37)

(37) *ibid.*, II, 95.

March 6–8

Seventh Party Congress

Heated deliberations during this very short Congress centred on the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty.

March 14–18

Fourth All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

March

'Left' communists (Osinsky, Bukharin, Lomov, Smirnov) ousted from leading positions in Supreme Economic Council—partly because of their attitude to Brest-Litovsk—and replaced by 'moderates' like Milyutin and Rykov. (38) Immediate steps taken to shore-up managerial authority, restore labour discipline and apply wage incentives under the supervision of the trade union organisations. The whole episode was a clear demonstration that 'lefts' in top administrative positions are no substitute for rank and file control at the point of production.

(38) *ibid.*, II, 91.

March 26

Isvestiya of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee publishes Decree (issued by the Council of Peoples Commissars) on the 'centralisation of railway management'. This decree, which ended workers' control on the railways was 'an absolutely necessary prerequisite for the improvement of the conditions of the transport system'. (39) It stressed the urgency of 'iron labour discipline' and 'individual management' on the railways and granted 'dictatorial' powers to the Commissariat of Ways of Communication. Clause 6 proclaimed the need for selected individuals to act as 'administrative-technical executives' in every local, district or regional railway centre. These individuals were to be 'responsible to the People's Commissars of Ways of Communication'. They were to be 'the embodiment of the whole of the dictatorial power of the proletariat in the given railway centre'. (40)

(39) V. I. Lenin. *Selected Works*, vol. VII, Explanatory Notes, p. 505

(40) *ibid.*

March 30

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

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

- (41) L. Trotsky. 'Work, Discipline, Order', *Sochineniya*, XVII, pp. 171-172.
- (42) N. V. Krylenko. Autobiography in *Ency. Dict.* XLI—1, Appendix, p. 246.

already been set aside by decree'. (41) N. V. Krylenko, one of the co-commissars of Military Affairs appointed after the October Revolution, had resigned in disgust from the Defence Establishment (42) as a result of these measures.

April 3

The Central Council of Trade Unions issued its first detailed pronouncement on the function of the trade unions in relation to 'labour discipline' and 'incentives'.

The trade unions should 'apply all their efforts to raise the productivity of labour and consistently to create in factories and workshops the indispensable foundations of labour discipline'. Every union should establish a commission 'to fix norms of productivity for every trade and category of workers'. The use of piece rates 'to raise the productivity of labour' was conceded. It was claimed that 'bonuses for increased productivity above the established norm may within certain limits be a useful measure for raising productivity without exhausting the worker'. Finally if 'individual groups of workers' refused to submit to union discipline, they could in the last resort be expelled from the union 'with all the consequences that flow therefrom'. (43)

- (43) *Narodnoye Khozyaistvo* No. 2, 1918, p. 38.

April 11-12

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

April 20

The issue of workers' control was now being widely discussed within the Party. Leningrad District Committee publishes *first issue of Kommunist* (a 'left' communist theoretical journal edited by Bukharin, Radek and Osinsky, later to be joined by Smirnov). This issue contained the editors' *Theses on the Present Situation*. The paper denounced 'a labour policy designed to implant discipline among the workers under the flag of "self-discipline", the introduction of labour service for workers, piece rates, and the lengthening of the working day'. It proclaimed that 'the introduction of labour discipline in connection with the restoration of capitalist management of industry cannot really increase the productivity of labour'. It would 'diminish the class initiative, activity and organisation of the proletariat. It threatens to enslave the working class. It will arouse discontent among the backward elements as well as among the vanguard of the proletariat. In order to introduce this system in the face of the hatred prevailing at present among the proletariat against the "capitalist saboteurs" the Communist Party would have to rely on the petty-bourgeoisie, as against the workers'. It would 'ruin itself as the party of the proletariat'.

The first issue of the new paper also contained a serious warning by Radek: 'If the Russian Revolution were

overthrown by violence on the part of the bourgeois counter-revolution, it would rise again like a phoenix; if however it lost its socialist character and thereby disappointed the working masses, the blow would have ten times more terrible consequences for the future of the Russian and the international revolution'. (44) The same issue warned of 'bureaucratic centralisation, the rule of various commissars, the loss of independence for local soviets and in practice the rejection of the type of state-commune administered from below'. (45) 'It was all very well', Bukharin pointed out, 'to say as Lenin had (in *State and Revolution*) that each cook should learn to manage the State. But what happened when each cook had a commissar appointed to order him about?'

The second issue of the paper contained some prophetic comments by Osinsky: 'We stand for the construction of the proletarian society by the class creativity of the workers themselves, not by the ukases of the captains of industry. . . If the proletariat itself does not know how to create the necessary prerequisites for the socialist organisation of labour, no one can do this for it and no one can compel it to do this. The stick, if raised against the workers, will find itself in the hands of a social force which is either under the influence of another social class or is in the hands of the soviet power; but the soviet power will then be forced to seek support against the proletariat from another class (e.g. the peasantry) and by this it will destroy itself as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Socialism and socialist organisation will be set up by the proletariat itself, or they will not be set up at all: something else will be set up—state capitalism'. (46)

Lenin reacted very sharply. The usual vituperation followed. The views of the 'left' Communists were 'a disgrace', 'a complete renunciation of communism in practice', 'a desertion to the camp of the petty bourgeoisie'. (47) The left were being 'provoked by the Isuvs (Mensheviks) and other Judases of capitalism'. A campaign was whipped up in Leningrad which compelled *Kommunist* to transfer publication to Moscow, where the paper reappeared first under the auspices of the Moscow Regional Organisation of the Party, later as the 'unofficial' mouthpiece of a group of comrades. After the appearance of the first issue of the paper a hastily convened Leningrad Party Conference produced a majority for Lenin and 'demanded that the adherents of *Kommunist* cease their separate organisational existence'. (48) So much for alleged factional rights . . . in 1918! (i.e. long before the 10th Congress officially prohibited factions—in 1921)

During the following months the Leninists succeeded in extending their organisational control into areas which had originally backed the 'lefts'. By the end of May the

(44) K. Radek. 'Posle pyati-mesyatsev' (After five months), *Kommunist*, No. 1, April 1918, pp. 3-4.

(45) *Kommunist*, No. 1. 'Tesisy o tekushchem momente' (Theses on the Current Situation), p. 8.

(46) Osinsky. 'O stroitelstve sotsializma' (On the building of Socialism), *Kommunist*, No. 2, April 1918, p.5. It was already obvious to some, in 1918, in which direction Leninist economic policy was leading. Those who, today, claim to be both, 'leninists' and 'state capitalists' in relation to Russia, please note!

(47) V. I. Lenin. 'Left-wing childishness and petty-bourgeois mentality', *Selected Works*, vol. VII, p. 374.

(48) V. Sorin. 'Partiya i oppositsiya' (The Party and the Opposition), I, *Fraktsiya levyykh kommunistov* (The fraction of left communists), Moscow 1925, pp. 21-22.

predominantly proletarian Party organisation in the Ural region, led by Preobrazhensky, and the Moscow Regional Bureau of the Party had been won back by the supporters of the Party leadership. The fourth and final issue of *Kommunist* (May 1918) had to be published as a private factional paper. The settlement of these important issues, profoundly affecting the whole working class, had not been 'by discussion, persuasion or compromise, but by a high pressure campaign in the Party organisations, backed by a barrage of violent invective in the Party press and in the pronouncements of the Party leaders. Lenin's polemics set the tone and his organisational lieutenants brought the membership into line'. (49) Many in the traditional revolutionary movement will be thoroughly familiar with these methods!

(49) R. V. Daniels, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

April 28

Lenin's article on '*The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government*' published in *Isvestiya* of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. 'Measures and decrees' were called for 'to raise labour discipline' which was 'the condition of economic revival'. (Among the measures suggested were the introduction of a card system for registering the productivity of each worker, the introduction of factory regulations in every enterprise, the establishment of rate of output bureaux for the purpose of fixing the output of each worker and payment of bonuses for increased productivity.) If Lenin ever sensed the potentially harmful aspects of these proposals he certainly never mentioned it. No great imagination was needed, however, to see in the pen pushers (recording the 'productivity of each worker') and in the clerks (manning the 'rate of output bureaux') the as yet amorphous elements of a new bureaucracy.

(50) Before the Revolution Lenin had denounced Taylorism as 'the enslavement of man by the machine'. (*Sochineniya*, XVII, 247-8).

Lenin went even further. He wrote: 'We must raise the question of piece-work and apply and test it in practice . . . we must raise the question of applying much of what is scientific and progressive in the Taylor system (50) . . . the Soviet Republic must at all costs adopt all that is valuable in the achievements of science and technology in this field . . . we must organise in Russia the study and teaching of the Taylor system'. Only 'the conscious representatives of petty bourgeois laxity' could see in the recent decree on the management of the railways 'which granted individual leaders dictatorial powers' some kind of 'departure from the collegium principle, from democracy and from other principles of soviet government'. 'The irrefutable experience of history has shown that . . . the dictatorship of individual persons was very often the vehicle, the channel of the dictatorship of the revolutionary classes'. 'Large-scale machine industry—which is the material productive source and foundation of socialism—calls for absolute and strict unity of will . . . How can strict unity of will be ensured? By thou-

sands subordinating their will to the will of one'. 'Unquestioning submission (emphasis in original) to a single will is absolutely necessary for the success of labour processes that are based on large-scale machine industry . . . today the Revolution demands, in the interests of socialism, that the masses *unquestioningly obey the single will* (emphasis in original) of the leaders of the labour process'. (51) The demand for 'unquestioning' obedience has, throughout history, been voiced by countless reactionaries, who have sought moreover to impose such obedience on those over whom they exerted authority. A highly critical (and self-critical) attitude is, on the other hand, the hallmark of the real revolutionary.

(51) V. I. Lenin. *Selected Works*, Vol. VII, pp. 332-3, 340-2.

May

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

May

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

(52) *Kommunist*, No. 4.

May 5

Publication of '*Left wing childishness and petty-bourgeois mentality*'. After denouncing *Kommunist's* views as 'a riot of phrasemongering', 'the flaunting of high sounding phrases', etc, etc, etc, Lenin attempted to answer some of the points made by the left communists. According to Lenin 'state capitalism' wasn't a danger. It was, on the contrary, something to be aimed for. 'If we introduced state capitalism in approximately 6 months' time we would achieve a great success and a sure guarantee that within a year socialism will have gained a permanently firm hold and will have become invincible in our country'. 'Economically, state capitalism is immeasurably superior to the present system of economy . . . the soviet power has nothing terrible to fear from it, for the soviet State is a state in which the power of the workers and the poor is assured' (because a 'Workers' Party' held political power). The '*sum total* of the necessary conditions for socialism' were 'large-scale capitalist technique based on the last word of modern science . . . inconceivable without planned state organisation which subjects tens of millions of people to the strictest observance of a single standard in production and distribution' and 'proletarian state power'. [It is important to note that the power of the working class *in production* isn't mentioned as one of the 'necessary conditions for socialism'.] Lenin continues by pointing out that in 1918 the 'two unconnected halves of socialism existed side by side like two future chickens in a single shell of international imperialism'. In 1918 Germany and Russia were the embodiments, respectively, of the 'economic, productive and social

(53) V. I. Lenin. *Sochineniya*, XXII, 516-517.

(54) *ibid.*, XXVI, 326.

(55) V. I. Lenin. *Selected Works*, vol. VII, pp. 360-66.

(56) E. H. Carr. *op. cit.*, II, 100.

(57) V. I. Lenin. *'The threatening catastrophe and how to fight it'*.

economic conditions for socialism on the one hand, and of the political conditions on the other'. The task of the Bolsheviks was 'to study the state capitalism of the Germans, to spare no effort at copying it'. They shouldn't 'shrink from adopting dictatorial methods to hasten the copying of it'. As originally published (53) Lenin's text then contained the interesting phrase: 'Our task is to hasten this—even more than Peter hastened the adoption of westernism by barbarian Russia, not shrinking from the use of barbarous methods to fight barbarism'. This was perhaps the only admiring reference to any Tsar, in any of Lenin's writings. In quoting this passage three years later Lenin omitted the reference to Peter the Great. (54)

'One and the same road', Lenin continued, 'led from the petty bourgeois capitalism that prevailed in Russia in 1918 to large-scale capitalism and to socialism, through one and the same intermediary station called "national accounting and control of production and distribution"'. Fighting against state capitalism, in April 1918, was (according to Lenin) "beating the air". (55) The allegation that the Soviet Republic was threatened with 'evolution in the direction of state capitalism' would 'provoke nothing but Homeric laughter'. If a merchant told him that there had been an improvement on some railways 'such praise seems to me a thousand times more valuable than twenty communist resolutions'. (56) When reading passages such as the above, it is difficult to understand how some comrades can simultaneously claim to be 'leninists' and claim that the Russian society is a form of state capitalism to be deplored. Some, however, manage to do just this.

It is crystal clear from the above (and from other passages written at the time) that the 'proletarian' nature of the regime was seen by nearly all the Bolshevik leaders as hinging on the proletarian nature of the Party that had taken state power. None of them saw the proletarian nature of the Russian regime as primarily and crucially dependent on the exercise of workers' power *at the point of production* (i.e. on workers' management of production). It should have been obvious to them, as Marxists, that if the working class did not hold economic power, its 'political' power would at best be insecure and would in fact soon degenerate. The Bolshevik leaders saw the capitalist organisation of production as something which, in itself, was socially neutral. It could be used indifferently for *bad* purposes (as when the bourgeoisie used it with the aim of private accumulation) or *good* ones (as when the 'workers' state' used it 'for the benefit of the many'). Lenin put this quite bluntly. 'Socialism' he said, 'is nothing but state capitalist monopoly made to benefit the whole people'.

(57) What was wrong with capitalist methods of production, in Lenin's eyes, was that they had in the past served the bourgeoisie. They were now going to be used

by the Workers' State and would thereby become 'one of the conditions of socialism'. It all depended on who held state power. (58) The argument that Russia was a workers' state *because of* the nationalisation of the means of production was only put forward by Trotsky . . . in 1936! He was trying to reconcile his view that 'the Soviet Union had to be defended' with his view that 'the Bolshevik Party was no longer a workers' party'.

May 24–June 4

First All-Russian Congress of Regional Economic Councils held in Moscow. This 'economic Parliament' was attended by rather more than 100 voting delegates (and 150 non-voting delegates) drawn from Vesenka, its 'glavki' and centres, from regional and local Sovnarkhozy and from the trade unions.

The Congress was presided over by Rykov—a man of 'unimpeachable record and colourless opinions'. (59) Lenin opened the proceedings with a plea for 'labour discipline' and a long explanation for the need to employ the highly paid 'spetsy' (specialists).

Osinsky stood uncompromisingly for the democratisation of industry. He led an attack on 'piece rates' and 'Taylorism'. He was supported by Smirnov and a number of provincial delegates. The 'opposition' urged the recognition and completion of the *de facto* nationalisation of industry which the Factory Committees were bringing about and called for the establishment of an overall national economic authority based on and representing the organs of workers' control. (60) They called for 'a workers administration . . . not only from above but from below' as the indispensable economic base for the new regime. Lomov, in a plea for a massive extension of workers' control, warned that bureaucratic centralisation . . . was strangling the forces of the country. The masses are being cut off from living, creative power in all branches of our economy'. He reminded the Congress that Lenin's phrase about 'learning from the capitalists' had been coined in the eighteen-nineties by the quasi-Marxist (and present bourgeois) Struve. (61)

There then took place one of those episodes which can highlight a whole discussion and epitomise the various viewpoints. A sub-committee of the Congress passed a resolution that *two-thirds* of the representatives on the management boards of industrial enterprises should be elected from among the workers. (62) Lenin was furious at this 'stupid decision'. Under his guidance a Plenary Session of the Congress 'corrected' the resolution and decreed that no more than *one-third* of the managerial personnel of industrial enterprises should be elected. The management committees were to be integrated into the previously outlined complex hierarchical structure which vested veto rights in the Supreme Economic Council (Vesenka) set up in December 1917. (63)

(58) For a fuller analysis of this conception of means and ends—and of what it led to—see Paul Cardan's 'From Bolshevism to the Bureaucracy', *Solidarity* Pamphlet No. 24.

(59) E. H. Carr. op. cit., II, 101. fn 4.

(60) Osinsky, in *Trudy pervogo vsrossiiskogo s'yezda sovetov narodnogo khozyaystva* (Proceedings of the First All-Russian Congress of Economic Councils) Moscow, 1918, pp. 61-64.

(61) *ibid.*, p. 75.

(62) *ibid.*, p. 65

(63) *Polozheniye ob upravlenii natsionalizirovannymi predpriyatiyami* (Regulations for the Administration of Nationalised Enterprises), *ibid.*, pp. 477-478.

(64) E. H. Carr. op. cit., II, pp. 119-120.

The Congress formally endorsed a resolution from the Trade Union Central Council asserting the principle of 'a definite, fixed rate of productivity in return for a guaranteed wage'. It accepted the institution of piece work and of bonuses. A 'climate of opinion rather than a settled policy was in the course of formation'. (64)

May 25

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

June 28

Council of Peoples' Commissars, after an all-night sitting, issues *Decree on General Nationalisation* involving all industrial enterprises with a capital of over one million rubles. The aims of the decree were 'a decisive struggle against disorganisation in production and supply'.

The sectors affected, whose assets were now declared 'the property of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic, were the mining, metallurgical, textile, electrical, timber, tobacco, resin, glass and pottery, leather and cement industries, all steam driven mills, local utilities and private railways, together with a few other minor industries. The task of 'organising the administration of nationalised enterprises' was entrusted 'as a matter of urgency' to Vesenska and its sections. But until Vesenska issued specific instructions regarding individual enterprises covered by the decree 'such enterprises would be regarded as leased rent-free to their former owners, who would continue to finance them and to draw revenue from them'. (65)

(65) *ibid.*, II, p. 105.

The legal transfer of individual enterprises to the state was easily transacted. The assumption of managerial functions by appointees was to take a little longer but this process was also to be completed within a few months. Both steps had been accelerated under the threat of foreign intervention. The change in the *property relations* had been deep-going. *In this sense* a profound revolution had taken place. 'As the Revolution had unleashed Civil War, so Civil War was to intensify the Revolution'. (66) But as far as any fundamental changes in the relations of production were concerned, the Revolution was already spent. The period of 'war communism'—now starting—was to see the working class lose what little power it had enjoyed *in production*, during the last few weeks of 1917 and the first few weeks of 1918.

(66) R. V. Daniels, op. cit., p. 92.

July 4-10

Fifth All Russian Congress of Soviets.

Throughout the first half of 1918 the issue of 'nationalisation' had been the subject of bitter controversy between

the 'left' communists and the Leninists. Lenin had been opposed to the total nationalisation of the means of production, immediately after October. This was not because of any wish to do a political deal with the bourgeoisie, but because of his underestimation of the technological and administrative maturity of the proletariat, a maturity that would have been put to an immediate test had all major industry been formally nationalised. The result had been an extremely complex situation in which some industries had been nationalised 'from above', (i.e. by decree of the Central Government), others 'from below' (i.e. where workers had taken over enterprises abandoned by their former owners), while in yet other places the former owners were still in charge of their factories—although restricted in their freedom of action or authority by the encroachment of the Factory Committees.

Kritzman, one of the ablest theoreticians of 'left' communism had criticised this state of affairs from an early date. He had referred to the 'Workers Control' decree of November 14, 1917 as 'half-measures, therefore unrealisable'. 'As a slogan workers' control implied the growing, but as yet insufficient power of the proletariat. It was the implied expression of a weakness, still to be overcome, of the working class movement. Employers would not be inclined to run their businesses with the sole aim of teaching the workers how to manage them. Conversely the workers felt only hatred for the capitalists and saw no reason why they should voluntarily remain exploited'. (67)

Osinsky, another 'left' communist, stressed another aspect. 'The fate of the workers' control slogan', he wrote 'is most interesting. Born of the wish to unmask the opponent, it failed when it sought to convert itself into a system. Where, despite everything it fulfilled itself, its content altered completely from what we had originally envisaged. It took the form of a decentralised dictatorship, of the subordination of capitalists, taken individually, to various working class organisations acting independently of one another . . . Workers' Control had originally been aimed at subordinating the owners of the means of production. . . But this co-existence soon became intolerable. The state of dual power between managers and workers soon led to the collapse of the enterprise. Or it rapidly became transformed into the total power of the workers, without the least authorisation of the central powers'. (68)

Much 'left' communist writing at this time stressed the theme that early nationalisation of the means of production would have avoided many of these ambiguities. Total expropriation of the capitalists would have allowed one to proceed immediately from 'workers' control' to 'workers' management' through the medium of some central organism regulating the whole of the socialised economy. It is interesting that Lozovsky,

(67) I. Larine and L. Kritzman, *Wirtschaftsleben und Wirtschaftlicher Aufbau in Soviet Russland, 1917-1920*. Hamburg, 1921, p. 163. (In German.)

(68) N. Osinsky. '*O stroitelstve sotsializma*' ('The building of Socialism') Moscow 1918, p. 35 et seq.

- (69) A. Lozovsky *'The Trade Unions in Soviet Russia'*. (All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions, Moscow, 1920,) p. 654.

although at the time strongly opposed to the viewpoint of the 'left' communists (because he felt that the revolution had only been a 'bourgeois democratic' revolution) was later to write: 'It was soon to be proved that in the era of social revolution, a constitutional monarchy in each enterprise (i.e. the previous boss, but only exercising limited power. M.B.) was impossible and that the former owner—however complex the structure of a modern enterprise—was a superfluous cog'. (69)

A split occurred a little later among the 'left' communists. Radek reached an agreement with the Leninists. He was prepared to accept 'one-man management' in principle (not too hard a task for a non-proletarian?) because it was now to be applied in the context of the extensive nationalisation decrees of June 1918. In Radek's opinion these decrees would help ensure the 'proletarian basis of the regime.' Bukharin too broke with Osinsky and rejoined the fold.

Osinsky and his supporters however proceeded to form a new oppositional tendency: the 'democratic centralists' (so-called because of their opposition to the 'bureaucratic centralism' of the Party leadership). They continued to agitate for workers' management of production. Their ideas, and those of the original group of 'left' communists were to play an important role in the development, two years later, of the Workers Opposition.

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

- (70) R. V. Daniels. *op. cit.*, p. 91.

August

High point of Volga offensive by the Whites.

The Civil War immensely accelerated the process of economic centralisation. As a knowledge of previous Bolshevik practice might have led one to expect, this was to prove an extremely bureaucratic form of centralisation. The whole Russian economy was 'reorganised' on a semi-military basis. The Civil War tended to transform all major industry into a supply organisation for the Red Army. This made industrial policy a matter of military strategy.

It is worth pointing out, at this stage, that we doubt if there is any *intrinsic* merit in decentralisation, as some anarchists maintain. The Paris Commune, a Congress of Soviets (or a shop stewards' committee or strike committee to take modern analogies) are all highly centralised yet fairly democratic. Feudalism on the other hand was both decentralised and highly bureaucratic. The key

question is whether the 'centralised' apparatus is controlled from below (by elected and revocable delegates) or whether it separates itself from those on whose behalf it is allegedly acting.

This period witnessed a considerable fall in production, due to a complex variety of factors which have been well described elsewhere. (71) The 'trouble' was often blamed by Party spokesmen on the influence of heretical 'anarcho-syndicalist' ideas. Mistakes had certainly been made but what had been the growing pains of a new movement were now being attributed to the inherent vices of any attempt by the workers to dominate production. 'Workers control over industry carried out by the Factory and Plant Committees' wrote one government spokesman 'has shown what can be expected if the plans of the anarchists are realised'. (72) Attempts at control from below were now being systematically suppressed. Proletarian partisans of the individual Factory Committees tried to resist but their resistance was easily overcome. (73) Bitterness and despair developed among sections of the proletariat (and by no means 'backward' sections). Such factors must also be taken into account—but seldom are—in discussing the fall of production, and the widespread resort to 'antisocial activities' so characteristic of the years of 'war communism'.

August 25–September 1

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

'*Volny Golos Truda*' (The Free Voice of Labour) was established as the successor to *Golos Truda* (closed down in May 1918). The new paper was itself closed down after its fourth issue (September 16, 1918). This had contained an interesting article by 'M. Sergven' (?Maximov) called '*Paths of Revolution*'. The article 'made a remarkable departure from the usual condemnation of the Bolsheviks as 'Betrayers of the Working Class'. Lenin and his followers were not necessarily cold-blooded cynics who, with Machiavellian cunning, had mapped out the new class structure in advance to satisfy their personal lust for power. Quite possibly they were motivated by a genuine concern for human suffering. . . But the division of society into administrators and workers followed inexorably from the centralisation of authority. It could not be otherwise. . .

(71) See for instance I. Deutscher *The Prophet Unarmed*, O.U.P. 1959, pp. 1-14.

(72) I. I. Stepanov-Skortsov, op. cit., p. 24.

(73) M. Dobb. *Soviet Economic Development since 1917*, New York, 1948, pp. 89-90.

(74) P. Avrich. op. cit., p. 191.

- (75) *ibid.*, pp. 192-3.
 (76) Manilov was a day-dreaming landowner in Gogol's *Dead Souls*.

- (77) P. Avrich. *op. cit.*, pp. 196-197.

- (78) E. H. Carr. *op. cit.*, II, 180-181.

- (79) Vserossiiskaya konferentsiya zheleznodorozhnikov komunistov (First All-Russian Conference of Communist Railwaymen), Moscow 1919, p. 72.

- (80) *Sbornik dekretov i postanovlenii po narodnomu khozyaistvu* (1920), ii, 83.

Once the functions of management and labour had become separated (the former assigned to a minority of "experts" and the latter to the untutored masses) all possibility of dignity or equality were destroyed'. (75) In the same issue Maximov slammed the 'Manilovs' (76) in the anarchist camp as 'romantic visionaries who pined for pastoral utopias, oblivious of the complex forces at work in the modern world. It was time to stop dreaming of the Golden Age. It was time to 'organise and act'. For these principled yet realistic views Maximov and the anarcho-syndicalists were to be viciously attacked as 'anarcho-bureaucratic Judases by other tendencies in the anarchist movement'. (77)

August 1918

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

In other words within a year of the capture of state power by the Bolsheviks, the relations of production (shaken for a while at the height of the mass movement) had reverted to the classical authoritarian pattern seen in all class societies. The workers *as workers* had been divested of any meaningful decisional authority in the matters that concerned them most.

September 28

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

October

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

November 6-9

Sixth All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

November 25-December 1

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

December

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

(81) E. H. Carr. op. cit., II, 183.

December

Second All-Russian Congress of Regional Economic Councils.

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

(82) Trudy vtorogo vserossiiskogo s'yezda sovetov narodnogo khosyaistva (n.d.), (Second All-Russian Congress of Regional Economic Councils), p. 213.

(83) E. H. Carr. op. cit., II, 190.

1919

January 16–25

Second All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions

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

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

(1) I. Deutscher. *op. cit.*, p. 25

(2) Waldemar Koch. *Die Bolshevistischen Gewerkschaften*, Jena 1932, pp. 81-82.

(3) Vtoroi vserossiiski s'yezd professionalnykh soyuzov: stenograficheski otchet (Second All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions: stenographic report), Moscow, Central Trade Union Press, 1919, I, 34. (Henceforth referred to as Second Trade Union Congress).