

# THE WORKERS OPPOSITION

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# INTRODUCTION

Alexandra Kollontai's text THE WORKERS OPPOSITION was written in Russian, during the early weeks of 1921. It was first published in Britain in Sylvia Pankhurst's 'Workers Dreadnought'\* and reprinted in Chicago later that year. The text - one of the 'forbidden documents' of Bolshevism - is an attempt to give a theoretical formulation to the 'Theses on the Trade Union Question' submitted by the Workers Opposition for discussion at the 10th Congress (March 1921) of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.\*\*

'Solidarity' republished Kollontai's document in 1961. The publication aroused considerable interest (as judged by sales) but little comment at the time. Translations appeared in Italian and French.\*\*\* Following recent events in Czechoslovakia there has been a sudden renewal of interest, among revolutionaries, as to the class nature of the Russian State. This - and a steady stream of requests for our 1961 text - made a reprint imperative. Hence this second 'Solidarity' edition.

Kollontai's original pamphlet had for long been difficult to obtain, although its existence was undoubtedly known to quite a number of people in the revolutionary movement. Even after Khrushchev's revelations at the 20th Congress and the Hungarian events of 1956, none of the tendencies claiming allegiance to socialist 'humanism' or to 'libertarian' marxism had grasped the significance of this text - or had sensed the contribution it could make to the great discussion then taking place as to 'what went wrong'.

Or perhaps these tendencies had perceived it only too well. Kollontai wrote 3 years before Lenin died. Her document is a fundamental critique of the developing bureaucracy in Russia. It is a critique of a far more penetrating kind than those of the various tendencies which, for one reason or another, were - after Lenin's death - to oppose the 'Stalinist' usurpation of the Russian Revolution. It contains fundamental ideas, for too long glossed over, as to the nature of workers' power and of socialism. It stresses the essential ingredient of working class power at the point of production before anyone can even talk of a fundamental change in the class nature of a society. It describes a phase of the struggle between the nascent bureaucracy and those advocating workers' management of production: the phase that was fought out within the ranks of the Party itself. (Those advocating similar ideas outside the ranks of the Party had long since been silenced.) Finally it warns with agonised and near prophetic insight, of the internal dangers confronting the Revolution.

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\* April 22 - August 19, 1921.

\*\* The Theses themselves had been published in Pravda on January 25, 1921.

\*\*\* See 'Socialisme ou Barbarie', No. 35 (January-March 1964).

We do not attempt - either in this introduction or in the footnotes that follow Kollontai's text - to depict the conditions prevailing in Soviet Russia between 1917 and 1921. A number of excellent studies (Carr, Deutscher, etc.) have been published on the subject and Kollontai herself brings a number of interesting new facts to light. Nor do we attempt to write a history of the Workers Opposition. The material for such a study is available in Daniels' excellent 'Conscience of the Revolution'.\* Our task is a different one. We wish to bring to the attention of revolutionary socialists a basic document, still insufficiently known in this country. And in the footnotes we seek to explore the role of Bolshevik ideology and practice in the degeneration of the Russian Revolution. Without at least a superficial knowledge of these facts any analysis of 'what happened after 1917' must of necessity be incomplete.\*\*

The degeneration of the Russian Revolution is usually attributed to such 'unavoidable' and 'external' factors as Russian backwardness, the failure of the Revolution to spread to the industrially advanced countries of Western Europe, the overwhelming preponderance of the peasantry and the terrible legacy of devastation left by the Imperialist War, by the Civil War and by the Wars of Intervention. Such factors were undoubtedly important in giving the degeneration of the Russian Revolution its specific features. But they do not fully explain the fundamental nature of the process. Moreover these 'explanations' do nothing to assist the development of the kind of mass socialist consciousness which alone can ensure that the process is not repeated.

A moment's reflexion will show why this is so. If the degeneration was due solely to 'unavoidable' and 'external' factors, and if the advance to socialism is solely dependent on these agencies (degree of industrialisation, level of culture, availability of raw materials, etc.) then all the revolutionary movement need concern itself with now are the technical problems of the conquest of power ('building the vanguard Party', ensuring it has a sufficient 'implantation' in the masses, etc.). Revolutionaries can only live in hope that the conquest of power itself will not be followed by too great a destruction of natural resources ... or pray that it will not occur in countries with too great a proportion of peasants in the

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\* R.V. Daniels, 'The Conscience of the Revolution', Harvard University Press, 1960.

\*\* This role of Bolshevik ideology has been analysed in more detail in Cardan's introduction to the French edition of 'THE WORKERS OPPOSITION'. Cardan's text is available in English as Solidarity Pamphlet No. 24 'FROM BOLSHEVISM TO THE BUREAUCRACY' (9d, post free, from H. Russell, 53A, Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent).

The practice of Bolshevism during these crucial years will be the subject of our next major work: 'THE BOLSHEVIKS AND WORKERS' CONTROL: 1917 - 1921', which we hope to have out before the end of the year. The text will contain a lot of new material we have come across since 1961, when we produced our first edition of 'The Workers Opposition'. In view of this additional material we hesitated whether, in this second edition, to republish the footnotes as they originally appeared, or whether to omit them altogether. We chose to re-publish them.

general population. If on the other hand the building of socialism depends on mass socialist consciousness, on mass initiative, on mass participation of the working class at all levels of economic and political life, then all ideologies that tend to substitute the action of a self-appointed elite for the actions of the masses (who, as Lenin stated, 'can only develop a trade union consciousness') need to be exposed from NOW.

It is our contention that the ideology of Bolshevism - with its emphasis (from as early as the spring of 1918) on 'one-man management' of industry and on the 'political supremacy of the Party' - played a very significant role in the process of bureaucratic degeneration. This is not to denigrate the heroism and self-sacrifice of many early Bolsheviks. In Spinoza's words 'the task is neither to laugh nor to weep, but to understand'. And what has to be understood is that the ideas that went into the building of the Bolshevik Party corresponded to a given stage of working class consciousness. They marked, in fact, a high tide of that consciousness. Large sections of the Russian proletariat identified themselves with the Party they had created. Having through superhuman exertions and sacrifices brought that Party to power, the class retreated from the historical stage, delegating to 'its' Party the great task of building the new society. This retreat from active and creative work was partly imposed upon the class by factors beyond its control. The war and the famine had dispersed and decimated its basic cadres. But the retreat was also encouraged, and at times even enforced, by the practice of the Bolsheviks. Kollontai was only vaguely aware of this aspect of the problem. We cannot however remain silent about it. If there is to be a progression of both revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice, we must go beyond the particular level of consciousness pertaining to the period Kollontai described. The unpalatable facts (concerning the ideas and practices we are seeking to transcend) must be made widely known and must be thoroughly discussed throughout the movement.

Kollontai's critique of the developing bureaucracy suffers from two main shortcomings. These are interesting in that they both reflect the fact that demystification - in relation to Bolshevik practice - had not gone beyond a certain point for those industrial militants who formed the backbone of the Workers Opposition.

The first criticism that could be made of Kollontai's text is that it is essentially an appeal to the Party leaders - and in particular to Lenin. 'Ilyitch' Kollontai writes 'will ponder, he will think it over, he will listen to us. And then he will decide to turn the Party rudder towards the Opposition. Ilyitch will be with us yet.' Only at times does Kollontai seem to appeal to the Party rank and file (and to the broad masses of the working class outside the Party) with a view to mobilising them against the Bolshevik leadership. She still seems to accept, although with obvious reluctance, the profoundly pernicious doctrine of the primacy of the Party. Adherence to this doctrine was to lead other prominent supporters of the Workers Opposition into actions at variance with some of their most deeply held beliefs. For instance it was to lead many of them into denouncing the Kronstadt uprising.

How could this possibly arise? The answer isn't really hard to find. As many who have broken with Stalinism or Trotskyism will know from their own experience, the rejection of a given system of ideas does not unfortunately proceed at an even tempo in relation to all its manifold implications. In the absence of clearly articulated alternatives, the process is usually difficult in the extreme. It must have been particularly hard for those breaking with Bolshevism in 1921 and yet intent on remaining serious revolutionaries. This unevenness in the growth of revolutionary consciousness has proved an easy target for latter-day wiseacres of all kinds. For instance Brian Pearce, the cynical ex-historian of the Socialist Labour League, can write: 'The Workers Oppositionists would have had a very quizzical smile for those who today claim that a good communist in 1921 should have been both for them and for the Kronstadters'.\* Pearce claims that 'Kronstadt and the Workers Opposition represented mutually antagonistic programmes'.

Other Trotskyists have made the same kind of point. Thus 'Socialist Current' - in their review of our 1961 edition of this pamphlet - imply that there is something illogical in non-Bolsheviks feeling a sense of affinity with the Workers Opposition. 'Kollontai' they point out 'argued as a leading participant in the Bolshevik Party (whereas) Solidarity argue as vehement opponents of the whole concept of Bolshevism'.\*\* Real life however is more complex than that. The tragedy of Kronstadt for instance was precisely that 'good communists' were to be found among both the contending forces. We prefer Daniels'\*\*\* assessment of the overall situation in 1921: 'The Opposition within the Party and the Kronstadt revolt were manifestations of the same kind of dissatisfaction: both attacked the Communist leadership for violating the spirit of the Revolution, for sacrificing democratic and egalitarian ideals on the altar of expediency and for inclining to bureaucratic concern with power for its own sake'. 'In their programme, though not in their armed defiance, the Kronstadters were closely akin to the ultra-left opposition within the Party'.

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\* See '1921 and All That' in Labour Review, vol. 5, No. 3 (October-November 1960).

\*\* 'The Basic Reasons for the Degeneration of the October Revolution - a reply to the Solidarity pamphlet on the Workers Opposition and a defence of Bolshevism.' A Socialist Current special (July 1962, vol.7, No.7). These 'defenders of Bolshevism' are now active in the 'libertarian' socialist movement. One step forward?

\*\*\* Loc. cit., pp. 144 - 145.

The other criticism one could make of Kollontai's text is its implied identification of the working class with the unions and of workers' management of production with management of production by the unions. By 1921 the Russian unions were already strongly under Party control and therefore, for dual reasons, already in a fairly advanced stage of bureaucratisation. As we shall show in detail in our forthcoming pamphlet, Bolshevik policy in the first year or so after the revolution was to remove all questions of industrial management from the hands of autonomous workers' committees and vest them in the hands of the unions or other 'economic' organisations. At a later stage (from about 1919 on) they were to shed even the pretence of union control and sought firmly to place all matters of industrial policy directly in the hands of the Party. Whether Kollontai and the Workers Opposition realised it or not, their protest was really against this second phase of Bolshevik policy. But in the process of articulating their protest they hit on a number of profoundly relevant truths.

These truths are still relevant today. They have moreover ceased to be abstractions. Both East and West, the working class has -during the last fifty years - gone through a tremendous experience: the experience of 'its own' leaderships, in fact of all 'leaderships' claiming to act on its behalf. And deep down it is beginning to draw the lessons of a whole historical epoch. These are that its emancipation will only be achieved and maintained through its own sustained efforts.

Over a hundred years ago Marx and Engels wrote that 'the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself' and that the proletarian movement was the 'self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority'. In 1921 Alexandra Kollontai and the Workers Opposition perceived some aspects of this essential truth through the terrible experience of the bureaucratic counter-revolution. Today, after the open admissions of the 20th and 22nd Congresses of the CPSU, after what the whole world witnessed in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and after the innumerable and as yet undocumented horrors of the Stalin epoch (and of the period immediately preceding it), it is the task of revolutionaries to take a dispassionate look at reality, to draw all the lessons and fearlessly to proclaim them.

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## REFERENCES (in footnotes)

Lenin's Selected Works refer to the 12 volume Lawrence and Wishart English edition, edited by J. Fineberg. Lenin's Works (or Sochineniya) refer to the standard 30 volume Russian edition produced between 1928 and 1937 by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute in Moscow.

References to statements made at Party Congresses relate to the official protocols issued between 1923 and 1936 by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute.

References to early Trade Union Congresses relate to the official reports published in Moscow by the Central Trade Union Press between 1919 (Second Congress) and 1927 (Seventh Congress).

V.K.P. (b) refers to the two interesting volumes published by the Party Press in Moscow in 1931 and 1932. These are known, for short, as 'The All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks in Resolutions and Decisions of its Congresses, Conferences and Plenums of the Central Committee'. Isvestia Ts. K. refers to 'Central Committee News', a Party 'organizational journal', published in Moscow between 1920 and 1929.

The page numbering in the 'footnote' section may appear somewhat bizarre in that it starts with p.45... whereas the last page of Kollontai's text is numbered p.48! This isn't due to any desire surreptitiously to shorten the pamphlet, but is due to the fact that following our first edition the stencils of Kollontai's text proper had to be re-typed, whereas the 'footnote' stencils didn't.

The main sectional titles appear in Kollontai's original text. The subtitles are our own. In this second edition we have also broken down a number of the paragraphs and sentences, some of which were so long as to make the original version extremely hard to read. A better translation is urgently needed, if only to do Kollontai justice.

September 1968.

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# THE ROOTS OF THE WORKERS OPPOSITION

## 1. INDIVIDUAL OR COLLECTIVE MANAGEMENT ?

Before making clear what the cause is of the ever-widening break between the 'Workers' Opposition' and the official point of view held by our directing centres, it is necessary to call attention to two facts:

(1) The Workers' Opposition sprang from the depths of the industrial proletariat of Soviet Russia. It is an outgrowth not only of the unbearable conditions of life and labour in which seven million industrial workers find themselves, but it is also a product of vacillation, inconsistencies, and outright deviations of our Soviet policy from the early expressed class-consistent principles of the Communist programme.

(2) The Opposition did not originate in some particular centre, was not a fruit of personal strife and controversy, but, on the contrary, covers the whole extent of Soviet Russia and meets with a resonant response.

At present, there prevails an opinion that the whole root of the controversy arising between the Workers' Opposition and the numerous currents noticeable among the leaders consists exclusively in difference of opinions regarding the problems that confront the Trade Unions. This, however, is not true. The break goes deeper. Representatives of the Opposition are not always able clearly to express and define it, but as soon as some vital question of the reconstruction of our Republic is touched upon, controversies arise concerning a whole series of cardinal economic and political questions.

For the first time, the two different points of view (as expressed by the leaders of our party and the representatives of our class-organised workers), found their reflection at the Ninth Congress of our Party (1) when that body was discussing the question: 'Collective versus personal management in industry.'

At that time, there was no opposition from any well-formed group, but it is very significant that collective management was favoured by all the representatives of the Trade Unions, while opposed to it were all the leaders of our Party, who are accustomed to appraise all events from the institutional angle. They require a good deal of shrewdness and skill to placate the socially heterogeneous and the sometimes politically hostile aspirations of the different social groups of the population as expressed by proletarians, petty owners, peasantry, and bourgeoisie in the person of specialists, and pseudo-specialists, of all kinds and degrees.

Why was it that only the Unions stubbornly defended the principle of collective management, even without being able to adduce scientific arguments in favour of it? And why was it that the specialists' supporters at the same time defended the 'one man management'? (2) The reason is that in this controversy, though both sides emphatically denied that there was a question of principle involved, two historically irreconcilable points of view had clashed. The 'one man management' is a product of the individualist conception of the bourgeois class. The 'one man management' is in principle an unrestricted, isolated, free will of one man, disconnected from the collective.

This idea finds its reflection in all spheres of human endeavour - beginning with the appointment of a sovereign for the State, and ending with a sovereign director of the factory. This is the supreme wisdom of bourgeois thought. The bourgeoisie do not believe in the power of a collective body. They like to whip the masses into an obedient flock, and drive them wherever their unrestricted will desires.

The working class and its spokesmen, on the contrary, realise that the new Communist aspirations can be obtained only through the collective efforts of the workers themselves. The more the masses are developed in the expression of their collective will and common thought, the quicker and more complete will be the realisation of working class aspirations, for it will create a new, homogeneous, unified, perfectly-arranged Communist industry. Only those who are directly bound to industry can introduce into it animating innovations.

Rejection of a principle - the principle of collective management in the control of industry - was a tactical compro-

mise on behalf of our Party, an act of adaptation; it was, moreover, an act of deviation from that class policy which we so zealously cultivated and defended during that first phase of the revolution.

Why did this happen? How did it happen that our Party, matured and tempered in the struggle of the revolution, was permitted to be carried away from the direct road, in order to journey along the roundabout path of adaptation, formerly condemned severely and branded as 'opportunism'?

The answer to this question we shall give later. Meanwhile we shall turn to the question: how did the Workers' Opposition form and develop?

## 2. GROWTH OF THE WORKERS OPPOSITION

The Ninth Congress of the Russian Communist Party was held in the spring of 1920. During the summer, the Opposition did not assert itself. Nothing was heard about it during the stormy debates that took place at the Second Congress of the Communist International. But deep at the bottom, there was taking place an accumulation of experience, of critical thought. The first expression of this process, incomplete at the time, was at the Party Conference in September, 1920 (3). For a time, the thought preoccupied itself largely with rejections and criticisms. The Opposition had no well-formulated proposals of its own. But it was obvious that the Party was entering into a new phase of its life. Within its ranks, 'lower' elements demand freedom of criticism, loudly proclaiming that bureaucracy strangles them, leaves no freedom for activity or for manifestation of initiative.

The leaders of the Party understood this undercurrent, and Comrade Zinoviev made many verbal promises as to freedom of criticism, widening of the scope of self-activity for the masses, persecution of leaders deviating from the principles of democracy, etc. A great deal was said and well said; but from words to deeds there is a considerable distance. The September conference, together with Zinoviev's much-promising speech, has changed nothing either in the Party itself or in the life of the masses. The root from which the Opposition sprouts, was not destroyed. Down at the bottom, a growth of inarticulate dissatisfaction, criticism and independence was taking place.

This inarticulate ferment was noted even by the Party leaders and it quite unexpectedly generated sharp controversies. It is significant that in the central Party bodies, sharp controversies arose concerning the part that must be played by the Trade Unions. This, however, is only natural.

At present, this subject of controversy between the Opposition and the Party leaders, while not being the only one, is still the cardinal point of our whole domestic policy.

Long before the Workers' Opposition had appeared with its Theses and formed that basis on which, in its opinion, the dictatorship of the proletariat must rest, in the sphere of industrial reconstruction, the leaders in the Party had sharply disagreed in their appraisal of the part that is to be played by the working class organisations regarding the latter's participation in the reconstruction of industries on a Communist basis. The Central Committee of the Party split into groups. Comrade Lenin stood in opposition to Trotsky, while Bukharin took the middle ground. (4)

Only at the Eighth Soviet Congress (5) and immediately after did it become obvious that within the Party itself there was a united group kept together primarily by the Theses of principles concerning the Trade Unions. This group, the Opposition, having no great theoreticians, and in spite of a most resolute resistance from the most popular leaders of the Party, was growing strong and spreading all over labouring Russia. Was it so only in Petrograd and Moscow? Not at all. Even from the Donetz basin, the Ural mountains, Siberia, and a number of other industrial centres came reports to the Central Committee that there also the Workers' Opposition was forming and acting.

It is true that not everywhere does the Opposition find itself in complete accord on all points with the workers of Moscow. At times there is much indefiniteness, pettiness and absurdity in the expressions, demands and motives of the Opposition. Even the cardinal points may differ. Yet there is everywhere one unalterable point - and this is the question: who shall develop the creative powers in the sphere of economic reconstruction? Shall it be purely class organs, directly connected by vital ties with the industries - that is, shall industrial unions undertake the work of reconstruction - or shall it be left to the Soviet machine which is separated from direct vital industrial activity and is mixed in its composition? This is the root of the break. The Workers' Opposition defends the first principle, while the leaders of the Party, whatever their differences on various secondary matters, are in complete accord on the cardinal point, and defend the second principle.

What does this mean? This means that our Party lives through its first serious crisis of the revolutionary period, and that the Opposition is not to be driven away by such a cheap name as 'syndicalism', but that all comrades must consider this in all seriousness. Who is right, the leaders or the working masses endowed with a healthy class instinct?

### 3. CAUSES OF THE CRISIS

Before considering the basic points of the controversy between the leaders of our Party and the Workers' Opposition, it is necessary to find an answer to the question: how could it happen that our Party - formerly strong, mighty and invincible because of its clear-cut and firm class policy - began to deviate from its programme?

The dearer the Communist Party is to us, just because it has made such a resolute step forward on the road to the liberation of the workers from the yoke of capital, the less right do we have to close our eyes to the mistakes of leading centres.\*

The power of the Party must lie in the ability of our leading centres to detect the problems and tasks that confront the workers, and to pick up the tendencies, which they have been able to direct, so that the masses might conquer one more of the historical positions. So it was in the past, but it is no longer so at present. Our Party not only reduces its speed, but more often 'wisely' looks back and asks: 'Have we not gone too far? Is this not the time to call a halt? Is it not wiser to be more cautious and to avoid daring experiments unseen in the whole of history?'

What was it that produced this 'wise caution' (particularly expressed in the distrust of the leading Party centres towards the economic industrial abilities of the labour unions) - caution that has lately overwhelmed all our centres? Where is the cause?

If we begin diligently to search for the cause of the developing controversy in our Party, it becomes clear that the party is passing through a crisis which was brought about by three fundamental causes.

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\* This particular formulation of Alexandra Kollontai's shows quite clearly that the Workers' Opposition was not thinking at the time the document was written (early 1921) in terms of an open break with the Party ... despite various allegations being made by leading Bolsheviks.

This organisational loyalty to the Bolshevik Party was to continue right up to the time of the Kronstadt events (March 1921). Shliapnikoff and some of the members of the Workers' Opposition in fact supported the actions of the Party on this occasion. The bureaucracy showed no gratitude, however. Shortly after the banning of factions at the 10th Congress, the Workers' Opposition was declared illegal.

Several years later, in 1926, Trotsky in his turn was loudly to proclaim his organizational loyalty to the Stalinist apparatus - which was merely waiting for the most opportune moment to destroy the Left Opposition ...

The first main basic cause is the unfortunate environment in which our Party must work and act. The Russian Communist Party must build Communism and carry into life its programme:

- (a) in the environment of complete destruction and breakdown of the economic structure;
- (b) in the face of a never diminishing and ruthless pressure of the Imperialist States and White Guards;
- (c) to the working class of Russia has fallen the lot of realising Communism, creating new Communist forms of economy in an economically backward country with a preponderant peasant population, where the necessary economic prerequisites for socialisation of production and distribution are lacking, and where Capitalism has not as yet been able to complete the full cycle of its development (from the unlimited struggle of competition of the first stage of Capitalism to its highest form: the regulation of production by capitalist unions - the trusts.)

It is quite natural that all these factors hinder the realisation of our programme (particularly in its essential part - in the reconstruction of industries on the new basis) and inject into our Soviet economic policy diverse influences and a lack of uniformity.

Out of this basic cause follow the two others. First of all, the economic backwardness of Russia and the domination of the peasantry within its boundaries create that diversity, and inevitably detract the practical policy of our Party from the clear-cut class direction, consistent in principle and theory.

Any party standing at the head of a heterogeneous Soviet state is compelled to consider the aspirations of peasants with their petty-bourgeois inclinations and resentments towards Communism, as well as lend an ear to the numerous petty-bourgeois elements, remnants of the former capitalists in Russia and to all kinds of traders, middlemen, petty officials etc. These have very rapidly adapted themselves to the Soviet institutions and occupy responsible positions in the centres, appearing in the capacity of agents of different commissariats etc. No wonder that Zarupa, the People's Commissar of Supplies, at the Eighth Congress quoted figures which showed that in the service of the Commissariat of Supplies there were engaged 17% of workers, 13% of peasants, less than 20% of specialists, and that of the remaining, more than 50%, were 'tradesmen, salesmen, and similar people, in the majority even illiterate' (Zarupa's own words). In Zarupa's opinion this is a proof of their democratic constitution, even though they have nothing in common with the class proletarians, with the producers of all wealth, with the workers in factory and mill.

These are the elements - the petty-bourgeois elements widely scattered through the Soviet institutions, the elements of the middle class, with their hostility towards Communism, and with their predilections towards the immutable customs of the past, with resentments and fears towards revolutionary acts. These are the elements that bring decay into our Soviet institutions, breeding there an atmosphere altogether repugnant to the working class. They are two different worlds and hostile at that. And yet we in Soviet Russia are compelled to persuade both ourselves and the working class that the petty-bourgeoisie and middle classes (not to speak of well-to-do peasants) can quite comfortably exist under the common motto: 'All power to the Soviets', forgetful of the fact that in practical everyday life, the interests of the workers and those of the middle classes and peasantry imbued with petty-bourgeois psychology must inevitably clash, rending the Soviet policy asunder, and deforming its clear-cut class statutes.

Beside peasant-owners in the villages and burgher elements in the cities, our Party in its Soviet State policy is forced to reckon with the influence exerted by the representatives of wealthy bourgeoisie now appearing in the form of specialists, technicians, engineers and former managers of financial and industrial affairs, who by all their past experience are bound to the capitalist system of production. (6) They cannot even imagine any other mode of production, but the one which lies within the traditional bounds of capitalist economics.

#### 4. GROWING INFLUENCE OF THE SPECIALISTS

The more Soviet Russia finds itself in need of specialists in the sphere of technique and management of production, the stronger becomes the influence of these elements, foreign to the working class, on the development of our economy. Having been thrown aside during the first period of the revolution, and being compelled to take up an attitude of watchful waiting or sometimes even open hostility towards the Soviet authorities, particularly during the most trying months (the historical sabotage by the intellectuals), this social group of brains in capitalist production, of servile, hired, well-paid servants of capital, acquire more and more influence and importance in politics with every day that passes.

Do we need names? Every fellow worker, carefully watching our foreign and domestic policy, recalls more than one such name.

As long as the centre of our life remained at the military fronts, the influence of these gentlemen directing our Soviet policy, particularly in the sphere of industrial reconstruction, was comparatively negligible.

Specialists, the remnants of the past, by all their nature closely, unalterably bound to the bourgeois system that we aim to destroy, gradually begin to penetrate into our Red Army, introducing there their atmosphere of the past (blind subordination, servile obedience, distinction, ranks, and the arbitrary will of superiors in place of class discipline, etc.). But their influence did not extend to the general political activity of the Soviet Republic.

The proletariat did not question their superior skill to direct military affairs, fully realising through their healthy class instinct that in military matters the working class as a class cannot express a new world, is powerless to introduce substantial changes into the military system - to reconstruct its foundation on a new class basis. Professional militarism - an inheritance of past ages - militarism and wars will have no place in Communist society. The struggle will go on along other channels, will take quite different forms inconceivable to our imagination. Militarism lives through its last days, through the transitory epoch of dictatorship, and therefore it is only natural that the workers, as a class, could not introduce into the forms and systems anything new and conducive to the future development of society. Even in the Red Army, however, there were innovating touches of the working class. But the nature of militarism remained the same, and the direction of military affairs by the former officers and generals of the old army did not draw the Soviet policy in military matters away to the opposite side sufficiently for the workers to feel any harm to themselves or to their class interests.

In the sphere of national economy it is quite different however. Production, its organisation - this is the essence of Communism. To debar the workers from the organisation of industry, to deprive them, that is, their individual organisations, of the opportunity to develop their powers in creating new forms of production in industry through their unions, to deny these expressions of the class organisation of the proletariat, while placing full reliance on the 'skill' of specialists trained and taught to carry on production under a quite different system of production - is to jump off the rails of scientific Marxist thought. That is, however, just the thing that is being done by the leaders of our Party at present.

Taking into consideration the utter collapse of our industries while still clinging to the capitalist mode of production (payment for labour in money, variations in wages received according to the work done) our Party leaders, in a fit of distrust in

the creative abilities of workers' collectives, are seeking salvation from the industrial chaos. Where? In the hands of scions of the bourgeois-capitalist past. In businessmen and technicians, whose creative abilities in the sphere of industry are subject to the routine, habits and methods of the capitalist system of production and economy. They are the ones who introduce the ridiculously naïve belief that it is possible to bring about Communism by bureaucratic means. They 'decree' where it is now necessary to create and carry on research.

The more the military front recedes before the economic front, the keener becomes our crying need, the more pronounced the influence of that group which is not only inherently foreign to Communism, but absolutely unable to develop the right qualities for introducing new forms of organising the work, of new motives for increasing production, of new approaches to production and distribution. All these technicians, practical men, men of business experience, who just now appear on the surface of Soviet life bring pressure to bear upon the leaders of our Party through and within the Soviet institutions by exerting their influence on economic policy.

## 5. STATE AND PARTY

The Party, therefore, finds itself in a difficult and embarrassing situation regarding the control over the Soviet state. It is forced to lend an ear and to adapt itself to three economically hostile groups of the population, each different in social structure. The workers demand a clear-cut, uncompromising policy, a rapid, forced advance towards Communism; the peasantry, with its petty-bourgeois proclivities and sympathies, demands different kinds of 'freedom', including freedom of trade and non-interference in their affairs. The latter are joined in this demand by the burger class in the form of 'agents' of Soviet officials, commissaries in the army, etc., who have already adapted themselves to the Soviet régime, and sway our policy toward petty-bourgeois lines.

As far as the centre is concerned, the influence of these petty-bourgeois elements is negligible. But in the provinces and in local Soviet activity, their influence is a

great and harmful one. Finally, there is still another group of men, consisting of the former managers and directors of the capitalist industries. These are not the magnates of capital, like Riabushinsky or Rublikoff, whom the Soviet Republic got rid of during the first phase of the revolution, but they are the most talented servants of the capitalist system of production, the 'brains and genius' of Capitalism, its true creators and sponsors. Heartily approving the centralist tendencies of the Soviet government in the sphere of economics, well realising all the benefits of trustification and regulation of production (this, by the way, is being carried on by capital in all advanced industrial countries), they are striving for just one thing - they want this regulation to be carried on, not through the labour organisations (the industrial unions), but by themselves (!) - acting now under the guise of Soviet economic institutions - the central industrial committees, industrial centres of the Supreme Council of National Economy, where they are already firmly rooted. The influence of these gentlemen on the 'sober' State policy of our leaders is great, considerably greater than is desirable. This influence is reflected in the policy which defends and cultivates bureaucratism (with no attempts to change it entirely, but just to improve it). The policy is particularly obvious in the sphere of our foreign trade with the capitalist states, which is just beginning to spring up: these commercial relations are carried on over the heads of the Russian as well as the foreign organised workers. It finds its expression, also, in a whole series of measures restricting the self-activity of the masses and giving the initiative to the scions of the capitalist world.

Among all these various groups of the population, our Party, by trying to find a middle ground, is compelled to steer a course which does not jeopardise the unity of the State interests. The clear-cut policy of our Party, in the process of identifying itself with Soviet State institutions, is being gradually transformed into an upper-class policy, which in essence is nothing else but an adaptation of our directing centres to the heterogeneous and irreconcilable interests of a socially different, mixed, population. This adaptation leads to inevitable vacillation, fluctuations, deviations and mistakes. It is only necessary to recall the zig-zag-like road of our policy toward the peasantry, which from 'banking on the poor peasant', brought us to placing reliance on 'the industrious peasant-owner'. Let us admit that this policy is proof of the political soberness and 'Statecraft wisdom' of our directing centres. But the fut-

ure historian, analysing without bias the stages of our domination, will find and point out that in this is evident 'a dangerous digression' from the class line toward 'adaptation' and a course full of harmful possibilities or results.

Let us again take the question of foreign trade. There exists in our policy an obvious duplicity. This is attested by the constant, unending friction between the Commissariat of Foreign Trade and the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. This friction is not of administrative nature alone. Its cause lies deeper. And if the secret work of the directing centres were exposed to the view of rank and file elements, who knows what the controversy dividing the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and the trade representatives abroad might lead to?

This seemingly administrative friction is essentially a serious, deep, social friction, concealed from the rank and file, and makes it absolutely necessary for Soviet politics to adapt to the three heterogeneous social groups of the population (workers, peasants and representatives of the former bourgeoisie). This constitutes another cause bringing a crisis into our Party. And we cannot but pay attention to this cause. It is too characteristic, too pregnant with possibilities. It is therefore the duty of our Party, on behalf of Party unity and future activity, to ponder over this cause and to learn the necessary lessons from the widespread dissatisfaction generated by it in the rank and file.

## 6. 'THE MASSES ARE NOT BLIND'

As long as the working class, during the first period of the revolution, felt itself to be the only bearer of Communism, there was perfect unanimity in the Party. In the days immediately following the October revolution, none could even think of 'ups' as something different from 'downs', for in those days the advanced workers were busily engaged in realising point after point in our class-Communist programme. The peasant who received the land did not at the time assert himself as a part of and a full-fledged citizen of the Soviet Republic. Intellectuals, specialists, men of affairs - the entire petty-bourgeois class and pseudo-specialists at present climbing up the Soviet ladder, rung by rung, under the guise of 'specialists', stepped aside, watching and waiting but meanwhile giving freedom to the advanced working masses to develop their creative abilities.

At present, however, it is just the other way. The worker feels, sees, and realises at every step that specialists and (what is worse) untrained illiterate pseudo-specialists, and unpractical men, throw out the worker and fill up all the high administrative posts of our industrial and economic institutions. And the Party, instead of putting the brakes on this tendency from the elements which are altogether foreign to the working class and Communism, encourages it. The Party seeks salvation from the industrial chaos, not in the workers but in these very elements. Not in the workers, not in their union organisations does the Party repose its trust, but in these elements. The working masses feel it and instead of unanimity and unity in the Party, there appears a break.

The masses are not blind. Whatever words the most popular leaders might use in order to conceal their deviation from a clear-cut class policy, whatever the compromises made with the peasants and world Capitalism, and whatever the trust that the leaders place in the disciples of the capitalist system of production, the working masses feel where the digression begins.

The workers may cherish an ardent affection and love for such personalities as Lenin. They may be fascinated by the incomparable flowery eloquence of Trotsky and his organising abilities. They may revere a number of other leaders as leaders. But when the masses feel that they and their class are not trusted, it is quite natural that they say: 'No, halt! We refuse to follow you blindly. Let us examine the situation. Your policy of picking out the middle ground between three socially opposed groups is a wise one indeed, but it smacks of the well-tried and familiar adaptation and opportunism. Today we may gain something with the help of your sober policy, but let us beware lest we find ourselves on a wrong road that, through zigzags and turns, will lead from the future to the débris of the past.'

Distrust of the workers by the leaders is steadily growing. The more sober these leaders get, the more clever statesmen they become with their policy of sliding over the blade of a sharp knife between Communism and compromise with the bourgeois past, the deeper becomes the abyss between the 'ups' and the 'downs'; the less understanding there is, and the more painful and inevitable becomes the crisis within the Party itself.

The third reason enhancing the crisis in the Party is that, in fact, during these three years of the revolution, the economic situation of the working class, of those who work in factories and mills, has not only not been improved, but has become more unbearable. This nobody dares to deny. The suppressed and widely-spread dissatisfaction among workers (workers, mind you) has a real justification.

## 7. WHO HAS GAINED FROM THE REVOLUTION

Only the peasants gained directly by the revolution. As far as the middle classes are concerned, they very cleverly adapted themselves to the new conditions, together with the representatives of the rich bourgeoisie, who had occupied all the responsible and directing positions in the Soviet institutions (particularly in the sphere of directing State economy, in the industrial organisations and the re-establishment of commercial relations with foreign nations). Only the basic class of the Soviet Republic, which bore all the burdens of the dictatorship as a mass, ekes out a shamefully pitiful existence.

The Workers' Republic controlled by the Communists, by the vanguard of the working class, which, to quote Lenin, 'has absorbed all the revolutionary energy of the class', has not had time enough to ponder over and improve the conditions of all the workers (those not in individual establishments which happened to gain the attention of the Council of the People's Commissars in one or another of the so-called 'shock industries') in general and lift their conditions of life to a human standard of existence.

The Commissariat of Labour is the most stagnant institution of all the Commissariats. In the whole of the Soviet policy, the question was never seriously raised on a national scale and discussed: what must and can be done in the face of the utter collapse of industry at home and a most unfavourable internal situation to improve the workers' conditions and preserve their health for productive labour in the future, and to better the lot of the workers in the shops.

Until recently, Soviet policy was devoid of any worked out plan for improving the lot of the workers and their conditions of life. All that was done in this field was done

almost incidentally, or at random, by local authorities under the pressure of the masses themselves. During these three years of civil war, the proletariat heroically brought to the altar of the revolution their innumerable sacrifices. They waited patiently. But now that the pulse of life in the Republic is again transferred to the economic front, the rank and file worker considers it unnecessary to 'suffer and wait.' Why? Is he not the creator of life on a Communist basis? Let us ourselves take up this reconstruction, for we know better than the gentlemen from the centres where it hurts us most.

The rank and file worker is observant. He sees that so far the problems of hygiene, sanitation, improving conditions of labour in the shops - in other words, the betterment of the workers' lot has occupied the last place in our policy. In our solution to the housing problem, we went no further than housing the workers' families in inconvenient bourgeois mansions. What is still worse, so far we have not even touched the practical problem of housing in regard to workers. To our shame, in the heart of the Republic, in Moscow itself, working people are still living in filthy, overcrowded and unhygienic quarters, one visit to which makes one think that there has been no revolution at all. We all know that the housing problem cannot be solved in a few months, even years, and that due to our poverty, its solution is faced with serious difficulties. But the facts of ever-growing inequality between the privileged groups of the population in Soviet Russia and the rank and file workers, 'the frame-work of the dictatorship', breed and nourish the dissatisfaction.

The rank and file worker sees how the Soviet official and the practical man lives and how he lives - he on whom rests the dictatorship of the proletariat. He cannot but see that during the revolution, the life and health of the workers in the shops commanded the least attention; that where prior to the revolution there existed more or less bearable conditions, they are still maintained by the shop committees. And where such conditions did not exist, where dampness, foul air and gasses poisoned and destroyed the workers' health, these conditions remain unchanged. "We could not attend to that; pray, there was the military front." And yet whenever it was necessary to make repairs in any of the houses occupied by the Soviet institutions, they were able to find both the materials and the labour. What would happen if we tried to shelter our specialists or practical men engaged in the sphere of commercial transactions with foreign capitalists in those huts in which the masses of workers still live and labour? They would raise such a howl that it would become necessary to mobilise the entire housing department in order to correct 'the chaotic conditions' that interfere with the productivity of our

specialists.

### 3. 'OUR SORROWS ARE NOT THEIRS...'

The service of the Workers' Opposition consists in that it included the problem of improving the workers' lot (together with all the other secondary workers' demands) into the general economic policy. The productivity of labour cannot be increased unless the life of the workers is organised on a new Communist basis.

The less that is undertaken and planned (I do not speak of something that has been carried out) in this sphere, the deeper is the misunderstanding, the estrangement, and still greater is the mutual distrust between leaders and workers. There is no unity, no sense of their identity of needs, demands and aspirations. The leaders are one thing, and we are something altogether different. Maybe it is true that the leaders know better how to rule over the country, but they fail to understand our needs, our life in the shops, its requirements and immediate needs; they do not understand and do not know. From this reasoning follows the instinctive leaning towards the unions, and the consequent dropping out of the Party. 'It is true they are a part of us, but as soon as they get into the centres, they leave us altogether; they begin to live differently; if we suffer, what do they care? Our sorrows are not theirs any longer.'

And the more our industrial establishments and unions are drained of their best elements by the Party (which sends them either to the front or to the Soviet institutions), the weaker becomes the direct connection between the rank and file workers and the directing Party centres. A chasm is growing. At present, this division manifests itself even in the ranks of the Party itself. The workers, through their Workers' Opposition ask: Who are we? Are we really the prop of the class dictatorship? Or are we just an obedient flock that serves as a support for those who, having severed all ties with the masses, carry out their own policy and build up industry without any regard to our opinions and creative abilities under the reliable cover of the Party label?

## 9. OBJECTIVES OF THE OPPOSITION

Whatever the Party leaders might do in order to drive away the workers' Opposition, the latter will always remain that growing healthy class force which is destined to inject vitalising energy into the rehabilitation of economic life as well as into the Communist Party, which begins to fade and bend low to the ground.

There are thus three causes which bring about a crisis in our Party: there is first of all the overall objective conditions under which Communism in Russia is being carried out (the civil war, economic backwardness of the country, its utter industrial collapse as an aftermath of the long years of war); the second cause is the heterogeneous composition of our population (1 million workers, the peasantry, the middle classes, and, finally, the former bourgeoisie, men of affairs in all professions, who influence the policy of Soviet institutions and penetrate into the Party); the third cause is the inactivity ( ) of the Party in the field of immediate improvement of the workers' life coupled with the inability and weakness of the corresponding Soviet institutions to take up and solve these problems.

What then is it that the workers' Opposition wants? What is its rôle?

Its rôle consists in raising before the Party all the perturbing questions, and in giving form to all that heretofore was causing only a subdued agitation in the masses and led the non-partisan workers ever further from the Party. It clearly and fearlessly shouted to the leaders: 'Stop, look and think! Where do you lead us? Are we not going off the right road? It will be very bad for the Party to find itself without the foundation of the dictatorship. The Party will be on its own and so will the working class. In this lies the greatest danger to the revolution.'

The task of the Party at its present crisis is fearlessly to face the mistakes and lend its ear to the healthy class call of the wide working masses. Through the creative powers of the rising class, in the form of industrial unions, we shall go forwards towards reconstruction and the development of the creative forces of the country; towards purification of the Party itself from elements foreign to it; towards cor-

rection of the activity of the Party by means of going back to democracy, freedom of opinion, and criticism inside the Party.

# THE TRADE UNIONS: THEIR ROLE AND PROBLEMS

## 1. WHO SHALL BUILD THE COMMUNIST ECONOMY?

In a basic yet brief outline, we have already explained what it is that causes the crisis in our Party. Now we shall make clear what are the most important points of the controversy between the leaders of our Party and the Workers' Opposition.

There are two such points: firstly, the part to be played by, and the problems confronting, the trade unions during the reconstruction period of the national economy, coupled with the organisation of production on a Communist basis, and secondly, the question of self-activity of the masses. This question is linked with that of bureaucracy in the Party and the Soviets.

Let us answer both questions in turn. The period of 'making theses' in our Party has already ended. Before us we find six different platforms, six Party tendencies. Such a variety and such minute variations of shades in its tendencies our Party has never seen before. Party thought has never been so rich in formulae on one and the same question. It is, therefore, obvious that the question is a basic one, and very important.

And such it is. The whole controversy boils down to one basic question: Who shall build the Communist economy, and

how shall it be built? This is, moreover, the essence of our programme: this is its heart. This question is just as important as the question of seizure of political power by the proletariat. Only the Bubnoff group of so-called political centralism (9) is so nearsighted as to underestimate its importance and to say: 'The question concerning trade unions at the present moment has no importance whatsoever, and presents no theoretical difficulties.'

It is, however, quite natural that the question seriously agitates the Party. The question is really: 'In what direction shall we turn the wheel of history; shall we turn it back or move it forward? It is also natural that there is not a single Communist in the Party who would remain non-committal during the discussion of this question. As a result, we have six different groups.

If we begin, however, carefully to analyse all the theses of these most minutely divergent groups, we find that on the basic question - who shall build the Communist economy and organise production on a new basis - there are only two points of view. One is that which is expressed and formulated in the statement of principles of the Workers' Opposition. The other is the viewpoint that unites all the rest of the groups differing only in shades, but identical in substance.

What does the statement of the Workers' Opposition stand for, and how does the latter understand the part that is to be played by the trade unions, or, to be more exact, the industrial unions, at the present moment?

'We believe that the question of reconstruction and development of the productive forces of our country can be solved only if the entire system of control over the people's economy is changed.' (from Shliapnikoff's report, December 30) Take notice comrades: 'only if the entire system of control is changed.' What does this mean? 'The basis of the controversy', the report continues, 'revolves around the question: by what means during this period of transformation can our Communist Party carry out its economic policy - shall it be by means of the workers organised into their class union, or - over their heads - by bureaucratic means, through canonised functionaries of the State.' The basis of the controversy is, therefore, this: shall we achieve Communism through the workers or over their heads, by the hands of Soviet officials. And let us, comrades, ponder whether it is possible to attain and build a Communist economy by the hands and creative abilities of the scions of the other class, who are imbued with their routine of the past? If we begin to think as Marxists, as men of science, we shall answer categorically and explicitly: 'No!'

## 2. NEW RELATIONS IN PRODUCTION AND THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

The root of the controversy and the cause of the crisis lies in the supposition that 'practical men', technicians, specialists, and managers of capitalist production can suddenly release themselves from the bonds of their traditional conceptions of ways and means of handling labour (which have been deeply ingrained into their very flesh through the years of their service to Capital) and acquire the ability to create new forms of production, of labour organisation, and of incentives to work.

To suppose that this is possible is to forget the incontestable truth that a system of production cannot be changed by a few individual geniuses, but through the requirements of a class.

Just imagine for a moment that during the transitory period from the feudal system (founded on slave labour) to the system of capitalist production (with its alleged free hired labour in the industries), the bourgeois class, lacking at the time the necessary experience in the organisation of capitalist production, had invited all the clever, shrewd experienced managers of the feudal estates who had been accustomed to deal with servile chattel slaves, and entrusted to them the task of organising production on a new capitalist basis. What would happen? Would these specialists in their own sphere, depending on the whip to increase productivity of labour, succeed in handling a 'free', though hungry, proletarian, who had released himself from the curse of involuntary labour and had become a soldier or a day labourer? Would not these experts wholly destroy the newly-born and developing capitalist production? Individual overseers of the chattel slaves, individual former landlords and their managers, were able to adapt themselves to the new form of production; but it was not from their ranks that the real creators and builders of the bourgeois capitalist economy were recruited.

Class instinct whispered to the first owners of the capitalist establishments that it was better to go slowly and use common sense in place of experience in the search for new ways and means to establish relations between capital and labour, than to borrow the antiquated useless methods of exploitation of labour from the old, outlawed system.

Class instinct quite correctly told the first capitalists during the first period of capitalist development that in place of the whip of the overseer they must apply another incentive - rivalry, personal ambition of workers facing unemployment and misery. And the capitalists, having grasped this new incentive to labour, were wise enough to use it in order to promote the development of the bourgeois capitalist forms of production by increasing the productivity of 'free' hired labour to a high degree of intensity.

Five centuries ago, the bourgeoisie acted also in a cautious way, carefully listening to the dictates of their class instincts. They relied more on their common sense than on the experience of the skilled specialists in the sphere of organising production on the old feudal estates. The bourgeoisie was perfectly right, as history has shown us.

We possess a great weapon that can help us to find the shortest road to the victory of the working class, diminish suffering along the way, and bring about the new system of production - Communism - more quickly. This weapon is the materialistic conception of history. However, instead of using it, widening our experience and correcting our researches in conformity with history, we are ready to throw this weapon aside and follow the encumbered, circuitous road of blind experiments.

Whatever our economic distress happens to be, we are not justified in feeling such an extreme degree of despair. It is only the capitalist governments, standing with their backs to the wall that need feel despair. After exhausting all the creative impulses of capitalist production, they find no solution to their problems.

As far as toiling Russia is concerned, there is no room for despair. Since the October revolution, unprecedented opportunities of economic creation have opened new, unheard-of forms of production, with an immense increase in the productivity of labour.

It is only necessary not to borrow from the past, but, on the contrary, to give complete freedom to the creative powers of the future. This is what the Workers' Opposition is doing. Who can be the builder and creator of Communist economy? That class - and not the individual geniuses of the past - which is organically bound with newly-developing, painfully-born forms of production of a more productive and perfect system of economy. Which organ can formulate and solve the problems in the sphere of organising the new econ-

omy and its production - the pure class industrial unions, or the heterogeneous Soviet economic establishments? The Workers' Opposition considers that it can be done only by the former, that is, by the workers' collective, and not by the functional, bureaucratic, socially-heterogeneous collective with a strong admixture of the old capitalist elements, whose mind is clogged with the refuse of capitalistic routine.

'The workers' unions must be drawn from the present position of passive assistance to the economic institutions into active participation in the management of the entire economic structure' (from 'Theses of the Workers' Opposition'). To seek, find and create new and more perfect forms of economy, to find new incentives to the productivity of labour - all this can be done only by the workers' collectives that are closely bound with the new forms of production. Only these collectives from their everyday experience, are capable of drawing certain conclusions. At first glance, these conclusions appear to be only of practical importance, and yet exceedingly valuable theoretical conclusions may be drawn from them concerning the handling of new labour power in a workers' state where misery, poverty, unemployment and competition on the labour market cease to be incentives to work!

To find a stimulus, an incentive to work - this is the greatest task of the working class standing on the threshold of Communism. None other, however, than the working class itself in the form of its class collectives, is able to solve this great problem.

The solution to this problem, as proposed by the industrial unions, consists in giving complete freedom to the workers as regards experimenting, class training, adjusting and discovering new forms of production, as well as expressing and developing their creative abilities - that is, to that class which can alone be the creator of Communism.

This is how the Workers' Opposition sees the solution to this difficult problem, from which follows the most essential point of their theses: 'Organisation of control over the social economy is a prerogative of the All-Russian Congress of Producers, who are united in the trade and industrial unions which elect the central body directing the whole economic life of the republic.' (Theses of the Workers' Opposition). This demand would ensure freedom for the manifestation of creative class abilities, not restricted and crippled by the bureaucratic machine which is saturated with the spirit of routine of the bourgeois capitalist system of production and

control. The Workers' Opposition relies on the creative powers of its own class: the workers. The rest of our programme follows from this premise.

### 3. WHO WILL MANAGE PRODUCTION ?

But right at this point there begin the differences between the Workers' Opposition and the line that is followed by the Party leaders. Distrust towards the working class (not in the sphere of politics, but in the sphere of economic creative abilities) is the whole essence of the theses signed by our Party leaders. They do not believe that by the rough hands of workers, untrained technically, can be created those foundations of the economic forms which, in the course of time, shall develop into a harmonious system of Communist production.

To all of them - Lenin, Trotsky, Zinovieff, and Bukharin - it seems that production is 'such a delicate thing' that it is impossible to get along without the assistance of 'directors'. First of all we shall 'bring up' the workers, 'teach them', and only when they have grown up shall we remove from them all the teachers of the Supreme Council of Natural Economy and let the industrial unions take control over production. It is, after all, significant that all the theses written by the Party leaders coincide in one essential feature: for the present, we shall not give control over production to the trade unions; for the present 'we shall wait'. It is doubtless true that Trotsky, Lenin, Zinovieff, and Bukharin differ in their reasons as to why the workers should not be entrusted with running the industries just at present. But they unanimously agree that just at the present time, the management of the production must be carried on over the workers' heads by means of a bureaucratic system inherited from the past.

On this point all the leaders of our Party are in complete accord. 'The centre of gravity in the work of the trade unions at the present moment - assert the Ten (10) in their Theses - must be shifted into the economic industrial sphere. The trade unions as class organisations of workers, built up in conformity with their industrial functions, must take on the major work in organisation of production.' 'Major work' is a too indefinite term. It permits of various interpretations. And yet it would seem that the platform of the 'Ten' gives more leeway for the trade unions in running the industries than

Trotsky's centralism (11). Further, the theses of the 'Ten' go on to explain what they mean by 'major work' of the unions. 'The most energetic participation in the centres which regulate production and control, register and distribute labour power, organise exchange between cities and villages, fight against sabotage, and carry out decrees on different compulsory labour obligations, etc.' This is all. Nothing new. And nothing more than what the trade unions have already been doing. This cannot save our production nor help in the solution of the basic question - raising and developing the productive forces of our country.

In order to make clear the fact that the programme of the 'Ten' does not give to the trade unions any of the directing functions, but assigns to them only an auxiliary rôle in the management of production, the authors say: 'In a developed stage (not at present, but at a 'developed stage'), the trade unions in their process of social transformation must become organs of a social authority. They must work as such, in subordination to other organisations, and carry out the new principles of organisation of economic life.' By this they mean to say that the trade unions must work in subordination to the Supreme Council of National Economy and its branches.

#### 4. TROTSKY'S VIEW

What is the difference, then, with that and 'joining by growth' (12) which was proposed by Trotsky? The difference is only one of method. The theses of the 'Ten' strongly emphasise the educational nature of the trade unions. In their formulation of problems for the trade unions (mainly in the sphere of organisation, industry and education), our Party leaders as clever politicians suddenly convert themselves into 'teachers'.

This peculiar controversy is revolving not around the system of management in industry, but mainly around the system of bringing up the masses. In fact, when one begins to turn over the pages of the stenographic minutes and speeches made by our prominent leaders, one is astonished by the unexpected manifestation of their pedagogic proclivities. Every author of the theses proposes the most perfect system of bringing up the masses. But all these systems of 'education' lack provisions for freedom of experiment, for training and for the expression of creative abilities by those who are to be taught. In this respect also all our peda-

gogues are behind the times.

The trouble is that Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin and others see the functions of the trade unions not as the control over production or as the taking over of the industries, but merely as a school for bringing up the masses. During the discussion it seemed to some of our comrades that Trotsky stood for a gradual 'absorption of the unions by the state' - not all of a sudden, but gradually and that he wanted to reserve for them the right of ultimate control over production, as it is expressed in our programme. This point, it seemed at first, put Trotsky on a common ground with the Opposition at a time when the group represented by Lenin and Zinovieff, being opposed to the 'absorption of the state,' saw the object of union activity and their problem as 'training for Communism'. 'Trade Unions,' thunder Trotsky and Zinovieff, 'are necessary for the rough work' (p.22 of the report, Dec. 30). Trotsky himself, it would seem, understands the task somewhat differently. In his opinion, the most important work of the unions consists in organising production. In this he is perfectly right. He is also right when he says, 'Inasmuch as unions are schools of Communism, they are such schools not in carrying on general propaganda (for such activity would mean they were playing the part of clubs), not in mobilising their members for military work or collecting the produce tax, but for the purpose of all-round education of their members on the basis of their participation in production.' (Trotsky's report, Dec. 30) All this is true, but there is one grave omission: the unions are not only schools for Communism, but they are its creators as well.

Creativeness of the class is being lost sight of. Trotsky replaces it by the initiative of 'the real organisers of production', by Communists inside the unions (from Trotsky's report, Dec. 30). What Communists? According to Trotsky, by those Communists appointed by the Party to responsible administrative positions in the unions (for reasons that quite often have nothing in common with considerations of industrial and economic problems of the unions). Trotsky is quite frank. He does not believe that the workers are ready to create Communism, and through pain, suffering and blunder still seek to create new forms of production. He has expressed this frankly and openly. He has already carried out his system of 'club education' of the masses, of training them for the rôle of 'master' in the Central Administrative Body of Railways (13) adopting all those

methods of educating the masses which were practised by our traditional journeymen upon their apprentices. It is true that a beating on the head by a boot-stretcher does not make an apprentice a successful shopkeeper after he becomes a journeyman. And yet as long as the boss-teacher's stick hangs over his head, he works and produces.

This, in Trotsky's opinion, is the whole essence of shifting the central point 'from politics to industrial problems.' To raise, even temporarily, productivity by every and all means is the whole crux of the task. The whole course of training in the trade unions must be, in Trotsky's opinion, also directed towards this end.

## 5. THE VIEWS OF LENIN, ZINOVIEV & BUKHARIN

Comrades Lenin and Zinovieff, however, disagree with him. They are 'educators' of 'a modern trend of thought'. It has been stated many a time that the trade unions are schools for Communism. What does that mean - 'schools for Communism'?

If we take this definition seriously, it will mean that in schools for Communism, it is necessary first of all to teach and bring up, but not to command (this allusion to Trotsky's views meets with applause). Further on, Zinovieff adds: the trade unions are performing a great task, both for the proletarian and the Communist cause. This is the basic part to be played by the trade unions. At present, however, we forget this, and think that we may handle the problem of trade unions too recklessly, too roughly, too severely.

It is necessary to remember that these organisations have their own particular tasks - these are not tasks of commanding, supervising or dictating, but tasks in which all may be reduced to one: drawing of the working masses into the channel of the organised proletarian movement. Thus, teacher Trotsky went too far in his system of bringing up the masses. But what does Comrade Zinovieff himself propose? To give, within the unions, the first lessons in Communism: 'to teach them (the masses) the basic facts about the proletarian movement.' How? 'Through practical experience, through practical creation of the new forms of production? Just what the Opposition wants? Not at all. Zinovieff-Lenin's group favours a system of bringing up through reading, giving moral precepts and good, well-chosen

examples. We have 500,000 Communists (among whom, we regret to say, there are many 'strangers' - stragglers from the other world) to seven million workers.

According to Comrade Lenin, the Party has drawn to itself 'the proletarian vanguard'. The best Communists, in co-operation with specialists from the Soviet economic institutions, are searching hard in their laboratories for the new forms of Communist production. These Communists, working at present under the care of 'good teachers' in the Supreme Council of National Economy or other centres, these Peters and Johns are the best pupils it is true. But the working masses in the trade unions must look to these exemplary Peters and Johns and learn something from them without touching with their own hands the rudder of control, for it is 'too early as yet'. They have 'not yet learned enough'.

In Lenin's opinion the trade unions - that is, the working class organisations - are not the creators of the Communist forms of people's economy, for they serve only as a connecting-link between the vanguard and the masses: 'the trade unions in their everyday work persuade masses, masses of that class ...' etc.

That is not Trotsky's 'club system', not a mediaeval system of education. This is the Froebel-Pestalozzi's German system (14) founded on studying examples. Trade unions must do nothing vital in the industries. But they must persuade the masses. They must keep the masses in touch with the vanguard, with the Party which (remember this!) does not organise production as a collective, but only creates Soviet economic institutions of a heterogeneous composition, whereto it appoints Communists.

Which system is better? This is the question. Trotsky's system, whatever it may be in other respects, is clearer and therefore more real. On reading books and studying examples taken from goodhearted Peters and Johns, one cannot advance education too far. This must be remembered, and remembered well.

Bukharin's group occupies the middle ground. Or rather, it attempts to co-ordinate both systems of up-bringing. We must notice, however, that it too fails to recognise the principle of independent creativeness of the unions in industry. In the opinion of Bukharin's group, the trade unions play a double rôle (so it is proclaimed in their thesis). On the one hand it (obviously 'the rôle') takes

on itself the function of a 'school for Communism'. And, on the other hand, it takes on the functions of an intermediary between the Party and the masses (this is from Lenin's group). It takes on, in other words, the rôle of a machine: injecting the wide proletarian masses into the active life (notice, comrades - 'into the active life' - but not into the creation of a new form of economy or into a search for new forms of production). Besides that they (obviously the unions) in ever increasing degree, must become the component part both of the economic machine and of the State authority. This is Trotsky's 'joining together'.

The controversy again revolves not around the trade union problems but around the methods of educating the masses by means of the unions. Trotsky stands, or rather stood, for a system which, with the help of that introduced among the railway workers, might hammer into the organised workers' heads the wisdom of Communist reconstruction. By means of 'appointees', 'shake-ups', and all kinds of miraculous measures promulgated in conformity with 'the shock system', it would re-make the unions so that they might join the Soviet economic institutions by growth, and become obedient tools in realising economic plans worked out by the Supreme Council of National Economy.

Zinovieff and Lenin are not in a hurry to join up the trade unions to the Soviet economic machine. The unions, they say, shall remain unions. As regards production, it will be run and managed by men whom we choose. When the trade unions have brought up obedient and industrious Peters and Johns, we will 'inject' them into the Soviet Economic institutions. Thus the unions will gradually disappear, dissolve.

The creation of new forms of national economy they entrust to the Soviet bureaucratic institutions. As to the unions, they leave them the rôle of 'schools'. Education, education and more education. Such is the Lenin-Zinovieff slogan. Bukharin, however, wanted 'to bank' on radicalism in the system of union education, and, of course, he fully merited the rebuke from Lenin together with the nickname of 'Simidicomist'. Bukharin and his group, while emphasising the educational part to be played by the unions in the present political situation, stand for the most complete workers' democracy inside the unions, for wide elective powers to the unions - not only for the elective principle generally applied, but for non-conditional election of delegates nominated by the unions. What a democracy! This smacked of the very Opposition itself, if it were not for one difference. The

Workers' Opposition sees in the unions the managers and creators of the Communist economy, whereas Bukharin, together with Lenin and Trotsky, leave to them only the rôle of 'schools for Communism' and no more. Why should Bukharin not play with the elective principle, when everybody knows that it will do no good or bad to the system of running industry? For, as a matter of fact, the control of industry will still remain outside the unions, beyond their reach, in the hands of the Soviet institutions. Bukharin reminds us of those teachers who carry on education in conformity with the old system by means of 'books'. 'You must learn that far and no further', while encouraging 'self-activity' of the pupils ... in organising dances, entertainments etc.

In this way, the two systems (15) quite comfortably live together and square up with one another. But what the outcome of all this will be, and what duties will the pupils of these teachers of eclectics be able to perform - that is a different question. If Comrade Lunacharsky were to disapprove at all the educational meetings of 'eclectic heresy' like this, the position of the People's Commissariat on Education would be precarious indeed.

## 6. RESTRICTING CREATIVENESS

However, there is no need to underestimate the educational methods of our leading comrades in regard to the trade unions. They all, Trotsky included, realise that in the matter of education, 'self-activity' of the masses is not the least factor. Therefore, they are in search of such a plan where trade unions, without any harm to the prevailing bureaucratic system of running the industry, may develop their initiative and their economic creative powers.

The least harmful sphere where the masses could manifest their self-activity as well as their 'participation in active life' (according to Bukharin) is the sphere of betterment of the workers' lot. The Workers' Opposition pays a great deal of attention to this question, and yet it knows that the basic sphere of class creation is the creation of new industrial economic forms, of which the betterment of the workers' lot is only a part.

In Trotsky and Zinovieff's opinion, all production must be initiated and adjusted by the Soviet institutions, while the trade unions are advised to perform a rather restricted, though useful, work of improving the lot of the workers. Comrade Zinovieff, for instance, sees in distribution of cloth-

ing the 'economic rôle' of the unions, and explains: 'there is no more important problem than that of economy; to repair one bath-house in Petrograd at present is ten times more important than delivering five good lectures.'

What is this? A naïve, mistaken view? Or a conscious substitution of organising creative tasks in the sphere of production and development of creative abilities, by restricted tasks of home economics, household duties, etc.? In somewhat different language, the same thought is expressed by Trotsky. He very generously proposes to the trade unions to develop the greatest initiative possible in the economic field.

But where shall this initiative express itself? In 'putting glass' in the shop window or filling up a pool in front of the factory (from Trotsky's speech at the Liners' Congress)? Comrade Trotsky, take pity on us! For this is merely the sphere of house-running. If you intend to reduce the creativeness of the unions to such a degree, then the unions will become not schools for Communism, but places where they train people to become janitors. It is true that Comrade Trotsky attempts to widen the scope of the 'self-activity of the masses' by letting them participate not in an independent improvement of the workers' lot, on the job (only the 'insane' Workers' Opposition goes that far), but by taking lessons from the Supreme Council of the National Economy on this subject.

Whenever a question concerning workers is to be decided, as for instance about distribution of food or labour power, it is necessary that the trade unions should know exactly, not in general outline as mere citizens, but know thoroughly the whole current work that is being done by the Supreme Council of National Economy (speech of Dec. 30). The teachers from the Supreme Council of National Economy not only force the trade unions 'to carry out' plans, but they also 'explain to their pupils their decrees.' This is already a step forward in comparison with the system that functions at present on the railways.

To every thinking worker, it is clear, however, that putting in glass, useful as it may be, has nothing in common with running industry; productive forces and their development do not find expression in this work. The really important question still is: how to develop the productive forces. How to build such a state of economy by squaring the new life with production, and how to eliminate unproductive labour as much as possible. A Party may bring up a Red soldier, a political worker or an executive worker to carry out the projects already laid out. But it cannot develop a creator of Communist economy, for only

a union offers an opportunity for developing the creative abilities along new lines.

Moreover, this is not the task of the Party. The Party task is to create the conditions - that is, give freedom to the working masses united by common economic industrial aims - so that workers can become worker-creators, find new impulses for work, work out a new system to utilise labour power, and discover how to distribute workers in order to reconstruct society, and thus to create a new economic order of things founded on a Communist basis. Only workers can generate in their minds new methods of organising labour as well as running industry.

## 7. TECHNIQUE AND ORGANIZATION

This is a simple marxist truth, and yet at present the leaders of our Party do not share it with us. Why? Because they place more reliance on the bureaucratic technicians, descendants of the past, than on the healthy elemental class-creativity of the working masses. In every other sphere we may hesitate as to who is to be in control - whether the workers' collective or the bureaucratic specialists, be it in the matter of education, development of science, organisation of the Army, care of Public Health. But there is one place, that of the economy, where the question as to who shall have control is very simple and clear for everyone who has not forgotten history.

It is well known to every marxist that the reconstruction of industry and the development of the creative forces of a country depend on two factors: on the development of technique and on the efficient organisation of labour by means of increasing productivity and finding new incentives to work. This has been true during every period of transformation from a lower stage of economic development to a higher one throughout the history of human existence.

In a workers' republic the development of the productive forces by means of technique plays a secondary rôle in comparison with the second factor, that of the efficient organisation of labour, and the creation of a new system of economy. Even if Soviet Russia succeeds in carrying out completely its project of general electrification, without introducing any essential change in the system of control and organisation of the people's economy and production, it would only catch up with

the advanced capitalist countries in the matter of development.

Yet, in the efficient utilisation of labour power and building up a new system of production, Russian labour finds itself in exceptionally favourable circumstances. These give her the opportunity to leave far behind all bourgeois capitalist countries in the question of developing the productive forces. Unemployment as an incentive to labour in socialist Russia has been done away with. New possibilities are open for a working class that had been freed from the yoke of capital, to have its own creative say in finding new incentives to labour and the creation of new forms of production which will have had no precedent in all of human history.

Who can, however, develop the necessary creativeness and keenness in this sphere? Is it the bureaucratic elements, the heads of the Soviet institutions or the industrial unions, whose members in their experience of regrouping workers in the shop come across creative, useful, practical methods that can be applied in the process of reorganising the entire system of the people's economy? The Workers' Opposition asserts that administration of the people's economy is the trade unions' job and, therefore, that the Opposition is more marxist in thought than the theoretically trained leaders.

The Workers' Opposition is not so ignorant as wholly to underestimate the great value of technical progress or the usefulness of technically trained men. It does not, therefore, think that after electing its own body of control over industry it may safely dismiss the Supreme Council of National Economy, the central industrial committees, economic centres, etc. Not at all. The Workers' Opposition thinks that it must assert its own control over these technically valuable administrative centres, give them theoretical tasks, and use their services as the capitalists did when they hired the technicians in order to carry out their own schemes. Specialists can do valuable work in developing the industries; they can make the workers' manual labour easier; they are necessary, indispensable, just as science is indispensable to every rising and developing class. But the bourgeois specialists, even when Communist labels are pasted on them, are powerless physically and too weak mentally to develop the productive forces in a non-capitalist state; to find new methods of labour organisation and to develop new incentives for intensification of labour. In this, the last word belongs to the working class - to the industrial unions.

When the rising bourgeois class, having reached the threshold leading from mediaeval to modern times, entered into the economic battle with the decaying class of feudal lords, it did not possess any technical advantages over the latter. The trader - the first capitalist - was compelled to buy goods from that craftsman or journeyman who by means of hand files, knife, and primitive spindles was producing goods both for his 'master' (the landlord) and for the outside trader, with whom he entered into a 'free' trade agreement. Feudal economy having reached a culminating point in its organisation, ceased to give any surplus, and there began a decrease in the growth of productive forces. Humanity stood face to face with the alternatives of either economic decay or of finding new incentives for labour, of creating, consequently, a new economic system which would increase productivity, widen the scope of production, and open new possibilities for the development of productive forces.

Who could have found and evolved the new methods in the sphere of industrial reorganisation? None but those class representatives who had not been bound by the routine of the past, who understood that the spindle and cutter in the hands of a chattel slave produce incomparably less than in the hands of supposedly free hired workers, behind whose back stands the incentive of economic necessity.

Thus the rising class, having found where the basic incentive to labour lay, built on it a complex system great in its own way: the system of capitalist production. The technicians only came to the aid of capitalists much later. The basis was the new system of labour organisation, and the new relations that were established between capital and labour.

The same is true at present. No specialist or technician imbued with the routine of the capitalist system of production can ever introduce any new creative motive and vitalising innovation into the fields of labour organisation, in creating and adjusting a Communist economy. Here the function belongs to the workers' collectives. The great service of the Workers' Opposition is that it brought up this question of supreme importance frankly and openly before the Party.

Comrade Lenin considers that we can put through a Communist plan on the economic field by means of the Party. Is it so? First of all, let us consider how the Party functions. According to Comrade Lenin, 'it attracts to itself the vanguard of workers'; then it scatters them over various Soviet institutions (only a part of the vanguard gets back into the

trade unions, where the Communist members, however, are deprived of an opportunity of directing and building up the people's economy). These well-trained, faithful, and perhaps very talented Communist-economists disintegrate and decay in the general economic institutions. In such an atmosphere, the influence of these comrades is weakened, marred, or entirely lost.

Quite a different thing with the trade unions. There, the class atmosphere is thicker, the composition more homogeneous, the tasks that the collective is faced with more closely bound with the immediate life and labour needs of the producers themselves, of the members of factory and shop committees, of the factory management and the unions' centres. Creativeness and the search for new forms of production, for new incentives to labour, in order to increase productivity, may be generated only in the bosom of this natural class collective. Only the vanguard of the class can create revolution, but only the whole class can develop through its everyday experience the practical work of the basic class collectives.

Whoever does not believe in the basic spirit of a class collective - and this collective is most fully represented by the trade unions - must put a cross over the Communist reconstruction of society. Neither Krestinsky or Preobrajensky Lenin or Trotsky can infallibly push to the forefront by means of their Party machine those workers able to find and point out new approaches to the new system of production. Such workers can be pushed to the front only by life-experience itself, from the ranks of those who actually produce and organise production at the same time.

This consideration, which should be very simple and clear to every practical man, is lost sight of by our Party leaders: it is impossible to decree Communism. It can be treated only in the process of practical research, through mistakes, perhaps, but only by the creative powers of the working class itself.

### 3. THE PROGRAMME OF THE OPPOSITION

The cardinal point of the controversy that is taking place between the Party leaders and the Workers' Opposition is this: to whom will our Party entrust the building of the Communist economy - to the Supreme Council of National Economy with all its bureaucratic branches? Or to the industrial unions? Comrade Trotsky wants 'to join' the trade unions to

the Supreme Council of People's Economy, so that, with the assistance of the latter, it might be possible to swallow up the former. Comrades Lenin and Zinovieff, on the other hand, wanted to 'bring up' the masses to such a level of Communist understanding that they could be painlessly absorbed into the same Soviet institutions. Bukharin and the rest of the factions express essentially the same view. Variations exist only in the way they put it; the essence is the same. Only the Workers' Opposition expresses something entirely different, defends the proletarian class viewpoint in the very process of creation and realisation of its tasks.

The administrative economic body in the workers' republic during the present transitory period must be a body directly elected by the producers themselves. All the other administrative economic Soviet institutions should serve only as executive centres of the economic policy of the all-important economic body of the workers' republic. All else is goose-stepping, that shows distrust towards the creative abilities of the workers, distrust which is not compatible with the professed ideals of our Party, whose very strength depends on the perennial creative spirit of the proletariat.

There will be nothing surprising if at the approaching Party congress, the sponsors of the different economic reforms, with the single exception of the Workers' Opposition, will come to a common understanding through mutual compromises and concessions, since there is no essential controversy among them.

The Workers' Opposition alone will not and must not compromise. This does not, however, mean that it 'is aiming at a split'. Not at all. Its task is entirely different. Even in the event of defeat at the Congress, it must remain in the Party, and step by step stubbornly defend its point of view, save the Party, clarify its class lines.

Once more in brief: what is it that the Workers' Opposition wants?

(1) To form a body from the workers - producers themselves - for administering the people's economy.

(2) For this purpose, (i.e. for the transformation of the unions from the rôle of passive assistance to the economic bodies, to that of active participation and manifestation of their creative initiative) the Workers' Opposition proposes a series of preliminary measures aimed at an orderly and gradual realisation of this aim.

(3) Transferring of the administrative functions of industry into the hands of the union does not take place until the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the trade unions has found the said unions to be able and sufficiently prepared for the task.

(4) All appointments to the administrative economic positions shall be made with consent of the union. All candidates nominated by the union to be non-removable. All responsible officials appointed by the unions are responsible to it and may be recalled by it.

(5) In order to carry out all these proposals, it is necessary to strengthen the rank and file nucleus in the unions, and to prepare factory and shop committees for running the industries.

(6) By means of concentrating in one body the entire administration of the public economy (without the existing dualism of the Supreme Council of National Economy and the All-Russian Executive Committee of the trade unions) there must be created a singleness of will which will make it easy to carry out the plan and put into life the Communist system of production. Is this syndicalism? Is not this, on the contrary, the same as what is stated in our Party programme, and are not the elements of principles signed by the rest of the comrades deviating from it?

# ON BUREAUCRACY AND SELF ACTIVITY *of the* MASSES

## 1. INITIATIVE... AND THE ROOTS OF APATHY

Is it to be bureaucracy or self-activity of the masses? This is the second point of the controversy between the leaders of our Party and the Workers' Opposition. The question of bureaucracy was raised and only superficially discussed at the eighth Soviet Congress. Herein, just as in the question on the part to be played by the trade unions and their problems, the discussion was shifted to a wrong channel. The controversy on

this question is more fundamental than it might seem.

The essence is this: what system of administration in a workers' republic during the period of creation of the economic basis for Communism secures more freedom for the class creative powers? Is it a bureaucratic state system or a system of wide practical self-activity of the working masses? The question relates to the system of administration and the controversy arises between two diametrically opposed principles: bureaucracy or self-activity. And yet they try to squeeze it into the scope of the problem that concerns itself only with methods of 'animating the Soviet institutions'.

Here we observe the same substitution of the subjects discussed as the one that occurred in the debates on the trade unions. It is necessary to state definitely and clearly that half-measures, changes in relations between central bodies and local economic organisations, and other such petty non-essential innovations (such as responsible officials or the injection of Party members into the Soviet institutions, where these Communists are subjected to all the bad influences of the prevailing bureaucratic system, and disintegrate among the elements of the former bourgeois class) will not bring 'democratisation' or life into the Soviet institutions.

This is not the point however. Every child in Soviet Russia knows that the vital problem is to draw the wide toiling masses of workers, peasants and others, into the reconstruction of economy in the proletarian state, and to change the conditions of life accordingly. The task is clear: it is to arouse initiative and self-activity in the masses. But what is being done to encourage and develop that initiative? Nothing at all. Quite the contrary. At every meeting we call upon the working men and women to 'create a new life, build up and assist the Soviet authorities.' But no sooner do the masses or individual groups of workers take our admonition seriously and attempt to apply it in real life than some bureaucratic institution, feeling ignored, hastily cuts short the efforts of the over-zealous initiators.

Every comrade can easily recall scores of instances when workers themselves attempted to organise dining-rooms, day nurseries for children, transportation of wood, etc. Each time a lively, immediate interest in the undertaking died from the red tape, interminable negotiations with the various institutions that brought no results, or resulted in refusals, new requisitions etc. Wherever there was an opportunity un-

der the impetus of the masses themselves - of the masses using their own efforts - to equip a dining-room, to store a supply of wood, or to organise a nursery, refusal always followed refusal from the central institutions. Explanations were forthcoming that there was no equipment for the dining-room, lack of horses for transporting the wood, and absence of an adequate building for the nursery. How much bitterness is generated among working men and women when they see and know that if they had been given the right, and an opportunity to act, they could themselves have seen the project through. How painful it is to receive a refusal of necessary materials when such material had already been found and procured by the workers themselves. Their initiative is therefore slackening and the desire to act is dying out. 'If that is the case', people say, 'let officials themselves take care of us.' As a result, there is generated a most harmful division: we are the toiling people, they are the Soviet officials, on whom everything depends. This is the whole trouble.

## 2. THE ESSENCE OF BUREAUCRACY

Meanwhile, what are our Party leaders doing? Do they attempt to find the cause of the evil? Do they openly admit that their very system which was carried out into life through the Soviets, paralyses and deadens the masses, though it was meant to encourage their initiative? No, our Party leaders do nothing of the kind. Just the opposite. Instead of finding means to encourage the mass initiative which could fit perfectly into our flexible Soviet institutions, our Party leaders all of a sudden appear in the rôle of defenders and knights of bureaucracy. How many comrades follow Trotsky's example and repeat that 'we suffer, not because we adopt the bad sides of bureaucracy, but because we have failed so far to learn the good ones.' ('On one common plan', by Trotsky). (17)

Bureaucracy is a direct negation of mass self-activity. Whoever therefore accepts the principle of involving the masses in active participation as a basis for the new system of the workers' republic, cannot look for good or bad sides in bureaucracy. He must openly and resolutely reject this useless system. Bureaucracy is not a product of our misery as Comrade Zinovieff tries to convince us. Neither is it a reflection of 'blind subordination' to superiors, generated by militarism, as others assert. This phenomenon has deeper roots. It is a by-product of the same cause that explains our policy of double-dealing in relation to the trade unions, namely, the growing influence in the Soviet institutions of elements host-

ile in spirit not only to Communism, but also to the elementary aspirations of the working masses. Bureaucracy is a scourge that pervades the very marrow of our Party as well as of the Soviet institutions. This fact is emphasised not only by the Workers' Opposition. It is also recognised by many thoughtful comrades not belonging to this group.

Restrictions on initiative are imposed, not only in regard to the activity of the non-Party masses (this would only be a logical and reasonable condition, in the atmosphere of the civil war). The initiative of Party members themselves is restricted. Every independent attempt, every new thought that passes through the censorship of our centre, is considered as 'heresy', as a violation of Party discipline, as an attempt to infringe on the prerogatives of the centre, which must 'foresee' everything and 'decree' everything and anything. If anything is not decreed one must wait, for the time will come when the centre at its leisure will decree. Only then, and within sharply restricted limits, will one be allowed to express one's 'initiative'. What would happen if some of the members of the Russian Communist Party - those, for instance, who are fond of birds - decided to form a society for the preservation of birds? The idea itself seems useful. It does not in any way undermine any 'State project'. But it only seems this way. All of a sudden there would appear some bureaucratic institution which would claim the right to manage this particular undertaking. That particular institution would immediately 'incorporate' the society into the Soviet machine, deadening, thereby, the direct initiative. And instead of direct initiative, there would appear a heap of paper decrees and regulations which would give enough work to hundreds of other officials and add to the work of mails and transport.

The harm in bureaucracy does not only lie in the red tape - as some comrades would want us to believe - they narrow the whole controversy to the 'animation of Soviet institutions'. The harm lies in the solution of all problems, not by means of an open exchange of opinions or by the immediate efforts of all concerned, but by means of formal decisions handed down from the central institutions. These decisions are arrived at either by one person or by an extremely limited collective, wherein the interested people are quite often entirely absent. Some third person decides your fate: this is the whole essence of bureaucracy.

In the face of the growing suffering in the working class, brought about by the confusion of the present transitory period, bureaucracy finds itself particularly weak and impotent. Miracles of enthusiasm in stimulating the productive forces and alleviating working conditions can only be performed by

the active initiative of the interested workers themselves, provided it is not restricted and repressed at every step by a hierarchy of 'permissions' and 'decrees'.

Marxists, and Bolsheviks in particular, have been strong and powerful in that they never stressed the policy of immediate success of the movement. (This line, by the way, has always been followed by the opportunists-compromisers). Marxists have always attempted to put the workers in such conditions as would give them the opportunity to temper their revolutionary will and to develop their creative abilities. The workers' initiative is indispensable for us, and yet we do not give it a chance to develop.

Fear of criticism and of freedom of thought, by combining together with bureaucracy, often produce ridiculous results. There can be no self-activity without freedom of thought and opinion, for self-activity manifests itself not only in initiative, action and work, but in independent thought as well. We give no freedom to class activity, we are afraid of criticism, we have ceased to rely on the masses: hence we have bureaucracy with us. That is why the Workers' Opposition considers that bureaucracy is our enemy, our scourge, and the greatest danger to the future existence of the Communist Party itself.

### 3. AGAINST BUREAUCRACY IN THE PARTY

In order to do away with the bureaucracy that is finding its shelter in the Soviet institutions, we must first get rid of all bureaucracy in the Party itself. That is where we face the immediate struggle. As soon as the Party - not in theory but in practice - recognises the self-activity of the masses as the basis of our State, the Soviet institutions will again automatically become living institutions, destined to carry out the Communist project. They will cease to be the institutions of red tape and the laboratories for still-born decrees into which they have very rapidly degenerated.

What shall we do then in order to destroy bureaucracy in the Party and replace it by workers' democracy? First of all it is necessary to understand that our leaders are wrong when they say: 'Just now we agree to loosen the reins somewhat, for there is no immediate danger on the military front, but as soon as we again feel the danger we shall return to the military system in the Party. We must remember that heroism saved Petrograd, more than once defended Lugansk, other centres, and

whole regions. Was it the Red Army alone that put up the defence? No. There was, besides, the heroic self-activity and initiative of the masses themselves. Every comrade will recall that during the moments of supreme danger, the Party always appealed to this self-activity, for it saw in it the sheet-anchor of salvation. It is true that at times of threatening danger, Party and class discipline must be stricter. There must be more self-sacrifice, exactitude in performing duties, etc. But between these manifestations of class spirit and the 'blind subordination' which is being advocated lately in the Party, there is a great difference.

In the name of Party regeneration and the elimination of bureaucracy from the Soviet institutions, the Workers' Opposition, together with a group of responsible workers in Moscow demand complete realisation of all democratic principles, not only for the present period of respite but also for times of internal and external tension. This is the first and basic condition for the Party's regeneration, for its return to the principles of its programme, from which it is more and more deviating in practice under the pressure of elements that are foreign to it.

The second condition, the vigorous fulfilment of which is insisted upon by the Workers' Opposition, is the expulsion from the Party of all non-proletarian elements. The stronger the Soviet authority becomes, the greater is the number of middle class, and sometimes even openly hostile elements, joining the Party. The elimination of these elements must be complete and thorough. Those in charge of it must take into account the fact that the most revolutionary elements of non-proletarian origin had joined the Party during the first period of the October revolution. The Party must become a Workers' Party. Only then will it be able vigorously to repeal all the influences that are now being brought to bear on it by petty-bourgeois elements, peasants, or by the faithful servants of Capital - the specialists.

The Workers' Opposition proposes to register all members who are non-workers and who joined the Party since 1919, and to reserve for them the right to appeal within three months from the decisions arrived at, in order that they might join the Party again.

At the same time, it is necessary to establish a 'working status' for all those non-working class elements who will try to get back into the Party, by providing that every applicant to membership of the Party must have worked a certain period of

time at manual labour, under general working conditions, before he becomes eligible for enrolment into the Party.

The third decisive step towards democratisation of the Party is the elimination of all non-working class elements from administrative positions. In other words, the central, provincial, and county committees of the Party must be so composed that workers closely acquainted with the conditions of the working masses should have the preponderant majority therein.

Closely related to this demand stands the further demand of converting all our Party centres, beginning from the Central Executive Committee and including the provincial county committees, from institutions taking care of routine, every-day work, into institutions of control over Soviet policy.

We have already remarked that the crisis in our Party is a direct outcome of three distinct cross-currents, corresponding to the three different social groups: the working class, the peasantry and middle class, and elements of the former bourgeoisie - that is, specialists, technicians and men of affairs.

Problems of State-wide importance compel both the local and central Soviet institutions, including even the Council of People's Commissars and the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, to lend an ear to, and conform with, these three distinct tendencies, representing the groups that compose the population of Soviet Russia. As a result, the class line of our general policy is blurred, and the necessary stability is lost. Considerations of State interests begin to outweigh the interests of the workers.

To help the Central Committee and Party Committees stand firmly on the side of our class policy, to help them call all our Soviet institutions to order each time that a decision in Soviet policy becomes necessary (as, for instance, in the question of the trade unions) it is necessary to disassociate the prerogatives of such responsible officials who, at one and the same time, have responsible posts both in the Soviet institutions and in the Communist Party centres. We must remember that Soviet Russia has not so far been a socially homogeneous unit. On the contrary, it has represented a heterogeneous social conglomeration. The State authority is compelled to reconcile these, at times mutually hostile, interests by choosing the middle ground.

The Central Committee of our Party must become the supreme directing centre of our class policy, the organ of class thought

and control over the practical policy of the Soviets, and the spiritual personification of our basic programme. To ensure this, it is necessary, particularly in the Central Committee, to restrict multiple office-holding by those who, whilst being members of the Central Committee, also occupy high posts in the Soviet government. For this purpose, the Workers' Opposition proposes the formation of Party centres, which would really serve as organs of ideal control over the Soviet institutions, and would direct their actions along clear-cut class lines. To increase Party activity, it would be necessary to implement everywhere the following measure: at least one third of Party members in these centres should be permanently forbidden to act as Party members and Soviet officials at the same time.

The fourth basic demand of the Workers' Opposition is that the Party must reverse its policy in relation to the elective principle.

Appointments are permissible only as exceptions. Lately they have begun to prevail as a rule. Appointments are very characteristic of bureaucracy, and yet at present they are a general, legalised and well-recognised daily occurrence. The procedure of appointments produces a very unhealthy atmosphere in the Party. It disrupts the relationship of equality amongst the members by rewarding friends and punishing enemies, and by other no less harmful practices in Party and Soviet life. Appointments lessen the sense of duty and responsibility to the masses in the ranks of those appointed, for they are not responsible to the masses. This makes the division between the leaders and the rank and file members still sharper.

Every appointee, as a matter of fact, is beyond any control. The leaders are not able closely to watch his activity while the masses cannot call him to account and dismiss him if necessary. As a rule every appointee is surrounded by an atmosphere of officialdom, servility and blind subordination, which infects all subordinates and discredits the Party. The practice of appointments completely rejects the principle of collective work. It breeds irresponsibility. Appointments by the leaders must be done away with and replaced by the elective principle at every level of the Party. Candidates shall be eligible to occupy responsible administrative positions only when they have been elected by conferences or congresses.

Finally, in order to eliminate bureaucracy and make the Party more healthy, it is necessary to revert to the state of affairs where all the cardinal questions of Party activity and Soviet policy were submitted to the consideration of the rank and file, and only after that were supervised by the leaders. This was the state of things when the Party was forced to carry on its work in secret - even as late as the time of the signing of the Brest-Litovsk treaty.

#### 4. DISCUSS THE PROBLEMS OPENLY !

At present, the state of things is altogether different. In spite of the widely circulated promises made at the All-Russian Party Conference held in September (1920) a no less important question than that of concessions was quite arbitrarily decided for the masses. Only due to the sharp controversy that arose within the Party centres themselves was the question of the trade unions brought out into the open, to be thrashed out in debate.

Wide publicity, freedom of opinion and discussion, the right to criticise within the Party and among the members of the trade unions - such are the decisive steps that can put an end to the prevailing system of bureaucracy. Freedom of criticism, right of different factions freely to present their views at Party meetings, freedom of discussion - are no longer the demands of the Workers' Opposition alone. Under the growing pressure from the masses, a whole series of measures that were demanded by the rank and file long before the Party Conference are now recognised and officially promulgated. One need only read the proposals of the Moscow Committee in regard to Party structure to be proud of the great influence that is being exerted on the Party centres. If it were not for the Workers' Opposition, the Moscow Committee would never have taken such a sharp 'turn to the left'. However, we must not overestimate this 'leftism', for it is only a declaration of principles to the Congress. It may happen, as it has many a time with decisions of our Party leaders during these years, that this radical declaration will soon be forgotten. As a rule, these decisions are accepted by our Party centres only just as the mass impetus is felt. As soon as life again swings into normal channels, the decisions are forgotten.

Did not this happen to the decision of the eighth Congress which resolved to free the Party of all elements who joined it for selfish motives, and to use discretion in accepting non-

working class elements? What has become of the decision taken by the Party Conference in 1920, when it was decided to replace the practice of appointments by recommendations? Inequality in the Party still persists, in spite of repeated resolutions passed on this subject. Comrades who dare to disagree with decrees from above are still being persecuted. There are many such instances. If all these various Party decisions are not enforced, then it is necessary to eliminate the basic cause that interferes with their enforcement. We must remove from the Party those who are afraid of publicity, strict accountability before the rank and file, and freedom of criticism.

Non-working class members of the Party, and those workers who fell under their influence, are afraid of all this. It is not enough to clean the Party of all non-proletarian elements by registration or to increase the control in time of enrolment, etc. It is also necessary to create opportunities for the workers to join the Party. It is necessary to simplify the admission of workers to the Party, to create a more friendly atmosphere in the Party itself, so that workers might feel themselves at home. In responsible Party officials, they should not see superiors but more experienced comrades, ready to share with them their knowledge, experience and skill, and to consider seriously workers' needs and interests. How many comrades, particularly young workers, are driven away from the Party just because we manifest our impatience with them by our assumed superiority and strictness, instead of teaching them, bringing them up in the spirit of Communism?

Besides the spirit of bureaucracy, an atmosphere of officialdom finds a fertile ground in our Party. If there is any comradeship in our Party it exists only among the rank and file members.

## 5. HISTORICAL NECESSITY OF THE OPPOSITION

The task of the Party congress is to take into account this unpleasant reality. It must ponder over the question: why is the Workers' Opposition insisting on introducing equality, on eliminating all privileges in the Party, and on placing under a stricter responsibility to the masses those administrative officials who are elected by them.

In its struggle for establishing democracy in the Party, and for the elimination of all bureaucracy, the Workers' Opposition advances three cardinal demands:

(1) Return to the principle of election all along the line with the elimination of all bureaucracy, by making all responsible officials answerable to the masses.

(2) Introduce wide publicity within the Party, both concerning general questions and where individuals are involved. Pay more attention to the voice of the rank and file (wide discussion of all questions by the rank and file and their summarising by the leaders; admission of any member to the meetings of Party centres, except when the problems discussed require particular secrecy). Establish freedom of opinion and expression (giving the right not only to criticise freely during discussions, but to use funds for publication of literature proposed by different Party factions).

(3) Make the Party more of a workers' Party. Limit the number of those who fill offices, both in the Party and the Soviet institutions at the same time.

This last demand is particularly important. Our Party must not only build Communism, but prepare and educate the masses for a prolonged period of struggle against world capitalism, which may take on unexpected new forms. It would be childish to imagine that, having repelled the invasion of the White Guards and of Imperialism on the military fronts, we will be free from the danger of a new attack from world capital, which is striving to seize Soviet Russia by roundabout ways, to penetrate into our life, and to use the Soviet Republic for its own ends. This is the great danger that we must stand guard against. And herein lies the problem for our Party: how to meet the enemy well-prepared, how to rally all the proletarian forces around the clear-cut class issues (the other groups of the population will always gravitate to capitalism). It is the duty of our leaders to prepare for this new page of our revolutionary history.

It will only be possible to find correct solutions to these questions when we succeed in uniting the Party all along the line, not only together with the Soviet institutions, but with the trade unions as well. The filling up of offices in both party and trade unions not only tends to deviate Party policy from clear-cut class lines but also renders the Party susceptible to the influences of world capitalism during this coming epoch, influences exerted through concessions and trade agreements. To make the Central Committee one that the workers feel is their own is to create a Central Committee wherein representatives of the lower layers connected with the masses would not merely play the rôle of 'parading generals', or a merchant's wedding party.

The Committee should be closely bound with the wide non-party working masses in the trade unions. It would thereby be enabled to formulate the slogans of the time, to express the workers' needs, their aspirations, and to direct the policy of the Party along class lines.

Such are the demands of the Workers' Opposition. Such is its historic task. And whatever derisive remarks the leaders of our Party may employ, the Workers' Opposition is today the only vital active force with which the Party is compelled to contend, and to which it will have to pay attention.

Is the Opposition necessary? Is it necessary, on behalf of the liberation of the workers throughout the world from the yoke of capital, to welcome its formation? Or is it an undesirable movement, detrimental to the fighting energy of the Party, and destructive to its ranks?

Every comrade who is not prejudiced against the Opposition and who wants to approach the question with an open mind and to analyse it, even if not in accordance with what the recognised authorities tell him, will see from these brief outlines that the Opposition is useful and necessary. It is useful primarily because it has awakened slumbering thought. During these years of the revolution, we have been so preoccupied with our pressing affairs that we have ceased to appraise our actions from the stand-point of principle and theory. We have been forgetting that the proletariat can commit grave mistakes and not only during the period of struggle for political power. It can turn to the morass of opportunism. Even during the epoch of the dictatorship of the proletariat such mistakes are possible, particularly when on all sides we are surrounded by the stormy waves of imperialism and when the Soviet Republic is compelled to act in a capitalist environment. At such times, our leaders must be not only wise, 'statesman-like' politicians. They must also be able to lead the Party and the whole working class along the line of class creativeness. They must prepare it for a prolonged struggle against the new forms of penetration of the Soviet Republic by the bourgeois influences of world capitalism. 'Be ready, be clear - but along class lines'; such must be the slogan of our Party, and now more than ever before.

The Workers' Opposition has put these questions on the order of the day, rendering thereby an historic service. The thought begins to move. Members begin to analyse what has already been done. Wherever there is criticism, analysis, wherever thought moves and works, there is life, progress, advancement forward towards the future. There is nothing more frightful and harmful

than sterility of thought and routine. We have been retiring into routine, and might inadvertently have gone off the direct class road leading to Communism, if it were not for the Workers' Opposition injecting itself into the situation at a time when our enemies were about to burst into joyful laughter. At present this is already impossible. The Congress, and therefore the Party, will be compelled to contend with the point of view expressed by the Workers' Opposition. They will either compromise with it or make essential concessions under its influence and pressure.

The second service of the Workers' Opposition is that it has brought up for discussion the question as to who, after all, shall be called upon to create the new forms of economy. Shall it be the technicians and men of affairs, who by their psychology are bound up with the past, together with Soviet officials and some Communists scattered among them, or shall it be working-class collectives, represented by the unions?

The Workers' Opposition has said what has long ago been printed in The Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels: the building of Communism can and must be the work of the toiling masses themselves. The building of Communism belongs to the workers.

Finally, the Workers' Opposition has raised its voice against bureaucracy. It has dared to say that bureaucracy binds the wings of self-activity and the creativeness of the working class; that it deadens thought, hinders initiative and experimenting in the sphere of finding new approaches to production; in a word that it hinders the development of new forms for production and life.

Instead of a system of bureaucracy, the Workers' Opposition proposes a system of self-activity for the masses. In this respect, the Party leaders even now are making concessions and 'recognising' their deviations as being harmful to Communism and detrimental to working class interests (the rejection of centralism). The Tenth Congress, we understand, will make another series of concessions to the Workers' Opposition. Thus, in spite of the fact that the Workers' Opposition appeared as a mere group inside the Party only a few months ago, it has already fulfilled its mission. It has compelled the leading Party centres to listen to the workers' sound advice. At present, whatever might be the wrath toward the Workers' Opposition, it has the historical future to support it.

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Just because we believe in the vital forces of our Party, we know that after some hesitation, resistance and devious political moves, our Party will ultimately again follow that path which has been blazed by the elemental forces of the proletariat. Organised

as a class, there will be no split. If some groups leave the Party, they will not be the ones that make up the Workers' Opposition. Only those will fall out who attempt to evolve into principles the temporary deviations from the spirit of the Communist programme, that were forced upon the Party by the prolonged civil war, and hold to them as if they were the essence of our political line of action.

All those in the Party who have been accustomed to reflect the class viewpoint of the ever-growing proletariat will absorb and digest everything that is wholesome, practical and sound in the Workers' Opposition. Not in vain will the rank-and-file worker speak with assurance and reconciliation: 'Ilyich (Lenin) will ponder, he will think it over, he will listen to us. And then he will decide to turn the Party rudder toward the Opposition. Ilyich will be with us yet'.

The sooner the Party leaders take into account the Opposition's work and follow the road indicated by the rank-and-file members, the quicker shall we overcome the crisis in the Party. And the sooner shall we step over the line beyond which humanity, having freed itself from the objective economic laws and taking advantage of all the richness and knowledge of common working-class experience, will consciously begin to create the human history of the Communist epoch.

THE END

#### SOLIDARITY PAMPHLET No. 27

#### THE KRONSTADT COMMUNE by Ida Mett

This 70-page pamphlet is the first English translation of an important work, first published in Paris 30 years ago. It should destroy, once and for all, various Stalinist and Trotskyist myths to the effect that the Russian events of March 1921 were 'a counter-revolutionary mutiny'. Also nails the more 'sophisticated' rationalizations to the effect that the Kronstadt sailors were 'only peasants', and that they demanded 'soviets without Bolsheviks' or 'unrestricted freedom for the kulaks'. Read about Stalin's technique of the 'amalgam' - as practiced by Lenin and Trotsky. An essential document for a real understanding of how the bureaucracy arose and a tribute to the revolutionaries who struggled against it, before 1923.

# CHRONOLOGY

This short chronology may help readers situate some of the political events, conferences, congresses, etc, referred to in Kollontai's text and in the footnotes. All dates given according to Julian calendar (13 days behind Western calendar). The Julian calendar was used in Russia until February 1918.

## 1917

- February 27 : Abdication of Tsar Nicholas II. Formation of Provisional Government.
- May 30-June 3 : First full Conference of Petrograd Factory Committees.
- July 26-August 3 : Sixth Party Congress.
- October 17 - 22 : All-Russian Conference of Factory Committees.
- October 25 : Overthrow of Kerensky's Provisional Government. Proclamation of Soviet Government during opening session of Second Congress of Soviets.
- October 31 : Publication of draft decree on workers' control. 'The decisions of the elected delegates of the workers and employees were obligatory upon the owners of enterprises' but could be annulled 'by trade unions and congresses'.
- December 1 : Creation of Supreme Economic Council (Vesenkha) - which 'absorbed' the All-Russian Council of Workers' Control.

## 1918

- January 6 : Dissolution of Constituent Assembly.
- January 7 - 14 : First Congress of Trade Unions.
- February 23 : Central Committee vote on German peace terms.
- March 3 : Signature of Brest-Litovsk Treaty.
- March 6 - 8 : Seventh Party Congress.
- April 28 : Isvestia publishes Lenin's article 'The immediate tasks of the Soviet Government': 'Today the Revolution demands, in the interests of socialism, that the masses unquestionably obey the single will (emphasis in original) of the leaders of the labour process'.
- May 24 - June 4 : First Congress of Regional Economic Councils.
- June 28 : Decree of general nationalization (all industrial enterprises with a capital of over 1 million roubles). Beginning of War Communism.

# 1919

- January 16-25 : Second Congress of Trade Unions.
- March 18 - 23 : Eighth Party Congress. Establishment of Politbureau, Orgbureau and Secretariat.
- December 2 - 4 : Eighth Party Conference.
- December 17 : Pravda publishes Trotsky's theses on militarisation of labour.
- December 27 : With Lenin's approval, the Government sets up the Commission on Labour Duty, with Trotsky (still Commissar for War) as its President.

# 1920

- January 10 - 21 : Third Congress of Economic Councils.
- January 12 : Meeting of All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions. Lenin and Trotsky together urge acceptance of the militarisation of labour.
- March 29-April 4 : Ninth Party Congress. Establishment of Control Commission.
- April 6 - 15 : Third Congress of Trade Unions. Trotsky declares that 'the militarisation of labour... is the basic, indispensable method for the organization of our labour forces'. Lenin states that he had stood for one-man management from the beginning.
- August : Trotsky places railwaymen and personnel of repair workshops under martial law. When the railwaymen's trade union objected, he summarily ousted its leaders and, with the full support and endorsement of the Party leadership, 'appointed others willing to do his bidding.' (Deutscher)
- Early September : Setting up of Tsektran (Central Administrative Body of Railways).
- September 22 - 25 : Ninth Party Conference.
- November 8 - 9 : Meeting of Central Committee. Trotsky threatens to 'shake up' various trade unions as he had 'shaken up' those of the transport workers. For the first time Lenin publicly dissociates himself from Trotsky on the issue of industrial management.
- December 22 - 29 : Eighth Congress of Soviets.

# 1921

- January 14 : 'Theses of the Ten'.
- March 2 - 17 : Kronstadt revolt.
- March 8 - 16 : Tenth Party Congress. Proclamation of New Economic Policy. Resolution on 'unity' condemns factions within Party.

FOOTNOTE 1.

The 9th Congress of the Russian Communist Party was held between March 29 and April 4, 1920. The most controversial of the issues discussed were those relating to the 'militarisation of labour' and to 'one-man management' in industry.

On December 16, 1919, Trotsky had submitted to the Central Committee of the Party his famous 'theses on the transition from war to peace'. The most important of his proposals was the demand for the 'militarisation of labour'.

Trotsky had intended his proposals to go no further than the Central Committee. (1) The most important decisions, affecting the material conditions of life of hundreds of thousands of ordinary Russian workers clearly had first to be decided behind closed doors by the Party leaders, who knew best what was in the interests of the working class. 'By mistake' Bukharin published the text in Pravda, on December 17, 1919. 'The indiscretion gave rise to an extremely tense public controversy' (2) which lasted for over a year. The interest of this episode is that the working class was accidentally given an opportunity of discussing matters of the greatest importance to itself.

Trotsky publicly defended his views at the 9th Congress. 'The working masses' he said 'cannot be wandering all over Russia. They must be thrown here and there, appointed, commanded, just like soldiers...' 'Compulsion of labour would reach the highest degree of intensity during the transition from capitalism to socialism'. 'Deserters from labour ought to be formed into punitive battalions or put into concentration camps' (3). Trotsky also advocated 'incentive wages for efficient workers', 'socialist emulation' and spoke of the 'need to adopt the progressive essence of Taylorism', that perfected form of labour exploitation devised by American capitalism and based on the intensive application of work-study methods. Stalinism was later to implement every one of Trotsky's proposals in this field.

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(1) I. Deutscher, 'The Prophet Armed', p.487.

(2) *ibid.*, p.487.

(3) Trotsky, Sochineniya, vol. XV, p.126.

At the 9th Congress Trotsky was opposed by Loutovinov and other trade union leaders who were later to play a prominent role in the Workers' Opposition. Shliapnikov, president of the Metal Workers Union, a member of the Central Committee of the Trade Unions, and later a prominent member of the Workers' Opposition, did not attend the Congress. Early in 1919 he had expressed himself in unambiguous terms against the Party's industrial policy and had been sent to Norway on a long term assignment. Trotsky was also opposed by the 'democratic centralists' (Osinsky, Sapronov and Preobrajensky) to whom further reference will be made further on.

The 9th Congress adopted a resolution calling for a struggle against 'the vulgar presumptions of... demagogic elements... who think that the working class can solve its problems without having recourse to bourgeois specialists in the most responsible positions'. It also passed a resolution, largely on Lenin's instigation, calling on the unions 'to take upon themselves the task of explaining to the broad circles of the working class all the necessities of reconstructing the apparatus of industrial administration... 'This can only be achieved' the resolution stated, 'by a transition to the maximum curtailment of collective administration and by the gradual introduction of individual management in units directly engaged in production' (1). One-man management was to apply to all institutions from State Trusts to individual factories. This policy was rigorously to be followed. Later that year (1920) Kritzman (2) was to report that of 2000 important enterprises for which data were available 1720 were already under 'one man management'.

The 9th Congress finally gave the Orgbureau - which had been set up a year earlier and was composed of 5 members of the Central Committee - the right to carry out transfers and postings of Party members without reference to the Politbureau. The only exceptions were appointment to the central apparatus itself. As happened so often in the ensuing years changes in industrial policy went hand in hand with profound changes in internal party structure.

(1)

Resolution of the 9th Party Congress ('On the Question of the Trade Unions and their Organisation'). Resolutions, I, 493.

(2)

Kritzman, L., 'The Heroic Period of the Russian Revolution', Moscow, 1926.

FOOTNOTE 2

The controversy concerning 'one-man management' of industrial enterprises started as early as the Spring of 1918. A full understanding of Bolshevik ideas on this subject is essential to those seeking a complete explanation of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution and of the subsequent rise of Stalinism. It is totally insufficient to attribute this degeneration solely to such external factors as isolation, backwardness and devastation without seeing the role played, in the whole process, by the conscious and deliberate policy pursued since early 1918, by the leaders of the Bolshevik Party.

This policy (one-man management in industry) was in such flagrant contradiction with Bolshevik promises of workers control that it rapidly led to demoralisation, cynicism and apathy amongst the most advanced sections of the Russian proletariat. These moods in turn powerfully contributed to the bureaucratic degeneration. Lenin's article 'The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government' (1) - later translated into English and produced as a pamphlet 'The Soviets at Work - expressed for the first time after the conquest of power, and in unambiguous terms, the majority opinion among the Russian leaders on the crucial questions.

'We, the Bolshevik Party' Lenin wrote 'have convinced Russia. We have won her from the rich, for the poor. Now we must administer Russia'. The Party was left in no doubt as to the form Lenin intended this administration to take. While paying lip-service to initiative and to control from below, the real emphasis - and constant practice - always centered on discipline, obedience and the need for individual as distinct from collective management.

'A condition of economic revival' Lenin wrote, 'is the raising of the discipline of the toilers, their skill, their dexterity, increasing the intensity of labour and improving its organisation... The more class conscious vanguard of the Russian proletariat has already set itself the task of raising labour discipline. For example the Central Committee of the Metal Workers Union and the Central Council of the Trade Unions have begun to draft the necessary measures and decrees. This work must be supported and pushed forward with all speed'.

The 'measures and decrees' whereby 'labour discipline' was to be enforced make tragic reading, in the light of subsequent events.

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(1) Lenin, Selected Works, vol. VII (Lawrence & Wishart, 1937 edition) pp.313 - 350. This article, from which most of the quotations in this footnote are drawn, was first published in the Isvestia of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, on April 28, 1918.

They start by bemoaning 'the absence of all industrial discipline'. They then prescribe measures 'for the purpose of improving labour discipline such as: 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 the payment of bonuses for increased productivity.' (1)

It requires no great imagination 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 the new bureaucracy.

But Lenin went much further. He quite explicitly came out, as early as 1918, in favour of the individual management of industrial enterprises. 'The struggle that is developing around the recent decree on the management of the railways, the decree which grants individual loaders dictatorial powers (or 'unlimited powers') is characteristic' he wrote. Only the 'conscious representatives of petty-bourgeois laxity' could see 'in this granting of unlimited (i.e. dictatorial) powers to individual persons a departure from the collegium principle, a departure from democracy and from other principles of Soviet government'. 'Large scale machine industry' he went on ' - which is the material productive source and foundation of socialism - calls for absolute and strict unity of will... How can strict unity of will be ensured? By thousands subordinating their will to the will of one.'

What of discussion and initiative at shop floor level? The idea was summarily dismissed. 'The revolution demands' Lenin wrote 'in the interests of socialism that the masses unquestioningly obey the single will of the leaders of the labour process'. No nonsense here about workers' management of production, about collective decisions, about government from below. Nor are we left in any doubt as to who the 'leaders of the labour process' were to be. There was, Lenin said, to be 'unquestioning obedience to the orders of individual representatives of the Soviet government during work time' - 'iron discipline while at work, with unquestioning obedience to the will of a single person, the Soviet leader.'

Lenin's oft-repeated views on labour discipline did not go unchallenged. Opposition developed within the Party itself. Early in 1918 the Leningrad District Committee published the first issue of the 'left' communist paper Kommunist. This was edited by Boukharin, Radek and Osinsky (Obolensky and Smirnov were later to join the editorial board). The journal issued a far-sighted warning: 'The introduction of labour discipline in connection with the restoration of capitalist

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(1) Lenin. Selected Works, vol.VII, p. 504.

management of industry cannot really increase the productivity of labour, but it will diminish the class initiative, activity and organisation of the proletariat. It threatens to enslave the working class. It will rouse 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, and in this way it would ruin itself as the party of the proletariat'. (1)

Lenin reacted violently. He called such views 'a disgrace', 'a complete renunciation of communism in practice', 'a complete desertion to the camp of the petty-bourgeoisie'. (2) The Left were being 'provoked by the Isuvs (Mensheviks) and other Judases of capitalism'. He lumped together leaders of the 'left' and open enemies of the revolution, thus initiating the technique of the political amalgam which was to be used so successfully by Stalin in later years. A campaign was whipped up in Leningrad which compelled Kommunist to transfer publication to Moscow, where the paper reappeared in April 1918, first under the auspices of the Moscow regional organisation of the Party, later as the 'unofficial' mouthpiece of a group of comrades.

The controversy smouldered on throughout 1918. Kommunist repeatedly denounced the replacement of workers' control by 'labour discipline', the increasing tendency for industrial management to be placed in the hands of non-communist 'specialists' and the conclusion of all sorts of unofficial deals with previous owners 'to ensure their cooperation'. It pointed out that the logical outcome of 'management based on an important participation of capitalists and on the principle of bureaucratic centralisation was the institution of a labour policy which would seek to re-establish regimentation of workers under the pretext of voluntary discipline. Governmental forms would then evolve towards bureaucratic centralisation, the rule of all sorts of commissars, loss of independence for local Soviets and, in practice, the abandonment of government from below'. '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 conflict between the Leninists and the 'left' communists came to a head during May and June, 1918, during the First Congress of Economic Councils. Lenin spoke out strongly in favour of 'labour discipline', of 'one-man management' and of the need to use bourgeois specialists. Osinsky, Smirnov and Obolensky, supported by numerous

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(1) Kommunist, No. 1, p. 8.

(2) Lenin, 'Left-wing Childishness and Petty-bourgeois Mentality'. Selected Works, vol. VII, p. 374.

provincial delegates demanded 'a workers administration... not only from above but from below.' (1) They urged that two-thirds of the representatives on the management boards of industrial enterprises should be elected from among the workers. (2) They succeeded in getting a Congress sub-committee to accept this resolution. Lenin was furious at this 'stupid decision'. Under his guidance a plenary session of the Congress 'corrected' the resolution, decreed that no more than one-third of the managerial personnel should be elected, and set up a complex hierarchical structure vesting veto rights in a Supreme Economic Council, at the apex of the administrative pyramid.

A split occurred at this time among the 'left' communists. Radek was prepared to reach an agreement with the Leninists. He was prepared to accept the 'one-man management' principle in exchange for the extensive nationalisation decrees of June 1918, which heralded the period of War Communism, and which in his opinion would ensure the proletarian basis of the regime. Bukharin also broke with Osinsky and rejoined the fold. The ideas developed by the Left communists continued to find an echo however, despite the defection of most of those who had first advocated them. Osinsky and his supporters formed the new opposition group of 'Democratic Centralists'. Their ideas on workers' management of production (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.

Throughout 1919 and the early months of 1920 the opposition to Lenin's conceptions of 'one-man management' in industry gained support in the unions. On January 12, 1920, Lenin and Trotsky had together urged Party members attending the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions to accept the militarisation of labour. Only two of the 60 or more Bolshevik delegates supported them. 'Never before' writes Deutscher, 'had Trotsky or Lenin met with so striking a rebuff.' (3)

The opposition maintained its strength. At the end of January 1920 the Third All-Russian Congress of Economic Councils adopted a resolution in favour of collective management. Regional Party conferences in Moscow and Kharkov came out against 'one-man management'. Tomsy, a well-known trade union leader and a member of the Central Committee of the Party presented 'theses' criticising Lenin's conceptions. So did the 'Democratic Centralists'. But such was Lenin's

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(1) Leninski Sbornik (The Lenin Collection). Notes, manuscripts and fragments by Lenin. Moscow, 1924-1940. In this series, see in particular 'First Congress of Economic Councils', p. 5.

(2) *ibid.*, p. 65.

(3) Deutscher, 'The Prophet Armed', p. 493.

authority - and so great already the bureaucratisation of the Party - that the 9th Congress (March 1920) gave the Leninists a clear majority. It was decreed that 'no trade union group should directly intervene in industrial management' and that 'factory committees should devote themselves to the questions of labour discipline, of propaganda and of education of the workers'. The unions should behave as 'components of the apparatus of the Soviet State'. (1) All this was already in flagrant contradiction with the Party programme of 1919 (see footnote No.4, p. 53 ).

At the Third All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions which shortly followed the Ninth Party Congress, Lenin made it clear that his policy on the matter had been a constant and a consistent one. 'For example, take the year 1918' he said. 'At that time there were no disputes in connection with the question (2) and I pointed out the necessity of recognizing the dictatorial authority of single individuals for the purpose of carrying out the soviet idea.' (3)

By 1921 Lenin was writing: 'It is absolutely essential that all authority in the factories should be concentrated in the hands of management... under these circumstances any direct intervention by the trade unions in the management of enterprises must be regarded as positively harmful and impermissible.' (4)

When in 1929, Stalin proclaimed: 'Communists must help to establish order and discipline in the factory... union representatives and shop committees are instructed not to interfere in questions of management' (5) he was merely making his own, minor, contribution to a very long list of Leninist sayings!

So much for 'every cook' learning to manage the State!!!

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- (1) See V.K.P. (b), (1898-1938) - Moscow, 1932, pp. 398-402.
  - (2) This is not strictly correct... the files of Kommunist are there to prove it!
  - (3) 'Trade Unions in Soviet Russia'. Labour Research Department and ILP Information Committee. November 1920, British Museum. (Press Mark 0824 - bb - 41).
  - (4) 'The Role of the Trade Unions under the N.E.P.'. Resolution adopted at the Eleventh Party Congress. See CPSPU in Resolutions, I, 607, 610-612.
  - (5) 'Freiheit', German language paper of the American Communist Party, September 9, 1929.

The Party Conference of September 22-25, 1920, took place at a critical period, about mid-way between the Ninth and Tenth Party Congresses.

The differences which had first found expression at the Ninth Party Congress had been temporarily papered over, largely as a result of Lenin's personal intervention. This spurious unity did not last. Throughout the summer of 1920 the differences of opinion on such issues as the bureaucracy within the Party and the relation of the Trade Unions to the State took on a much sharper form. A more detailed account of these events will be found in footnotes 4 and 13, relating respectively to the attitude of various Bolshevik leaders to the unions - and to the setting up of Tsektran, the Central Transport Commission.

At the September Conference of 1920 Zinoviev gave the official report on behalf of the Party. The 'Democratic Centralists' were well represented and Sapronov presented a minority report. Loutovinov spoke for the Workers' Opposition. He called for the immediate institution of the widest measures of proletarian democracy, the total rejection of the system whereby appointment from above were made to nominally elected positions, and the purging of the Party of careerist elements. He also asked that the Central Committee should refrain from its constant and exaggerated intervention in the life of the trade unions and the Soviets.

The leadership had to retreat. Zinoviev evaded answering the complaints that had been made. Preobrajenski and Krestinski were in favour of a compromise. A resolution was passed stressing the need for 'full equality within the Party', and denouncing 'the domination of rank-and-file members by privileged bureaucrats'. The rights to free discussion were to be considerably extended.

The resolution instructed the Central Committee to proceed by means of 'recommendations' rather than by appointments from above. It recognised that in 'exceptional circumstances' appointments might have to be made to posts nominally open to election. Transfers of Party officials were under no circumstances to take the form of sanctions, imposed on comrades because of political differences on various questions.(1)

Despite these verbal concessions, the leadership, through their spokesman Zinoviev, succeeded in getting the September Conference to accept the setting up of Central and Regional Control Commissions. These were to play an important role in the subsequent process of bureaucratisation of the Party. The commissions were to be composed 'of the most impartial comrades'. Their function was to report on complaints and disagreements between Party members. Djerjinski, Preobrajenski and Mouranov were the three members of the first Central Control Commission.

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(1) V.K.P. (b), v. rez., pp.411-416 and Isvestia Ts. K., No.24, October 12, 1920.

FOOTNOTE 4

Kollontai analyses further on the attitude to the Trade Unions of various tendencies within the Bolshevik Party. She also describes the attitude of the Workers' Opposition to these various tendencies.

It is interesting to see how these various positions evolved and to produce some documentary evidence in support of Kollontai's statements.

The period between March and November 1917 had seen a phenomenal growth of the factory and plant committees (fabrichno-zavodnye Romitety). In April 1917 a conference of Petrograd factory committees had declared: 'All orders concerning the internal management of a plant such as length of the working day, wages, hiring and firing of workers and employees, leaves of absence, etc... should issue from the factory committee'. (1) Another conference of factory committees had been held in Petrograd, in June 1917, this time dominated by the Bolsheviks. This had called for 'the organization of thorough control by labour over production and distribution' and for 'a proletarian majority... in all institutions having executive power.'

These were the days of Lenin's 'State and Revolution' - an impeccable document from a revolutionary point of view - in which Lenin had stated that the Revolution would have to be followed by 'immediate changes 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'.

Immediately after the October Revolution these committees, often assisted by local soviets, took over managerial functions in many areas of the country. Unfortunately little detailed information is available concerning this most interesting phase of the Russian Revolution. What scanty data are available usually come from sources (either bourgeois or bureaucratic) fundamentally hostile to the very idea of workers' management and solely concerned in proving its 'inefficiency', 'impracticability', etc...

So strong was the working class upsurge at this time that the new situation had to be written into law. On November 14, 1917, the Council of People's Commissars 'recognised the authority of workers' control throughout the economy'. (2) There is no doubt as to what the

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(1) Quoted in V.L. Meller and A.M. Pankratova, 'The Workers' Movement in 1917', Moscow and Leningrad, 1926, pp.74-75.

(2) Lenin, Sochineniya, vol.XII, pp.25-26.

workers themselves meant and wanted. The January 1918 issue of Vestnik Metallista (The Metal Workers' Herald) carried an article by a N. Filippov, an engineering worker. 'The working class' he stated 'by its nature... should occupy the central place in production and especially in its organization... All production in the future must be a reflection of the proletarian mind and will.' The First Congress of Trade Unions (January 1918) resolved that 'the trade union organisations, as class organisations of the proletariat built on an industrial basis, must take upon themselves the main task of organising production...'(1)

Throughout 1918 the trade unions played a very important role in the management of the economy. (2) This role was itself to provoke important dissensions within the ranks of the Bolshevik Party. The dissensions were at first masked by other dissensions, namely those concerning the conclusion of the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty, but after the conclusion of peace they were to break out in full.

Osinski and other 'left' communists favoured the extension of workers' management to other sectors of the economy, the ratification of the power of the factory committees and the setting up of an overall national economic authority, formed by delegates from the workers' councils. (3) Lenin and the remainder of the Bolsheviks regarded workers' control in a very different manner. To them it was a means of preventing capitalist sabotage - a stop-gap measure to be resorted to until such time as the central institutions of the Soviet State could themselves take over industrial management and rigidly centralise its administration.

The isolation and ideological defeat of the 'left' Communists on the question of Brest-Litovsk had considerable repercussions in other fields. It strengthened those sections of the Party who supported Lenin in his campaign for 'one-man management' of industry. In March 1918 a decree was passed ending workers' control on the Railways and granting 'dictatorial' powers to the Commissariat of Ways of Communications. The relevant clause of this decree is clause 6 which urges the need for 'administrative technical executives' in every local, district or regional railway centre. These executives were to be 'responsible to the People's Commissar of Ways of Communications'. They were to be 'the embodiment of the whole of the dictatorial power of the proletariat in the given railway centre'. 'The appointment of such persons' the decree concluded, was 'to be endorsed by the People's Commissar of Ways of Communications'.

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(1) Quoted in A.S. Shliapnikov, Die Russischen Gewerkshaftern (The Russian Trade Unions), Leipzig, 1920.

(2) Kritzman, L., 'The Heroic Period of the Russian Revolution'. Moscow, 1926.

(3) See Osinski's contribution in the Proceedings of the First All-Russian Congress of Economic Councils, Moscow, 1918, pp.61-64.

Writing in Kommunist a month later, Osinski was to issue a prophetic warning: 'We stand' he wrote, 'for the construction of the proletarian society by the class creativity of the workers themselves, not by ukases from the "captains of industry"... We proceed from trust in the class instinct, and in the active class initiative of the proletariat. It cannot be otherwise. 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. No one can compel it to do this. The stick, if raised against the workers, will find itself either in the hands of another social force... or in the hands of the soviet power. But then the soviet power will 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 must be set up by the proletariat itself, or they will not be set up at all; something else will be set up: state capitalism.' (1)

Preobrajensky, writing in another issue of Kommunist a few weeks later (2) reiterated the warning: '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.'

The 'left' Communists lost influence in the ensuing months, partly on account of their confused attitude on the question of Brest-Litovsk (ruthlessly exploited by the Party leaders), partly because of their compromises on the crucial questions, partly because of enormous material difficulties put in the way of the production of Kommunist. Both the Ural organisation of the Party (led by Preobrajensky) and the Moscow Regional Organisation, once their strongholds, fell under the control of the Leninists.

By 1919 there had already been a definite shift of power. Working class organisation and consciousness were still strong enough however to impose at least verbal concessions from the leaders of the Party and the Unions. The Second Congress of Trade Unions (January 1919) had spoken of granting official or governmental status to the administrative prerogatives of the unions. It spoke of 'governmentalising' of the trade unions as their functions broadened and merged with the governmental machinery of industrial administration and control'. (3) The Government's Commissar for Labour, V.V.Schmidt, was to declare at this Congress that 'even the organs of the Commissariat of Labour should be built out of the trade union apparatus'. (4)

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(1) Kommunist, No.2, April 1918, p.5

(2) Kommunist, No.4, May 1918

(3) See 'The Second All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions: Stenographic report', Moscow, 1919, I, 97.

(4) *ibid.*, p.99.

The Eight Party Congress held a few weeks later (March 1919) was to ratify these conceptions. It proclaimed that 'the organisational apparatus of socialised industry must be based primarily on the trade unions... The trade unions must proceed to the actual concentration in their own hands (our emphasis) of all the administration of the whole economy, as a single economic unit.' (1)

But these were largely verbal sops to the rank and file of the Party and the Unions. The years 1918 and 1919 saw an immense centralisation of economic administration. This was largely dictated by the necessities of war and of itself need not have had harmful effects. There is no intrinsic merit in decentralisation, as the anarchists maintain. The Paris Commune, a congress of Soviets - or a shop stewards or strike committee to take contemporary analogies - are all highly centralised and highly democratic. Feudalism, on the other hand, was both decentralised and bureaucratic. The key question was who was to administer the centralised apparatus.

For a while collective management prevailed on the boards (collegia) of the centralised administration. There was massive trade union participation. The real degeneration set in when both of these basic features of the proletarian state were undermined. For as Kritzman (2) pointed out collective management is 'the specific, distinctive mark of the proletariat, distinguishing it from all other social classes. It is the most democratic principle of organization'.

Following the publication of Trotsky's theses on the militarisation of labour (Pravda, December 17, 1919) the whole controversy took a much sharper turn. It was clear by now that the Whites were facing defeat and the masses more than ever yearned to taste at last the fruits of their Revolution.

It was at this stage that Lenin wrote: 'The collegial principle (collective management)... represents something rudimentary, necessary for the first stage, when it is necessary to build anew. The transition to practical work is connected with individual authority. This is the system which more than any other assures the best utilisation of human resources...' (3) In his theses presented to the Ninth Party Congress (March 1920) he wrote: 'The elective principle must now

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- (1) 'Programme of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). Resolutions, I, p. 422.
  - (2) Kritzman, L. 'The Heroic Period of the Russian Revolution'. Moscow, 1926, p. 83.
  - (3) Lenin. Speech to Second Congress of Economic Councils (January 1920). Works, XXV, p. 17.

be replaced by the principle of selection'. (1) Collective management he dismissed as 'utopian', 'impractical' and 'injurious'. (2)

Early in 1920 there were, it is true, differing shades of opinion among the Bolshevik leaders (Lenin, Trotsky and Bukharin) on the trade union question. But, as will be shown, a lot more united them than separated them. In their attitude to the developing Workers' Opposition - and to the views it was beginning to put forward - they presented a united front.

TROTSKY's views are well known. 'The young workers state', Trotsky wrote after the Ninth Congress, 'requires trade unions not for a struggle for better conditions of labour... but to organise the working class for the ends of production, to educate, to discipline the workers... to exercise their authority hand in hand with the State, to lead the workers into the framework of a single economic plan...' (3) 'The unions should discipline the workers and teach them to place the interests of production above their own needs and demands'. Trotsky denounced those who protested at his views. He said, of the militarisation of labour: 'This term at once brings us into the region of the greatest possible superstitions and outcries from the opposition.' (4) He denounced his opponents as Mensheviks, and 'people full of trade unionist prejudices'.

'The militarisation of labour' he declared at the Third Congress of Trade Unions, '... is the indispensable basic method for the organisation of our labour forces.' 'Was it true' he asked 'that compulsory labour was always unproductive?'. He denounced this view as 'a wretched and miserable liberal prejudice', learnedly pointing out that 'chattel slavery, too, was productive' - and that compulsory serf labour was in its time 'a progressive phenomenon'. (5) He told the unions that 'coercion, regimentation and militarisation of labour were no mere emergency measures and that the workers state normally had the

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- (1) Lenin. 'The Trade Unions and their Tasks'. Theseis presented on behalf of the Central Committee, Ninth Party Congress, Appendix 12, p. 532.
  - (2) Lenin. Ninth Party Congress, pp. 26, 28.
  - (3) Trotsky. 'Dictatorship vs. Democracy', p. 14.
  - (4) *ibid.*, p. 14.
  - (5) Third Pan-Russian Congress of Trade Unions: 5 - 17 April 1920. Stenographic account of plenary sessions. Moscow, 1921.

right to coerce any citizen to perform any work at any place of its choosing (our emphasis).(1) A little later he proclaimed that the 'militarisation of the trade unions and the militarisation of transport required an internal, ideological militarisation...' (2) etc. Just exactly what an 'ideological militarisation' means can be gathered by a quick glance at the history of the repeated faction fights that have plagued the Trotskyist movement ever since!

The unions, according to LENIN were to be the link or 'transmission belt' between the Party and the mass of non-party workers. They were not to be institutions of the State. But this was in no sense to be a real autonomy. Party influence had to be developed in the unions. The unions would be strongly influenced by Party thinking and would undertake the political education of the masses along lines determined by the Party. In this way they would 'help develop the productivity of labour' and play a useful role in the building of 'Socialism'. These views of Lenin's in no way conflicted with his views on 'one-man management' in industry. At no stage did Lenin envisage the unions as playing an independent role in the initiation - or even in the implementation - of policy.

BUKHARIN's views of the unions had been clearly expressed at the Ninth Congress. He had advocated the 'governmentalising' of the unions, their incorporation into the official apparatus of industrial administration. 'The unions' he had stated, 'must participate (in production)... not as independent organs, on whose shoulders this or that function rests, but as organs closely tied to the general framework of soviet institutions'. Bukharin was a few months later to advocate 'workers democracy in production', in an attempt to build a bridge between the official views of the Party and those of the Workers' Opposition. This was to earn him some of Lenin's severest strictures. (3)

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- (1) I. Deutscher. 'The Prophet Armed'. pp. 500-501.
  - (2) Trotsky. Speech to the enlarged Plenum of the Tsektran, December 2, 1920. Works, XV, pp. 422-423.
  - (3) Lenin. 'On the Trade Unions, the Current Situation, and the Mistakes of comrade Trotsky.' Works, XXVI, pp. 63-81.

FOOTNOTE 5.

The Eighth Pan-Russian Congress of Soviets was held between December 22 and December 29, 1920, in Moscow. It provided an opportunity for a public airing of the diverging viewpoints which had developed within the Party and which could no longer be contained within its ranks. The degree of opposition which had by this time developed to official Party policy can be gauged by the contents of Zinoviev's speech to the Congress. Zinoviev promised:

'We will establish more intimate contacts with the working masses. We will hold meetings in the barracks, in the camps and in the factories. The working masses will then... understand that it is no joke when we proclaim that a new era is about to start, that as soon as we can breathe freely again we will transfer our political meetings into the factories... We are asked what we mean by workers and peasants democracy. I answer: nothing more and nothing less than what we meant by it in 1917. We must re-establish the principle of election in the workers and peasants democracy... If we have deprived ourselves of the most elementary democratic rights for workers and peasants, it is time we put an end to this state of affairs'. (1)

Zinoviev's concern for democracy did not carry much weight. It was tactically and factionally motivated and part of a campaign to discredit Trotsky. Zinoviev had during this very period been involved in a whole series of shady deals behind the scenes which had very little to do with workers and peasants democracy! Shapiro ('The Origin of the Communist Autocracy') reports that public orators, in search of witty comments, could always get a laugh from their audience by carefully chosen quotations from Zinoviev on the subject of democratic rights!

Following the Congress a meeting was held in the Bolshoi Theatre, on December 30, 1920, at which the various Party leaders publicly stated their differences. Trotsky and Bukharin reiterated their views, which differed only fractionally from one another. Lenin and Zinoviev spoke for the centre of the Party. Lenin's views had changed a little, as will be seen in Footnote 10. He now felt it necessary to dissociate himself from Trotsky. Shliapnikov spoke for the Workers' Opposition. He demanded that all administrative organs should be elected and responsible to the organised workers and proposed an 'All-Russian Congress of Producers'. The theses of the Workers' Opposition on the trade union question, first publicly presented at this meeting, were subsequently published in Pravda (January 25, 1921).

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(1) Stenographic report of the Eighth Congress of Soviets, Moscow, 1921, p. 324.

FOOTNOTE 6.

There is considerable confusion, in the working class movement, on the role of 'technicians' and 'specialists' in a socialist society. What is this role? And does it entitle them to exert any special influence or to have any special privileges?

During the last 3 or 4 decades a whole system of ideas and a whole mystique of management have gradually developed. Both are carefully fostered by private capitalist and state bureaucrat alike. Both are part of the ideology of the beneficiaries of State capitalism. Both reflect the concentration of capital itself. And in Russia both received considerable impetus through Lenin's repeated advocacy of 'one-man management' in industry.

The implicit assumption of these ideas is that technological knowledge - the importance of which few would deny - in some way entitles these who possess it to manage production, to impose decisions, and, almost incidentally, to obtain privileges in the process!

The socialist view is that technicians should use their specialised knowledge to develop plans and techniques of production. These should be designed primarily to benefit the producer, not to maximise production (the two are by no means synonymous). This role does not entitle the specialist or technicians to any special privileges. Any concession on this point is a concession to capitalist values, and to capitalism's rigid division between manual and intellectual labour.

A series of alternatives plans would be drawn up by technical experts. Their detailed implications for each factory, for each sector of industry and for each region of the country would be worked out. To an increasing extent this work could be carried out by electronic computers. Under a system of workers' councils the various plans would then be submitted for discussion, modification, ratification or rejection by those who would have to implement them. Fundamental decisions would always come from below. The producers themselves would decide on such basic aspects of industrial policy as whether increases of productivity should result in higher wages, shorter hours or more investment.

Some of the practical problems involved are mentioned in 'Solidarity' pamphlet No.6 ('The Meaning of Socialism'). The whole subject is thoroughly discussed in issues No.22, 23 and 24 (1957 and 1958) of the journal of our French co-thinkers 'Socialisme ou Barbarie'.

FOOTNOTE 7.

Kollontai was here showing almost prophetic insight. The more far-sighted sections of the capitalist class, she predicted, would see no real objection to the complete nationalisation of the means of production, or even to the rule of a political party of the working class, provided they themselves retained a dominant position in the relations of production, i.e. provided they continued to manage production, to have an important say in the distribution of the social product and to derive privileges in the process.

History has shown the correctness of this analysis. Traditional marxist thought concedes the point in relation to 'capitalist nationalisations'. Only the most short-sighted Tories, for instance, would today demand the return of the mines or railways to private enterprise or the abandonment by 'their' government, of its increasing control of investment and of the economy as a whole, in the long term interests of capitalism itself.

Most revolutionary socialists take a very different attitude however to 'socialist nationalisations' by which they mean nationalisations carried out when the working class holds political power. 'Nationalisation' is then seen as a means of abolishing the anarchy of the market, of developing the productive forces, or increasing the productivity of labour, of 'building socialism'. This view, which we consider inadequate, was undoubtedly held by Lenin and by the majority of the Bolsheviks. In May 1918 Lenin had written that state capital and the political power of the working class together constituted the material preconditions of socialism. 'History' he wrote, '... had brought forth in 1918 the two unconnected halves of socialism, existing side by side like two future chickens in the single shell of international imperialism. Germany and Russia were the embodiment of the most striking material realisation of the social-economic conditions for socialism, on the one hand, and the political conditions on the other'. (1)

The experience of the last 40 years has shown this analysis to be inadequate. The concentration of capital in the hands of the State, even when taking place during the tenure of political power by the working class, does not of itself bring about socialism. Something else is needed, something that will ensure that working class political power does not itself degenerate, to be replaced by the power of a ruthless bureaucracy, emerging from the ranks of the working class itself.

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(1) Lenin. 'Left-wing Childishness and Petty-bourgeois Mentality'. Selected Works, vol. VII, p.365.

This essential feature is workers' management of production. Unless the working class maintains and extends its economic power at the point of production - and this is the real meaning of workers' management - its political power will at best be unstable. At worst it will rapidly cede ground to the political power of the managerial bureaucracy. For whoever dominates the relations of production, that is whoever manages production, will sooner or later dominate and manage the State and society as a whole.

Kollontai's text shows an extraordinary awareness of this problem. Already in 1921 she saw the danger of centralisation being carried out 'not through the labour organisations' but through the agency of 'the most talented servants of the capitalist system of production.'

FOOTNOTE 8.

Even those sources most sympathetic to the Russian regime admit that by 1920 there had been little if any change in the reality of working class life. Years of war, of civil war and of wars of intervention, coupled with devastation, sabotage, drought, famine and the low initial level of the productive forces made material improvement impossible. But man does not live by bread alone. The Paris Commune had fed its defenders rats and dogs... and inspired them to 'storm heaven' (Marx). For a few brief weeks it had totally altered the reality of their existence, making them masters of their fate. It had turned all social relations upside down.

This was not the case in the 'Soviet' Russia of 1920, where the industrial workers were 'subjected again to managerial authority, labour discipline, wage incentives, scientific management - to the familiar forms of capitalist-industrial organisation with the same bourgeois managers, qualified only by the State's holding the title to the property.' (1)

(1)

Daniels, R.U. 'The Conscience of the Revolution'. Harvard University Press, (1960), p. 107.

FOOTNOTE 9.

Kollontai's quote is part of a resolution originally passed at the Moscow Provincial Party Conference, early in 1920. It was later presented to the Ninth Party Congress (March 1920)... and rejected.

A.S. Bubnoff who had joined the 'Democratic Centralists' some time earlier was a colourful figure. At the Party Conference of July 1907 he had supported the boycott of the Second Duma and had been joined in this demand by eight of the nine Bolshevik delegates present. Lenin had united with the Mensheviks, Polish Social Democrats and Bundists to defeat the boycott proposals.

On October 16, 1917, Bubnoff was appointed to the military centre, a liaison group between the Central Committee of the Party and the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet. Early in 1918 he had voted with Bukharin, Uritsky and Lomov against the acceptance of the German peace terms. He later organised opposition to the German armies in the Ukraine, a territory to which the terms of the Brest-Litovsk treaty did not apply. Towards the end of 1923 he switched to the side of the apparatus. Despite this fairly early Stalinist 'conversion' he was purged in the 1930's. He was posthumously 'rehabilitated' in 1956.

FOOTNOTE 10.

The 'Platform of the Ten' - published on January 14, 1921 - was signed by the following: Artem-Sergeyev, Kalinin, Kamenev, Lenin, Lozovsky, Petrovsky, Rudzutak, Stalin, Tomsy and Zinoviev.

The document outlines Lenin's end-of-1920 views on the trade unions. The unions were to be organs of education - not coercion. They were still seen as a link between the Party and the mass of the workers. Lenin now objected to Trotsky's 'fundamental error', namely his assumption that in a 'workers state' the unions are superfluous as organs of working class defence. 'Our present state is such that the entire organised proletariat must defend itself. We must use these workers organisations for the defence of the workers against their state'. (1)

There is no mention in the platform about any autonomous role of the unions in the process of production. On the contrary. The unions were to undertake 'production propaganda and to play their part in the maintenance of labour discipline'. The Party remained supreme. 'The Russian Communist Party, in the person of its Central and local organisations, unconditionally guides, as before, the whole ideological side of the work in the trade unions.' (2)

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(1) Lenin. 'On the Trade Unions, the Current Situation and the Mistakes of Comrade Trotsky'. Works. vol. XXVI, p. 67.

(2) *ibid.*

FOOTNOTES 11 and 12.

Trotsky held that in a 'workers state' the unions and the State's economic institutions would be 'joined, by growth'. Many references have been made in these notes to Trotsky's 'centralism'. Only one further point needs to be made.

It is generally conceded in 'Trotskyist' circles that Trotsky was 'wrong' on the Trade Unions question, that he 'went too far' and 'had to be corrected by Lenin', etc. What is never pointed out is that Trotsky was merely expressing with his customary 'brilliance' of style and lack of feeling for ordinary people what many leading Bolsheviks were thinking but had not the courage openly to state.

Trotsky was too logical a thinker, his outlook on life too coherent and systematised for his attitude to the trade unions to be considered an isolated aberration. This was no episode of schizophrenic dissociation. When he stated that 'labour... obligatory for the whole country, compulsory for every worker is the basis of socialism' or that 'the militarisation of labour... is the basic, indispensable method for the organisation of our labour force' (1) he was expressing ideas that had their roots in the very substance of Bolshevism.

It was after he had expressed such views that Trotsky formed the Tsektran (see footnote 13), which he was ruthlessly to use to get the railways running again. In all the bureaucratic measures he then used, he was backed to the hilt by the Politbureau. The idea that Trotsky's actions, throughout the major part of 1920, did not have the support of the Bolshevik leadership is not substantiated by the facts. The break only came at the meeting of the Central Committee of November 8 and 9, 1920, when Lenin had to dissociate himself from Trotsky. The Central Committee was then to forbid Trotsky from speaking in public on the relationship between the trade unions and the State.

FOOTNOTE 13.

Early in 1920 Trotsky had been given the Commissariat of Transport, in addition to his defence post. 'The Politbureau offered to back him to the hilt, in any course of action he might take, no matter how severe'. (2) Once in charge of Transport, Trotsky was immediately to implement his pet ideas on the 'militarisation of labour'.

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- (1) Third All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions. Stenographic report, p.97.  
 (2) I. Deutscher. 'The Prophet Armed'. p. 498.

The railwaymen and the personnel of the repair workshops were put under martial law. There was a major outcry. To silence his critics, and with the full endorsement of the Party leadership, Trotsky ousted the elected leaders of the union and 'appointed others who were willing to do his bidding.' 'He repeated the procedure in other unions of Transport workers.' (1) The ground thus cleared, he proceeded to the setting up of Tsektran.

Tsektran (Central Administrative Body of Railways) was set up in September 1920. It was very much Trotsky's brain child. It was brought into being as a result of a compulsory fusion of the Commissariat of Transport, of the Railway unions and of the Party organs in this field. The entire railroad and water transport systems were to fall within its compass. Trotsky was appointed its head. He ruled the Tsektran along strictly military and bureaucratic lines. 'The Politbureau backed him to the hilt, as it had promised'. (2)

These measures got the railways running again. We recall others, who claimed credit for similar feats... A certain Italian, for example.

#### FOOTNOTE 14.

Frederic Froebel (1782 - 1852) was the German educationalist who first proposed the 'kindergarten'. Jean Henri Pestalozzi (1746 - 1827) was a Swiss educationalist who achieved world wide renown for his theories on the education of the children of the poor!

#### FOOTNOTE 15.

The words 'two systems' accurately reflect the true state of affairs in Russia at the time. On the one hand there was talk of workers control, of educating the workers to run production, of granting them rights to inspect, of teaching them accountancy and the merits of communist production. On the other hand the real management of economic and political affairs was already firmly in the hands of an economic bureaucracy, centred around 'specialists' and managers (selected and appointed from above) and of a political bureaucracy centred around the 'specialists of politics': the revolutionary party. Proletarian democracy, both in the factories and in the Soviets, was already moribund.

(1) I. Deutscher. 'The Prophet Armed'. p. 502.

(2) ibid.

We must comment, at this stage, on the difference between workers' control and workers' management. This is no terminological quibble. It is a question of basic importance to the labour movement.

'Workers' control' implies that someone else is responsible for the real day-to-day management of industry. Very often at first, less often subsequently the working class will be allowed to inspect, to ask questions, to protest, even to veto. But deprived of the essential data, it will not be able to initiate fundamental decisions, to guide production along lines of its choosing. The important decisions will be taken by those who 'know', by those who 'have the experience' because they perform actual management.

'Workers' control' implies a state of economic dual power. Like all forms of dual power, economic dual power is essentially unstable. It must evolve either into a consolidation of managerial power (with the working class exerting less and less of the 'control') or into workers' management, with the working class taking over all managerial functions.

Lenin was in no doubt as to the difference between workers' control and workers' management. He quite consciously opted for the former, considering it a necessary 'school' for the latter. This is well illustrated in the following passage:

'Until workers' control has become a fact, until the advanced workers have organised and carried out a victorious and ruthless crusade against the violators of this control, or against those who are careless in matters of control, it will be impossible to pass from the first step (from workers' control) to the second step, to socialism, to workers' regulation of production.' (1)

It is worth pointing out that the bourgeoisie is also well aware of the difference. During the Spanish Revolution of 1936 the Popular Front Government was quite prepared to use the slogan 'nationalisation under workers' control' as a means of taking away from the workers the railways and other sectors of industry in which workers' management had already become a reality.

FOOTNOTE 16.

The class nature of 'technology' and its relation to the organisation of labour is discussed more fully in 'The Meaning of Socialism' (Solidarity pamphlet No.6, p. 7).

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(1) Lenin. 'Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government'. Selected Works, vol. VII, p. 328.

FOOTNOTE 17.

Kollontai's comments on the 'defenders and knights of bureaucracy' were aimed at Trotsky. During December 1920, at a closed meeting of the Tséktran, Trotsky had defended his practice of over-ruling the elected leaders of the trade unions. He 'castigated those who cried out that a new bureaucracy was reviving Tsarist methods of government.' 'A competent, hierarchically organised civil service has its merits' said Trotsky. 'Russia suffers not from the excess but from the lack of an efficient bureaucracy.' (1) Stalin was later to describe Trotsky, not without reason, as the 'patriarch of the bureaucrats'. (2)

FOOTNOTE 18.

Kollontai's optimism was not to be justified. Between the publication of her text and the Tenth Party Congress the dispute became increasingly bitter. The Party apparatus itself was increasingly used against the Opposition.

A provincial party conference, held in Moscow in November 1920 had shown the Opposition groups to be steadily gaining strength. 'The Workers' Opposition, the Democratic Centralists and the Ignatov group (a local Moscow faction closely allied to the Workers' Opposition and later to merge with them) had won 124 seats against 154 for supporters of the Central Committee' (3) The leadership took fright and early in January 1921 the 'official' Congress campaign was launched through Zinoviev's Petrograd organisation.

Before even the Congress was held a wide variety of measures were used to ensure the defeat of the Opposition. So irregular were some of these methods that the Moscow Committee at one stage voted a resolution (by 14 to 13) publicly censuring the Petrograd organisation 'for not observing the rules of proper controversy'. (4) On January 13, 1921, the Moscow Party Committee denounced 'the tendency of the Petrograd

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- (1) I. Deutscher. 'The Prophet Armed'. p. 503.
- (2) Stalin. Sochineniya. vol. VI, p. 29.
- (3) Daniels, R.V. 'The Conscience of the Revolution'. Harvard University Press (1960). p. 138.
- (4) Trotsky. 'Answer to the Petrograd Comrades'. Tenth Party Congress. pp. 826 - 827 n.1.

organisation to make itself a special centre for the preparation of Party Congresses'. The Central Committee was also criticised and 'urged to ensure the equitable distribution of materials and speakers... so that all points of view would be fairly represented.' At the Congress Kollontai was to state that the circulation of her pamphlet on 'the Workers Opposition' had been deliberately impeded. (1)

During the pre-Congress discussion the Leninist faction made good use of the new Control Commission. They ensured the resignation of both Preobrajensky and Djerjinsky and their replacement by hardened apparatchniks. They played relentlessly on the cult of Lenin's personality. They succeeded in gaining control of the machine, even in areas with a long tradition of support for the Opposition. The Congress itself was 'packed' and the official resolution went through without much difficulty.

Lenin opened the Congress by denouncing the Workers' Opposition as 'a threat to the Revolution'. Others took up the cue. An atmosphere of mass hysteria prevailed, never previously encountered at Party Congresses. The Workers' Opposition denounced 'bureaucratism... the source of cleavage between the authority of the soviets and the broad working masses.' It demanded 'regular periods of manual labour for all party members, to keep them in contact with the conditions of life among the workers' and a purge 'to remove non-proletarian elements from the Party.' Milonov, one of the leaders of the Workers' Opposition denounced Lenin as 'the greatest chinovnik' (hierarch of the Tsarist bureaucracy). The Ignatov group charged that the class basis of the Soviet regime was changing and becoming non-proletarian. It demanded that two thirds of all members of Party committees should be workers. Bottled-up discontent was breaking loose at every session. Through their control of the apparatus the Leninists (with the support of the Trotskyists) succeeded however in controlling the proceedings and getting the Party to vote the 'resolution on unity', forbidding factions.

The 'unity' resolution ordered 'the rapid dispersal of all groups without exception which have formed themselves on one platform or another'. It instructed 'all organisations to deal strictly with any factional manifestations by prohibiting them'. 'Failure to execute this decision' the resolution continued 'would lead to immediate and unconditional expulsion from the Party'.

The Resolution also gave the Central Committee unlimited disciplinary powers. 'The Congress' it stated 'gives the Central Committee full power to exercise, in cases of violation of discipline, or the causing or allowing of factionalism, all measures of party punishment up to

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(1) Kollontai, A. Tenth Party Congress, p. 103.

expulsion from the Party'. In case of infraction by members of the Central Committee it advocated their 'demotion to candidates and even, as an extreme measure, their expulsion from the Party.'

The Resolution also declared 'the most immediate task' of the Central Committee to be 'the stringent effectuation of uniformity in the structure of party committees'. Five members of the Central Committee were to devote themselves exclusively to party work 'such as visiting provincial committees and attending provincial party conferences.'

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

Outside the Conference Hall, many hundreds of miles away, and while the Congress was still in session, another drama was being enacted: the drama of Kronstadt. The 'temporary vacillations of the working class' were being corrected by Party bullets. The men of Kronstadt were being denounced as 'counter-revolutionary mutineers led by a White general'(1). Trotsky issued instructions to his troops to 'shoot them down like partridges'.

Together the Tenth Party Congress and the Kronstadt events mark a turning point in the Russian Revolution. After March 1921 the bureaucratic degeneration gained enormous momentum. The Trotskyists, who had voted for all of Lenin's resolutions - but had not been considered vocal enough in their denunciation of the Workers' Opposition - lost most of their positions on the Orgbureau and on the Secretariat, both of which were 'purged' from top to bottom. By his actions at this time Trotsky was to build a solid and permanent wall between his followers and the genuinely proletarian revolutionaries. When a few years later he was to appeal to them against the bureaucracy (which was now threatening Trotsky himself) his calls were to fall upon deaf ears.

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(1) It is interesting that Deutschner, whose 'respect for facts' the Trotskyists repeatedly acknowledge, states that the denunciation 'appears to have been groundless'. 'The Prophet Armed', p.511.

In 1793, at the height of the French Revolution, Robespierre had turned against his left-wing supporters (the Hébertists and the Enragés) who wanted to carry the revolution further. When confronted with a right-wing come-back some time later, during the days of Thermidor, he had been unable to mobilise the working class districts of Paris. He was completely isolated. Trotsky's fate was to be very similar.

Following the Tenth Congress the Workers' Opposition was submitted to increasing persecution. The Party had to break the Opposition's control of the Metalworkers' Union, led by Medvedev. At the Union's Conference in May 1921 the Central Committee of the Party presented the union with a recommended list of candidates for the union's leadership! The metalworkers' delegates voted down the list but this gesture proved futile: the party leadership boldly appointed their own men to the union offices and the opposition collapsed'. (1) In March 1922, another Conference of the Metalworkers' Union was held. Union policy was decided by the Party fraction, whose meetings were being attended by such distinguished metalworkers as Lenin, Zinoviev, Stalin, Molotov, Kamenev, Cachin... and Clara Zetkin! (See Shapiro, op. cit.)

A few months later the Eleventh Party Congress (March 27 - April 2, 1922) set up a special commission to 'investigate the activities of the Workers' Opposition'. All organised opposition within the Soviets was soon to be declared illegal. The Eleventh Congress also appointed Stalin as General Secretary of the Party. But this is another story...

- (1) R.V. Daniels. 'The Conscience of the Revolution'. Harvard University Press (1960). p. 157.

## READ

THE MEANING OF SOCIALISM by Paul Cardan. What is a socialist programme? The real contradiction in capitalist production. Socialist values. A restatement of socialist objectives. The case for workers' management of production.

KRONSTADT 1921 by Victor Serge. An erstwhile supporter of the Bolsheviks re-examines the facts and draws disturbing conclusions.