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A: LABOR AND SOCIETY

"...the key to the understanding of the whole history of society lies in the historical development of labor."

--F. Engels: Ludwig Feuerbach

I. The Concept of Labor

Labor has been decisive in the evolution of man. (1) Historical materialism traces a progressive development in the course of human ascendancy from lower to higher stages, which has asserted itself through all seeming accidents and temporary retrogressions. The driving forces of history have not been great men, but great masses of people, who were set into motion by the incongruity between productive forces and production relations, that is to say, by the antagonism between the development of the material means of production and the relations of people in production. They liberated the new productive forces fettered by the outlived mode of production and production relations, created the conditions for a new method of production and thus laid the basis for a new social order.

The evolution of man from lower to higher stages takes place by means of the developing process of labor. Labor has transformed the natural conditions of human existence into social ones. In primitive communism labor was a mode of self-activity, the creative function of man, which stemmed from his natural capacities and further developed his natural talents. In his contact with nature, primitive man, despite the limitations of his knowledge, exercised not only his labor power but his judgment as well. He thus developed himself and nature. The method of increasing the productivity of nature through human activity resulted in the further development of man. But freedom and historic initiative of man could not further the progress of mankind until man had learned to master nature. It is true that under primitive communism the producers were masters of production and of the products of their labor, but production was carried on in such narrow limits as merely to procreate barely self-subsisting units. So limited a production could not thrust humanity forward. The social division of labor was the necessary prerequisite in molding nature to man's will and creating new productive forces. However, this undermined the collective nature of production and appropriation. Producers no longer consumed directly what they produced, and they lost control over the products of their labor.

1. Labor in class societies

With the division of labor --the most monstrous of which is the division between mental and manual labor --class societies arose. The separation of intellectual and physical labor stands in the way of man's full development. Hence labor in class societies -- whether

(1) "...to socialist man all history is nothing else than the production of man through human labor." Marx: Private Property and Communism. (Archives of Marx and Engels, Vol. III, in Russian; also to be found in German: Gesamtausgabe, Abt. I, Bd. III)

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that be the slave, feudal, or capitalist order --no longer means the free development of the physical and intellectual energy of man. The product of his labor is alienated from the laborer, and his very mode of labor becomes an alien activity. Labor is no longer voluntary but compulsory. It has ceased to be "the first necessity of living" and has become a mere means to life. It has become a drudgery man must perform to earn a living, and not a mode of activity in which he realizes his physical and mental potentialities. He is no longer interested in the development of the productive forces, and, in fact, the productive forces seem to develop independently of him. Labor has become a means of creating wealth and "is no longer grown together with the individual into one particular destination." (2)

Labor in class societies has taken the form of one of three types of servitude: (a) outright slavery, (b) serfdom, and (c) wage slavery. The mode of labor corresponds to the mode of production. Slave labor used the rudest and heaviest implements and wasted the soil. Improved methods of cultivating the land led to the substitution of serf for slave labor. However, both under slavery and serfdom the development of the productive forces was on a low level, the economy was stagnant, and the mode of activity of the direct producer was limited by a crude instrument of production. Hence any liberation achieved by an individual slave or serf could not emancipate him from the limitation of that crude instrument of production. Even in freedom they remained bound by the restricted mode of activity imposed by that crude instrument. Each man's particular labor and necessary tools of his craft became his own property but the necessity to protect the laboriously acquired skill led to the formation of guilds. Hence the social relations in the city where the refugee serfs escaped imitated the feudal form of organization prevailing in the country. "The instrument of production became their property," Marx sums up, "but they themselves remained determined by the division of labor and their own instrument of production." (3)

The multitude of productive forces available to man determines the nature of their society. Man is essentially a tool-making animal and the process of the production of his material life, the process of labor, means the process of the growth of the productive forces and his command over nature. "Industry," explained Marx in his "Private Property and Communism", "is the real historic relation of nature, and consequently of the science of nature, to man." The industrial revolution, the progress of natural science and the general technological advance so revolutionized the mode of production that finally there arose a basis for a true freedom, not only freedom from exploitation, but freedom from want. Tremendous progress has been achieved, but the productive forces which have been developed by the bourgeois mode of production have also been harnessed and fettered by bourgeois production relations which have resulted in

(2) Marx: Critique of Political Economy, p. 299

(3) Marx: The German Ideology, p. 67

labor's enslavement to capital. Technology has progressed so far that general want does not reign out of the nature of production but because of the production relation. It becomes necessary to put an end to that relationship to make it possible for the nature of production to assert itself.

## 2. Labor in socialist society

Production is no longer limited by a crude instrument, nor does a crude instrument restrict the activity of man as it did in pre-capitalist societies, even when it was his property. Were man to appropriate the modern machines of production, that would open up limitless vistas for the development of man himself, for it would be on such a high material base that the intellect of the masses could combine with their physical powers and truly lay the basis for a new mode of life. Thus the appropriation of the totality of the instruments of production "is nothing more than the development of the individual capacities corresponding to the material instruments of production. The appropriation of a totality of instruments is for this very reason, the development of a totality of capacities in the individuals themselves." (4) That is the heart of the problem, because the development of man's capacities means the re-establishment of self-activity on a gigantically higher historical scale and the "abolition" of labor.

Because of the class content of the word, labor, Marx, in his early works, never used the term to describe the mode of activity in socialist society. He wrote, not of the emancipation of labor, but of its "abolition". In the historical circumstances of the complete separation of manual from mental labor, he stressed, man can become master of himself, not through the development of labor, but through its abolition. Hence the proletarian revolution is not only the revolutionary appropriation of the totality of the instruments of production, but is directed against the very mode of activity under capitalism, and "does away with labor." (5)

Marx did not abandon this concept of labor when he abandoned the use of the philosophic term, self-activity, and began, in his later works, to speak of the emancipation of labor. For labor in socialist society was in no manner whatever to be the type of activity as under capitalism where man's labor is limited to the exercise of his physical labor power. No, labor in socialist society would be the type of activity as in primitive communism. The division between manual and mental labor would be abolished and the two aspects of labor thus united would make it possible for "freely associated men" consciously to plan production, and what would assert itself would be the "free individuality of the laborer himself." (6)

The emphasis placed by Marx on the individual rather than on society in his late works thus consistently follows and develops the theoretic scope of his early works where he sketched the pattern of the social order to follow capitalism. It is true that the new mode of production does not appear full-blown on the morrow the bourgeoisie

(4) Ibid, p. 66

(5) Ibid, p. 69

(6) Capital, Vol. I, p. 838

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is overthrown. But whether the dictatorship of the proletariat will be transitional from capitalism to socialism will be judged by whether the socialised means of production serve social needs to an ever greater and greater degree. Marx had warned us, in his Civil War in France, that if cooperative production were not to prove to be a delusion, it must be under the proletarians' own control. And in his earlier writings he had written significantly enough: "It is especially necessary to avoid ever again the counterpose 'society' as an abstraction, to the individual."<sup>(7)</sup> This prophetic statement will be analyzed in greater detail in the section, "Is Russian Society Part of the Collectivist Epoch". Here we are only interested in tracing the general Marxian concept of labor, which, in primitive communism, was synonymous with the self-activity or the creative function of man, but which has undergone a deterioration in class societies.

On the basis of a production of abundance, for which the highly developed productive forces have laid the groundwork, the further development of the productive forces means the all-rounded development of the greatest productive force, the laborer. Labor then will mean the unrestricted development and exercise of man's physical and mental faculties. That is the basis for what Engels calls "humanity's leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom."

That is not Utopia. That is not the hereafter. That road has to be taken on the morrow the bourgeoisie is overthrown and the dictatorship of the proletariat established if the socialized means of production are to serve any better end than the privately owned means of production. For it is not the means of production that create the new type of man, but the new type of man that will create the means of production, and the new mode of activity will create the new type of human being, socialist man.

## II. The Concept of Property

"All science would be superfluous if the appearance, the form, and the nature of things were wholly identical."  
--K. Marx: Capital, Vol. III

A great advance in the evolution of political economy as a science was made when the source of wealth was recognized to be not in objects outside of man--precious metals or the earth--but in the function of man, that is, the result of man's labor was the source of private property. How is it, then, that that living embodiment of labor, the laborer, continues to remain poverty-stricken and the products of his labor are not his "private property"? Here the classical economists could offer no answer and merely tried to pacify the laborer by stating

(7) Archives of Marx and Engels, Vol. III. Also Gesamtausgabe, Abt. Ibd. 3

his condition was "temporary", and pointing to his "freedom". They were limited by their bourgeois horizon and labored "to purify economic relations from their feudal blemishes." (8)

"When one speaks of private property, one thing of something outside of man," wrote the young Marx in 1844, "when one speaks of labor, one has to do immediately with man himself. The new formulation of the question already involves its solution." But, as we saw, that new formulation of the question involved the solution not when the bourgeois economists tackled the problem, but when the revolutionist Marx did. The difference between the science of economics "as such", as a science of objective elements, wages, value, etc. and the Marxian science of economics is that for Marxism all economic categories are social categories and thus in the science of economics it incorporates the subjective element, the receiver of wages, the source of value, in other words, the laborer. You cannot disassociate property forms from production relations. The laborer, whose function, labor, creates bourgeois wealth and his own impoverishment is opposed to his predicament of being dominated by a product of his own labor. He rebels against the mode of labor and thus becomes the grave digger of bourgeois private property. Private property thus contains within itself the seed of its own disintegration. It is for that reason that the classical economist, limited by the concepts of his class which blurred his vision as to the historic nature of the capitalist mode of production, could not probe the problem to the end, and failed to see that the living embodiment of the source of wealth, the laborer, would bring to a head and to an end all the contradictions inherent in private property.

In actual fact, wrote Marx, bourgeois private property is not private property at all, but is based on "the expropriation of the peasants, artisans, in general on the abolition of the method of production resting on private property of the direct producer, on his conditions of production," and "develops to the degree that this private property and the method of production based on it is abolished" (9) Thus the very basis of capitalist production is expropriation of the self-earned private property of the direct producer. It is the "free", the propertyless laborer that creates the "private property" of the capitalist and it is he who sharpens the inherent contradictions of capitalist private property that will rend it assunder.

The machine age demanded the abolition of private property; the full development of the productive forces will achieve the true abolition of property, although, "in the first instance" \* this has taken the contradictory form of capitalist private property. The juridical notion that this is really private property is at complete variance with the bourgeois production relations.

The legal concepts of private property, which sprawls across diverse societies, are as heterogeneous as the societies where they exist. Under capitalism, furthermore, every phase in the development of industry has altered the legal concepts of private property.

(8) Marx: Poverty of Philosophy, p. 134

(9) Archives of Marx-Engels, II(VII)p. 263

\* Marx: Private Property and Communism, to be found in Gesamtausgabe Abt. I, Bd. III; & in the Russian Complete Works of Marx, III.



The manufacturer thinks of it as the legal title he has to the factory he runs. The financier thinks of it as "a bundle of expectations which have a market value." (10) It is not the legal concepts, not the appearances of property that interest us. It is the nature of private property, which scientific socialism has investigated to the end, that is of primary importance. In reducing private property to labor and labor to man Marx got behind the legal fiction of property ownership to the hard reality of the activity of man and the relations of men in production.

The Marxian concept of property stresses the fact that from the very outset the division of labor has meant the division of the conditions of labor, of tools and materials. From the moment that the product of his labor did not belong to the direct producer, man became an "object" for himself. That is to say, the object which he himself has created by his activity was something outside of him because it was appropriated by another who had power over him. As long as there exists "power over individuals", wrote Marx in The German Ideology "private property must exist." Property is the power of disposal over the labor of others. Private property has developed so diversely under capitalism that one's property is only "a bundle of expectations" in the form of stocks and bonds yet power is still the power of disposing, or sharing in the disposition of, the labor of others.

It is impossible for a Marxist to discuss property forms, or even production relations without knowing the state of production. Marx attributed such great importance to the multitude of productive forces accessible to man that he practically discounted the forms of property ownership. In and of itself, that is to say, without a high stage of industrial development, a change from private to communal ownership would be barren of historic significance. "Lacking any material basis and resting on a purely theoretic foundation, it would be a mere freak and would end in nothing more than a monastic economy." (11)

So insistent was Marx in stressing that the mode of production was crucial, not the form of property, that he spoke of "communal private property" when he described ancient state ownership, for it was "only as a community that the citizens hold power over their laboring slaves and on this account alone, therefore, they are bound to the form of communal ownership." (12) Thus communal ownership in and of itself does not denote a new, non-private property epoch.\* It is only when collectivist property arises under highly developed industrial conditions that it can denote the new collectivist epoch where society will not be counterposed to the individual and the totality of the instruments of production will be controlled by all and be made "subject to each individual." (13)

(10) Berle and Means: Modern Corporation and Private Property

(11) The German Ideology, p. 18, footnote (12) Ibid, p. 9

(13) Ibid, p. 67

\* This will be dealt with in greater detail in section "Is Russian Society part of Collectivist Epoch".

For Marx the abolition of private property was not an end in itself but a means toward the abolition of the alienated mode of labor. He did not separate one from the other. He never tired of stressing that what was of primary importance was not the form of property but the mode of production; every mode of production creates a corresponding form of property. "But to see mystery in the origin of property; that is to say, to transform the relations of production into a mystery--is that not," asked Marx of Proudhon, "to renounce all pretensions to economic science?.....In each historic epoch property is differently developed and in a series of social relations entirely different. Thus to define bourgeois property is nothing other than to explain all the social relations of bourgeois production." (14)

(14) Poverty of Philosophy, p. 168

B. ROLE OF LABOR IN A WORKERS STATE

I. The Party and the Trade Unions

October raised the question of workers' rule from an abstract plane to concrete reality. October was the first historical instance when the workers not only gained power but held it. In retaining power the Russian workers furnished the greatest living laboratory of the working mechanism of a proletarian state. The workers had achieved the revolution in a country which was the weakest link in the chain of international capitalism. The conquest of power was followed by a protracted civil war and international counter-revolution which left them a ruined industry. How could the transitional state achieve the long-range aim of establishing a classless society? What effect would the international capitalist encirclement exert over the economy? How to rebuild that economy?

The Russian trade unions were young organizations. They held their first nation-wide congress after the revolution. They had valiantly participated in the revolution and felt confident of their role in the workers state they helped to establish. The resolution passed at their first congress held in 1918 thus defined their tasks: "to participate most energetically in all the administrative departments of production, organize labor boards of control, registration and distribution of labor, the exchange of labor between the village and the city; to fight against sabotage and establish complete labor cooperation and discipline." (15)

The R.C.P. welcomed the participation of the trade unions in the management of the economy, without which they could not have survived, and in their program (1919) stressed the fact that the participation of the trade unions "is at the same time the chief means of struggle against the bureaucratization of the economic apparatus of Soviet power and creates the possibility for the real peoples' control over the results of production." (16)

Nevertheless immediately after the cessation of the civil war the R.C.P. was shaken by a violent dispute over the role of the trade unions in a workers state. Precisely how should the workers participate in the management of the economy was the basis for the controversy. Trotsky said: satisfy the trade unions. Shlyapnikov demanded: turn the management of the entire economy to the trade unions. Lenin's solution was: let the trade unions continue to defend the interests of the workers while drawing the workers "to a man" into the management of the economy, but turn the unions into "schools of communists." These leaders -- Lenin, Shlyapnikov and Trotsky (later joined by Bukharin) -- were the chief disputants in the 1920-1 trade union controversy.

The concept of the historical development of labor had found a testing ground. The trade union dispute has both historic and immediate importance because a comprehension of the contesting viewpoints is indispensable to a correct revolutionary orientation toward the sixth of the world whose singular form of combined development has wrought such confusion in the revolutionary movement.

(16) Resolutions of the Congresses and Conferences of R.C.P. (In Russian)  
This is a compilation of all the resolutions from the very first congress in 1898.



## II. Lenin, Trotsky, and Shlyapnikov

The trade union dispute related, in part, to the functioning of the Cectran -- the merger of the Central Committees of the Railway and Water Transport Workers Union -- which was established in order to facilitate the restoration of railroad transportation. Comrade Trotsky was charged with the responsibility of putting the completely ruined railroad system into efficient operating order. Extraordinary measures were adopted to execute the plan. The reader will recall that for the year 1922 the Statistical Abstract of the U.S.S.R. revealed the disintegration of the entire economy with the exception of electricity and railroads. The railroads, in particular, showed phenomenal growth, from 59 thousand kmts. in 1913 to 71 thousand in 1922. This was made possible through the efficient work of the Cectran. However, the Communist fraction of the Water Workers Union accused the Cectran of handling the job bureaucratically and of unnecessarily disregarding normal democratic methods of trade union work. The dispute developed into one regarding the role of the trade unions in a workers state.

### 1. Trotsky's position

Trotsky contended that the trade unions had a very limited part to play in a workers state -- put up its candidates for economic posts and to carry on production propaganda. "No further perspectives are open to it," read the first draft of Trotsky's thesis. (17)

In elaborating his point of view before the plenum of the Cectran held December 7, 1920, Trotsky explained: "We have entered a new epoch.... Therefore we say to the working masses: test us but assimilate new criteria. Previously you had need of leaders who could be good defenders of your interests during times of strikes. Now you have need of propagandists, builders, organizers, i.e. they should raise the productivity of labor." (18)

These ideas he repeated in his thesis as it was finally worked out: "The task of an organization of labor in a workers state can have only a production basis and aim... By themselves the methods of democracy within the trade unions, without changing the situation and the role of the trade unions in a workers state do not resolve the question and do not point the way out of the crisis... Our platform is one of production contrasted to one of trade unionism... Workers democracy knows no fetishism. It knows only revolutionary expediency." (19) And, revolutionary expediency, Trotsky concluded, demanded the statification of the trade unions.

(17) The Trade Unions and their Future Role, included in the book, The Party and the Trade Unions, published for the 10th party Congress, and edited by Zinoviev. This book includes all conflicting positions in the trade union dispute.

(18) Ibid.

(19) This speech, along with the two other of his main speeches on the trade union dispute are included in Selected Works of Lenin, Vol. IX where the English readers can find them, and I will therefore make no further references to them. Where quotations are taken from other sources I will mention them.

(19) The Role and Tasks of the Trade Unions, included in some book edited by Zinoviev as mentioned previously. Also included as Appendix No. 10 to the Minutes of Tenth Congress, in Russian

## 2. Lenin's reply

Lenin violently attacked Trotsky's thesis. First of all, there was no point in speaking of a workers state as an abstraction; in the particular workers state, the Soviet Union, they had "the reality of the transition." The dictatorship was not something static, composed of constant and inflexible rules. There are constant reciprocal influences and adjustments between the masses and the state, between the trade unions and the masses. It was necessary to examine the trade unions in a workers state "from the point of view of the transition from capitalism to socialism". "It is impossible to effect the dictatorship," Lenin told the Communist fraction of the Eighth Soviet Congress (20), "without having a number of 'transmission belts' from the vanguard to the masses of the advanced class, and from the latter to the masses of the toilers...the Party, so to speak, absorbs into itself the vanguard of the proletariat and the vanguard effects the dictatorship of the proletariat. Without a foundation like the trade unions the dictatorship cannot be effected...Thus we get as it were a system of cogwheels. And such is the mechanism of the very foundation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of the very essence of the transition from capitalism to communism."

Had Trotsky looked at the "reality of the transition", Lenin insisted, and had not been "carried away by intellectual talk or abstract arguments", he would have seen that the Soviet Union was not a "pure" workers state, but a state in which, first, the peasantry predominated, and, furthermore, it was bureaucratically distorted. "Our present state is such that the entirely organized proletariat must protect itself and we must utilize the workers organizations for the purpose of protecting the workers from their own state and in order that the workers may protect our state."

If the workers were to be the rulers in their own state, their conscious participation in the management of the economy and of the state was quintessential. If the workers were eventually to concentrate in their own hands the management of the entire economy--and that is what the Party program called for--prolonged, hard, organizational work had to be carried on. If the trade unions were to train the masses for this gigantic task, they cannot be mere organs of coercion; they must be "schools of communism". If the vanguard party is to prove its leadership in fact, it must be the agitator, the propagandist, rather than the administrator. "Com. Trotsky's fundamental mistake lies precisely in that he approached (or, more correctly, rushed at) the very questions he himself raised in his pamphlet-platform as an administrator, whereas he could and should have approached these questions exclusively as a propagandist."

Production problems cannot be solved for the workers by administrators but must be administered by the workers themselves--if the transitional state was to be transitional to socialism and not to a "return backwards". It was impermissible for Marxists eclectically to separate economics from politics and counterpose production to democracy. "Trotsky and Bukharin make it appear that they are concerned about increasing production whereas we are only concerned about formal democracy. This presentation is wrong because the only way the matter stands (and it is the only way the matter can stand from the Marxist point of view) is that without appropriate political approach the given class cannot maintain its rule and consequently cannot solve its own production problems."

Lenin indefatigably reminded his comrades that "every political superstructure in general (which is inevitable until classes have been abolished until a classless society has been created) in the last analysis is determined by the production relations prevailing in the given society." And production relations should be the crucial concern both of the party and the trade unions. The trade unions must not merely discipline the workers but defend their interests. The party must not administer for the worker but urge and train them to administer. Unless the workers were "to a man" to manage the economy and direct the state, socialism would remain "only a wish."

### 3. Shlyapnikov's position

So far as Shlyapnikov was concerned, neither Trotsky's nor Lenin's position lighted the path to the future society. To try to choose between them was like trying to distinguish between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. The real road of the deepening of the revolution was not through statifying the trade unions, nor was it by turning the trade unions into "schools of communism". Rather the party itself needed to be proletarianized. In the resolution of the Workers Opposition (Shlyapnikov's faction) was included the demand: "Every year each member of the party must do three months of manual labor!" (21) Rather than statifying the trade unions, a correct slogan would be: "Unionise the state".

The only correct road for the proletarian state to take was to turn over the entire management of the economy to the producers themselves. His thesis read: "The organization of the management of the national economy is the function of the All-Russian Congress of Producers organized in industrial unions which elects bodies to manage the whole of the national economy of the republic."

### 4. Lenin, the realist

Lenin hit out against Shlyapnikov's unrealistic, anarchistic approach to the problems that confronted the young worker state. It is true, he contended, that it was wrong of Trotsky to make an abstraction of the workers state. But it was even more wrong for Shlyapnikov to abstract the workers state, treat the problem of the Soviet Union as those of a classless society. The proletariat state was a new society, but a new society that issued from the womb of capitalism. The Soviet Union consisted not of producers in general, but of workers and peasants. It had to manage the economy not only of industry but of agriculture as one single economic unit and thus fight against capitalist survivals. A task more difficult than the overthrow of the bourgeoisie was the establishment of a new mode of production "because in the last analysis the new and higher mode of social production, the substitution of large-scale Socialist production for capitalist and petty-bourgeois production can alone serve as the deepest source of strength for victory over the bourgeoisie and the sole guarantee of the durability and permanence of this victory." Only the new mode of production will bring about a new mode of labor and thus the abolition of the division between manual and mental labor. Ody then--but that was a task not for a day but prolonged over many years--will it be permissible to speak of producers in general for then we will have a classless society. At the present time it was anarchistic--and thus did not solve the problem of labor in a workers state, but brought further chaos to it--to speak of "a congress of producers" managing the economy. Prolonged work in training the masses, and necessary, and in this training the trade unions should act as "schools of communism", before the masses could actually concentrate "in their hands the management of the whole national economy."

(21) Thesis of Workers Opposition, incl. in book edited by Zinoviev, and in Minutes of Tenth Congress. Cf. no. 17

A realistic approach to the problem would show that the working mechanism of the existing proletarian state was complicated by the fact that the proletariat took power in a backward industrial state in which the peasant masses preponderated over the proletarian nucleus that had further been decimated by revolution and protracted civil war. Industrial production was down to one-seventh of 1913, and only one-half of the workers employed then were employed in 1920. Many of the Red Army men were returning to the country. Demobilization of the army even had brought about some banditism. It was necessary, first of all, to have an economy and "recreate" the proletariat. It was necessary, secondly, to train the proletariat in the management of the economy and in the direction of the state. Ruthlessly Lenin opposed the syndicalist deviation of Shylapnikov who would transfer the management of branches of industry into the hands of the masses of non-Party workers. It was true that the dictatorship could not be effected without a foundation like the trade unions, which were "transmission belts" from the vanguard of the proletariat to the wide masses. But the motive power of those transmission belts is the vanguard party itself.

#### IV. The Trade Unions and the NEP

Lenin's point of view won the day at the 10th Congress of the R.C.P. A correct approach to the masses, as exemplified in the trade union resolution which stressed drawing the masses into managing the economy could not, however, solve the primary problem of "having" an economy. Few of the enterprises were operating. Now the enemy was not a band of White Guards assisted by the international bourgeoisie. "The enemy," wrote Lenin with his usual frankness and perspicacity, "is every-day economic in a small peasant country with a ruined large-scale industry." The young workers state could not lift itself out by its own bootstraps, particularly as it didn't have any boots. A retreat was necessary. The NEP was adopted.

Immediately following the adoption of the NEP, the 11th conference of the R.C.P. adopted a resolution which defined the task of the Party in relation to the trade unions as requiring "a more decisive drawing in of the trade unions and through them of the masses to the resolving of the problems of organization and management in production." Trotsky objected to this postulate and repeated his objection to the congress following the conference. His position was that the transition to a market economy "excludes the possibility of practical participation of the trade unions in the management of the enterprises." (22) The new trade union resolution stated openly that granting of capitalist concessions and concentration of power in the hands of the factory management excluded interference by the trade unions. But it also stressed that "it would be completely incorrect to interpret this undisputed truth as a denial of participation of the trade unions in the socialist organization of industry and in the management of the economy." (23)

(22) Minutes of 11th Congress R.C.P., p. 288, Russian

(23) It is significant of the slanderous attitude of the Social-Revolutionists to the workers state, that the right SR, Many Gordon, in her book, The Workers Before and After Lenin, not only leaves out the above clause when she deals with that resolution, but tries to give the impression that the workers state forbade strikes. If it did, it surely failed to enforce it as in that year there were between 30 to 40 strikes a month in Moscow alone. Naturally, the party thought that the trade unions ought to function so well that workers' grievances are acted upon as they arise, and not let the dissatisfaction grow and cause a walk-out. But not only were strikes permitted but Lozovsky at that very same congress spoke again



The trade union resolution at the 11th congress was adopted unanimously. However, Trotsky was curiously motivated in voting for it. "Daily maneuvering", he explained, "is absolutely incompatible not only with the leadership but with practical control of the trade unions over the practical daily work of the economic organs." (24)

Again Trotsky's position was that of an administrator.\* His erroneous conception 1920: "Parallelism of economic organs is intolerable is likewise evident in his 1921 position: "Market maneuvering is incompatible with practical control of the trade unions." Lenin was right in both instances for only one reason: to him the role of labor was clear. There was "only one road--changes from below; we wanted the workers themselves to draw up, from below, the new principles of economic conditions." (25)

Tomsky, who was the official reported on the trade union resolution at that congress, answered Trotsky sharply: "Trotsky says that on the basis of the market we should throw out the worker from management. Please, what kind of business-like polemic is this? If we approach the trade unions with such a measure and with such an interpretation, then this will get us nowhere, particularly it is good for nothing in the sphere of trade union work where the many millioned non-party masses bring their full pressure to bear upon the trade unions and the Communists in the trade unions." (26)

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Lenin, who had made no fetish of the workers, state, watched like a hawk the further development of the NEP. He knew well that the dictatorship of the proletariat was a transitional state which could be transitional "either to socialism or to a return backward to capitalism," depending upon the historic initiative of the masses and the international situation.

(23) Cont'd

some Communists who had not walked out with the workers when they struck. How is it possible, he asked, for Communists to lead workers when they remain at their benches at a time when the workers strike? And Tomsky severely rebuked some for their "chincynik attitude when they proposed that strikes be allowed in private plants, but not in state enterprises.

(24) Same as note 22.

\* Lenin's characterization of Trotsky as an administrator appeared in his Will as a criticism of Trotsky for having "a disposition to be far too much attracted by the purely administrative side of affairs."

(25) Lenin: Selected Works, Vol. VIII, p. 277



V. The international market and the isolated state

None of the Bolshevik leaders thought they could hold out long in isolated backward Russia without the aid of the European revolution. In explaining the policy of the NEP to the Third Congress of the C.I. Lenin stressed their dependence on the international revolution. "We quite openly admit, we do not conceal the fact that concessions in the system of state capitalism mean paying tribute to capitalism. But we gain time and gaining time means gaining everything, particularly in the epoch of equilibrium, when our foreign comrades are preparing thoroughly for their revolution."

The revolution was successful in no other country and the Russian proletariat was left isolated in a backward industrial country. Lenin knew well that the very backwardness which had thrust them forward would now come to plague them, for they were a link in the chain of world economy and could not resist the pressure of that advanced economy. They had to examine, squarely, he warned the last congress at which he appeared, "the Russian and international market to which we are subordinated, with which we are connected and from which we cannot escape."

Lenin further stressed the fact that a bourgeois like Ustryalov had announced his support of the Soviet government "because it had taken the road that will lead it to the ordinary bourgeois state." The class enemy, stated Lenin, was speaking "the simple class truth and is pointing to the danger that is confronting us. The enemy is striving to make this inevitable.... This is the real and main danger." The only way to avoid making the return backwards inevitable is to face squarely the dangers, to realize that the Communists were not leading, but were being led. The state machine must be made to travel in the direction the Communists will guide.

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With the death of Lenin the state had lost its most accurate guiding hand. The economy was permitted to develop "spontaneously" and the workers were assured that they could reach socialism "at snail's pace." Trotsky warned prophetically that an unbridled development of the NEP would lead to the Soviet Union's acquiring capitalism "on the installment plan". He pointed, further, to the strength of the kulaks and demanded that the workers state begin to plan production on a nationwide scale. To which Stalin replied cynically: "It isn't a plan the peasants need but a good rain for his crops."

The social legislation of the workers was left intact, but the rise in wages lagged behind the rise in profits of private industry, which had grown so fast that by 1926 20% of the proletariat was employed in private enterprises, including foreign concessions. The worker had his 8 hour day and two weeks vacation with pay; his wages and conditions of work were protected by collective agreements executed by his trade unions. He had regained the 1913 standard of living and there it stopped, while profits ran ahead.

Meanwhile the kulak who had grown so fat that, although he constituted but 6% of the peasant population, had concentrated in his hands 60% of the grain destined for sale. Stalin still continued blithely on; as late as 1927 he still spoke against planned production, stating that the attempt to build Dneprestroy Hydroelectric Station was tantamount to a muzhik buying a gramophone instead of a cow. The muzhik

bought neither, but the kulak hoarded his grain and refused flatly to turn it over to the state. It was then that a plan was hastily elaborated in an attempt to erase all past mistakes by such dizzy rates of speed as completely to disregard the chief productive force: the proletariat, who had in the meantime lost its best defenders when the Left Opposition was expelled from the party and the trade unions, imprisoned, and exiled.

The abolition of the NEP and the inauguration of the Five Year Plan consolidated the entire social capital in the hands of the state but did nothing to draw the workers into the management either of the economy or the state. Nevertheless the workers still felt that now that private capitalism was abolished, the state of the October Revolution was his and he was inspired to exceed all established norms. The Workers Conflict Commission was still functioning and the Council of Labor and Defense emphasized that responsibility for fulfilling the financial program rested exclusively with the management. The workers had been given the 7 hour day on the eve of the expulsion of the Left Opposition and the social legislation won through the revolution had been left intact. Hence the proletariat did not appreciate the claim of the Left Opposition that with the latter's expulsion the proletariat had lost its best revolutionary representatives. The workers were first beset by doubts when their economic conditions did not improve, but grew worse, despite the inauguration of planned economy. They saw that the state was the owner of the means of production, but they were not its managers.

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