

## Unit 12

### Russia II: 1917-30

### This Unit aims to

- Outline the Russian Revolution (see also Unit 11) and subsequent events.
- Examine the establishment of the Bolshevik regime under Lenin in the years following 1917.
- Illustrate the twisted logic and suspect motives of the Bolsheviks during the period.
- Consider briefly the anarcho-syndicalists in Russia at the time.
- Trace the steps in the establishment of the Bolshevik dictatorship.

### Terms and abbreviations

**Left SR:** Left wing of the Social Revolutionary Party who supported the Bolsheviks.

**Right SR:** Right wing of the Social Revolutionary Party, opposed to the Bolsheviks.

**CPC:** The Council of People's Commissars

**CheKa:** All-Russian Extraordinary Committee, the Bolshevik secret police, later to become the KGB.

**VSNKh:** Supreme Council of National Economy.

**NEP:** New Economic Policy introduced in 1922 heralding a return to small-scale capitalism.

## Introduction

The events leading up to 1917 in Russia are discussed in Unit 11. This Unit follows on, by considering the developments of 1917 and after.

The February Revolution had brought about the formation of soviets and factory committees that were based on workers' democracy. Lenin and the Bolsheviks worked ceaselessly to secure a majority in the factory committees and soviets by using the slogan of workers' control. Once they seized power they transformed the soviets beyond recognition; into a mechanism they could use to exercise centralised control and single party dictatorship.

## After October

Before the Bolsheviks' seizure of power in October 1917, Lenin had relentlessly attacked the provisional government for its failure to arrange elections for a Constituent Assembly. At the same time, since Lenin's 'April Thesis', the Bolsheviks had promoted the soviet system over the Constituent Assembly option. In effect, Lenin was arguing through the summer of 1917 that the two systems could run along side each other, arguing;

*"...only strong and triumphant soviets would guarantee the convocation of the national assembly." He called this tactic "revolutionary realism" and, as Trotsky later noted, "...outside the soviet dictatorship and until its arrival, the Constituent Assembly had to appear as the highest achievement of the revolution."*

Although the Bolsheviks had, due to the perceived popular support, found it prudent to pay lip service to the idea of the Constituent Assembly, the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists had, of course, always opposed it. Before October they had poured scorn on the idea of parliamentary democracy stating that preparations for the Constituent Assembly were a waste of precious energy and instead preparations should be made for the workers to take over the factories and the peasants the land. As one anarcho-syndicalist

## The Constituent Assembly

argued:

*"We must create economic organisations. We must be prepared, so that on the day after the revolution we can set industry in motion and operate it."*

After October, things had changed dramatically for the Bolsheviks and one of their first changes in tactics was to switch from being staunch advocates of the idea of an elected Constituent Assembly, to complete rejection of it. Firstly, the soviet system had now been established, and secondly, the Bolsheviks had gained a leading position within it. Both Lenin and Trotsky now argued that the establishment of a Constituent Assembly was a backward step, representing an obsolete remnant of the 'bourgeois' revolution. The soviets were portrayed as a new stage of the revolution, which would eventually lead to the establishment of socialism.

Managing the Bolshevik about-turn in policy was not easy, since they had campaigned so hard prior to October for a Constituent Assembly. At first, Lenin argued that the party should simply reject the policy as now out of date, but the majority of the Bolshevik Central Committee, who argued that such a measure immediately after the Bolshevik seizure of power would prove unpopular, opposed him. Eventually, Lenin was forced to accept this, and the election for the Constituent Assembly was duly set for November 25th 1917.

The election result clearly demonstrated the weakness of the non-socialist parties in Russia. Altogether, they mustered only a fifth of the vote. For all Lenin's talk of counter-revolution, this demonstrates how sweeping the Russian revolution had been and how total the victory was. The Social Revolutionaries (SR), were the largest party. They had stood as a single party but entered the Assembly as two groups. The Right SR had 380 while the Left had 39 seats. The Bolsheviks formed the second largest party, with 168 seats. The biggest losers in the elections were the Mensheviks, who only got 18 seats, reflecting the folly of their earlier decision to support the now defunct 'bourgeois' provisional government.

The election result posed another problem for the Bolsheviks – they had hoped for far greater gains. Now, they were faced with at least some power being shifted from the soviets, which they effectively controlled, to the new Constituent Assembly, which they did not. In response, Lenin again showed all his determination and tactical brilliance. Within days of the result of the election being announced, he unleashed a ferocious attack on the Constituent Assembly, arguing that its very existence alongside the soviet system was inconsistent. It represented bourgeois capitalism, while the soviets reflected a real workers' revolution. He challenged the Russian workers to decide which of the two they wanted.

Lenin had rightly calculated that, though workers may support the Constituent Assembly, this support would evaporate if it meant abandoning or severely weakening the soviet system. There were two planks to Lenin's strategy. Firstly, the soviets had previously functioned democratically (it was only in recent months that this had begun to be undermined by the Bolsheviks) and still enjoyed broad worker support on the basis of this former mode of operation. Secondly, by arguing that those who favoured the Constituent Assembly were automatically undermining the soviets, he rallied the broad support for the soviets and used it to oppose the assembly.

Immediately, those who supported the establishment of the Constituent Assembly were put on the defensive. The Right SR argued that the apparent conflict between the soviets and the Constituent Assembly had been artificially created by Lenin. Instead, they maintained, both could co-exist, and both had a role. The soviets united the working class and safeguarded revolutionary gains, while the Constituent Assembly was to legislate and define society.

However, they fatally played into Lenin's hands by arguing that, if it came to choice of 'assembly versus soviet', then the assembly was preferable. The main reason for this was the role and interests of the wealthier peasantry within the Right SR. They opposed the idea of land nationalisation promoted by the rural soviets. Indeed, it was this issue that lay at the heart of the split within the SR. While the Left favoured common ownership and direct democracy, the Right basically favoured a capitalist-based economy based on a parliamentary democracy.

Within the Mensheviks opinions differed, a minority, with their mechanistic scientific Marxism, favoured the Assembly for theoretical reasons. They advocated a tightly knit popular front of all non-Bolshevik forces in support of the Constituent Assembly. The majority argued for a coalition extending from the Bolsheviks to the Right SR and although still maintaining, "*All power of the state belongs to the Constituent Assembly*" they, in effect, assumed a neutral position between the Bolsheviks and their opponents.

On January 18th the first, and last, session of the assembly took place. After a long debate, a Bolshevik motion calling for the assembly to accept the programme laid down by the soviets was defeated by a coalition of the Right SR, Mensheviks, non-aligned capitalists and regional nationalists. The Bolsheviks and the Left SR walked out. At about the same time the Central Executive of the All Russian Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Soviets issued a decree, written by Lenin, calling for the dissolution of the assembly. A detachment of the Red Guard was sent to disperse the Assembly, symbolically led by an anarchist, a Krondstadt sailor called Zhelezniakov, which it did without much fuss. On January 23rd, the All Russian Congress of Soldiers' and Workers' Soviets (henceforth 'Congress of Soviets') met and voted to dissolve the assembly. The Third Peasant Congress ratified it two days later. On January 28th, a statement issued by the Congress of Soviets declared the formation of the Russian Socialist Soviet Republic.

Lenin had read the situation correctly. Though the Russian working class may have supported the general idea of the assembly, it remained an abstract concept. The reality of the soviets was stronger than this. Its previous actions and effectiveness was proven - the new assembly was not. Furthermore, the old provincial government had tried to stop peasants seizing the land by saying they

should wait for the establishment of the assembly to bring about land reform. However, Lenin had already mocked this notion, pointing out that a parliamentary democracy would never introduce real land redistribution. Hence, he cast the assembly as an opponent of land reform, and the soviets as being the true source of workers' power.

Lenin's tactic worked. The shutting down of the assembly by the Congress of Soviets met with general indifference. The army stayed in the barracks and the workers stayed off the streets. Thus, the Russian parliament passed into history with scarcely a murmur of protest.

# The Soviet System

The months that followed the failed assembly saw significant strengthening of the soviet system, particularly in rural areas, where their development lagged behind the cities. Regional land committees were established as a rural form of soviet, and the soviets and land committees began to administer society. This involved co-ordinating the local economy, and forming militias under democratic control and so a democratised system based on equal but independent soviets began to emerge.

The soviet principle was also applied to the army and navy - though this was due more to recognition of the hatred of the officers by the soldiers and sailors than a conscious application of soviet principles - and power was passed to soldiers' committees, with officers now being elected. In factories, day-to-day control passed to councils of workers elected directly from the workplace. These councils quickly set about organising into a national federation that, in conjunction with the soviets, would be able to co-ordinate the Russian economy both nationally and locally.

With the soviets now the sole sources of state power, the Left SR put forward proposals for a new soviet constitution. This included;

*"...that the soviets should carry full state power; they have the right to decide all questions, except those voluntarily delegated to the exclusive authority of the central power". They also stressed; "our federation is not an alliance of territorial governments or states but a federation of social economic organisations."*

In other words, individual soviets were to be autonomous in voting procedures and general internal organisation. However, territorial federalism was opposed, in view of the danger of the emergence of regional and ethnic divisions. Thus, the Left SR saw the future soviet system as an organic structure under which the state and politicians would soon disappear, leaving a society run on co-operation and self-government.

The Bolsheviks directly opposed the Left SR proposals, delayed the formation of a constitution, and quickly set about securing power. The Council of People's Commissars (CPC), dominated by the Bolsheviks and led by Lenin, was the main instrument through which they began to gather power. The CPC almost immediately began to make decisions and issue decrees independently of the Congress of Soviets Executive. The Left SR protested immediately about the

undemocratic nature of these actions. The Bolsheviks informed them that:

*"The Soviet Parliament (meaning the Congress of Soviets) cannot abrogate the right of the Council of People's Commissars to issue decrees of extreme urgency without previously submitting its proposals to the central executive committee."*

The CPC was supposed to be merely an executive organ, responsible for carrying out decisions of the Congress of Soviets Executive. However, under Bolshevik control since January 1918, it had been transformed into a permanent institution, with its own committees and rules of procedure. Now, it was actively establishing committees and departments designed to bring the soviet system under central control. In undertaking this, the managers and high-ranking civil servants from the old Tsarist regime began to be utilised by the Bolsheviks as "experts". From there, the People's Commissar rapidly began to function as an independent power centre gradually superseding the Congress of Soviets that only met infrequently.

Through the CPC, the Bolsheviks began immediately to use the power of the state to undermine opposition. As early as November 21st 1917, Lenin declared:

*"...the State is an institution built up for the sake of exercising violence. Previously, this violence was exercised by a handful of money bags over entire people, now we want to transform the state into an institution of violence which is to do the will of the people...We need firm government, violence and compulsion, but it shall only be directed against a handful of capitalists."*

## Bolshevik Repression

The first to feel the Bolshevik state violence were the Kadet Party, whose members began to be arrested in November 1917, as a prelude to their organisation being suppressed. However, the Red Guards, under Bolshevik control, increasingly began to arrest and search citizens and politicians alike. Widespread and increasing protest resulted, to which Trotsky responded by stating:

*“You protest at this mild terror...you should know later the terror will assume very violent forms after the example of the French Revolution. The guillotine will be ready for our enemies and not merely jail”.*

Within weeks of Trotsky's speech, the CPC established the “All-Russian Extraordinary Committee”, which quickly became known as the CheKa, and one of the most feared organisations in Russia. The CheKa was set up supposedly to prevent counter-revolutionary groups operating. At this time, the Russian revolution was so successful that no such organisations existed, but the CheKa soon found a role for itself. On January 8th, it was announced that Labour Battalions were to be formed, made up of “...men and women of the bourgeois class...” stating that “...those who resist are to be shot.” Lenin now advocated “...shooting on the spot one out of every ten found guilty of idling.” A few weeks later he said;

*“...until we apply terror -shooting on the spot - to speculators, takers of bribes and swindlers, we shall achieve nothing.”*

By February, the CheKa was well established nationally, acting independently, with no constitutional checks on its activities. It announced that all counter-revolutionaries would be shot, including “...those who pass out or stick up anti-government leaflets”. The term ‘counter-revolutionary’ was already beginning to be applied to anyone suspected of being opposed to the increasingly brutal Bolshevik rule. The phrase ‘swindlers and idlers’ was increasingly applied to the peasantry, and began even to be applied to any workers who dared to protest against Bolshevik economic policies. Prior to 1918, Russia had been a country in which the use of capital punishment was extremely rare. Now, the Bolsheviks were all-powerful and their use of summary execution became an everyday occurrence.

## Capitalist Coexistence

A cornerstone of the Russian revolution had been an end to the war - but not at any price. The rallying cry of the Russian masses had been peace without “annexation”. In December, Trotsky, now in charge of foreign affairs, refused to sign a peace agreement put forward by Germany, arguing; “...we wage no war, we sign no peace..” and that there would be “...no compromise with German imperialism.” The decision met with widespread approval throughout Russia. Later the same month, he stated that;

*“...the workers and peasants, inspired and armed by the revolution, could by guerrilla warfare overcome any invasion”.*

Three months later, in March 1918, Trotsky signed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, handing Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, White Russia and Bessarabia over to Germany. Understandably, this provoked widespread opposition, even within the Bolshevik party. Lenin's April Thesis had been entirely dependent upon the notion that a Marxist revolution was imminent in the west, after which the proletariat would come to Russia's aid. Since, he had argued, the Russian proletariat and economy was too underdeveloped to make a full transition to state control, the success of the revolution depended on revolutions in the west. Thus, a major plank of Bolshevik strategy was to aid and encourage an international revolutionary movement. Brest-Litovsk was the first step towards co-existence with the capitalist world. Bukharin, a rising star within the Bolsheviks, was particularly bitterly opposed to this development, stating;

*“...we said and we say that in the end everything depends on whether the international revolution conquers or not. In the end, the international revolution-and that alone- is our salvation.”*

He went on to argue that the primary role of the soviets was to wage ‘revolutionary war’ against capitalism. Accepting the treaty meant undermining the central part of soviet policy, the promotion and encouragement of world revolution, which was the only salvation for underdeveloped Russia. Disagreement was such, that an opposition faction (the so-called “left” communists) was formed immediately after a majority accepted the Brest-Litovsk Treaty.

Outside the narrow confines of the Marxist theoretical debate within the Bolsheviks, there was widespread opposition to the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. Virtually everyone, including every other political

## Red Terror

party, was incensed by it.

The opposition to the agreement was on two levels. Firstly, it meant handing over a large section of the Russian working class. Secondly, it would spell economic ruin, since most Russian industry would be handed over to Germany, including the Ukraine grain belt and the Don coalfields. The Left SR and anarchists argued that a guerrilla army should be formed in order to defeat the threat of German invasion. Workers and peasants immediately responded by forming military detachments to go to White Russia and the Ukraine, the current centre of the fighting with the Germans.

The Bolsheviks responded to the call for a revolutionary war by announcing that Russia was now under an obligation to honour the agreement signed with Germany. Trotsky dispatched troops to pursue and suppress the partisan units. Dzerzhinsky, head of the CheKa, demanded “...*that all such terrorists be handed over.*” With some of the anarchists and the Left SR now calling for the overthrow of the Bolsheviks, preparations were made to unleash a campaign of “Red Terror” aimed at ridding Russia of all opposition to Bolshevik totalitarian rule. This was to be the first of many such bloody episodes in the ensuing decades.

To prepare for the way for single party rule, the Bolsheviks set about reorganising the army to bring it under Bolshevik control. Shortly after the Brest-Litovsk agreement was signed in early March, Lenin and Trotsky met with the two former high-ranking Tsarist officers Altvater and Behrens, to discuss the reorganising of the army. It was quickly decided that much of the structure of the army under Tsarist Russia should now be reintroduced, including bringing back the old officer corps. This was many months before the beginning of the civil war.

In April 1918, Trotsky announced the introduction of conscription for the Labour Battalions. In May, the army obtained a general staff and commander in chief, Kamenev, a former Tsarist staff colonel. Trotsky announced that the army needed the specialised skills of a former Tsarist officer. Another crucial cornerstone of the revolution – a democratically-run army, made up of and run by workers, was thus forgotten. Both the Marxists (including Lenin) and the anarchists had always argued that the only guarantee that the army would not be used against the revolution was to ensure it was controlled by and an integral part of the working class. However, after Brest-Litovsk, the Bolsheviks quickly realised that they would need an army under state rather than workers control if they were to succeed in their historical mission to lead the masses. The army would be central to crushing all opposition to their rule.

The first to feel the wrath of the Bolsheviks were the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists. Their calls for free soviets under direct workers control had begun to gather considerable support, especially in the major towns and cities. Lenin acknowledged this growing influence and resolved to use both rhetoric and force against them. In late March, he announced:

## Land Deals

*“The nearer we come to the full military suppression of the bourgeoisie, the more dangerous becomes to us the high flood of petty-bourgeois anarchism...(and this must be met with)...force and compulsion.”*

On April 12th, troops under the command of the CheKa were deployed against the anarchist movement. Their centres were closed, activists shot and imprisoned, and the anarchist press was banned. Soon after, came the turn of the Mensheviks and Right SR, who were increasingly harassed by the CheKa. In June, they were banned from standing for elections to the soviets and their organisations were thereafter suppressed.

Only the Left SR remained. On March 19th they had resigned in protest from the CPC, after the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, though they remained on the Congress of Soviets' Executive. Through propaganda in the army and the peasantry, they sought to obstruct the treaty, leading to growing tension between them and the Bolsheviks. Matters came to a head during the 5th Congress of Soviets in July. While the Congress was in progress, the Left SR assassinated the German Ambassador. This was followed by the Left SR attempting to organise a number of uprisings, aimed at overthrowing the Bolsheviks, in the hope that this would end the Brest-Litovsk Treaty.

This was the ideal excuse for the Bolsheviks to unleash the CheKa on the Left SR. All their delegates to the Congress of Soviets were arrested, and raids and mass-arrests were simultaneously made across Russia. The SR papers were closed, leaving only the Bolshevik press operating. On July 15th the Congress of Soviets, now made up only of Bolsheviks, passed a resolution outlawing the SR. The Bolsheviks were now the only legal party in Russia and the only group allowed to publish papers and other propaganda.

At the same time as the political opposition was attacked and demolished, any opposition to Bolshevik one party rule within the wider working class was also dealt with. Lenin, who only a year earlier had made 'workers' control' a central tenet of Bolshevik propaganda, was now forthright in just what he really meant by the phrase. His description was in terms of the power of workers to regulate the economy. By 'workers' control', he meant not the workers' control of industry, but workers' control over industry.

Lenin's apparent early support for what workers and the revolutionary movement saw as workers' control was purely tactical. For similar reasons, the Bolsheviks also originally embraced the idea of direct control of the land by the peasantry, with land distribution being decided by the soviets and land committees. Indeed, buying and selling of land was banned, as was the hiring of labour, but these measures were basically the programme of agrarian reform developed by the SR and passed by the All Peasants' Congress in August 1917 (known as resolution 242). The Bolshevik support for the principle of 'land to the peasants' was purely tactical too.

In October 1917, Bolshevik support amongst the peasantry was virtually non-existent. Hence, they needed to keep the support of the Left SR, and so accepted their agrarian programme, even though they did not, as it turned out, have any intention of carrying it out. As Lenin himself stated later, circumstances forced the Bolsheviks *“to swallow whole”* the SR programme. Lenin had earlier argued for the nationalisation of the land under state control, and had been scathing about the SR agrarian programme, calling it *“...hopeless, unwittingly naive wishful thinking of down-trodden, petty proprietors.”* As part of his April Thesis, he had argued for the land to be nationalised and brought under state control in large-scale state-run farms. What the Bolsheviks wanted in November, was land nationalisation in accordance with the April Thesis, but they could not yet achieve this without fierce opposition from the peasantry and they did not yet feel ready to face such a prospect.

Although, in 1905, Lenin had argued that the proletariat would make the revolution with the help of the peasantry, once in power, his basic Marxist mistrust of the peasantry as a reactionary and backward class came to the fore. Underlying the Bolshevik plans for nationalisation and the adoption of large-scale state-run farms was not the concern of economic efficiency, but the belief that the peasantry were not to be trusted, and were incapable of self-management.

## Workers' Control Crushed

From November 1917, the Bolsheviks were in a strong position in the cities, enjoying both popularity and the forces of the state. They immediately began to introduce their industrial programme. In December 1917, the Supreme Council of National Economy was set up known as the VSNKh. This was attached to the CPC and was in effect run by a Bolshevik committee, with powers to issue orders on economic affairs. By January 1918, it was taking on the managers of capitalist firms as advisers. By May, it had formed a massive bureaucracy of industrial control, both on regional and national levels.

On January 19th, the VSNKh issued a decree which made a law that no further expropriation of industry could take place without its specific authority. This was the first attempt, after the Congress, by the Bolsheviks to take control of the movement of workers' councils. However, they were still in no position to enforce such a law and the decree was virtually ignored. By March, however, with the Bolsheviks in sole control of the CPC following the Left SR resignation over Brest-Litovsk, another attack was launched. By now, the CheKa was also fully functional. On March 3rd the VSNKh announced a decree to bring industry under the control of the state. In each industry, a central administrative council composed of workers, employers and technical personnel was to be established, which would have sole power within industry and be answerable to the CPC. The decree accepted that capitalism would continue in Russia, and limited the powers of the workers to the role of regulating capitalism. The Bolshevik Milyutin introduced the decree by declaring;

*"...the dictatorship of the proletariat had made inevitable a change of our whole economic policy from the bottom to the top."*

He went on to criticise the possibility of having both workers' control and state control. Just days later, the VSNKh announced it had entered into negotiations with a leading Russian rail magnet Meshchersky, under which a new national rail company would be established. Half the shares would be owned by the state and the other half by Meshchersky. At the time, the railways were being operated directly by the rail workers themselves through their union, and had been doing so successfully for several months. Next, the VSNKh announced that negotiations were taking place with Stakheev, a Russian steel magnate. Steel production was to be taken over under one of three options; a joint company financed by the state;

Stakheev and an unnamed American capitalist, or a company financed by the state but managed by Stakheev's company in a return for a percentage of the profits.

Both announcements met with widespread hostility, including from within the ranks of the Bolsheviks. The Left communists immediately denounced the proposals, and matters quickly came to a head at a party meeting on April 4th. Here, Lenin outlined his industrial strategy in a paper later to be produced as a pamphlet entitled *'The Immediate Task Facing the Soviet Government'*. For the first time, Lenin clearly outlined the basic form the new soviet society was to take. The Bolshevik aim of single party rule is clearly stated:

*"The people's political leaders, i.e. the members of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)...which today is the governing party in Russia, must set about organising society...(later)...we have won Russia from the rich for the poor.... We must now administer Russia."*

Russia was no longer governed by a soviet system, but by one party rule administered through the soviets. In this new soviet system, Lenin argues, the expropriation of capital must come to an end, to be replaced by the;

*"...strictest and country-wide accounting and control of production (meaning workers) not being lazy, not stealing and working hard (above all, they have to) observe the strictest labour discipline."*

He also clarifies what he means when he says 'workers must take control over industry'. He means legislation must be introduced to regulate capitalism and give the workers some say in the running of the workplace. In effect, he means a mixed economy - even control by the state is now no longer advocated, never mind direct control by workers themselves. His justification is basically that the workers are not capable of running capitalism, so industry requires the expertise of the capitalist, in the form of *"...co-operation of bourgeois specialists, technicians and administrators."* In recruiting these specialised staff, Lenin claims it is necessary to *"...pay a very high price for their services..."* entailing *"...different levels of incomes for different skills."* Another basic principle of the revolution, equality of earnings, is thus lost, laying the basis for economic inequality, which can only lead to the creation and maintenance of a class-based system.

# Totalitarianism

In his *"On the Nature of the Russian Workers"*, Lenin boldly states that *"...the Russian is a bad worker when compared with his western counterpart."* This was his justification for the introduction of piecework. The Taylor system, aimed at increasing efficiency of labour and once described by Lenin as *"...the enslavement of man to machine..."*, was now advocated as the best means of doing away with *"...superfluous and awkward motions..."* in the production process. He argues for the reintroduction of one-man management and furthermore that, *"...obedience, and unquestioned obedience at that, during work to one-man decisions,"* must be observed; that managers should be *"...granted dictatorial powers (or unlimited powers)..."*, and that compulsory labour should be introduced.

Lenin also unequivocally proclaims himself a keen advocate of state coercion;

*"...we are not anarchists, we must admit that the state, that is coercion, is necessary...(this requires)...dictatorship...Dictatorship is iron rule by coercion."*

He goes on to advocate *"...the shooting of thieves on the spot..."*, the *"...shooting of hooligans..."* and the shooting of *"counter-revolutionaries"*, which he describes variously as anarchists, Mensheviks, Right SR, and even the Left SR. The Bolshevik Central Committee adopted this unashamedly totalitarian document. A few days later, Lenin delivered another paper, again later released as a pamphlet, entitled *'On Left Infantilism and Petty-Bourgeois Spirit'*. In this, he argues for the introduction of state capitalism based on the model adopted by Germany throughout the First World War, i.e. a highly concentrated and monopolistic economy operated by capitalism, but under strict state supervision. He also states that since revolutions have not yet occurred in the west as predicted, backward Russia must make progress through its own devices and modernise by its own exertions. The tool he advocates is state capitalism, as a stepping-stone to socialism. He argues that Russia;

*"...must learn from the Germans...Germany now represents the last word in contemporary large capital technique and planned organisation...(The task of the Russian revolution is to)...study state capitalism of Germany...to adopt it with all possible strength, not to spare dictatorial methods in order to hasten its adoption."*

To carry out the programme, Lenin calls for some sectors of industry, such as railways and agriculture, to be nationalised and taken under state control. In other sectors *"agreements with the captains of industry"* must lead to the formation of trust directed by them and embracing basic industries, which from the outside may have the appearance of state undertaking. Bukharin and the Left communists described Lenin's ideas not as a step forward to socialism but a step backward to capitalism. But Lenin's stranglehold on the party was now complete, and moves against the workers' councils began, firstly through use of the trade unions to undermine them.

Prior to October 1917, the trade unions were dominated by the Mensheviks and were seen as moderate bodies in line with Menshevik doctrine. After this, the Bolsheviks had begun to take them over and, by December, they were already being transformed into organs of state control. Before the regulation of the economy could be transferred to Bolsheviks they had to curb the freedom of the industrial workers as represented by the factory committees. They called for *"iron discipline"* in the factories and the mines. The trade unions, which until then had had taken a secondary role, were to be used to *"devour"* the factory committees and convert workers' control to state control.

This began at the First All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions, which met in Petrograd from 7 to 14 January 1918, immediately after the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. The Bolsheviks commanded a large majority of the 416 voting delegates while the anarcho-syndicalists, who had generally shunned the unions in favour of the factory committees, had only six. The Bolsheviks were joined by the Mensheviks in attacking the anarcho-syndicalists who argued for industrial federalism and the autonomy of the factory committees. Bill Shatov, an active anarcho-syndicalist and member of the Central Council of Petrograd Factory Committees, characterised the trade unions as *"living corpses"* and argued that the workers needed to;

*"...organise in the localities and create a new Russia, without a God, without a Tsar and without a boss in the trade unions."*

When the well-known Marxist scholar, and newly converted Bolshevik, protested against this attack on the unions Grigorii Maximoff, another leading anarcho-syndicalist, dismissed his

## Land Grabs

objections as those of a *“white-handed intellectual who had never worked, never sweated, never felt life.”* Another anarcho-syndicalist delegate reminded the Congress that the revolution had been made *“not by the intellectuals but by the masses”*; that they need to *“listen to the voice of the working masses, the voice from below...”*

The Bolsheviks, having now seized power, had no intention of listening to the voices from below. Before October, when they sought to overthrow the Provisional Government, they had joined the anarcho-syndicalists in support of the factory committees and workers' control. Now they sought centralisation and sided with the trade unions that sought state control. The Bolsheviks did part company with those trade unionists who demanded that the unions stay neutral, that is exist independently of the government, labelling this a “bourgeois” idea and an anomaly in a workers' state. The Congress promptly agreed that the unions;

*“...should be transformed into organs of the state, the participation in which for all persons employed...will be part of their duty to the state.”*

By March 1918, the trade unions had been fused with the People's Commissariat of Labour and its regional and local variants (the so-called Labour Commissars), primarily made up of trade union officials. The function of the unions thus became to discipline labour and to raise productivity. The workers' councils were absorbed into the unions by degree and were slowly transformed into organs of state control made up of party members who policed the workforce.

The ending of peasant control of the land was far more direct and far more brutal than the Bolshevik take-over of industry. In January 1918, with food shortages already growing, Lenin had called for mass searches of storehouses and the shooting of all speculators. By May, with food supplies a serious problem, much of it caused by the loss of the Ukraine, Lenin moved the blame from swindlers in the city to rich peasants hoarding food in the countryside.

In May 1918, the Peoples' Commissariat of Supply was given powers to organise armed detachments to confiscate grain from the peasantry. In June, the Bolsheviks created 'Committees of Village Poverty', which replaced the existing soviets. Together, these two organs of Bolshevik power brutally confiscated grain from rich and poor alike, often burning down the villages of those who resisted. As starvation turned into famine in the countryside, so democratic control and self-management of agriculture also ended at the hands of the Bolsheviks.

# Revolt and Civil War

The elimination of all political opposition and the destruction of the structures of workers' control and self-management were resisted across Russia, leading to numerous uprisings. This included a failed insurrection in Moscow, and culminated in an attempt to assassinate Lenin by the SR member Dora Kaplan. In response, Lenin unleashed a new intensity of "Red Terror". An orgy of mass-murder ensued, during which the state and party organs seemed to compete over who could make the most brutal call for more mass-murder of 'counter-revolutionary' forces. This was real 'scientific socialist' Bolshevism. How many were murdered will never be known, but one of the prominent CheKa members at the time calculated that some 245 uprisings were put down during this period. This was probably exaggerated, as the CheKa sought to demonstrate its unswerving loyalty to the Bolshevik cause. Nevertheless, opposition was clearly sustained and desperate, and was crushed without mercy.

However, Bolshevik rule was soon to be threatened by an outside enemy. In August, French, US, Japanese and British troops invaded. In southern Russia, "white" forces under the leadership of Denikin formed a "volunteer army", encouraged, trained and supplied by the allies. As it began its northward advance, more forces under Wrangel joined it. The Russian Civil War had started, and before it ended, millions of people were to die, either in the fighting or through disease and malnutrition.

In response to the invasion, Bolsheviks partially lifted their ban on opposition groups and the press. The softening led many to believe the revolution was still worth fighting for, and there was a general rallying to its defence. At the same time, so-called 'War Communism' was introduced, which led to the whole economy being brought under direct state control, the introduction of rationing. Later, the workforce was militarised under a system of compulsory labour.

War Communism also allowed the CheKa to extend its influence further, to cover all aspects of civil life. During the civil war, the number of executions it carried out soared, some estimates putting the total at 150,000. As Lenin later boldly stated; "...anybody who placed their own interest above the common interest was shot."

It was during the civil war that the anarchists played one of their most prominent roles in the revolution. After the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, a guerrilla army had been organised by the anarchist Makhno in the Ukraine known as the Makhnovtschina. First, it fought the Germans

after the Ukraine was ceded to them, then it turned on the "whites" during the civil war. The rallying cries were 'free soviets without a ruling power' and 'against the subservient and partisan Bolshevik soviets'. Within the area protected by Makhnovtschina, delegates to the soviets were elected directly from the village and workplace, and no-one was allowed to stand on a political party ticket. This ensured that soviet delegates put forward the views of the people who delegated them, not the views of political parties. There was also freedom of the press, even though war conditions prevailed.

At first, the Bolsheviks attempted to suppress the Makhno army, but were soon forced to recognise how effective this highly mobile, democratically controlled force of thousands was. After the civil war broke out, Makhno visited Lenin to offer an alliance against the whites. In doing so, he illustrated the ineffectiveness of the Red Army armed trains, which had only managed to liberate an area 30 metres each side of the track.

By late 1919, the whites were retreating and the Makhnovtschina had played a major role in their defeat. Immediately, the Bolsheviks moved against them. Red Army units were transferred to the Ukraine in large numbers, under the guise of a joint operation. As the two armies joined forces, the Makhno units found themselves surrounded and were defeated. Though the partisan movement took up a campaign against the Bolsheviks, they were never to recover and were eventually totally suppressed.

The brutal and cynical crushing of the Makhnovist movement marked a change of strategy for the Bolsheviks. In 1920, with the civil war coming to an end, there was widespread hope that after all the sacrifices and brutality, War Communism would come to an end and a truly democratic soviet system could be established. Such hopes were cruelly dispelled as the Bolsheviks quickly moved to assert their dominance. They stated that War Communism was not related to the war. Bukharin, now a staunch Lenin supporter, wrote;

*"...the Bolsheviks had conceived war communism as not related to the war ...Proletarian compulsion in all its form, from executions to compulsory labour, constitutes, as paradoxical as this may sound, a method of formation of a new communist humanity."*

With the war threat receding, the Bolsheviks actually increased state repression. As Trotsky wrote in 1920;

## Kronstadt Massacre

*"..militarisation of labour...represents the inevitable method of organisation and discipline...during the transition to socialism...(and)...the road to socialism lies through a period of highest possible intensification of the principles of the state...which embraces the life of the citizen in every direction."*

This caused opposition within the party, in the form of the 'Workers' Opposition Call for Greater Democracy'. In opposing this group, Trotsky argued that the historic birthright of the party allowed *"...it to maintain its dictatorship regardless of the temporary wavering of the masses."* Lenin dismissed the opposition as *"...anarcho-syndicalist deviations."* The workers' opposition within the party was quickly defeated and silenced. However, it was not so easy to defeat the Russian people at large. With the Whites defeated, the people once again rose up against the Bolshevik dictatorship. There were some 118 peasant revolts in February 1921 alone. Even the Bolshevik sympathiser Lewis Siegelbaum was forced to concede that, in early 1921;

*"...the workers' hostility towards the Bolsheviks authority was as intense as it had been four years earlier towards the Tsarist regime."*

The Bolsheviks attempted to contain the protest through the introduction of martial law. However, even with the full weight of this dictatorial tool, the country slipped further towards the verge of a fresh revolution. Shortly, matters came to a head in Petrograd.

The strike started over further cuts in food rations and more factory closures. Petrograd workers were in uncompromising mood, and, with martial law imposed and strikes banned, the movement soon became political. The main thrust of the demands were free elections to the soviets. This was recognised as the first step to replacing the Bolshevik dictatorship with direct democracy. As the strikes spread, the Bolsheviks rushed in troops from other regions, fearing the city garrison could not be trusted. As soon as they arrived, they were ordered in to the city, led by the "Kursants", the young communists of the Bolshevik military training school.

The strike soon spread to the Port of Kronstadt, which had long been a centre of revolutionary activity. A mass meeting of some 16,000 workers and sailors was held and demanded free elections of all soviets to be held after a period of free agitation. This period would allow freedom of speech and press for workers, peasants, anarchists and left-socialist parties, freedom of assembly, release of all political prisoners and abolition of all political units in the army. Also, it would allow the equalisation of earnings and the peasants' right to control their soil as long as they do not employ people. The meeting also decided to arrest the Bolshevik naval commander Kuzman.

On March 4th 1921 Trotsky, in his role as commissar of war, condemned the Kronstadt sailors and demanded their unconditional surrender. Despite a massive propaganda campaign against the Kronstadt uprising, the first attempt to storm the port failed. The troops brought in from other areas refused to fight. On March 18th elite troops arrived as wide-scale military tribunals were set up to attempt to enforce state discipline. On March 17th the port was taken after the Kronstadt sailors decided not to take offensive action. On entering the port, the Bolshevik troops shot hundreds of unarmed sailors on the spot in cold blood. Many more were imprisoned, and others managed to escape to Finland.

## After Kronstadt

After the Kronstadt revolt, the Bolshevik Government arrested thousands of social revolutionaries, anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists and Mensheviks. Some 3,000 workers were sentenced to forced labour for breaches of labour discipline in 1921. Lenin argued that the death sentence should be extended to all forms of activity by Mensheviks, social revolutionaries, anarcho-syndicalists and anarchists. This was followed by a formal ban on all political groups and parties later that year. This was later extended to a ban on factional organisation within the Bolsheviks party itself.

Although some peaceful anarchist activity was tolerated until 1929 the most militant anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists were tracked down by the CheKa and brought before Revolutionary Tribunals. Those who were not executed were jailed or sent to concentration camps. Those sent to the converted monasteries on the Solovestkii Islands staged demonstrations and hunger strikes to protest at their confinement until they were eventually dispersed among the CheKa prisons or banished to the penal colonies of Siberia. Those anarcho-syndicalists who escaped Russia, including Maximoff, were convinced that their movement had failed because of a lack of effective organisation. The main centre for exiles was Berlin and, in 1922, many were to play important roles in the establishing of the anarcho-syndicalist international, the IWA.

Next, the Bolsheviks tried to use the famine (which raged throughout 1921 and claimed up to 3 million lives) to reintroduce capitalism. In late 1921, it announced the 'New Economic Policy' (NEP), under which nationalisation of all small industry was revoked. Every citizen was authorised to "...undertake small scale industrial enterprise not extending beyond the hiring of twenty workers." Leasing of factories in the possession of the VSNKh was introduced, and some 6,000 private firms were immediately leased out. The NEP introduced a form of mixed economy with an overwhelmingly private agriculture and small-scale private manufacturing.

In 1922, with the economy still in a desperate state, profit making was introduced as the sole operating criteria. Lenin advocated allowing large sectors of the Russian economy to be run by foreign capitalists, saying: "*We chased out our own capitalists, now we must call in foreign capitalists.*" Within the state, management was made up of party secretaries, managers and trade union officials. Workers were selected to sit on 'production councils', a primitive form

of works councils, which had no real power and little input into decision-making. The workers on these councils were trained to give them "...various administrative, technical and economic skills." They were intended to be the new managers of the future soviet economy.

Though it was never really successful, the NEP continued up until 1929 and at least there was no recurrence of the mass starvation that had occurred in 1921. The NEP was finally scrapped after a bitter internal feud left Stalin in control of the Bolshevik party. In 1929, Stalin immediately set about introducing "...the revolution from above..." aimed at full nationalisation of the economy, including the introduction of large state-run farms. The next few years saw new depths of misery, as 6 million peasants starved due to a famine brought about directly by the collapse of agriculture due to this disastrous policy. In industry, Stalin's first 5-Year Plan was introduced, involving forced industrialisation, the aim of which was to catch up and overtake western capitalism. Brutal methods were employed, with capital punishments for minor 'offences' such as absenteeism, in an attempt to make the plan work. At the same time, punishments such as death by shooting were reintroduced for petty theft and other minor crimes.

The command economy that Stalin introduced survived until the collapse of the soviet system in the late 1980s - a testament to the brutal repression and careful planning of the Bolshevik elite. Despite this, the dream first articulated by Lenin of overtaking western capitalism was never achieved. Indeed, the state-run system fell increasingly behind, unable to deliver the technological innovation needed for the electronic revolution that now powers western capitalism.

As in the 1850s, it was war that highlighted just how far Russia had fallen behind. The 1967 Middle Eastern War saw the American-supplied weaponry of the Israeli forces annihilate the Russian-supplied Arab counterparts, sending shock waves through the Russian elite. The resultant forced change of policy led to the Soviet Union increasingly embracing free market capitalism. Over thirty years later, this path has led it into the current misery now being endured by the Russian people.

# Conclusion

Looking at the failures of Marxist-Leninism, it is often argued by some of the more libertarian Marxists, that Leninism was a distortion of true Marxism. Certainly, as the Mensheviks argued, Marx foresaw revolution occurring after a long period of capitalist relations. However, this does not exonerate Marxism from its involvement with Leninism. A major factor in the Russian revolution was the basic distrust of the peasantry, a distrust derived from Marxist theory - which condemned the peasantry as a "reactionary" force. Furthermore, this distrust reflects a wider distrust of the working class, inherent in Marxist theory.

Though it recognises that the state, by its very nature, is repressive, Marxism argues that, during a 'transitional period', revolutionary society must be run by the state. In other words, until the workers have reached social, economic and political maturity, an all-powerful state must act on their behalf. This is a fatal flaw; the state cannot act on the workers' behalf, it is diametrically opposed to their interests. Marxism then goes on to reason that, when the point is reached that the workers are able to take control of their own lives, the state will somehow wither away. This is a second fatal flaw; the state will never wither away of its own accord, since this could not possibly be in its interest.

The single major failing of the Russian revolution was the basic Marxist mistrust of the people. The Bolsheviks deeply distrusted the peasantry, in a country where 80% of the population were peasants. As Marxists, they felt that, because Russia was backward, a socialist revolution was impossible without the aid of the western advanced proletariat. When this failed to materialise, they fell back on forced industrialisation based on state coercion.

The Russian revolution was made by the Russian masses, including the peasantry. The Bolshevik contribution was negligible since, at the time of the revolution, they were temporarily paralysed, because their Marxist theory did not match reality. However, with the expert tacticians Lenin and Trotsky, they were able to place themselves at the head of the revolution, by jettisoning much of their theory in order to win mass support.

Once in power, their Marxist distrust came to the fore and they once again attempted to bend reality to meet theory. Instead of encouraging the masses' enthusiasm for change, they did the opposite and actively stifled it. Using intense and brutal measures,

the Bolsheviks eventually crippled the massive movement for workers' control and self-management, at which point the revolution was lost. Far from playing a positive part in the Russian revolution, it was the Marxists, and particularly the Bolsheviks, which directly caused it to fail.

The next major revolutionary episode in Europe was to occur in Spain in the 1930's. This was a very different story, and one that will be examined in Units 15-18. Meanwhile, the last words on Russia are left to two people who were there at the time. The first is from an anarchist, summing up the Bolsheviks' attitude to the workers, and the second is from a Bolshevik in 1921, summing up the essence of the tragedy that was the Russian revolution.

*"According to the Bolsheviks, the masses are 'dark', mentally crippled by ages of slavery. They are multi-coloured; besides the revolutionary advance guard they comprise great numbers of the indifferent and many self-seekers. The masses, according to the old maxim of Rousseau, must be freed by force. To educate them to liberty one must not hesitate to use compulsion and violence."*

*"We are afraid to let the masses do things themselves. We are afraid of allowing their creativity. We no longer trust the masses. Therein lies the origin of our bureaucracy. Initiative wanes, the desire to act dies out...Here is the root of all evil."*

## Key points

- After October 1917 the Bolsheviks, under instructions from Lenin, switched from being advocates of a Constituent Assembly to being staunch opponents of it.
- Having gained control of the soviets they now extended them to all areas, including the army and navy, to cement their control of the Russian state.
- Workers' control was suppressed and the factory committees were subsumed in the trade unions, which in turn, were taken under state control.
- Managers were re-introduced into industry and officers re-introduced into the army and navy.
- Repression of all opposition began with the formation of the secret police organisation, the CheKa. All opponents of the Bolsheviks were soon to be deemed counter-revolutionary.
- Any opposition such as Kronstadt revolt and the Makhnochina in the Ukraine were brutally suppressed.

## Checklist

1. How did Lenin and the Bolsheviks justify their switch from support of the Constituent Assembly to their total opposition to it?
2. How were the soviets and factory committees brought under the central control of the Bolsheviks?
3. What was the role of the CheKa?
4. What were the features of 'war communism'?
5. How did the Bolsheviks attitude to the peasantry change?
6. Why did the Bolsheviks introduce the 'New Economic Policy' in 1922?

## Answer suggestions

1. *How did Lenin and the Bolsheviks justify their switch from support of the Constituent Assembly to their total opposition to it?*

Before October 1917 the Bolsheviks had supported the idea of a Constituent Assembly but this was merely a tactic to use against the Provisional Government. After October, with the Bolsheviks effectively in control of the soviets, they argued against it now maintaining that the establishment of a Constituent Assembly was a backward step. After its election Lenin attacked the Constituent Assembly, arguing that its very existence alongside the soviet system was inconsistent. It represented bourgeois capitalism, while the soviets reflected a real workers' revolution. He challenged the Russian workers to decide which of the two they wanted. He rightly calculated that, though workers may support the Constituent Assembly, this support would evaporate if it meant abandoning or severely weakening the soviet system. The two planks to Lenin's strategy were, firstly, the soviets had previously functioned democratically enjoyed broad worker support on the basis of this former mode of operation. Secondly, he rallied the broad support for the soviets by arguing that those who favoured the Constituent Assembly were automatically undermining the soviets.

2. *How were the soviets and factory committees brought under the central control of the Bolsheviks?*

They began by using the Council of People's Commissars, which was supposed to be an executive organ responsible for carrying out decisions of the Congress of Soviets Executive to undermine opposition within the soviets. The CPC began to make decisions and issue decrees independently and the Bolsheviks justified this by arguing that it was necessary due to the extreme urgency of the situation. The CPC rapidly began to function as an independent power centre gradually superseding the Congress of Soviets that only met infrequently. The factory committees were then brought under the control of the trade unions, which, in turn, were brought under state control. All economic policy was centralised under the Supreme Council of National Economy known as the VSNKh. This was attached to the CPC and was in effect run by a Bolshevik committee made up of fifteen members.

3. *What was the role of the CheKa?*

The CheKa was the All-Russian Extraordinary Committee and was set up at the end of 1917 to prevent counter-revolutionary groups operating. At the time there was little or no such groups and so the CheKa soon established a role in the crushing of any opposition to the Bolsheviks including anarchists and the Left SR. By February 1918 the CheKa was well established nationally, acting independently, with no constitutional checks on its activities.

4. *What were the features of 'war communism'?*

War communism meant that the whole economy was brought under direct, centralised, state control. Rationing was introduced and, later, the workforce was militarised under a system of compulsory labour. It was in fact the system that Stalin later re-introduced in 1929 and was the foundation of the later Soviet economy.

5. *How did the Bolsheviks attitude to the peasantry change?*

When the Bolsheviks seized power they had little support amongst the peasantry. They adopted the programme of the Left SR wholesale to attract support. This again was a purely tactical move and when they felt strong enough they ended peasant control of the land was far more direct and far more brutal than the Bolshevik take-over of industry. In May 1918, the Peoples' Commissariat of Supply was given powers to organise armed detachments to confiscate grain from the peasantry. In June, the Bolsheviks created 'Committees of Village Poverty', which replaced the existing soviets. Democratic control and self-management of agriculture was ended by these two organs of Bolshevik power that brutally confiscated grain often burning down the villages of those who resisted. As a result starvation turned into famine in the countryside.

6. *Why did the Bolsheviks introduce the 'New Economic Policy' in 1922?*

The New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced in late 1921. The Bolsheviks used the famine as an excuse to reintroduce capitalism. It announced that the nationalisation of all small industry was revoked. Citizens were authorised to undertake small scale industrial enterprise that employed less than twenty workers. Leasing of factories in the possession of the VSNKh was introduced, and some 6,000 private firms were immediately established. The NEP introduced a form of mixed economy with an overwhelmingly private agriculture and small-scale private manufacturing. Profit making was introduced as the sole operating criteria. Lenin advocated allowing

## Discussion points

large sectors of the Russian economy to be run by foreign capitalists and, within the state, management was made up of party secretaries, managers and trade union officials. Workers were selected to sit on 'production councils', a primitive form of works councils, which had no real power and little input into decision-making. The workers on these councils were intended to be the new managers and so trained to give them administrative, technical and economic skills.

The NEP continued up until 1929 when it was finally scrapped after a bitter internal feud and left Stalin in control to re-introduce his version of war communism under the guise of the five-year plans.

- What is the basis for co-operation between anarcho-syndicalists, anarchists and Marxist-Leninists?
- How much of the failure of the anarcho-syndicalists in Russia be attributed to a lack of a coherent organisational basis?

## Further Reading

**A. Berkman. The Bolshevik Myth. ISBN 1853050326. Pluto. £3.95. -AK-**

Based on Berkman's diaries, roughly covering the period 1919-21, an excellent account of a tragic period for Berkman and all other anarchists in Russia.

**M. Brinton. The Bolsheviks & Workers Control. Black & Red, £4.95. -AK-**

Historical view from a libertarian Marxist perspective, sympathetic to the anarchists. Detailed, especially on the period 1917-21, littered with quotes and critique of Lenin.

**Voline. The Unknown Revolution. Black Rose. ISBN 0919618251. £12.99. -AK-**

Many view this as the best text on the Russian revolution. Chunky, detailed, combination of eye-witness account, history and analysis, from an anarchist participant in the period 1917-21. One for your birthday list.

**A. Nove. An Economic History of the USSR. 1969. Pelican. -LI-**

Focuses on social and economic, rather than political aspects. Hardly mentions any alternative to the Bolsheviks. The author was a leading light in developing 'market socialism' theory in 1950's USSR.

**N. Makhno. The Struggle Against the State & Other Essays. AK Press, ISBN 1873176783. £7.95. -AK- -BS-**

Makhno wrote most of this while in Paris in the 1920s, while battling with the bottle and looking back on the betrayals of the Bolsheviks. nevertheless, an important account from the most prominent anarchist involved in the Russian struggle.

**E. Yartchuck. Kronstadt in the Russian Revolution. KSL pamphlet. £3.00. -AK-**

Excellent eye-witness account of this crucial event. Yartchuck was an elected member of the Kronstadt Soviet, a veteran of both the 1905 and 1917 revolutions, and was subsequently imprisoned by the Bolsheviks.

**I. Mett. The Kronstadt Commune. Solidarity pamphlet. £1. -AK-**

First published in 1938, Mett provides us with a telling chronology of Kronstadt from an anarchist perspective. Cheap and essential guide to a critical event.

**I. de Llorens. The CNT in the Russian Revolution. KSL pamphlet. £1.00. -AK-**

Concentrates on the visits to Russia of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT from Spain, and the negotiations over setting up of the anarcho-syndicalist international (see also Unit 14).

**T. Brown. Lenin & Workers Control. Monty Miller Press pamphlet. £1.50. -AK-**

Tom Brown's short polemic on just how cruelly Lenin sold out the Russian workers. 1940s British perspective, cheap and essential.

**O. Ruhle. The Struggle Against Fascism Begins With The Struggle Against Bolshevism. ISBN 1870133544. Bratach Dubh pamphlet. £1.50. -AK-**

Vicious attack on Lenin, especially his 'left wing Communism', from a classic Marxist (council communist) viewpoint.

**D. Guerin. No Gods No Masters: Book Two. AK Press. ISBN 1873176694. £11.95. -AK-**

Part II of this reader contains over 100 pages on the Russian revolution from various contemporary writers and activists, including Voline, Makhno, the Kronstadt Sailors, and Emma Goldman.

Note 1: For more further reading on the Russian revolution, see Unit 11.

Note 2: Lenin's own works are also well worth a visit - he never hid his real intentions, and his contemporary writings of the time are especially eye-opening, e.g. 'The Immediate Tasks Facing the Soviet Government' and 'Left-wing Communism - an Infantile Disorder' (both 1918). Get cheap, discarded 'Collective Works of Lenin' in s/h book shops.

Note 3: The further reading outlined is not an exhaustive bibliography or a prescriptive list. It is always worth consulting local libraries for general history texts, although they invariably understate the level of working class organisation and activity. To assist Course Members, an indication is given alongside each reference as to how best to obtain it. The codes are as follows: -LI- try libraries (from local to university), -AK- available from AK Distribution (Course Member discount scheme applies if you order through SelfEd, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW), -BS- try good bookshops, -SE- ask SelfEd about loans or offprints).