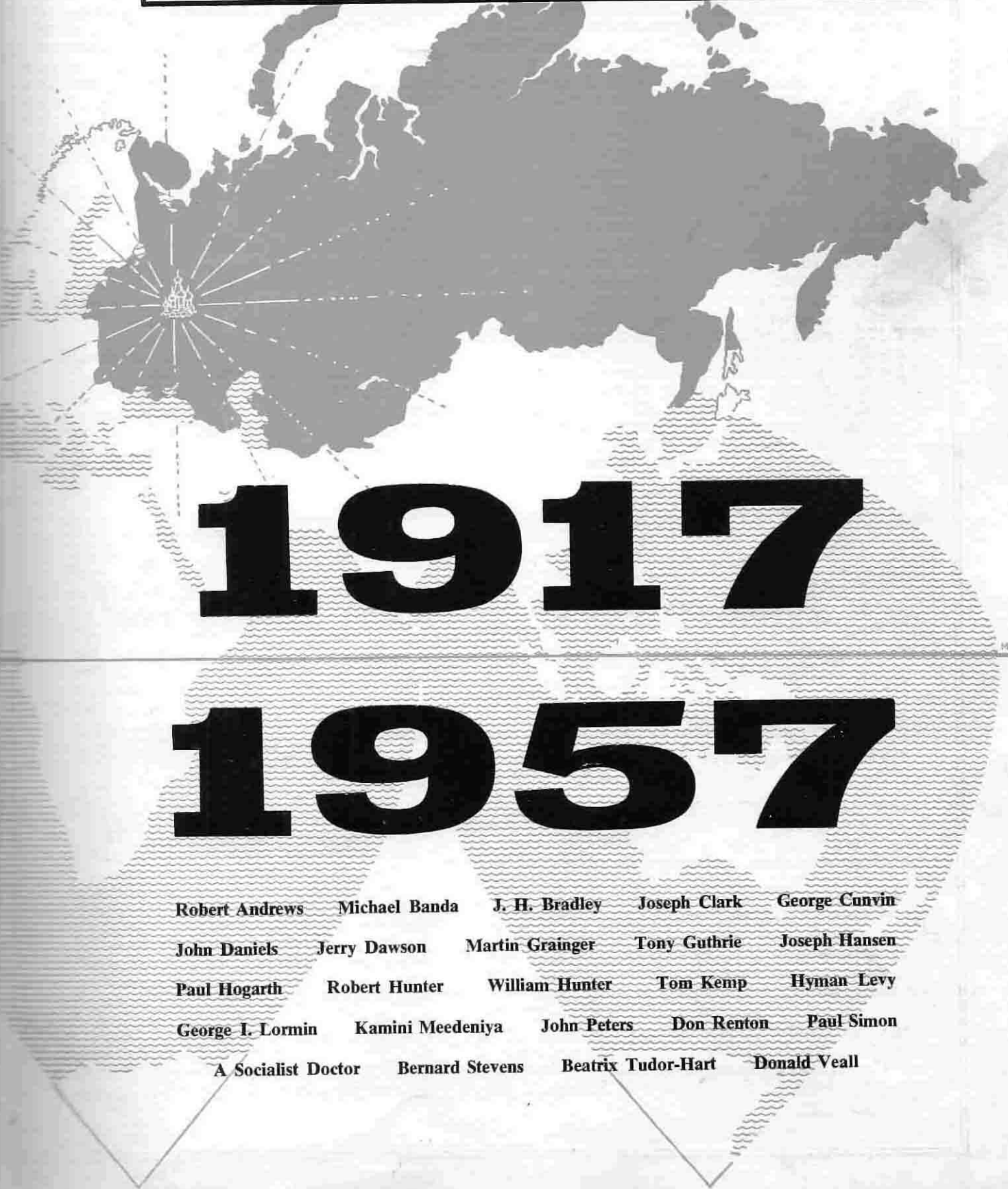


THE NEWSLETTER

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1917

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NO FORCE CAN QUENCH THE FLAMES LIT FORTYE

THE EVENT whose fortieth anniversary we celebrate today is the greatest in the whole story of man. No matter what crimes have bloodied and scarred the Soviet Union in these four decades, or ripped from the hands of the Russian workers the fruits of their victory of November 7, 1917, the Revolution they made was humanity's first decisive step across the threshold of a new society. The achievements the Russian people have conquered, despite cruel invasions and the crippling toll extorted by bureaucracy, already demonstrate for all who have eyes to see the immense superiority of socialist economy over any form of class society. Russia has passed through war, civil war, pestilence and famine. She has been fettered by backwardness and weariness. She has known hardships that no other people in the world has suffered. None other has made such efforts. The Russians' energy and zeal, born in the flames of the October Revolution, have swept them in less than half a century from the Slough of Despond that was tsarism to the level of an advanced industrial power. No other nation ever went forward at such a tempo, even at the time of the Industrial Revolution. Before 1917 the symbol of Russia was the wooden plough. Today it is the TU 104 and the first earth satellite, which has amazed the world. And the secret of this breath-taking economic progress is neither the Russian soul nor the genius of a Stalin or a Khrushchev: it is the impetus, still unspent, still redoubtable, furious, elemental, of that autumn day when the *Aurora* trained her guns on the Winter Palace and sleepless men in the Smolny guided the seizure of power by the revolutionary workers, soldiers and sailors. Though Stalinism has sought by every means to damp down the fire lit forty years ago today, destroying the party that Lenin built and murdering its leaders, mocking and perverting revolutionary forms by filling them with an alien content, restoring privilege in the mask of equality and injustice dressed up as socialist legality, fostering national arrogance while preaching internationalism, squeezing the spirit of Marxism into the mould of dogmas and parrot-cries—yet the fire has gone on burning, steadily and imperishably, in the hearts of men. Forty years after the English Revolution its traditions were dissipated in the false consciousness of the Restoration and the 'Glorious Revolution'. Forty years after the French Revolution its grandeur and *élan* seemed to a new generation a temporary and unaccountable aberration. The Levellers and the Jacobins were scarcely more than ripples in the stream of history. But the Bolsheviks have diverted the whole stream till it has engulfed one-third of the earth in a torrent of social change. For this is the epoch of proletarian revolution, and its traditions cannot be destroyed. October was the dawn of a new age. Bourgeois and proletarian, white man and African, intellectual and Philistine, bureaucrat and revolutionary: all live today in the shadow of October. It dominates our times like a volcano destined yet again by its eruption to shake and reshape the world, to topple rulers and bring empires crashing to ruin.

The caste which rules the Soviet Union is obliged to celebrate the October Revolution, just as it is obliged to maintain and make more efficient the socialist economic basis. Its dominance depends both on its success in propagating the fiction that it is the rightful heir,

defender and champion of 1917, and on its effective extraction of tribute from Russia's nationalized industries. Its parasitism must be concealed beneath the mantle of respect for such aspects of October as can decently and legitimately be called to the attention of that majority of Soviet citizens which lacks personal recollections of the Revolution and of its leaders. Years of 'correcting' historians, of re-evaluating heroes who became traitors overnight or vice versa, have necessitated constant patching and repatching of this mantle. The bureaucracy, turning tradition into mystique, relies on the figures '1917' to dazzle all but the longest memories and the most sensitive consciences. At present it does not rely in vain.



BUT the very soil on which the bureaucracy depends for its existence inevitably breeds resistance to its domination, just as the celebration of such a cataclysmic event as the October Revolution must inevitably excite interest in and curiosity about the real history of the Soviet Union, the original meaning of soviets, the democratic traditions of the Bolshevik Party, the exact positions taken by the protagonists in far-off controversies and the part played by men who were later imprisoned and killed as 'enemies of the people'. Among the millions of Soviet youth there will be some at least whose imagination is so stirred by the revolutionary past of their country that a mere repetition of familiar forms of speech cannot satisfy them. And once the dust is blown off the archives and the seals torn from the forbidden books, there can be no return to the decade of falsification which sought to canalize scientific investigation and strait-jacket creativeness in the arts. The fifth decade of the USSR will witness a re-education of Soviet youth, with consequences impossible to predict.

The tenth anniversary of the October Revolution came at the point where the bureaucracy, relying on the fatigue of the Russian workers and the defeat of the Revolution in Germany and China, was able to consolidate its power inside and outside the party. November 7, 1927, was the last occasion on which representatives of the Opposition were able to make an open and public appeal to the workers. The twentieth anniversary came in the midst of the dreadful excesses of the purge, when a generation of revolutionary leaders was massacred to the monotonous refrain of confessions and the high-sounding but void articles of the Moscow democratic constitution in the world. The thirtieth anniversary found the Soviet people, battered and bled by the fascist onslaught, straining to restore their national economy despite the baffling and frustration of their initiative by officialdom and the grotesque cadences of the paean of praise to Comrade Stalin, then approaching its climax. Ten years later mass pressure and the fear of its intensification have forced certain important concessions from an unwilling ruling stratum, including admissions about past tyranny and the disgrace of prominent and seemingly permanent leaders, which have intensified the incipient intellectual ferment. This fortieth anniversary coincides with the first anniversary of events in Poland and Hungary which, despite compromise solutions in the former and savage repression in

YEARS AGO BY RUSSIA'S WORKERS AND PEASANTS

the latter country, are the writing on the wall for Stalin's term. The bureaucracy sees in the Commune of Budapest and the workers' councils of Győr and Tatabánya its own approaching doom, when new soviets, new soviet parties and new proletarian democracy will arise to complete the work October began. The swift changes and shocks of the fourth decade may well be succeeded by a still swifter march of events in the fifth. Side by side with the re-education of Soviet youth there is bound to come a powerful revitalization of the Russian proletariat, a renewal of revolutionary energy and self-confidence which could be postponed, as the revival after 1905 was postponed, only by the disaster of war. The greatest achievement of the coming decade would be the creation of a new Marxist leadership, the long-delayed rebirth of Lenin's party.



THE ATTITUDE of British socialists to the Soviet Union is not, and cannot be, determined either by the character and actions of the present leadership or by the vulgar and unprincipled anti-Soviet barrage in the capitalist Press. A trade union remains an instrument for working-class advance even when it is thrown out of focus by the domination of trade union bureaucrats. The Soviet Union remains a working-class conquest despite the temporary exclusion of the working class from the seats of power. Forty years ago the chain of capitalism was snapped; the distortions and deformations that have attended the building of a socialist economy are unfinished business for the workers to settle; and in settling this overdue account they need neither help nor advice from the imperialists. From the proletariat of the rest of the world, however, they need the utmost fraternal help and understanding. The principle of international working-class solidarity imposes on us in 1957, no less than in 1917, the pre-eminent duty of defence of the Soviet Union and of its planned economy.

No slogan has been more misused than this one by the Stalinist leaders of the Communist Parties. They have used it to veil their drooling docility to the International Department of the CPSU; they have used it to blunt the finest revolutionary and internationalist instincts of the workers under their influence. In the name of the defence of the USSR the temporary and sectional interests of the Soviet bureaucracy have taken precedence over the victory of the revolutionary movement. In fact Pollitt, Thorez and Togliatti have transmuted this slogan into its opposite, and have betrayed the real interests of the Russian workers. Real defence of the Soviet Union, from the standpoint of socialist principles, means, not apologetics, lies and whitewashing, but unconditional defence of the socialist property relations, unflinching criticism of every bureaucratic distortion and unswerving support of the Soviet workers in their struggle for genuine socialist democracy and the preservation of the traditions of October. It means speeding by every possible means the advance to real socialism in the capitalist countries. In the event of war between world imperialism and the USSR it means support for the USSR, even with its present leadership, against the ruling class of one's 'own' country.

Not least, it means active, vigorous and determined resistance, by all the traditional socialist means, to any attempt by imperialism to take advantage of working-class opposition to bureaucracy.

Ten years ago talk of such opposition could be dismissed as revolutionary romanticism. Today it is not so easy to close one's eyes to the future. The Hungarian Revolution in particular, despite every attempt by King Street and Fleet Street to portray it as the work of reactionaries, is generally accepted as the struggle of industrial workers and communist intellectuals. To suppose that the tensions which brought about this upsurge are confined to the periphery of the socialist world is to surrender Marxism to its perverters and jog along hopelessly in the wake of events, shocked anew at each fresh 'revelation', unable to generalize or learn from each fresh convulsion. Nor is there any comfort to be derived for capitalism from the reawakening of the spirit of October, the renaissance of all the mass creative initiative of the soviets, the political consummation of Russia's economic seven-league strides, which will ultimately come on the order of the day. Socialist democracy, soviet democracy, in the Soviet Union, will be a powerful magnet for the workers of the capitalist countries. As she is today the Soviet Union is a *potential* beacon of hope for the oppressed: they see in her their future, but the mirror is clouded and the image distorted by grave and terrible abuses. The redemption, painful and harsh though it may be, will hasten the elimination of exploitation and oppression with new and startling swiftness. History will more than compensate for the delay, for the long night that fell in 1923, and that is now coming to an end.



FORTY years after the words 'We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order' were spoken the past and the future are subtly interwoven in Soviet society. There are greed and parasitism, inequality and intolerance, a hundred and one prehistoric, pre-human traits. There are also the civic consciousness, dignity, respect for labour and, above all, class feeling, which can and will eliminate the abuses and cleanse and heal the new society. Those who hate and fear the Soviet Union speak only of the bad, because they are terrified of the decline of their own civilization and the onset of what seems to them a new dark age. Those who serve the interests of the bureaucracy speak only of the good, for they seem to themselves to shine in the reflected glory of bureaucratic privilege. Marxists must not flinch from the complex interweaving of bad and good, and must pin their hopes on the one social force which, as science shows, can shoulder the responsibility of leadership in the leap to a new and really human existence. To love humanity and understand the process of social development is to love the working class, understand its historical mission, and have confidence that it can fulfil it; to love, too, its first creation, the Soviet Union. On this fortieth anniversary our love for the Soviet people and our gratitude for their incomparable efforts and sacrifices is blended with steady confidence in their ability to return to the road of October, the road that leads to communism.

MARTIN GRAINGER

How They Took Power in Petrograd

FROM FEBRUARY TO OCTOBER

RED FLAGS had appeared on many official buildings in February but in reality little had changed. The socialist Ministers held office by kind permission of the classes they claimed to have overthrown but were frightened of the power and problems suddenly thrust upon them.

Their social traditions, their individual incapacity and their meagre theoretical baggage all dictated that they should share this power with the bourgeoisie.

But in so doing they took upon themselves the solution of insoluble tasks, for the interests of the people were irreconcilably opposed to those of the propertied classes. The inner logic of the Revolution soon exposed all those who failed to grasp this essential fact.

The front was in a state of ferment. Discontent was spreading rapidly among the peasants. The workers watched their representatives closely and with increasing distrust. The Ministers sheltered behind the General Staff. In the background Generals Kornilov and Kaledin, the 'mailed fists of the bourgeoisie', were awaiting their turn.

As the months went by the utter impotence of coalition and provisional governments and the scarcely veiled designs of the counter-revolution were revealed.

But another power was arising, its roots in the factories and barracks, in the mud of the trenches and in the land-hungry countryside.

The demands for peace, land and bread echoed the deep and urgent needs of the Russian people. They were voiced through the soviets, upon which soldiers, workers and peasant constantly sought to impress their will and which they were to mould into the organs of their own power.

The influence of the soviets spread far and wide. Within the soviets, the influence of the Bolsheviks increased day by day, and within the Bolshevik Party itself, Lenin's views,

The 'October' Revolution, which took place on November 7, 1917, is known as the 'October' Revolution because, until the Soviet government brought Russia into line with the western world in this matter, the Russians used a calendar thirteen days behind ours.

considered the purest adventurism in April, were soon realized to be the only ones offering any kind of solution to the deepening crisis.

Events moved rapidly. The June offensive. The July demonstrations. Kornilov's attempted coup d'état . . .

Class consciousness surged forward. One leadership after another was tested, found wanting and rejected. Alone the Bolsheviks knew what they wanted and were prepared to pass from words to action.

The second All-Russian Congress of Soviets was due to be held in September but the old executive, elected in June and threatened by the irresistible growth of Bolshevik influence, decided to postpone the Congress 'until after the convening of the Constituent Assembly'.

This was scheduled for December, but had been postponed several times already in the course of the summer months.

The Bolsheviks, in the name of the soviets of northern Russia, now decided themselves to summon the All-Russian Congress.

The old executive at first strenuously opposed this step. But when confronted with the obvious and increasing response

to the call they attempted to lead the movement, the better to guide it into 'harmless' and 'constitutional' channels.

The Congress was to meet at Smolny, on November 2. The date was later postponed to November 7. The Bolsheviks were confident of a majority. After much discussion it was finally decided to seize power through the organs of the Petrograd soviet, and place it in the hands of the delegates to the All-Russian Congress, at the opening session, confronting them with a fait accompli and compelling a decision.

Everything was planned on this basis. November 6 would have been too early for the insurrection as all the delegates would not yet have arrived. November 8 would psychologically have been too late.

ON THE EVE OF INSURRECTION

The government, having vacillated for weeks, decided at last on really drastic measures. Petrograd, Kronstadt and Finland were declared in a state of siege. Cossack troops patrolled the streets for the first time since the July days.

On the night of November 5-6 the Ministers seized their courage in both hands: they would move reliable troops into Petrograd, smash the Military Revolutionary Committee set up a few days earlier by the soldiers' section of the Petrograd soviet, suppress the Bolshevik newspapers and arrest the leaders of the Petrograd soviet.

In the morning of November 6 the guards in front of the Winter Palace were reinforced, armoured cars lined up in front of Staff Headquarters, the officers in the military schools were asked to hold themselves ready for all eventualities.

Instructions went out to open the bridges over the Neva. The cruiser Aurora—its crew won to the Bolsheviks—was ordered to regain the high seas. All garrisons were confined to barracks. Public meetings were forbidden.

There was unfortunately one minor drawback: there was no one capable of effectively enforcing these decrees.

A detachment of cadets succeeded, it is true, in closing down the print shop of Rabotchi Put', one of the Bolshevik papers. Smolny, immediately informed, sent over a company of the Lithuanian Regiment. The premises were occupied and printing resumed. Within a short while the paper was on sale in the streets.

The Aurora refused to sail but instead took up positions, as instructed by Smolny.

Later in the day the Military Revolutionary Committee issued a call to all regiments to mobilize on a war footing and to await orders. These acts of open defiance heralded the insurrection proper. The formal power of the government was seen to be a mere fetish.

Smolny was rapidly fortified. Sections of the Soviet were in permanent session both within the Institute and in all the working-class areas of the town.

The Bolshevik Central Committee took its final decisions. The practical detail were worked out and put into execution by the Military Revolutionary Committee. Delegates to the All-Russian Congress were already arriving. Power must be taken within twenty-four hours.

Kerensky meanwhile addressed the Pre-Parliament (that still-born substitute for an elected assembly), for the last time seeking endorsement for his emergency measures.

'The government has the firm intention of putting an end to the disorders of the populace. I weighed my words carefully: I said populace.'

The meeting proceeded in uproar. The various groups failed to reach agreement.

¹Rabotchi Put means Workers' Path. This was the name under which Pravda had been appearing since it was suppressed, after the July days.

The whole afternoon was spent in heated argument and in the hopeless search for magic formulas with which to solve the problems of class relations.

The pseudo-deputies denounced the reaction, the Bolsheviks, the government and one another. It was finally decided that the struggle must be led by the Committee of Public Safety, not by the government, which had failed to solve a single one of the problems confronting it. Kerensky, furious, learned that even his own supporters no longer supported him.

In the afternoon the Municipal Duma, sensing something afoot, sent a deputation to Smolny to inquire whether an insurrection was being envisaged. This clearly illustrates the rapidly changing balance of forces—for the leaders of the soviet were formally under threat of arrest!

The Mayor and his associates were politely informed that the question of power would shortly be decided by the Congress of Soviets. Impishly, Trotsky even invited them to participate in the Military Revolutionary Committee.

In extraordinary session the Duma proceeded to appoint a Committee of Public Safety which in the days ahead was to become the chief rallying point of the counter-revolution.

Smolny had last-minute doubts about the political reliability of the garrison of the strategic Peter-Paul fortress, on the Neva. The motor-cycle corps, of largely peasant stock, had been deliberately sent there by the government.

Smolny that afternoon organized a special meeting for the men near the Cirque Moderne, sending down its best agitators. Trotsky spoke.

The fortress commander was arrested, the weapons from the arsenal made available. No blood was shed, but another battle was won.

There were immediate repercussions. Other sections of the motor-cycle corps, detailed by the government to protect the Winter Palace, came over to the Revolution. They had to be replaced by cadets.

Hour by hour the basis of the government's military support narrowed and its class character became more obvious.

Kerensky's instructions to the military met with greater success than his appeals to the Pre-Parliament. Throughout the afternoon, cadets occupied the railway stations, guards were placed at the main cross-roads. Private vehicles were requisitioned.

The bridges over the Neva were occupied and raised, in the vain hope of severing all contact between official, bourgeois Petrograd and the proletarian districts.

This provocative gesture was not misunderstood. The answer was immediate. Workers' and soldiers' detachments appeared. Their arguments and threats sufficed, the bridges were soon lowered again.

Further unsuccessful attempts were made against the revolutionary Press. This time help did not have to be summoned from Smolny. The workers themselves disarmed the government patrols.

Shortly after midnight the government telegraph was occupied by a Smolny detachment. The power lying in the streets was being picked up piecemeal.

THE CAPTURE OF PETROGRAD

The main insurrectionary offensive develops in the early hours of November 7. The arsenals, the railway stations, the banks, the post-office, the food depots, the electric power station, the Tauride Palace are occupied by small groups of workers and soldiers. Scarcely any opposition is encountered.

A few soldiers have entered the print shop of the reactionary *Russkaya Volya* and other bourgeois papers, welcomed by the workers of the night shift. Hundreds of thousands of revolutionary proclamations are rapidly printed and distributed. A special issue of *Rabotchi Put* is prepared. Government troops ordered to recapture the premises flatly refuse.

The state bank is occupied at dawn without a shot being fired, under the very eyes of guards placed by the provisional government.

Armoured cars painted with Bolshevik slogans patrol the bridges and the key road intersections. Several Ministers and isolated groups of cadets are arrested and disarmed. Govern-

ment troops sent to reoccupy the post office declare they will not fight the soviet.

The telephone exchange is occupied at about 7 a.m. The Ministry of War is also occupied.

In February it had taken several days of bitter struggle to overthrow the Tsar. It now takes a few hours to topple Kerensky.

In the working-class districts the trade unions and factory committees are the spearhead of local action. Class and party act as one.

To feel their strength, the workers do not have to come out and demonstrate in the streets. That was the past. Now the factory committees organize supplies for their Red Guards, issue arms and see to the rounding-up of groups of counter-revolutionaries.

In the barracks, relief teams set forth as each patrol returns from its assigned task.

Throughout the night of November 6-7, while the power is slipping into the armed hands of the Military Revolutionary Committee, a joint meeting of the Petrograd soviet and of the old All-Russian Congress of Soviets is held at Smolny.

The compromisers are still at work. The professional politicians talk, protest, manoeuvre. The Revolution is not unfolding according to their schemata or predictions. It is ahead of them.

By now, they represent little else than themselves. The people have moved far to the Left. The Bolsheviks refuse to compromise with these political nonentities. The meeting is long, noisy and inconclusive.

On the third floor, a different picture! Reports of success are pouring into the Military Revolutionary Committee.

Immediate decisions are taken. Weary, grimy and determined men are acting with enthusiasm and confidence. As success became more and more obvious, groups of agitators are diverted from Petrograd to the front. The insurrection is moving methodically towards its climax.

Kerensky spends the first part of the night in the Winter Palace, again deciding it is about time the Bolsheviks were resolutely tackled. Dan, the Menshevik leader, presses him to take the wind out of their sails, however belatedly, by announcing that peace proposals have been put to the Allies.

The Right insists on action of a different kind: no concessions to the propaganda of the soviets and annihilation of the Bolsheviks.

Frantic orders are sent to the Cossack regiments stationed on the outskirts of the city, but the troops still fail to turn up.

The railways are instructed to suspend passenger services to allow the passage of other badly needed reinforcements. These do not materialize either.

Polkovnikov, the military commander of the Petrograd region, proposes a march on Smolny. Kerensky acquiesces. There are 200,000 troops in the Petrograd area.

Alas, when attempts are made to count the reliable regiments, these are revealed to be totally inadequate for the task. Instead it is the Red Guards who occupy the Palace Bridge, under Kerensky's very windows.

An urgent conference is held at staff headquarters where many officers are sheltering from their troops. Feeling runs high. Groups of officers even threaten to arrest Kerensky. Chaos prevails.

Kerensky returns to the Winter Palace only to learn that the Bolsheviks have now cut all telephone communications. He throws up the sponge and hurries out of Petrograd, in a car flying the American flag.

By 10 a.m., on November 7, Smolny proclaims victory. This is anticipating matters a little as the formal authority of the provisional government still prevails, at least in the Pre-Parliament and in the corridors of the Winter Palace.

By noon the Marinsky is surrounded and in the afternoon soldiers of the Lithuanian Regiment and groups of sailors enter the building.

The assembly is peacefully dispersed. Its leaders are not arrested. Many of them set forth for the Winter Palace, loudly proclaiming their intention of dying in the defence of Constituted Authority. They are held up on the way and denied this dubious privilege.

At 2.30 p.m. Trotsky, speaking on behalf of the Military Revolutionary Committee, announces at a special meeting of the Petrograd soviet that the provisional government no longer exists.

'We were told that insurrection would drown the Revolution in a sea of blood—we have no knowledge of even a single victim!'

Throughout the day a rash of posters appear on the walls, announcing the victory of the insurrection. In the afternoon, groups of incredulous and agitated bourgeois appear on the streets of the better quarters.

The shops are open, the trains are running and restaurants serving meals. Soldiers and armed workers are patrolling the width and breadth of their city.

Later great, excited crowds pack the streets to argue and to watch what is going on. In the evening the theatres and cinemas are full. Chaliapine sings in Don Carlos.

THE END OF THE WINTER PALACE

A curious medley of Ministers without Ministries, generals without troops, monarchist or patriotic politicians, speculators, frightened minor officials and demoralized cadets, the political riff-raff of the February régime, have meanwhile sought refuge in the Winter Palace, official seat of the provisional government, there to await an improbable salvation at the hands of non-existent 'loyal' battalions.

Although there are several high ranking officers among them, they no doubt take a gloomy view of their prospects. The defence is entrusted to the civilian Kishkin, Minister of Public Assistance!

The Bolshevik plan for the encirclement and capture of the Palace grossly over-estimated the government's capacity for resistance, and is proving unnecessarily elaborate. This threatens to upset the carefully drawn-up time-table of the Military Revolutionary Committee.

The arrival of the revolutionary detachments from Kronstadt is unavoidably delayed. Several crucial hours elapse.

Further small groups gain access to the Palace: armed cadets, groups from the Military Schools, and later a small detachment of Uralian Cossacks, some Knights of St. George (ex-servicemen) and a further company of the women's battalion. At one time the Palace contained an estimated 1,500 people.

In the late afternoon the Kronstadt sailors appear at last in the Neva estuary and take up their assigned positions. From all sides the ring now slowly tightens around the Winter Palace.

By 6 p.m. the encirclement is completed. Armoured cars occupy the open ground in front. Attempts at parley fail. Shots are exchanged and the first casualties occur.

Demoralization spreads within the Palace. Agitators are discovered among the cadets. The officer-cadets organize a meeting, insisting on being told what is happening. The full retinue of Ministers confront them, attempting to appease them.

When they proceed to exhortations they are given a rough passage. The idea of a glorious last stand loses much of its glamour.

From the Peter-Paul fortress two cyclists arrive conveying Antonov's ultimatum: surrender and disarm the garrison—or the guns of the fortress and of the ships in the Neva will open fire.

Twenty minutes to decide. Further squabbles among the besieged. The military are for surrender, the civil authorities will hear none of it. It is decided to ignore the ultimatum . . . and to appeal to the Duma.

The staff headquarters, immediately opposite the Winter Palace, are occupied by Red Guards and sailors without resistance.

Another hour or two pass. In the Palace the Ministers become increasingly gloomy. They start quarrelling in earnest. Polkovnikov, formerly military commander of the Petrograd region, is deposed as insufficiently energetic and replaced by General Bagratuni, chief of General Staff.

But the General resigns his new appointment after a few brief hours, is publicly demoted and escorted out of the Palace where he is almost lynched by the sailors.

Some officers have too much to drink (the Palace is exceptionally well provided) and indulge in duels in the corridors. Others point out the futility of further resistance . . . and are denounced as Bolsheviks.

Desultory firing continues. Further delays on the part of the besiegers, who are still hoping to avoid unnecessary casualties. Several groups of cadets decide they have had enough. Further arguments. Will they take their artillery out with them or not? They do. As they emerge they are stopped by an armoured car.

The cannons are turned to point at the Palace. Others also begin to leave the Palace, including the Uralian Cossacks. Further parleys between besiegers and besieged, the intrepid Chudnovsky actually entering the Palace to conduct negotiations.

The opening of the Congress of Soviets has to be postponed for a few hours. The Bolsheviks are determined to spare life, if possible. The surrender proposals are rejected.

The Aurora fires her first warning rounds, blanks as pre-arranged. Further small groups surrender. Infiltrators get into the palace, first singly, then in small clusters. Some fight, others just spread defeatist rumours. No one knows who is on which side.

Indescribable chaos ensues. The Ministers seem paralysed.

The defenders attempt to plunge most of the Palace in darkness but mysteriously the lights keep going on again. The besieged Palace remains a blaze of light.

The bombardment very slowly increases. Heavy shells are not used and the crews are reluctant to inflict real damage. The object is still intimidation.

More and more infiltrators gain access to the corridors. Fighting breaks out within the Palace itself. Smolny now

WHEN WILL THE 'OTHERS' BE NAMED?

The July 1957 issue of *Voprosy Istorii* [Problems of History] (not published until late August) contains a twenty-page article on 'The Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee in October 1917'.

The author, I. G. Dykov, manages to avoid mentioning even once the name of the chairman of this committee, L. D. Trotsky.

In one place he refers to the secret meeting a few days before the insurrection between Lenin and 'Podvoisky, Nevsky, Antonov-Ovseyenko and others'.

How long will it be before the identity of the principal one of the 'others' can be revealed to the Soviet reader?

Eight months elapsed between Khrushchev's notorious formula about the break with Tito having been due to 'Beria, Abakumov and others' and his revelation of the primary role played by Stalin in this affair.

There, of course, it was a question of giving discredit where discredit was due, while in the case of the October Revolution it is the opposite.

The consequences that would follow even an approach to a 'rehabilitation' of Trotsky, however, would make the results of Khrushchev's anti-Stalin speech seem like a polite giggle . . .

insists on a rapid completion of the affair which has already dragged far too long. The ships prepare to open up a really heavy barrage when the news reaches the crews that the Palace has been captured . . . from within and from without.

The people invade the building in their thousands. At 2.10 a.m., Antonov, in the name of the Military Revolutionary Committee, arrests the remaining members of the Provisional Government.

That night the new All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies meets, elects a Bolshevik leadership and in the early hours of November 8, issues the first of its momentous appeals to the workers of Russia and of the whole world. The foundation stone of proletarian power has been laid.

LEADERS OF THE REVOLUTION . . .



LENIN
(Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov)
1870-1924

'Lenin became the unqualified leader of the most revolutionary party in the world's history, because his thought and will were really equal to the demands of the gigantic revolutionary possibilities of the country and the epoch.'

(Trotsky, 1930)

Introduced to Marx's writings by his Narodnik brother, executed for part in plot to assassinate Tsar Alexander III. First arrested while law student. Expelled from Kazan University. Joined Marxist circle in Kazan. Joined a Marxist group in St Petersburg, 1893. Combated Narodism and 'legal Marxism' in debates, pamphlets and books. Organized smuggling of illegal publications from abroad. Organized St Petersburg Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. Exiled to Siberia 1897-1900. Launched fight against Economism.

Edited Iskra. Led majority (Bolsheviks) at Second Congress of RS-DLP, 1903. Resigned from Menshevik-controlled Iskra. Launched Vperyod, 1904. Proletarii, 1905. Advocated boycott of Witte Duma and proposed policy of support for soviets and working-class organizations in 1904-07 revolution. Fought revisionism in politics and philosophy after defeat of revolution. Reorganized Bolshevik Party; guided its work in pre-war revival of Russian Labour movement. In 1914 took immediate revolutionary defeatist stand against opportunism and social-chauvinism, and called for new international. Returned to Russia five weeks after March Revolution. 'April Theses' a bombshell against Stalin and Kamenev. July 1917, went underground to evade arrest. Threatened to resign from central committee if insurrectionary course not adopted. Appeared at Congress of Soviets, November 8. Chairman of Council of People's Commissars. Minority position on Brest-Litovsk; later won party for German 'peace' proposals. August 30, 1918, attempt on life. Detailed work of building Soviet State. Introduced New Economic Policy 1921. First stroke, May 1922. Launched open campaign against bureaucracy in last articles, and, in agreement with Trotsky, sought to curb Stalin's growing powers. Proposed Stalin's removal January 1923. Broke off relations with him, March 1923.

At age of eighteen organized South Russian Workers' Union, 1898, exiled to Siberia. Soon afterwards escaped abroad. Wrote for Iskra. Delegate to Second RS-DLP Congress, 1903. After split supported Mensheviks. Put forward a development of Marx's 1850 theory of permanent revolution. Elected chairman of first St Petersburg soviet of workers' deputies. Arrested, exiled for life to Siberia, but escaped en route. Emigrated. Published Pravda, in Vienna, 1908. Broke with Mensheviks and formed August Bloc with dissident Bolsheviks, in opposition to Lenin-Plekhanov bloc. Took firm internationalist position on outbreak of imperialist war. Helped produce Nashe Slovo in Paris. Supported Zimmerwald programme. Deported, went to USA. Returned to Russia, May 1917—interned on the way and set free on demand of Provisional Government. Joined Bolshevik Party with Mezhrayontsi group at Sixth Congress, July-August 1917. Arrested; freed under popular pressure. Elected chairman Petrograd soviet. Prominent in organization and leadership of insurrection. Commissar for Foreign Affairs up to February 1918. Commissar for War March 1918-April 1925. 'Created a model army in a year' (Lenin). Active in formation of Comintern. Leader of Left Opposition from 1923. Expelled

TROTSKY
(Lev Davidovich Bronstein)
1879-1940



'All the work of practical organization of the rising was carried out under the immediate leadership of Comrade Trotsky, chairman of the Petrograd Soviet. We can say with certainty that we owe the garrison's prompt adherence to the Soviet cause and the skilful organization of the work of the party's military revolutionary committee first and foremost to Comrade Trotsky.' (Stalin, 1918)

from CPSU 1927. Exiled 1928. Deported 1929. Hounded by GPU from country to country—Turkey, France, Norway, Mexico, 1938, founded Fourth International. Prodigious literary output combating Stalinist theory and practice begun 34 years ago. Murdered while at work on biography of Stalin, August 1940.



SVERDLOV
(Yakov Mikhailovich)
1885-1919

'No one could so unite in himself alone organizational and political work as Sverdlov was able to do, and we had to try to replace his activity with the work of a collegium.'

(Lenin, 1920)

Active revolutionary while at high school. Arrested 1902. Delegate to Tammerfors conference. Represented central committee in Urals, 1905. Arrested and sentenced to 2½ years' imprisonment, 1906. Exiled to Siberia for three years, 1909, but returned to Petersburg, 1910. Exiled again, escaped, recaptured, escaped again, 1912, on bureau of Bolshevik fraction in Fourth Duma, then under pressure from Right and tending to conciliationism. Pravda under

same pressure; editor Stalin summoned abroad by Lenin. Sverdlov took charge of paper 'for the purpose of reorganizing the editorial board', 1913, exiled, February 1914, moved north of Arctic circle. 1915 wrote 'On the Split in German Social-Democracy' for Lenin's projected legal Marxist anthology. Freed by March Revolution. Elected to CC at April conference on demand of rank and file. Organized party fraction at First Congress of Soviets. Gave organizational report at Sixth Party Congress. Member of Military Revolutionary Committee and of party military ('parallel') centre. Assigned by party and Military Revolutionary Committee to watch Provisional Government and maintain contact with Peter Paul Fortress, November 1917, signatory ultimatum to Coalition compromisers. Following this inner-party crisis, appointed one of four members of Special Bureau for Solution of Pressing Questions. Carried responsibility for entire party organizational work, 1918. Voted for German 'peace' proposals along with Lenin (February 23, 1918). Member of six-man Council of Defence. Commissioned to fetch Stalin back from Tzaritsyn when latter recalled on protest from Trotsky. Died of typhus, 1919.



KAMENEV
(Leon Borisovich Rosenfeld)
1883-1936

'A distinguished propagandist, orator, journalist, not brilliant but thoughtful, Kamenev was especially valuable for negotiations with other parties . . . although from such excursions he always brought back with him a bit of some mood alien to the party.'

(Trotsky, 1930)

Joined RS-DLP 1901. Jailed. Joined Bolsheviks 1903. Organizer in Tiflis. Imprisoned. 1913, took over Pravda

Joined RS-DLP 1901. 1904, collaborated on Vperyod with Lenin. Active in St Petersburg during 1905 revolution. Arrested. Emigrated. Elected to central committee at 1907 Congress. Co-editor of Proletarii, 1908. Arrested same year and exiled. Escaped abroad. 1909, co-editor of Sotsial-Demokrat and Proletarii. Co-author with Lenin of 'Socialism and War'. Represented party with Lenin at Kienthal and Zimmerwald conferences. Member of bureau of Zimmerwald Left. Returned to Russia March 1917. President of Petrograd Soviet after November. Member of Military Revolutionary Committee of Seventh Army during Civil War. President of Committee for the Defence of the Republic. Chairman of Executive Committee of Communist International. One of the Triumvirate. Broke with Stalin 1925. Expelled from party 1927. Capitulated and readmitted 1928. Expelled, 1932. Capitulated again. Framed in Kirov assassina-

tion case in 1935 and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. Framed again and murdered August 1936.

ZINOVIEV
(Grigori Yevseyevich Radomysslsky)
1883-1936

'Zinoviev was a born agitator. He knew how to infect himself with the mood of the masses, excite himself with their emotions, and find for their thoughts and feelings a somewhat prolix, perhaps, but very gripping expression.'

(Trotsky, 1930)



Chairman Bolsheviks in Duma. Arrested and exiled to Siberia 1911. Escaped abroad. Arrested for anti-war propaganda. Editor Novy Mir in USA. Returned to Russia March 1917. Moscow party committee and district bureau. Editor Sotsial-Demokrat. July still held concept of bourgeois-democratic revolution. Elected to central committee, remaining on it till 1934. During Brest-Litovsk negotiations advocated 'revolutionary war'. Held legalistic position on Constituent Assembly. Editor Pravda. Opposed centralized army and use of ex-tsarist officers, permitting Stalin faction to exploit Pravda against Trotsky. Reproved by CC. Politbureau 1919. Collaborated with Stalin against Opposition up to 1927. 1928 criticized—hounded with supporters. Capitulated 1929. Editor Izvestia. Arrested 1937. Cajoled, intimidated, blackmailed to confess. Murdered 1938.



BUKHARIN
(Nikolai Ivanovich)
1888-1938

'Bukharin is not only the most valuable and biggest theoretician in the party, but also may legitimately be considered the favourite of the whole party; but . . . there is something scholastic in him . . .'

(Lenin, 1922)

Joined RS-DLP 1906. Moscow regional committee 1908.

Revolutionary at 15. 1912, arrested, exiled. Escaped 1914. Berne conference. Anti-war propagandist during first world war. After March 1917 chairman Kiev party committee. After October, Commissar State Bank. Ultra-Left on national, military and Brest-Litovsk questions. Successfully undertook most dangerous military organizational work in Ukraine; underground organizer of workers' insurrection. First president Soviet Ukraine. Highest military posts in army during civil war. Commissar of Military Academy 1920. In charge of Urals labour army. Restored activity of Donbas industry, then assigned to reconstruction of entire Soviet industry. Left Oppositionist, 1923. Expelled from party 1927. Capitulated. Carried brunt of planning and organization of first two Five Year Plans. Arrested 1936, framed, broken, 'tried' and murdered.

PYATAKOV
(Yuri Leonidovich)
1890-1937

'A man undoubtedly distinguished in will and ability, but too much given over to administration and the administrative side of things . . .'

(Lenin, 1922)



STALIN
(Josif Vissarionovich Djughashvili)
1879-1953

'Capricious, irritable and brutal . . . His persecution mania reached unbelievable dimensions . . . Completely lost consciousness of reality . . . Stalin himself, using all conceivable methods, supported the glorification of his own person . . .'

(Khrushchev, 1956)

Joined RS-DLP 1898. Exiled six times, escaped five times. Took part in Tiflis expropriation, 1908. Co-opted to central

committee after Prague conference, 1912. Supported Provisional Government in Pravda, March 1917. People's Commissar for Nationalities. General secretary of party 1922. Used position to destroy party democracy and betray revolution in Germany (1923 and 1932-33), China (1926-27) and Spain (1936-39). Arrested and murdered 70 per cent. of central committee elected at 17th Congress (1934) and arrested 1,108 of the 1,966 delegates as 'enemies of the people'. (This was the 'Congress of Victors'.) Murdered leaders of Bolshevik Party and murdered or exiled tens of thousands of rank-and-file communists. Forced Ordzhonikidze to suicide. Massacred Red Army general staff. Deported several nationalities en masse. Preparing to murder Jewish doctors at time of death. Motto (according to Khrushchev): 'Beat, beat and beat again.'



. . . AND ONE WHO BETRAYED IT

WILLIAM HUNTER

HONEST, REALISTIC, DISCIPLINED, DEMOCRATIC: THAT WAS LENIN'S BOLSHEVIK PARTY

LATE in the evening of November 8, 1917, Lenin mounted the rostrum of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets and began his speech with the simple declaration: 'We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order'.

The Bolshevik Party had a firm majority in the most democratic ruling assembly the world had seen. It was leading a revolution that would decisively mould the future of 150 million people formerly ruled by the tsars.

Yet Bolshevism had first taken shape only fourteen years before. Even in February 1917 there were hardly more than 25,000 Bolsheviks inside and outside Russia. By April the party had 80,000 members; 200,000 were reported at its August conference.

On the eve of the October Revolution 'the masses lived and breathed with the Bolsheviks, they were wholly in the hands of the party of Lenin and Trotsky'. So declared Sukhanov, himself a Menshevik.

The Bolshevik Party originated as a faction at the 1903 congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. The congress had been called to create a centralized organization out of the scattered Marxist circles and groups carrying on revolutionary work in Russia.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks advocated a strongly welded, disciplined party of convinced revolutionaries. The Mensheviks proposed a diffuse organization with its boundaries not clearly defined.

The Bolsheviks wanted to reserve the right of party membership only to those who 'personally participated' in one of the party organizations; the Mensheviks supported a looser definition of a party member as one who rendered 'regular personal assistance' to the party.

The division between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks was described as a split between 'hards' and 'softs'. The hardness of the Bolsheviks was born out of a firmness of principle, out of thorough conviction.

Those who wanted to go all the way in the fight against oppression and exploitation those prepared—as Lenin put it—to give not just their spare evenings but their whole lives to socialism: these came to Bolshevism.

At the height of tsarist repression, at the beginnings of real revolutionary organization, it was impossible to have the elective principle from top to bottom.

It was necessary for leading committees to have extraordinary powers. Internal relations were determined by the underground nature of the struggle and the need for protection against police persecution and an army of agents provocateurs.

In fact no section of Russian social democracy was able to apply complete inner-democratization if it wished to continue. Honest, as always, Lenin openly recognized that fact.

The Bolsheviks changed their organizational structure radically according to the stage of struggle. The relationship between inner democracy and centralism was based on what was necessary to build and maintain the revolutionary organization.

Those who see the centralism of Lenin in 1903 as a monster feeding on itself should note his immediate reaction to the radical change in the conditions of activity after the 1905 revolution, when freedom of assembly, of association and of the Press had been seized.

Under these conditions of political liberty it was the Bolsheviks who proposed that the Fourth Congress of the RS-DLP be expedited and 'at the same time to begin immediately, at once, to apply the elective principle'.

The Bolshevik Party was never a finished mechanical instrument with clockwork responses. It was not a monolithic automaton.

In particular, the period between February and October 1917 shows it as a living movement with the inner vitality, the rich

pulsating life of a Marxist party winning the masses and leading them to storm the heights of power.

The Bolshevik Party steered its course to October through a real collective process. Internal struggle was inevitable as it prepared for its great revolutionary task, as old habits of thought came up against a quickly changing situation, as sections hesitated before the immensity of the revolutionary leap.

Only through internal struggle did its leadership and its ranks gain the determination necessary to carry it through October.

Lenin played a major part in arming the party to measure up to its tasks. His authority grew immensely in this period, because events demonstrated with great rapidity the correctness of his ideas.

When Lenin returned to Russia on April 3, he stepped forward, alone among the Bolshevik leadership, with his 'April Theses' directed against the war, against compromise with the Provisional Government and for workers' power. He was met with hostile bewilderment by leaders overwhelmed by the atmosphere after the February revolution.

'Even our Bolsheviks show confidence in the Government', said Lenin to the April conference of the party. 'Only the fumes of the revolution can explain that. That is the death of socialism . . . if that is your position, our way is part. **I prefer to remain in a minority.**'

But his iron logic, his clarity of thought, dispersed the confused impressionism at the top of the party. Expressing and developing what the workers in the ranks of the party were feeling, he secured a majority for his theses and turned the party on to the road to power.

How foreign was any cult of the individual to a Bolshevik conference was shown, however, in another vote at this April conference.

Zinoviev proposed that the Bolshevik Party take part in an international conference called by the Scandinavian social democrats. The motion was adopted by all votes against one—that of Lenin.

The struggles within the party did not end in April. In September Trotsky (who had joined it in July) was in a minority in the leadership in proposing a boycott of the Council of State or Pre-Parliament.

The decision of the central committee to participate was ratified by many local committees. At the suggestion of Lenin the Moscow regional bureau adopted a resolution against the central committee accusing it of irresolution, wavering and introducing confusion into the ranks of the party, and demanding that it take a clear and definite course towards insurrection.

The base of the party corrected the leadership. City conferences compelled the committees, including the central committee, to make an about-face.

Immediately before the seizure of power itself Kamenev and Zinoviev circulated the party with a long appeal against the decision of the central committee on the insurrection. But the party majority was firm.

The Bolshevik Party achieved victory because, in the words of Trotsky, 'the compromisers talked themselves out of difficulties, the Bolsheviks went to meet them'.

Its core was grounded in realism, not the 'realism' of opportunist politicians, but Marxist realism which sees beyond superficial moods and impressions to the essential tendencies beneath.

The unity of word and deed; a revolutionary programme and the will to carry it out; policies based on scientific objectivity; an abhorrence of demagoguery; honesty in explaining advances and retreats; discipline built on political understanding and conviction—that was Bolshevism before the Stalinist degeneration.

GEORGE CUNVIN

THE SOVIETS — REALITY AND CARICATURE

THE Union of *Soviet Socialist Republics*—it was no accident that this was the title given to the State which emerged from the October Revolution. In this name was summed up the programme of an epoch—the transitional period between the end of capitalism and the beginnings of a new form of society—socialism.

This transitional period was characterized by Marxists as the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' which, in plain English, simply means the rule of the working class.

For many years before the Russian Revolution of 1917, socialists had engaged in long academic discussions about the form of government which would bring about the transformation of the social order.

Ever since Marx it has been generally accepted that this task would fall to the workers as a class; but how would the working class organize its State when it achieved power?

Only in the Paris Commune of 1871 did the world catch a fleeting glimpse of what workers' power would look like.

The workers' direct mouthpieces

Then came the 1905 revolution in tsarist Russia, a revolution in which the political parties of the Russian workers played the leading role. But for the task of organizing and guiding the revolution, a new type of organization came into existence—councils of working men, or soviets, to give them their Russian name.

These soviets were not political parties or trade unions but consisted of elected representatives of the workers at the point of production.

They were the direct mouthpieces of the men at the workshop bench or the coal face, in daily contact with their workmates, able to respond instantaneously to every nuance of a rapidly changing political situation.

With the March 1917 revolution, soviets once again emerged spontaneously as the expression of the workers' will. Soviets of workers' deputies, soviets of peasants and of soldiers.

Right from the start the soviets constituted a challenge to the power of the Provisional Government. Lenin recognized that here was the embryonic form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The working class had itself created the organs through which it would exercise its rule.

'All power to the soviets' became the slogan of the Bolsheviks and this was the programme which gave it victory in November 1917.

That victory would have been impossible without the soviets. They welded the alliance of the workers and peasants against the exploiters.

Workers' democracy in action

They played a central role in the civil war; helped the work of the Military Revolutionary Committee; mobilized the draftees; conducted a struggle against deserters; collected foodstuffs, raw materials, supplies.

Above all, the soviets developed the initiative and creative abilities of the people.

In the first years of the Revolution, soviet democracy was a real and living thing. When the constitution of the young Soviet Republic stated that 'Russia declares itself to be a republic of workers', soldiers' and peasants' delegates. All power, both central and local, is vested in these soviets' it meant exactly what it said.

In 1922, Bukharin and Preobrazhensky could still write in their 'ABC of Communism':

'To an ever greater extent the masses of the people, the workers and poor peasants, come to participate in the joint labours of the soviets, the trade unions, and the factory committees. This is going on everywhere. In the country towns and in the villages people who

never did anything of the kind before are now actively participating in the work of administration and in the building of a new life. In this way the soviet power secures the widest self-government for the various localities and at the same time summons the broad masses of the people to participate in the work of government.'

Many visitors to the Soviet Union during that period confirm this graphic picture of a genuine and developing workers' democracy in action.

But even then the germs of degeneration were at work. At the best it was no easy task to transform 'every cook into an administrator' (Lenin).

The flower of the Russian working class had been decimated in the civil war. Its vanguard—the finest in the world—was swamped in a sea of backwardness and illiteracy. This was fertile soil for the rising bureaucracy to sink its roots into.

Only the extension of revolution to the advanced industrial countries of the West could have stopped the process. But the Revolution was confined within the frontiers of the former tsarist empire.

With the rise of the bureaucracy the role of the soviets began to decline. In the early soviets the right of recall was fundamental to the proper functioning of soviet democracy. If a delegate fulfilled his duties badly, if he no longer represented the views of those who elected him, he could be, and frequently was, recalled.

With the advent of Stalinism and the disappearance of freedom of discussion and the right to criticize in the Communist Party and in the trade unions, only those who found favour with the all-powerful secretariat could hope to be elected to the soviets. The right of recall remained only on paper.

The original constitution of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic states: 'The All-Russian Congress of Soviets is the supreme authority... and must meet at least twice a year'.

It did so even during the perilous days of Civil War! But after the general secretary usurped all power this clause became a dead letter.

Soviet republic without soviets

Years passed—and what years—without the soviets being summoned, until finally they were replaced, in the Stalin Constitution of 1936, with a spurious form of parliamentarism. To-day the Soviet Union can truly be described as a soviet republic without soviets.

In the early days the best worker-delegates to the soviets were drawn into the task of administering the State. Under Stalinism, the administrative apparatus became more and more separated from the people and transformed into an instrument of the ruling caste.

The Soviet State, as it emerged from October, was the ideal instrument for translating into practice Engels' vision of the State 'withering away'. But this required that the material conditions for the expansion of culture should be to hand.

In the conditions prevailing in Russia at the end of the civil war this was impossible. Within limits the rise of a bureaucracy was inevitable, but a healthy soviet democracy could have exercised effective control over the bureaucracy and prevented its worst excesses. It was precisely because soviet democracy threatened its privileges that the bureaucracy had to crush the soviets.

The same ruthless terror which smashed the opposition in the CPSU and tore the living heart out of Bolshevism ensured 'monolithic unity' in the soviets. Only the caricature remained.

To-day we still talk and write of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics even though the traditional forms of soviet rule have long disappeared. Recent events in Hungary once again demonstrated that in a revolutionary situation the working class intuitively throws up workers' councils as instruments of struggle and for wielding power after victory.