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Workers Socialism



- a short guide

by Alan Woodward

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by Alan Woodward

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Events and dates

- 1840 Proudhon uses Lyons workers demands as basis for control.
- 1842 Marx proposes theory of the Party as key to the socialist society.
- 1864 -78 First International Working Men's Association with clash between anarchists and marxists over policy.
- 1871 Paris Commune, as workers resist invasion and set up their own basic arrangements.
- 1886 Start of east European strike wave.
- 1902 Lenin amends marxist theory to even more centralised model.
- 1905 First Russian revolution sees workers councils established for first time.
- 1906/19 Rise of anarchism as world wide movement.
- 1907 Rosa Luxemburg writes *Mass Strike* book on strike wave,
- 1915 British shop stewards set up S S & Workers Committee movement which grows towards end of WW1 but flails to escape it's origins.
- 1917 Second Russian revolution and mass workers councils, plus exceptionally, soviets.
 = [October] Bolshevik revolution after mass popular revolt.
 = Bolsheviks integrate workers councils into state machine despite workers plan.
- 1918 Mass workers councils in Germany, repressed by Labour Party, SDP, by use of mercenaries and regular troops. Repeat performance for Austrian and Bavarian councils.
- 1920 Germans set up council communists and debate with Lenin.
 = Italian workers councils dispersed by Labourist CGL/PSI, after Antonio Gramsci writes for shop stewards movement.
 = Irish workers prove industrial action more effective than terrorism in fight against imperialism.
 = German council movement and revolutionary party established with Anton Pannekoek and Herman Gorter providing the theory for council communism.
- 1925 Stalin announces 'Socialism in One Country' for Russia = end of revolution.
- 1926/7 Chinese workers massacred by nationalist troops and betrayed by Stalin.
- 1936 French occupation of factories.
 = Spanish revolution, with numerous collectives in factories & land, finally defeated by alliance of fascism, stalinism, international capitalism and labourism in 1939.
- 1945 Russian army takes over east European states and extends state capitalism.
- 1956 Polish revolt initiates Hungarian revolution, biggest insurrection against stalinism, with a shattering effect on monolithic world communism.
- 1958 CLR James writes first English text on councils, *Facing Reality*.
- 1962 Algerian council movement, generally on foreign owned works.
- 1968 Mass strike and insurrection, entirely unexpected, in France, sets the pattern for modern insurrection and revives various anti labourist and stalinist movements.
- 1969 Czech insurrection and councils.
- 1973 Chilean council movement, crushed ultimately by USA imperialism
- 1974 Portuguese councils after military insurrection, widespread movement .
- 1979 Iranian councils subverted by Islamic fundamentalism,
- 1980 Polish workers set up Solidarity & councils, later repressed.
- 1989 Collapse of Russian and east European state capitalism, and many national CPs.
- 2002 Argentinean councils in workplace, and in estates and city centres.

People

- © Anton Pannekoek, leading Dutch writer for council communism in Germany in KAPD and Holland in GIK. Wrote key book.
- © Antonio Gramsci, Italian socialist who applied ideas to practice and influenced especially Turin shop stewards councils.
- © CLR James, Trinidadian Trotskyist who changed to council supporter and wrote first English text. Did not follow up this initiative.
- © Errico Malatesta, Italian activist lived in various countries, kept alive the idea of popular control and workers revolution.
- © Frederick Engels, German, close associate of Marx, who he outlived and subsequently published his works and his own.
- © Gustav Landauer, German anarchist, executed leader in Bavarian councils State, who wrote extensively on overcoming the State.
- © Guy Aldred, key activist in both London and Glasgow, who supported numerous initiatives of anti parliamentary politics.
- © Herman Gorter, life long German associate of Pannekoek, who challenged Lenin and was hands on leader in council communists.
- © Jan Appel. German council communist, later in Holland. Primarily an active leader but also writer of major book on the theory.
- © Karl Marx, anglicised German founder of coherent if not always correct theory of party communism. Also active politically.
- © Leon Trotsky, Russian, independent, then Bolshevik then anti Stalinist, Party centred but writer of several major books on revolution.
- © Maurice Brinton, founder of Solidarity 1960, and key writer, leading British activist and writer.
- © Michael Bakunin, Russian leader of anarchists developed theory and led the fight against Marx in first International.
- © P J Proudhon, pioneer but inconsistent French anarchist, who broke with Marx and founded the modern movement.
- © Peter Kropotkin, early social revolutionary, later veteran Russian anarchist writer and activist, dissident in Russia after 1917.
- © Rosa Luxemburg, left Polish marxist who clashed with German Social Democrats, founder of CP, killed in counter revolution in 1918.
- © Shen Zhongjiu, main Chinese anarchist activist, against nationalists and communists, in established tradition.
- © Victor Serge, Belgian anarchist, Bolshevik, Trotskyist, then independent revolutionary, and writer of excellent fiction.
- © Vladimir Lenin, Russian founder of Bolshevik Party communism which became Stalinist state capitalism despite his capability and efforts.

Some prehistory

The origins of workers socialism, or the council communism which it can be said to have been rooted in, is traceable back to the foundation of the working class movement in the middle of the nineteenth century, with its three components of Anarchism, Labourism and Marxism. The operation of the market and industrial manufacturing had horrendous results for the working population, causing extensive poverty, reducing life expectation to 20 years and an infant mortality rate of 500 per 1,000 children. Sporadic and desperate resistance was inevitable.

Of course opposition to both state and local authority, and/or capitalism can be found at an earlier time. This is true both of ideas and organisation. Peter Kropotkin has written extensively of the peasant traditions of collective control in Russia for example ¹.

Britain had seen the proposals for rights against the encroachments of the capitalist market by a series of writers ², the practice of indirect opposition in the moral economy - described by E P Thomson ³, the labour exchanges of the 1820s ⁴, and Chartism ⁵. The exposition of theories of workers economic liberation came after Tom Paine's blast for political reform, but before Karl Marx's systematic theory of exploitation ⁶.

The anarchist component

But our concern is with the explicit formation of the concept of workers control of the workplace, and structures above this. This can be found to have begun with the establishment of permanent structures of the working class in the form of trade unions. Strangely, one of the earliest references comes from the writings of the eccentric French anarchist, P J Proudhon.

¹ Kropotkin, Peter: *Mutual Aid* [1939, 278pp]

² Thompson Noel: *The Real Rights of Man - political economies for the working class 1775-1850* [1998, 168pp]

³ Thompson EP: *The Makings of the English Working Class* [1980 987pp]

⁴ McNally, David: *Against The Market - political economy, market socialism and the marxist critique* [1993, 262pp]

⁵ see Noel Thompson, footnote 2 above

⁶ but see Wolff, Jonathan: *Why Read Marx Today?* [2002, 136pp], or Callinicos, Alex: *The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx* [1983, 208pp]

His perspective of workers control was prophetic and significant. Proudhon adopted it in a specific form from the workers of Lyons after the 1840 insurrection⁷. Its essential features were an overall association of labour and :

- every associated individual to have an indivisible share in the enterprise,
- each worker to take his share of heavy , dirty, or dangerous work, in the workplace and /or society,
- each to be trained for, and to do, all the operations of the workplace or industry,
- remuneration to be proportional to skill and responsibility of the job,
- profits to be shared in proportion
- each to be free to set his own hours, work as defined and leave the association at will,
- management and technicians to be elected, and work regulations to be subject to collective approval,
- office holders to be elected⁸.

Most of the ideas of industrial and political liberation can be implied from the demands, though Proudhon's strong opposition to strikes - the most likely means of achieving these - was just one of many contradictions in his theories.

The (First) International Working Men's Association

However others were more consistent. Anarchists like Michael Bakunin, Cesar Paepe, formed an active anarchist movement both inside and outside the Delegate Congresses of the International Working Men's Association, or IWMA, that was busy trying to implement the ideas :

1865 London [Conference only]

1866 Geneva

1867 Lausanne

1868 Brussels

1869 Basel

1871 London [Conference only]

1872 The Hague [anarchism vs marxism]

1873 Geneva [as a reformed body after Marx's attempted close down

⁷ Proudhon , P J : *The General Idea of the Revolution* [1989, 301pp] Introduction by Robert Graham, pages xi and xx.

⁸ Guerin Daniel : *Anarchism - from theory to practice* [1970, 166pp] page 46, an ex Marxist who attempts to relate the two ideologies and provides a comprehensive introduction to Russian, Italian and Spanish council movements.

tactic]

1874 Brussels

1876 Berne

1877 Verviers , also World Socialist Congress, at Ghent, held in that year.

A note on the marxist spoiling tactic in 1872. Marxist leninists have for some decades tried inducing splits, infiltrating, boycotting what are termed opposition groups. This includes the studied disregard of Support Committees for the recent Liverpool dockers strike ⁹.

In practice, the subsequent anarcho syndicalist movement, including Errico Malatesta, was to provide the impetus for much of the industrial organisation that is primary for workers socialism in the twentieth century ¹⁰.

These are -

- workplace control by workers in the form of councils elected and accountable to regularly held assemblies,
- geographical area councils made up of delegations from local workplaces, and termed, exceptionally, soviets in Russia,
- federations of delegates within cities, regions, nations, etc, to formulate policy and liase over production and distribution.

In the event, the workplace councils have been supplemented by sub committees with specific responsibility for such aspects as welfare provisions , internal production and supply of materials and so on. The inevitable attempts at State repression have been countered by armed militias such as the Red Army of the Ruhr that successfully resisted the full assault of the German Army for several weeks in 1919 ¹¹.

The history of anarcho syndicalism which concentrates on workers organisation around the workplace, shows the debt to this branch of anarchism ¹². Though many were to warn of the dangers of over involvement, including Errico Malatesta, the international growth of the

⁹ Bradley , Pauline & Knight , Chris : *Another World is possible - how the Liverpool dockers launched a global movement* [2004, 84pp]

¹⁰ the classic publications are Pannekoek, Anton : *Workers Councils* [2003, 219 pp]. and Bricianer, Serge : *Pannekoek and Workers Councils* [1978 USA, 306pp]

¹¹ Appel, Jan : *Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution* [1990 private publication, 589pp],

¹² Rudolf Rocker : *Anarcho Syndicalism* [1989,166pp] is by far the best source .

doctrine that existing organisations formed the embryo of the future socialist society, in fact prefiguring it, was the major factor in council communism.

The Great Unrest

It was after the turn of the century that the great age of syndicalism with its emphasis on workplace union organisation occurred. This was a worldwide phenomena ¹³, and there were patterns of experience in Britain, Germany, Italy, etc. In these countries, workers councils were established despite strong opposition from the leadership of the reformist labour parties and official unions.

Even the traditionally moderate British council leaders took care to distance themselves from the full time union officials - "we will support the officials as long as they support us" said the Clyde Workers Committee, a key part of the Shop Stewards and Workers Committee movement. Its National Administrative Council was bound closely to anarchist ideas over leadership.

The unofficial movement in Germany provided the backbone of the hundreds of councils set up at the end of the war in November in 1918. Unfortunately some councils were more populist 'Peoples Councils' with membership from the official SDP and the more left wing Independent SPD. The former practised the tactic of joining councils with a specific purpose of subverting them ¹⁴. The same betrayal was seen in Italy, leaving Antonio Gramsci and *L'Ordine Nuovo* group high and dry ¹⁵.

This was the high point of syndicalism, for all its faults, and 1917 saw a new world apparently opening up,

Marx and co

Karl Marxists and Frederick Engels had been active as revolutionaries from the 1840s and had been involved actively in the events of 1848. Their joint book *The Communist Manifesto* was based in the perspectives for the insurrections of that year and its failure meant a return to the

¹³ van der Linden, Marcel & Wayne Thorpe, eds : *Revolutionary Syndicalism - an international perspective* [1990, 260pp]

¹⁴ Appel, Jan : *The Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution* [1990 private publication, 589pp]

¹⁵ Williams, Gwyne A : *Proletarian Order - Antonio Gramsci, factory councils and the origins of Italian communism 1911-21* [1975, 370pp]

drawing board. Marx went on researching for his theory while the anarchists began building the labour movement.

Marx, Engels and their small band of followers clashed with stronger forces of libertarianism in the IWMA over issues like political activity, centralisation or federal structure and so on. The anarchists won the dispute over the industrial element and remained a dominant influence on the shop floor until the 1920s.

Marx clearly won the debate with Proudhon in the battle over general political strategy ¹⁶. But since the publications of Marx sold at most in hundreds while those of the anarchists were in tens of thousands, it was however something of an invisible victory and had little practical effect ¹⁷

Marx did develop a systematic theory of society that was both consistent and comprehensive. Later anarchists were to argue that he derived this from other writers. The Chinese anarchist Shen Zhongjiu wrote for the long running *Peoples Tocsin* in 1927 that Marx had copied his most basic ideas from others - class struggle [Guizot, Considerant, Blanc, Proudhon], surplus value [Sismondi, Blanqui], the concentration of capital [Considerant], rate of profit [Ricardo], historical materialism [Vico, Herder] ¹⁸.

From whatever sources, Marx did write extensively about economics, history, philosophy, and politics, but anarchists and council socialists would challenge the political lessons that Marx drew from his work ¹⁹. The economic analysis from *Das Capital* and other works is outstanding and valid today. Many would also accept the materialist conception of history, though writers like Peter Kropotkin have implicitly disputed it ²⁰.

Marx wanted the dominance of the centralised political organisation over all other considerations and anarchists from Bakunin onwards have

¹⁶ see Proudhon : *System of Economic Contradictions - the philosophy of poverty*, summarised in Woodcock, George : *Pierre Joseph Proudhon - his life and work* [1987 Canada, 295pp] and Marx's reply *The Poverty of Philosophy* [1973 USSR, 205 pp]

¹⁷ see Woodward, Alan : *Marx, Bakunin or what ?* in *What's Next* 27, 2004

¹⁸ Dirlik, Arif : *Anarchism in Chinese Revolution* [1991 USA, 326pp] p. 227

¹⁹ for a reasoned assessment, see Wolff, Jonathan : *Why Read Marx Today* [2002, 136pp]

²⁰ Kropotkin, Peter : *The State ; its historic role* [1997, 60 pp]

been suspicious of this. Bakunin warned explicitly of the dangers of the red bureaucracy in a revolutionary society, and Leninism/Stalinism, for many libertarians, is held to be conclusive proof of this, regardless of other conclusions ²¹.

Another component

However the theoretical impulse for workers socialism can undeniably be found in the minority politics of marxist organisation, especially in Germany²². But the main point at issue between the main thrusts of the two philosophies is the emphasis on the political nature of the struggle and the role of the party.

Critiques

There is a vast body of literature criticising marxism from a libertarian standpoint, one of the best being that of the hero of the Bavarian councils, Gustav Landauer ²³. For our purposes, we can note briefly only a few of these and trace a possible area of overlap.

The leading council communist writer Anton Pannekoek has assessed Marx as a socialist philosopher and destroyed Lenin as such ²⁴. Rudolf Sprenger produced a sharp analysis ²⁵. Social anarchist writers have challenged the claim of marxism to be "scientific", and at least one has criticised it for a lack of an ethical dimension, despite the indignation that bulges through the original texts ²⁶.

Since the nineteenth century, marxism has competed with anarchism, though many would claim to see an overlap, Daniel Guerin, for example, claims that Rosa Luxemburg's brilliant assessment of the anarcho syndicalist tactic of general strike, *The Mass Strike, The Political Party and the Trade Unions*, exposes a strong similarity to anarchist ideas,

²¹ see Woodward, above

²² Gombin, Richard : *The Radical Tradition - a study in modern revolutionary thought* [1978, 153pp]

²³ Landauer, Gustav : *For Socialism* [1978 USA, 150pp]

²⁴ Pannekoek, Anton : *Lenin as Philosopher* [1975, 132pp]

²⁵ Sprenger, Rudolf (Helmut Wagner) : *Bolshevism - its roots, role, class view and methods*, [2004, 37pp]

²⁶ Bookchin, Murray : *Anarchism, Marxism and the future of the Left - interviews and essays 1993-1998* [1999, 352pp]

and her critique of Bolshevik power in 1918 was close to libertarianism²⁷. Others have pointed out the number of anarchists in the SDP Left.

But to return to the main theme - the development of workers socialism.

Russia and council communism

From the turn of the century, Vladimir Lenin, pursued the revolutionary idea by proposing a theory of the highly centralised professional party which would lead the workers and peasants²⁸. His main reason for this, that workers could not alone develop their own political policies or practice, has been shown to be invalid but his point about a central party in face of the grossly reactionary government and vast size of the country, may be partially justified.

But his solution was rejected even by such future colleagues as Trotsky - "a potential dictatorship" - and certainly a whole range of traditional "left" and libertarian activists. Their warning were to come only too tragically true.

After a brilliant start to the process in 1905²⁹ - repressed only with extreme brutality by the Czarist military - when the real revolution broke out in February 1917, Lenin's Bolsheviks did carry out their pre-ordained role and secure what appeared to be the first workers state. However, their theory soon ensured that the Party were in charge not the workers. The resulting society was not socialism.

Lenin, aided by Trotsky, was to eliminate the workers control element in the Russian revolution in 1917/8 by :

- rejecting outright the national Central Council of Factory and Shop Committee's plan for a new society, and an amended version.
- bringing in a very weak Decree on Workers Control despite stiff opposition, more a plan for consultation.
- negating the workers own *Practical Manual For The Implementation Of Workers Control Of Industry* by instructions in a Counter Manual

²⁷ Guerin Daniel : Marxism and Anarchism [17pp] in David Goodway ed : For Anarchism - history, theory and practice [1989, 278pp] p 110

²⁸ Lenin, Vladimir (Vladimir Ulanov) : *What is to be Done ?* [1988, 261p],

²⁹ Anweiller , Oscar : *The soviets - the Russian worker's, peasant's, and soldier's councils 1905 to 21* [1974 USA, 337pp]

- amalgamating the workers councils into party controlled trade unions and other State bodies
- by-passing the soviets - second layer of councils - with State institutions, up to the governmental Commissars at national level,
- imposing one man management, and other techniques, in workplace,
- over riding various decisions by workers organisations
- repressing workers and their organizations , most bloodily at Kronstadt in 1921 ³⁰ .

The full story is reproduced as an appendix at the end of the book. This does not examine the nature of the regime, whether it was state capitalist or not , but tries to draw out the lessons for use by workers socialists in the future.

For example the manoeuvre practised by Lenin and the Bolsheviks is extremely similar to that of the latter day leninists, the Socialist Workers Party, Starting in the 1960s from a federalist, issue led group, this was led into a carbon copy of Bolshevism and its Party dominated organisation.

This now is a professionally run, extremely effective party, which delves into every issue with its closely controlled " front committees " with the single intent of recruiting more members " to build the Party " . Yes it will support initiatives from the rank and file , etc and popular campaigns but only to make its own gains. Exactly like the Bolsheviks, and with the same disastrous counter revolutionary results if ever they get a chance.

Breakaway communists

Even so the concept of the revolutionary party was accepted by the ex Leninist founders of German council communism, as it was called in those days ³¹. This was in Germany in 1920. The subsequent story of their split with Bolshevik's orthodox communism , setting up the German Communist Workers Party, KAPD, etc, is finally available in English with books by Jan Appel, Paul Mattick and the present writer ³². A more

³⁰ Brinton, Maurice : *The Bolsheviks and Workers Control, 1917-21* [1970, 86pp] and Woodward, Alan : *Party Over Class ; how Leninism has subverted workers council organisation* [2004 - second revised edition, 50pp]

³¹ Gorter , Herman : *Open Letter to Comrade Lenin* [1995 reprint, 42 pp]

³² Appel , Jan: *Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution* [1990 private publication, 589pp], : Mattick, Paul: *Anti Bolshevik Communism* [1978, 231pp]; Woodward, Alan : *Party over Class* [2002, 78pp]

detailed, though dated, look at workers councils has been penned by CLR James³³.

So workers socialism, as it is now called, has an industrial base structure with a parallel co-ordinating political party. This divides it from both

- anarchism with its denial of the political party, though much has come from that source,
- and marxist leninism, with its central theme of Party control.

Councils - theory and practice

Definitions and Differences

Those pursuing the issue will find workers councils referred to by a number of different names in different countries. The expressions workers committees, workers self management, or workers democracy are often used.

The versions in Russia were termed factory or shop committees. The German terms were either arbeiterrate - workers council or betriebsrate - workplace council for the obleute, or shop stewards.

In France the expression sometimes used is commune, as in 1871, or later committees of action. These grew from the sections or area committees from earlier revolutionary crises. In 1968 we had action committees and Worker-Student Action Committees. In Algeria, there were the conseil de travailleurs for autogestion, or management committees - comités de gestion.

In Italy in 1921 the word was internal commissions, or committees of union representatives, then movement of workshop delegates or factory councils. In Ireland in 1921 most revolutionary initiatives were incorrectly called soviets, instead of work ins. The main book on the Chinese labour movement just describes them as unions, a bit like the old British expression for local activity. The extent of formation beyond this is unknown but the influence of anarcho syndicalists like Shifu was still strong.

³³ Lee, Grace C, Pierre Chaulieu (Cornelius Castoriadis) and JR Johnson (CLR James): *Facing Reality* [1958 USA, 174pp]

In Iran and Iraq, they were shoras. In Chile, the cordons industriales, covering industrial estates, made their power felt. Yugoslavia had BOALs, basic organisations of associated labour, as the basis of the state run, token councils

Co-ops and associated councils

A specific form of council is the co-operative, like the kibbutzim in early Palestinian/Israeli, before degeneration. Many Spanish councils in the civil war were workers control commissions, workers alliances, collectives or enterprise councils officially. The division between councils as councils and collectives was held to more crucial in current Argentina, 2002 onward.

Housing committees

Supporting the workplace committees, area bodies based on working class estates have a secondary role, but have emerged in recent years. Of course historically they go back to the 48 sections in Paris in 1789 which re-occurred in 1848 and 1871. They featured in the KAPD councils, in France in 1968 and most prominently in the Portuguese events of 1974 as neighborhood councils. The Iranian workers had their komitehs in the quarters. In Argentina, the interbarrials far outnumbered the workplace bodies, and local, citywide, regional and national structures were operative.

Associated industrial bases

Many councils began as strike committees, occupations, sit ins, work ins or "Polish strikes" but this phenomena, in periods of relative stability like modern Britain, does not always go onto the full council. Shop stewards joint committees and combine bodies have been models as in the Lucas Aerospace Joint SSC.

In North America rank and file committees and independent associations began a process that remains unfinished. The potent general strike wave against CPUSA run unions, government and employers in 1945-6. little known even at the time was apparently run by union branches or locals ³⁴.

The expressions used worldwide are all words for the workers councils, starting with the workplace.

³⁴ Lipsitz, George : *Rainbow at Midnight* [1994, USA, 359pp]

Councils : Features

Whenever workers set up councils , either by up-grading existing negotiation or consultation committees, or electing new bodies, the multiple experience over the hundred years since 1905, has shown certain features are likely to occur.

1 firstly, workplace conditions, including occupation. Workers extend their control of the workplace to amend work rules /conditions, as in Turin, Italy in 1921. Strike action can be extended and this can result in a take over of the site either in the form of co-operatives as in Argentina in 2002, or outright occupations as in France '68 . Foreign employers especially those who flee, are more at risk as in Algeria in 1962, but can sometimes be protected by less than revolutionary governments, as in Spain 1936-8.

2 then self organisation - they elect officers both internally and to outside bodies but these are recallable, as in Paris Commune in 1871. In fact this provision appear to be unused but John Reed reports that some delegates to soviets after 1917 were successfully replaced after Bolshevik repressions. Internal officers are expected to follow policy as a matter of course, and defections result in instant removal, as in Hungary in 1956.

3 extending organisation It is common for workers assemblies to elect/appoint sub committees for specific roles, either production related or for welfare, as in Russia in 1918. On occasions these sub committees grow into area bodies which monitor social conditions in the immediate neighbourhood as in Portugal in 1975 and at the women's prices committee in Nantes in France in 1968. The neighbourhood committee itself tightly controlled transport and drivers required a permit to travel.

4 armed self defence. For security against State counter revolution, workers generally raise armed troops or militias. Most remarkably , the Red Army of the Ruhr fought off the German Regular Army for some weeks in 1918. This was made up of workers, and active council communists, anarchists and reformists from the SDP, and its unions. Alternatively a liberating army can result in workers democracy, as in the

Northern Expedition in China in 1926 or Durruti's Column in Aragon , Spain in 1936.

5 non centralised federation - structures beyond the immediate area are constructed to extend workers control, in the form of federations. These can be for industrial estates in Valparaiso in Chile in 1972, cities or districts as in Petersburg and Moscow , etc in 1917, regionally as in Catalonia and Eastern Spain in 1936, or nationally. as in the Central Council of Factory and Shop Committees in Russia in 1917. Exceptionally political soviets can emerge, as in Russia and Germany, but see below, " Problems, workers councils ".

6 auxiliary councils. Peasant and soldiers councils can emerge either as joint bodies with workers as in Russia in 1917 or in the movement of collectives in the Ukraine under Nestor Makhno 1918-20, or in Republican Spain from 1936-8. The earliest soldiers organisation was the Regimental Agitators in the Soldiers Council of the English Revolution in 1647 . More recently the Paratroopers in the Portuguese Army in 1975 rallied to the inspirational slogan, shouted at demonstrations, "The soldiers are the sons of the people " ,

7 the political and international response. The growing political consciousness that the movement is now dealing with the State results in political organisation of a revolutionary socialist nature. This was taken to its fullest extent in Russia in 1917 with the Bolshevik and other parties, and In Spain with the CNT union and the FAI political group. International solidarity should hopefully follow.

Councils : the historical experience

We now turn to an outline of the subsequent history of workers councils. They have been associated not only with defensive opposition to capitalism and imperialism, fascism and military rule, but also to social democratic and Stalinist governments. Councils owe their emergence to a number of situations, singly or in combination. One of these is as an anti war body - Russia 1917, Germany and Austria 1918. A second element could be as a defence mechanism against declining or low material living

standards - Russia 1917, Germany and Austria, 1918, Italy 1919, and possibly France 1968.

Thirdly councils were set up as a move against the fascists or right wing military rule - Spain 1936, France 1936, Portugal 1974, Chile 1973, Iran 1979 and Argentina in 2002. Councils have been part of national liberation struggle - Ireland 1919, China 1927, Algeria 1962, and Iran 1979.

A series of councils were set up by workers against oppression by Stalinism in East European states - Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1969 and Poland 1981. Interestingly Communist governments have established puppet councils as part of their conflict with the Russian Communist regime - by Yugoslavian Communist leader Tito in 1950, and the Poles in 1956 also against Stalinism. There were elements of this in the Czech councils in 1969³⁵.

Repression

Councils have appeared in numerous countries and in numerous forms but of course many go unrecorded. Capitalism strenuously opposes councils even on a modest scale and has an ongoing strategy for them. One tactic is to isolate them from other workers, and/or reduce them to consultative committees by legal or management action. A second is to have them, or their leaders politically incorporated into the reformist structures of the trade unions, "Communist" or Labour parties. In the special case of Iran, the incorporation was into the Fundamental Islamic State.

Thirdly, comes the use of unemployment as a weapon to victimise active shop stewards, or to reduce their negotiating power, while retaining their outward form. Perhaps the final option is physical dissolution, arrests, imprisonment, etc. , with China 1926/7 as paramount. Combinations can be found in the history of councils and the class struggle in the twentieth century.

To date, councils have not for a variety of reasons been able to develop their organisation to a position of strength and have been defeated by

³⁵ for reading references on individual movements of workers councils, see the Reading References at the end or Woodward, Alan : *Readers Guide to Workers Socialism* [2003, 30pp].

repression by capitalism West and East. This has been by a variety of institutions.

Even the briefest survey of political councils shows that they have been established by workers but beaten by reformist or Labour governments - Germany and Austria in 1918, Portugal 1975, Algeria 1962. Military force has been liberally used - Germany and Bavaria 1919, Italy 1920, Ireland 1921, China 1927, Germany 1923, Spain 1936 to 39, Hungary 1956, Portugal 1975, Algeria 1964, Chile 1973, Iran 1979, Poland 1982, and so on. The workers in the National Guard, a key element in the Paris Commune in 1871 with their soldiers councils were similarly slaughtered in the thousands.

Those who have proclaimed themselves as "Communists" have either defused councils - France 1936 and 68, and formally repressed them by government action - Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1969 and Poland 1982. Stalinism was also actively opposed to the Spanish councils from 1936 to 1938.

Whatever the quarrel with Lenin, it was of course in quite a different dimension to the gross repressions of the later Stalinist regimes. Workers councils have foundered on the politics of the so called Communist Party, with its treacherous double role as leader but betrayer of the movement for workers power. Its adoption of reformist politics, driven by the search for defence of the USSR, has been fatal to several generations of rebellion, and possibly revolution.

Councils - problems

Some aspects of our ideas, because of their contentious nature, require a further examination:

workers councils or rather their central position. This is not due to some nostalgic sentiment, that once there were workers councils and they were splendid, or to some abstract belief in workers democracy as being a good thing. Nor is it to be confused with municipal authorities, who usually act purely as agents for the capitalist state in spite of their closeness to their electors.

It is because work is a universal, constructive, unifying feature in human experience, and one that results from the deepest instincts. Observation of children confirms that humans are naturally curious, inventive and keen to create some form of construction in the world.

In practice everyone "works", and has a workplace -

- manual, administrative and professional workers alike
- mothers work bring up children, perhaps the most important job of all,
- students work at studying in colleges
- even transport and home workers have a base or depot
- artists work at producing their vision,
- even self employed workers could have some form of geographical representation, albeit imperfect, rather like trade union branches.
- the retired could perhaps be entitled to attach themselves to any council ?

Work is the one experience unifying experience that virtually all people have in common, By definition, it is social, collective, dependent on others, and an expression of the urge to create. Even Marx argued that alienation - or frustration of creativity was a key component of consciousness. Anarchist thinkers have consistently repeated the importance of control of people's lives against pervasive capital and statist institutions.

Hence some form of representation from the social base of work is the single unifying process that encompasses all members of society. Everyone contributes to the production of the world as we know it and this must be the basis of its government, much more so than political views, or age and gender, or position. When Antonio Gramsci argued in 1920 that all workers in Italian factories should have the right to vote for their representative, not just union members, he was expressing this universal truth ³⁶.

We say therefore that assemblies at "work" and representation from this, historically in the form of unofficial councils, are the basis of the new socialist society. They figure prominently in the programme, *As We See It*, below

³⁶ Gramsci, Antonio, ed Quintin Hoare : Selections from Political Writings (1910-1920) [1977, 393pp]

Pannekoek identified councils as the key structures in the new stage into which he believed society had moved. Mass organisation, characterised by direct workers democracy, and in sharp contrast to Lenin's attempt to recreate the bodies of the pre war period. His analysis may well prove accurate but his time scale was "telescoped".

Previous stages were -

- that of the condition of no organisation at the workplace, hence total employer hegemony, marked by insurrections that were either heroic but doomed or to help another class - capitalism - seize power against feudalism,
- reformism, characterised by parliamentary representation [not democracy], labour parties, national trade unions and their formations, and small disjointed and sometimes suspect revolutionary groups. This was the age of winning and using the right to vote, securing minor changes around the edges of society, and a period of learning for workers and their organisations. Regrettably, capitalism has proved able to prolong this phase, and delay the new stage, but not for ever ³⁷.

Other political groups like those calling for workers councilism, council communism and such like, join workers socialism in recognition of this idea and prioritising the councils structure. Workers, or work based councils - unofficial, revolutionary and based on direct action - are the pivot around which our theory stands. They are the realisation of control over our lives, which is the core of socialism. This idea, applied to the most universal experience of work, is the meaning of workers socialism.

Councils not soviets

The common habit of referring to soviets as councils can be quite confusing. Soviets are area bodies with a political executive and hence very likely to become party dominated. They have only occurred in Russia and Germany, where this did happen. Recently, political representation, in conferences and structures of councils, has been banned - Portugal, Poland and Argentina. Party communists regard soviets as a means to legitimise their position but current scepticism, in for example Social Forums, are likely to result in the ban becoming permanent.

³⁷ Bricianer, Serge : *Pannekoek and Workers Councils* [1978 USA, 306pp]

Experience from perhaps the greatest revolution since 1917, that in France in 1968, conforms the multiple forms of work based bodies ³⁸. Workers with this philosophy quickly took to the streets, published their own leaflets and raised the eternal questions of revolutions everywhere : who is in charge, how can they be defeated, who will help us, what do we do next ³⁹? .In 1968, the insurrection spread from workplaces to the streets and it is to that process we turn next.

Housing based committees

A second query concerns organisation on the basis of where people live. These are by definition not quite so universal or necessarily collective for the inhabitants of an urban area - the locality or neighbourhood committees. They have become increasingly important in recent episodes as mentioned above in 'Features'. [

The no-go area has an honourable tradition of resistance. They have frequently provided the structure and personnel for street action , not just in 1968, but in Spain 1936-7, Portugal, Argentina 2002 etc

Of course, in future societies, housing may well become more collective and committees located on that assume greater significance. Some social anarchist already credit inhabitancy based committees with a dominance above work based bodies ⁴⁰, These are the communalists like Murray Bookchin, but for our purposes and for now , the order is clear.

Nature of organisation

A third question for further exploration is federalism , as opposed to centralism, For marxists with their emphasis on political action and the role of the state, the significance of centralisation is essential. Their whole political strategy depends on it, but of course for anarchists the dangers far outweigh the advantages. So Bakunin's timely warning, quite specific about the potential hazards of Marx's authoritarianism, applied to Lenin, Trotsky and perhaps inevitably Stalin ⁴¹.

³⁸ Brinton, Maurice : *Paris : May 68* [1968, 55pp]

³⁹ Viénet, René : *Enragés and Situationists in the Occupation Movement, France, May '68* [1992 USA, 158pp]

⁴⁰ Bookchin , Murray : *Anarchism, Marxism and the future of the Left - interviews and essays 1993-1998* [1999, 352pp]

⁴¹ Woodward Alan : *Marx, Bakunin or what ? What Next ?* 28, [2004, 7pp]

Federalism represents the basic idea of control over our lives related to the field of social organisation. There is no point in securing control over work, housing, etc, if our organisations restrict that freedom in the interests of political theories like marxism.

Hence federalism -

- can be defined as a consensual and equal association
- is a bottom down idea
- and is a defence against the dominance of political systems and theories that may well turn out to be undemocratic in practice.

Closely associated is the concept of autonomy, the right of organisations to govern themselves. This includes a basic right of withdrawal even from a properly constituted federation, and to attempt to go your own way. Though there are obvious difficulties in such a freedom, this must be balanced against the inherent dangers of centralisation and the ever present threat of conflict that this alternative formation holds.

Federations in view of the subsequent experience of the degeneration of Marxist revolutionary parties, would appear to make sense.

Even so , and despite the smears and ignorance, nearly all anarchists do believe in organisation. To avoid the dangers of centralism as evidenced above, they favour federation of institutions within an autonomous framework, and federations of federations above that in a geographical sense.

Applied to economic structures , this would be organisations of work based councils, communes or co-operatives, run by associations of free labour through mutual aid. Social services would be similarly structured. Pannekoek astonishingly prophesied in the 1950s, the use of computing to facilitate this. It should be noted that in the Spanish land collectives of 1936-8, agrarian workers who did not wish to join the communal organisation were allowed to withdraw and function individually , as long as they did not employ people. It appears to have functioned well in practice

⁴²

Political structures, particularly in the likelihood of multiple parties, seem especially suitable to autonomous organisation. The result may well prove to be a long winded and possibly convoluted process, but like democracy would be preferable to the alternatives.

⁴² Dolgoff, Sam editor : *The Spanish Collectives - workers management in the Spanish Revolution 1936-39* [1990 Canada , 194pp]

In the present, workers socialism accepts the notion of autonomy in one special form. Workplace industrial organisation should be independent from the official trade union movement under capitalism and function with its own structures, activities like unofficial strikes, occupations and work ins, and lastly any political commitment to revolution.

Progress - elections and the right to vote ?

The final query concerns the revolutionary political party and its tactics. A constant theme running through this document has been the different approaches of anarchism and marxism, and the amalgam of these concepts to make workers socialism. Readers may have had their fill of this but one feature remains - electoral activity and exercising the right to vote, two separate layers of involvement.

Differences can be traced back to the policy of the IWMA, 1864 to 1878. The Marxist project required that the workers be organised on a political party basis in line with their theories. But the whole electoral strategy was a trap, anarchists believed, in which the workers representatives would become controlled in the house of representatives by the political agents of capitalism, a not unfounded fear, readers may think.

The extremely controversial minority view of Marx was adopted by the IWMA and became policy as a result of the some sharp practice at the London Conference which only had the power to introduce "administrative changes". Only Delegate conferences could change the rules, rather like union Rules Revision Conferences today

The seeds of conflict were thus sown. Anarchists' abstention from voting, based primarily in opposition to conventional parliamentary activity and fuelled by marxist unconstitutional manipulation, came to be regarded as a totally sacrosanct negative principle, and eventually a dogma.

Marxism adopted the other extreme, going beyond voting to actually standing and supporting their own candidates. It may well be that this commitment to official and constitutional processes contributed to the degeneration of some European labour parties, specifically the German SDP, up to the outbreak of war in 1914.

Over the decades theory and practice have not always coincided. The inconsistent founder of anarchism, P J Proudhon, himself stood for and was elected to the Assembly in 1848, though his erratic performance there puzzled friend and foe alike. He later disowned it. . In his final work, *On The Political Capacity of the Working Classes*, he advocates the complete separation from conventional politics.

A Russian initiative , the Anarchist Party was formed by Novomirsky [Kirilovsky] in 1907 as an umbrella body for all anarchists, and it is here that the expression anarcho-syndicalism was coined, it is claimed. Fortunately it put workers organisation like councils and soviets as its main concern, and hence maintained the tradition . Similarly the post revolutionary Platform group of anarchist in the 1920s, said to be Bolshevik influenced, kept to the line.

The argument that electoralism results in trapping the successful candidates and that it provides a "cover" for the exercise of real power by capitalists, has generally won the day, Guerin relates how Errico Malatesta, at the Alliance of the Left in 1924, conceding that elections can have good or bad results, and that anarchist votes can be crucial, still maintained his advice for abstention ⁴³.

More recently the Spanish anarchist workers in 1930 voted pragmatically for the new republic on the fall of the monarchy but abstained three years later , allowing a very reactionary government into office. The alternative policy of insurrection was a disaster for the Anarchist participants. In the meanwhile Angel Pestaña had led a split to the political right and set up the Syndicalist Party, against the prevailing theory. The Anarchist Federation of Iberia, or FAI had been set up as a political group precisely to counter such tendencies ⁴⁴.

In the crucial Popular Front election in 1936, although the CNT/FAI policy was officially for continued abstention , this was largely tokenism and many supporters voted against the political conservatives⁴⁵. Revolutionary events followed, with Pestaña back in the fold.

⁴³ Guerin [1970] above , page 19

⁴⁴ Christie, Stuart : *We, the Anarchists - a study of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) 1927-1937* [2000, 127pp]

⁴⁵ see Guerin, above, [1970] pages 17-20.

Also, some anarchist organisations have engaged in parliamentary action. Guy Aldred, the leading British anarchist of the twentieth century, favoured the Sinn Fein tactic - standing, getting elected but not taking the seat ⁴⁶. A version of the tactic was used with astonishing success by Bobby Sands in the Irish Hunger Strikes of 1981, standing for election from his deathbed in prison and helping ultimately in the long convoluted process to defeat Thatcher ⁴⁷.

On the other side many marxist-leninists have adopted the "entrism" tactic, that is infiltrating reformist parties with a view to collecting membership. These ventures have generally resulted in the reformists infiltrating the revolutionaries, and a collapse of the project.

A little more successfully the Bolsheviks supervised the election of Tribunes of the People in the Russian Duma before World War 1, but with certain safeguards over their defection ⁴⁸. These concerned selection of candidates, a majority of political action linking in with extra parliamentary activity, and the use of "Instructions," or mandates, from electors. Today some marxist leninist groups exercise a degree of control over the activities, payment, etc, of their elected parliamentary representatives. Such discipline seems essential to the tactic.

The workers socialist approach to the issue goes back to the council communists. Herman Gorter wrote his persuasive *Open Letter to Comrade Lenin* ⁴⁹ which out argued the latter as conclusively as Marx had defeated Proudhon in 1847. The result in terms of impact was however much the same.

Gorter makes the point that in a revolution, the tactic of parliamentary activity should not be used in order to maximise the case. He did concede that it could be used in less crucial periods. This was understandable in view of the gross betrayal by the Social Democrats everywhere in the war, but the present writer believes that the view of

⁴⁶ Taylor Caldwell, John: *Come Dudgeons deep - the life and times of Guy Aldred, Glasgow anarchist* [1988, 290pp] page 192 -7

⁴⁷ Berresford Ellis, Peter: *A History of the Irish Working Class* [1985, 372pp] for the general picture.

⁴⁸ Badayev, A Y: *Bolsheviks in the Tsarist Duma* [1987, 248pp] be sure to read the Introduction by T Cliff.

⁴⁹ Gorter, Herman: *An Open Letter to Comrade Lenin* [1993, 41 pp]

Rosa Luxemburg, that all methods should be used, and that voting is a useful monitoring of opinion, was correct.

Gorter himself was to adopt a similar approach later when in answer to questions about membership replied that "we seek them everywhere" and listed the streets, meetings etc as sources of expansion. Council communists opinion modified over the next decade ⁵⁰.

A section of political activists today feel that the tactic of voting in parliamentary elections, in addition to municipal electoral activity, can be beneficial -

- to exercise a negative veto and prevent the extreme Right wing taking office through non violent methods, such as alliances of Left candidates in Germany in 1932 which could have marshalled the divided working class into action against Nazism ⁵¹. See also Spain in the 1930's above.
- as a part of consolidating mass movements for social reform objectives like anti war, though to make it the sole mechanism as happened in 2003 against the Iraq invasion is clearly invalid.
- as a means of progressing a popular movement against capitalism, subordinate to direct action, but necessary to widen the struggle, as Rosa Luxemburg pointed out in Germany in the post war crisis of 1918/19.

It is from this basis that this booklet is published. Readers are invited to follow up their own field of interest and find out for themselves. The footnotes and the selected Reading list at the end give the essential information.

Workers Socialism Today : "As We See It"

This programme is reproduced in all issues of the *Declaration* newsletter.

▶▶ One - Build the working class

The primary role of those who want to promote workers socialism is to work for the

- formation,
- development,

⁵⁰ Pannekoek, Anton : *Workers Councils* [2002, 219pp] reviewed in Freedom 64/11 by the present writer

⁵¹ Trotsky, Leon : *Fascism, Stalinism and the United Front* [1989, 237pp]

- unity, and
- co-ordination of working class resistance to capitalism on a day to day basis. Throughout the world, the vast majority have no control over their lives and merely sell their labour power while others, who own or control, accumulate wealth and use the State to perpetuate and reinforce their privileged position.

Two - In practice this means in the first instance building rank and file committees in all organisation especially the workplace. The traditional programme of rank and file at the workplace, as developed over many years of struggle, and involving membership control of all full time union officials and their structure, is often the starting point of this process. Adaptations to other bodies may be needed.

Three - Most resistance will result in the achievement of reforms in economic, social and political systems and these will add to greater levels of social control. Though our aims are for the revolutionary transformation of existing society by collectivist organisations, the embryo of the new society is to be found in the working class organisation of today.

Four - The political struggle

It is essential to the advancement of socialism that political organisation and co-ordination is practised at every level and in every field. The contest is political but organisation, comprising the most active and committed comrades, should be soundly rooted in the basic structures of the class.

Five - The agenda is that of encouraging meaningful activity, that is whatever increases confidence, autonomy, initiative, control, and self activity. Negative action is that which re-inforces passivity, apathy, cynicism, alienation, differentiation and reliance on others - like parliamentary or municipal representatives - to do things for them.

Six - A revolutionary party which is separately structured and based on a Party interests alone, will only weaken and split the workers movement at the most critical times.

Seven - The effectiveness of a revolutionary party is more important than its size and that means a programme of education, co-ordination and

study is an integral part of its existence. It is proposed that this compliments the staple work of the group.

Eight - This approach rejects the politics of marxist leninist parties which emphasis exclusively the building of the dominant mass revolutionary party, and also the politics of those forms of anarchism which reject the idea of collectively controlled and directly acceptable leaders.

Nine - Things to do

Socialists are most able to promote their aims by being active and unionised members of a workplace, and standing as delegates in that capacity. This is a primary agitational function, even for those who chose to become politically active, and one that cannot be neglected .

Ten - Outside this, workers socialists may be active in -

- organisations fighting racism and discrimination against asylum seekers,
- the defence of the welfare state against closure, cuts and privatisation,
- anti - war campaigns, and other fields including possible tactical electoral work at this stage.

The promotion of socialists ideas, perspectives and literature, is an integral part of the this activity.

Eleven - Activity in such bodies assumes the positive acceptance of organisational responsibility rather that the blatant use of "interventions" in public meetings to recruit membership. People will become politically active on the basis of the performance of existing socialists, rather than speeches.

Twelve - The revolutionary party needs its own meetings, organisation and literature. Flexibility, initiative and imagination, within the boundaries of workers socialist movement, are the obvious assets ◀◀

Appendix : Some reading suggestions

This is a list of books referred to in the text , plus other relevant titles.

- Anderson, Andy : *Hungary '56* [1964, 120p]
Anweiller, Oskar : *The Soviets : the Russian workers, peasants and soldiers councils 1905 -1921* [1974 USA, 337pp]
Appel , Jan: *Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution* [1990 private publication, 589pp], :
Badayev , A Y : *Bolsheviks in the Tsarist Duma* [1987, 248pp]
Colin Barker : *Festival of the Oppressed* [1986, 192pp] ref Poland
Barker, Colin : *Revolutionary Rehearsals* [1987, 270pp]. ref France, Chile, Portugal, Iran and Poland.
Baldwin, Roger editor : *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets - a collection of writings by Peter Kropotkin* [1970 USA, 307pp]
Bayat, Assef : *Workers and Revolution in Iran* [1987, 227pp]
Berresford Ellis , Peter : *A History of the Irish Working Class* [1985, 372pp]
Bookchin , Murray : *Anarchism, Marxism and the future of the Left - interviews and essays 1993-1998* [1999, 352pp].
Bourrinet, Philippe (unascibed) : *The Dutch and German Communist Left* [2001,416pp]
Bradley , Pauline & Knight , Chris : *Another World is possible - how the Liverpool dockers launched a global movement* [2004, 84pp]
Bricianer, Serge : *Pannekoek and Workers Councils* [1978 USA, 306pp]
Brinton, Maurice : *The Bolsheviks and Workers Control, 1917-21* [1970, 86pp]
Callinicos, Alex : *The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx* [1983, 208pp]
Carr , E H : *Russian Revolution from Lenin to Stalin 1917- 29.* [1978, 200]
Carr , E H : *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917 - 23, Book 1* [1966 , 448pp] the first of three volumes under this heading. These are part of the 14 volume *History of Soviet Russia* which comprises the above, *The Interregnum 1923-4*, *Socialism in One Country 1924-6*, and *the Foundations of the Planned Economy 1926-9*. A summary of these is in the single volume *Russian Revolution from Lenin to Stalin 1917- 29*, see below.
Chesneaux, Jean : *The Chinese Labour Movement 1919-27* [1968, 574 pp]
Christie, Stuart : *We, the Anarchists - a study of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) 1927-1937* [2000, 127pp]
Clegg, Ian : *Workers Self Management in Algeria* [1971, 222pp].
Cliff, Tony : *Lenin* , four/three volumes [1975,76,78,79 : 398pp, 412pp,230pp, 251pp]
Danos, Jacques and Marcel Gibelin : *June '36* [1986, 272pp] ref France
Dirlik, Arif : *Anarchism in Chinese Revolution* [1991 USA, 326pp]
Dobbs ,Farrell : *Teamster Rebellion* , [1972 , USA, 185pp], *Teamster Power* [1973, USA, 255pp] *Teamster Politics* [1975, USA, 257pp] *Teamster Bureaucracy* [1977, USA, 304pp]

- Dolgoff, Sam editor : *The Spanish Collectives - workers management in the Spanish Revolution 1936-39* [1990 Canada , 194pp]
- Engels Frederick: *The Condition of the Working Class in England (1844)* [1982, 336pp]
- Fisera, Vladimir, editor : *Workers Councils in Czechoslovakia: documents and essays.* [1978, 199pp]
- Fischer Ernst ; *Marx in his own words* [1970, 187pp]
- Figes, Orlando : *A Peoples Tragedy - the Russian revolution 1891 - 1924* [1997, 923pp]
- Gedye , G E R : *Fallen Bastions* [1939, 519pp] ref Austria
- Gombin, Richard : *The Radical Tradition - a study in modern revolutionary thought* [1978, 153pp]
- Gorter , Herman : *Open Letter to Comrade Lenin* [1995 reprint, 42 pp]
- Gramsci , Antonio, ed Quintin Hoare : *Selections from Political Writings (1910-1920)* [1977, 393pp]
- Grunberger, Richard : *Red Rising in Bavaria* [1973, 164pp]
- Guerin Daniel : *Anarchism - from theory to practice* [1970, 166pp]
- Guerin Daniel : *Marxism and Anarchism* [17pp] in David Goodway ed : *For Anarchism - history, theory and practice* [1989, 278pp]
- Higgins, Jim : *More Years for the Locusts - the origins of the SWP* [1997, 177pp]
- James , CLR : *World Revolution 1917-36 : the rise and fall of the Communist International* [1938, 446pp].
- James , CLR but filed under Lee , Grace C, Pierre Chaulieu (Cornelius Castoriadis) and JR Johnson (CLR James) : *Facing Reality* [1958 USA, 174pp]
- Jones , R M : *The Experience of the Factory Committees in the Russian Revolution* [1984 private publication 28pp],
- Kollontai, Alexandra : *The Workers Opposition* [1966, 70pp] :
- Kropotkin , Peter : *Mutual Aid* [1939, 278pp]
- Kropotkin , Peter : *The State ; its historic role* [1997 , 60 pp]
- Landauer, Gustav : *For Socialism* [1978 USA , 150pp]
- Lenin, Vladimir (Vladimir Ulanov) : *The State and Revolution* [1972 Russia, 141pp]
- Lenin, Vladimir (Vladimir Ulanov) : *What is to be Done ?* [1988, 261p]
- Liebman , Marcel : *Leninism under Lenin,* [1975, 477pp]
- Lipsitz, George : *Rainbow at Midnight* [1994, USA, 359pp] ref USA.
- Lomax, Bill , editor : *Eye Witness in Hungary.* [1981, 183pp]
- Mailer, Phil, : *Portugal, the impossible revolution,* [1977, 399pp.]
- Marx' , Karl : *The Poverty of Philosophy* [1973 USSR, 205 pp]
- Marx , Karl and Frederick Engels : *The Communist Manifesto* [1967, 124pp] but see also Fischer
- Mattick, Paul; *Anti Bolshevik Communism* [1978, 231pp] ;
- McNally, David : *Against The Market - political economy ,market socialism and the marxist critique* [1993, 262pp]

- Murphy, JT : *The Workers' Committee - an outline of its principles and structure* [1972, 261pp]
- Pannekoek , Anton : *Lenin as Philosopher* [1975, 132pp]
- Pannekoek, Anton : *Workers Councils* [2003, 219 pp].
- Proudhon : *System of Economic Contradictions - the philosophy of poverty* , summarised in George Woodcock : *Pierre Joseph Proudhon - his life and work* [1987 Canada, 295pp]
- Proudhon , P J : *The General Idea of the Revolution* [1989, 301pp]
- Ratner , Harry : *Premature - and diseased from infancy ?*, in *New Interventions*, 8/2 , Winter 97.
- Richards, Vernon : *Malatesta - his life and ideas* [1977, 311pp]
- Rocker , Rudolf: *Anarcho Syndicalism* [1989, 166pp] is by far the best source. *Scorcher* publication : *The Hungarian Revolution 1956*, [1984, 24pp]
- Serge, Victor : *Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901-1941* [1967, 401pp]
- Singleton , Fred : *Workers self management and the role of trade unions in Yugoslavia* [16pp] in Ken Coates, Tony Topham, and Michael Barrett Brown, editors : *Trade Union Register 1970* .
- Sprenger, Rudolf (Helmut Wagner) : *Bolshevism - its roots, role, class view and methods*, [2004, 37pp]
- Taylor Caldwell, John : *Come Dudgeons deep - the life and times of Guy Aldred, Glasgow anarchist* [1988, 290pp]
- Thompson EP : *The Makings of the English Working Class* [1980 987pp]
- Thompson Noel : *The Real Rights of Man - political economies for the working class 1775-1850* [1998 , 168pp]
- Trotsky , Leon : *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, [1971, 506pp],
- Trotsky , Leon : *The Lessons of October* in 1924,
- Trotsky , Leon : *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, [1971, 506pp] pages 35 to 47 and *Fascism, Stalinism and the United Front* [1989, 287]
- Trotsky , Leon (L D Bronstein) : *Fascism, Stalinism and the United Front* [1989, 287]
- van der Linden, Marcel & Wayne Thorpe, eds : *Revolutionary Syndicalism - an international perspective* [1990, 260pp]
- Viénet, René : *Enragés and Situationists in the Occupation Movement, France, May '68* [1992 USA, 158pp]
- Williams, Gwyne A : *Proletarian Order - Antonio Gramsci, factory councils and the origins of Italian communism 1911-21* [1975, 370pp]
- Wolff, Jonathan : *Why Read Marx Today ?* [2002, 136pp],
- Woodcock , George : *Pierre Joseph Proudhon - his life and work* [1987 Canada, 295pp]
- Woodward Alan : *Marx, Bakunin or what ? What Next ?* 28, [2004, 7pp]
- Woodward, Alan : *Readers Guide to Workers socialism* [2003, 30pp].
- Woodward, Alan : *Party Over Class ; how Leninism has subverted workers council organisation* [2004 - second revised edition, 50pp]
- Zanon Ceramics Factory - a year of occupation*, author unknown, [2002 Argentina , 13pp]

Appendix :

The Bolsheviks and Workers Socialism

The crisis of February 1917 saw the collapse of the Tsar's regime, the establishment of workers councils and soviets, and a compromising Provisional government based on them. A socialist revolution in October saw a new "Workers" government but led by Bolsheviks.

Bolshevik power was based nominally on the institutions of workers organisations but it is clear that Lenin was a strong advocate of the soviet because the 1905 model had an Executive Committee which was based on party political representation. Hence he was arguing for his own political representation and not for workers councils in the workplace of which there is not a trace in his writings until May 1917. By then a national moment of workers councils was established, soon to be the main socialist organisation. As the government became discredited, eventually even the soviets backed revolutionary change, which was a main point in the programme of the Bolsheviks.

Be that as it may, the Bolsheviks seemed at the time to be the strongest advocates of workers power, and the revolution was carried through on this basis. The new society was to be built. This was not to be the realisation of workers control however, more an experiment in Party Communism as envisaged by Lenin. By far the best critique of this process is in Maurice Brinton's *The Bolsheviks and Workers Control* ⁵².

Factory Committees plan for a workers government

Perhaps the greatest betrayal of Bolshevik policies, as perceived by many, was the coercion applied to factory committees - effectively workers councils - to force them into the trade unions. The day after the revolution, a deputation of Petrograd factory committee delegates from the Central Council of Factory and Shop Committees had spoken to Lenin and proposed a Provisional All Russian Peoples Economic Council based on factory committees.

The CCFSC plan was based on an central economic Council, with a two third majority of members who were workers representatives from the

⁵² and see Brinton, Maurice : *The Bolsheviks and Workers Control*, 1917-21 [1970, 86pp] plus *International Socialism Journal* [old series] 49 & 52, for his successful debate with Chris Harman, editor of *Socialist Worker*.

factory committee, unions and the Soviet Central Executive or CEC. One third was to come from technicians and owners. The Council would have separate divisions for each industry with a Control Commission made up only of workers and with the power to regulate its own area. It could take over free enterprises. These control commissions would make up a Central Control Commission over the whole Council. Labour distribution was to be decided at a national level with wages determined by unions.

This imaginative and constructive plan was ignored by the Bolshevik leadership, who had their own plan in the form of a Decree for Workers Control, of which more later. Regardless a second attempt was made by the workers representatives on 3 November, this time to set up an All Russian Council for the Regulation of Industry. This proposal differed from the first in that it excluded the unions who were now seen as in the Party pocket. Employers were similar left out and clauses were built in to stop the committees being integrated into the State machine. This plan was also rejected ⁵³.

This, and other evidence of the comprehensive plans advanced by the Committees, undercuts the allegation often made in some marxist leninist literature that they were only interested in an anarchist type solution of total local control and no central direction. They were clearly not in favour of each workplace working separately, with its own arrangements. They were in favour of a workers council based political economy which was neither founded on individual schemes or Party domination but on actual workers running the new society. Lenin rejected these ideas.

It quickly became apparent after the successful establishment of the revolutionary regime that the Bolshevik use of the expression "workers control" meant in practice only a degree of workers supervision of the workplace. The management of the new society was to be province of the Bolshevik Party despite their previous utterances. This first became apparent with the publication on 3 November 1917 ⁵⁴ of the draft *Decree on Workers Control*.

Decree on Workers Control

⁵³ see Jones, R M: *The Experience of the Factory Committees in the Russian Revolution* [1984 private publication 28pp], page 17,

⁵⁴ strangely *Lenin on Workers Control and the Nationalisation of Industry* has the text of the draft Decree and Cliff, Tony: *Lenin*, volume 3, has a summary of the final document. Cliff's book (first edition) makes no mention of the amendments.

This 8 point document began by providing for the "introduction of workers control of the production, warehousing, purchase and sale of all products and raw materials in all industrial, commercial, banking, agricultural and other enterprises employing a total of not less than 5 workers and employees or with a turnover not less than 10,000 roubles per annum".

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

This grand provision was unfortunately followed by two important qualifications. Firstly Point 5 was that decisions of the elected delegates were binding upon owners of enterprises but that they could be "annulled by trade unions and their congresses". Given the fact that unions were historically very weak and totally under some type of Party control at the time, this was important. Indeed the mechanism for controlling the vigorous Councils was to be their compulsory integration into the unions.

Point 6 stipulated that "in all enterprises of State importance" all delegates elected to exercise workers control were to be "answerable to the State for the maintenance of the strictest order and discipline and for the protection of property". This has a familiar ring because such a definition is capable of wide interpretation and point 7 clearly states that this wording covers enterprises "connected with the production of articles necessary for the existence of the masses of the population". In other words almost anything could come within its terms.

Dissent

Not surprisingly when the *All Russian Central Executive Committee Of The Soviets* and *Council Of Peoples Commissars* came to ratify the draft decree, there was an unprecedented degree of opposition. After nearly two weeks of heated debate, the amended Decree was agreed.

Now comprising 14 points, it theoretically accepted the validity of "workers control" throughout the economy, agreed to allow the Councils to control individual workplaces but made them responsible to a hierarchy of organisations, specifically *Regional Councils of Workers Control* and

the *All Russian Council Of Workers Control*. Moreover there was to be an *All Russian Council Of Factory Committees*.

Henceforth only "works" councils

However these concessions cannot cover the fact that the autonomy of the Councils was gone, contained within the new *ARCWC*, which was dominated by the trade unions. Effectively they had been reduced to works councils, under government control, a tactic copied later by the reactionary German authorities.

There was only minority representation from the committees, the same as that of the State. This was within four weeks of the revolution, and the existing *Central Soviet Of Factory Committees* was abolished. The anarchist *Revolutionary Centre Of Factory Committees* was never allowed to function.

The same was true of the *ARCoFC* and even the supposedly powerful *All Russian Council for Workers Control* struggled to overcome administrative obstacles and internal dissent. Hence the basic approach of the new government to workers actually controlling their workplace, and attempting to control society was clearly expressed. It was not to happen.

The *CCFCS* incidentally tried to continue after the forced integration but was eventually to emerge as the Northern Economic Council of the national body. Many of the *FCS* activists sat on this though it was under the control of the 28 year old Molotov, a party apparachnik who had no industrial experience.

The State too

Two weeks later on 5th of December, the *Supreme Council of National Economy* or *Vesenka* was established. It was to direct economic activity and authorities, both centrally and locally. This encompassed the *ARCWC* and was at first led by left Bolsheviki, with Osinsky in charge. It was made up of people from the trade unions and the State, both strongly dominated by the Party, though Tony Cliff in his volumes on Lenin does not mention the integration of the *ARCWC*.⁵⁵

There was a substantial element of worker representatives on the *Vesenka*, the Petrograd district going over en bloc to the new

⁵⁵ see Cliff :: *Lenin* above, vol. 3

organisation, see above. It was to set up local and industrial centres, issue directives and assume control of industry when it was nationalised in the summer, albeit under a lending back arrangement. It had enormous economic powers which were rarely used and was the base for the opposition to Lenin's plans for both the setting up of trusts under a state capitalist plan, and his ideas on non-collective management.

Blueprint without workers control

Back in December came the publication of Lenin's *State And Revolution*, a blueprint for revolution, some would say an anarchist one even, but was extremely vague on workers control⁵⁶. There were some generalisations and statements that appeared to define control in terms of supervision and recording, but little more.

Cynics have remarked that Lenin's sudden "conversion" was a purely tactical move, structured to collect the widespread anarchist sentiment. Either way, Lenin did draw on Anton Pannekoek writings substantially for this volume⁵⁷.

Two different versions of workers control

Next came the *Manual and Counter Manual*⁵⁸. The *Central Council of Petrograd Factory and Shop Committees* published its guidance document, subtitled *A Practical Manual For The Implementation Of Workers Control Of Industry*. This gave an extensive programme for workers councils to control their workplaces through commissions. It also announced an intention to establish a nationwide structure of councils for the purpose of managing the totality of economic life. A fuller examination of its contents and the implications is made in Maurice Brinton's book.

A week after the publication of the *Manual* came the official reply. *The General Instructions On Workers Control In Conformity With The Decree Of November 14* became known as the *Counter Manual* and was basically an outline of the new legislative role of factory committees. It was in line with the other Government proposals.

⁵⁶ Lenin, Vladimir (Vladimir Ulanov) : *The State and Revolution* [1972 Russia, 141pp]

⁵⁷ Bricianer, Serge : *Pannekoek and Workers Councils* [1978 USA, 306pp] page 69

⁵⁸ for details of these see Brinton above

It should be noted that the title claimed to be Instructions, not guidance, and again indicates the limitations of the Leninist view of factory councils and workers control. This was at best an expression of the demoting of Councils to the role of improving production, educating workers and so on. These are called consultative committees today.

Not syndicalism, just different

The *Practical Manual* can be seen under examination to expose as false the condemnation of Bolsheviks spokesman at numerous conferences that the factory committee movement was dominated by syndicalists and reactionaries. They inaccurately characterised the councils as manifestations of anarchist chaos, whereas in reality it was an expression of a different, if now defeated, political view.

Councils put into trade unions

In January, the first *All Russian Congress Of Trade Unions* was held in Petrograd. The organisation of unions set up the previous summer had achieved very little and was run as a one man show by Losovsky according to some critical delegates. However the Congress was now largely Bolshevik and the decision to transform councils into union institutions was duly carried

The arguments ran deep and long about Marxism, workers councils and the nature of the new Government. Trade unions as such were strongly criticised by many rank and file factory committee activists, including a small minority of anarcho-syndicalists..

It should be noted that the delegates of the Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary Parties supported the Bolsheviks on this issue, which should indicate its intention. Later these two were to reverse their support as they jumped on the bandwagon of the Extraordinary Assemblies, EAFPR, which were emerging organs of dissent set up by workers, before the Kronstadt Council and its uprising.

Factory councils were decreed to become merely the organs of unions, carrying through their educational objectives and increasing production - this was to become a familiar story. The *All Russian Central Council of Trade Unions* was to make clear later that breaches of union discipline could lead to expulsion "with all the consequences that flow there from".

The significance of the events outlined above is that they illuminate the attitude of the Leninist government to actual workers control. The repressions were to take place in the early weeks of the revolution. Excuses made by marxist leninists like Tony Cliff that the civil war forced suppressions are quite invalid for our purposes because the fighting started afterwards, in July 1918.

Similarly, the actions taken against the workers councils policies of the majority of the German Communist Party, the KPD, on the grounds of the returning stability of capitalism, stem from the same fundamental political idea - the Party control of society and Communist Party tactics. Leninism means party control not workers, and this proved to be true even of the politically controlled soviets.

Sovietism

We have noted the obsession with soviets and its rationale, above. Even Lenin had recognised the power of the factory committees and it has been claimed that they actually ran the Petrograd workplaces in October⁵⁹. Trotsky warns of the fetish with soviets in his anti Stalin book of 1924⁶⁰ saying the factory and shop committees could have been an equally acceptable base in 1917. He repeats this message of emphasising the role of the German workers councils in 1931 as the base for opposition to fascism⁶¹.

Of course, recognition of the potential of factory committees was not possible at a time when they and the soviets had been integrated, and the Communist Party had been raised to a supreme position. However back to 1917.

Soviet expansion

The new administration had, on the other hand, acted quickly to promote Soviets throughout society. Various regulations regarding representation were published and these called for Soviets to be set up as "local organs of power" and "all organisations with administrative, commercial, financial and cultural functions must submit to them".

⁵⁹ Losovsky, quoted in Remington, T F : *Building Socialism in Bolshevik Russia*, page 36

⁶⁰ *The Lessons of October* in 1924,

⁶¹ Trotsky, Leon : *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, [1971, 506pp] pages 35 to 47 and *Fascism, Stalinism and the United Front* [1989, 287]

Further "All former local organisations must be replaced by corresponding Soviets of workers, soldiers, peasants, and rural labourers. The whole country must be covered with a network of Soviets and they must maintain close relations. Each organisation is autonomous in local matters... In this way a coherent and fully integrated soviet republic will emerge" ⁶². This nominal emphasis was implemented over wide areas of the country but within a context of political control that was ultimately self defeating.

Municipal authorities merged in

Existing local and town authority councils were transferred over to Soviets with their funds and inventories in January 1918. In the new year, the old courts were abolished and Peoples Courts established. At first, judges were elected but later were appointed by local Soviets.

Armed forces

In both the Army and Navy the soviet principle was introduced in December. Soldiers committees became the centres of power and elected all officers up to regional commander. The same pattern applied to the Navy with the Admiralty being abolished for good measure. Thus the enormous decay in the armed forces was the subject of a serious assault though in reality this was little more than a recognition of the reality of actual changes.

Regional independence

On a larger scale various local regions of old Russia took the process of de-centralisation at its word and established semi independent and autonomous departments with their own governments which frequently acted independently of the capital. The national groupings became republics within Communist Russia.

Crisis of Bolshevik Control over soviets

So it was that the period after October saw a massive horizontal growth of soviets but it was not long before the contradiction between the generally liberatory effect of "soviet" rule and the restrictions inherent in the Leninist party rule began to create problems.

These were due to the already evident degeneration of soviets representation and the growing crisis in the workplace regarding

⁶² Anweiler, Oskar : *The Soviets : the Russian workers, peasants and soldiers councils 1905 -1921* page 219.

production. There was also considerable problems with peasant soviets in rural areas. These cumulatively resulted in a substantial degree of opposition which became expressed inside the Party and, despite manoeuvres by the leaders, later reached considerable proportions with the urban strike wave and the Kronstadt revolt. Things were not helped by the rapid decline of inner Party accountability.

Soviets by-passed

By December of 1917, the Soviet Executive Committee was meeting less regularly, at best once or twice a week, and the Councils of Peoples Commissars was in virtually permanent session.

It decreed to itself the right to pass urgent legislation without soviet approval and from then on took important decisions like opening peace talks, declaring war on Ukraine and introducing martial law in Petrograd and Moscow, on its own initiative⁶³.

There were of course protests from non Bolshevik delegates and long standing member Kamenev even resigned as chair of the Soviet EC but a reply was issued saying that the Council of Peoples Commissars reserved the right to issue decrees in cases of urgency. It was noticeable that the Third All Russian Congress Of Soviets, the nominal sovereign body within the State, met even less regularly than previous congresses and did not function as a permanent and powerful institution with its own rules, procedures, and suchlike. Soviet control was being eroded in favour of Party rule through conventional State mechanisms.

There was enormous emphasis placed on workplace delegates within the idea of soviet power and of course classical Marxist theory was centred on work as a dominant human activity. Much of the attraction of factory councils was the value of workplace representation so it could reasonably be expected that some form of this would be incorporated into soviet structure.

Indeed a Left Socialist Revolutionary, Reissner, who was for a time Peoples Commissar for Justice, prepared a draft constitution which provided for a "federation of workers" within "an all Russian workers

⁶³ Figes, Orlando : *A Peoples Tragedy - the Russian revolution 1891 - 1924* [1997, 923pp] page 506, quoted by Harry Ratner in *Premature - and diseased from infancy ?*, in which a life long Trotskyist questions his ideas; *New Interventions*, 8/2, Winter 97.

commune". This scheme that had clear links with Western syndicalism and some traditional peasant institutions, would have provided a national constitution that included much of the best of soviet innovations.

Territorial structure preferred

However this and the many anti centralist and syndicalists ideas of the Left Socialist Revolutionaries and other significant activists were ignored when the final Constitution of the Union Of Soviet Socialist Republics was adopted in July 1918. This made great play of the centrality of the Soviets which were to be constructed around territorial representation.

There was to be a pyramidal structure with indirect elections within a franchise that was strongly biased towards the urban resident rather than the country dweller. There were to be 25,000 voters for each delegate to the urban soviet but 125,000 rural voters for their delegate. Voting on issues was frequently by a show of hands in practice. More crucially, the myth of soviet control was enhanced but there was no word about the a role of the Communist Party, as it was soon to be called.

Local autonomy restricted

Another feature of the constitution was the way that the independence of local Soviets was curtailed. In previous practice they had assumed a good degree of authority but the primary obligation under now was the execution of all decrees of the respective supreme organs of socialist soviet power. Predictably funding was from the centre and this also contributed to the relative loss of autonomy.

Cheka and soviets

The secret police, or Cheka, had been set up in the previous December. There is much debate about the role of the Cheka, and secret tribunals, and the case against them has been made by people like Victor Serge ⁶⁴. There have been many accounts of the mass arrests, imprisonments and labour/concentration camps which are well known.

For our purposes it should be noted that their power was accumulated at the expense of soviets, especially after August 1918, when the central office instructed its branches to ignore interference by them. Instead the Cheka was to impose its will on the supreme bodies of soviet power ⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ See also Carr, E H. : *The Bolshevik Revolution*, volume 1, [1966, 448pp] chapter 7 which takes a close look at the Cheka.

⁶⁵ see Liebman, Marcel : *Leninism under Lenin*, [1975, 477pp] page 229

From these early events may be deduced the growing repression of Russian workers and their institutions. The struggle continued through the issue of Lenin and Trotsky's strong advocacy of one man management, the outlawing of party dissent and the manipulatory defeat of the Workers Opposition in 1921. More important was the crushing of the Kronstadt Uprising where overt lies and distortion were used to mislead even Communist Party members⁶⁶. Hope of a new society was severely weakened by the Communist government and ideas of a socialist one were long dead and buried.

Conclusions

The significance of the Bolshevik repression of the workers councils into party run institutions cannot be over estimated. It was simply a repression of workers initiatives and institutions in the interests of an outside group. The capacity of the working class to liberate itself and run society its own way - as outlined by Marx - was subordinated to a preconceived plan. Workers control became party control; Party placemen assumed power despite little experience in the labour movement; a natural tendency to collectivity was subsumed into the authoritarian rule of closed meetings and committee decisions. This was instituted before the crisis of the foreign intervention and the civil war

The battle was not won overnight. For many years, the elected leaders of the councils, usually operating in the lower levels of the party machine, fought to retain their power, but it was a rearguard action. Even the Emergency Committees, set up to co-ordinate strikes were unable to reverse the trend. When Lenin's misplaced politics were transposed into Stalin's nationalistic ideology, the war was finally lost.

Lenin - and Leninists - often criticise as ultra left those revolutionaries who oppose them. They are accused of not understanding the change of power in society and misreading the "downturns". Now even the best socialists disagree over such analysis as we know, and there was certainly a fierce debate in the early 1920's which we examine below.

Even if it is conceded that the workers council communists may have been slow in their analyses, this "fault" is dwarfed by the action of the

⁶⁶ see Brinton above, Kollontai, Alexandra: *The Workers Opposition* [1966, 70pp] : and Serge, Victor (Victor Kibalchich): *Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901-1941* [1967, 401pp]

Bolsheviks in breaking the power of the workers councils. It may well be that Pannekoek and co did not understand quickly enough the implications of the downturn but it is absolutely certain that Lenin's action in dismembering working class power is a far greater crime.

In any grading of mistakes, Bolshevism's come out at the top. Leninism is no model for modern revolutionaries, and the current obsession with party organisation is both self defeating and anachronistic. It would be better to study the workers council communists, including their mistakes, instead of preparing to repeat history.

There is no doubt that much that occurred after the repression in the new "worker state" was constructive and worth studying. This was so for some years. The crucial question for revolutionary socialists is the basis of a society. The Leninist one of the USSR was built to a pre conceived plan, in the most backward country in Europe, after the workers own plans had been scrapped. This could never be the basis for a socialist society.

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