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The formative years of the Soviet press : an institutional history, 1917-1924.

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THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF THE SOVIET PRESS:
AN INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY 1917-1924

A Dissertation

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PREFACE

The following study attempts to trace the development of the Soviet press in the years up to Lenin's death. This formative period was extremely important since the guidelines and functions were formulated, and party control established over the Russian press at this time. For a source of such importance in revealing the history of Soviet Russia, the press has hardly been studied in the western world, and no western source treats the initial period of its creation adequately. In Soviet historiography the situation is only slightly better. Two studies, A.F. Berezhnoi, K istorii partiino-sovetskoi pechati, Moscow, 1956 and Partiinaia i sovetskaia pechat' v bor'be za postroyeniye sotsializma i kommunizma, Moscow, 1961 treat the period up to the second world war, but pass over the first seven years of the Soviet press tracing only the bare outlines of its establishment. These accounts portray early papers as solidly united in defense of the principles of Leninism and do not indicate the variety of approaches that were tried or that the party's control of the press was not always as firm as it would later become. The reliability of these, the two best Soviet accounts, is further undermined by their failure to use contemporary accounts or even the material published in the press. Local studies are in many cases more detailed, but their accuracy

is difficult to judge, and they have been used only where they can be corroborated by other sources.

Fortunately contemporary and primary sources provide a wealth of materials which reveal a different picture of the development of the Soviet press and allow the construction of a more reliable history of the early period. The contemporary publications, scores of articles and data in Soviet papers, supplemented by the information in Izvestiia tsentral'nogo komiteta and the documentary collections on the press enable the researcher to see the various approaches that were not chosen and what obstacles were overcome in the course of proceeding along the road that was selected. They make it possible to show that the early history of the Soviet press was not the product of Lenin and Stalin, evolving remorselessly along the lines of a preconcerted plan, but one of experiment and crisis in which the party had far less control than Soviet historiography indicates.

For the most part the present study deals with the organization and expansion of Soviet newspapers. Immediately a definition becomes necessary. Soviet newspapers for the purpose of this paper are limited to publications commonly and regularly available to various segments of the Soviet population in the years under reference. For this reason neither the Soviet institutional press nor the many journals of the time have been considered. For similar reasons Izvestiia

tsentral'nogo komiteta, which began publication as a two page supplement to Pravda in 1919 and subsequently became an independent journal, has been omitted, although its pages provided extensive documentation on the condition of the press.

In tracing the development of the papers considerable effort was made to illustrate the various deficiencies and problems which confronted the Soviet press with examples taken from the printed page. Unfortunately the Soviet papers available in the United States did not lend themselves to this approach, and in most cases the errors and defects of the local press remain vague generalizations, reflected on the pages of the central papers without revealing the specific content of the offending publication.

The evolution of the press passed through two distinct stages. In the initial phase paths and policies were followed haltingly or led to dead ends, thwarted by circumstances beyond the control of the party. In relating the history of this period the different approaches have been identified and the reasons for their failure, indicated. Mostly they were attempts to do too much too soon or at least at the wrong time. Particularly stressed in this first stage are the efforts of party and state to control and guide the press, and their general failure.

In the second stage, these early approaches have given

way to a firmer attitude at the center. By 1923 the Central Committee had selected the press policy which it felt best suited the needs of the state, had chosen the path along which the press would develop, and began to organize it in conformity with these ideas. The second part of the paper, then, defines the new tasks of the press, relates the evolution of new types and levels of papers, and records the success of the party in controlling the diverse segments of the whole net.

In addition to describing the infra-structure of the press, the present study indicates the functions and tasks which the party expected it to fulfill. From the initial definition of freedom of the press, through the many refinements by the party, the thread of the press as a class weapon runs continuously, and this paper attempts to show how this thread was woven into the fabric of Soviet life, what the party expected from it, and whether these expectations were gratified.

Finally material is included concerning the Soviet paper as an institution to show its content and format, how the staff functioned and where responsibility for it lay. The rabselcor movement, which took the place of reporters, is also considered from the perspective of a tool which the party tried to control because of its impact among the masses. Since correspondents were instrumental in delivering the paper to its subscribers, they represented the logical extension

of the party, capable of making its influence felt in the most backward area of the state.

Two caveats are needed to avoid the impression that this is by any standard a definitive study. Its preparation and many of the conclusions reached showed that a far greater number of Soviet papers, especially at the lower levels of the net, need to be examined before many of the generalizations ventured could be considered proven. The few papers examined for this study represent sequences of a month or more consecutive numbers, and there were less than twenty of these, all at the gubernia or higher level. The Smolensk Party Archives at the National Archives and the Moscow and Petrograd Gubernia papers in the Library of Congress provide some light on the lower levels. The Smolensk Archives are particularly valuable for the period 1920-1924, while the gubernia papers are equally so for 1922, the year of the press crisis. Unfortunately only the Smolensk records give a continuous record of the local response to central directives and the establishment of uezd papers. To see if the demands and decrees of the Central Committee were generally executed, to discover specifically what facets of the local press drew such frequent complaints, requires the study of many more titles. Such an examination would also throw light on the monolithic nature of the press in 1924 and on the struggle of the Central Committee with

factions in the party by revealing the different lines presented in the publications of the local organizations.

The second caveat involves the availability of the extensive literature of the press section of the Central Committee and other press related institutions. Its major publication, Krasnaia pechat', is available in the United States only for 1925-1928 despite inception in 1921. None of the hundreds of Biulleteni are available either. These handicaps were overcome to a certain extent by the press section's reports in Izvestiia tsentral'nogo komiteta. A similar situation exists for ROSTA and the rabselcor movement. Only one copy of Agit-ROSTA and no issues of Rabochii-krest'ianskii korrespondent or its predecessor are in the United States. The absence of these sources and a variety of contemporary publications, referred to in Soviet sources, indicate that a vast amount of published information pertinent to the early years of the Soviet press remains to be tapped.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SHORT TITLES

The following list represents all short titles which appear in more than one chapter of this study. Short titles occurring in only one chapter are indicated in parentheses following the initial citation to the source. The short title appears first.

Andronov, Boyevoye oruzhiye partii: Andronov, S.A., Boyevoye oruzhiye partii, "Pravda" 1912-17, Leningrad, 1962.

Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pechat': Berezhnoi, A.F., et al., Bol'shevistskaia pechat' v bor'be za vlast' sovetov, Leningrad, 1960.

Budnykov, Bol part pechat': Budnykov, V.P., Bol'shevistskaia partiinaia pechat' v 1917 godu, Moscow, 1957.

Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti: Valkom, S.N., Ed., Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti, 4 vols., Moscow, 1957ff.

Iurko, "Sozdaniye bazy sovetskoi pechati": Iurko, A.I., "Sozdaniye material'no-tekhnicheskoi bazy partiinoi i sovetskoi pechati", in Mishuris, A.L., Partiino-sovetskaia pechat' v period bor'by za stroitel'stvo sotsializma, Moscow, 1964.

Iz TsK: Izvestiia tsentral'nogo komiteta rossiiskoi kommunisticheskoi partii, 1919-24.

Kalinin, O korrespondentakh: Kalinin, Mikhail Ivanovich, O korrespondentakh i korrespondentiiakh, Moscow, 1958.

Kotlyar, Newspapers: Kotlyar, A., (Pseud), Newspapers in the USSR, New York, 1955.

KPSS v bor'be: KPSS v bor'be za pobedu velikoi oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii, 1917, Moscow, 1957.

Lenin, Pol sob soch: Lenin, Vladimir Il'ich, Polnoye sobraniye sochineniia, 55 vols., Moscow, 1955ff.

Lenin o pechati: Lenin o pechati, Moscow, 1959.

Martselei, Pechat' Belorussii: Martselei, S.V., Pechat' sovetskoi Belorussii, Minsk, 1967.

O part i sov pechati: O partiinoi i sovetskoi pechati, sbornik dokumentov, Moscow, 1954.

Okt i kniga: Nazarov, A.I., Oktiabr' i kniga, 1917-23, Moscow, 1968.

Part i sov pechat' v bor'be: Partiinaia i sovetskaia pechat' v bor'be za postroyeniye sotsializma i kommunizma, Chast' I, Moscow, 1961.

Pechat' XIV s"ezdu: Pechat' SSSR k XIV s"ezdu, Moscow, 1928.

Perepiska TsK: Perepiska sekretariata TsK RSDRP(b) s mestnymi partiinymi organizatsiiami, 3 vols., Moscow, 1952ff.

Petriakov, Stranitsy slav ist: Petriakov, G.B., Comp., Stranitsy slavnoi istorii, vospominaniia o "Pravde", 1912-1917, Moscow, 1962.

Portiankin, Sov voyen pechat': Portiankin, I.A., Sovetskaia voyennaia pechat', istoricheskii ocherk, Moscow, 1960.

Protokoly TsK: Protokoly tsentral'nogo komiteta RSDRP(b), Avgust 1917-Fevral' 1918, Moscow, 1958.

Rappeport, Desiat' let: Rappeport, M.L., Desiat' let na boyevom postu: istorii "Krasnoi Gazety", 1918-1928, Leningrad, 1928.

Resheniia partii o pechati: Resheniia partii o pechati, Moscow, 1941.

Sbornik bol'shevistskaia pechat': Sbornik bol'shevistskaia pechat', 2 parts, Moscow, 1945.

Sekretar' "Pravdy": M.I. Ul'ianova sekretar' "Pravdy", Moscow, 1965.

Sov pechat' v dok: Kaminskaia, N., Ed., Sovetskaia pechat' v dokumentov, Moscow, 1961.

Trinadtsatyi s"ezd: Trinadtsatyi s"ezd RKP(b), stenograficheskii otchyot, Moscow, 1958.

Trotsky, Soch: Trotsky, Lev Davidovich, Sochineniia, 21 vols., in part, Moscow, 1925-7.

Vardin, Sov pechat': Vardin (Mgeladze), Illarion V., Sovetskaia pechat', sbornik statei, Moscow, 1924.

Vertinskii, Gazeta v Rossii: Vertinskii, N.S., Gazeta v Rossii i SSSR XVII-XXvv, Leningrad, 1931.

WKP: Smolensk Party Archives, Records of the All-Union (Russian) Communist Party, Smolensk District.

Zakony o pechati: Nikolayev, N.M., Ed., Zakony o pechati, Moscow, 1924.

Zernitskii, "Gazeta 'Zvezda'"; Zernitskii, M., "Belorusskaia gazeta 'Zvezda' v 1918 godu", Voprosy zhurnalistiki, Issue II, Book I, 1960, pp. 44-62.

TRANSLITERATION TABLE

а	a
б	b
в	v
г	g
д	d
е	e or ye after vowels
ё	yo
ж	zh
з	z
и	i
й	i
к	k
л	l
м	m
н	n
о	o
п	p
р	r
с	s
т	t
у	u
ф	f
х	kh
ц	ts=
ч	ch
ш	sh
щ	shch
ъ	"
ы	y
ь	'
э	eh
ю	iu
я	ia

PART I

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

CHAPTER I

THE PRESS BETWEEN THE REVOLUTIONS

February-July

The February Revolution in Russia which ended the rule of the Tsars also ushered in a period of civil liberties with the March 2[1] proclamation of the Provisional Government. The proclamation of civil liberties was followed three days later by a special decree on the press, revoking the administrative measures including censorship which the Autocracy had imposed before and during the war.[2] These official acts of the Provisional Government made it possible for nearly any group or organization to publish papers subject only to the availability of newsprint, presses, experienced press workers and journalists. But in the first days of the Revolution Petrograd suffered from a nearly complete press blackout, and only

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1. The dates in this chapter follow the Julian calendar (old style).

2. Browder, Robert P., and Kerensky, Alexander F., Eds., The Russian Provisional Government 1917, Stanford, 1961, vol. I, p. 233; (Hereafter cited as Browder and Kerensky, The Rus Prov Gov); Sazonov, I.S., "Presledovaniye bol'shevistskoi gazety 'Pravda' v 1917 g.", O sovetskoi i zarubezhnoi pechati, Vyp. III, 1964, p. 85; (Hereafter cited as Sazonov, "Presledovaniye", O sov pechati).

on March 5 did papers return to the streets of the capital.[3]

The Bolsheviks like many other groups, prepared immediately to utilize the new civil liberties in the areas of the press granted in the flush of victory by the Provisional Government. The majority of the party's leaders were in exile or abroad, but the Buro of the Central Committee began to organize a party paper even before the sanction of the Provisional Government had been granted. On March 2 it voted to resurrect Pravda which had published sporadically from May 12, 1912 until July 8, 1914, when it was finally closed by the Autocracy. The Petrograd Committee concurred with this decision March 3 and agreed to help with the publication.[4] Since the party had no printing facilities, the discussion of reviving Pravda was academic until the material-technical resources

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3. Only Izvestiia of the Petrograd Soviet (one edition for February 26-7) and Russkii invalid published at all before March 5. Berezhnoi, A.F., et al., Bol'shevistskaia pechat' v bor'be za vlast' sovetov, Leningrad, 1960, p. 10 (Hereafter cited as Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pechat'). It seems unlikely that the absence of papers was due to the lack of enabling legislation, or any other legal basis for publication, but more likely due to the necessity of organizing presses at short notice.

4. Antropov, T., Gazeta "Pravda" v bor'be za pobedu oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii, Moscow, 1954, p. 18 (Hereafter cited as Antropov, Gazeta "Pravda"); Iaroslavskii, Em., Tridtsat' let bol'shevistskoi "Pravdy", Moscow, 1942, p. 23 (Hereafter cited as Iaroslavskii, Tridtsat' let); Andronov, S.A., Boyevoye orushiye partii, "Pravda" 1912-1917, Leningrad, 1962, pp. 282-4 (Hereafter cited as Andronov, Boyevoye oruzhiye partii); Berezhnoi, et al., Ibid., p. 19. Iaroslavskii credits Molotov with placing the question of Pravda on the agenda of the Central Committee.

for publication could be obtained. The Central Committee solved the problem on March 4 by seizing the presses and offices of Sel'skii vestnik, and on the same day named a provisional editorial board of three to plan and publish the first issue.[5]

Having solved the problem of physical plant and created an editorial board, the Central Committee and the Petrograd Committee brought out the first four-page issue of the restored Pravda, March 5 in accordance with the decision taken at the March 2 session of the Central Committee. In addition to its manifesto to the citizens of all Russia, articles about the fall of the old order and the revolution in the provinces, the Central Organ of the party appealed to its readers for contributions to the "Iron Fund" of the worker press which would enable the Central Organ to continue pub-

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5. Zaslavskii, B., et al., "Pravda", 1917, Moscow, 1962, p. 9 (Hereafter cited as Zaslavskii, "Pravda"). Antropov, Ibid.; Berezhnoi, et al., Ibid., pp. 18-9; Budnykov, V.P., Bol'shevistskaia partiinaia pechat' v 1917 godu, Moscow, 1957, p. 13 (Hereafter cited as Budnykov, Bol part pechat'). The three members of the editorial board were V.M. Molotov, M.I. Kalinin and K.S. Eremeyev. The economic side of the paper was entrusted to the old Pravdist K.M. Shvedchikov. Budnykov names only Kalinin and Eremeyev as editors, using the familiar "and others" to fill out the board. The Publication of his work in 1957 undoubtedly accounts for the omission of Molotov. Apparently the Central Committee had to seize its own presses because a special commission of the Petrograd Soviet failed to allot any printing facilities to the party.

lication.[6]

Following the restoration of Pravda a number of party papers quickly arose in the major cities of Russia. In Moscow the Oblast Buro and Moscow Committee had decided early in March to publish their own organ. The leading spirit in this venture was M.S. Ol'minskii who planned the first issue before going to Petrograd to assist with the publication of Pravda.[7] The Moscow party paper suffered from the same lack of poligraphic base and trained journalists that obtained in Petrograd, but unlike the Central Committee, the Moscow organization arranged to have its paper, Sotsial-demokrat, printed on a local press, with the first issue appearing March 7 under a provisional editorial board of three.[8] Like Pravda, Sotsial-demokrat appealed for worker

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6. Pravda, March 5, 1917, p. 1. This had been the means for supporting Pravda in its checkered career before the war, and it had been fairly successful. The decision to continue on this basis was taken at the same time that the editorial board was named. The problem of financial support was never adequately solved before October, since the party press had no revenue from ads. Berezhnoi, et al., Ibid., p. 20, claims there were only 100 rubles available when the first issue came out.

7. Kuznetsov, I., and Shumakov, A., Bol'shevistskaia pechat' Moskvy, Moscow, 1968, p. 294 (Hereafter cited as Kuznetsov and Shumkov, Bol pechat' Moskvy).

8. Ibid.; Budnykov, Bol part pechat', p. 14. The three editors were I.I. Skvortsov-Stepanov, A.I. Usagin and N.M. Lukin-Stepanov.

support in its initial issues, and explained the role of the paper:

> "The working press -- this is the mighty mouthpiece through which the proletariat raises its voice.
> The working paper -- this is the organization of the opinion of the working class.
> Comrades, hand in hand for the work! Support your paper. Organize [its] dissemination, organize collective subscriptions, give information, gather [money for] 'the fund of the worker press'. The worker press can exist only by the friendly, organized power of the whole class."[9]

In addition to these two leading party papers, Bolshevik publications appeared in Kharkov, Kiev, Kronstadt, Samara, Tiflis and Ufa in the two weeks following the first issue of Pravda.[10] All these publications experienced the same difficulties in initiating and maintaining themselves. They had no stocks of newsprint, no presses, ink, type, money or experienced press workers. The owners of the presses for the most part refused to print party dailies and the few reactionary presses that were seized in the early days of the revolution usually proved insufficient to the needs of the given party organization. But the greatest stumbling block

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9. Sotsial-demokrat, March 7, 1917, in Bol'shevistskaia pechat', Moscow, 1961, vol. IV, p. 134.

10. These publications were Proletarii, Golos sotsial-demokrata, Golos pravdy, Privolzhskaia pravda, Kavkazskii rabochii, and Vperyod!. In Kharkov and Kiev the papers arose following meetings of the local party committees which named the editorial boards. Karnaukh, J., Po puti gazety "Pravda", Lvov, 1962, pp. 19-20 (Hereafter cited as Karnaukh, Po puti "Pravda"). No material is available on the genesis of the other papers.

on the road of the party press was its continuously precarious financial position. Pravda and Sotsial-demokrat were not the only party publications pleading for the financial support of the workers. And despite the poverty of the source to which the party press appealed, monetary assistance was forthcoming, if not on a great scale, at least in sufficient quantity to maintain the given publication.[11] A particular irritation to the Bolsheviks was the failure of soviet publications to support the party, since neither financial appeals nor general support for the party line existed in any of the many Izvestiias which sprang up throughout Russia following the February Revolution.[12]

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11. Petriakov, G.B., Comp., Stranitsy slavnoi istorii, vospominaniia o "Pravde", 1912-1917, Moscow, 1962, p. 235 (Hereafter cited as Petriakov, Stranitsy slav ist); Antropov, Gazeta "Pravda", p. 19; Karnaukh, Ibid., p. 23, cites the following appeal in Golos sotsial-demokrata, March 16, "Remember that on you depends the fate of our organ, that it can live and develop only through your support. Only through your support, through your assistance in every way can the worker paper become as it must become -- the leader of the workers on their difficult path, a lighthouse, which illuminates for the masses the thorny road for the realization of their ideal." Figures on financial support exist only for Pravda in this period. Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pechat', p. 20, cites the round figure of 16,000 rubles collected for March which is supported by Sazonov, "Presledovaniye", O sov pechati, p. 86. Pravda published a continuous record of its collections from its second issue in the section "Iron Fund".

12. The situation was particularly glaring in Moscow and Petrograd where the soviets were controlled by the Mensheviks and gave the party absolutely no press support. Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pechat', pp. 26-7, says the papers of the Tomsk and Pskov soviets were edited by Bolsheviks, but does not assert that they were party papers. Bolshevik collaboration in provincial soviet publications

Pravda as the Central Organ of the party immediately assumed the leadership of the small Bolshevik press network and quickly developed this position by passing judgement on those papers that called themselves Socialist. By March 11, according to Pravda, only two such papers existed, Pravda and Sotsial-demokrat.[13] While certifying socialist papers, the Central Organ also stated that all publications, once accepted into the Bolshevik family, were free to reprint articles from the leading party papers without crediting the source, and both Pravda and Sotsial-demokrat encouraged the exchange of experience and information between party papers, undoubtedly to improve the dissemination of the party line and to help overcome journalistic deficiencies and inexperience among party papers.[14]

The assertion of Pravda's leadership assumed a unity of leadership within the party as to the direction of the paper. Such unity did not in fact exist. As the old Pravdists returned from exile the temporary editorial board which had manifested a hard line toward the Provisional Government was

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is quite possible, since they were less likely to have adopted a hard line on the split within the Social Democratic Party that so clearly existed at the center. Control of any of these papers is very unlikely however.

13. Pravda, March 11, 1917, p. 1.

14. Ibid.; Sotsial-demokrat, March 30, 1917, in Bol'shevistskaia pechat', vol. IV, pp. 136-7.

replaced by a new five member board including Stalin and Kamenev which had a less critical posture toward the Provisional Government.[15] The new editorial board was prepared to support the existing government in so far as it struggled against reaction and counter-revolution, but it abandoned the slogan "Down with the war" as unsuitable.[16] Apparently this quick change in the direction of the paper did not go unchallenged, since the transformation was discussed at sessions of the Central Committee March 15 and 17. At the latter meeting the Central Committee reaffirmed an earlier decision that all actions of the editorial board had to be unanimous or referred to the Central Committee in cases where differences among the board arose over particular articles. The Petrograd Committee then discussed the direction of

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15. Browder, and Kerensky, The Rus Prov Gov, vol. III, pp. 1205-6; Trotsky, Leon, The History of the Russian Revolution, vol. I, New York, 1932, pp. 287-90 (Hereafter cited as Trotsky, Russian Rev). Trotsky states that Stalin, Kamenev and Muranov removed the old (provisional) editors for being too far to the left. The new editorial board was composed of Stalin, Kamenev, Muranov, Kalinin (held over from the old board) and Lenin's sister Maria, in place of Molotov.

16. Pravda, March 16, 1917, p. 1. Soviet historiography of the change in editorship of the Central Organ places all blame for deviation from the hard line on Kamenev and is silent on Stalin's role in this shift. The editorials in #s 8 and 9 are attributed to Kamenev although unsigned while Stalin's article "On War" (signed) is not considered. Furthermore Stalin is usually credited with struggling against this tendency. Three more recent works have indicted Stalin as well. Andronov, Boyevoye oruzhiye partii, 1962, pp. 299-300; Karnaukh, Po puti "Pravda", 1963, p. 41; Burdzhalov, E.N., "O taktike

the Central Organ, March 18, and supported the paper's general line.[17]

While the Central Committee confirmed the new party line, local organizations continued to establish new publications that were duly certified by the Central Organ. But it would be a mistake to assume that these papers arose in response to some co-ordinated plan from Petrograd. Rather the opposite was the case. Their appearance resulted from the particular circumstances in the individual locality which combined a handful or more of party adherents, frequently an old Pravdist, and the material-technical means for carrying out such a venture, not from any directive by the Central Committee or any plan by Pravda. In fact Pravda's leadership for these publications, except on paper, is extremely problematical, since the limited number of copies on the one hand, prevented speedy delivery to the capital for approval, and the chancy transportation situation on the other, made it unlikely that the Central Organ would reach local party organizations for their leadership once the parent paper became aware of the

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bol'shevikov v Marte - Aprele 1917 goda", Voprosy istorii, 1956, #4, April, pp. 45-6.

17. Zaslavskii, "Pravda", p. 33; Andronov, Ibid., p. 301. Since none of the Soviet Historians have recorded appeals to the Central Committee about articles, it seems unlikely that there was any real dissension within the new editorial board over the shift in direction of the Central Organ.

existence of its offspring.[18]

The framework then of the Bolshevik press at the end of March and the beginning of April was not tightly knit. Only a handful of papers existed, weakly connected, if at all, with the nominal leadership of the party press, constantly in want of funds to secure their financial base, but drawing on a part of the population which could barely provide the needed money. Further the very center of this press, supposedly providing leadership and guidance for the local publications, had just done a volte face after its first six issues, and given qualified support to the Provisional Government which it had initially attacked.

This position was quickly and sharply changed at the beginning of April. Lenin's return to Russia from Switzerland had the same impact in the Bolshevik press that it had within the party. The "April Theses" provoked heated discussions in party meetings which inevitably spilled over into the press after Lenin's cooptation into the editorial board of Pravda,

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18. The issues of Pravda offer supporting evidence for this lack of ties by comparing the date of certification in the Central Organ with the first date of issue. This comparison reveals, not surprisingly, that proximity to the capital resulted in rapid certification while the more remote publications took longer. Thus Sotsial-demokrat waited three days and Golos pravdy only two for certification, while Proletarii of Kharkov required seven days. Pravda, March 12, p. 1; 16, p. 1; 17, p. 1. Another instance of this failure of communication is shown by comparing the lists of approved party papers printed in Pravda and Sotsial-demokrat, March 30. The Moscow paper approved six publications (Pravda, Sotsial-demokrat, Golos pravdy, Proletarii, Sotsial-demokrat of Saratov and Priv-

April 5, and the publication of the theses in the Central Organ April 7.[19] The immediate response to the theses was "Our Differences" by Kamenev April 8, after which the Central Organ returned to the path which Molotov and the provisional editorial board had charted in the first six issues.[20] The publication of the "April Theses" in the Central Organ was followed by a series of reprints in the localities in line with the instructions issued in March by Pravda for the reproduction of articles. But the absence of a greater number of references to reprints of the theses indicates that the whole family of Bolshevik papers was not ready to make as rapid a change as Pravda had or did not support the new line of the Central Organ.[21] In Moscow apparently the theses

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olzhskaia pravda) while the Central Organ certified eight papers (Sotsial-demokrat, Golos pravdy, Iushnii rabochii, Listok peterburgskogo komiteta evreiskoi RSDRP, Nashe zhitta, Zabakailskii rabochii). Pravda and Sotsial-demokrat, March 30, 1917, p. 1.

19. Andronov, Boyevoye oruzhiye partii, p. 310; Pravda, April 7, 1917, p. 1.

20. Pravda, April 8, 1917, p. 1. According to Zaslavskii, "Pravda", p. 41, Lenin reacted to Pravda's conciliatory line immediately upon arrival at the Finland Station when he asked Kamenev "what are you writing in Pravda? We have seen several issuse and healthily upbraid you." From the Memoirs of F. Raskolnikov in Proletarskaia revoliutsiia, #1, 1923, pp. 221-2.

21. Another possibility, of course, exists. This is that they didn't find out about the theses or receive them until so long after their publication in Pravda that their reprinting was no longer reasonable. The number of reprints is impossible to estimate without being able to see the various party papers. Andronov, Boyevoye

were published only after some opposition within the Moscow organization was overcome, and the failure of Golos sotsial-demokrata to reprint the "April Theses" suggests even stronger opposition in Kiev to the abrupt change in the party line which could not be overcome at the time.[22]

Whatever the nature of the response in the party press to the lead set by Pravda in printing the theses, the new line had been established and the leadership of the Central Organ rested in the hands of Lenin.[23] Whether the local party branches followed Pravda's line or not, a new tone had been set at the center and the party now turned to the more prosaic tasks of expanding its press base.

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oruzhiye partii, p. 310, lists the following six papers as reprinting the theses: Sotsial-demokrat, Proletarii, Bakinskii rabochii, Kavkazskii rabochii, Vperyod! and Krasnii rabochii; Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pechat', p. 57 lists the same group with the exception of Bakinskii rabochii. Both have the ambiguous "and others" after their lists. Karnaukh, Po puti "Pravda", p. 43, cites Proletarii and Zvezda as reprinting the theses April 13 and 29 respectively. Cherepakhov, M.S., Comp., Russkaia periodicheskaia pechat', 1895-1917, Moscow, 1957, p. 281 (Hereafter cited as Rus period pechat'), records the publication of the theses in Sotsial-demokrat of Iakutsk, April 25. The total number of party papers at the end of April was about twenty. Taking all the cited papers gives a list of eight, meaning that less than half the party net published one of the most important documents of the revolution despite the impact that it made in Pravda.

22. Budnykov, Bol part pechat', p. 42, cites the opposition of Rykov and Nogin in Moscow, and that of Piatakov and Bosh in Kiev.

23. There is no evidence of the excommunication of any papers certified by Pravda for failure to reprint the theses or for any other deviations once they had been certified.

The particular task facing the Central Committee and its publication, Pravda, was the purchase of a new press. On April 13, the Central Organ appealed to its readers and supporters to gather 75,000 rubles for new presses, since those of Sel'skii vestnik were inadequate for the expanded format and circulation planned for Pravda.[24] The original request asked for the collection in five days, and though the request was endorsed by the Petrograd General City Conference of Bolsheviks April 14, the deadline was not met. At about the same time Sotsial-demokrat made a similar appeal to its readers, basing its request on the need to expand format in order to print more worker letters and the many articles on questions of the day.[25] The provincial press took up the call for financial assistance and recorded their collections in the sections "Iron Fund of the Worker Press'. However the success of the campaign was not achieved immed-

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Whether this indicates that the other party papers came into line or that the center was not sufficiently informed about their content is impossible to determine, but the former is more likely.

24. Pravda, April 13, 1917, p. 1. Two other reasons were given: the need to fight the slanders of the bourgeois press and the desire to publish a small popular paper called Rabochii i soldat. The success of the appeal is indicated by the failure of such a publication to appear.

25. Sotsial-demokrat, April 7, 1917 in Bol'shevistskaia pechat', vol. IV, p. 140.

iately but over an extended period of time, since Pravda was unable to purchase and equip its new presses until June.[26]

Contemporaneously with the efforts to expand the physical plant and circulation of the party dailies, proceeded the construction of a press apparatus worthy of the name, including preparation for expedition, dissemination and subscription. One of the most important steps taken in these areas was the creation of a Press Buro by the Central Committee, fulfilling a need for such an institution that had been expressed at the 7th "April" Conference of the Party.[27] The Press Buro, run by Molotov, had a twofold responsibility:

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26. The establishment of the new printing office, Trud, is festooned with such a variety of data that only the fact of its existence is sure. Budnykov, Bol part pechat', pp. 69-70, states that 75,334 rubles were gathered in the first week of the appeal, but for some reason the party waited until June when 140,000 rubles had been gathered and another 130,000 was taken from the "Iron Fund", to equip Trud. Sazonov, "Presledovaniye", O sov pechati, p. 95, supports Budnykov on the latter two figures, but does not mention the success of the first week. Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pechat', p. 72, reports the success of the original campaign by press day (May 12), but indicates that the owner of the press raised his price, and a more expensive press had to be purchased. This account is supported by Andronov, Boyevoye oruzhiye partii, pp. 291-3, but neither he nor Berezhnoi mention the final price paid for Trud. Most likely the original deadline was not met and the price of the press did go up. This would explain the much higher figures cited by Budnykov and Sazonov to purchase the press in June.

27. Once again the precise date for an event is obscure. Berezhnoi, et al., Ibid., p. 75, puts the establishment of the Buro after the 7th Conference; Antropov in Gazeta "Pravda", p. 23, places it, in passing, with the material on the party press in March and April; Portiankin, I.A., Sovetskaia voyennaia pechat', istoricheskii

leadership and guidance. On the one hand it distributed articles and information on questions of the day to party papers in the capital and provinces, while on the other, the Buro was meant to strengthen the leadership of Bolshevik organizations by providing them with theoretical materials. To do this the Buro published its own periodical, Biulleten' biuro pechati, the first issue of which appeared June 15. For the many party organizations which had no publication, the Biulleten' was used as a substitute and supplement to the few party papers that might have reached their area.[28]

The Press Buro might provide guidance and leadership for local periodicals if they received its instructions and information, but the heart of the party press problem lay in the area of dissemination. Equally important and intimately linked with the question of dissemination were the expedition of and subscription to party papers. All three of

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ocherk, Moscow, 1960, p. 8 (Hereafter cited as Portiankin, Sov voyen pechat'), dates its creation in April.

28. Bol'shevistskaia partiinaia periodicheskaia pechat', Mart-Noiabr' 1917, Moscow, 1951, p. 13 (Hereafter cited as Bol part pechat'); Rus period pechat', p. 235; Berezhnoi, et al., Ibid., pp. 75-6; Antropov, Gazeta "Pravda", p. 23. Destined to appear three times per week, the Biulleten' published four issues (June 15, 19, 26 and July 1) and then stopped. There is no indication of the reason for the cessation, but the destruction of Trud in the aftermath of the July Days probably made it impossible to continue printing the Biulleten'. Nor is there a direct link between this Press Buro and the future press agencies of the Soviet Government; ROSTA, Press Section Central Committee or Press Buro of VTsIK, since this buro was dissolved in August.

these functions represented individual facets of the same task, getting the party publication from the press to the reader, and the party tackled them at the same time.

Part of the responsibility for these services rested at the center and part at the local level. As the press apparatus was created after the February Revolution, a section of the physical plant of a paper was set aside for an expedition office, responsible for preparing the individual paper for distribution (dissemination) throughout Russia. Dissemination involved the delivery of the paper to individual or collective subscribers, secured by the local organization throughout the area of its jurisdiction. Thus subscription and expedition were matters over which the party had direct control while dissemination by post or mail was the responsibility of the Provisional Government. If all three parts worked as intended, papers would have flowed smoothly from presses to readers. But it had become apparent even in March that none of these services was functioning well. The Central Organ of the party lost over half its circulation in Petrograd and this was unsatisfactory. In May to rectify the situation Pravda appealed to all party committees to create raion sections for the Central Organ without which dissemination would suffer.[29] While the response to this appeal was not overwhelming, special measures were taken in

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29. Pravda, May 25, 1917, p. 1.

Moscow, the Ukraine and the Donbass to facilitate the sale of the party press.[30]

At the same time Pravda inquired why there were not 80,000 subscriptions to party papers when, according to the All-Russian Conference of the party, all members had the obligation and responsibility to subscribe to a party publication.[31] The Central Organ had stated this duty even more specifically earlier in the month in another notice to the party: "Every party organization must organize the extensive dissemination of the Central Organ -- Pravda. Every member of the party must be a subscriber to Pravda. Every member of the party must organize collective subscriptions to Pravda."[32] The Central Committee also helped in its own way by sending experienced Pravdists from the capital to aid struggling local Bolshevik papers.[33]

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30. Budnykov, Bol part pechat', pp. 89-90; In Kharkov and Lugansk all party members were ordered to distribute the party press. Karnaukh, Po puti "Pravda", pp. 29-30.

31. Pravda, May 19, 1917, p. 1.

32. Pravda, May 2, 1917, p. 1. On the same day Soldatskaia pravda, the organ of the Military Organization of the Central Committee, had appealed to its readers to organize cooperative societies for the distribution of the paper. Soldatskaia pravda, May 2, 1917, in Bol'shevistskaia pechat', vol. IV, p. 174.

33. Astrakhan, Kh.M., and Sazonov, I.S., "Sozdaniye massovoi bol'shevistskoi pechati v 1917 godu", Voprosy istorii, #1, 1957, p. 91 (Hereafter cited as Astrakhan and Sazonov, "Sozdaniye massovoi pechati"), write that the Pravdist V.A. Tikhomirov was sent to Kazan and helped organize Rabochii in that city, while Ia. Erman was dispatched by direct order of the Central Committee to Tsaritsyn

The effect of all this activity is difficult to determine. It is clear that the number of Bolshevik papers grew larger following Lenin's return and the circulation of the party press increased, since there is no record of any periodical suspending publication until the July days. But the question of dissemination makes recourse to statistics an unreal exercise, since the means of dissemination lay in hostile hands. The Provisional Government controlled the postal-telegraph agencies and the Mensheviks controlled the railroad unions. Neither was well disposed toward dissemination of the party press. In one case 4,000 copies of Pravda, destined for general dissemination in the Caucasus were confiscated by the Tiflis Mensheviks.[34] But a more likely cause for the poor dissemination of the party press was the breakdown of transportation and communication within Russia due to the dislocations of war and the chaos of revolution. Whatever the reason, the Bolshevik papers were not regularly distributed although some areas fared well, while others were simply overwhelmed by a sea of larger papers published by Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, Kadets or other groups.[35]

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where he helped with Bor'ba. The editors of Tovarishch acknowledged the assistance of the Central Committee in creating their paper in the second issue.

34. Sazonov, "Presledovaniye", O sov pechati, p. 92.

35. Sed'maia (aprel'skaia) vserossiiskaia konferentsiia RSDRP (bol'shevik), protokoly, Moscow, 1958, passim. Examples of the problem of attempting to obtain an accurate picture of dissemination is found in Soviet ac-

Attempts to disseminate the party press within the army met with similar mixed results. In the Ukraine the two papers designated for regiments of the Southwest Front passed quickly out of existence in June. On the other hand Okopnaia pravda, which began publication at the end of April on funds gathered by soldiers of the Novoladozhsk Regiment, was extensively disseminated by regimental committees and at paper kiosks, while the commander of the Rumanian Front noted the influence of both Pravda and Okopnaia pravda in the 675th Infantry Regiment.[36] Generally the party press was officially banned at the front and ordered confiscated and burned where it did appear, or simply did not reach the front for unknown reasons.[37] The impact of all the party

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counts of the press. Karnaukh, Po puti "Pravda", p. 23, claims 200 copies of Pravda reached Lugansk regularly while Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pechat', p. 66, reports that the Lugansk delegation to the 7th Party conference stated that no copies of the Central Organ reached its area.

36. Karnaukh, Ibid., pp. 22-3; Grazkin, G.D., "Okopnaia pravda", Moscow, 1958, pp. 89-90.

37. Grazkin, Ibid., p. 90; Sazonov, "Presledovaniye", O sov pechati, p. 92; Budnykov, Bol part pechat', p. 108, cites materials from the archives which report that the soldiers of the XIth Army drew their ideological leadership from Pravda and Soldatskaia pravda. He also states that the Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Front had prohibited the sale and dissemination of Bolshevik papers, p. 105. Pravda, April 29, p. 2, recorded the absence of any proletarian papers at the front in the Minsk area, while according to Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pechat', p. 66, some of the delegates to the 7th Conference reported the irregular and innaccurate delivery of the Central Organ at various fronts. The party military press at this time consisted of Okopnaia pravda, Soldatskaia pravda, Volna and Golos pravdy. Soldatskaia pravda was designated as

publications on the Russian scene, thus, was probably not very great and when their circulation, estimated at 300,000 for April and May, is considered, such a small impact is not surprising.[38]

Within this context of a slowly expanding Bolshevik press net there remains the curious incident of the attempt of the Petrograd Committee to organize its own paper rather than participate in the Central Organ of the party. This question was raised by Molotov and Tomsky within the Petrograd Executive Commission and then discussed at an extraordinary session of the Petrograd Committee on May 30. Lenin opposed the idea of a separate publication because it would waste party press resources and divide the party's strength. He stressed the continuity of the interests of the Central Committee and the Petrograd Committee, but tabled two resolutions. Adoption of the first would have permitted the publication of a separate paper for the Petrograd Committee, while the second

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the Central Organ of the military organizations of the RSDRP(b) by the Conference of Front and Rear Organizations at the end of June. Vsesoiuznaia kommunisticheskaia partiia (bol'shevik) v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh s"ezdov, konferentsii i plenumev TsK, part I, Moscow, 1940, p. 248.

38. This figure is obtained by totaling the circulation of the various party papers in Rus period pechat', but it is inexact since many party publications were not dailies. Perhaps a more meaningful figure would be 200,000 copies for Pravda, Sotsial-demokrat and Soldatskaia pravda, as these were the main party dailies. This means that the average provincial publication had a circulation of about 5,000 copies.

would have alloted more space within the Central Organ for local affairs.[39] In this case the party leader was unable to convince the Petrograd Committee of the error of its ways and had to appeal over its head to the district organizations, asking them to discuss the question of the second paper, and repeating the arguments he had used before the Petrograd Committee. The proponents of the second paper also appealed to the local organizations, but at this level Lenin succeeded in obtaining a majority decision in favor of the second resolution, and no local party paper appeared in the capital.[40] The expansion of the party net was desirable apparently only so long as it did not detract from the power of the Central Organ.

As the final step in the guidance of its net the Central Committee and the Central Organ held consultations with local party members when they were in the capital and began a press section in Pravda which analyzed the contents of the various party publications, noting their strengths and weaknesses and attacked the press of other parties and groups, revealing

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39. Lenin, Vladimir Il'ich, Sochineniia, 3rd Ed., vol. 20, pp. 447-9 (Hereafter cited as Lenin, Soch); Andronov, Boyevoye oruzhiye partii, p. 323.

40. Lenin, Ibid., pp. 455-7; Andronov, Ibid., pp. 52-3 and 327; Budnykov, Bol part pechat', p. 53. The arguments used in this discussion antedate arguments that will recur after the seizure of power as Molotov based his position on the need to satisfy a layer of readers between the lowest who read Soldatskaia pravda and the leading ranks of the workers who read Pravda.

their true aims and counter-revolutionary tendencies.[41]

July-October

By summer the tone of the Bolshevik press had become increasingly strident. Accusing the Provisional Government of being merely a continuation of Capitalism and calling for the unity of the working class around the slogan "Bread, Peace and Land", the party press led by Pravda continuously attacked the government. All party papers propagandized for the demonstration June 18 which brought thousands into the streets. And the crowds that began to gather in the capital July 2 were encouraged by the party press, which called for all power to the soviets. These demonstrations which the party was unable to control and which severely pressed the Provisional Government, inevitably led to reaction by the government and brought down on the party press, which had been instrumental in inciting the masses, full scale repression, arrests and closings.

First to feel the weight of reaction to the July Days was Pravda, whose offices were destroyed by a mob after they had been closed by the government. This occurred just after

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41. Grazkin, the editor of Okopnaia pravda, relates a trip to Petrograd for consultation with party leaders in June during which Sverdlov criticized his paper for being narrowly provincial and filled with exclusively local materials, unrelated to the general tasks of the party. Grazkin, G.D., "Okopnaia pravda", Moscow, 1958, p. 85.

Lenin had left the editorial offices early in the morning of July 5. All the collaborators and press workers found in the offices were arrested, the copies of the paper then ready for expedition were thrown into the Moika, and the editorial documents and papers, seized or destroyed. Despite the destruction, on the next day Listok pravda was able to appear in Pravda's place, since the presses of Trud had not been affected by the previous night's activity. This edition was the first and last for the substitute Central Organ as Trud was razed July 6.[42]

In the days following the closing of Pravda and during the course of August the Provisional Government closed many other party papers,[43] forbade the distribution of all party periodicals at the front, and on July 12 gave the Ministries of the Interior and War the right to close publications, advocating military disobedience or appealing to violence and

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42. Nazarov, A.I., Oktiabr' i kniga, 1917-1923, Moscow, 1968, p. 33 (Hereafter cited as Okt i kniga); Budnykov, Bol part pechat', pp. 131-3; Zaslavskii, "Pravda", p. 124; Sazonov, "Presledovaniye", O sov pechati, p. 100; Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pechat', pp. 123ff.; Rabochii i soldat, July 26, 1917. Estimations on the damage run from 100,000 to 150,000 rubles. The standard Soviet version of the closing states that Pravda was destroyed by Junkers and Cossacks under the direct orders of General Polovtsev, Commander of the Petrograd Military Okrug. They then tell how the presses at Trud were razed and I.A. Voinov killed distributing Listok pravda.

43. Fourteen different party papers were closed in this period. The Central Organ alone was stopped on four different occasions. Rus period pechat', pp. 231ff.; Bol part pechat', passim.

civil war, and hold their editors responsible.[44] The only major party paper that escaped the reaction was Sotsial-demokrat (Moscow), but this was not the fault of the Commissar of the 2nd Army who telegraphed Kerensky July 20, appealing for the closing of the Moscow paper "... which is in no way inferior to the paper Pravda, is disseminated in an importantly greater number than before, fully replacing Pravda".[45]

The suppression of these papers was no small matter to the party. Particularly difficult to surmount was the loss of both Central Organs with their circulation of about 150,000 copies daily. Equally important was the destruction of Trud, since the financial means to replace the presses was not available, and the owners of other presses were even more reluctant to publish party papers in the aftermath of the July Days. In addition to the physical destruction and the official closing of various papers, the reaction to the July Days manifested itself in another important way: decline in the number of contributions, which affected all party publica-

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44. Browder and Kerensky, Rus Prov Gov, vol. III, p. 1436; Astrakhan and Sazonov, "Sozdaniye massovoi pechati", p. 133; Andronov, Boyevoye oruzhiye partii, p. 375. The decree closing Pravda was not published until July 15. Browder and Kerensky, Ibid., vol. II, p. 979. According to Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pechat', p. 126, the Provisional Government also forbade the sending of party papers by mail.

45. Kuznetsov and Shumakov, Bol pechat' Moskvy, p. 334. Berezhnoi, et al., Ibid., p. 128, says Sotsial-demokrat was not closed because the workers and soldiers would not allow it. Apparently this was one of the few in-

tions.[46] The destruction of the leading party papers was felt much more at this time by the local organizations than it would have been in March when they were so poorly connected with the localities and did not provide leadership and guidance.[47]

Because of the importance of the Central Organ to the local organizations and the working masses, the Central Committee immediately tried to restore Pravda and reestablish the other papers which had been closed. In the meantime Sotsial-demokrat served as the de facto Central Organ of the party, a situation that only hastened efforts to revive a real Central Organ, since the Moscow paper was far removed from the seat of power and could never adequately give timely information on events in the capital. The attempts by the Central Committee evolved along the same lines that had been taken in March and encountered the same difficulties: lack of funds, presses and material-technical support. Nor were there any reactionary presses available for seizure, and the

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stances when the local soviet supported a party paper since the Moscow Soviet at its July 15 session protested the closing of Sotsial-demokrat. Shestoi s"ezd RSDRP (bol'shevik), protokoly, Moscow, 1958, p. 58 and footnote p. 410 (Hereafter cited as Shestoi s"ezd).

46. Sotsial-demokrat, #s 111 and 113, July 19 and 21 in Bol'shevistskaia pechat', vol. IV, pp. 154-6; Karnaukh, Po puti "Pravda", p. 29.

47. Astrakhan and Sazonov, "Sozanniye Massovoi Pechati", p. 92, cite letters of the local organizations which state that the loss of Pravda made their situation difficult. Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pechat', p. 129 cites similar materials.

response to appeals for funds was not immediate. After a protracted search for a new press proved fruitless, the Central Committee decided to restore the presses at Trud although this would be a costly and time consuming process. Following the decision, but before the renovation was completed in mid-August, the leader of the Military Organization, Podvoiskii, was able to purchase a press on which the new Central Organ of the party, Rabochii i soldat, appeared July 23.

Many of the other closed papers had an easier time reopening. Golos pravdy, the organ of the Kronstadt Committee, closed July 13, came out the next day as Proletarskoye delo, while Okopnaia pravda, reappeared two days after its closing, July 23, as Okopnyi nabat. On the other hand Soldatskaia pravda did not resume independent publication until August 13, when it appeared as Soldat.[49] The papers that reopened quickly were those whose presses were not destroyed, and by

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48. Okt i kniga, p. 33; Zaslavskii, "Pravda", p. 130; Berezhnoi, et al., Ibid., p. 130; Sazonov, "Presledovaniye", O sov pechati, p. 104; Astrakhan and Sazonov, Ibid., p.96. Rabochii i soldat was confirmed as the Central Organ of the party at a plenem of the Central Committee August 4 and an editorial board of five, including Stalin, Sokolnikov, Miliutin and representatives of the Petrograd Committee and the Military Organization, was selected. Protokoly tsentral'nogo komiteta RSDRP(b), Avgust 1917-Fevral' 1918, Moscow, 1958, p. 4 (Hereafter cited as Protokoly TsK).

49. Rus period pechat', pp. 239, 259-60, 268; Soldatskaia pravda was merged with the reopened Central Organ due to the paucity of press resources available to the party at the end of July, but with Trud restored in August, it resumed its own path.

the end of July most of the closed publications had been restored.

This restoration coincided with the Sixth Congress of the Party, July 26 - August 3, at which not only the press in general, but the Central Organ specifically were discussed, and the extent of the party press net in the provinces clearly delineated. The question of the party papers was first raised by Sverdlov in the Organizational Report at the third session of the Congress, July 27. In his report Sverdlov stated definitely the role of the Central Organ:

> "The Central Committee through Pravda realizes the ideological leadership of all the party. In Pravda comrades find the answers to all theoretical questions."[50]

It was not necessary for members of the Central Committee to visit each local organization and report on individual questions since their views were published in Pravda. From the articles in the Central Organ all party organizations would obtain material to respond to the events taking place in Russia. The two week hiatus in the appearance of the Central Organ was passed over in silence, but its incidence of delivery in the provinces was one of the questions posed in a pre-congress questionnaire sent to local party organizations. The answers of the sixty nine responding groups show that only

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50. Shestoi s"ezd, p. 37.

twelve received any party publication from another city or organization, suggesting that the Central Organ might in theory be the source of all information and attitudes on the issues of the day, but very few party members were able to make use of this source.[51]

The report of the Moscow Organization at the fifth session, July 28, set the tone for the condition of the party press in the localities.

> "We publish a daily paper Sotsial-demokrat, which is printed in 50,000 copies. But the size of the publication is too small, and therefore it is impossible to make it exhaustive not only in the sense of all-Russian information, but even for purely local. To expand the size of the paper we need our own press. Up to this time we have been printing at a private press, seized at the beginning of the revolution, from which they have tried to expel us every day. Several days ago a compulsory collection was [made] for the party press, and we hope that we will be successful in realizing the purchase of our own press."[52]

Other party organizations reported the weakness of their papers or that their publications had been closed in the days following the July demonstration.[53] But the most revealing fact about the extent of the Bolshevik press net was that only one third of the reporting party groups had their own

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51. Ibid., pp. 317-90, passim. The evidence here is not conclusive since only one party committee stated that it did not receive any party publications while the rest simply did not answer the particular questions.

52. Ibid., p. 57.

53. Ibid., pp. 50-1, 72, 76, 78.

publications.[54]

By the end of the Sixth Congress the Central Committee had a more accurate picture of its press net, a picture of very limited dimensions which revealed that most organizations were weakly connected with the center and their publications existed generally on local efforts. Outside the capital and Moscow there were few party papers and fewer still benefited from the guidance of the Central Organ or had the material-technical means necessary to publish a paper capable of making an impression even on the local scene. The absence of financial backing is continually mentioned as the reason for the failure to expand format and circulation, and the reaction to the July Days lay behind this unwillingness to support the party press. By the end of July, although the worst of the situation had been overcome with the reopening of the majority of closed periodicals, the former circulation of the party press had not been restored, nor had an influence commensurate with the expectations of the party's leaders

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54. Ibid., pp. 317-90, passim. Question thirteen asked whether the local group had its own publication. The positive reply of only twenty three organizations does not indicate only twenty three papers since some groups had more than one, so the exact number of party papers is in doubt. The Congress Press Report names thirty seven papers, but Budnykov, Bol part pechat', p. 138, and Zaslavskii, "Pravda", p. 142, say this figure does not include some local publications. Only seventeen party groups could report the predominance of the party press in their areas.

been attained.[55]

The period following the sixth party congress saw a steady accretion of strength to the party press, despite further closings of the Central Organ by the Provisional Government, as new publications arose in hitherto unrepresented areas. No sooner was the party congress over than the government on August 10 suppressed Rabochii i soldat. This time only three days elapsed before the Central Organ reappeared and on that same day, August 13, a new Central Organ for the party's military organizations began to publish in the form of Soldat.[56] The reestablishment of the leading papers for both workers and soldiers sparked a steady stream of correspondence from local party organizations to the Central Committee which revealed an increased demand for the Central Organ and other leading party papers and a more consistent penetration of the party press to the provinces. The party also continued its campaign for the support of Bolshevik papers and their dissemination in the localities.[57]

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55. Astrakhan and Sazonov, "Sozdaniye Massovoi Pechati", p. 96, states that the circulation of the Central Organ fell to 50,000 at the end of July. The press report of the sixth congress cites a figure of 85,000. Shestoi s"ezd, p. 150.

56. Protokoly TsK, pp. 20-4; Bol part pechat', pp. 8-14. The new Central Organ was called Proletarii. Strictly speaking Rabochii i soldat had been the Central Organ of the military organizations, but it had been made the interim Central Organ of the party as well.

57. Perepiska sekretariata TsK RSDRP(b) s mestnymi partiinymi organizatsiiami, vol. I, Moscow, 1952, passim (Hereafter cited as Perepiska TsK). Some messages indicate that

The restoration of Trud, which added a major printing plant to the presses secured by the military organization in July, materially aided the campaign for increased dissemination.

Then on the 20th of August the Central Committee discussed the question of the Central Organ with the idea of improving its content. The decision was taken to expand the editorial college and divide the paper into twelve sections covering areas of importance to the party.[58] This reorganization marked the first attempt to delineate the content of the party press except in the most general terms. Previously party publications had had no fixed format and varied from issue to issue depending on the needs of the day. Now the Central Organ of the party was given definite sections which should have permanent places in the format of every issue.[59] The change in the editorial board of the Central Organ was

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the requested periodicals did not arrive, but quantitatively they are declining. A typical example of the appeals used in the dissemination campaign, quoted from Donets proletarii, August 28, is in Karnaukh, Po puti "Pravda", p. 33. The real push in this area would come at the beginning of September when the Kornilovshchina offered more fertile ground for expanding the circulation of the party press.

58. Protokoly TsK, vol. I, p. 26. The sections and their editors were: Trade unions - Glebov, Production - Vladimirov, Literature - Lunacharskii, Municipal - Uritskii, Political Reports - Manuilskii, Current Events - Kharakan, Party Life - Sverdlov, Around Russia - Joffe, Soldier Life - Menzhinskii or Nevskii, Press Section - Nevskii, Plant Factory - Skrypnik, Foreign Life - Uritskii.

59. The format created by the Central Committee August 20 has changed little since that day. During NEP certain revisions were attempted to attract readers, but these

reflected in the provinces where similar changes occurred.[60] At the same time the Central Committee took steps to protect its publication from the harrassment of the Provisional Government by moving its presses to the Vyborg worker district where they would be more immune to physical attack. The financial condition of the paper was then entrusted to Sverdlov with the aim of ending the chronic monetary crisis.[61]

The ink was barely dry on the reorganization of the Central Organ when the Central Committee initiated an intensive campaign for dissemination of and subscription to its paper and the party press in general. The first step in this campaign was a directive by the Central Committee published in Proletarii August 24.

> "Comrades!
> The party is concerned that the dissemination of its Central Organ should be established on a suitable level. [It is] the duty of local organizations to take

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were ephemeral. In the days following the seizure of power all the party press conformed to this model if it had not already done so, while the governmental press took its lead from Izvestiia.

60. At least in Moscow at Sotsial-demokrat this expansion was done to protect the paper from the government and perhaps even to swamp anti-Leninists on the board. In this case the Moscow Committee set up a narrow and wide board at the end of August with the former running the paper. Kuznetsov and Shumakov, Mos bol pechat', pp. 362-3.

61. Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pechat', p. 175; Mutovkin, N., "Soldatskaia pravda" v oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii, p. 22 (Hereafter cited as Mutovkin, "Soldatskaia pravda"); Sazonov, "Presledovaniye", O sov pechati, p. 104. These precautions were well taken since the Provisional Government closed Rabochii, the latest Central Organ, September 2,

upon themselves the organization of the extensive dissemination of the CO.

The CC orders all organizations of the party to oblige all their members to become continual subscribers to the CO.

The CC appeals to all members of the party to assist in the most extensive dissemination of the party paper through the organization of collective subscriptions in factories, plants, workshops, barracks etc.

Let not one member of the party remain away from active work on behalf of the CO"[62]

Not content with a simple appeal in the Central Organ, the Central Committee then dispatched a circular letter September 1 to local organizations, defining the proper apparatus for dissemination and explaining the necessity for such a campaign.

"We have already appealed in our Central Organ to all organizations of the party to place dissemination of the CO on a suitable level. It is possible to do this by separating from the composition of the local organization some group which is charged with all relations with us on matters of the Central Organ.

We have been forced by the separate closings of our paper, which make it impossible to establish correctly the dispatch of papers, to propose to you the organization mentioned above....

The group which you designate should take upon itself reception of individual and collective subscriptions....

The realization of our plan for the organization of dissemination of the Central Organ is considered unconditionally necessary, since this is the sole means at the present time for the extensive dissemination of our directives and the ideological leadership of the movement, and therefore, dear comrads, we ask you to take all

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but the presses remained unscathed and the new Central Organ, Rabochii put', appeared the next day.

62. Proletarii, August 24, 1917 p. 1. Zaslavskii, "Pravda", p. 156, claims that this appeal was sent as a letter to all party organizations, but the Central Committee correspondence does not contain a copy.

measures for its speedy fulfillment."[63]
Two other communications from the Central Committee expressed the center's concern over the lack of exposure for the rest of the party press throughout Russia and requested detailed accounts of the status, periodicity and financial condition of local party publications.[64]

The response to these appeals and instructions was an increased demand for not only the current issues of the Central Organ of the party, but also for complete sets. At the same time special dissemination groups were set up attached to the local party committee which in turn distributed more and more copies of the party press.[65]

But probably the greatest boon to the expansion and dissemination of the party press at the beginning of September was the Kornilovshchina which provided an air of respectability for Bolshevik papers through their posture as defenders of the revolution from military reaction. From a position attacking the government at the end of June to that of protecting the

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63. Perepiska TsK, vol. I, pp. 33-4. According to the Journal of Central Committee documents, 415 copies of this letter were sent to local organizations September 3 and another 100, September 4.

64. Ibid., pp. 37 and 57. Only five replies to the second communication are available, from Moscow, Rostov-on-Don, Samara, Helsingfors and Ivanove-Voznesensk. With the exception of Moscow, all reported deficits for their papers. Ibid., pp. 258, 263, 268, 294, 354.

65. Ibid., passim; Astrakhan and Sazonov, "Sozdaniye massovoi pechati", p. 96; Zaslavskii, "Pravda", p. 178.

revolution could only redound to the credit of the party press, and the growth of its circulation must be partially explained by this turn of events.[66] In terms of the number of party publications, the Kornilovshchina aided the Bolsheviks in obtaining majorities in various soviets and with them control of their papers which soon reflected the party line.[67]

The measures of the Central Committee and the course of events combined to give the party a much stronger press net than it had had at any time. Their impetus would continue until the seizure of power in October and insured the recovery of all the ground lost during the reaction that followed the July days. The Central Organ of the party had increased its circulation and, with its presses safe in the worker district of Vyborg, was secure from physical destruction. In the provinces the party press net was expanding steadily

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66. It is impossible to determine whether the press campaign or the Kornilovshchina was responsible for the growth of the party press. Most likely the new air of respectability made the press campaign more effective than it otherwise would have been.

67. The majority of the soviet papers that fell to the Bolsheviks did so in September or later. The two most important were Izvestiias in Moscow and Minsk. At about the same time anti-Bolshevik socialist papers in Kostroma, Nizhnyi Tagil and Vladivostok became party. Martselei, S.V., Pechat' sovetskoi Belorussii, Minsk, 1961, p. 54 (Hereafter cited as Martselei, Pechat' Belorussii); Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pechat', pp. 250-1. Izvestiia of the Petrograd Soviet resisted takeover until the revolution, but in October an evening paper, Rabochii i soldat, controlled by the party, also began to appear as an organ of the soviet. Trotsky, Lev Davidovich, Sochineniia, vol. III, part 2, Moscow, 1925, pp. 16-7 (Hereafter cited as Trotsky, Soch). By the time of the seizure of power

both in terms of circulation and number of papers.

On the other hand two factors must be born in mind to keep this picture of the party press in its proper perspective. In the first place the total circulation of the party and Bolshevik controlled soviet press at this time amounted to only about 600,000 copies.[68] This circulation was insufficient to meet the requirements of the whole country. A second consideration is that the demand for the Central Organ of the party can in no sense be equated with the actual distribution of the paper since there is no evidence that all copies sent from the center reached their destination.[69]

In the days following the Kornilovshchina the party began to consider the question of peasant papers in order to fill an obvious gap in the party press. First afield in this area was the Moscow Organization which began to publish Derevenskaia pravda three times per week from October 4. This was followed by the first edition of Derevenskaia bednota

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at least 35 soviet papers were controlled by the party. Anisimova, P., "Vtoroi vserossiiskii s"ezd sovetov", Krasnyi arkhiv, #5 (84), 1937, pp. 12-134, passim.

68. Astrakhan and Sazonov, "Sozdaniye massovoi pechati", p. 98; Berezhnoi, et al., Ibid., p. 203.

69. Both these caveats are open to the same argument, namely that the revolution was made in the cities of Russia where the party press was strongest. However in Moscow the liberal paper Russkoye slovo was printed in 350,000 copies alone which indicates that even in the cities the party press was relatively weak. Vertinskii, N.S., Gazeta v Rossii i SSSR XVII-XXvv, Leningrad, 1931, p. 135 (Hereafter cited as Vertinskii, Gazeta v Rossii).

October 12, published by the Military Organization of the Central Committee.[70] The two papers set for themselves the tasks of reflecting the way of life in the village and undertook the explanation of the counter-revolution.[71] The party's peasant papers were quickly integrated into the press net and disseminated to local organizations, but their effect must have been limited in the time remaining before the October Revolution since the party had little experience, connection or organization among the peasants for whom they were destined.

By early October with the Provisional Government less and less able to respond in a meaningful way to the problems confronting Russia and with the strength of the party increasing, the Bolshevik press turned to the question of an armed uprising in the capital. The role of the press in the preparation and realization of the seizure of power, of course, varied from place to place. In Petrograd and Moscow where the press was strong and the Bolsheviks a majority in the soviet, party publications played an important role in designating the targets for the uprising and acquainting

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70. At the end of June, the Minsk Soviet had published fourteen issues of Krest'ianskaia gazeta, edited by Frunze, before it was suppressed by the Provisional Government. It did not reopen so the Moscow and Petrograd peasant papers are the first continuous party publications for the peasantry.

71. Derevenskaia pravda, October 4; Derevenskaia bednota, October 12, in Bol'shevistskaia pechat', vol. IV, pp. 210-2 and 204-5.

their readers with the tactics for seizing these targets. The Central Organ of the party included a whole series of articles during October calling for the armed overthrow of the Provisional Government and explaining the procedures of revolution and the barricades. Sotsial-demokrat adopted a similar line.[72]

By the middle of the month the Provisional Government awoke from its lethargy to the seriousness of the situation that was developing in the capital and tried to take steps to prevent the uprising. The foremost target for preventive measures was the Central Organ of the party which continued to outline the steps necessary for taking power. During the night of October 23-4 the government decreed the closing of Rabochii put' and the central military paper Soldat, hoping to forestall any Bolshevik coup by silencing the party mouthpieces. This order was executed with the usual smashing of stereotypes and the confiscation of copies on hand.[73] But the situation in the capital had changed since the last suppression of the Central Organ in September. When the

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72. Probably only the Moscow and Petrograd party papers printed their own articles on the uprising, while the local papers reprinted materials suitable for their area. Budnykov, Bol part pechat', p. 176, records a number of reprints of Lenin's "The Crisis Ripens" in Rabochii put' October 7.

73. Budnykov, Ibid., p. 182; Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pechat', p. 241; Andronov, Boyevoye oruzhiye partii, p. 443; Sazonov, "Presledovaniye", O sov pechati, p. 108.

Central Committee heard of the closing, it reported the event to the Military Revolutionary Committee with instructions to reopen the papers immediately. This was duly accomplished and Rabochii put' appeared October 24 in defiance of the Provisional Government's decree. The Military Revolutionary Committee then issued its own decree opening both revolutionary papers, ordering their press workers to continue printing the papers, and entrusting the protection of the Central Organs to reliable military units.[74] The failure of the Provisional Government to forestall the moves of the party and the revolutionary Military Committee was its last chance to prevent the seizure of power, since on the 25th the party stopped defending its own papers and began to requisition those of the opposition in preparation for the establishment of its own regime.

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74. KPSS v bor'be za pobedy velikoi oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii 1917, Moscow, 1957, p. 115 (Hereafter cited as KPSS v bor'be); Budnykov, et al., Ibid., p. 183; Sazonov, Ibid., pp. 108-110, quotes a decision of the Central Committee "... to despatch quickly to the press a guard and to attend to the timely publication of the next number of the paper" after receiving the news of the closing of the Central Organ. Apparently another attempt was made to close Rabochii put' following a decree of the Provisional Government suppressing all seditious papers and ordering soldiers and citizens to assist in the execution of the decree. The attempt to fulfill this order during the night of October 24-5 was unsuccessful due to the guard posted by the Military Revolutionary Committee which defended both publications.

CHAPTER II

THE SEIZURE OF POWER AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOVIET PRESS

The Suppression of the Opposition Press

The failure of the Provisional Government to forestall the Bolshevik seizure of power during the night of October 24-5 (November 6-7)[1] ensured the overthrow of the Kerensky Government and the February Revolution. One of the initial steps in this coup was a decree of the Military Revolutionary Committee closing the so-called counter-revolutionary papers as soon as the party had taken the initiative.[2] The party followed this measure with another decree, dated October 27 (November 9), signed by the Chairman of the Soviet of Peoples' Commissars (SNK), Lenin, entitled "Decree on the Press". This read:

> "In the grave decisive hour of the revolution and the days immediately following it, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee had to adopt a series of measures against the counter-revolutionary press of various shades.
>
> Immediately on all sides there arose cries that the new Socialist power had violated, by such a measure, the

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1. The dates in this chapter are given first according to the Julian calendar and then according to the Gregorian until February 1 (14) when the Gregorian was officially introduced by the Soviet Government.

2. Lenin o pechati, Footnote 1, p. 748; Budnykov, Bol part pechat', p. 188, lists the following papers which were

basic principle of its program, encroaching on freedom of the press.

The worker and peasant government calls the attention of the population to the fact that in our society, behind this liberal screen actually is hidden the freedom for the propertied classes to seize in their hands the lion's share of all the press, [and] unhindered to poison the minds and confuse the consciousness of the masses.

Everyone knows that the bourgeois press is one of the most powerful weapons of the bourgeoisie. Especially at the critical moment, when the new power, the power of the workers and peasants, is only being consolidated, it is impossible to leave this weapon in the hands of the enemy, at a time when it is no less dangerous than bombs and bullets. Therefore provisional and extraordinary measures have been taken for the supression of the filth and slander in which the yellow and green press have flooded the young victory of the people.

As soon as the new order is consolidated all administrative measures on the press will cease, full freedom for it will be set up within the limits of responsibility before a court, according to the most extensive and progressive legislation in this area.

Considering, however, that the restraint of the press even at this critical moment is admissable only within limits absolutely necessary, the Soviet of Peoples' Commissars decrees:

General Position on the Press

1. Only the following organs of the press are subject to closing: 1) those which appeal for open opposition or defiance of the Worker and Peasant Government; 2) those spreading dissension by means of a clearly slanderous distorition of the facts; 3) those appealing to acts of a clearly criminal, i.e. punishable by law, character.

2. The closing of organs of the press, provisionally or permanently, will be realized only by decree of the Soviet of Peoples' Commissars.

3. The present position has a temporary character and will be cancelled by a special law at the beginning

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closed by the decree: Nashe obshcheye delo, Rech', Novoye vremia, Vechernyeye vremia, Russkaia volia, Birzhevyye vedomosti, Narodnaia pravda, Zhivoye slovo, Den', Gazeta-kopeika, "and others". Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pechat', p. 253, gives a similar list.

of normal conditions of public life."[3]

The reaction to this SNK decree was strong and immediate throughout the non-party press, accusing the Bolsheviks of curtailing freedom of the press and demanding the rescision of the press law. The reaction was so strong that Pravda, which had begun to appear again October 27 (November 9) under its old name, was compelled to explain and justify the party's action.

> "No one more than us values the free oral and printed word, no one better than us knows the value of this freedom, since no one has been forbidden this freedom to such a degree as we have been forbidden it.
>
> But when the bourgeois conspirators and Social-democrats want to use freedom of the press to attack revolutionary freedom -- when they need freedom of the press, in order to support Kerensky in the struggle against the Soviets -- the bulwarks of all revolutionary freedoms, we say: in the interest of revolutionary freedom, won by the people, the interests of the bourgeois and social traitors' press must be subjugated. To leave such freedoms to Kerensky and Co. would be to betray the revolution."[4]

In this way the party defined freedom of the press in terms of the safety of the revolution, and papers which jeopardized the creation of the new order would be closed. Of course, the

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3. Valkom, S.N., Ed., Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti, vol. I, Moscow, 1957, pp. 24-5; (Hereafter cited as Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti); the decree was then published in Pravda and Izvestiia, October 28 (November 10), 1917.

4. Pravda, October 29 (November 11), 1917, p. 1. The reaction to the party's attack on the non-party press must have begun as soon as the Military Revolutionary Committee closed the first papers, since the second paragraph of the decree refers to the cry that arose.

definition of these terms remained the province of the party.

Acting on the strength of the "General Position on the Press" and the party's interpretation thereof, SNK forbade the publication of all those papers which had been closed by the Military Revolutionary Committee in the October Revolution.[5] But the question of the press was not settled so easily, since even some of the Bolsheviks were genuinely concerned about the suppression of non-party papers and the definition of freedom of the press. Their anxiety and that of the Left S. R.'s, who had agreed to participate in the new government, was sufficient to have the question of the press discussed at the fifth session of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets (VTsIK) November 4 (17).

In the stormy evening VTsIK session at the Smolny, the Bolshevik Iu. Larin immediately raised the question of the press. Amid hoots and hisses, he demanded that the measures taken against the press should be modified, since the period of revolutionary struggle, which justified their existence, had passed.[6] In the debate that followed the introduction of

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5. Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti, vol. I, p. 539.

6. Reed, John, Ten Days that Shook the World, New York, 1935, p. 267 (Hereafter cited as Reed, Ten Days); Okt i kniga, p. 55; the latter indicates that at the VTsIK session October 27 (November 9) the Left S.R.'s had accepted the text of the decree on the press without demur. Reed says Larin's resolution was greeted by thunderous applause even from parts of the party, pp. 267-8. Lenin o pechati, footnote 1, p. 748, says Nogin, Riazonov and other Bolsheviks supported Larin, while Reed, Ibid., cited Riazonov and Lozovsky as members of the party supporting the resolution.

Larin's resolution, the Bolsheviks at first attempted to defer discussion of the question. When the Executive Committee vetoed this procedure, the party read its own resolution, stating that the suppression of the bourgeois press was necessary not only in the period of struggle but also during the transition from the old to the new. Having extended the time in which suppression of the non-party press was necessary, the Bolshevik fraction then proposed the confiscation of newsprint and presses by the soviets, which would apportion these resources to political groups and parties in proportion to the number of their constituents. The Bolshevik resolution concluded:

> "The re-establishment of the so-called 'freedom of the press' i.e. the simple return of presses and newsprint to the capitalists -- poisoners of the minds of the people, would be an intolerable capitulation to the will of capital, the surrender of one of the most important positions of the worker and peasant revolution, i.e. a measure of unquestionable counter-revolutionary character.
>
> Proceeding from the above exposition, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee categorically rejects all proposals which aim at the restoration of the old regime in the matter of the press, and unconditionally supports the Soviet of People's Commissars in this question against the pretensions and importunities, which are dictated by petty bourgeois prejudices or direct subservience to the interests of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie."[7]

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7. Reed, Ibid., p. 268; Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti, vol. I, pp. 43-4. In the text of this resolution published in Pravda, November 5 (18), the first sentence of the last paragraph begins: "The Central Committee proposes to the Bolshevik fraction of the Central Executive Committee categorically to reject...." According to Reed, Ibid., p. 269, the reading of the Bolshevik resolution was interrupted frequently from the floor, and the party was immediately compared with the Black Hundreds. An alternate draft resolution, prepared by Lenin, is printed in Lenin o pechati, p. 591.

After the reading of the two resolutions Trotsky and Lenin spoke in favor of the Bolshevik resolution. The Peoples' Commissar for Foreign Affairs stressed the need to confiscate the presses and newsprint of counter-revolutionary papers as the property of society and to strike the press monopoly from the hands of the bourgeoisie. It was unthinkable that periodicals should exist without the support of the population.[8] Lenin summed up the arguments for the Bolshevik faction. To tolerate the existence of bourgeois papers, he said, was to stop being a socialist. "Those who say 'Open the bourgeois papers' do not understand that we are going full speed toward socialism. After all the Tsarist papers were closed after its overthrow."[9] And Lenin certainly intended to see the bourgeois press accorded the same treatment, now that its revolution had been in turn overthrown.[10] After the party's leader had spoken, his views were attacked by other fractions, but when the vote was taken, the Bolshevik

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8. Trotsky, Soch, vol. 3, part 2, pp. 104-5; Reed, Ten Days, pp. 269-70. Reed gives a slightly different version of Trotsky's speech, but the content is the same.

9. Lenin o pechati, p. 592.

10. The non-party press had been warned that this would be the attitude of the Bolsheviks in September, when Lenin had written that a Soviet Government would close the counter-revolutionary papers, confiscate their presses and institute a Government monopoly on advertisements. Lenin o pechati, p. 582, "Tasks of the Revolution"; in Rabochii put', September 26-7 (October 9-10), 1917.

resolution was adopted.[11]

The passage of the party's resolution at the fifth session of VTsIK laid down the fundamental law of the new Soviet state for the press, a law which has never been repealed. Under this statute the definition of counter-revolutionary activity and the establishment of the new regime were the criteria, first in deciding whether a given publication could freely publish and second, in determining when the new regime was firmly consolidated so the "Decree on the Press" could be repealed. Using these two criteria the party has resolutely defined the acceptable press as that emanating from party-soviet institutions.[12]

The decree on the press delimited the theoretical aspects of freedom of the press, but did not create an apparatus for its enforcement or attack the foundation of the bourgeois press -- its financial base. Both of these problems were dealt with in subsequent legislation. In the draft

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11. According to Reed, Ten Days, p. 271, the vote was 34-24 in favor of the Bolshevik resolution and 22-31 against Larin's. The former figures are cited by the editors of both Trotsky's and Lenin's works, but the editors of Trotsky's works show 23-29-2 against Larin (vol. 3, part 2, p. 403) a figure which is supported in Okt i kniga, p. 57.

12. This definition had been applied also within the area of the acceptable press to insure conformity to the party line, however, other measures are usually employed to keep the party-soviet press in line. See chapter 9.

resolution which he had not tabled at the VTsIK session, Lenin had written:

> "As the first step ... The Provisional Worker and Peasant Government should name a Commission of Inquiry to disclose the links of the periodical press with capital, the source of their means of revenue ... and all the economics of the paper in general."[13]

This sentiment pervaded Trotsky's declaration and the Bolshevik resolution adopted by VTsIK, and it was partially realized when the Soviet of Peoples' Commissars passed a decree introducing a state monopoly on advertisements in the periodical press October 30 (November 12). This statute forbade the publication of ads in any publication except organs of the Provisional Worker and Peasant Government and transferred all offices and institutions connected with the processing of ads to the state. The execution of this decree was initially delayed, however, as the question of advertisements was again discussed by SNK November 15 (28), and only three days later did the Commissariat of the Press announce that the decree on ads would become legally binding on November 22 (December 5).[14]

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13. Lenin o pechati, p. 501.

14. The original draft of the decree was prepared by Lunacharsky and revised by Lenin before submission. Both the original and revised drafts are in Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti, vol. I, pp. 54-6. The decree was published in Pravda and Izvestiia, November 8 (21), 1917. On the day of its coming into force the Commissar for Press Matters was instructed to close all papers which appeared on the 22nd with ads.

Striking directly at the source of the economic power of the non-party press as seen by the Bolsheviks, the decree was intended to deny it income from ads. Those papers which continued to publish advertisements would be closed. Not that ads were to be completely eliminated from the press, but they were to be controlled by the state, and local advertising offices would be created to insure their proper management. As Lenin later explained:

> "The decree which established a Governmental monopoly on advertisements also assumed, that private enterprise papers would remain as a general phenomenon, that an economic policy would remain which demanded private advertisements, a system of private property would remain -- a whole series of private businesses would remain which would need advertising, advertisements. Such was and only could be the idea of the decree on the monopoly of private advertisements."[15]

This meant not the curtailment or the end of advertising, but merely an exchange of the beneficiary of the money accruing therefrom and a great diminution of the power of the non-party press from the loss of such revenues. As this money flowed into party coffers, its press would inevitably grow stronger and eventually supplant the non-party press. Suppression would not have to be meted out to those papers that did not breach the regulations of the "General Position on the Press" since they, like the state, could be expected to wither away.

The new government's position was further elaborated in

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15. Lenin, Vladimir Il'ich, Polnoye sobraniye sochinenii, vol. 40, p. 200 (Hereafter cited as Lenin, Pol sob soch)

an article in the Central Organ of the party, which explained the need for the monopoly on ads in terms of forcing the bourgeoisie to obey the Soviet Government and of showing non-party papers that they would not be tolerated if they attacked it.[16] And Trotsky, in a speech to the Grenadiers' Regiment, violently denounced the accusations of strangling the free word.

> "Freedom of the press! What do the advocates of the bourgeoisie mean by this slogan. ...Bourgeois freedom of the press means the monopoly of the capitalist in the dissemination of the ideas of the capitalist class, poisoning the peoples' class consciousness and polluting the peoples' conscience by the refuse of bourgeois thought. ... Where does freedom of the press for the masses begin? It begins at that moment when they receive for their own disposal the material tools of printing ... along with the stocks of paper. We the Soviet power, look at the matter of freedom of the press in such a manner, that we consider ourselves obliged, first of all, to strip from the hands of the bourgeois class the monopoly ... of publication and put the means at the disposal of all the people...."

Advertisements were only a weapon in the hands of the capitalist press, a means to impose tribute on the masses. The liberation of the press must begin with the monopoly of ads, and Trotsky had no doubt what the outcome of the struggle for freedom of the press would be.

> "Our struggle against the bourgeois paper men, against the monopolists of the printed work, is concieved by Philistines of the streets, as a struggle against the free word, but the true masses of people, clearly understand, what is the task for the victory of the first elementary conditions for a true peoples' freedom of the press. Every press which was created by the peoples' labor and the stolen capital of the people, every press which we take from the hands of the bourgeoisie and trans-

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16. Pravda, November 24 (December 7), 1917, p. 1.

fer to the hands of the Soviets of Worker and Peasant Deputies, is a stone in the construction of real freedom of the press. Despite all the baiting and all the opposition, we will carry this task to an end and in place of those paper houses of tolerance, which now create the power of capital in the name of profit, there will be created true organs of free human thought."[17]

The decree on ads aroused the same sort of response that had greeted the decree on the press, and the Petrograd Society of Editors protested against it to SNK.[18] But the party remained unmoved by the outcry, continuing to enforce the decree even though it did not produce the expected results. The failure of the non-party press to get the new press legislation rescinded, only caused them to shift their struggle with the Soviet Government to a new area. Rather than stop publication, the various bourgeois papers continued to appear with or without ads, changing their names, when they were closed as Pravda had before October, and reappearing on the following day. They persisted in attacking the new order and didn't concern themselves overly about remitting any money realized from ads or about the decree itself.[19]

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17. Trotsky, Soch, vol. 3, part 2, pp. 125-7; Pravda, #202, November 30 (December 13), 1917.

18. Okt i kniga, p. 59.

19. Trotsky, Soch, vol. 3, part 2, p. 127. Four years later at the 7th Moscow Gubernia Party Conference Lenin indicated how naive the party had been when it talked about a monopoly for ads, since there could be no ads in a period of desperate struggle. It remained only a paper decree. Lenin, Pol sob soch, vol. 40, pp. 201-2.

The apparatus for executing and enforcing the decree on the press was set up when it became obvious to the party that this piece of legislation would not be self-executing. The Peoples' Commissariat of Justice took the first step in this direction, December 18, in a decree which created a special Revolutionary Tribunal of the Press attached to the Military Revolutionary Committee with the power to fine, suspend or close a publication and confiscate its presses.[20] Through this Tribunal the party intended to realize firm control over the non-party press, but its early proceedings showed just the opposite tendency. The reason for this failure to correspond to the intention of the party is not hard to find, for in constituting the Tribunal, the Peoples' Commissariat of Justice had appointed I.Z. Shtenberg, a Left

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20. Iurko, A.I., "Sozdaniye material'no-tekhnicheskoi bazy partiinoi i sovetskoi pechati", in Mishuris, A.L., Partiino-sovetskaia pechat' v period bor'by za stroitel'stvo sotsializma, Moscow, 1964, p. 42 (Hereafter cited as Iurko, "Sozdaniye bazy sovetskoi pechati"); Okt i kniga, p. 60. The decree was published in Gazeta vremenogo rabochego i krest'ianskogo pravitel'stva, December 19, 1917 (January 1, 1918). In Partiinaia i sovetskaia pechat' v bor'be za postroyeniye sotsializma i kommunizma, Moscow, 1961, p. 19 (Hereafter cited as Part i sov pechat' v bor'be), the date for the establishment of the Tribunal is incorrectly given as January 20 (February 2), 1918. Shchelkunov, M., "Zakonodatel'stvo o pechati", Pechat' i revoliutsiia, #7 (4), 1922, p. 179, states that the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission also set up subsections in the provinces and collected papers to check their contents for conformity with the actual course of events. If they corresponded to reality, they were tolerated, otherwise the writer of the offensive article or the editor of the paper was called to account before the Revolutionary Tribunal. This is not substantiated by other sources.

S.R. to direct its activity. He used the authority of the Revolutionary Tribunal of the Press not only against the counter-revolutionary papers, as was stated in the Justice decree, but also frequently against party periodicals.[21] Such a situation was intolerable to the party, and after the party press complained about their treatment by the Tribunal, its activity was reconsidered at a meeting of the Soviet of Peoples' Commissars, January 24 (February 6), 1918.

At this session the responsibilities of the Tribunal were redefined to give it jurisdiction over attacks and offenses against the people and infringements of legislation on the press. A Commission of Inquiry was created within the Tribunal of the Press composed of three members elected by the Petrograd Soviet. This Commission could penalize papers and editors anywhere from a simple fine to the loss of all political rights for breaches of the press laws.[22] The institution of the special Commission within the Tribunal, having greater powers and composed of members who were more responsive to the party's attitude toward the press, successfully by-passed Shtenberg and the Tribunal was able to carry

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21. Okt i kniga, p. 60; Smirnov, I.S., Iz istorii stroitel'stva sotsialisticheskoi kul'tury v pervyi period sovetskoi vlasti, Moscow, 1952, p. 78 (Hereafter cited as Smirnov, Iz istorii stroitel'stva). Both of these sources agree that the penalties which the Tribunal could impose were too light to be effective.

22. Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti, vol. I, pp. 432-4.

out its assigned task until its dissolution in May 1918.

Two other acts of the new government assisted the party in suppressing the opposition papers. These were the nationalization of banks which destroyed the financial base of many non-party papers and the nationalization of presses in February 1918, which gave the Bolsheviks far better control of publications in general.[23]

By early 1918 then the party had passed the necessary legislation and created an apparatus to deal with the non-party press. Yet that press did not disappear. Non-party papers continued to eke out a shadowy existence, tolerated so long as they were not openly hostile to the new Soviet Government, but subject to immediate closure or requisition. The imperfections of the system, the inability of the party to enforce its legislation effectively, and the criterions that allowed other papers to publish so long as they did not distort the facts or attack the government, insured the continuation of publications other than the party's after the October Revolution. Those papers that insisted on attacking

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23. Iurko, "Sozdaniye bazy sovetskoi pechati", p. 8. The nationalization of the presses was particularly helpful since the poligraphers' union was still controlled by the Mensheviks who had passed a resolution at the 2nd All-Russian Conference of the union calling for freedom of the press. Nationalization limited the trouble which this union could cause by attaching its presses to the state. Only in the fall of 1918 did the Bolsheviks gain control of the union. Okt i kniga, pp. 66-7.

the government were closed, and while they might reappear under new titles, they could not hope to survive for any length of time without adopting a less hostile attitude toward the party and its policies.[24]

The end of this period of toleration began shortly after the Soviet Government shifted from Leningrad to Moscow in March 1918. Lenin spoke for the closing of the remaining bourgeois papers on March 14 at the 4th All-Russian Congress of Soviets.[25] His views on the subject were undoubtedly colored by the great number of non-party papers that continued to publish in Moscow. The Soviet of Peoples' Commissars took up the question of the 18th and discussed a report by Sverdlov concerning the closing of the bourgeois press. This discussion led to an SNK decree entrusting the fate of these papers to the Moscow Soviet, the Commissariat of Justice and the Head of the Extraordinary Commission for Fighting the Counter-revolution (Cheka), Felix Dzerzhinsky, with the aim of closing such

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24. The best case in point would seem to be Gorky's Novaia zhizn' which openly attacked Pravda by saying that it lied. Lenin tried to silence the paper by demonstrations and strikes at its printing plants, cutting off its supply of newsprint and attacking the publication in Pravda, all to no avail. Lenin was reluctant apparently to order the closing of the paper since Gorky was a friend and well-known revolutionary figure, but when all the other measures had failed, in July 1918, he ordered Novaia zhizn' closed. Wolfe, Bertram D., The Bridge and the Abyss, New York, 1967, pp. 70-4.

25. Lenin o pechati, p. 596.

periodicals and bringing their editors before the Revolutionary Tribunal.[26] The suppression must have moved ahead slowly, since Lenin had to reiterate the need for closing anti-Soviet publications in May.[27] But under the influence of this prodding, the silencing of the opposition press continued and by the end of 1918 it had disappeared in those areas of Russia controlled by the new Soviet Government.[28] The suppression of the remaining non-party papers was only the logical conclusion of the chain of events which had started with the closing of the first Petrograd papers by the Military Revolutionary Committee in October (November) 1917 and was institutionalized by the decree on the press. The haphazard and uncertain way of dealing with various non-party publications until the spring of 1918 could never be satisfactory. The uprising of the Left S.R.'s in July only speeded up a process which had already begun and offered

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26. Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti, vol. II, p. 569; Okt i kniga, pp. 64-5; Smirnov, Iz istorii stroitel'stva, pp. 80-1. The Decree on the Press had been applied very mildly in Moscow and by far the greater part of the bourgeois press had continued to publish after the revolution. This permissiveness went to such an extent that after November 8 (21), when the local press law was enacted, any paper regardless of direction could publish unobstructed.

27. Lenin o pechati, p. 599. "Thesis on the Contemporary Political Situation", May 13.

28. An indication of the magnitude of this task is the fact that one hundred and fifty papers were closed in Moscow under the SNK decree. Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pechat', p. 254; Okt i kniga, p. 65.

the opportunity to deal ruthlessly with another part of the non-party press which had been tolerated because of the participation of that group in the Government. Nor did the Constitution of the RSFSR, promulgated July 10, offer any amelioration from the drive for complete suppression.[29]

The Establishment of the Soviet Press

The creation of the party-soviet press began partially in March 1917 with the restoration of Pravda and partially after the October Revolution when the party took control of most of the soviets throughout Russia and added their papers to its embryonic net. In both cases the party after the seizure of power was able to proceed from an already created press base complete with presses and a certain number of qualified press workers.

In the area of the party press the process of expanding its size, begun before the coup, recieved an additional impetus October 25 (November 7) with the requisitioning of the presses and offices of Russkaia volia by the Military Revo-

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29. Article 14 of the Constitution read: "With the goal of securing for the workers real freedom of expression of their opinion, the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic abolishes the dependence of the press on capital and places in the hands of the working class and peasant poor all the technical means for the publication of papers, brochures, books and all other press works and guarrantees their free dissemination about all the state." Nikolayev, N.M., Ed., Zakony o pechati, p. 197 (Hereafter cited as Zakony o pechati).

lutionary Committee, an action which had been planned before the uprising.[30] The first issue of the Central Organ on these presses appeared in an expanded edition of 200,000 copies, and on the 27th it began to appear under its old name Pravda. Following the example of Pravda other party papers returned to publication under their old names and received the presses of those papers which the Military Revolutionary Committee had closed.[31] In most cases the press workers of the silenced papers agreed to help print the respective party papers, while the editorial staff and contributors refused, thus extending the problem which had plagued the party press between the revolutions and would continue to plague the party-soviet press throughout its formative years: the lack of a trained cadre of journalists to help produce its papers. At the same time that these party papers returned to publication under their old names, and strengthened by a more power-

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30. Sbornik bol'shevistskaia pechat', Moscow, 1945, part 2, p. 7; Petriakov, Strantsy slav ist, pp. 330-1. To insure no interference with this measure the Military Revolutionary Committee detached units of the red guards to protect the premises.

31. Pravda, maintained the subtitle Rabochii put' until October 30 (November 12). Also returning to publication under their old names were Soldatskaia pravda, Okopnaia pravda and Golos pravdy. The presses of the closed papers Rech' and Den' were allocated to Soldatskaia pravda and Derevenskaia bednota respectively, while those of Birzhevyye vedomosti were subsequently requisitioned for the Naval Military Revolutionary Committee. Okt i kniga, pp. 52-3.

ful technical base, Izvestiia, which had eluded the control of the party before the revolution, was now taken over by the Bolsheviks to be edited by Iu. Steklov, a former Menshevik editor of the paper, who had joined the party shortly before the seizure of power. In Moscow and in the provinces the seizure of power also meant a rapid expansion of the Bolshevik press net as soviet papers were harnessed to the party, and new party papers appeared on the presses of closed publications.[32]

Despite the rapid strengthening of the party press and its increased circulation in the first days of the seizure of power, the disruption of transportation and communication greatly hampered the delivery of papers on any regular basis. Because of this the Central Committee decided to print special bulletins, informing local organizations of the course of events at the center. The first was printed and distributed October 29 (November 11) and was succeeded by seven more issues with the last one appearing November 7 (20).[33] After the eighth bulletin the Central Committee returned to the dissemination of leading party papers as the vehicle for pro-

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32. Mishuris, A.L., Pechat' rozhdennaia oktiabrem, Moscow, 1968, p. 7.

33. Protokoly TsK, p. 235 and footnote 228, p. 288; KPSS v bor'be, footnote 27, p. 524. The texts of the eight issues are printed Ibid., pp. 235-45 and 80-9. The bulletins were sent to local party organizations as the opportunity allowed, since papers were not reaching the localities by ordinary means.

viding local organizations with the necessary information. At the same time, to increase the stream of information about the revolution, it began to publish a two-page evening edition of the Central Organ of the party.[34]

Unfortunately, the party could not fully utilize the rapidly expanding press net until its expedition and dissemination apparatus had been reorganized to handle the greater number of papers and copies and until the means of dissemination rested firmly in the hands of the new worker and peasant government. In the days before the revolution the party press had been mostly disseminated by railroad although attempts had been made to use the posts. With the seizure of power the party encountered even more resistence from the Menshevik controlled railroad unions than it had met between February and October, and the Central Committee had to order railroad officials not to place any obstacle in the way of delivery of Bolshevik papers. The situation in the Postal-telegraph agencies was no better despite central control as delays and even sabotage of paper delivery occurred.[35]

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34. The first evening edition appeared November 2 (15), and it continued to appear until March 20, 1918. Izvestiia also had an evening edition, Rabochii i soldat, which stopped publication in February 1918.

35. Perepiska TsK, vol. II, passim; Iurko, "Sozdaniye bazy sovetskoi pechati", p. 18; Berezhnoi, et al., Bol pecnat', p. 256. Iurko notes an attempt by the press workers of Petrograd to form a poligraphers' syndicate which would have demanded high wages from the Bolsheviks for continuing to print their periodicals.

Simultaneously with the rapid growth of the party and its press, the seizure of power increased the demand for party literature of all kinds, particularly the central leading papers. This taxed the small expedition facilities at the center beyond their capacity and indicated that a good part of the inability to deliver party papers to local organizations lay in the expedition offices of the central papers which simply could not respond to the provincial demand and were unable to cope with the greater number of copies that poured from the recently seized presses.[36]

It was impossible for the party to deal with, much less rectify, all the deficiencies of the delivery system at once. Nevertheless initial steps were taken in several directions by the end of 1917. Before the Central Committee considered what could be done about expedition and dissemination, it had to determine the extent of the net which these functions would service. This information was gathered by means of a questionnaire sent to local committees in November.[37]

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36. The published correspondence of the Central Committee in late 1917 attributes the irregular delivery of the press to faulty expedition at the center. Perepiska TsK, vol. II, passim. A contributing factor undoubtedly is the chaotic transportation situation. Okt i kniga makes the increased demand from the localities the reason for seizing the presses of the opposition. p. 46.

37. Perepiska TsK, vol. II, pp. 59-63. The November questionnaire was a more extensive version of the circular sent out before the 6th Congress. The questions of relevance to the press were #s 13-8 which asked whether the local organization had its own publication,how great its

While the Central Committee digested the replies, it began a series of measures at the center and in the localities to insure dissemination of its press and provide subscriptions to publications of local and central origin. The Central Committee reminded party members that they were obliged to subscribe to and disseminate the party press. Readers were encouraged to write to the papers and pass on their copy of the various publications to others when they were through with it. In areas where the party could enforce its decisions, kiosks were set up for the dissemination of the party press and later the Souvarin railroad kiosk system was transferred to the state.[38] At the center the Central Committee dealt directly with the expedition office and corrected its defects to satisfy the demands from the provinces. At the same time the Central Committee instituted a press briefing at the Smolny for editors of the Petrograd papers. Trotsky held the meetings with the editors every afternoon at three, imparting information for

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circulation was, what other parties had papers, their circulation, what other party papers were received, and what type of paper was most disseminated in the area. Only the reply of the Lugansk Committee is printed, but other communications from the provinces indicate a proliferation of party or party controlled publications.

38. Derevenskaia pravda, October 26 (November 8), p. 1; Pravda, November 14 (17), p. 1; November 17 (31), p. 1; Iurko, "Sozdaniye bazy sovetskoi pechati", pp. 21-4; Andronov, Boyevoye oruzhiye partii, p. 460. The Souvarin net eventually became the dissemination system for Government papers such as Izvestiia.

publication on the domestic and international scene.[39]

The measures taken by the party were meant to solve the problems connected with the delivery of publications. The institution of a press briefing began the serious consideration of the effective and correct distribution of information to the various branches of the party-soviet press. But Trotsky's briefings only served the Petrograd papers. Steps were taken to serve the provinces with the creation of a Press Buro, attached to SNK, in November and by converting the Petrograd Telegraph Agency, which had served the Tsar and the Provisional Government as a news agency, into an instrument of the new government.[40] According to Soviet historians the Telegraph Agency supplied tendatious information to papers and was unable to satisfy the informational demands of the Soviet press. The inability or disinclination of the agency was unacceptable to the party and it was taken over

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39. Protokoly TsK, pp. 151ff.; Perepiska TsK, vol. II, p. 49; Berezhnoi et al., Bol pechat', p. 259. The decision to brief the capital's editors was taken at a session of the Central Committee November 29 (December 12). At the same session the editorial board of Pravda was reorganized with the new board consisting of Sokolnikov, Stalin, Trotsky and Bukarin. The session also considered ending the evening edition of Pravda in order to create Krasnaia gazeta, a paper to serve local needs. This decision was not taken. In January 1918, Krasnaia gazeta began to appear under the editorship of Volodardsky without curtailing Pravda.

40. Martselei, Pechat' Belorussii, p. 130; Okt i kniga, p. 130. This Press Buro should not be confused with the Press Buro attached to the Peoples' Commissariat of Internal Affairs which was charged with fighting slanders

by the state in December as part of SNK.[41] Under state aegis, the Telegraph Agency apparently did not perform any better, since in 1918 the Press Buro and the Agency were united into a new information buro called the Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA).[42] The local branches of each organization became branches of ROSTA with the task of preparing and distributing information for the party-soviet press.

The effect of all these measures on the condition and success of the party-soviet press is difficult to assess since the source material is so limited. Soviet studies on the conquest of power in the localities, the correspondence of the Central Committee and the few histories of local or area press provide only a partial picture. Generally, party strength and the control of the local soviet can be equated with the ability of the party press to develop in a particular city.

In Moscow where Sotsial-demokrat was firmly established and where the party controlled the soviet, the Bolshevik press continued to function without interruption. At the beginning of 1918, following the nationalization of the presses, a

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and insinuations in the bourgeois press apparently as a supplement to the Revolutionary Tribunal of the Press. The Chief of the Press Buro attended SNK sessions and his report of these meetings was published in the papers.

41. Martselei, Ibid., pp. 130-1; Iurko, "Sozdaniye bazy sovetskoi pechati", p. 46; Smirnov, Iz istorii stroitel'stva, p. 93.

42. Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti, vol. III, pp. 296-7. L.S.

city-wide institution was created to regulate and distribute this resource. Similar regulatory institutions were begun in other major centers of Russia.[43] In Ivano-Voznesensk, northeast of Moscow, the party paper Nasha zvezda, which had ceased publication just before the October coup, reopened as Rabochii gorod, the organ of the local soviet. It led a very difficult existence at first, since a larger non-party paper dominated the city until it was closed late in December. Analogous situations developed in Cheliabinsk, Ufa, Samara, Pskov and Voronezh as Bolshevik controlled soviet and party papers arose, initially on insecure foundations, were sometimes suppressed by counter-revolutionary forces, but ultimately survived as the opposition papers were closed and their resources appropriated for party publications.[44]

Roughly speaking then, party papers appeared through the efforts of the local party group in the larger centers and managed to suppress anti-Soviet publications without aid from the Central Committee. But as the local periodicals

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Sosnovskii was entrusted with ROSTA's leadership. The Press Buro and Telegraph Agency had first been transferred to VTsIK on June 26 after a series of discussions starting in April. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 486-7.

43. Mishuris, A.L., Pechat' rozhdennaia oktiabrem, Moscow, 1968, pp. 6-7.

44. Sevast'ianova, T.M., Pervye bol'shevistskiye gazety v Voronezne, Voronezh, 1959, pp. 67-72; Chugayeva, D.A., Ustanovleniye sovetskoi vlasti na mestakh v 1917-18 godakh, Moscow, 1959, pp. 313, 401-3, 427, 505-8.

arose and acquainted the center with their existence, the measures taken by the Central Committee to improve dissemination of the party press came into play. Requests from local organizations for guidance and copies of the leading party papers were met most frequently by sending the latest issues or complete sets of Pravda, Soldatskaia pravda and Derevenskaia bednota.[45] However, the number of inquiries from the Central Committee to the local groups, asking whether the requested copies had arrived, shows that the center did not know exactly what reached the provinces although the acknowledgements for the receipt of the central papers was far greater after October than for the period before the revolution.[46] Those organizations which received the party's leading papers were instructed to use the information therein as a guide for dealing with the questions of the day, especially with respect to the Constituent Assembly, the war and

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45. Perepiska TsK, vol. II, passim. The number of references in the correspondence from the Urals and central industrial areas to Sotsial-demokrat suggest that the Moscow party paper was widely disseminated as well.

46. Ibid., a more specific generalization is untenable because of the incompleteness of the source. There is no indication of how many local organizations wrote to the Central Committee about their press. There are, however, two striking features about the printed communications: first the total absence of any references to closing opposition papers, and second, the frequent use of the phrase "we hope you receive them" in letters from the Central Committee, which further indicates the frailty of the dissemination apparatus.

the agrarian problem. In this way the party-soviet press played an important role in insuring the conformity of the local periodical with the line laid down at the center by the Central Committee, and the sending of copies of the local paper to the center enabled the party to check that conformity in detail.[47]

At the start of the new year there were no dramatic changes in the party's posture toward the press. The party-soviet net continued to develop locally and at the center, but it became more and more difficult to secure the material resources for publication because the German armies were overrunning the areas which produced newsprint, and the stocks available to the party were near exhaustion. In addition to discomfiting the party-soviet press, the German armies posed a major threat to the security of the Soviet Government. This threat was sufficient to cause the Central Committee to transfer the capital to Moscow, and along with it the Central Organ of the party and the paper of the Petrograd Soviet, Izvestiia. The initial decision was taken at the session of the Central Committee January 9 (22), 1918, but the papers did not appear

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47. After the seizure of power Pravda no longer certified party publications on its pages, but each party and soviet organization was required to send several copies of its publication to the Central Committee. Presumably these papers were approved on the basis of their content, and if they were not satisfactory the local organization was told to correct its line.

in the new capital until March 16. The departure of the leading party and soviet papers forced the Bolsheviks to reshuffle the party-soviet press in both Moscow and Petrograd. Sotsial-demokrat, which had published uninterrupted since March was united with Pravda, and Petrogradskaia pravda replaced the Central Organ in the former capital.[48] Izvestiia was in turn united with its Moscow counterpart, while Krasnaia gazeta replaced it as the organ of the Petrograd Soviet.[49]

The reshuffle at the center coincided with the further expansion of the press net in the provinces. But the new members of the Bolshevik newspaper family, due to the scarcity of publication materials, lack of financial support, the advance of the German armies or counter-revolutionary activities of the Whites often ceased publication soon after

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48. Protokoly TsK, pp. 165-6. The Central Committee named Bystrianskii, Smilga, and Zinoviev as the editorial board of the new Petrograd party paper, while Stalin and Sokolnikov became the editors of the transferred Pravda. Upon moving to Moscow the leading party and soviet papers occupied a four story building at 28 Tver Street. The presses were on the fourth floor, Pravda's offices on the third, Izvestiia's offices on the second, and the expedition offices on the street floor. M.I. Ul'ianova secretar' "Pravdy", Moscow, 1965, p. 184 (Hereafter cited Secretar' "Pravdy").

49. Mishuris, A.L., Pechat' rozhdennaia oktiabrem, Moscow, 1968, p. 19. Actually Izvestiia also inherited Gazeta vremennogo rabochego i krest'ianskogo pravitel'stva, which had ceased publication March 19 by SNK decree. Izvestiia then became the official Government paper. Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti, vol. I, pp. 570-1.

initial publication.[50] The insecurity and material weakness in the localities soon began to manifest itself at the center as well. The dissemination apparatus, which the party had tried valiantly to create immediately after the revolution and which had just begun to achieve some results, broke down completely. Both Izvestiia and Pravda suspended their evening editions. At the first session of the 7th Party Congress, March 6, Sverdlov in the Organizational Report indicated that Pravda actually circulated only in Petrograd. Its copies were declining; the provinces rarely received the Central Organ; its delivery had become almost impossible due to the transportation situation; and financial support was chronically lacking.[51] If this was the condition at the center in the most important and powerful party publication, the

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50. Martselei, Pechat' Belorussii, pp. 86-8 lists eight party papers arising at this time in White Russia. Mishuris, A.L., Pechat' rozhdennaia oktiabrem, Moscow, 1968, pp. 19-23, cites twenty eight publications founded in various parts of Russia at the beginning of 1918. Vertinskii, Gazeta v Rossii, p. 135, states that most of the Bolshevik papers begun in early 1918 folded from a lack of trained journalists or were content merely to reprint telegrams and articles from the central party papers.

51. Sed'moi s"ezd rossiiskoi kommunisticheskoi partii, stenograficheskii otchyot, 5-8go Marta, 1918, Moscow, 1923, pp. 5-6. Sverdlov indicated that some 450,000 rubles which Pravda had sent to local organizations, presumably for their papers, was already considered lost. He gave the Central Organ's circulation as 85,000 just before the Congress. By mid year this had declined even further to 30,000 while Izvestiia's stood at 35,000 and Bednota, the Central Committee's peasant paper, printed 50,000 copies. Smirnov, Iz istorii stroitel'stva, p. 91; Vertinskii, Ibid.

situation in the provinces must have been considerably worse.

It was at this time, with the number of papers and circulation falling, that the party took the first real steps to define the tasks of the party-soviet press. Before the revolution the Bolshevik press had concentrated its venom on the Provisional Government. In the October days and the months immediately thereafter it had published the decrees of the new government, defended the worker and peasant regime as a governmental publicist, or attacked Capitalism as the main enemy of the proletariat.[52] The party had paid attention to the direction of the press only in terms of examining it for counter-revolutionary tendencies and had left the positive aspects of coverage and distinctions between the various types and levels of papers for consideration at a later date. Until March 1918, the individual editor was responsible within the limits of the acceptable party line for the content and con-

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52. Steklov, Iu.M., Vospominaniia i publitsistika, Moscow, 1965, pp. 120-1; Krasnaia gazeta, #8, January 21 (February 3), 1918. Originally Gazeta vremennogo rabochego i krest'ianskogo pravitel'stva had been created strictly for the publication of official acts and decrees, although all party and soviet publications printed the most important ones. The demise of Gazeta left only Izvestiia as a governmental periodical and it had to explain policy as well as publish decrees. Under such circumstances SNK's decision of November 1917, obliging soviet papers to publish decrees, was extended to all publications, Smirnov, Iz istorii stroitel'stva, pp. 81-92.

centration of his paper, and most publications were devoted to the politics of the revolution and its aspects abroad. Lenin, as the spokesman for the party attacked this orientation directly:

> "... The Soviet press has devoted excessively much space and attention to details of policy, to individual questions of political leadership, by which the capitalists of all states try to divert the attention of the working masses from the really serious deeply rooted questions of their life.... The task is to change the press from an organ predominantly reporting the political news of the day into a serious organ for the economic education of the mass of the population. It will be necessary to strive and we are striving for the press, which serves the Soviet masses, to devote less space to questions on the personal composition of political leadership, or on political measures.... In the very first place must stand the questions of labor in their immediate practical position. The press must become the organ of the working commune in this sense, that it exposes just what the leaders of capitalist enterprise are trying to hide.... The main means must be the press, revealing the defects of economic life..., ruthlessly branding these defects, openly revealing all the ulcers of our economic life and, thus, appealing to the public opinion of the working masses to remove these ulcers. Let us have ten times less paper material (possibly it would be fine, if it were one hundred times less), which is devoted to the so called topic of the day -- but let us have disseminated in the hundreds, thousands and millions of copies a press, which acquaints the population with the exemplary condition of affairs in some labor commune of the state which outstrips others....
>
> Up to this time we still find ourselves under the definite influence of the old public opinion of the bourgeoisie. If [we] examine our papers, [we] are easily convinced that an excessively great place is still devoted to questions, which were set up by the bourgeoisie --- questions which it wants to divert the attention of the working masses from the concrete political tasks of socialist construction. We must change --- and we will change --- the press from an organ of sensation, from a simple apparatus for reporting political news, from an organ of struggle against bourgeois lies ---

into a weapon acquainting the masses with how to set up labor in the new era."[53]

The press would become the weapon of worker competition in which the black list would be used to indicate those enterprises which failed to respond to the new forces in the state. In Lenin's view Soviet papers had gone off in the wrong direction, and it was necessary for the party to recall them to the tasks of restoring the economy of Soviet Russia and constructing the new worker and peasant society. The self-imposed task of extirpating the counter-revolution must be abandoned for more important work. Unimaginative duplication of central papers must end, and the conditions of local economic enterprises must become the focal point of the press. Implicit in this guidance was the idea that the central leading party and soviet papers would handle political news while the rest of the Bolshevik press detailed the events and battles of socialist construction, pointing out the successes of the new economic order and revealing the slackers.[54]

Thus by the spring of 1918 certain trends and the sketchy

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53. Lenin o pechati, pp. 585-8, "The Original Draft of the Article 'The Foremost Tasks of Soviet Power'", March 23, 1918.

54. In the revised but basicly similar draft Lenin added the further thought that the party must "... create a press that will not entertain and fool the people with political sensation and trivialities, but which will submit the everyday questions of economic life to the peoples' judgement and assist in the serious study of those questions." Pravda, April 28, 1918, pp. 3-5.

outline of the party-soviet press had emerged in response to activities at the center and in the localities. Basically this press was worker oriented, existing predominantly in the major cities and industrial areas of Russia.[55] Numbering about seventy five publications at the time of the seizure of power, the net had rapidly expanded as new party papers were created from the means confiscated by local organizations and as the soviet press came under party control,[56] then contracted in response to the shrinking area controlled by the Bolsheviks and the scarcity of press resources. The party, unaccustomed to working from a position of power, encountered entrenched opposition to its posture on the press in both non-party publications and in the services which enabled the press to reach its readers. All of these problems were dealt with in an ad hoc manner, partially based on the treatment meted out to the party press before the revolution, suppressing or attaching to governmental bodies as the case demanded. Such unpremeditated

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55. Only Moscow and Petrograd had peasant papers at this time and they were locally oriented. To a certain extent the party's military papers can be considered as peasant periodicals, but even granting this, the overwhelming majority of the press and by far most of its circulation were destined for the workers.

56. According to Mishuris, A.L., Pechat' rozhdennaia oktiabrem, Moscow, 1968, p. 18, the party-soviet press at the beginning of 1918 numbered 563 titles with a circulation of about two million copies. There are no other figures to substantiate or disprove these statistics.

measures, particularly in a revolutionary situation, were effective only as emergency acts, but taken as a whole traced the outline of the party's attitude toward the press.

In the provinces the papers that arose were tied very tenuously with the center. Stronger and more extensive than similar ties forged before the revolution, these links were still rudimentary. The Central Committee had no assurance that guidance, provided in the Central Organ of the party, would reach Ufa and Smolensk to say nothing about party organizations further afield.[57] The poorly developed technical base for the party-soviet press, even with the seizure of non-party presses, made it difficult for the center to supply the localities with sufficient copies of its papers and for the local organizations to satisfy their readers, and so nearly impossible for the Soviet press to cover adequately a given area. When these considerations are added to the problems of transportation and communication within Russia, the task confronting the Bolshevik press after October had been far from overcome by the various measures which the party had taken.

The attempt to define the role of the press came at a time when such a definition was becoming increasingly academic.

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57. The third volume of Central Committee correspondence gives ample evidence of failure of papers to arrive in the provinces and requests for copies of local papers from the center. There are also frequent reports of the post failing. Perepiska TsK, vol. III, passim.

As spring ripened into summer, anti-Soviet forces closed many local papers and the lack of financial and technical resources forced others to cease publication. The process of shrinkage, begun early in 1918, would continue during the Civil War as the outlying periodicals were eliminated or forced to live a shadowy illegal existence in hostile territory. The papers in the area remaining under party control were hardly able to benefit from the final closing of the non-party press, and the only part of the press which could hold its own and even expand during the next eighteen months would be the military. The history of the Soviet press in the Civil War becomes largely a chronicle of increasing difficulties that could not be solved and an account of the militarization of the press.

CHAPTER III

THE TIME OF PREOCCUPATION AND EXPERIMENT: THE SOVIET PRESS DURING THE CIVIL WAR

The period from mid 1918 to the end of 1920 marks a time in which the Bolshevik press attempted various solutions to its many problems. In every phase of the Soviet press measures were taken or overlooked which precipitated situations that had not been foreseen. The weakly developed press base, created in the relatively peaceful days and months following the seizure of power, did not allow the anticipated expansion of papers. Increasing preoccupation with the problems of waging war pre-empted the attention of the party's leaders, and the secondary figures who ministered to the needs of the press frequently worked at cross purposes to each other; rarely could bring the weight of the party behind such decisions as they took, and lacked the prophetic powers necessary to select the road of development that would satisfy the state's press needs. Two aspects of the situation during the Civil War particularly inhibited the Soviet press: the party's neglect except in the military sphere, and the scarcity of material support. These two circumstances made the history of the press during the Civil War a chronicle of attempts to solve problems that the party's leadership

was less concerned about than the questions of war, and which probably defied solution because of the chaotic situation within the Soviet state.

The major factor affecting the Soviet press during the Civil War was the nearly total absence of newsprint. The shortage of paper, already felt in the spring, continued throughout 1918 despite attempts by the party to ration and rationalize its use. This scarcity, which affected all areas of the press, was directly related to fluctuations on the battlefield which cut the center off from paper producing areas (domestic and foreign) and to the scanty reserves of paper that had been accumulated at the center in case outside supply was stopped.

Although there were indications in the summer that newsprint was not abundant, official recognition of its scarcity came at the first congress of journalists in November 1918, when in reply to a proposal for uncontrolled proliferation of the press, Kerzhenstev noted that there was not even enough newsprint for the capital's papers. A similar lack of paper represented one of the main obstacles to the publication of periodicals in the provinces.[1] However, there is no indication that the congress proposed any steps to rectify the situation, and by the end of 1918 the crisis had become acute. According to Pravda, paper was insufficient for all the

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1. Pravda, November 13 and November 21; Izvestiia, November 15, 1918, passim.

necessary publications, and in Petrograd and Moscow some papers had suspended printing while others had been curtailed.[2]

No area of the press escaped. The central papers were forced to limit their formats. Izvestiia, reduced to a four page edition at the end of 1918, became a two page publication in 1919. Pravda managed to continue at four pages into the spring of 1919, but then also curtailed its pagination to two. The absence of newsprint forced editors to use any available paper thus producing a range of formats, which varied from four to eight columns in width with a comparable range in size.

In the provinces the situation was even worse. Izvestiia noted at the beginning of 1919 that because of the paper shortage, a whole series of provincial papers had to restrict either their format or periodicity.[3] In the Ukraine Zvezda, while touring the country in an effort to find a permanent home until the German armies departed, consistently changed its make-up to take advantage of existing stocks of paper. In Petrograd the crisis became acute at the beginning of 1919. Krasnaia gazeta was printed on wrapping paper, and whole pages appeared blank due to poor inks. Scarcity of paper limited circulation, and finally forced the Gubernia Committee to reduce officially the circulation of all Petrograd papers.

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2. Pravda, December 21, 1918, p. 1, fourth lead article.

3. Izvestiia, January 29, 1919, p. 4.

In an attempt to maintain its influence on the workers and limit the impact of its curtailed circulation, Krasnaia gazeta refused to accept individual subscriptions and limited dissemination to collective orders at factories, institutions and Red Army units.[4]

By March the situation had become so critical that the question was raised in the Soviet of Peoples' Commissars. After discussing the problem on March 8, SNK promulgated a decree on the distribution of paper which instituted newsprint rationing for the old and new capitals by curtailing the number and circulation of papers in the two cities. Petrograd was restricted to two papers, circulating up to 400,000 copies daily, but limited to four pages. In Moscow Golos trudovogo krest'ianstva, the peasant organ of VTsIK, was restricted to 30,000 copies and two pages, as was Ekonomicheskaia zhizn' on four pages. Pravda was limited to a circulation of 150,000, while Izvestiia could print up to 400,000 copies. All papers were prohibited from expanding their format if they did not realize the allotted circulation.[5] Two days later the Soviet of Worker and Peasant Defense

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4. Rappeport, M.L., Desiat' let na boyevom postu: istorii "Krasnoi gazety", 1918-1928, Leningrad, 1928, pp. 54-8 (Hereafter cited as Rappeport, Desiat' let).

5. Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti, vol. IV, pp. 640-2. "Decree on Distribution of Paper March 8, 1919". Infractions would be taken before responsible revolutionary tribunals. A similar decree had been promulgated November 19, 1918, but apparently was ineffective. Ibid., pp. 555-7.

ordered the collection of waste paper of all sorts and its delivery to paper industries to help overcome the shortage.[6]

Curtailment and rationing provisionally solved the problem at the center and in the old capital, but in the localities no such solution was forthcoming, and it is not improbable that no solution was available for the provinces. The disruption of transport and the vicissitudes of the Civil War made distribution of paper on a regular basis to the provinces difficult, and given the scarcity at the center, extremely unlikely. Supply by infrequent agit-prop trips to the local area was equally insufficient and unsatisfactory. The provinces, left to shift for themselves, could not overcome the crisis, and more papers had to close or curtail their activities.

Even in Petrograd and Moscow the figures adopted by SNK were found unrealistic and further cuts were made in their press during the summer.[7] Toward the end of 1919 both Pravda and Izvestiia had become two page papers, a condition from which they had still not recovered by the end of 1920. Similar fates overtook Ekonomicheskaia zhizn' and the two Petrograd papers, Krasnaia gazeta and Petrogradskaia pravda, although the latter were curtailed to two pages later in 1919

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6. Ibid., p. 478.

7. Izvestiia tsentral'nogo komiteta rossiiskoi kommunisticheskoi partii (b), #4, July 19, 1919, p. 2 (Hereafter cited as Iz TsK).

and resumed four page publication in the fall of 1920. By the 8th party conference in December the situation had not improved, and Krestinskii in giving the Organizational Report would state, "the paper hunger prevents expansion of circulation with respect to the demand for the paper ...."[8] In the final analysis the newsprint crisis could not be solved during the Civil War, despite these efforts because party and state had all their attention focused on the war.

Another factor contributing to the difficulties of the Soviet press was the apparatus servicing the various papers. But in the case of the dissemination system and other institutions concerned with distribution of the press, the apparatus established during the Civil War remained largely unchanged in the early twenties, even though it functioned imperfectly. The creation of the Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA) by decree of VTsIK September 7, 1918, which institutionalized the previous amalgamation of the Petrograd Telegraph Agency and the SNK Press Buro, established a central information service for the RSFSR.[9] By the end of 1918 telegraphic reportage in the

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8. Vos'maia konferentsiia RKP(b), protokoly, Moscow, 1961, p. 27. Pravda's circulation at that time was 215,000.

9. O partiinoi i sovetskoi pechati, sbornik dokumentov, Moscow, 1954, pp. 180-1 (Hereafter cited as O part i sov pechati). Prokhorov, E. p., "Rossiiskoye telegraphnoye agentstvo i pervyye shagi sovetskoi zhurnalistskoi periodiki (1919-1921gg.)", in Mishuris, A.L., Ed., Partiino-sovetskaia pechat' v period bor'by za stroitel'stvo sotsializma, Moscow, 1964, p. 33, states that ROSTA was also chosen to solidify the ties with the local press. After its first

press and even some longer articles world bear the interpolation ROSTA, much in the same way that AP and UPI are used today.

To assist in disseminating publications, postal-telegraphic agencies were put at the disposal of the press in the fall of 1918 and a central agency of VTsIK for the supply and dissemination of works of the press (Tsentro Pechat') was created. Like ROSTA, Tsentro Pechat' soon established subsections attached to gubernia and uezd executive political committees (Ispolcoms). This distribution system was confirmed November 23, 1918, by the Presidium of VTsIK in a decree that united all dissemination activity under Tsentro Pechat', and named V.D. Bonch-Bruyevich to head the agency.[10] In the spring of 1919 dissemination of non-military papers from the center to the Red Army was included in the duties of Tsentro Pechat' and from June 1, a special section in the agency controlled dissemination of the press to the fronts.[11]

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congress in 1919, took upon itself the realization of the party line in the press. Shortly after its creation ROSTA began to publish an instructional sheet, Agit-ROSTA, which advised and instructed the provincial press on its tasks, failures and direction.

10. Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti, vol. IV, pp. 52-3; Iurko, "Sozdaniye bazy sovetskoi pechati", pp. 25-7. At its first congress, December 1-2, 1918, the workers of institutions disseminating the press confirmed this decree.

11. Izvestiia, May 16, 1919, p. 2; Pravda, May 25, 1919, p.3. This section distributed only the party-Soviet press to the Red Army apparently. It is uncertain whether it disseminated army papers from one unit to another.

But like so much else during the Civil War execution of a defined role remained beyond the ability of the assigned institution. From all indications the confusion of the Civil War prevented any of the institutions serving the press from fulfilling their designated functions except in the limited area controlled by the Soviet Government.[12] Other factors influenced their performance. The Postal-Telegraph Agency still harbored many who did not support the Soviet government. According to Pravda, "Our post works ... poorly. All the provinces groan that they receive neither letters nor papers. The post works so badly that the majority of provincial soviets refuse to send papers since the papers that are sent all too often are not received at all or are received with great delay."[13] Unlike the papers, the distributing institutions were not affected by the papers crisis, but the dissemination apparatus suffered particularly from the fortunes of the Civil War. Outside the central core continually controlled by the Bolsheviks it maintained a tenuous existence and could not

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12. In a session of the Smolensk Gubernia Committee, May 7 1920, it was noted that Tsentro Pechat' material did not reach Smolensk and it was necessary for the local press to create its own material. Smolensk Party Archives, WKP 6.

13. Pravda, October 11, 1918, p. 1. A similar complaint over Vardin's signature appeared in Pravda, October 27, which reported that the Vitebsk Soviet received only 2 or 3 copies of Izvestiia per month. The Commissar for Post and Telegraph, Podbel'skii, stated that the fault lay with the paper offices which failed to deliver copies to the agency on time. Pravda, November 3, 1919, p. 2.

be relied upon to perform its duties.

Leadership and Control

Confronted with these two basic problems, the new Soviet Government nevertheless tried to proceed with the formulation of guidelines for its publications and construction of a press net. For the most part it was a frustrating period of trial and error, and the few achievements were quickly discarded when new conditions and tasks confronted the state with the coming of peace in 1921.

Leadership of the press during the Civil War was exercised not unilaterally by the party, as it had been before and immediately after the revolution. The trend established soon after October, which saw the soviets take charge in certain areas of the press, continued. This should not be taken to mean an abandonment of control of the press by the Bolsheviks, but rather its theoretical guidance by the party, with the execution and control devolving upon VTsIK as the institution issuing the legislation.

The position expounded by Lenin in April on the tasks of the press had remained the blue print from which guidance was drawn and it was refined in September by another major article entitled "On the Character of Our Papers". Again the party leader expostulated against the great space devoted to political twaddle and the scant attention paid to the construction of a new life. Political information should be

condensed into short telegraphic notes instead of perpetuating the habits of bourgeois papers. What the Soviet press needed was more economics, a careful gathering and studying of the facts of socialist construction, to show the people what was happening within the state. The chief function of the press was the education of the masses in this vein through concrete models and examples from all areas of life.[14]

This second statement became the focal point for a series of articles in the central papers by lesser party figures who in the waning days of 1918 discussed the role of the press. Lenin had posited the idea of a press responsive to the demands of a society changing from capitalism to socialism. Iaroslavskii replied to this idea, that while the press had become the proponent of socialism among the masses, papers were not reaching the people, and the party should start by improving the vehicle before its delivery.[15] Kerzhentsev took up the same theme, complaining that Soviet papers were worse than the former bourgeois sheets. They were all from the same mold and copied one another without relief; there was no difference between a worker and peasant paper or between a central or provincial daily. It would be better to curtail the number of papers and improve the quality of those remaining. The latter could then be reconstructed along

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14. Lenin o pechati, pp. 600-2.

15. Pravda, September 24, 1918, p. 1, fifth lead article.

various lines according to type.[16] But not all members of the party shared Lenin's view on the press, and the belief was expressed on the pages of Izvestiia that papers had no right to criticize deficiencies of the Soviet system.[17]

The difference of opinion at the center and the obvious contrast between what the center wanted and what the localities could deliver led to demands for the convoking of a conference of press workers. Provincial editors and their staffs claimed that the time had come for a discussion of the problems confronting the press and that the initiative for such a meeting should come from the center. Steklov, the editor of Izvestiia, responded to this feeling by placing the question in his paper for public discussion, suggesting the time of the 6th Congress of the Soviets, since many editors would be participating in that meeting.[18] Apparently the provincial demand was confirmed by the rest of the press and the first congress of Soviet journalists convened in Moscow

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16. Pravda, October 6, 1918, p. 1, fifth lead article. This reflects the same idea that Molotov had used in vain to secure a separate paper for the Petrograd Committee in May, 1917. It was still premature in 1918, but with the change to NEP it would become party policy.

17. Izvestiia, October 17, 1918, p. 2. This thesis was firmly rejected by Ol'minskii (Pravda, October 26, 1918, p. 1, fifth lead article) and by M. Ligina (Pravda, December 31, 1918, p. 1, fourth lead article) who stated that defects of the system had to be discussed in the press.

18. Izvestiia, October 23, 1918, p. 2.

on November 13, with such party dignitaries as Radek, Kamenev and Kollontii in attendance.[19]

The congress began with a reiteration of the demands expounded by Lenin in his articles on the press. As Radek put it in his report to the congress "... the Soviet press must on the one hand exhaustively illuminate the construction of the new life and on the other ... it must have sufficient courage to show all the deficiencies of the new state apparatus." This theme was generally accepted by the meeting, although the idea of criticism aroused a certain hesitancy in Steklov, since the difficult situation during the Civil War prohibited full exposition of the state's deficiencies. Despite Steklov's qualms the congress resolution on Radek's report recognized the need for full and free criticism of general policy and specific acts or defects in local and central institutions. As a hedge against the abuse of this privilege, the resolution insisted that the relationship between the press and local organs of Soviet power be instituted and regulated by the local party organization. The right to criticize obtained as long as this criticism was, in the words of the editor of Bednota, Sosnovskii, prudent.

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19. The material on the congress which follows is taken from reports in Izvestiia, November 14-7, Krasnaia gazeta, November 16, passim, and Vardin (Mgeladze) Illarion V., Sovetskaia pechat', sbornik statei, Moscow, 1924, pp. 126-30 (Hereafter cited as Vardin, Sov pechat').

Having delineated the competence and role of the Soviet press, the congress turned to its leadership. In the pre-October period the Central Committee had led the press. However the more extensive paper net and the preoccupation with the war precluded a similar arrangement in 1918. For want of other alternatives the congress created a Tsentro Soviet of the All-Russian Union of Soviet Journalists, which would lead and direct the press. Behind this idea lay the desire to combine and coordinate the several agencies and institutions which had hitherto shared responsibility for the press, including the functions of the Central Committee, Tsentro Buro of the Soviet press, NKVD, SNK and ROSTA. As the resolution of the congress stated, Tsentro Soviet would "... resolve questions on the organization of all the Soviet press and designate the general principles of its activities ...", in addition to taking upon itself the protection of the needs of journalists.

Finally the congress considered the problem of the press net, over which two points of view arose. Steklov defended the position that there should be two types of papers: leading and popular, the one in the language of and intended for leading workers and peasants, the other for the masses, abridged and written in popular language. Sosnovskii saw the question in a different light. He felt all traces of the bourgeois past and influence had to be eliminated, and the Soviet paper transformed into a publication for the simple mouzhik or

proletarian. In the end the congress supported Steklov's position and ordered the preservation of leading and mass dailies, at the same time proposing the creation of those papers in centers where they did not exist.

The resolutions adopted by the congress were meant to control and organize the press, but in most cases they were unrealistic. With the exception of the emphasis on criticism which remained an integral part of the state's press program, all the other proposals, came to naught. In the area of leadership, the attempt to unite all aspects of the press under the aegis of the union of journalists meant the loss of any direct party control and guidance, and the merging of party and trade union activities in a totally new and untried institution. The congress was undoubtedly right in its appraisal of the need for a single central authority, but Tsentro Soviet was not the answer, and it never functioned in this manner.[20]

The decision on the types of papers was equally unrealistic, since the demands of the Civil War and militarization of the press in support of the Red Army prevented the realization of even such general distinctions until the preoccupation with the war passed, and peace provided the background for differentiation in the press. The papers

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20. The three sessions of Tsentro Soviet show very limited participation and few accomplishments. Izvestiia, December 3, 26 and 31, 1918, passim.

that existed during the hostilities were either agitational sheets, printed for their shock value and to encourage and arouse the population in support of the Soviet Government, or Red Army papers destined for soldiers and sailors. In such conditions distinctions between leading and popular papers was not possible or useful. The concentration on agitation at the expense of propaganda, cultural activity, education and economic construction and the crisis in the supply of newsprint forced curtailment rather than expansion of the press net, thus precluding the creation of new papers and even preventing the transformation of existing papers into leading and popular sheets.

The apparent preoccupation of the party with other matters, evidenced by the convocation of the congress through soviet rather than party institutions, was further revealed at the 8th party congress, March 18-23, 1919. At the first session Osinskii, replying to a statement by Lenin that the press expressed the views of the Central Committee, noted:

> "Such an explanation would be possible to recognize as correct only if the CC led the party press. But this is not [the case] and has not been. I am one of the editors of the Central Organ Pravda, and I must state, that no leading orders have been received from the Central Committee. The Central Committee has not led the Central Organ."[21]

Osinskii's views were supported within Pravda by Men'shoi, another member of the staff, who stated that while the

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21. Vos'moi s"ezd, RKP(b), protokoly, Moscow, 1954, p. 27.

Central Committee considered this situation normal, he personally believed it was a mistake.[22] Sosnovskii's general report at the sixth session also dwealt on the deficiencies of party leadership, showing that the connection between the party and the masses was a direct function of the press which was weak throughout the country. In fact many party organizations had no idea of how to deal with the press or how important it was. These revelations and accusations were instrumental in determining the general theme of the congress resolution on the press, which ordered local party committees to take measures for its improvement and reminded party members of the value of the press as a weapon of propaganda, agitation, organization and as a means of influencing the masses.[23]

Apparently the decree of the congress was ineffectual or poorly executed, because within two months the whole range of press questions was re-examined at the second congress of journalists. Unlike the first congress, the second was undistinguished in its leadership and even less notable in its results. The demands of the Civil War prevented many editors from attending the congress, and the party leaders were involved in far more important matters. The failure of the

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22. Pravda, March 21, 1919, p. 1, third lead article. The Petrograd Committee also felt that it had no ties with its paper and that it was trying to rectify the situation.

23. Vos'moi s"ezd, RKP(b), protokoly, Moscow, 1959, pp. 295-6 and 436-7.

first congress was admitted by the dissolution of Tsentro Soviet. In its place the congress called into existence a new union, Tsekomzhur, based on party organizations instead of functioning through trade unions and soviets. The new union consisted of a Communist Union of Journalists and its Central Committee, supposedly parallel to and linked with the party structure at all levels from the central to the local committee. Once again the congress placed responsibility for all press activities on its new creation.[24]

Like its predecessor Tsekomzhur failed to provide either leadership or direction for the Soviet press. The party never accepted the new union or recognized its status. The fifteen man Central Committee was unable to meet regularly during the Civil War and at its final meeting after the 9th party congress, it could only lament the critical condition of the press and the disorganized state of its journalists.[25]

The lack of central leadership and the absence of a concerted policy beyond the general task of criticism made the functioning of the press more and more difficult as the Civil War intensified and then merged with the Polish War in 1920. Scarcity of newsprint only aggravated this condition. As the press became the province of lesser lights within the

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24. Izvestiia, May 15, 1919, p. 2; Vardin, Sov pechat', pp. 130-1.

25. Vardin, Sov pechat', p. 132.

party hierarchy, the quality and quantity of papers within Soviet Russia declined. The 9th party congress in April, 1920, noted this fact, but could only repeat the already time honored phrase about paying more attention to economics. It did not undertake the formulation of resolutions to deal with the decline of the press, other than appealing to all institutions to raise the production of newsprint.[26]

For the better part of the Civil War then, the press remained an orphan, directed only in the most casual way from the center. Only toward the end of the hostilities did the party return to its guidance. As usual the vehicle for the new initiative was an article by Lenin which recalled the press to the task of economic construction. Emphasis this time would be on production propaganda. While Pravda and Izvestiia, curtailing their reportage devoted to politics and expanding their coverage of production, would nominally lead the campaign, in this case another paper, Bednota, would be the single leading organ of production propaganda. It was, unlike Pravda and Izvestiia, a mass popular paper, which could unite the urban and rural proletariat. This meant it was accessible to those people immediately concerned with construction and would have greater influence among them. The only danger in so utilizing Bednota lay in quality control of the appeal

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26. Deviatyi s"ezd RKP(b), Mart-Aprel' 1920, Moscow, 1960, pp. 416-7; Smolensk Party Archives, WKP, 254. All further references to the Smolensk Archives are indicated by WKP numbers.

and its editors would have to control its standards.[27]

Lenin's article marked a watershed in the history of the Soviet press. Previously the press had been exclusively an instrument of agitation in a time of extreme crisis. Now the press was called upon to transfer its attention from military affairs to the problems of reconstruction, and inevitably to NEP. It marked the end of the militarization of the press, the end of party preoccupation with more important matters, and the point at which the creation of a press apparatus within the party was begun to lead and direct the press and determine its role within the Soviet state. Before this change can be documented it is necessary to consider what press net the party had at its disposal.

The Press Net

The Soviet press net at the start of the Civil War was weak and poorly established in terms of quality, extent and circulation, yet it was far better than at any time before and than it would be at any time up to the end of 1920. Nor are the reasons for the decline from this modest level hard to find. The ebb and flow of the Civil War destroyed newly created papers at an alarming rate. Scarcity of printing supplies, especially newsprint, forced the curtailment of format and periodicity, and many times even stopped publication. Finally

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27. Lenin o pechati, pp. 630-1.

the demands of the Civil War stripped party committees and soviets of their most experienced cadres including those with publication experience and the publications devolved into the hands of inexperienced party members or poorly trained workers.

In the middle of July, 1918 "... it was difficult to say anything satisfactory..." about the 150 to 200 papers publishing in the Soviet part of Russia.[28] The absence of original articles was total, and it was impossible to tell from what area of the country a paper came because there was rarely any material of a local character in it. Statistics, official notices, telegrams and reprints were the usual fare in the provinces. Even the central party and soviet organs suffered in part from this dryness of material, a situation that drew frequent complaints. Ekonomicheskaia zhizn' was accused of leading a conspiratorial existence without being a real paper. The editors of the White (Belo) Russian paper Zvezda reported a lack of collaborators, poor articles on trite themes and stated that "... up to this time it is ridiculous to note that not a single local paper has even one reporter, we have no correspondents, the sections of our papers are led only so-so."[29]

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28. Pravda, August 15, 1918, p. 1, fifth lead article.

29. Quoted from Zvezda, October 4, 1918, in Zernitskii, M., "Belorusskaia gazeta 'Zvezda' v 1918 godu", Voprosy zhurnalistiki, Issue 1, 1960, p. 48 (Hereafter cited as Zernitskii, "Gazeta 'Zvezda'").

Papers failed to generate interest in the economy and even after Lenin's appeal did not reveal the deficiencies of state apparatus or unmask corruption and slackers. Provincial publications especially drew fire for their drab, colorless appearance with page after page of decrees and protocols of marginal use to the population.[30] These defects were summarized in the resolution of the 8th party congress on the press.

> "1) The general weakening of the party press during the civil war ... has been harmfully reflected in the composition of our party and soviet press. The general shortcoming of almost all our party and soviet publications is the separation from local and frequently from general political life. The provincial party and soviet press almost completely does not illustrate local life, and material on general questions is selected in a very clumsy manner. Long boring articles are printed instead of those that resound with simple language in short signed articles to the leading questions of general and local life. Sometimes whole pages are filled with decrees instead of that which expounds by simple accepted language the most important of them. They print fully a variety of decrees and instructions from different enterprises and institutions instead of material to set up a living chronicle of local life."[31]

The congress explained these deficiencies by the flight of the best party literary personnel to Government work and suggested that local organizations would be well advised to rectify the situation by designating special comrades for press work and by paying special attention to the masses for which their papers were predominantly destined. At the center Pravda

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30. Pravda, January 15, 1919, p. 1, fifth lead article.

31. Vos'moi s"ezd RKP(b), protokoly, Moscow, 1959, p. 436.

would devote its attention to the question of party construction and lead the provincial press.[32]

The congress might well have directed its attention to other endeavers. Its concern was wasted, even at the center, as the confusion of the Civil War made correction of these problems beyond the power of the party. Before the congress had adjourned Izvestiia was accused of being bourgeois, of attempting to become a socialist Times, an accusation that was answered sharply by Steklov.[33] Instead of improving, the quality of the press seemed to respond inversely to any attention paid to it. Trotsky complained about this to the printers:

> "Comrade printers, our printing technique is terrible. Whole series are so blurred that you can't make out a single line, the number of misprints, jumbled lines are innumerable. To the person who for ten years has become accustomed to reading papers and understands a phrase from two words, it is difficult often times impossible to decypher the idea of our paper articles."[34]

Even the most widely read papers Bednota, Kommunar and Golos trudovogo krest'ianstva were distinguished by their poor printing, and their content remained unresponsive to the exhortations of the congress. In the village the peasantry didn't read papers because provincial writers did not know

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32. Ibid., pp. 436-7.

33. Pravda, March 26, 1919, p. 1, fifth lead article.

34. Trotsky, Soch, vol. 21, p. 243. "For the Quality of the Press".

how to write for the countryside. Articles were too long, on the wrong subjects and in a language unrecognizeable to the muzhiks.[35] Vardin summarized the situation at the 8th party conference.

> "Beside the insufficient circulation of papers, it is necessary to say, that our papers are very bad .... Even Izvestiia TsIK does not have a continual cadre of collaborators, to say nothing about the provincial press. In this sense the decision of the VIIIth congress, which recommended paying attention to the press, has remained only a decision."[36]

In the more urban areas where a superior party organization existed and the congress decree should have achieved results, the press remained reproachable. Party and soviet indifference hindered the development of the press and diverted it from the road to perfection. According to Pravda, the overwhelming majority of provincial editors and journalists, despite the attention of the 8th party congress and the second congress of journalists, were not devoted to the basic tasks confronting the local press.[37] The problem of rallying the masses to the paper, which had been established by the journalists, was not carried out at all, and local press workers and

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35. Izvestiia, June 25, 1919, p. 4.

36. Vos'maia konferentsiia RKP(b), protokoly, Moscow, 1961, p. 34. A footnote indicates that in the verbatim record Vardin added "It is necessary to carry out the wish, that the CC pay attention, that our party press has a reserve staff of paper workers. Without papers we are killing ourselves."

37. Pravda, August 15, 1919, p. 1, third lead article.

party committees were enjoined to realize these pronouncements.

In the provinces and closer to the center in the old capital, examination of papers revealed that even in the major centers the press was unsatisfactory. Deficiencies elaborated at the 8th congress had not been eliminated. The 11th General City Conference of the Petrograd Committee found that its organ, Petrogradskaia pravda, did not lead with its articles. Local papers had no instructions to follow and did not discuss the questions of the day in terms of local needs. The party paper should be a leader, the lively, clear mouthpiece of the party, interesting, rich in information and not just a collection of bourgeois articles.[38]

Yet for all this self-flagellation the resolution of the city conference on the press offered no better solutions than had been taken at the 8th party congress, enjoining the Petrograd Committee to designate " ... individual comrades for work wholly in its organ."[39] Indeed one commentator in the old capital compared the character of the Soviet press unfavorably with pre-revolutionary papers, a picture which press workers and editors of the period corroborate.[40]

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38. Petrogradskaia pravda, November 27, 1919, p. 2.

39. Ibid.

40. Litovskii recalls that papers were bad technically in their presentation of material, proofreading and make-up. Kotlyar and Rappeport remember blank pages, sensationalism and dull format. Litovskii, O., Tak i bylo, Moscow, 1951, p. 14. Rappeport, Desiat' let, pp. 53-7;

By 1920 the worst was over, passing with the crisis period of the Civil War, and the continual cry about the quality of format and content of the press began to subside, but not disappear. Rather concern began to be voiced about expanding format and developing new sections. In Smolensk, Petrograd and Moscow consideration was given to preparation of youth columns, expansion of sections devoted to worker life and information on the life of women in Soviet Russia.[41] With the decline in the military pressure after the height of the Polish attack a turning point was reached for the condition of the press just as it was in terms of the direction from the center and for the extent of the press network.

The extent of the press net during the Civil War is far less clear than its condition. In those years the character and extent of the paper net were the subject of widespread and fairly continuous debate. The days immediately after the revolution had witnessed a proliferation of Bolshevik periodicals as nearly every party committee took upon itself the task of publishing a paper. The seizure of numerous soviet sheets augmented this party net. By early summer of 1918 this too

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Kotlyar, A., (Pseud), Newspapers in the USSR, New York, 1955, pp. 2-5 (Hereafter cited as Kotlyar, Newspapers).

41. WKP 6 and 7 have a variety of materials on setting up new sections and columns in Rabochii put'. In Petrograd the youth column began in the spring in Krasnaia gazeta and in January, 1921 in Petrogradskaia pravda, while the women's section began to appear every sixth issue at the end of the spring. None of these innovations survived the press crisis of 1922.

rapidly expanded net had been severely curtailed by the activities of the Whites and Germans. This trend undoubtedly continued during the Civil War with battlefield fluctuations responsible for the rise and fall of innumerable publications. The stripping of local literary talent and the preoccupation with fighting the war undoubtedly accounted for the demise of other papers. If Sosnovskii's figure of 150-200 papers is taken as a starting point, then certain patterns emerge.

Consideration was given inter alia to the number of papers that should exist in the press net. The experience in the heady post-October days had been toward extensive proliferation. In the spring of 1918 the advance of hostile forces or the lack of sustaining power on the part of the publishing net had removed many of these dailies. Uncontrolled proliferation also began to meet resistance within the ranks of the party for the same reasons that Lenin had used with the Petrograd Organization in May 1917. A report of the delegation of the Don Soviet Government made the point in the following manner: "To multiply newspapers with the shortage of staff is shameful and inexpedient. It is necessary to recast and improve existing [papers]."[42] The idea of a restricted press net emphasizing quality rather than quantity was not accepted, however, until the first congress of journalists when proliferation was abandoned.

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42. Sbornik bol'shevistskaia pechat', part 2, p. 15.

Initially at the congress uncontrolled expansion was proposed with the idea of creating a vast network of papers for town and country. This proposal was attacked by Kerzhentsev on behalf of the congress presidium.

> "To create hundreds of new papers in all corners of Russia means, in place of the organization of the Soviet press on rationally begun lines, to organize confusion, since it is more reasonable, rational, especially in the absence of paper and ... technical means to curtail the number of existing papers and at the same time to improve their quality and cheapen them."[43]

The congress supported Kerzhentsev's stand against proliferation, but at the same time prophesied future developments by referring to the time ahead when every uezd and village would have its own paper. The lack of newsprint and the emphasis on quality rather than quantity defeated the idea of massive proliferation, and the principle of curtailment became the conscious objective of the party. A similar feeling was expressed within the Smolensk party organization.

> "The strivings of our local comrades to create in every nest in every city their own paper ... with the absence of those cadres of literary workers among our party must be shed. Ours is not an individual uezd or city party, but a party of the whole oblast ... and must have its expression on a paper reflecting the power, harmony and organization that at the present time can be fulfilled only by an oblast paper."[44]

Proceeding from the determination to improve quality, the party approached the realization of this aim from two direc-

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43. Pravda, November 21, 1918, p. 1, sixth lead article.

44. WKP 2.

tions. At the center and in the more responsible and larger city organizations, various publications were suspended. VTsIK had already taken steps along this line during the fall of 1918 by closing Vestnik biuro voyennykh kommissarov and Finansy i narodnoye khoziaistvo. Other papers had to curtail their format or stop publication of their evening edition.[45] In Saratov the local committee decided to discontinue its Red Army publication and combine three uezd papers into one. To improve and assist the remaining publications, the center, as it had done in the months before October, dispatched experienced press workers to local papers.[46]

Toward the end of November a commission, created by SNK to consider what kinds of papers should be closed, reported the need to preserve in the large centers still under Bolshevik control three types of publications: a soviet, party and popular paper. The provincial centers would be served by a single political paper; similarly the institutional press would be sharply curtailed. But realization of this program was beyond the power of the party. Many of the important centers could barely support one publication. The Smolensk Committee recognized the need for printing Zvezda,

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45. Okt i kniga, pp. 135-6; Iurko, "Sozdaniye bazy sovetskoi pechati", p. 16.

46. Verzhbitskii, N., Zapiski starogo zhurnalista, Moscow, 1961, pp. 169-71.

but it had been driven out of the city by the Germans. Forced to live a shadowy existence dependent on unreliable technical and monetary support, it suspended publication for various lengths of time.[47]

The initial shakedown of the press net, aided by the course of the Civil War continued into 1919 and soon threatened to surpass the limitations which the center had suggested. One report on the press in the localities noted the extreme scarcity of periodicals in the provinces.

> "Many uezd organizations have had to stop the publication of their own papers, (sometimes without damage to the situation, that is the local organs are not always distinguished by good condition) many gubernias have begun to curtail the size of their papers."[48]

The report then related the closing of all uezd papers in Novgorod Gubernia and the combining of their editorial boards for a single gubernia paper. In other gubernias the endemic shortage of newsprint forced suspension of papers or limitation of their size regardless of the plan at the center. Golos bednota in Kursk and Izvestiia of the Petrograd Soviet went under for this reason, while all the rest of the Petrograd press was forced to reduce its format. The program for selective curtailment was thus speeded up and perhaps pushed beyond the intended limits by the lack of press resources.

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47. Zernitskii, "Gazeta 'Zvezda'", pp. 44-8; Martselei, Pechat' Belorussii, pp. 101-3.

48. Iz TsK, #4, July 9, 1919, p. 2.

The one area which did not conform to this trend was the military press. Before October only a handful of military papers had existed attached to party organizations. Following the revolution a limited flowering of these publications occurred along with the general proliferation of the press, but this growth was not sustained despite the creation of the Red Army in February, 1918. The onset of the Civil War aroused concern at the center for this type of paper and sparked a discussion about the place and need for special Red Army publications.

In the first months of the Civil War no action was taken to delimit a net of Red army papers, although a variety of them sprung up in various units of the army. By the spring of 1919 this haphazard development had resulted in a situation that caused Izvestiia to say that the Red Army was living without its own press, and at this stage the Red Army press seemed to suffer from the same problems that afflicted other Soviet papers. Only the subject matter was different.[49]

At about the same time the question of a special Red Army paper, corresponding to the central organ for the party, soviets and peasantry, was raised. The journalists' congresses and the 8th party congress had not considered the question or even paid any attention to the problems of the military press, so there was no guidance from those sources. During the first

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49. Izvestiia, April 13, 1919, p. 1, third lead article.

months of the Civil War Krasnaia armiia, created in September 1918 and discontinued in November, had served in the capacity of a central military organ, but the center felt no need to create another. Since workers, peasants and soldiers all belonged to the same family no special periodicals were needed for the Red Army. "We must cease publishing special Red Army papers. There must be only worker and peasant." Anyway the fronts didn't read papers and the newsprint shortage was so acute that the state could not afford such publications.[50]

Theory at the center however clashed radically with practice in the field. As the worker and peasant press contracted, the military press expanded. For in the years of the Civil War the Soviet press became increasingly militarized. All the central papers initiated Red Army columns that assumed important and large positions in the publication. The basic content of the press became more and more war oriented, as was natural in a period when military events rather than economic construction meant the life or death of the government. On the other side of the coin, hand in hand with the expansion of the Red Army went the proliferation of military papers. No special decision was taken in favor of these publications nor was the sentiment in Izvestiia repudiated, but they continued to appear in ever greater numbers, responding to the army's need for papers and providing a natural tool among the soldiers.

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50. Ibid., May 4, 1919, p. 1, fourth lead article.

Published by the political section in the individual unit or by the revolutionary military soviets for the purpose of informing and educating the masses of the armies, military papers were controlled in theory by the party through its political commissars in the Red Army. To assist these publications, a special military press section was created in the Revolutionary Military Soviet to supply them with a continuous stream of materials.

The military publications that arose in the early days of the Civil War were short lived generally, a situation that probably contributed to the initiation of Red Army columns and supplements in the rest of the press. But by the end of 1918 or early in 1919, even as Izvestiia wrote against special army papers, a network of front, army and division publications was being decided on. This decision was implemented early in 1919, and by the summer twenty one army level papers existed in addition to two fleet, two special army group and several division publications.[51]

Initially they were subject to the many mistakes that plagued the rest of the Soviet press. Frequently they did not reflect the life of the soldiers and many published only political articles rather than articles concerning the life of the Red Army.[52] By the end of the Civil War, however, the

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51. Portiankin, Sov voyen pechat', p. 18.

52. Pravda, June 15, 1919, p. 3.

majority of these mistakes had been corrected and all the larger army units had been provided with papers. If at the end of 1918 there were only ninety Red Army publications, by the end of the war there were one hundred seventy military papers.[53] Some of the more important of these were Krasnyi kavalerist, Krasnyi baltiiskii flot, Soldat revoliutsii at Tsaritsyn and Krasnyi voin of the 11th Army on the Astrakhan Front.

In the course of its development the military press had to create an apparatus to organize, direct and distribute its papers. Before the establishment of the Political Board of the Revolutionary Military Soviet, to which publication activities were attached, supplying of the Red Army with various papers and literature was done by several institutions. The most important of these was the military section of the VTsIK publishing house. Other material was secured through the cultural-education section of the All-Russian Buro of Military Commissars and the several other publishing houses. In 1919 the Revvoyensoviet created its own literary-publication section to unite all these sources, and to support this merger, the Soviet of Worker and Peasant Defense obliged Glavbum to designate monthly fifty per cent of all types of paper for the Red Army.

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53. Berezhnoi, A.F., Furmanov: Zhurnalist, Leningrad, 1955, p. 74.

This arrangement helped distribute papers to various units. It was assisted by the travels of armored trains which served as command vehicles. Almost all of these trains had print shops which produced literature and papers for the area through which they were passing and distributed military publications to the troops. Closely analogous to the military train publications were the papers printed on agitation trips by high party members during the Civil War. There were at least five trains and one steamer of this type, organized by VTsIK, which in the period 1918-20 completed twenty expeditions around the territory held by the Bolsheviks.[54] Kalinin led eleven of these trips, printing papers whenever the occasion or opportunity demanded. On the twenty wagon "October Revolution" one full car was devoted to the press complete with editorial board, presses, papers and inks. At each city or important center it published a two page, twenty five by forty centimeter paper, concentrating mainly on current events and the military situation. In areas which had their own papers, the facilities of the train would be used to assist the local publication which was usually very weak. Where no paper existed, the train published one.[55]

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54. Kleandrova, V.M., Organizatsiia i formy deiatel'nosti VTsIK (1917-1924gg.), Moscow, 1968, pp. 89-90. Sergeyev, B. "Agitpoyezdki M.I. Kalinina v gody grazhdanskoi voiny", Krasnyi arkhiv, #1 (86), 1938, pp. 93-168.

55. Verzhbitskii, N., Zapiski starogo zhurnalista, Leningrad, 1955, pp. 182-91.

On one trip to the eastern front following the rout of Kolchak in 1919 Kalinin gave the following description of its publication activities.

> "'On the tour a paper was published. This tour paper had a small format, the type of our central Bednota, had very great success especially among the red army eschelons, which took it .... This paper gave the most exhaustive information. When this or that city had a local paper, then ours always succeeded in receiving and gathering information more quickly than the local, and it was characteristic that in our paper there was given more information on local interests than in the local paper.'"[56]

The great value of these trips derived from mobility and their ability to give the most up to date information. They continued up to the first years of NEP, changing their contents and message to meet altered situations.

The history of the Soviet press during the Civil War then represents a story of trial and error, an attempt to define programs that were incapable of realization because the course of events was beyond the control of the party and state. Preoccupation with military events left the press in the hands of press men who lacked the power to execute their decisions. As Vardin said, "the main trouble of the press is [sic] that the party, absorbed with the struggle at the fronts, had not devoted to it sufficient attention."[57]

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56. Quoted in Part i sov pechat' v bor'be, p. 49.

57. Vardin, Il., "Nasha periodicheskaia pechat'", Pechat' i revoliutsiia, Book 3, 1921, p. 137.

The militarization of the press in this period was a natural development given the concern with the war as was the decline of party and soviet press. By the end of 1920 the situation had become far less critical as the Red Army pushed its enemies to the ends of the state. At this time the party returned to its consideration of the press, hoping to lay the foundation of its future development. The ideas generated in the Civil War, although impossible of execution at the time, would be revived again as the party sought a basis and program for the Soviet press.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRESS CRISIS OF 1922

The End of Party Preoccupation

The party's preoccupation with the war ended toward the fall of 1920. Lenin's article signaled this change and indicated the renewed interest which the party would bring to the press. This attention had become all the more necessary because as the hostile armies retreated to the borders of Russia, the press net expanded again, quickly reaching 580 titles.[1] Guidance for this net remained the decisions of the 8th party congress, but these directives were clearly in need of updating and reemphasis, since they had been observed in the breach during the fighting, and following the Civil War new problems arose for the Soviet press. Additionally neither Tsentro Buro or Tsekomzhur had been able to lead the press effectively, coordinating leadership at the center to combat party indifference to it.

The party took the initial steps to correct irregularities in the press at the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921. In August two groups within the agit-prop section of the Central Committee began serious work in the areas of dissemination, publication and subscription. Five months later individual

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1. Vertinskii, Gazeta v Rossii, p. 137. This figure represents only gubernia (246) and uezd (334) papers. The number of central and army papers in unknown.

subsections were created within the gubernia committees to deal with, inter alia, all aspects of the press at that level.[2] This activity at the center provided the setting for another article by Lenin which noted the party's indifference to the press in the preceding five years and returned to the old slogans, originally enunciated in 1918, of less politics and more production propaganda. On this occasion the party leader castigated Soviet bureaucrats who plundered papers before they reached their destination. If they could be prevented from wasting thousands of copies, the country's needs could easily be satisfied with a smaller circulation. The newsprint saved in this manner could be used for other press works.[3]

Lenin's article and the creation of a central leadership apparatus, did not however, provide specific guidelines for local publications. To fill this gap the agit-prop section,

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2. Iz TsK, #27, p. 5 and #28, p. 14, January and March 1921. In 1921 the agit-prop section had five subsections; propaganda, agitation, national minorities, literature dissemination and editing-publication. The fourth section dealt with Tsentro Pechat' and delivery of literature to the party, The fifth section published Izvestiia tsentral'nogo komiteta and Vestnik agit-prop.

3. Lenin o pechati, pp. 632-5. "On the Work of the Peoples' Commissariat of Education"; Pravda, February 9, 1921. Volin elaborated on this theme in Pravda, February 16, when he stated that every responsible worker and party member felt he needed a complete set of papers, a feeling that was shared everywhere in the chain of command. He proposed single sets at capital, gubernia and uezd levels, where they were needed, but in no case should the press be pilfered by secretaries and chairmen.

basing its policy on Lenin's article on the character of the Soviet press, dispatched a circular which gave detailed instructions on the content and format of gubernia and uezd papers. Their most glaring errors, according to the Central Committee were:

> "1) The papers are filled with general discussion and take little participation in the practical construction of local life, 2) the papers are little popular; besides the predominance of abstract contents over concrete, they give material in the form of long articles with complicated and not understandable phrases, and 3) the papers are not the tribune of the readers, don't have ties with the worker-peasant masses, with organizations and even with local institutions."

After calling the attention of local committees to the need for decisive measures to correct these deficiencies, the secretariat proposed a program for the local press corresponding to the needs of the Soviet Government. Gubernia and uezd publications must be locally oriented, concentrating on the realities of the local situation. The abstract must give way to the illumination of the concrete through agitation by facts. Factual examples, if taken from non-local events, must be fully related to the local situation. To realize this program the local paper should have the following format: "a) agricultural construction, b) plant-factory industry, c) city economy, d) party life, e) peoples' education, f) Red Army life."[4] These sections did not have to be illustrated in each number of the

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4. Iz TsK, #30, July, 1921. "On the Program of the Local Press". April 4, 1921.

publication, but had to be extensively covered in general.

Having instructed the local organizations on the content of their papers, the Central Committee next turned to delivery of the message. Because of the semi-literate composition of the vast majority of the population, the press had to consider not only the interests of the reader, but also had to reduce the style of presentation on the gubernia and uezd level to simple construction and plain format, explaining unfamiliar names and words. Unfortunately the party noted that the Soviet press attempted to flaunt its worldliness, using foreign words and erudite expressions. This was a completely mistaken approach to the press. Finally papers had to be tied to the masses, and this could only be done through tens and hundreds of letters and by visits of the editor and his staff to villages and factories. Letters to the papers however, depended on the content of the publication. When that was interesting, letters arrived in a steady stream. When it was not they fell off and the paper was isolated from the masses. Correspondents must utilize the institutions within the area served by the press, and party committees must render them all possible aid. "Without the establishment of a true connection with the readers the paper will not succeed in fulfilling its task and, it follows, the most important agitational means for influencing the masses, that is the paper, will remain unused."[5] The desire

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5. Ibid.

to have connections with the reading public was also reflected by the Central papers which appealed to party and soviet institutions to designate special comrades for the systematic correspondence with the parent paper.[6]

Following enunciation of the program for the local press, the Central Committee entrusted Trotsky with the leadership of a commission to investigate the improvement of printed matters in the state. The commission, like the agit-prop section, began with an examination of the country's papers, and then considered all the ancillary branches of the press. The basic principle guiding the commission's work was delivery of the maximum number of papers to the masses with primary attention focused on the technical problems of distribution and dissemination. It also attacked the technical aspects of format, trying to secure legible copy for the reader.[7] Within the commission separate subcommissions were created to consider problems of dissemination, newsprint, presses and ROSTA.

At the end of April, Trotsky reported its findings. Papers were insufficient to meet the demand for them, and the commission had adopted measures to expand their sales. The commission decided to divide the press according to type, designating

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6. Pravda, April 10, p. 1, circular to all gubcoms; Izvestiia April 16, 1921, p. 1, from Presidium of VTsIK.

7. Izvestiia, April 15, p. 2; Ekonomicheskaia zhizn', April 10, 1921, p. 3. The Central Committee, VTsIK, Tsentro Pechat', the Moscow and Petrograd press participated in the Commission's work. There is no mention of it in Soviet monographs.

papers for workers and peasants. Trotsky concluded that little progress had been made in the area of differentiation since three quarters of the papers repeated each other and most of the masses didn't even see publications. Following Lenin's idea, the commission also stressed the need for economy of newsprint with precise accounting for each sheet, and called for rationalization of printed works.[8]

The question of securing maximum dissemination in a period of restricted circulation was recognized as the immediate crux of the problem. Molotov in the name of the Central Committee informed all party organizations at the end of April that each paper must be widely read until the general circulation of the press could be expanded. Party and trade union organizations must be mobilized for this task and must impart to the reader that every printed work, whether book, brochure or paper, could no longer be considered individual property, but must come into general use. Papers, especially the ones pasted for public reading, had to be given the widest circulation by carefully placing and protecting them.[9] In those areas where there were no papers, posters would be substituted giving brief coverage and summaries of important events.

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8. Trotsky, Soch, vol. 21, pp. 244-6. "Position on Publishing Matters", also in Izvestiia, April 16, 1921. The editors of Trotsky's works state that they could not find any reports on the commission other than the one in Izvestiia.

9. Iz TsK, #30, July 20, 1921, pp. 13-4. "On Dissemination of Agitational Literature".

The appeals of the center for the rationalization of dissemination and localization of content met a very limited response. In Smolensk it brought immediate attention to the press. Production propaganda was promoted. Politics and agitation were ordered curtailed, and the editors of Rabochii put' furnished the local committee with a list of collaborators, who were obliged to write regularly for the paper.[10] As to the distribution of the press, the gubernia committee noted that it remained in unsatisfactory condition and called upon party secretaries to correct the situation.

Other areas of the country did far less. In Georgia, apparently, there was no response to the instruction from the center, and the press, according to the local paper, remained divorced from life and unchanged from the days of the Civil War.[11] The situation in Georgia more accurately reflected the position of the press in the country as a whole. Izvestiia found that its appeal for local news had yielded no perceptible results and VTsIK repeatedly called for this information to assist Izvestiia in creating a section devoted to the localities. The central peasant paper Bednota confirmed the Smolensk picture of dissemination, reporting the late arrival of the central papers as close as Tula.[12] Among Red Army

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10. WKP 254, May 1921; WKP 512, May 1 and July 28, 1921.

11. Pravda Gruzii, July 5, 1921, p. 2.

12. Izvestiia, June 1, 1921, p. 1, editorial. Bednota, September 28, 1921, p. 3.

readers, the situation was apparently the same. The paper "... must reflect the life of the red units, their thoughts, their needs, their interests. This task can be resolved only if in every unit are found correspondents and workers of the paper, both communist and non-party."[13]

These reports indicated that the deficiencies of the local press remained uncorrected mainly because of inattention at the local level which the central press continued to decry.

> "The majority of these [papers] produce a very wretched impression. In the majority of papers local life is absent. Questions of economic construction get a place in the backyard. There are almost no articles which illustrate the new course of economic policy. A place is not provided for the explanation of the latest decrees ...."[14]

They also failed to send their publications to the Central Committee, a practice continued from the first days of the restored Pravda in March 1917. This hampered the party's direction of the local press, and to rectify this omission the Central Committee ordered all party organizations to send copies of their publications to the center.[15] But toward the end of 1921, the party recognized that improvement of the Soviet press was still being realized very slowly in the localities, if at all. Local papers had not responded to the center

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13. Trotsky, Soch, vol. 21, p. 238. "Tasks of the Red Army Paper", July 20, 1921.

14. Pravda, August 14, 1921, p. 1, seventh lead article.

15. Iz TsK, #33, October 1921, p. 20. The response to this directive was appreciable as #38, February 1922, lists some 90 publications received.

and the party would have to pay further attention to them.

Part of its new attention was given to the possibility of calling another congress of journalists and part took the form of still another letter from the Central Committee to oblast and gubernia committees. In the latter the Central Committee argued that because local organizations failed to give the press proper attention, "... many uezd and gubernia, frequently even oblast publications stand below all criticism." This was intolerable. Local branches of the party must change their attitude to conform with the resolution adopted at the 8th party congress. The Central Committee recommended examining the composition of editorial boards with the aim of supplying them with mature party members and politically prepared workers, first of all from the membership of the given party committee. Local organizations were further enjoined to take leadership of papers into their own hands and direct and instruct the press of the lower party committees with the aid of the agit-prop sections.

> "The Central Committee reminds you, that the party committee bears completely the responsibility for the condition of the given party-soviet printed organ. Attached to the agit section of the Central Committee has been created a special apparatus, which examines the condition of the press, strengthens its party leadership. The local party committees must understand the whole importance of the press for all our work and, led by the decisions of the VIIIth party congress, take it in its hands, strengthen the workers and render it all possible aid."16

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16. Iz TsK, #36, December 15, 1921, dated November 16, 1921.

At the same time the Central Organ of the party reiterated that part of the 8th congress resolution dealing with the responsibilities of local organizations in the revival of the party press.

> "As a general rule local organizations have not paid serious attention to the periodical press. Papers have been stripped ... at the present time of responsible workers, they are poorly supplied with money. About the paper crisis and press destruction it is not necessary to speak. The paper is forgotten by all ... finds itself in the position of a 'poor relative' attached to the ROSTA information apparatus."[17]

This condition meant that the prime vehicle of influencing the masses was crippled and not fulfilling its elementary obligations. Even worse many papers distorted the policy of the Soviet Government and compromised it before the masses. The whole situation was best characterized by the example of Svobodnyi pakhar' of Zadonsk in Voronezh Gubernia. The editor, secretary and all the collaborators were the same individual. He was afforded no support or aid by either the uezd committee or the uispolcom and the paper finally had to close. Such an attitude toward the press had to stop.

> "Every Gub Com of the party, every Gubispolcom bears the responsibility for the condition of the local press. We will note on the black list those gubernia centers, which by their organs disgrace party and [Soviet] power."[18]

Vardin reported a similar attitude when he was discussing the

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17. Pravda, November 22, 1921, p. 2.

18. Ibid.

8th congress resolution. The idea of the party committee's obligation "... evidently did not penetrate the consciousness of the local leading elements of our party, since how can we explain otherwise ... the disgraceful position, in which our local press finds itself." The main problem lay in the absence of any life in the local press, because the paper was "... a matter the demands of which could be satisfied by the tenth rank."[19]

From these statements it became evident that the directives of the Central Committee since the end of the Civil War had fallen on deaf ears. Because of indifference, physical impossibility or the lack of means at the local level, the press was not responding to party directives. For the most part the blame lay squarely on the provincial party and soviet institutions which did not understand the importance of the press in the scheme of Soviet power. While instructions and orders of the Central Committee had little effect, the change to NEP in 1921 left an indelible mark on the whole press net and forced the party to assume an even more attentive attitude toward the press.

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19. Vardin, Il., "Nasha periodicheskaia pechat'", Pechat' i revoliutsiia, November-December, 1921, pp. 134-7. He repeated this theme in an article in Petrogradskaia pravda, December 28, 1921, "Toward the Question of the Press", which noted that the wretched condition of the press in the provinces required the interference of the central institutions of the party. In another article Vardin went still further and claimed that the majority of the local press was non-party and even non-communist.

The Change to NEP

First to be effected by this change to NEP was the dissemination and expedition apparatus of Tsentro Pechat' which until the fall of 1921 had serviced all Soviet papers free. Its change to cost accounting was the initial step in the transformation of all phases of the press from the newsprint industry to the paper itself.[20] The introduction of dissemination fees was quickly followed by the change to the paid paper on December 15. Not only were persons and institutions to pay for the paper, but the price of the given periodical was to be determined "... by the actual publication according to prime costs including production costs." The only exception to this general principle was a slight reduction in the price for collective subscriptions.[21] The final step in the conversion of the press was then taken in January 1922, when all papers were transferred to cost accoun-

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He wrote that this could not continue. "Every Soviet paper must be a party, Communist paper in direction, spirit and theme. We don't need a non-party, indefinite paper even though called Soviet." Vardin, Sov pechat', pp. 98-101. "The paper in the System of the Party Apparatus".

20. This was done as early as August in the Moscow area. Okt i kniga, p. 234. The introduction of fees for dissemination and distribution had an immediate impact in Smolensk. The editors of Rabochii put' asked the Gubernia committee to discuss the question of the paper because the tarif made its production run in the red. WKP 512, #386, November 23, 1921.

21. Zakony o pechati, pp. 42-3. "Decree of the Soviet of

ting retroactively from the first of the year. Apparently realizing the impact of the last step on provincial papers, the Soviet of Peoples' Commissars opened a fund to subsidize the press through the local executive committees.[22]

At the end of 1921 with the press undergoing the change to cost accounting, the agit-prop section of the Central Committee, faced with the patent failure of all efforts to improve and strengthen the local press, worked out a general plan for a paper network which was discussed at a meeting of the secretaries of gubernia and higher party organizations. The press subsection had drafted a resolution for the meeting which elaborated a series of measures and general directives for the reorganization of the press and the creation of a basic network of worker and peasant, gubernia and uezd papers. The draft plan, adopted by the meeting, provided a blueprint for the Soviet press in the localities, and for this reason it deserves considerable attention, although the change to NEP would render its implementation impossible in the immediate future.

After stating that the 8th congress resolution remained unfulfilled and that the condition of the press was extremely

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of Peoples' Commissars on the Introduction of the Paid Paper", November 23, 1921.

22. Ibid., pp. 43-4. "Decree of VTsIK and SNK on the Transformation of all Organs of the Periodical Press to the Beginning of Economic Accounting", January 24, 1922.

unsatisfactory, the meeting of the secretaries confirmed "... that the press is a basic and most important means of influence on the masses and the link of the party with them" and recognized "the pressing need for the firm realization of the measures, noted in the resolution of the VIIIth congress and the meeting of the agit-prop sections of the Gubcoms."[23] The ties between the party committee and the editorial board, which were an integral part of the correct operation of a paper and which up to that time had not been correct, must be close, and generally the editor of the paper must be a member of the given party committee. The local party unit should guide its paper, but not interfere in the daily life and details of editorial work. It should also register all journalists and transfer them to paper work. As for the press net,

> "Considering the immensity of distances, the insufficiency of means, paper and qualified staff, the meeting expresses itself for the maximum curtailment of the government net of papers and the reorganization of the provincial press, according to a general all-Russian plan, which must be worked out in the shortest time. This plan must be constructed on the basis of a calculation of the demands of the basic categories of readers -- workers and peasants."

For the gubernias, the basic paper would be a mass worker-

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23. Iz TsK, #1(37), January 1922, p. 42. "Draft Resolution". The meeting of the agit-prop sections took place in July 1921. The only material concerning it was found in Petrogradskaia pravda, December 31, 1921, p. 2, in a report on the secretaries meeting. This report stated that the sections had characterized the condition of the press as unsatisfactory, but had noted its great importance in party work. Editors should be party members of the local committee and should be given autonomy to run their papers.

peasant, political and production paper, an organ of mass propaganda and agitation to uncover and mobilize public opinion among the working masses. The paper of the Gubispolcom was relegated to the second spot, its circulation reduced and its periodicity curtailed to weekly publication. In the large gubernia and oblast centers a daily party and soviet publication was also possible.

On the uezd level the basic paper must be popular and political, destined predominantly for the peasantry and publishing one to three times per week. In areas with a worker population the orientation of the paper would be changed to become the expression of plant-factory life. Where the material means was weak or the uezd was close to the gubernia center, the publication of the uezd paper must cease; in other cases raion papers must serve several neighboring uezds.

These papers provided the officially sanctioned net, but any locality was free to create a publication on its own initiative under the aegis of the local committee. The leadership of the whole net was entrusted to the subsection of the press which would guide local papers through its branches in individual gubernia committees. These subsections would lead and direct the local and lower press according to the tasks standing before the party and would rally to participation in the press, party members and non-party individuals.[24]

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24. Ibid., pp. 18-20 and 42-3.

Following the drafting of this plan and its acceptance by the party secretaries, the Orgburo of the Central Committee nominated a commission to define the number of each type of paper.[25] The commission finished its work in January 1922, and the Orgburo adopted its findings. Special press nets were to be established in the Ukraine, the Caucasus and the other autonomous oblasts and national areas. All Moscow and Petrograd papers were incorporated without change except for institutional and trade union publications. The rest of the press was reduced to 232 papers: 74 uezd papers and 158 gubernia publication including 20 peasant and 11 Komsomol.[26]

Conceivably the establishment of the new press net and the party secretaries' participation in its creation would have corrected the unsatisfactory press situation in Soviet Russia, however, events evolved differently. The combination of the change to cost accounting and the attempt to restructure the press net had a catastrophic effect on the number and circulation in the provinces. The following figures illustrate the

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25. Ibid., p. 19. The commission consisted of Sosnovskii and Vorob'ev from the press subsection, Iaroslavskii from the Central Committee, and Doletskii and Lebedev from the Board of the Periodical Press.

26. Part i sov pechat' v bor'be, pp. 60-1. The military press underwent a similar examination at this time by army and fleet editors who decided against the creation of divisional papers and established the okrug periodical as the basic military publication. Portiankin, Sov voyen pechat', pp. 98-9.

crisis that developed:

Date	Number of Papers Gubernia	Uezd	Total	Circulation
Jan. 1, 1922	312	490	802	2,661,189
March 1	171	211	382	2,287,905
April 1	163	199	362	2,334,390
May 1	163	175	338	1,156,180
June 1	164	166	330	1,051,200
July 1	156	157	313	1,022,135
August 1	163	136	299	993,050
September 1	178	152	330	1,000,055
October 1	214	158	372	1,110,900
November 1	233	178	411	1,210,930
December 1	244	179	423	1,432,445 [27]

The meaning of these figures is obvious. Immediately after the change to NEP the number of provincial papers was reduced by more than half. That these publications had little support is indicated by the fact that the loss of more than four hundred publications resulted in a circulation decline of only four hundred thousand copies. Put another way, while half the uezd press net disappeared only about one seventh of the circulation was similarly affected. Curtailment through the elimination of the weaker publications probably would have been acceptable to the party if the trend had stopped at that point, since the remaining periodicals were undoubtedly the stronger papers. Unfortunately in the spring of 1922 the stronger papers

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27. Vardin, Sov pechat', p. 54; Vertinskii, Gazeta v Rossii p. 130, gives slightly different totals for March and April, but agrees with the rest of the figures. Chernomorskii, M.N., Periodicheskaia pechat', Moscow, 1956, p. 27, cites the same statistics.

with larger circulations also began to succumb to the high costs of publication with a consequent heavy reduction in circulation. The statistics reveal that the average circulation of papers that failed in April-May was about 50,000 copies, a loss that must have been felt far more extensively than that of the four hundred titles.

This catastrophic decline far exceeded the desires of the party, and the press subsection in January tried to arrest the mass closings of the local press before they got out of hand.[28] It also produced a whole new series of issues for the party to deal with in addition to the still unresolved problem of involving the party apparatus generally in the press. The change to NEP in most publications generated a vicious circle that was responsible for their failure. The prime costs for a paper would rise as the supporting industries and services demanded real payment for their work. This forced the paper to raise its subscription price which in turn drove away readers and meant a smaller gross income. Smaller income necessitated further price hikes, and the publication ran the very real risk of pricing itself out of existence. The answer to this problem

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28. Iz TsK, #2 (38), February 1922, p. 17. "Report of the Agitprop Section for January". From this and other reports throughout the year it becomes obvious that the closings were an unplanned reaction to cost accounting and not from planned reductions to fit the new state net, even though the number of provincial papers at its nadir in August still exceeded the number planned in the state net.

created by NEP and the response to other aspects of the press crisis flowed along several lines.

The best answer financially, if not ideologically, to the problem of cost accounting had been utilized even before the final change had occurred. A bourgeois problem demanded a bourgeois solution, and the press replied to the challenge by accepting paid advertisements. Initially appearing in the central papers in November 1921, they had spread to all publications by early 1922. In the central press most of the ads were for official or institutional goods and services, publications, nationalized industries etc. With time this composition expanded to include the theater and arts, private enterprise; even individual position ads began to appear. In quantity they rapidly assumed a full page of a four page edition, usually the back page, and frequently the last two pages of a six page edition. By 1923 they were appearing on every page in a given issue.

Advertisements enabled the central and larger papers to change to cost accounting with a manageable deficit and a minimum of difficulty, but in the provinces such a solution was clearly beyond local means. Primarily it failed because there were not enough institutions or enterprises in the localities who could afford ads, and the number of artistic and private contributors at the uezd level was almost non-existent. Ads did not provide the answer to the new economic policy for the

local press and its decline continued unchecked. Other attempts to circumvent the problem were equally ineffective in the localities. Expansion of distribution either through collective subscriptions or through the use of the oral paper that was read to meetings and assemblies, both suffered from the same drawback: they did not deal with the problem of rising costs. Collective subscriptions failed to expand circulation and hence did nothing to meet increased expenses, and the oral paper failed to generate any monetary support at all.

It was in conditions such as these, with the press being reorganized along commercial lines, with papers closing in the provinces and with party and soviet organizations seemingly unable to comprehend the function of the press, that the third congress of journalists convened in Moscow at the end of January 1922. The congress met at a critical time and had the opportunity to present concrete proposals to deal with the problems that were destroying the Soviet press. Unfortunately the press workers missed their chance completely. Beside dealing with the old problems of the role of their colleagues in the paper and their position in the state, the congress simply reiterated the importance of party leadership in the new conditions. "The change to the paid paper gives rise to the danger of adaption (in pursuit of circulation) to the taste of petty-bourgeois readers ...."[29] and this tendency must be fought by party vigi-

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29. Vardin, Sov pechat', p. 134.

lence.

The keynote speaker at the congress, Sosnovskii, seemed unaware of the rapid decline that was occurring, noting rather the continued unsatisfactory content and the inattention of local organizations to the press. He then referred to the state paper net as a program that had to be realized. Only at the last session did Sosnovskii hint that the congress was almost totally irrelevant to the crisis, stating that the delegates had not been fully prepared for their work and that many important questions remained to be discussed.[30]

Having missed a fine opportunity to deal with the press crisis in its infancy, the party reverted to browbeating lower organizations about their inability to grasp the importance of the press. Their culpability lay at the heart of the problem and the Central Committee continued to demand greater responsibility and attention to this party weapon. Repeating the admonitions of the secretaries' meeting, the center again enjoined its branches to name competent, experienced party members to editorial boards and lead their work by directives without interfering in the routine of publication. Journalism was to be regarded as responsible party work. At the same time the

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30. Pravda Gruzii, February 16, 1922, p. 3. Probably the only important measure taken by the congress was the establishment of wage norms for the various types of paper work which helped to determine the standard cost for producing a given publication.

local committee must tread a fine line between "leaning" on the press and preventing anti-party deviations.

> "The Central Committee calls to the attention of the party committee the fact that petty-bourgeois tendencies are beginning to percolate through the local press. It is necessary to carry on a decided struggle with all deviations of editors from the political line of the RCP."[31]

By March the situation had become so threatening that the 11th party congress, March 27 - April 2, took time from dealing with the worker opposition to discuss fully the press crisis. The problem consisted of two parts. On the one hand the party was not paying sufficient attention to the press and on the other the new economic policy was taking a great toll of the periodical press which was not established well enough to withstand the pressures of publishing according to prime costs. In the localities the value of the press as a party tool was underestimated or not understood. This led to qualitatively poor publications, since the given committee was unwilling to assign experienced members to paper work. Failure to designate experienced party members resulted in a boring unitelligible publication that offered nothing of interest to its readers. The introduction of the paid paper and rising subscription rates drove away even the most stalwart subscribers. Such a situa-

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31. Kaminskaia, N., Ed., Sovetskaia pechat' v dokumentov, Moscow, 1961, pp. 218-20 (Hereafter cited as Sov pechat' v dok). "Central Committee Circular on the Periodical Press", February 22, 1922. A similar statement of the problems of the press in Georgia is in Pravda Gruzii, March 2, 1922, p. 2.

tion could only be corrected by vigorous action and a completely new party approach to the press. Yet the party had to make the paper popular and interesting to attract readers without falling into petty bourgeois Phillistine tendencies.

In its report to the congress the press subsection of the Central Committee, whose guidelines had been laid out in November 1921, related the history of the periodical press since the 8th congress, noting particularly the absence of any response to the great number of appeals from the Central Committee. Papers had not been strengthened and journalists had been registered in only fifty of ninety gubernia committees. The February circular had produced some results, but in the provinces few party organizations had created the apparatus necessary to revive the press or established press subsections. The report concluded that the decree of the 8th congress was still far from realization.[32]

The congress discussed the press at its tenth session on the morning of April 1. The head of the agit-prop section, Iakovlev, began the debate with a description of the press.

> "If we photographed at the present moment the position in which our press is found then the picture received is very sad despite the fact that in the last months some improvements have been noted. In the local press it is possible to note two tendencies. One -- when the local press, in connection with the new economic policy, has released the reins, on account of the new economic policy, loses all its communist content, surrenders all positions. The other -- when the press remains as before without

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32. Iz TsK, #3 (39), March 1922, pp. 11-3; #4 (40), March 1922, p. 6.

color, continues to crank out feuilltons on extremely boring subjects, so neither a peasant or a worker give it any [consideration]."[33]

After relating further particulars on the condition of the press and stating that the party was clearly losing its position in this area of Soviet life, Iakovlev proposed two steps to rectify the situation. First, the party had to awaken its membership to the importance of the press, and second, it was necessary " ... to give the possibility to the paper worker to be devoted completely to his work, but not change the journalist to the last person, who can travel as he likes. The editor must always lead the paper, and not still do one hundred other things. We must do this immediately."[34] Iakovlev also suggested a series of measures dealing with the qualitative side of the problem. The paper must, he said, respond to the demands of the worker, and its content must be made more suitable to him. This could only be done through greater attention by the party. Finally, with the days of state support gone, the press must agitate on its own behalf and close the gap between its prices and the wages of the reader.

Iakovlev's report covered every aspect of the press, indicating the problems and suggesting an outline of positive steps

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33. Odinadtsatyi s"ezd RKP(b), stenograficheskii otchyot, Moscow, 1961, pp. 417-8. Iakovlev later noted a third type which bordered on illiteracy.

34. Ibid., pp. 419-20.

that could cure them. The congress resolution on the press and propaganda reflected the tone of his ideas. In its nine paragraphs the congress 1) called for greater party attention to the press and the designation of press work as basic party work, 2) called for a basic change in content to reflect local life, 3) called for the designation of May 5 as press day, 4) forbade participation of communists in private publications except in rare circumstances, 5) asked the Central Committee to secure funds and newsprint for the press, 6) made it the duty of every party member to read and subscribe to a party paper, 7) called for independent Komsomol papers under gubernia leadership, 8) called for the establishment of subsections of the press at the gubernia and oblast level, and 9) called attention to the need for papers in the national languages.[35]

Immediately after the congress the Central Committee began implementation of these resolutions. The press subsection initiated measures to secure a better press net by providing local delegations with questionnaires on their publications.

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35. Ibid., pp. 569-71. In the draft press resolution in Pravda, March 26, only the first five points were included. The other four were added during the debate after Iakovlev reported. At the tenth session an attempt was made to eliminate all ads from party publications, thus allowing more room for other material. This suggestion was actually adopted in Lenin's absence. When he returned to the session, he spoke against the idea, asking where Pravda would get its funds without ads. Evidently the decision to remove ads was reversed, since they continued to appear in the paper.

Even before the completed forms were analyzed the press subsection's instructional unit started to examine the ideological and technical character of the state's printed organs. On another level the subsection convened general meetings in Moscow of the various servicing industries with the idea of reducing costs and correcting dissemination irregularities.[36] The result of these meetings was an attempt to involve more and more of the party and soviet apparatus in dissemination work, while at the same time improving the technical quality of format.[37] On April 20, the third point of the party resolution became law by a circular letter of the Central Committee which established May 5 as the day of the party-soviet press.[38]

The first press day was duly celebrated with expanded editions which recorded the importance of the press to the state and traced the history of individual publications. Readers and collaborators were encouraged and enjoined to promote the press and support it with articles and subscriptions. The general theme of the day was stated in Bednota.

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36. Iz TsK, #6 (42), June, 1922, pp. 6, 18-20. "Report of the Central Committee". One idea for reducing costs that gained currency after the congress was the transfer of presses to the papers.

37. Sbornik bol'shevistskaia pechat', part 2, pp. 80-1. "Regulation of the Dissemination of Printed Works".

38. Pravda, April 21, 1922, p. 1, circular; O part i sov pechati, pp. 254-5. "On the Day of the Press".

> "In the Soviet state the task of the worker-peasant press is to aid the powers in removing the defects of Soviet construction, in the struggle with the violations and infringements of Soviet legality in easing and improving the life of the workers."[39]

To improve the press further the Central Buro of the all-Russian section of press workers, organized at the third press workers' congress, appealed to both the Central Committee and the Soviet of Peoples' Commissars for a provincial press subsidy and the mobilization of additional aid for the local press from gubispolcoms.[40]

These instructions, appeals and meetings all dealt with particular aspects of the press, but the main result of the 11th congress was a letter from the Central Committee, June 7, which proposed a definite plan for gubernia and uezd papers. The theme expounded in this letter was not new, merely reviving in a more detailed form the ideas expressed in the 1921 program for the local press. On the gubernia level the Soviet press would direct its attention to all manifestations of local life. To insure this coverage the paper should set up a lead article of 80-100 lines, followed by a second article of smaller dimension, both devoted strictly to local matters. Lead articles would be considered as political directives with the force of decrees. Next were sections on

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39. Bednota, May 5, 1922, p. 3. All papers examined for the first press day devoted at least one page to the press, many the whole edition.

40. Pravda, May 13, 1922, p. 3.

Soviet and foreign life followed by major sections on party, worker and trade union life each with 120-180 lines per issue. The rest of the paper would include smaller sections devoted to industry, rural economy, cooperatives, the Red Army, correspondence and a reference section in which the readers' letters were answered. All these were designated as permanent sections which could be supplemented by special campaigns or temporary sections concerning the famine or the sowing season.

For uezd papers the concentration was even more restricted to local affairs. At this lower level two thirds of the paper would be devoted to the locality, concentrating on the rural economy and village life with subsequent attention to gubernia, state and foreign life in that order. The leader, rarely followed by a second article, would consist of 60-80 lines on a local topic. The rest of the paper would be filled with a compulsory party life section, and sections on industry and trade unions which would be small unless the paper was published in a proletarian area. The reference section at this level was especially important since the peasantry needed advice, explanations and information.[41]

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41. Sov pechat' v dok, pp. 222-4. "On the Plan of the Local Papers". Three days later in another letter the Central Committee ordered the creation of women's columns or sections in the local press and the involving of women in the work of the paper. O part i sov pechati, pp. 259-60. "On Worker and Peasant Women's Columns in the Local Press". Some papers had had these columns before on an infrequent basis, but none survived the change to NEP.

The immediate response to this program was minimal. At the end of June with few exceptions the majority of gubernia papers had not improved. Local life remained unillustrated. According to the Central Organ, some of these publications were literary periodicals divorced from the workers and peasants; and some were hackneyed economic sheets filled with reports and official materials; while others were printed on paper suitable for cigars. Their material situation was equally bad, since ads in the localities were not sufficient to provide operating capital.[42] The day of the press had not brought the anticipated results. The agit-prop section of the Central Committee noted that

> " ... familiarity with the majority of the most important party organs proved, that the local papers and journals suffer in their material relation, but also they satisfy little the tasks standing before the local party organs."[43]

Nor had the local party organizations suddenly concerned themselves with subscription and circulation or recognized press work as a basic party task.[44]

The decline in the number and circulation of papers continued, although at a slower rate. In some areas this was due

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42. Pravda, June 29, 1922, p. 1, third lead article.

43. Iz TsK, #7 (43), July, 1922, p. 26. "Report of the Agit-prop Section for June-July, 1922". Two other measures at the center provided for the payment of 50% of the local deficit and the despatch of central papers on the account of the Central Committee. Ibid., #8 (44), p. 38.

44. Vardin, Sov pechat', p. 35. "Unresolved Press Questions".

to the financial strain of NEP, in others to cannibalization and perhaps in a few due to the introduction of the state press net. In Petrograd with the cost of the individual issues skyrocketing, it became necessary to combine four papers into two in order to save on costs.[45] In Georgia the first Caucasian Congress of Communist Organizations closed the uezd papers except for those along the railroad. The local Izvestiia was also suspended, but in the centers where Central Committees existed a general-political paper was established.[46] In Moscow a conscious plan of cannibalization developed at the end of May after many uezd papers had already closed. Rabochaia Moskva, the organ of the Moscow Committee, called on the raion papers to cease publication and concentrate their resources on the continued printing of Rabochaia Moskva. This was the only way to insure the concentration of the necessary press resources for the masses.[47] The lack of financial support in Dagestan forced the local party organization to suspend its

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45. Rappeport, Desiat' let, pp. 66-72. Makhovik and Petrogradskaia pravda merged as did Derevenskaia pravda and Krasnaia gazeta. Krasnaia gazeta's price rose to 100,000 r for an issue by the spring. In Smolensk the production cost for an issue of Rabochii put' reached 2,300,000 r by the fall of 1922, a price that neither gubcom, gubispolcom or Tsentro Pechat' could meet. WKP 519. "Report of the Editors of Rabochii put'".

46. Pravda Gruzii, February 15, p. 3, and March 2, 1922, p. 2.

47. Rabochaia Moskva, May 31, 1922, p. 5. To compensate for this loss the coverage of local news was expanded.

publication.[48] Saratov, which at the middle of 1921 had one and in some cases two papers in each uezd, recorded a similar fate. This net of 20-25 papers by the spring of 1922 had collapsed to 2 or 3 " ... which had their feet in the grave." The situation improved slightly after press day, not through the assistance of party or soviet organizations, but because of the aid of cooperative societies in Saratov.[49]

Recovery Following the 12th Party Conference

As the summer wore on, however, the measures adopted at the center finally began to take effect. The crisis reached its peak in August as the number of papers fell to 299 and their circulation to less than one million copies, and then began to recover slowly. In Moscow this revival was reflected in the reestablishment of uezd papers beginning in mid August. In Petrograd the reappearance of the evening edition of Krasnaia gazeta signaled the passing of the worst period. But the recovery was neither fast nor spectacular. At the end of 1922 the Soviet press was only slightly more than half of what it had been in the previous year. Basically, the reason for the recovery was the cummulative effect of the instructions from the center which finally impressed the importance of the

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48. Akhmedov, D.H., Periodicheskaia pechat' v Dagestane, Makhachkala, 1963, pp. 118-9.

49. Pravda, June 30, 1922, p. 4.

press on the local organizations, and a subsidy for the press.

Following the 12th conference of the party in August, the agit-prop section convoked a special meeting of the delegates to discuss the press crisis. They reviewed the critical financial situation and the necessity for giving papers monetary support, stressing that " ... in the interest of preserving our press, to avoid perversion of its character, it is necessary that the proletarian press in the Soviet Republic be found in material dependence only on the state and proletarian party."[50] The meeting established a commission to control and administer a state subsidy for the press and to liquidate its indebtedness. Within the commission three sections were established to investigate press expenses, payment for information and dissemination and agitation costs.[51] This commission played an important part in reviving the closed papers by supplying them with the financial support necessary for publication.

The central party and soviet organs also contributed to the recovery with a series of articles on the press, as did the Central Buro of press workers which continued to discuss the condition of the press. Both noted the failure of many

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50. Vardin, Sov pechat', p. 53. "Party Work in the Area of the Press (March 1922 - March 1923)".

51. Ibid.; Iz TsK, #9 (45), September 1922, pp. 21-2. Portlankin, Sov voyen pechat', p. 101, states that the Red Army press alone got 35 million r in subsidy at this time.

party organizations to designate reliable comrades for their papers. To improve the quality of existing publications and to help reopen those that had closed, reportage had to remain local. This would popularize the local press and increase its subscriptions. The most important point of attack for the local committee, however, was the cost spiral which had to be broken to insure a strong paper. Reliance on the state subsidy would not affect this aspect of the publication. Other suggestions involved the strengthening of the dissemination apparatus, whose frequent malfunctions led to fewer subscriptions, and further efforts to transfer presses to the paper. The Central Buro found that the latter measure together with an expansion of the section devoted to worker life resulted in an improved publication and lower costs.[52]

It would be easy to overestimate the impact of these measures. Although the crisis had broken at the end of the summer, and symptoms of improvement were noted, many papers particularly at the uezd level, well into the fall of 1922, gave " ... few pleasant impressions. These are not papers, but one misunderstanding." They were illiterate, lacking any content connected with the locality, and filled with articles

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52. Pravda, p. 4, and Izvestiia, p. 3, October 3, 1922. The plenum concluded that no one solution would work in every case, but the realization of the 11th congress resolution should be the main weapon for improving the press.

ranging from NEP trash to pornographic poetry. The party in most cases remained without a decent press as did the workers and peasants, while party and soviet organizations still enjoyed themselves without concern for the situation. No one solution would overcome the diverse problems facing the press. Bubnov, the deputy leader of the agit-prop section told Pravda's readers that the state subsidy was not a panacea. The transfer of presses to the papers and the expansion of subscriptions would help solve the problem, but an important part in improving the press involved rallying to participation extensive masses of workers. The best way to achieve this was through extensive correspondence to the paper, replies to these letters and their publication in the press.[53] According to Izvestiia, the amount of correspondence denoted the extent of the paper's ties with the masses, concentration on the local area and a well founded publication.[54]

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53. Pravda, October 10, 1922, p. 1, second lead article. He also repeated the familiar theme that nothing could be done without the firm and deliberate leadership of the party.

54. Izvestiia, October 18, 1922, p. 2. A similar article by G. Neradov in the same issue harped on the bad quality and small quantity of papers and stressed the need for subscriptions from soviet institutions as well as support from the party. Also at this time the Central Committee ordered the local committees to stop procrastinating and implement another part of the press subsection meeting which called for the creation of local press worker unions. The struggle with petty-bourgeois ideologies arising under NEP demanded the binding of communist journalists to active participation in the press. Sbornik bol'shevistskaia pechat', part 2, pp. 91-2.

The costs of printing were directly assailed in the Central Organ by Vardin, in an article for discussion. Since few papers had their own presses, they had to pay the prices demanded by the poligraphers. At the party conference in August

> "... the Central Committee of the party gave a directive to the locals in the sense, that it should render assistance to local papers in the matter of transferring presses to them. In a series of localities they have been transferred and the results are brilliant. Firstly, to print the paper on their own presses results in a great cheapening since there is no place for 'fantastic calculations'. Secondly, the press besides printing papers, fills other orders, the resources from which go to decreasing the deficit of the editorial board."

Unfortunately the printers would not accept this change and found some support for their position at the center. This left the great majority of papers under the yoke of high costs, and Vardin demanded a responsible decision on the question.[55]

By the end of the year four months of slow but steady growth and constant party prodding had achieved modest results. The quality of the majority of oblast and gubernia papers had become satisfactory, while the press in the major centers of the country had also achieved a satisfactory level. Many papers, either through their own efforts, or because of the subsidy, had emerged from the red, others could go without the

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55. Pravda, October 28, 1922, p. 1, fourth lead article. The problem of press transfer continued at least to the end of 1924 with the printers fighting the policy. Exactly how many papers had their own presses could not be determined.

subsidy altogether.[56] At the uezd level the situation was quite different. Here the party still failed to pay proper attention to the press and the quality of publications remained unsatisfactory. Dissemination had improved, but many party members still did not subscribe. Nor had local organizations taken dissemination into their hands.[57] Generally uezd papers were weakly established and had very tenuous ties with their readers. Their circulation averaged less than 1000 copies, appearing mostly one to three times per week. Only 28 of the 179 uezd publications were dailies. This was the area on which the party would have to concentrate in the future,[58] and in its efforts to improve this layer of the press the center would once again confront the problem of diversification in an attempt to satisfy the various readers that could not be served by a general publication.

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56. Vardin, Sov pechat', p. 55. "Party Work in the Area of the Press".

57. Ibid., pp. 146-8. "Resolution of the All-Russian Meeting of Factory Agit-prop Sections", December 30, 1922.

58. Ibid., p. 39. "Position on the Press".

PART II
DIVERSIFICATION, PROLIFERATION AND EXPANSION

CHAPTER V
THE WORKER PRESS

Central Papers

The end of 1922 saw the Soviet press on the road to recovery. Full restoration would require several years, but the lost circulation would be regained in the course of the next two and even pushed well beyond the 2.6 million copies distributed at the start of NEP. While the main effect of the crisis had been a sharp decline in the Soviet press, it had also weeded out weak publications and established the remaining papers on a firm foundation. At the same time the party continued to define the limits within which the net would function and the levels of its performance. But most important the localities had finally begun to understand the importance of the press. From this foundation the party initiated a program of diversification, which was the necessary complement to its concern about the lower levels of the press, appealing to different elements of the population. To follow this process requires consideration of the different types of papers already existing or being developed. The most important was the worker or party publication whose development will be considered both at the center and at the local level.

Ever since underground Bolshevik presses had begun to crank out publications the party had focused its attention on the workers. This concentration flowed naturally from the appeal and ideology of the party which in its early history did not concern itself greatly with the peasantry, the military or youth. With the exception of the Civil War the first several years of Soviet power brought no change to this basic pattern,[1] and only after the resolution of the press crisis did the party give conscious thought to other types, as opposed to levels, of papers.

At the head of the worker press stood the great central dailies Pravda, Izvestiia, Rabochaia gazeta, Gudok and Ekonomicheskaia zhizn'.[2] Slightly below these central publications stood a group of papers serving the important centers of the country such as Petrogradskaia pravda, Rabochaia moskva, Krasnaia gazeta, and at a third level were the gubernia papers like Rabochii put' in Smolensk. A further stratification occurred at the uezd level, below which existed the wall paper.[3]

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1. For simplicity party, worker and soviet papers will be considered as worker in this chapter. Contemporary accounts refer to a group of "leading papers" but it is unclear whether this designation refers to central or party papers or some other category.

2. Ekonomicheskaia zhizn' was the organ of the Soviet of Labor and Defense, while Gudok was the organ of the Central Committee of railroad and barge unions of Russia.

3. Wall papers will be considered in chapter 7.

The first three layers of this heirarchy survived the crisis of 1922, relatively unscathed, although many gubernia papers were forced to curtail or suspend their publication. Below the gubernia level the crisis had devastated the press and by the end of 1922 it was still the subject of grave concern by the party.

As has been noted the party had finally given detailed instructions on the content and function of the press at the 11th congress and 12th conference. Not content to rest on these laurels, the press subsection of the Central Committee in 1923 continued to dispatch a steady stream of circulars, requesting full and complete registration of the press within the local committee's jurisdiction, submission of copies of all publications to the center and information on their type, periodicity and circulation.[4] But, initially, the main stress following the crisis was an attempt to delineate the role and position of the central organs in relation to the rest of the press. Were Pravda and Izvestiia to be popular or leading? The problem arose because of the nature of the history of the press, since up to the end of 1922 these two papers had provided the base for the Soviet Government. In those first

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4. Iz TsK #6 (54), July 1923, p. 77. "On the Registration of the Local Periodical Press". In October 1922, an eighteen question form had been sent out, but only 50% of the press had responded; the new form contained an additional eighteen questions on the condition of the local press.

five years they had been both popular and leading, and the editor of Pravda, Bukharin, believed it was possible to maintain this duality.

His concept was unsatisfactory to the press subsection whose chief, Vardin, felt that the time for differentiation had arrived.

> "We must have a paper for all (Izvestiia VTsIK), we must have a paper for the leading vanguard of the working class (Pravda). We need mass militant papers going to the center of the working class (Rabochaia gazeta) and peasants (Bednota). In the localities we need papers of the type Rabochaia Moskva. In the uezds mass peasant papers. These are the basic types of our papers. The character of the paper must depend on the reader it educates and whose public opinion it thinks to influence."[5]

The issue was fought out at the fourth congress of press workers which met in Moscow February 6-11, 1923. At the third session Vardin directly confronted the editor of the Central Organ with his publication's failure in this area.

> "Our papers have significantly improved, but all of them are not without mistakes. There are mistakes in the central press ..., as to Pravda, its deficiency is that it wants to be a paper of several types, uniting in itself the function of both leading and mass paper. It is necessary for Pravda to be exclusively a leading paper."[6]

In his report on the condition of the Central papers, Bukharin condemned this limited role for Pravda, stating that without links to the masses, i.e. popularity, the Central

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5. Vardin, Sov pechat', p. 40. "What Sort is the Worker Paper Papers?"

6. Pravda, February 9, 1923, p. 2. This is an edited version of part of Vardin's speech to the congress. The full text in Vardin, Sov pechat', p. 78, is even stronger.

Organ could not lead them. Vardin replied that the recently published Rabochaia gazeta could fill the popular role far better than Pravda, and the party would not lose its ties with the worker if Pravda was not linked directly with every reader. It was sufficient to have the reader linked with some party paper to insure ties with the party.[7] He was backed by Uritsky who felt Pravda's role should be restricted to the abstract discussion of a given question, while local papers supplied specifics. The congress also supported Vardin, adopting a resolution which called for press differentiation.

> "For every basic layer of reader it is necessary to create a special type of paper. These papers must be universal in the sense that they illustrate all the foremost questions of life applicable to the given layer of readers, but not in the sense of at the same time serving all layers of the reading masses."[8]

The restricted role of Pravda and the concept of differentiation were subsequently confirmed by the 12th party congress, April 17-25, which, in a resolution almost identical to that of the press workers, called for diversification of the press with respect to the various elements of the population and layers of readers.[9]

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7. Vardin, Sov pechat', pp. 92-4. Concluding Speech at the 4th Congress of Press workers, "what must Pravda be?" Rabochaia gazeta (originally Rabochii) had been established March 1, 1922 as another organ of the Central Committee.

8. Ibid., p. 150. "Resolution of the 4th Congress of Press Workers".

9. Resheniia partii o pechati, p. 45. In the draft thesis on the press prepared for the congress by Vardin, point 10

The question of differentiation was only one of many confronting the worker press. During the press crisis the inefficiency of the distribution and dissemination apparatus had been glossed over in the face of the many publications' failures. By 1923 dissemination irregularities that had temporarily escaped notice again came into full view. Papers leaving the expedition office were " ... plundered, delayed, held up and destroyed at various 'points' of dissemination."[10] This statement and the inability of the center to extend its concern for the press below the gubernia committee level indicated that many other problems beside diversification remained to be solved. The first efforts were made at the 4th press worker congress which restricted the role of the Central Organ and which, unlike its predecessor, dealt meaningfully with press problems.

The Central Committee had summoned the press workers at the end of 1922 to consider questions relating to the condition of the press.[11] This was the first congress to convene in something less than a crisis atmosphere and apparently the

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called specifically for leading roles for Pravda and Izvestiia only. During the congress this point was toned down.

10. Pravda, January 27, 1923, p. 1, fourth lead article.

11. Pravda, February 6, p. 1, editorial, cited the change from agit-prop to organizational work as the need for the congress, while Izvestiia, February 3, p. 3, indicated a need to see if the local organizations had begun to value the press correctly.

novel condition enhanced the work of the delegates. The congress was able to confirm that most of the oblast and gubernia papers were now well established and correctly linked with the masses. On the uezd level the press still required a great deal of attention. Vardin also reported a healthy change in the attitude of local party organizations which had been manifested in meetings with representatives from the center. Requests for staff and guidance, that previously had not been forthcoming, now frequently occurred and from this Vardin concluded that some party committees had finally begun to pay attention to the press.[12]

The general satisfaction with the higher levels of worker publications enabled the congress to concentrate on the lower tier of the press hierarchy. The question of uezd papers revolved around the very existence of such a net. There was no doubt that the vast majority of these publications were weak despite the state subsidy, and some delegates raised the question of curtailing the whole lot, expanding the circulation of gubernia papers to satisfy local need. This idea ran counter to the concept of diversification which had overwhelmed Bukharin's objections to a restricted role for Pravda, and to the practical consideration that no one gubernia paper could serve equally well a variety of uezds whose population

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12. Pravda, p. 2 and Izvestiia, p. 3, February 9, 1923. Statistics at the congress reveal a press net of 493 titles, 280 of which were gubernia publications.

might be worker, peasant or both. Again Vardin stated clearly the position of the press subsection.

> "We must state in the most decisive manner that the indiscriminately negative attitude toward the uezd paper is criminal. It is necessary to find all means and all possibilities, in order that the uezd paper exist and evolve. We can close an uezd paper only in the extreme case when it is impossible to correct it, when they write only philosophical classics in it."[13]

To further diversification the party in the same breath approved the devolvement of control to the locality, abandoning the idea of detailed central leadership of the press at the local level. Past experience had shown the futility of trying to guide provincial papers from Moscow. Instead the center would instruct the oblast or gubernia organization which would be responsible for the guidance of local committees. This decentralization ended a tradition that had arisen after the February revolution.

The congress resolution confirmed the findings and proposals of the various reports. The condition of gubernia and higher publications was again deemed satisfactory, but the uezd press was not, and the party, condemning out of hand attempts to liquidate uezd papers, demanded greater attention to this area. The congress also encouraged competition between papers as long as it remained within the limits of healthy rivalry and did not attempt to undermine any publication. Such competition promoted the improvement of the press.[14]

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13. Vardin, Sov pechat', p. 85. "Report to the IVth Congress of Press Workers".

For the first time the resolutions of the press workers were blessed by the party, as the 12th congress confirmed most of their findings. It further defined the area and extent of the state press net, definitely approving diversification, and laying to rest any thoughts of liquidating uezd publications. In the first place, according to the 12th congress resolution, no single gubernia paper could serve both the village and the city. Secondly, special dailies were needed at this level to serve the worker and the peasant. This part of the resolution cut the ground out from under the "liquidationists". Yet the congress was not content with the simple definition of the net and ordered the realization of all measures to aid the uezd press.[15] As to the competition between papers, the congress also supported it, noting that the local committee should explain the character of each paper to the masses, but in no case take sides; rather propagandizing for all Soviet papers.

The press workers had concentrated on specific proposals to improve publications, but had not examined the role of the press within Soviet Russia. In the Civil War and before the introduction of NEP the press had been an agitational sheet. With the return to peace this role was no longer paramount, and in the changed circumstances the function of the press became

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14. Ibid., pp. 148-51. "Resolution of the IVth Congress of Press Workers".

15. Reshenila partii o pechati, p. 45.

organizational.[16] This theme was pursued by the 12th party congress. Stalin referred to the fact that the press had not yet assumed the position of mass organizer. It was only establishing " ... an imperceptible tie between the party and the working class, a link which is as strong as any mass transmissive apparatus .... The press is the singular weapon, through the aid of which the party daily, hourly speaks with the working class in its own language, the language necessary for it."[17] The congress was less categorical in its pronouncement about the organizational role of papers, repeating almost verbatim the words of the party secretary, but combining them with a statement that the press was one of the leading elements of agitation and propaganda. It also delimited another function of the press.

> "The systematic and planned utilization of the party and soviet press from the side of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate and the Central Control Commission, both with the aim of revealing and disclosing all nature of crimes (slipshodiness, bribery etc.) and systematic deviations from the basic line designated by the party ...."[18]

During the Organizational Report Stalin had asked

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16. Vardin, Sov pechat', p. 48. "Successes noted -- Failure was Possible".

17. Sbornik bol'shevistskaia pechat', part 2, p. 94. In points 3-5 of the draft thesis Vardin had stressed the general role of the press in society. Agit-prop was not to be abandoned, but only put into the proper perspective.

18. Resheniia partii o pechati, p. 44. "On the Tasks of the Workers' and Peasants" Inspectorate and the Central Control Commission".

rhetorically what the power of the press was. Vardin attempted to answer this question by separating the press from this section or that institution. Organizationally the press would remain isolated, unconnected with party and state, but serving both and receiving its instructions directly from them. This was the gist of the resolution on the Central Control Commission and the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate. Partly a recitation of the old rubrics, enjoining the press to reveal the defects of socialist construction, the resolution included the new concept that party and soviet papers would disclose all deviations from the party line. Inherent in such revelations was the idea that they would depict the correct line as a counter to anti or non-party deviations. The press now took everyone and everything under its surveillance, supporting the work of the two central institutions.[19] Despite the resolution diversification of papers was challenged once more on the day before the end of the congress when Vardin's thesis on stratification was deemed inexpedient because of the narrowness of the Soviet press base.[20] But by

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19. Vardin, Sov pechat', pp. 57-63. "Press Questions at the 12th Congress RCP". He noted that this function of the press met opposition from economists led by Krassin who said press men and writers could not possibly understand economics. Their interference would ruin the economy. Vardin accused him of returning to capitalism by hiding commercial secrets and keeping the economy hidden from the public.

20. Izvestiia, April 25, 1923, p. 3.

the second press day such opposition had faded away. Probably it was no more than the expression of certain reservations on general press policy, and the major theme for the second press day was the expanded and diversified role of the press as an organizational tool in influencing public opinion, in economic construction and in the communist education of the masses.[21]

The 4th press worker and the 12th party congress had delimited the type of worker press net and its tasks. The mixed paper or the publication attempting to satisfy all layers of the masses would disappear. But the expansion or transformation of the existing net was not immediately possible. The material base, as Vardin had been told, was lacking. High costs, which had closed so many papers, continued to inhibit diversity since the publication of strictly worker papers meant an inevitable loss of subscribers. The attempt to transfer presses had received scant attention at the party congress, although the theory had been supported. The congress resolution, however, merely pressed for the correct organization of the printing industry and not for the shift

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21. Pravda, April 29, p. 4, which published the thesis for the press day, giving eleven commandments for the press and May 5, in which page 3 was devoted to the press. Vardin's articles in Izvestiia, May 5, p. 2, and in Petrogradskaia pravda, May 8, p. 8, stressed the organizational role as the basic function of the press during NEP.

of presses to the papers.[22] This meant that a good portion of the costs for production remained beyond the control of the publication.

The continued high costs of production led to a campaign in the spring of 1923 to expand circulation even further than had been done before the congress. As a first step the search for subscribers was intensified with delinquent party members attracting prime attention. In the words of the congress, "the decree of the XIth Congress, that every member of the party must subscribe (individually or collectively) to one of the party papers, has to be brought fully into life."[23] On press day campaigns were realized in every publication for subscriptions, particularly from the workers who were best able to afford papers, and who received them with some accuracy and timeliness. The second step toward increased circulation involved additional efforts to cheapen the press. The papers renewed their pressure for the transfer of presses and attempted to expand the printing of ads which would defray production

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22. Resheniia partii o pechati, p. 44. "Resolution on Industry". Trotsky had reported on printing matters at the morning session April 21, but had not suggested the transfer of presses. Vardin replied in Izvestiia, April 22, calling Trotsky's attention to this matter, and Trotsky had then indicated that if publishing matters did not improve, perhaps the presses should be transferred to the publishing houses. Vardin, Sov pechat', p. 142.

23. Ibid., p. 47. From the resolution of the 12th congress on propaganda, press and agitation.

costs and enable the state subsidy to help more papers. Even at the center where the great mass papers had every advantage in terms of ads, mass production and extensive subscriptions, the prices for individual issues were considered too high. In the summer of 1923 Pravda and Izvestiia both sold for 100 kopeks per month. This was high compared to the foreign press and even to Russkoye slovo which had cost only 85 kopeks before the war.[24]

A close scrutiny of the institutional press became the third part of the campaign. This was undertaken in June by a Central Committee commission which examined the publications of the central institutions and Peoples' Commissariats, and concluded that most of them served a very narrow circle of people.[25] Institutional papers on the local level suffered from the same deficiencies, only five of sixty such publications being oriented toward the masses. The commission recommended the curtailment or suspension of the majority of these publications. In August the Central Committee accepted these findings and adopted a decree implementing the commission's proposals.[26] Subsequently the Central Committee ordered guber-

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24. Pravda, August 11, 1923, p. 1, fifth lead article.

25. Okt i kniga, pp. 299-300.

26. Iz TsK, #1 (59), January, 1924, p. 54, cites the closing of 50 papers during September-November, 1923 although it does not specify what type they were.

nia and oblast committees to examine their institutional papers with the idea of eliminating all parallel publications. The nonprofitable periodicals would be liquidated and responsible and experienced party members placed at the head of all remaining papers.[27]

The result of this examination was a decline in the number of papers, but a continued advance in circulation. At the end of November, Iakovlev, the head of the agit-prop section of the Central Committee, was able to report that the circulation of worker papers had risen 500,000 copies with particular success noted in the gubernia press. At the same time the first of the central papers began to turn a profit, indicating that they had solved the problem of production costs and providing examples for the rest of the press.[28]

The steady growth of the press continued into the new year. Accompanying this expansion was a further definition of the role of the press and the Central Organ of the party in

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27. Iz TsK, #1(59), January 1924, p. 87. "On the Strengthening of Publishing Matters", November 14, 1923. In March 1924, the Central Committee repeated this demand, stating that the initial pruning had not cut deeply enough into the institutional press. O part i sov pechati, p. 299, "On the Limitation of the Institutional Press". March 26, 1924.

28. Pravda, November 20, 1923, p. 3. Izvestiia, Bednota, Pravda and Ekonomicheskaia zhizn' all operated without a deficit from October-November.

relation to fractional squabbles and anti-party tendencies. The 13th party conference, January 16-18, 1924 confirmed the line of Pravda as the Bolshevik position in the party's discussion with Trotsky and Preobrazhensky, but the conference also asked that this controversy be transferred from the pages of the Central Organ to a special "Discussion Sheet".[29] The confirmation of the line and leading position of Pravda was followed by two other events of significance for the press. On February 4 the Central Committee reorganized its structure, converting the press subsection into a full section. On the 24th this reorganization was extended to all party units down to the gubernia committees, except in national areas where the change applied only to the central committees.[30] At the same time the Central Committee adopted an extensive decree on the press, uniting the directives and instructions dispatched since the 4th congress of press wor-

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29. V pomoshch' partrabotniki, sistematicheskii sbornik rezoliutsii s"ezdov i konferentsii VKP(b), Moscow, 1927, p. 495, 13th Conference, "Greetings to the CO 'Pravda'". Resheniia partii o pechati, p. 51. "On the Stages of Discussion and Petty Bourgeois Tendencies in the Party". Pravda was the first paper to attack Trotsky at the end of 1923. After an interlude in 1924, this campaign against Trotsky was renewed, although his articles were still published in the Central Organ. By the end of 1924 everything he wrote brought rebuttals.

30. Iz TsK, #3 (61), March 1924, p. 39. The next issue stated that this was done to strengthen party leadership of the press, but by mid 1925 the reorganization remained incomplete as Krasnaia pechat', #13, May 1925, p. 5, lamented the continued existence of subsections.

kers in a single document that detailed the tasks of each part of the press with respect to the party.

According to this decree the importance of the press lay in the following three areas:

> "1. As one of the leading forms of the unity of the party with the worker and peasant masses and the influence of the city on the village.
> 2. As a weapon of strengthening and rallying the party.
> 3. As a means of disseminating knowledge among the worker and peasant masses and raising their cultural-political level."

Detailed instructions for the different types of papers followed the elaboration of the importance of the press. For the central papers questions of policy in the areas of international relations and internal policy would have primacy. Led by Pravda, they "... must give the party's orientation to the party member, avoiding superficial agitation, narrow institutional illumination of questions and giving more facts and the systematic illustration of them." Part of this orientation involved anti-Leninist tendencies, and the Central Committee ordered the leading press "... to begin a systematic explanation of the basic deviations and a systematic ideological struggle with them." Party life would become the most important section in this type of paper and the focus of party policy.

In practical non-party questions the central press would cultivate a full discussion of the "Scissors Crisis" and wages, trying to involve more fully the iacheiniki of the lower party

apparatus in this discussion. To promote the involvement of the masses, the function of the press as a collective organizer would be maximized, and to insure its fulfillment, the press section together with the Peoples' Commissariat of Education and the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate would strengthen the leadership of the central press and its dissemination. Direction of the campaign would be controlled by the complete utilization of available resources, which meant another registration of journalists and frequent and regular meetings with the editors of the large centers of the state.[31]

Reaffirmed in this decree was the idea of the central (leading) papers providing the guidelines for the rest of the net, delineating the general lines of party policy and requiring local publications to supply the nuances peculiar to their area. Pravda and its peers were saddled with the responsibility and obligation, the right and duty of indicating the correct party line and deviations therefrom, combatting those who strayed from the path of Leninism as defined by the Central Committee.[32] To insure the execution of this policy

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31. O part i sov pechati, pp. 290-6, passim. "The Most Important Foremost Tasks of the Party in the Area of the Press". February 6, 1924.

32. The question remains unanswered in the decree as to whom this was directed against. It is possible that no particular group such as the 46 was intended, and the decree was merely indicating a new role for the press and a warning for those who might stray from the correct path.

at the lower levels of the press, control and leadership were vested in the press section and the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate.

Not content with this general directive, the Central Committee dispatched in rapid succession additional instructions on the role of the press and Pravda in particular with relation to the masses entering the party in response to the Leninist appeal. On February 11, Pravda was enjoined to become the leader and friend of each new party member, uniting them with and around it. On February 19, another circular letter expanded this limited competence to the organizational-educational sphere, requiring all publications to educate the Leninists with the aim of providing the best amalgamation with the old party. Pravda would acquaint them with the basic tenets of Leninism and the leading tasks confronting the party.[33] A third directive stressed the role of the press in involving extensive masses of workers in the improvement of the governmental apparatus, raising economic productivity and mastering cultural backwardness. Again party committees were enjoined to guide the periodical press and exert

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33. Sov pechat' v dok, pp. 177-8. "On Work for Uniting New Members of the Leninist Appeal about Pravda and Recruiting among Them Subscriptions to It". February 12, 1924. Iz TsK, #3 (61), March 1924, p. 53. "On the Organizational Tasks of the Party Press in connection with the Leninist Appeal of Factory Workers". February 19, 1924.

their leadership to make the press a weapon for rallying the party by illustrating the most important points of party policy.[34]

The central papers dutifully adopted these suggestions, and the worker press became full of reports and articles about the Leninist appeal. The numbers and biographies of the new members were featured prominently in the press. In response to the will of the Central Committee, sections devoted to party life were expanded. The leader in this field, not surprisingly, was Pravda, which on January 26 had initiated a new section, "Into the Ranks of the RCP", and now developed its section on party life into a full page. Less spectacular progress was recorded in other publications. In Izvestiia the section expanded to a half page, but this coverage was dwarfed by that devoted to worker life which preempted a whole page. In Leningrad neither Petrogradskaia pravda nor Rabochaia gazeta had even regular party life sections early in 1924, although they printed frequent reports on the progress of the Leninist appeal, while the institutional and evening papers were completely unaffected by the campaign and had no party

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34. Iz TsK, # 4 (62), April 1924, p. 57. "On the Campaign in the Press for the Consummation of the Leninist Appeal". April 19, 1924. In April it was suggested in Pravda that a press questionnaire might be sent out to discover the bent of its readers. There is no evidence that this suggestion was ever implemented.

life section at all.

On the other hand the desire of the 13th conference to avoid the discussion of party policy in the press was not realized. Articles of the opposition continued to appear in Pravda and in the other central papers, at least until after the 13th congress. Resolutions of local party organizations both for and against the policy of the Central Committee appeared in "Party Life". Trotsky and Preobrazhensky usually drew immediate rebuttals to their arguments in the Central Organ, but in Bednota and Izvestiia their pronouncements were printed without reply. All this led to a thorough discussion of the press at the 13th party congress, May 23-31, 1924. Stalin set a tone of cautious optimism in the Organizational Report, which noted the growth of circulation from 1.5 to 2.5 million copies since the last congress, even though the number of titles had fallen below 500.[35] The press section supported this tone, reporting with some satisfaction the saturation of the proletariat by one paper to every five workers, and in the capital and larger cities, one to every three workers.[36] When the congress dis-

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35. Sbornik bol'shevistskaia pechat', part 2, p. 119. This decline is probably due to the final reckoning with the institutional press. Stalin posited two goals for the central press in his report: 500,000 copies for Pravda and the creation of a half million circulation paper for the new party members. Neither goal was realized.

36. Trinadtsatyi s"ezd, RKP(b), stenograficheskii otchyot, Moscow, 1958, Prilozheniye III, pp. 810-11 (Hereafter cited as Trinadtsatyi s"ezd).

cussed the draft resolution on the press at its thirteenth session, May 31, these successes provided the background.

The general theme of the draft resolution, prepared by representatives of the press section and chairmen of the provincial press sections, had been to continue the policies that had achieved these successes, intensifying already proven campaigns and expanding the party's efforts in areas that had not yielded results. Iakovlev directed the discussion, amending the draft to strengthen these trends by developing the links with the masses in order to reflect what was happening among them, and to maximize party influence. The congress also re-emphasized the Central Committee's concern for the new Leninists, a point which had not received prominence in the draft resolution. On the whole the congress expressed its satisfaction with the level of the worker press, but noted that its future development required a radical improvement of the dissemination apparatus which had now become the bottleneck to further growth.[37]

The emphasis on the problem of dissemination coincided with a change in the subscription system and was partially responsible for it. Distribution of papers in the large centers of the country had been solved by creating local dissemination nets when the failure of the Postal-telegraph Agency

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37. Ibid., pp. 584-6.

and Tsentro Pechat' became obvious. Accurate and timely delivery was a major factor in subscriptions, but due to the character of most subscriptions, further expansion of circulation had become nearly impossible. Two types were prevalent. One was the forced or obligatory subscription for the party member. The other was the collective subscription necessitated initially by the high price of the paper and the low wages of the readers. The second type allowed several workers to combine their resources for a subscription, but it limited the total circulation of the press. Following the 13th congress a reaction to the second type set in, and papers began to campaign for individual subscribers. Two factors made this possible. The cheapening of the press had been successful among worker publications with individual copies of Pravda selling for only five kopeks, and the beginning of economic reconstruction had increased the ability of the workers to pay for papers individually. The campaign begun toward the end of 1924 at first resulted in a slight decline, before rapidly expanding the circulation in subsequent years.[38]

At the end of 1924, having instructed local committees on individual facets, the Central Committee dispatched on

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38. Bochacher, M.N., Gazetnoye khoziaistvo, opyt posobiia po gazetno-izdatel'skomu dolu, Moscow, 1929, p. 40. At the end of 1924 the party also moved to end forced subscriptions at the local level. It is not at all clear what this refers to but it is not unlikely that some committees abused their position by forcing several subscriptions on party members or coercing non-party members to subscribe.

December 1 a series of decrees that dealt with every facet of the press based on the experience of the past year. In its consideration, the Central Committee reiterated the basic differentiation into worker and peasant publications, adapting the content of the former to the rising political and cultural level of the masses and striving for the illustration of all political, economic and party questions. This was basic to all previous instructions, but the new directive included an order for the worker paper to devote some attention to the peasantry, so the proletariat could understand state construction in the village and the party's policy toward the countryside.[39] In the same breath the press net was modified to include a peasant paper in predominantly prolitarian centers which already had a worker daily. Similar adjustments were to be made at the lower levels, and execution of the decree was entrusted to the press section of the Central Committee which would devise a suitable network of local papers.

The reason for this shift and the more extensive differentiation of the press lay in the center's determination to

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39. O part i sov pechati, pp. 319-20. "On the Type of Worker and Peasant Papers". Zinoviev elaborated on the attention to party policy in an article in Pravda five days later. Each publication from the Central Organ to the uezd paper must explain it. The paper "... must not spare blows, when the slightest deviation from the bases of Leninism, the slightest deviation from the instruction of V.I. Lenin threatens us." Pravda, December 6, 1924, p. 1, second lead article.

eliminate the mixed paper which was the principal type of publication in the outlying parts of the state below the gubernia level. These papers, which tried to serve all layers of the population in their immediate purview, flouted previous decisions on diversification and the earlier attempts to specify a particular paper for each segment of the population. The impetus for the creation of peasant columns in the worker papers came from the initiation of "The Village and the Party" in Izvestiia in June 1924, a decision which the editors regarded as a response to the demand for more attention to the village.[40]

Another decree in this series specified the format of the worker paper in the same way that the 1921 program for the local press had provided concrete guidelines for provincial papers. In effect this Orgburo directive gave specific instructions on the manner in which the general decree on the types of papers would be realized. Three major and five minor areas were listed as fields with which the worker paper should properly concern itself. Major attention would be devoted to general information on foreign affairs, social construction, proletarian and party life at home and abroad,

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40. Izvestiia, June 10, p. 1, editorial. Pravda had also begun such a column in the summer of 1924, but with less regularity than Izvestiia. The institution of peasant columns in worker papers seems to be a paradox in the struggle with mixed papers, but they represented only a small portion of the coverage. In mixed papers worker and peasant received equal reportage.

and the leadership " ... of the section of general information must be charged without fail to a member of the party, possessing sufficient political preparation." The other two areas of major attention were party and worker life. With regard to the former, the already hallowed shibolleths were repeated: involvement in party life, systematic propaganda based on Leninism, the struggle with all deviations from the party line, special attention to new party members, while two new features, work among Komsomols and women, were added.

Nor did the importance of worker life provide many surprises. It was to coordinate its contents with that of party life, involving worker, trade union and soviet power in the work of the party. The head of the worker life section would stress production and pay special attention to the expansion and strengthening of worker correspondents attached to the paper. Of lesser importance were sections on production, the trade union movement, the Red Army, trade, cooperatives and the problems of the village.[41]

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41. O part i sov pechati, pp. 320-22. "On the Worker Press". After giving these details the decree reverted to the problem of dissemination and subscription, remonstrating against forced subscriptions and calling on the local committees to strengthen their work and control over dissemination. To help improve distribution, the papers were ordered to accelerate the delivery of their publications to the dissemination apparatus. The problem of the worker and peasant correspondent movement is considered in Chapter 8.

Local Papers

The local worker press lacked many of the characteristics of the central and most of the generalizations about the leading press did not hold true in the localities. Except for a few centers like Petrograd, where both party and worker papers existed, the local publication was the organ of both party and soviet institutions. This conformed to the plan, formulated by the party secretaries in the winter of 1921-2 and confirmed by nearly every decree or resolution since that time. Undoubtedly the existence of a single worker paper also corresponded to the economic, technical and man power resources available in the provinces. The gubernia press in 1923 and nearly all the uezd papers that survived the press crisis were worker publications, but in the course of 1923-4 the latter became more and more peasant oriented.

The local press net recovered with difficulty from the effects of NEP, being unable to tap either ads or subscriptions available to central and large city papers. Nor did the failure of the local party organizations to grasp the importance of the press help provincial publications. This lack of support can be illustrated by reports from the localities. In Kursk Gubernia by 1923 twelve papers existed with maximum circulation, the 5000 copies of Kurskskaia pravda. The three gubernia and nine uezd papers were weakly supported by subscriptions. Only 5% of the party members and candidates

subscribed to the local party paper, and less than 2% of the Central Organ.[42] In Kiev, Iakutsk, the Urals, Smolensk, Petrograd and Moscow similar reports about the failure of local party leadership and the lack of party subscriptions were recorded.

The role of the uezd press remained the same as that of the central and gubernia: serving as a weapon in the ideological struggle, but the lack of proper utilization and support in early 1923 prevented realization of its task. The Smolensk Gubernia Committee responded to this dereliction by convening meetings of local organizations and institutions, obliging their membership to subscribe to the various local and central papers. Particular attention was devoted to improving dissemination of and subscription to Rabochii put', the Gubernia Party and Soviet paper.[43]

The Moscow Organization paid better attention to the uezd press and material support was more forthcoming. The eight uezd papers which resumed publication after the press crisis had grown to eleven by February 1923, although their quality remained low and they were still weakly connected with their locality.[44] A survey of the local press taken before the 4th

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42. Iz TsK, #1 (49), January 1923, p. 56. "Kursk Party Organization Report".

43. WKP 9, January-February 1923.

44. Rabochaia Moskva, October 1, 1922, p. 5 and February 7, 1923, p. 6.

congress of press workers confirmed the satisfactory quality of the gubernia and oblast press except for those in the recently added areas of the far east where they exhibited all the characteristics of the old boring provincial papers. But the uezd press remained the area for concern. This attitude was reflected in the work of the two congresses early in 1923 which noted their poor quality and attempted to make them more interesting and useful for the proletariat by instructing uezd party committees to publish a paper devoted to the locality and available to it. This had been the aim of both programs on the local press which remained unfulfilled. The difference between the uezd and gubernia papers was the complete concentration of the former on local events.

While the center considered the achievements of the uezd press in terms of its local reportage, one of the most important factors in its success at the local level was the ability to deliver the paper to its subscribers. Delivery was almost universally poor outside the cities and away from the railroad stations. Complaints about poor dissemination radiated from all outlying areas. Smolensk reported that lateness of arrival complicated the problem of subscription. In Voronezh not even the local paper reached its readers and because of this subscriptions declined not only to the local but also to the central press.[45] Such distribution hindered

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45. WKP 9, "February 12 Protocol of the Presidium of the Smolensk Gubernia Committee". Bednota, March 23, 1923, p. 3.

the realization of the press day goal for increased subscriptions in the localities, and the statistics show a circulation of only 199,000 copies for the 227 uezd papers.

Another factor affecting central and local paper alike in the locality was price. When high costs were added to the failure of the delivery apparatus, either through the defects of Tsentro Pechat' or through party and soviet failure to deliver the bundled publications from their offices, the situation for the press in the locality might well be described as a "... craving for the paper almost analogous to a famine."[46] Not surprisingly this led to the already noted demand for the liquidation of all uezd publications, since they did not serve the locality. In the summer of 1923 Pravda stepped into the discussion of the uezd press with a series of articles devoted to the various aspects of the problem. According to these articles, the crux of the difficulty lay in dissemination of the local paper. Bubnov, the head of the agit-prop section, noted the successful delivery of papers to main dissemination centers and railroad stations, and the failure of distribution from these points to the reader. As to the liquidation of the uezd press, he said such an idea was unthinkable since they served local interests and raised the cultural level of the masses in a way that could not be

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46. Pravda, August 11, 1923, p. 1, fifth lead article.

duplicated by the higher publications.[47] No one disputed this analysis, but when Bubnov also asserted that some local publications equalled those of the center and even suggested that exemplary papers were the rule, he elicited an immediate response which listed the local papers that were unsatisfactory in importance and directly opposed to party and soviet power.[48]

This attention to the uezd press succeeded in sparking a slow expansion. Various campaigns for subscriptions were carried out periodically in the provinces and the number of titles and circulation grew. The drive for the curtailment of the institutional press was extended to the localities, with the Central Committee ordering the elimination and general review of these publications by the agit-prop sections, although in many areas this order was academic since only one paper existed. Places like Iakutsk, where the local paper Kyym (The Spark) printed only 2,000 copies despite the support of party and soviet organizations, could hardly worry about the rationalization of the institutional press. In Buriat similar con-

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47. Pravda, August 18, 1923, p. 1, third lead article. "Discussion of the Press". Previous articles in this series were "On the Successes in the Urals" and "The Thirst for Papers" in Pravda, August 2, p. 5 and August 11, p. 1, fifth lead article.

48. Ibid., August 24, 1923, p. 1, fifth lead article.

ditions obtained.[49] In other areas the local party organization began to involve itself with the press. In Kharkov the circulation of 235,000 copies in February 1923 had risen to 360,000 by May 1924, while the press of the Ukraine had added fourteen new titles and 60,000 more copies over the same period.[50] The Smolensk Gubernia press section published no such figures, but in the fall of 1923 it reviewed all local publications and resolved to strengthen its leadership over them with circulars, letters and experienced press workers.[51]

The fall review in Smolensk was followed by a general gubernia conference of the local agit-prop sections and political educators at the start of 1924. This meeting adopted a resolution which corresponded completely with the views of the center.

> "1. The general improvement of the party-soviet press of Smolensk Gubernia is one of the foremost questions [and] necessitates the strengthening in every way of the dissemination of the paper among the masses.
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> 2. Thanks to the well known differences in the Gubernia each paper had its own circle of readers namely: a) Rabochii put' serving the workers and trade unions, b) Smolenskaia derevnia, the weekly peasant

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49. Dimitriev, S.K., Partiino-sovetskaia pechat' Iakutii v pervyye gody sovetskoi vlasti, 1917-25, Iakutsk, 1964, pp. 152-6; Dondakov, B. Ts., Vozniknoveniye i razvitiye partiino-sovetskoi pechati Buriatii, 1918-37, Ulan Bator, 1960, pp. 179-82.

50. Izvestiia, May 6, 1924, p. 4.

51. WKP 518.

paper destined for the extensive peasant masses of the Gubernia, c) Iunii torarishch serving the worker-peasant youth."[52]

To assist the press in the execution of its tasks, the conference recommended the establishment of agit-prop buros at all levels of the party heirarchy down to uezd and raion committees. They would organize correspondents and make Rabochii put' a mass worker paper, removing all institutional and long theses, and presenting what official material was necessary in a popular way so the worker could easily assimilate it. Leadership and support of the press would be realized by party and soviet organizations, and the local press deficit recovered through ads.

The promises of the conference were swiftly redeemed. By March Rabochii put' had become economically self-sufficient with a total of 6500 paid subscribers. This circulation reflected a certain willingness to play fast and loose with the directives from the center rather than force each member to subscribe to a party publication. In Smolensk only those members earning over thirty rubles in wages had to subscribe individually, while those receiving less could subscribe collectively with a number of comrades depending on the level

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52. Ibid., "Resolution of the Foremost Problems of the Press and the Tasks of Agitational Organizations in the Area of the Dissemination of the Press in Smolensk Gubernia". January 15, 1924.

of their wages.[53]

But no matter what successes were achieved, the Smolensk press was never satisfactory. Each meeting called for more stress here, more vigilence there, further expansion of Rabochii put', establishment of uezd papers and the like. The importance of the press as " ... one of the most important forms of connecting the party with the workers and peasant masses and influence of the city on the village"[54] was repeated over and over again. The Leninist appeal was also conducted in Smolensk with the aid of the press. Statistics revealed that 100% of the new party members read Rabochii put' and 50% read Pravda. Conversations with the new entrants indicated a real understanding of Leninism from reading the press, but in many cases they did not subscribe to any paper, and the local party committees undertook the correction of this defect.[55]

In Moscow the local press surprisingly seemed weaker than in Smolensk after its strong start in 1923. During the second half of 1924 sixteen uezd papers published in the Gubernia, eight of which were either wholly or partially worker. Their circulation had grown from 152,000 in May to

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53. WKP 10. "Protocol of the Agit-prop Investigation College". March 28, 1924.

54. WKP 518, "Basic Tasks of Political Education Work". April 1924.

55. WKP 126, passim.

215,000 in December, but their financial position was difficult since they no longer received enough support from the Moscow Committee. The local Gubernia paper, Rabochii Moskva, although continually expanding its coverage of the local scene, had not enlarged its material on party life in response to the instruction of the Central Committee.[56] These conditions necessitated greater attention from the local press section by fully grasping the leadership of the periodical press.

Other provinces had neither the Moscow net nor the Smolensk attention, and the strength of the local press seems to have decreased markedly from west to east. The situation in the Urals probably was more representative of the local press net. At the end of 1924 the sixteen Ural Oblast papers had still not overcome the problem of mixed reader orientation, despite the decrees of the 12th and 13th congresses. Worse still, many publications were not locally oriented, going either to the extreme of forgetting the locality altogether or omitting every vestige of nationally and internationally important news. The papers were frequently politically illiterate and naive.[57]

By the end of 1924, the worker press had evolved three levels of performance. The large papers, having their own

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56. Krasnaia pechat', #4-5, February 15, 1925, pp. 60-2. "The Moscow Press for a Half Year".

57. Ibid., pp. 64-5. "Papers of the Ural Oblast".

presses or a circulation of more than 30,000 copies, operated at a profit, were well established and responsive to the directives from the center. These were the central papers and the largest oblast and gubernia publications. On the next tier stood the remaining gubernia and oblast papers with circulation from 10,000 to 30,000 copies. They generally met the standards of the center and sometimes ran at a profit owing to one of three favorable factors: extensive circulation, large numbers of ads or possession of their own presses. They were less responsive to the center, attempting to create a satisfactory paper in conditions peculiar to their own area. Below this second level came the uezd publications which had neither the support or quality of the other papers of the hierarchy. They ran at a deficit, at least partially defrayed by the state subsidy, and were almost completely unresponsive to the center.[58] They demanded careful attention and greater party support and leadership before they could be regarded as satisfactory.

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58. Pravda, November 26, 1924, p. 2. Krasnaia pechat', #8, March 10, 1925, p. 39. A survey in the latter source indicates that papers which could defray 30-40% of their production expenses by ads would realize a profit, but the possession of their own presses meant an end to deficits regardless of the number of ads or subscribers.

CHAPTER VI

THE PEASANT PRESS

Origins and Early Development

The history of the peasant press in the first seven years of Soviet power is one of neglect followed by frantic attention. The Bolsheviks had created only a very few peasant papers before the October Revolution, notably the two in Petrograd and Moscow. Following the October revolution emphasis had remained on worker papers, although the party took steps in March 1918, to merge Derevenskaia pravda, Derevenskaia bednota and Soldatskaia pravda into the single peasant organ of the Central Committee, Bednota, which promised to struggle for the final liberation of the village poor from the yoke of capitalism.[1] In subsequent years however, Bednota was unable to develop into a mass peasant paper because its subscription price was too high and its ostensible readers unreachable. The paper's progress was further impeded by its concentration on general and world events unconnected and probably unintelligible to the peasantry. Finally its format and level of appeal were far removed from the intelligence and literacy of the average Russian peasant.

During the Civil War and the demobilization of the Red Army the military press to a certain extent supplemented

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1. Bednota, March 27, 1918, p. 1, editorial.

Bednota in attempting to reach the muzhiks. Since the recruits were mostly peasants, the Red Army press adapted its appeal to their level and concerned itself with their problems. Despite this supplement the peasant press was completely unable to satisfy the need of the overwhelming majority of the Soviet population for papers. That the Soviet Government in the first several years of its existence had neither the resources nor apparently the inclination to satisfy this segment of the population, did not seem to bother the party which was more concerned with developing the worker press in the cities where it had first taken power and where its strength lay. Nor is there any indication that the twenty peasant papers called for in January 1922, ever appeared.

The introduction of NEP and the generally satisfactory development of the worker press by the end of 1922 enabled the party on the one hand to consider the peasant press, and on the other forced it to pay more attention to the village at the risk of losing all influence in the countryside to capitalism and the Kulaks. For this reason the development of the peasant press really begins only after the press crisis had been overcome, when it is probably safe to say that only a handful of peasant papers existed throughout the state.

At their fourth congress the press workers coined the slogan "get the paper to the village", since party influence in the village had exceptional political importance. This initiative occurred at a fortuitous time, since differentia-

tion according to type had become party policy. The old mixed or worker paper at the uezd level and in gubernias of predominantly peasant population now came under increasing pressure from the center to cater to the peasantry. As Vardin put the problem:

> "I can in no way imagine how we can educate the peasantry in our spirit, how we can subordinate the peasantry to our political influence ... if we do not advance our papers to the village. The supply of the paper to the village is a question of exclusively political importance."[2]

This was an indication of the growing importance which the Central Committee attached to the peasant press, but its resources were insufficient to realize the task. According to Pravda, at the start of 1923 there was one paper to 2000 people in the village.[3] The Ukraine, which had the most firmly established peasant press, could only generate 9000 copies daily. Other areas revealed even smaller figures as the map of the village press was examined from west to east, and the condition of uezd papers accounted for this. The resolution of the congress phrased the problem succinctly: "In the village there is a completely insignificant collection of papers," and echoing Vardin, stressed that supply

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2. Vardin, Sov pechat', pp. 84-5, "The Village and the Paper", from a report at 4th congress on conditions and tasks of the press.

3. Pravda, February 9, 1923, p. 2. The majority of these copies were sent to agricultural soviets.

of the countryside with papers was a matter of first rank political importance, for consolidating the links between town and country and politically educating the peasantry.[4] These tasks were unthinkable without the press, so the congress took a strong position calling for massive attention to the dissemination of papers in the village.

Since Vardin was the head of the press subsection, that body manifested similar anxiety. It not only helped Bednota become economically self sufficient, but expanded the press subsidy to some four trillion rubles in February 1923, a major portion of which went to the peasant press. To provide additional help the press buro of the subsection divided its publications into two bulletins, for worker and peasant papers.[5] At the same time under the aegis of the subsection the familiar subscription campaign began to gather momentum, with local committees beating the drum for subscriptions to Bednota and/or a local peasant paper. Bednota explained that subscriptions should be collective, since the individual peasant could neither afford nor was he likely to want to

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4. Vardin, Sov pechat', p. 149. "Resolution of 4th congress press workers". Part of the reason for maintaining the uezd press in opposition to the "liquidationists" was the fact that they were the only periodicals which could reach the peasantry, its needs and its interests.

5. Iz TsK, #3, March 1923, pp. 76-8. Biulleten' A for workers and Biulleten' B for the peasantry.

spend his money for an individual subscription.[6]

The press workers congress marked the turning point for the peasant press. In its aftermath more attention was paid to those papers, yet relatively little beside the ground work had been accomplished by the end of April when the 12th party congress met. The concentration of the party congress on the problems of the peasantry was also reflected in its treatment of the press. In the draft resolution on the press, prepared by the press subsection of the Central Committee, Vardin had called for the change of most uezd papers to a peasant orientation. All gubernia committees would take the necessary steps to disseminate their uezd papers into the village. On the gubernia level the press would reflect the population of its area, but even in the worker gubernias there should be peasant papers or, if this were not materially possible, the gubernia worker paper should establish a peasant column.[7]

The congress resolution on questions of propaganda, press and agitation elaborated on these themes, calling on the Central Committee to order party committees to " ... straighten out the matter of dissemination of the press first of all in the village, since it had at the present time the most gigantic

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6. Bednota, March 21, 1923, p. 1.

7. Pravda, April 15, 1923, p. 5.

political importance." The congress also confirmed the press stratification implied in Vardin's draft; a peasant paper in large centers which could support both a worker and peasant paper or a column in the worker paper when a peasant publication was not possible. With respect to the uezd press the resolution went even further than Vardin.

> "The uezd press must designate the overwhelming part of all its material to peasant questions, advancing to the first place the illustration of the life of village and countryside. The situation, when uezd papers are almost completely oriented toward the city (as the general rule, toward the petty bourgeois) reader, is completely intolerable. Gubernia Committees are obliged to adopt all measures for the correct establishment of the uezd press, which has been very lightly disseminated in the village."[8]

The congress also confirmed the need for continued financial assistance to a whole series of local peasant papers and for the organization of daily papers for mass dissemination in the village.[9]

The 12th congress completely revised the attitude toward

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8. Resheniia partii o pechati, pp. 45-6, from the resolution on propaganda, press and agitation.

9. Ibid., p. 48. From the Resolution of the 12th congress on the work of the RCP in the village. This resolution also repeated the order for gubernia and uezd papers designated for the peasants. In another resolution the congress related the role of the Central Committee's Bednota to the future course of the peasant press. Bednota had shown that it was unable to be a mass paper because of its content and price during the early part of NEP. The congress therefore decreed the creation of another all Russian paper to give material to the peasantry at a price and in a language acceptable to the peasant masses.

the peasant press, and the party now recognized the need to shift its attention to this area of Soviet life. Two prime factors in the campaign ahead would be the extension of party influence into the countryside, and the change of the uezd press from worker or mixed to peasant papers. The development of the peasant press in 1923-4 reflects the party's attempts to establish an extensive village net and to realize its policies and ideas through these papers.

Attempts to develop the peasant press were handicapped from the start by the lack of knowledge about its publications. Little was known about their number, composition, dissemination, format or content. The press subsection of the Central Committee at once took steps to determine the extent of the village press in order to respond better to the congress resolution, and it also took direct action in support of these papers. Questionnaires and appeals for information were dispatched to discover the local situation. The press subsection continued to designate a large share of the state subsidy to peasant papers, almost one half for the third quarter of 1923, while estimates for the final quarter were that nine tenths of the peasant press would need support from the center. At the same time the press subsection began to consider rationalizing the peasant press, in line with the resolution of the 12th Congress, into a net similar to the one that had been established for worker papers at the end

of 1921.[10] However, the most important measure taken was the dispatch of an investigatory trip by Shafir, a member of the press subsection, to examine the peasant press and the availability of publications in the village.[11]

Examination of the situation in the countryside revealed the very real weakness of the peasant press and the failure of papers to penetrate beyond the railroads into the village. Shafir felt the data which he gathered was incomplete and insufficient, but it clearly showed that neither subscribers nor readers existed in the village. This was bad enough, but the real problem lay in the absence of these publications which meant " ... the village was being tilled by Papists, NEPmen, quacks and other enemies of Soviet power".[12] Conditions were universally bad. In Smolensk at the village of Durbatovo, Bednota was read occasionally but not subscribed to, since it didn't tell the truth and never printed peasant articles. Muzhiks in the Smolensk area would subscribe to

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10. Iz TsK, #7-8, (55-6), August - September, 1923, pp. 38. From the report of the agitation-propaganda section of the Central Committee.

11. The information that follows all comes from Shafir's report to the press subsection of the Central Committee, Gazeta i derevnia, which was published March 3, 1924. Shafir's trip took him to most of the peasant provinces and extended from June to the fall of 1923.

12. Ibid., p. 5.

the peasant press only if it presented the village as it really was and not as some fairyland.

In Saratov Gubernia at one village no one even knew whether anyone subscribed to a peasant paper, while in Voronezh the deficit for two peasant papers in May ran to 85 million rubles. The Voronezh despatcher said there were no subscriptions among the peasantry, and that those subscribers indicated in the figures of the local committee were sheer fantasy.[13] Papers rarely reached the villages and arrived late when they did. In one test case it took fifty eight hours for papers to travel fifty eight versts from Voronezh, fifty two and one half hours of this time were spent lying around in various delivery rooms at the stations. In another case a distance of thirty versts was covered in five days at best and generally in twelve days. From the railroad station the press depended on the postal-telegraph system for delivery. But not all volosts had postal-telegraph sections and those that didn't suffered even greater delays, frequently up to a month, or the total lack of delivery.

The circulation of the two local peasant papers numbered about 7,300 copies, while the number of local party members totaled over 7,900, indicating a general failure to support

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13. Ibid., pp. 10-1. Shafir had asked questions in Voronezh on the periodicity, support, popularity, format, content, dissemination, correspondents and subjects; the answers resulted in this picture.

the press. Most of these copies went to people connected with institutions and never matriculated into the countryside. Of the forty eight respondents to his questionnaire on reading habits Shafir found only four who read a paper regularly.

All these deficiencies represented irregularities of the dissemination apparatus and failures of local committees. But the defects did not stop there, in fact the most serious errors were made in the message of the peasant papers. The contents of the uezd village press was very bad and did nothing to fight the counter-revolution and Kulaks. After analyzing several articles, Shafir concluded that the party did not control the countryside since the village was not receiving its information from the party or ROSTA. Local papers had not been adapted to fight this type of battle and were unprepared or illprepared to campaign on the ideological front. "It is necessary to state, that our uezd press is too weak to fight with this systematic onslaught of the counter-revolution in the village."[14]

The conclusions drawn from this examination of the peasant press revealed clearly that the peasant press demanded more attention than the 12th congress had conceived. "Since political and cultural union with the village can best of all be established through the uezd press, we have to pay particular attention to the uezd press, to its quantita-

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14. Ibid., p. 112.

tive and qualitative strength."[15] In practical terms this meant creation or conversion. Peasant papers must be different from worker papers, concentrating on subjects familiar to the peasantry. Due to their cultural level the peasantry would best be served by a wall paper with simple language and corresponding illustrations. But the importance of the paper for the peasantry remained to be impressed on the local committee, and the question of the paper in the village must be raised to the first rank. Papers must receive support from the local budget; their dissemination, transferred to agencies created by the despatcher, rather than remaining with the cells where it was a patent failure. The editor should travel frequently throughout the area which his paper served in order to make it responsive to the needs and interests of the peasantry.

Not content with one examination of this kind, the press section sent another to the gubernias of Podolsk, Volynsk and Odessa at the end of 1923. It revealed a similar unsatisfactory situation. The peasant papers were exhausted from the lack of proper attention by party organizations. Their importance was simply not realized. Of the peasant publications examined in the three gubernias, those for Odessa (Iuzhnyi selianin) and Volynsk (Selianskaia bednota) were merely weekly supplements to the local worker paper. The third, Chervone

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15. Ibid.

selo of Podolsk was an independent twice-weekly publication, disseminating two thousand copies to the village. But in comparison with the four million peasants of the gubernias a total circulation of nine thousand copies was completely insufficient, and this second investigation only confirmed Shafir's conclusion that the party must give more attention and support to the peasant press.[16]

Even in Smolensk where the weekly peasant paper Smolenskaia derevnia had published since early 1923, and the gubernia committee could report that "the paper at the end of the year was more or less secure in its means", the party had to pay more attention to its content, popularizing it, orienting it toward the village with copious material on local life, and establishing its links with village organizations.[17] The condition of the peasant press was summarized by Iakovlev to the press workers and representatives of publishing houses on November 17.

> "The peasant papers stand poorly. In the twenty three peasant gubernias of the USSR the circulation of all the peasant papers is 85,000 copies, and the majority of the papers come out two-three times per week. The circulation of peasant papers is 5% of the general

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16. Izvestiia, January 12, 1924, p. 5. The article felt that the situation was really worse than the statistics indicated since most of the circulation was in the cities of publication and not in the countryside.

17. WKP 518, "Agit-prop work for the fall of 1923, Smolensk Gubernia".

circulation of papers in the USSR. But these papers reach the peasantry in small quantity, being lost in volispolkoms or in soviet secretariats."[18]

He reiterated the demand for a special publication for the peasantry and indicated that the minimum program for the village press was the dissemination of 120,000 by the spring of 1924.

Krest'ianskaia gazeta and the Expansion of the Peasant Press

Iakovlev's repetition of the proposal for a new Central Committee peasant daily, probably indicated his knowledge of the imminent appearance of Krest'ianskaia gazeta, which began publication November 25. Kalinin, the Chairman of VTsIK, was entrusted with the leadership of the new paper and directed to strengthen the alliance of workers and peasants. Its tasks were to " ... to reflect the life of the peasantry, practically aid the peasantry in grasping questions of economic, agricultural, legal and other matters ... and ... illuminate for the peasantry every sense of events occurring in the world and their deep connection with the life of our republic."[19]

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18. Pravda, November 20, 1923, p. 3.

19. Krest'ianskaia gazeta, November 25, 1923, p. 1, editorial. Initially a weekly, the paper became a daily by 1924.

The publication of another central peasant paper created a problem of competence for Bednota, which had stressed the need for a second, inexpensive peasant paper. Krest'ianskaia gazeta's large type and simple language brought it closer to the cultural level of the masses, according to Sosnovskii, the editor of Bednota, a very important fact since Bednota's price and content prevented it from reaching the lower strata of the peasantry.[20]

While the editor of Bednota agreed on the need for two central peasant papers, it became obvious that some members of the party did not share his view, and Pravda again served as a sounding board for the discussion of a press problem. Trotsky immediately supported the publication of Krest'ianskaia gazeta. He believed that Bednota with a circulation of 50-100,000 copies could not reach the peasantry. What Soviet Russia needed was a peasant paper with a circulation of two million copies to relate events in the village to what was happening in the Soviet Union. Such a paper would not teach or appeal to the peasant masses, but simply relate the course of events.

Trotsky's idea meant a vast expansion of Krest'ianskaia gazeta at the expense of Bednota, and it was attacked by Kar-

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20. Bednota, November 21, 1923, p. 1, editorial. According to ads in Bednota for the new paper, Krest'ianskaia gazeta was supposed to begin publication November 15, but was delayed for some reason.

pinskii who defended the original central peasant paper as the best village publication and claimed that its popularity had doubled. He suggested that Trotsky didn't realize the value of Bednota, but reserved his major criticism for Krest'ianskaia gazeta which could not be supported by the existing press apparatus. It would be a serious mistake to create a peasant paper of two million copies which had no links to the masses and no established collaborators, and Karpinskii believed this mistake would become obvious to all after the first several issues of Krest'ianskaia gazeta.[21]

In this case Trotsky was supported by the party. His idea of the mass paper was correct, but insufficiently developed. According to Soltz, a member of Pravda's staff, the tasks of the mass paper were, as Trotsky stated, to tell what was happening in the Soviet Union, especially in areas close to the party and the economy. Unfortunately the press apparatus would not immediately support two million copies so three hundred thousand would be Krest'ianskaia gazeta's goal for its first year with the whole peasant press expanding to two million copies. Bednota would keep its readers and compete with Krest'ianskaia gazeta for the recent-

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21. Pravda, December 6, p. 2 (Trotsky) and December 12, p. 1, fourth lead article (Karpinskii).

ly educated muzhiks.[22]

The final distinction was given by Sosnovskii, who responded to the great number of letters inquiring about the difference between the two papers and the need for Krest'ianskaia gazeta.

> "The Central Committee of the Communist Party striving to satisfy the village with papers decided to publish, beside a daily and therefore insufficiently cheap [paper], a weekly Krest'ianskaia gazeta. Its price - 15 kopeks per month secures for it many hundreds of thousands of subscriptions from the village, thus we will not know a greater paper famine. Beside this, Krest'ianskaia gazeta, strives to write in a simple language, that would be fully approachable to the most poorly literate reader.
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> As to Bednota, it serves the more literate peasant and has to give leading statements on all questions of work in the village. Bednota's 50,000 circulation is insufficient as every agricultural soviet needs one copy for guidance on all questions. We want to expand the circulation in the next months. But due to the extensive illiteracy in the village Krest'ianskaia gazeta is also very important."[23]

At the same time that this discussion was being vented in

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22. Pravda, December 19, 1923, p. 1, third lead article. In a footnote to his article Soltz stated that he had written it before he saw Karpinskii's. He regarded the latter's attack on Krest'ianskaia gazeta as non-party and purely official. Another article in Bednota December 8, had also attacked the idea of a second mass peasant paper, saying collective subscriptions would cover the problem of mass.

23. Bednota, December 22, 1923, p. 1, second lead article. Karpinskii stopped baiting Krest'ianskaia gazeta, but continued to attack Trotsky's idea that a peasant paper should not appeal or teach. He felt such a belief was a narrow methodological concept. Pravda, January 3, 1924, p. 1, third lead article.

the Central Organ of the party, the Central Committee acting through the agit-prop section convoked an all-union conference of peasant paper editors to discuss the condition and tasks of the rural press. Iakovlev gave the keynote speech, confirming the weakness of the village press apparatus, and stressing the small percentage of peasant papers within the Soviet press. Improvement of rural publications represented one of the most important programs in linking village with town. The advent of the new economic policy in the village had precipitated a struggle between the worker and the NEPman for the peasantry, and the press as an educational and cultural weapon was a most important tool of the workers.[24] In the eyes of the conference the peasant press was hindered in pursuing its tasks by three factors: illiteracy, low cultural level and the poor network of roads in the countryside that made dissemination nearly impossible.

The discussion of Iakovlev's speech confirmed his view of the condition of the press and reflected the failure of peasant publications to satisfy the peasantry. In most cases they had failed to win the muzhik over to the party line, and the center abetted this failure by paying insuf-

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24. Pravda, p. 3, and Izvestiia, p. 2, December 22, 1923. In addition to press subsection representatives, editors came from Smolensk, Tula, Nizhni, Voronezh, Gomel, and Union and Autonomous Republics. Iz TsK, #1 (59), January 1924, p. 58, states that the conference consisted of 18 central and Ukranian peasant paper editors.

ficient attention to the peasantry. "A peasant paper must be a true reflection of the life of the Republic, and the main place, of course, must be taken in it by questions closely affecting the interests of the peasant population. Important attention must be devoted to questions of agronomy."[25] Other reports and speeches to the conference also confirmed the findings of the press subsection's investigations of rural papers, and naturally injected themselves into the determination of the future peasant press net.

The conference supported the idea of a circulation of two million copies by the spring of 1925, setting an intermediate goal of 800,000 for the spring of 1924. Realization of this program would mean one peasant paper to ten peasant homes. To help achieve this goal, the conference enlisted Komsomol and Red Army organizations to facilitate delivery to the reader and emphasized the role of the selcor in disseminating and supporting the paper in the village. The editors then adopted a three tiered net of peasant papers. At the top stood the two central publications, Bednota and Krest'ianskaia gazeta; at the bottom would be the gubernia and uezd papers lumped together under the heading of okrug publications. Somewhere in

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25. Izvestiia, December 23, 1923, p. 4. A report on dissemination noted that of the 11,400 volispolcoms only 5400 were in the postal-telegraph net, while the rest lay ten to forty versts from the nearest drop point.

between would come oblast and autonomous republic papers. In constructing this net the conference invalidated the peasant supplement to the gubernia worker paper as a true peasant publication, accepting it only in exceptional cases. In the autonomous republics, the paper should be printed in the national language.[26]

The pressure for expansion met its best response apparently in those areas where peasant papers were already well established. In Smolensk the gubernia agit-prop conference in January 1924, fully supported the center on the importance of the peasant press. Differentiation in Smolensk had been achieved through the publication of worker, peasant and youth papers. The party committee reaffirmed the resolution of the editors for enlisting selcors in dissemination and ordered the establishment of raion and uezd agit-prop buros to further distribution of the press. Peasants were allowed to pay in kind for their subscriptions, and the gubernia committee went on record for the real material support of the peasant press by the gubernia, rather than being merely its nominal publishers.[27]

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26. Pravda, p. 5 and Izvestiia, p. 4, December 23, 1923. In the latter source the extent of this net is given as 2 central, 3 oblast and 58 okrug papers; of these 47 existed and the conference called for the establishment of 14 others in the immediate future.

27. WKP 518. "Resolution on the Foremost Tasks of the Press and Agitation Organizations in the Area of the Press in Smolensk Gubernia".

The activity of the press subsection at the end of 1923 and the discussion in Pravda were incorporated in the Central Committee decree of February 6, 1924, which instructed the party on all facets of the press. For village publications, the decree reiterated the points of the 12th congress, summarized the conclusions reached by the press subsection's investigations, indicated what tasks stood ahead, and how the party should approach them. After officially recognizing the need for only 200,000 copies of Krest'ianskaia gazeta by the spring, the decree stated:

> "In the area of serving the peasants it is necessary in every possible way to support uezd and gubernia peasant papers. The press is working out a concrete plan for a network of uezd peasant papers, weighing the special conditions of various raions, striving for the expansion of raion service (okrug papers in the Ukraine) for their change to serving the peasantry. It is indispensable to reinforce the instruction of uezd papers and to improve their composition by editorial boards established in a series of agricultural gubernias (up to ten) who have exemplary papers.
>
> Along all lines of peasant papers, push to the first place questions of the economic and political position of the Republic from the point of view of strengthening the alliance of the working class and the peasantry along with the illumination of questions of cooperatives and the propaganda of agricultural enterprises, which could have mass application and could give even minimal strengthening and improvement to the peasant economy. It is indispensable also to pay special attention to the illustration in peasant papers of questions of the way of life peculiar to the peasantry."[28]

This decree marked the beginning of the major efforts

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28. Iz TsK, #3, March 1924, pp. 48-52; O part i sov pechati, pp. 290-1. "The Most Important Foremost Tasks of the Party in the Area of the Press".

to improve and expand the peasant press which developed rapidly along a number of new lines. Bednota, having accepted its role as the senior and leading village paper, established a subscription corner which reported irregularities in the dissemination process and provided the incentive to improve distribution. The circulation of Krest'ianskaia gazeta, despite the predictions of Karpinskii, passed the 100,000 mark even before the subscription campaign had reached the gubernia level, and reports from the localities indicated an expanding demand for peasant papers now that they were becoming available. The Central Committee encouraged all these trends, constantly badgering local committees to pay more attention to the peasant press.

At the end of March in a circular to all gubernia and higher party organizations the Central Committee again stressed the role of the peasant press as " ... one of the most important means of uniting the peasantry with the working class and a means for the realization of party influence in the village."[29] To insure the availability of the press, periodicals had to be reduced in price. To realize 200,000 copies of Krest'ianskaia gazeta, party and Komsomol organizations would have to assume an energetic role in distributing the paper.

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29. WKP 209, #54. "On Disseminating Peasant Papers". March 28, 1924. Also in Iz TsK, #4, April 1924, p. 157.

The experience of a series of gubernia publications had proven that the successful organization of peasant papers was fully possible, therefore the Central Committee ordered all party organizations to initiate campaigns for the dispatch of Krest'ianskaia gazeta to the village, appealing especially to those workers who still had ties with the countryside. To further these campaigns local meetings would become forums for the discussion of dissemination and all trade union, cooperative, party, Komsomol and soviet organizations would become vehicles of delivery. The campaign for Krest'ianskaia gazeta was extensively supported, but the local committee was warned not to overlook gubernia or uezd papers which had the best ties with the peasantry.[30]

As the campaign wore on the results became more and more impressive. By March the number of peasant papers had more than doubled that of the previous year, while circulation had tripled. Although the center maintained that the peasant press was still insufficient, an indication of its progress was the reduction of its subsidy for the first and second quarters of 1924.[31] But the press section continued its instruction of the village press through Biulleten' A, articles

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30. Ibid. In Smolensk this appeal was repeated to lower party units on April 9 as "The Basic Tasks of Political Education Work". WKP 518.

31. Iz TsK #4, April 1924, pp. 103 and 122. The percentage declined from 40 to 23, although this still represented 35,000 r. With the increase in the total press subsidy for the second half of the year to 210,000 r, peasant papers received 48,300 r.

in Krasnaia pechat', consultations with rural paper editors, written instructions, general directives and circulars, instructional trips, articles in Pravda, information through ROSTA and reports to the Central Buro of press workers to maintain the momentum of the campaign.[32] At the same time the dissemination network was expanded and reorganized. The new delivery system of the Kontragentstvo of the press had nearly twice the number of drop points: 800 compared with 458. Its distribution was now divided between two institutions. A Buro for the dissemination of the periodical press delivered the papers to the railroad drops, while the new Buro, Sviaz, created in August 1923 to assist in dissemination, now dispatched the press from the railroad points to lower organizations and subscribers.[33]

As press day approached the initial campaign peaked, and Kalinin reported its successes. Peasant subscriptions which stood at 7000 at the start, had risen to 60,000. The circulation of the peasant press had grown steadily. By May Krest'ianskaia gazeta had passed the mark set by the editors in

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32. Ibid., p. 105. For the year ending April 1, the press section and its predecessor had given 2100 oral instructions, 700 letters, 20 general instructions and circulars, held 70 conferences, run 7 trips and published 251 press Biulleteni.

33. Ibid., p. 122. Bednota also asked the Commissar for Posts and Telegraphs to examine press delivery through its system and correct these irregularities. Bednota, April 3, 1924, p. 2.

December 1923. The Chairman of VTsIK emphasized, however, that these were only the first steps toward flooding the peasantry with papers, an interpretation that was shared by the editors of the paper. "This first major success must not create the impression that the whole task has been fulfilled and Krest'ianskaia gazeta can without special efforts toward the winter of next year have a million circulation."[34] The harvest season would bring a decline in subscriptions or at least a leveling off in the tempo. Because of this seasonal decline, all organizations would have to redouble their efforts for subscriptions and, since accurate and timely receipt of papers was such an important factor in their expansion, improve the delivery of the press to the village.

The initial success of the peasant press campaign was further confirmed at the 13th party congress, which also regarded these achievements as only the first step along the road to greater expansion. In the Organizational Report Stalin placed the realization of one million copies of Krest'ianskaia gazeta before the party. He was supported by the press section which enumerated the progress of the campaign up to the end of May. In the period since the 12th congress peasant papers had grown

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34. WKP 209. Circular of the Central Committee to All Ukoms, Volkóms, Iachyeks and Members RCP. "On Krest'ianskaia gazeta". May (?) 1924. Attached to the circular was a poster advertising the paper which each party organization was to display in a prominent place where the peasantry could read it. The Smolensk copy was not found in the archives.

into 15% of the two and one half million copies of the Soviet press, but this was still insufficient for the needs of the Russian peasantry.[35] In pursuit of further expansion, the congress broke little new ground, but continued to hammer away on already familiar themes.

> "The further development of the net of weekly peasant papers is indispensable, the strengthening of existing peasant papers, expansion of their circulation, improvement of their contents and the firming up of their connection with the peasantry by means of mass involvement of selcors .... The work of the selcors must be aided in every possible way by party and soviet organs. An attentive relation to peasant letters, the promotion in the soviet order of each peasant desire, legal aid to the peasantry, the skillful combination of agro-propaganda with the illustration of general policy and economic questions, especially cooperatives, finally, acceptable accounts for the peasantry, without hypocritical emptiness and unnecessary vulgarization -- all these are necessary qualities of a mass peasant paper.
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> The red army and red fleet press which must be in every way strengthened has great importance for serving the peasantry, but its contents and language must be adapted to the youth who are flowing into the army. It is indispensable also to use the territorial musters for establishing the link of the red army and peasant paper with the peasantry."[36]

The party thus went on record for further expansion of the peasant press and its support by ancillary papers which reached parts of the peasant population.

The response to the congress appeal for further work can

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35. Trinadtsatyi s"ezd, p. 119, 125 and 810-1. Both the draft resolution and the resolution adopted by the congress stressed the same line: success, but a long way to go.

36. Sov pechat' v dok, p. 65. The congress also confirmed the continued financial support for the peasant press.

be traced with some clarity in Smolensk. In that gubernia the campaign machinery that had generated peasant subscriptions during the winter and early spring was merely retooled for the new goals. Aiming for one paper to ten peasant huts, the new campaign generated a series of uezd and volost reports that revealed a steady growth in the number of subscriptions to both the central peasant papers and to Smolenskaia derevnia. Although the gubernia committee felt its progress was insufficient, and ordered all organizations to agitate for and discuss the peasant press, the subscription campaign moved rapidly ahead. The appeal of the editors of Krest'ianskaia gazeta, sent out in May, was repeated at the uezd level throughout the summer with the order to popularize the paper among the peasantry, and at the end of June the gubernia committee issued instructions for the immediate future.

> "It is indispensable to develop subscriptions to the central Krest'ianskaia gazeta and to Smolenskaia derevnia toward the fall on a more extensive scale than up to this time. Along with this must be strengthened for the fall period the instruction of selcors and the correct leadership by the party of their work. Selcors and readers must be active agents for the dissemination of peasant papers. With the new budget year all agricultural soviets will subscribe to the paper Smolenskaia derevnia."[37]

The results of this campaign varied. In the rural uezds subscriptions mounted and it was reported that Krest'ianskaia

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37. WKP 518. "Political and Educational Work in the Village". Issued at a session of the gubernia committee buro, June 28, 1924.

gazeta had become the main paper in the village. But in the city of Smolensk the local committee carried out an "inexpedient and unrealistic" campaign which failed completely to meet its goals.[38]

At the beginning of the fall the gubernia committee outlined the harvest campaign. The press subsection would register all press workers in the gubernia, organize meetings with peasant editors to establish closer ties between the paper and the subsection, centralize paper publication, decide on programs for local selcors, examine wall papers and work out basic directives for all the gubernia press.[39]

At the center the campaign was led by Bednota. Sections dealing with the localities became regular features in an attempt to establish links with the peasantry. During July a new section was instituted which reported the action taken on letters to the paper. By mid summer the trend toward the primacy of agricultural news, initiated after the 12th congress, was completed by printing peasant material on the first page and relegating foreign news to the back. To expedite dissemination a new column, "Bednota in the Village", apparently a replacement of the former "Subscription Corner", related the

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38. WKP 277. "Report on the Work of the Agit-prop Section of Gzhatsk Uezd Committee for June-September, 1924". WKP 10. "Protocol of an Extraordinary Session of the Agit-prop Section of Smolensk". September 18, 1924.

39. WKP 518. "Plan of the Agit-prop Work in Smolensk Gubernia for October-December 1924".

successes and failures of the paper in the countryside.[40] Other central papers also began to publish peasant sections or columns regardless of their direction and reading public. Izvestiia opened its peasant section in June, while Pravda started special consideration of the countryside during the summer. Leningradskaia pravda began publishing peasant numbers in July, and Kalinin demanded that other papers follow its example.[41]

As the campaign continued it became obvious that two factors were impeding major expansion of the peasant press. No longer were the absence of paper or technical means of publication dominant factors, and although the majority of peasant publications sustained themselves through the state subsidy, this was not a limiting factor either. Party and soviet organizations had begun to back the campaign and were promoting local papers, but price and dissemination remained obstacles that seemed to defy solution. The price of peasant papers varied from area to area; most cost 15-25 kopeks which was too much. A ten kopek peasant paper was inexpensive, while those costing thirty kopeks were completely out of range.[42]

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40. These changes, resulting from the 13th congress resolution, probably occurred also in Krest'ianskaia gazeta, but no copies were available for this period.

41. Leningradskaia pravda, July 9, 1924, p. 3.

42. Izvestiia, June 10, 1924, p. 5.

Essentially the question of price was linked to periodicty. More frequent editions meant higher costs assuming a constant circulation. The absence of many ads to help defray the production expenses of frequent issues resulted in high prices, despite the experience of the cities which showed that such a reaction was not the solution. The knowledge gained in the preceding years had shown that the best peasant papers in the localities were weekly publications, a theory that had been supported at the 13th congress. This frequency allowed the editors to choose and summarize their materials from a greater selection of information and events.

But the prime reason for this periodicity was dissemination. A weekly issue was the limit of the local delivery system. More frequent editions caused the complete breakdown of delivery, while the weekly could be disseminated with some success. The situation was best described by the editor of Kurskaia pravda, Gr. Tsypin, who noted the effect on the peasantry of irregular delivery after they had scraped together the money for a subscription. Hundreds of letters had poured into his office about such circumstances. Papers sent in May, arrived in June. In the case of Krest'ianskaia gazeta subscribers had not received a single copy in the course of several months.

A continuation of such dissemination would result in a complete refusal to subscribe, meaning in turn, an end to the

campaign and a loss of party influence in the countryside. Tsypin blamed the postal-telegraph system for the trouble, since it could not deliver papers beyond one hundred versts in less than ten days, and the volispolcoms which delayed or forgot about the papers.[43] By the fall the party had transferred its attention to the selcors in an attempt to overcome this obstacle. Conferences of village correspondents responded to this shift, calling on their colleagues to supplement the dissemination apparatus by delivering the paper to the peasantry.

In December the party summarized eighteen months' activity with a comprehensive statement about peasant publications. The function of the peasant press was defined in relation to differentiation into worker and peasant papers. It was not enough for peasant publications to concentrate on the countryside.

> "Peasant papers must without fail, along with the illustration of questions of village life and agricultural economy applied to local concrete conditions, acquaint the village with the international and internal position of the Union SSR, the activity of the party, cultural and economic construction of Soviet power. Peasant papers must also designate a place for worker life, the condition of local industry and economy from the point of view of the collaboration of the working class

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43. Pravda, July 16, 1924, p. 1, third lead article. This example was probably being used to reveal deficiencies of the local dissemination apparatus and encourage local organizations to correct them.

with the peasantry. Only through fulfillment of these conditions can the peasant papers become the real leader of soviet and party influence in the village, which has not been transformed into a narrow specialist sheet of agrarian character."[44]

This decree expanded the role of the peasant paper, while its main function remained the exertion of party and soviet influence in the countryside, the peasant paper now became a coordinator of an extensive collective effort to illustrate what was happening in all phases of state construction. The peasantry would now see local conditions within the wider context of the domestic and international situation.

Within this expanded context the Central Committee defined the approach and content of individual peasant papers. The first was to realize the educational level of the reader for which it was destined. This meant that editors must attend to the language of the paper so it would be comprehensible to the peasantry. As to content, agricultural propaganda came first, then the Central Committee demanded the establishment of a section devoted to party life, a feature which had been conspicuously absent from the peasant press up to that time. As the worker would have a section on the peasantry, so the peasant paper would devote a small section to the life and problems of the proletariat. Other sections would cover Red

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44. O part i sov pechati, p. 319. "On the Type of Worker and Peasant Papers".

Army life and anti-religious propaganda.[45]

By the end of 1924 the party had refined the role of the peasant press and prescribed its content. At the same time the continuing campaign for the expansion of its circulation had born positive results. Village circulation had grown to 1.3 million copies and that of Krest'ianskaia gazeta to 600,000 copies. All but four gubernias had peasant papers, and those four were preparing to launch them. In a manner very similar to the worker press following the crisis of 1922, the gubernia peasant paper had been taken in hand and its importance conveyed to the local party organizations. The press section now believed that the time was ripe to shift the focus of its attention to uezd papers which continued to be official sheets, not involving the peasantry or responsive to its needs.[46] As the number of peasant papers approached 150, almost double the number of titles existing one year before, the press section could well feel some satisfaction with its activity during the eighteen months since the party had called for attention to peasant publications.

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45. Ibid., pp. 322-3. "On the Peasant Press".

46. Krasnaia pechat', #9, March 25, 1925. The press section felt that the resolution of the 13th congress would be fulfilled only when the uezd press had been improved.

CHAPTER VII

MILITARY, WALL, NATIONAL, AND YOUTH PAPERS

The Military Press

The end of the Civil War and the press crisis combined to curtail the extensive net of military papers that had existed at the height of the fighting in 1920. The change to cost accounting had a heavy impact on the military press which had scant recourse to ads or extensive subscriptions, and it was clear that army publications would completely disappear without aid from the center. The Central Committee recognized this danger as early as July 1922, decreeing a subsidy of 35,000,000 rubles for the Peoples' Commissariat for War to support the most important army papers. Emphasis in the distribution of this money would be placed on those papers published for distant units that would not otherwise receive the press.[1]

The state subsidy prevented further decline of military papers, and at the beginning of 1923 the Revolutionary Military Soviet created its own press Buro to direct and assist

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1. Portiankin, Sov voyen pechat', p. 101. About this time Krasnoarmeiskaia pechat', the military counterpart of Krasnaia pechat', began to appear. Its publisher and date of issue are unknown, but it was probably printed by a section of the Revvoyensoviet. There is no record of its publication by the press section.

the remnants of the Red Army and Fleet press. In July of that year the Buro initiated its counterpart to the Central Committee Biulletins, the need for which had been proven in an examination of military papers that revealed staffs of four or five press workers.

While these steps were taken to prevent the total collapse of military publications, the center had not yet considered their function within the context of the whole press net. The party maintained its silence on the role of Red Army papers at a time when military agitation no longer held primary importance. Presumably political education and raising the class consciousness of recruits remained integral assignments. But until well into 1923, unlike worker and peasant publications, the party had not defined the position or function of the military press.

Nor was the general growth of Soviet papers during 1923 reflected in the military press. In fact just the opposite occurred. The 4th congress of press workers heard one report that noted the decline of Red Army publications to a total of eleven papers, some of which did not publish daily. Their circulation was 70,000 copies or 5% of all the Soviet press.[2] In this case, however, the party apparently sensed no urgency

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2. Pravda, p. 2 and Izvestiia, p. 3, February 9, 1923. The relationship of the decline in military papers to the attack on Trotsky is not clear, although it might have been intended to deprive him of a mouthpiece.

for correcting the situation. Since the class struggle was not being fought in the army, the military press remained an unattended backwater, and the congress contented itself with an appeal to civilian papers for more attention to the Red Army. This attitude was shared by the 12th party congress, which, preoccupied with the peasant press, did not even consider military papers.

Party inattention began to end in the fall of 1923, when the levels of the military press net were designated, and plans were laid for the publication of a central military paper. This net was extremely simple, calling only for papers at the okrug level in addition to one central paper.[3] With a small number of supporting military correspondents it was realized in the course of the next year through the publication of thirteen okrug papers and Krasnaia zvezda on January 1, 1924. The central military organ became a major factor in the development of the Red Army press, supplementing the guidance of the Press Buro, explaining themes of importance to the Red Army, and proclaiming its goal to be the laboratory of military thought. A critical evaluation of the militant period of the army's history would be the first step in mili-

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3. Materialy o sostoianii pechati SSSR, Moscow, 1924, p. 51 (Hereafter cited as Materialy o pechati).

tary education.[4]

But to accomplish these self-appointed tasks the paper had to rely on readers for staff and material, establishing an unbreakable link with the soldiers and responding to their questions and needs. This optimistic program was not realized, since Krasnaia zvezda never received the attention or support it needed to become such a paper. Its subscription rate remained unimpressive, attaining only 20,000 copies by the end of 1924.[5]

The task of the military papers, like the rest of the Soviet press, was educational. The change to the territorial system allowed some publications to double as peasant papers, devoting their pages to agricultural and soviet construction, but for the most part they formulated their task in terms of delivering basic cultural and political education to recruits and focused their attention on the problems facing the Red Army. The latter task was almost exclusively the province of military papers. Only rarely did the rest of the Soviet press

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4. Editorial of Krasnaia zvezda, #1, January 1, 1924, in O part i sov pechati, pp. 283. This examination probably was aimed at Trotsky. Portiankin, Sov voyen pechat', pp. 104-8, states that the main task in the military press for 1923-24 was eliminating his adherents who controlled the Moscow military okrug and its paper Krasnaia voina. He claims Trotsky denied partinost' to military papers by restricting them to communicating facts and not educating the soldiers.

5. Portiankin, Sov voyen pechat', p. 119; Materialy o pechati, p. 56.

invade this domain, and then, usually when some crisis threatened the state.[6]

The desultory progress of the military press was punctuated in May 1924 by a congress of Red Army editors, at which its functions and tasks were elaborated further. On this occasion Trotsky spoke about the problems of the military press. The army publication was a paper first and then military, according to the Commissar for War, and it was " ... the basic instrument for the political and cultural education of the vast masses.... Through the paper the main lesson is given, through the paper [the party] can and must not only inform, but give a known supply of information, raise ... the political and cultural level of the readers." For the military press the continuous turnover in personnel meant that the educational process began each year with the new recruits, and had only two years to accomplish its tasks before they left the army. In keeping with the general function of the Soviet press, Trotsky also maintained that military publications must be critical, revealing the mistakes and abuses of the Red Army.[7]

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6. The Curzon ultimatum in May 1923 was such an occasion. In response to it sections like "Defense of the Republic" which reported the activity of the Red Army and discussed strategy and tactics, appeared in the central press until the crisis had passed.

7. Trotsky, Soch, vol. 21, pp. 219-34, passim. "On the Military Press". Trotsky warned however, that military criticism had to be applied carefully to avoid abuses.

The work of the military paper had to be supplemented by military correspondents (voyencors). "The voyencor exists to correspond militarily; it is necessary to understand that the voyencor is a weapon for raising the cultural level of the Red Army. From the moment that the voyencor thinks he is an end in itself, that the voyencor is only for military correspondence -- he has died."[8]

Questions of content and emphasis were more easily answered, military matters had primacy. "But military matters for us are deeply connected with politics. Politics is connected with the party, with the worker state." From military subjects the press would shift its attention to the life of the working masses of town and country. Military publications could not be divorced from the reality of party and soviet existence and must be intimately connected with it. This supported Lenin's idea of the party establishing links with the other parts of the Soviet state. And Trotsky left no doubt that he understood the function of the military press in terms of *partinost'*. "I could say a great deal about the tasks of the press. There is no need to say that all this work will be fine from beginning to end only if it realizes the principle, i.e. if it is permeated with the principle and spirit of Leninism,"[9] a clear indication that the military publications, like all

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8. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

other parts of the press must be party first and military second.

With its functions and tasks clearly defined the military press returned to the more prosaic activity of expanding its number and circulation. This activity achieved small results, since the military published only 15 papers with a circulation of about 70,000 copies,[10] but the regularly published periodicals in 1924 were supplemented by a great number of garrison wall papers in the various units, which were edited by members of the political or party organizations within the unit. This type of paper will be examined next.

Wall Papers

The best description of the Soviet wall paper would be a cross between an agit-prop flyer or poster and a regular paper, with the content similar to the latter while the format indicated its relation to the former. Its actual origins are obscure, but references to this type of publication began to appear during the Civil War, and it is not improbable that

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10. Statistics on the military net vary. The press section listed thirteen okrug papers, while Portiankin, Sov voyen pechat', p. 120, cites fourteen. Berkhin, I.V., "Ukrepleniye partiino-politicheskikh organov i uluchesheniye partpolitraboty v krasnoi armii v 1924-25 godakh", Voprosy istorii, #2, 1958, p. 43, gives a total of nine okrug, two fleet, two corps, ten territorial and six national language papers in 1925. These figures correspond roughly to the nine okrug, two fleet, one corps, four territorial and six national language papers elaborated in Pechat' SSSR k XIV s"ezdu, Moscow, 1926, p. 195 (Hereafter cited as Pechat' XIV s"ezdu).

their publication started during the hostilities in place of regular papers due to the newsprint shortage. The most likely candidate for prototype is the military paper published on the arrival of an armored train or military press at a village or city. This sheet was then pasted up in a prominent location, not infrequently on the wall of the village center or soviet where all could read it.

With the end of the Civil War the wall paper returned to the barracks with the Red Army and began to serve the soldiers in garrison, but its military experience was adopted by other institutions of the state to disseminate information to the lowest levels of the population. One of the first to utilize wall papers was the central press agency ROSTA which began to publish Stennaia gazeta ROSTA at least as early as 1921.[11] Another area in which the wall paper prospered following the Civil War was the industrial enterprise where a variety of factory sheets were soon publishing. But this brief flurry of wall paper activity was almost entirely obliterated during the press crisis of 1922, when the process of cannibalization,

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11. Apparently the various geographical sections of the agency printed their own devoted to their area, but based on information disseminated by the center. The one copy found in the Smolensk Archives was #24, February 4, 1924. It measured about 23x26 inches and was published by the Smolensk section of ROSTA. Its content was factual, largely devoted to local affairs, but also containing brief telegraphic summaries of a few foreign and domestic events.

which insured the survival of the larger daily publications, devoured literary and technical resources at the local level.[12]

The wall press recovered far more rapidly from the crisis than the daily press. Smaller requirements for publication and the restricted audience in any enterprise allowed the wall paper to publish on very slender resources. By early 1923 it was no longer a question of their existence, as was still the case with many regular papers, but a question of defining their role in the cosmography of the Soviet press. Initially this was done by the local paper.

In Moscow Rabochaia Moskva dealt with the problem, emphasizing the difference in content between the great party press which defended the general interests of the proletariat, and plant publications which concerned themselves with the particular enterprise and its working conditions. Exceptions to this general distinction occurred only when the political or economic question directly affected the plant.[13] At this time

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12. Since the statistics on wall papers even in the most sketchy fashion began only in the period after the press crisis, there is no way to determine how extensive their net was or what portion was wiped out. Evidence for their demise appears in the Moscow and Petrograd press which noted their failure or demanded the use of their resources.

13. Rabochaia Moskva, March 11, 1923, p. 3. This section became a regular feature in Rabochaia Moskva during 1923.

control and leadership of the wall net had not been developed, and as long as the papers were not counter-revolutionary, they were allowed free rein. Apparently the practical value of the wall paper in illuminating and discussing the needs and interests of the factory, outweighed the idea of rigid control or direction, and as the number of wall papers grew, Pravda encouraged all enterprises to consider their publication and adopt measures for their organization.[14]

By the time of the 12th party congress, the number of wall papers had grown to such an extent that they were discussed during its sessions. The idea behind the wall paper coincided with the concept of diversification, representing its logical termination and providing local information which higher papers could not hope to deliver. The congress confirmed this perceptible role that plant papers were already playing in the state. Their importance lay, according to the congress resolution, in the illumination of local factory life and the involvement of public life.[15] Stressing the value of this tool, the congress pointed out the need for its control by the party.

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14. Pravda, May 5, 1923, p. 1, fifth lead article.

15. Reshenilia partii o pechati, p. 46. "Resolution of the 12th Party Congress on Questions of Propaganda, Press and Agitation".

The encouragement from the center produced a rapid expansion in the number of wall papers. By the fall of 1923, five hundred existed in Moscow alone. Unfortunately rapid growth produced chaos in the net, as the poor publications multiplied more rapidly than the satisfactory papers. According to Rabochaia Moskva, many wall papers mistakenly attempted to become daily publications, rather than waiting for enough useable material to accumulate for printing on a regular biweekly basis. A second error was the failure of local editorial boards to establish links with higher levels of the party which would examine and analyze their publications.[16] Wall papers had responded to the encouragement to expand, but not to the idea of control, and they had merrily gone their own separate way without relying on party leadership or caring about content. The party, on the other hand, grew increasingly uneasy since this weapon remained outside its control, considering that neither the information or technical power was available to warrant daily publication without risking degeneration.

The importance of wall papers for the party was stated most emphatically at the first correspondents' meeting of Pravda, where the following resolution was adopted:

> "The wall paper is the organizer of the collective will of the workers of a plant, the expression of public opinion; it is the expression of the mood of the workers,

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16. Rabochaia Moskva, October 5, 1923, p. 3.

> their ideas and thoughts, it is their organizer. Wall papers are the foremost posts of our press in the middle of the working mass. Here lies their great social importance ....
>
> Party and trade union organizations in the person of agitation and cultural sections and also editors of papers must render all attention and aid to the wall papers. This support must be rendered at meetings of the comrades who work in the wall papers, by analysis of wall papers appearing in the given raion or city, analysis of their local condition etc."[17]

This resolution reflected the importance of wall papers to the party and its very real concern about lack of control over the press closest to the masses.

In the period after the 12th congress the wall paper also began to appear in the village, probably in response to that congress' emphasis on the peasantry. But away from the major centers publication difficulties were far greater, and they never achieved in the countryside the numbers that they attained in the city.[18] Like the daily peasant publication, the village wall paper lacked the technical and material support as well as the editorial cadre necessary for publication. The inception of wall papers in the village, even on a modest

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17. Pravda, November 28, 1923, p. 5. At the same time the congress expressed itself against any form of censorship or preliminary examination of wall papers.

18. In 1924 a debate arose over spoken or oral papers at the lowest levels. Oral advocates pointed to its value with the illiterate masses and the savings in costs. The "written paper" advocates stressed the ease of absorbing information. Izvestiia, February 7, 1924, p. 4, considered the question for the Urals, concluding that written papers were the better type of publication generally, but not to the exclusion of the oral paper.

scale, added a third dimension to the city and barracks papers, and by the time the 13th party congress assembled their number had risen to 3000.

When the delegates considered the press, they concluded that plant-factory papers had now reached the point in their development where they were already playing an important role as a weapon influencing the masses and as a form for revealing their activity. In the village, however, the wall paper had not duplicated this success, and in the countryside it must become one of the most important forms of party and Komsomol work, struggling for improvement of the economy and cooperatives, raising the cultural level of the mouzhiks, and supporting the interests of the peasantry against the Kulaks and abuses of the administration.[19]

While the quality of worker publications had improved, the party was still concerned about control and leadership of wall papers, calling for their strengthening. This call for better party control went unrealized like its predecessor, as did the instruction for meetings with raion committees, and the papers continued to publish virtually without party direction.[20]

Since the party resolution had become a dead letter, at the

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19. Trinadtsatyi s"ezd, pp. 649-50. "Resolution on the Press".

20. Pechat' XIV s"ezdu, pp. 34-5.

end of the year the Central Committee dispatched its own decree on wall papers at the same time that it considered other aspects of the Soviet press. The December decree reaffirmed the importance of wall papers and stressed that all their activity must be under the leadership of the party. Execution of party guidance meant direction of the editorial board by responsible party members and frequent meetings with the various organizations and institutions important to the paper. General leadership would be exercised by the sections and subsections of the press which would designate a member to guide the editorial college and party cell.

Having dictated general control principles, the Central Committee then addressed itself to the contents of the papers, Articles must be short, connected with the enterprise and its activities, and accessible to the readers. The paper must not only be negative in revealing mistakes, but must explain errors, the reasons for them, and propose solutions for their elimination. In the countryside leadership must also reside with the party and be part of general political-educational work. The peasantry must be rallied to participation, and the Central Committee repeated that the village wall paper must concentrate on the issues expounded by the 13th congress, i.e. agriculture, culture, cooperatives, and the struggle with the Kulaks.[21] This

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21. O part i sov pechati, pp. 325-7. "On Wall Papers".

decree succeeded where previous directives had failed. By the 14th congress control and leadership no longer held the spotlight, and emphasis had shifted to expansion of the net in the village.

The National Press

From the first days of the February Revolution the Bolsheviks had published papers in languages other than Russian. Before October they numbered only a handful predominantly in the Baltic area, and most ceased publication when the Baltic states achieved Independence. For the rest of the country an embryonic national press net began to emerge in the days after October as the Bolsheviks expanded their control into non-Russian areas. These publications rarely survived the fortunes of the Civil War, but at the end of the fighting about sixty papers in various national languages had been established mainly due to the efforts of the Red Army.[22] While there are no figures available for national language publications during the interval between the end of the fighting and the change to NEP, it seems unlikely that they grew substantially. However, the introduction of NEP was a death blow to this modest net of papers, and a large percentage of the papers that ceased

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22. Part 1 sov pechat' v bor'be, p. 13.

publication during the press crisis were national papers which lacked the resources and support necessary to see them through 1922.

Nor was assistance forthcoming from the center which had never given any special attention to the national press despite the 8th congress which called for it, apparently content to let non-Russian publications emerge as they would, or more likely, overly concerned with parts of the press nearer at hand. Not until 1923, when gubernia papers had achieved a satisfactory level, did the party begin to examine the nature and function of the national press.

In this case the initiative came at the 4th congress of press workers which extended the concept of differentiation to the various peoples of the state and called the attention of the press workers to the vacuum that existed in this area. The delegates confirmed the very real difficulties of the national press due to the change to cost accounting, and asked for financial aid for the papers of the national minorities.[23] This straightforward approach was repeated by the 12th party congress in April, which decreed:

> "Periodical publications in languages of the national minorities, which serve the poorest and most backward masses of the national minorities, need in view of

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23. Vardin, Sov pechat', p. 151. "Resolution of the IVth Congress of Press Workers".

> their very weak dissemination, the absence of paid ads etc., powerful support without which their existence is impossible."[24]

At the same time the congress realized that the former haphazard and unregulated policy toward the national press was unsatisfactory, and instructed the agit-prop section of the Central Committee to strengthen party control and instruction of the national press in order to improve it.

The monetary part of this instruction was quickly executed by the agit-prop section which designated half the state subsidy for the last six months of 1923 to the national press, and over seventy per cent (105,000 r) in 1924 for the support of 68 national papers.[25] But beyond financial aid there is no evidence of any attempt by the center either to direct or lead the national press which maintained its position of poor relative, probably because the peasant paper campaign fully occupied the party's attention.

The state subsidy, however, prevented decline and even prompted a slow expansion. At the time of the congress there were some seventy nine national publications, representing 5% of the Soviet press. In November 1923, this number had grown to ninety three and by early 1924 to one hundred and eight.

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24. Resheniia partii o pechati, pp. 45-7.

25. Iz TsK, #7-8, August-September, 1923, p. 8 and #4, April, 1924, p. 122.

Most of this growth represented the transformation of local Russian papers into local language publications, while a smaller part represented the creation of new papers.[26] This slow expansion in the number of titles was accompanied by a relatively greater growth in circulation, however, the total dissemination for the national press in 1924 was still less than that of Pravda alone and averaged slightly more than 2000 copies per paper.[27]

In 1924 the party's lukewarm attitude toward non-Russian papers changed with the incorporation of a full section devoted to the national press in the Central Committee's decree of February 6.

> "[It is necessary] to recognize the need for strengthening the press in non-Russian languages by the reorganization of material means in the budgets of the national Republics and oblasts, covering the deficit on account by entering a subsidy in the budget of the union, distributing it through the existing oblast sections.
>
> [It is necessary] to continue the examination of what is published in the national Republics in Russian with the aim of the maximum reduction of publications of an institutional-apparatus type and the utilization of the means liberated for the development of the press in the local language.
>
> [It is necessary] to oblige the press section

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26. Pravda, November 20, 1923, p. 3. In Georgia and the Tatar Republic the press was 60% Russian and 40% national. The Ukraine had the worst balance of any area, although White Russia and Kirghiz had no national papers at all. Part of the problem lay in the absence of any type in the local language.

27. Iz TsK, #4, April 1924, p. 103. The report of the press section gives the following statistics for April 1923 and March 1924: 86 titles with 149,000 copies and 108 titles with 238,000 copies.

> to study in the first place all forms of papers in the local languages (wall, press etc.) and depending on the cultural level and local conditions of the given national area, to set up a paper for the peasants....
>
> At the same time in the largest Republics leading papers for party members in the local language must be strengthened."[28]

The decree focused the party's attention on continuing diversification, extending it to the national press which the Central Committee believed was ripe for differentiation. Peasant and worker-leading papers were to be laid out if the cultural level of the national minority could support a variety of publications and if the material-technical base was available. At the same time the attack on institutional publications was extended into the national area with the aim of liberating these resources for more important tasks.

The three pronged attack on the national press yielded steady results. By the end of May all the press in Armenia, 94% in Georgia and 54% in White Russia was in the local national language.[29] The 13th congress resolution on the press reiterated the instructions of the Central Committee for party leadership, support and diversification, thus reinforcing already existing directives of the party to continue along the

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28. Reshenilia partii o pechati, p. 55; Iz TsK, #3, March 1924, p. 50. The copies of this decree in Sov pechat' v dok and O part i sov pechati do not have this section.

29. Trinadtsatyi s"ezd, pp. 119-and 650. In Stalin's Sochineniia and O part i sov pechati the figure for the Ukraine is 88%.

path that had been charted. The press section summarized the progress of the national press in even more detail shortly after the 13th congress. Considering the problems of illiteracy and press resources, national publications had achieved considerable success. The conversion of Russian papers had reversed the situation of April 1923, when nine out of twelve national Republics had more Russian than local language papers. Only four such Republics remained and their inattention to the press explained the continued predominance of Russian papers.

These achievements were fine as far as they went, but the press section maintained that much still had to be done. The qualitative level of the national press remained low, particularly in the southern and eastern areas of Russia. Part of the reason for this lay in weak or non-existent ties with the masses through correspondents. Quality was also a facet of differentiation which had only begun in the national Republics. The national press was still predominantly mixed, trying in one paper to be something for everyone. Many of these publications also tried to duplicate the format of Russian papers which were unsuitable for the backward and semi-literate minorities which had different needs and interests. Nor were the old animosities between national groups absent from the press, while the number of party members on the staffs was very low. When these problems were added to financial insecurity which 170,000 rubles for the second half of 1924 could not completely

defray, the press section was forced to posit the major strengthening of the national press and its correspondents as a serious and immediate task of the party.[30]

Youth Press

The origins of youth papers are also obscure. Apparently some began to appear after the Civil War, perhaps reinforcing a few similar publications that had already existed. The January 1922 press net had called for eleven Komsomol papers, but their creation is uncertain, and the press crisis closed or curtailed what youth papers existed. The few that survived the crisis, however, were able to stand on their own, and by 1923 this group headed by Molodoi Leninets (Moscow 40,000), Smena (Petrograd 36,000) and Na smenu (Ekaterinburg 20,000), had become firmly established and began to expand, developing further publications at the gubernia level.[31] In the area of the youth press the provinces generally led the center which had its attention on other parts of the Soviet press.

In Smolensk the gubernia committee began to publish Iunii

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30. Materialy o pechati, pp. 67-75. The situation had not changed by the 14th party congress before which the press section again noted poor quality, political lapses, local deviations and lack of support. Only in Georgia, the Ukraine and Armenia were national papers somewhat satisfactory and the press section attributed this to their higher cultural level and a literary tradition. Pechat' XIV s"ezdu, pp. 135-42. This report of the press section lists the total number of national titles as 139.

31. Ibid., pp. 58-9.

tovarishch during 1923 and in Kharkov and Zhitomir at the end of the year two other youth papers also appeared. The press section of the Central Committee recorded the appearance of other youth papers throughout the year, but their continued publication depended on support from the local committee and subscriptions, neither of which was immediately forthcoming.[32] For all youth publications the press section recorded the following figures:

	Begun	Closed	Total
January 1, 1923	--	--	49
May 1	14	10	53
November 1	5	15	43
April 1, 1924	9	1	51

[33]

These figures indicate that most youth papers were shoestring operations, their periodicity extremely irregular, and their life expectancy short. Iunii tovarishch in its first year of publication managed only forty one editions with a peak circulation of 6000 copies even though supported by the Smolensk Gubernia Committee.[34]

The general lack of support and leadership was corrected in 1924 when the Central Committee called on the Komsomols to examine their publications with the help of the press section and consider the creation of daily papers for their union.

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32. Krasnaia pechat', #15, August 1926, pp. 41-2; WKP 518 "Resolution on the Closest Problems of the Press".

33. Materialy o pechati, p. 57.

34. WKP 275 "Report on Work among the Children of Smolensk Gubernia", March 3, 1924.

Another step taken to improve the leadership of the youth press was the creation before the 13th congress of a separate press section within the Central Committee of the Komsomols whose functions were to realize the party line and direct youth papers toward the leading tasks of the union and party.[35] The 13th congress also discussed the youth press, proposing inter alia, an all-Russian Komsomol paper.

The congress noted that the Komsomols had been very insufficiently served with literature up to that time, and to correct this deficiency it was necessary to strengthen and enlarge the net of youth oblast papers for worker, peasant and national minorities, devoting special attention to the latter two categories and to the expansion of the nets of young worker and peasant correspondents.[36]

The attempt to realize the pronouncements of the congress brought mixed results. Pravda took up the drum for the youth press, explaining the value of iuncors especially in the village. At the same time, during the summer of 1924, more and more of the central and larger provincial papers evolved youth

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35. O part i sov pechati, p. 291. "Decree of the Central Committee on the Most Important Tasks of the Party in the Area of the Press". February 6, 1924. At that time there were 39 Komsomol papers with a circulation of 34,000 copies. Iz TsK, #4, April 1924, p. 103. "Report of the Press Section".

36. Trinadtsatyi s"ezd, pp. 650-1. "Resolution on the Press".

or Komsomol columns and pages to serve and guide this part of the population. But the campaign to expand youth papers did not achieve dramatic results, realizing only the base from which future development would evolve. Continuing the policy of diversification, the first steps were taken to divide the youth press into worker and peasant nets, but many gubernias refused to publish a peasant youth paper despite an appeal from the Komsomol Central Committee.[37] Nor was this surprising since only four of the twelve gubernias published any peasant papers at all. For the most part it was easier for a newly published youth paper to be a mixed publication, since that type would appeal to the most extensive audience even though not appealing in the manner ordered by the center. In November the youth net had about equal numbers of mixed and worker or peasant papers, but by the end of the year eight more publications had been added to the net and of these six were mixed.[38]

In December the question of youth paper diversification

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37. Materialy o pechati, p. 61; Krasnaia pechat', #1, January 1925, p. 12. According to the press section, city youths were best served while peasant and national youths were worst. These papers operated at a deficit and an examination of 30 revealed four non-party editors.

38. Pechat' XIV s"edu, p. 170. There were eleven worker, nine peasant and eighteen mixed on November 1 and twelve worker, ten peasant and twenty four mixed in January 1925.

was raised in the Komsomol press, and after a prolonged discussion, in August 1925 resulted in a decree specifically dividing youth publications into worker and peasant types. At the same time the Central Committee of the union instructed its organizations on the content and composition of its papers. The party line was to be fully reflected in all union publications. Komsomol organizations would designate a qualified responsible editor from the local Buro to direct the paper and rally to participation all union members.[39] These activities and the continued interest of the Central Committee and its press section assured that major successes lay ahead for the youth press. But at the end of 1924, only the foundations had been laid, and the youth press like the national remained under-developed and in need of considerable support and guidance from the center.

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39. Ibid., p. 175. The question of the Central Organ for the Komsomols was resolved in 1925 with the publication of Komsomol'skaia pravda.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RABSELCOR MOVEMENT

No treatment of the Soviet press would be complete without considering the worker-peasant correspondent (rabselcor) movement. Soviet historiography traces its origins to the underground papers of Tsarist Russia and the few legal Bolshevik publications that appeared during the 1905 revolution and the last years before World War I. Soviet encyclopedias point to letters printed in the various party papers as evidence of an early correspondence movement, and in the widest sense of the expression this is correct. In the pre-revolutionary era the party press had to compensate for its lack of reporters by the letters and communications from individual workers.

With the coming of the February revolution this situation still obtained and there were constant reminders and appeals for the party press to be close to the people, connected with them etc. But throughout the first years of its existence there is no evidence of a conscious effort by the party press to organize or unite the disparate correspondents into a whole or instruct them in a way more positive then appealing for their letters. The change to NEP provided the incentive and catalyst which transformed this haphazard attitude into a conscious effort to guide and control an amorphous movement that was not dignified by a title until

1922.

Reasons for this sudden change appear in several areas. In the first place the press under NEP needed to be far more interesting than before to gain and hold subscribers. This entailed the accumulation of materials on the local scene, a process which had been handled in such a prefunctory manner previously that it had already drawn the criticism of the Central Committee. Most papers were not staffed to gather such material on their own and the natural answer was to attract correspondents who would accomplish the task.

In the second place the problem of revealing the defects of socialist construction, unmasking corruption and counter-revolutionary attitudes in the population and government, could best be done by individuals familiar with their locality and better able to comment on it. The non-official status of the correspondent would be an additional benefit. Finally after the change to NEP, as the party rapidly became aware of the general dissatisfaction that existed in the countryside and the growing danger of the Kulaks, it needed its own weapon in the village. Since the party was so weakly established outside the cities, the natural answer was a peasant correspondent movement, reporting on conditions among the muzhiks. These ideas did not emerge fully developed or at the same time from the Central Committee, but were evolved in the period 1922-4 when the correspondents came into pro-

minence, and the party attempted to deal with them.

The beginning of the rabselcor movement, as opposed to the mere writing of letters to a paper, is not at all clear. It is unlikely that more than a minimal net of correspondents existed until the end of the Civil War, since the first contemporary references appeared in 1921.[1] At this time, either on their own initiative or with direction from their papers, circles began to form in Moscow, Petrograd, Rostov on Don and Baku. Probably these arose in response to the frequent appeals from the press for correspondence.[2] Then on April 8, 1922, one of Pravda's rabcors, N. Spiridonov, was killed by workers for complaining about abuses and irregularities of the party committee and the officials of a Moscow factory. At the time the correspondent movement existed only in the cities where the central papers noted that its role lay in watching and

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1. Pravda, July 26, 1922, p. 1, fourth lead article. The central organ noted that two years previously rabcors had hardly existed. Sekretar' "Pravdy", p. 50, claims the movement began in 1921, but was unorganized and unplanned in the early stages. At its first conference in 1923, Sosnovskii placed the start of the movement in 1918-9, but claimed that real growth occurred from 1920 with the change to peaceful construction. Pravda, November 21, 1923, p. 5.

2. In Part i sov pechat' v bor'be, p. 70, the claim is made for the organization of rabcor circles around Pravda as early as 1919, and that a buro of rabcors was created in the editorial board of the paper. Sekretar' "Pravdy", p. 49, states that this was not done until 1922.

and revealing the corruption in socialist construction.[3] But Spiridonov's murder brought the embryonic movement into the spotlight, and attention to the tasks and responsibilities of the rabcors dates from it.[4]

The stir caused by the murder immediately evoked a cry for the protection of rabcors from persecution and for the severe punishment of the persecutors. It also galvanized many correspondents and their papers into beginning rabcor organizations, the first or one of the first of which was organized at Pravda in the name of Maria I. Ul'ianova. The problem of persecution became even more prominent following the trial. Pravda noted cases of intimidation and harrassment for rabcor notes and asked whether it was not time for the state to think seriously about defending the rights of the correspondents.[5] At the same time the press began to relate the proceedings of

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3. Pravda, July 29, 1922, p. 5; Bednota, July 28, 1922, p. 3. Kotlyar, Newspapers, p. 18, says that during the early NEP period rabselcors were used to reveal irregularities and injustices in the state administration.

4. It developed that Spiridonov had been warned several times about his revelations. When the local committee failed to correct the abuses which he revealed, Spiridonov had gone to the press which printed his notes. Shortly thereafter he was murdered. The complicity of the factor director, Firsov, made the event more spectacular, and the trial of the accused drew the attention of all the press in July. Firsov and the killer, Volodin, were sentenced to five years, while others implicated received shorter sentences.

5. Pravda, September 12, 1922, p. 1, fifth lead article.

of rabcor meetings which demanded protection for the movement.[6]

The concern for the rabcors was soon demonstrated in another way. Papers began to establish sections to follow up correspondent revelations and selected rabcors from among the workers who were disposed toward paper work. At the end of 1922 Pravda, to propagandize the movement, initiated a competition for the best plant director. The Central Organ wanted to involve the workers and change casual correspondents into continual collaborators by offering prizes for their letters. The campaign, which was duplicated by other papers, spurred reports on many enterprises which were printed in a special section in the Central Organ and succeeded by 1923 in adding great numbers to the ranks of rabcors.

The new year also brought the first consideration of the movement in its relation to party, state and press. The 4th press workers' congress discussed the function of the rabcor and found that he played a decisive role in the creation of ties between papers and the masses. To insure the proper forging of this link, the congress posited the political and technical education of rabcors as a foremost task among them.[7] This appreciation was confirmed by the 12th party congress

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6. Rabochaia Moskva, September 26 and 28, p. 5; Pravda, October 1, 1922, p. 4. Izvestiia, December 14, 1922, p. 4, reported a bequest of one million rubles to the family of a murdered rabcor by the Central Committee.

7. Vardin, Sov pechat', pp. 148-9. "Resolution of the 4th congress of Press Workers", February 1923.

which ordered all party organizations to take measures for their political education and involvement in general party work.[8]

The 12th congress, which marked the turning point in the party's attitude toward the peasant press, also denoted the time at which the center began to pay more than passing attention to the correspondent movement. Heightened interest in peasant publications meant the eventual growth of a selcor movement to serve that press in the same way that the rabcors worked with their papers. The development of the selcor movement, however, had to surmount more difficult obstacles, since the environment in which it worked was basically hostile to the Soviet Government. But by the end of the summer of 1923, the press at the center was full of material on the correspondent movement, discussing its activities, tasks and leadership. For the peasantry Bednota described the correspondent as a link between editor and muzhik, who would relate what was happening in the village and what was useful and necessary for the center to know. In addition the selcor would provide the link between town and country, worker and peasant, while securing subscriptions and disseminating the paper.[9]

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8. O part i sov pechati, p. 273. "Resolution of the 12th Congress on Questions of Propaganda, Press and Agitation". It is interesting to note that the resolution refers to the rabcors as a new power of the party.

9. Bednota, June 16, 1923, p. 4.

Pravda tried to put the two phases of the movement into perspective according to their experience and organization. Rabcors were already organizing, exchanging experiences and writing to the Central Committee and its organs about their activities. Selcors, on the other hand, since they were just beginning to develop, were not organized, and they needed experience even more than rabcors. Pravda placed the creation of selcor nets before the peasant press as an important task in terms of its educational value for the village.[10] In the larger provincial centers the movement also proceeded along two fronts. The Riazan Gubernia Committee noted that in one year it had established both types of correspondents, directing the activity of its selcors toward the explanation of new forms of agriculture and social relation in the village, while its rabcors illustrated the condition of labor and the relationship of the workers to politics and social life. In Smolensk Gubernia the party committee for the fall ordered the strengthening of its correspondent buro and the attracting of new writers, while at the same time guiding their work and education in terms of Soviet power, the international position

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10. Pravda, p. 7, July 26 and p. 2, August 2, 1923. The Central organ of the party complained that most worker correspondents were local and isolated from other papers. For instance, Pravda had 190 rabcors at this time; 180 were in Moscow. Its correspondents in other cities were occasional and not continual contributors.

of the state and the future tasks of the correspondent.[11]

The anomalous position of the movement and its rapid growth, the persecution of correspondents, and articles in the press asking for instructions, guidance and leadership finally galvanized Pravda into convoking a congress of rabcors. Attended by delegates from Moscow and the industrial centers, the meeting opened November 16 with a report by Lenin's sister Maria, the main speaker and spirit of the congress, who attacked a variety of problems in relation to the movement including organization, selection, tasks and persecution. The problem of selecting correspondents generated the most heat. As the movement developed, a worker became a rabcor by election, selection or volunteering. The congress concluded that the first two methods were incorrect since they revealed the identity of the correspondent and put him under obligation to the enterprise at which he worked, making him feel responsible to it. The third choice had two advantages: anonymity and enthusiasm, and it avoided red tape.[12]

In the area of persecution Borisov described several dif-

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11. Bednota, September 6, 1923, p. 4; WKP 518, "Agit-prop Work for Smolensk, Fall, 1923".

12. Pravda, November 21, 1923, p. 1, editorial; Sekretar' "Pravdy", pp. 57-8. The congress did not forbid the other methods, but recommended against them. The Urals, Kiev, Petrograd and Rostov all selected.

ferent types. Working conditions were made impossible or the correspondent was transferred to an area where heavy physical labor was demanded. Some were brought to trial for their revelations. When the work force was curtailed, rabcors were among or all those relieved of their jobs. Borisov also indicated that party members as well as avowed counter-revolutionaries participated in the persecution. In order to combat this activity, Borisov demanded recognition that the rabcors were doing important party work, and the strengthening of the party's struggle with elements opposed to them.[13]

Maria Ul'ianova also reported on the organization of the movement. She first noted that the congress only represented seventeen papers. Other publications had not deigned to attend despite their demands for the congress. This reflected a total lack of organization and exchange of ideas. But Lenin's sister would have no truck with the idea of a general or united rabcor organization, perhaps basing this feeling on the experience of the stillborn all-Russian Union of Journalists, and the delegates supported her, adopting the circle attached to the

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13. Ibid. The congress fulfilled this demand, ordering all organizations to consider rabcor work as an important party task. It stated that the habit of ignoring rabcors and their work was incorrect. The press was to undertake campaigns against persecution, publicize all incidents, and obtain court action against offenders. Pravda, November 28, 1923, p. 5.

editorial board of the given paper as the basic rabcor unit. At its head would be a buro, responsible to the correspondents and to the editorial board, which would organize work among rabcors, attract new contributors, and supervise their moral and social outlook.[14]

As to the tasks and role of the rabcor, the congress found him to be a completely new social power. According to Kerzhentsev,

> "The rabcor ... actively influences the working mass. He is the guide of the ideas of the party, he in his factory organizes worker public opinion. He, for example, by means of the press and in his personal impact increases the class conscious relation to production ... raises the worker's feeling of class dignity."[15]

The rabcor was an independent voice of the working masses, checking up on the whole proletariat, a reflection of worker life, a link between paper and masses, and an active organizer at his plant. His tasks were to express the will of the working masses, to develop their independence and initiative and to fuse the workers with the proletarian dictatorship.[16]

The congress also showed the extent and structure of the

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14. Pravda, November 27, 1923, p. 5; Sekretar' "Pravdy", pp. 219-20.

15. Pravda, November 27, 1923, p. 5.

16. Ibid., November 28, 1923, p. 5.

movement. The small response to the calling of the congress has already been noted, as has the contention that many party organizations paid insufficient attention to or ignored rabcor organizations. None of the fourteen provincial reports could boast of a rabcor organization previous to May 1922, and only four before the end of that year. Surprisingly the outlying cities like Ekaterinberg, Baku, Kharkov and Rostov on Don had initiated correspondent groups nearly a year before Moscow and Petrograd. All local reports, however, indicated a steady and in some cases rapid expansion of membership in the six months before the congress, and the majority reported the calling of regular and increasingly frequent local meetings to consider the problems of the movement, educate the rabcors and raise their cultural level.[17]

The congress had considered the whole spectrum of the rabcor movement, but neglected the selcor completely. Yet most of the decisions applied equally well to peasant correspondents. Organization and membership were the same, and although the persecution was more frequent, its elimination depended on the same party support necessary for the rabcor. Only in terms of

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17. Ibid., November 22-5, 1923, passim. The time sequence in the establishment of local groups supports the thesis that the rabselcor movement arose in response to a need for reporters on the local scene after the introduction of NEP, since the central papers, which had fewer correspondents, could rely on the wire service for information.

his function and tasks did the selcor differ, and these had yet to be completely mapped out. With the turn of the new year, as the campaign for the peasant press swung into high gear, the function of the selcor would assume greater importance. At the same time the decisions taken at the congress concerning rabcors would become operative and their practical value tested in the field.

The key to success in 1924 for the rabcors was the publication of the instructional journal Rabochii korrespondent, edited by Maria Ul'ianova, in addition to her responsibilities as head of the "Worker Life" section in Pravda. Such a publication had been discussed as early as the summer of 1923, but not until the congress was the idea given official sanction. Its tasks were to help establish rabcors as tributaries of their papers, to organize, guide and defend them from persecution. Additionally the journal printed acts and decrees affecting the press, published articles on the press and rabcors, and in general discussed all problems related to the movement.[18]

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18. Karavashkova, S.V., "M.I. Ul'ianova - organizator i redaktor zhurnala Raboche-krest'ianskii korrespondent", in Mishuris, A.L., Partiino-sovetskaia pechat' v period bor'by za stroitel'stvo sotsializma, Moscow, 1964, pp. 102-7; Sekretar' "Pravdy", pp. 52-62. The first issue rejected the selection of rabcors, but supported the idea of buros attached to the editorial board of the individual paper. However this institution tended to fossilize into an official structure and the eighth issue of the journal stamped it as incorrect.

First to consider the selcor was the meeting of the peasant paper editors at the end of December. Shafir reported on the village correspondent and his thesis was adopted by the delegates. He decried the trend among village correspondents to consider themselves officials with special authority. This tendency must be fought. Another incorrect approach was the proliferation of selcors who had no contact with the village. Put in a negative way,

> "The selcor (of the official type) was given to us that we would not know what was happening in the village. The selcor is in essence a most important support for our own press, since he is a peasant leader, he is an active reader. But in order that a correspondent should be a real support, it is indispensable, that he should be a true link between the village and the paper and not a bureaucratic distortion of such."[19]

Following the editors' meeting more frequent pronouncements began to appear on the function of selcors. Kalinin became their spokesman, and under his leadership the first selcor congress was convened at the beginning of February 1924, sponsored by Bednota. Kalinin, Sosnovskii and Demian Bednii, who were the leading speakers, prescribed the direction of the movement.

It was not sufficient merely to describe what was happening in the village without any feeling for events. As Kalinin explained " ... the first thing that is demanded from a corres-

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19. Shafir, Ia., Gazeta i derevnia, Moscow, 1924, pp. 135-6.

pondent is that he has lived through and suffered those very passions of the peasantry about which he writes." The selcor must also be able to provide examples of the phenomena which he was describing, and must be able to generalize from the specific. There was no need for a special peasant language, but merely a study of Russian to enable the selcor to recapture on the printed page what he had seen in the village.[20] Demian Bednii stressed the role of selcors as representative of Soviet power in the village and among the peasantry, the ears of the center in the countryside. Sosnovskii talked of selcors in terms of distributing papers in the localities and dealt with the need to protect them from persecution.[21]

One speaker stressed the newness of the selcor movement, noting that before the revolution there had been no peasant correspondents, and that in 1924 there was only one to 3000 muzhiks. Another added:

> "Generally speaking, the illumination of agricultural-economic questions in the paper is a means of approaching the peasantry, a means of the conquest of the reader's attention, and this means, the reader himself. Agricultural-economics and agronomy -- this is the path bringing the paper to the village. Thus we come

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20. Kalinin, O korrespondentakh, pp. 11-21. "On the Tasks of the Village Correspondent", also in Bednota, February 8, 1924.

21. Bednota, February 12-15, 1924, passim.

> to the conclusion that the first important task of correspondents is to write what has this or that relation to agricultural economy."[22]

But the peasant's dislike of organization had to be overcome in order to work usefully in the countryside and this was another task of the selcor. As to the selcor's function, Karpinskii devoted his attention to that topic. The peasant correspondent played a dual role, the conductor of ideas from the center and the expression of the peasant's needs. "A peasant writer must ... be a leading class conscious citizen of the Soviet Republic, that is a guide, explainer, interpreter for the peasantry of the plans, ideas, measures of Soviet power." On the other hand as the center of the village, the selcor should explain everything in relation to the interests of the peasantry.

> "... the peasant writer must be the expression of the interests of the peasantry. He must inform the worker-peasant power about what is happening in the village, and defend before the worker-peasant power the interests of the peasantry. This is the second, very important, basic task of the peasant writer."[23]

The former function was particularly important since the center needed unvarnished accounts of events in the countryside. With the revolution beginning in the village and the old

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22. Kalinin, Mikhail Ivanovich, Krest'ianskii korrespondent; ego rol', ego rabota, Moscow, 1924, pp. 33-8. "On the Work of the Selcors". Kalinin's pamphlet is a printed collection of the speeches at the selcor congress.

23. Ibid., pp. 72-3. "What a Peasant Writer Must Be".

capitalist system reviving, Karpinskii pointed out that selcors were the leading element in the countryside and must direct the peasantry along the proper path. The selcor would attack the struggle in the village from the class point of view, as a member of the have-not class in its struggle with the haves.

But the first selcor congress accomplished less than the first rabcor congress because of the limited number of peasant papers about which selcor buros could organize. Rabcors had an extensive and well established net of papers, but selcors could only claim one such sheet, Bednota, and their first meeting should more properly be called a meeting of Bednota selcors. Not until the village press existed in a more extensive form could a real congress of selcors be held.

Thus by early 1924 the two major types of correspondents had been called to the attention of the party through its leading papers, and the basic questions, functions, and organizational framework of the movement outlined.[24] The problem of

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24. On February 15, Kalinin spoke at a meeting of rabselcors of Rabochaia gazeta and defined the tasks of all correspondents as follows: "... to grasp life, to write as a process of life itself. They [the tasks] are approached, I think, only when a person is deeply interested in life and inserts part of himself in the process." Kalinin, O korrespondentakh, p. 23. Shafir, Ia., Gazeta i derevnia, Moscow, 1924, p. 138, cited the struggle with abuses, the raising of the cultural level in the village, and dissemination of papers as the tasks of the selcor.

persecution had not been eliminated and even the decisions of rabselcor meetings remained to be realized throughout a movement that had as yet no internal cohesion or real interdependence.

By the time of the thirteenth congress the party was ready to discuss the rabselcor movement as a whole. In the draft resolution, prepared before the congress, the press section of the Central Committee had called for party leadership of its writers.[25] But the draft resolution was regarded as unclear and incomplete even before it was considered, and the Central Organ of the party demanded the expansion of the points dealing with rabselcors to include aspects other than their education.[26] When the congress convened, Stalin in the Organizational Report noted that rabcors numbered 25,000 while there were an additional 5000 selcors. According to the party secretary,

> "The organization of rabcors and selcors has a great future. Through known conditions of development these organizations can play the role of the best expression and a powerful proponent of the will of proletarian opinion. You know the force of proletarian opinion in revealing and correcting the deficiencies of our soviet society -- it is much more serious than the power of administrative pressure. That is why the party must render all possible aid to this organization."[27]

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25. Pravda, May 22, 1924, p. 4.

26. Ibid., May 23, 1924, p. 4.

27. Trinadtsatyi s"ezd, pp. 113, 122-3. The rabselcor movement was considered in the section on organizations linking party and class.

Given the interest of the party secretary, it is not surprising that the resolution on the press adopted at the 13th session of the congress, May 31, extensively considered the movement. Its decisions on the worker correspondent confirmed the line adopted in the fall of 1923. Rabcors must be free from all forms of bureaucracy and formalism, united organizationally around the individual paper. Party leadership and assistance would take the form of communist education and political work among the rabcors, but the intensified activity of party and trade union groups should in no case take the form of censorship. The future of the movement demanded a mass influx of fresh cadres and the linking of rabselcors to the masses in production. As to the selcors, party and soviet organizations were to help them in every way. They would be the means of strengthening the links between peasantry and peasant paper.[28] These statements set the tone for rabselcor development until they were reexamined at the end of the year by the second correspondent congress.

Up to the 13th congress the correspondent movement had been largely amorphous despite the figures cited by the party secretary. Actual circles were few, and the selcor movement had barely been recognized except for the meeting sponsored

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28. Sov pechat' v dok, pp. 63-4. "On the Press". From the Resolution of the 13th Congress.

by Bednota. As later reports about this period indicated, even party committees in the largest centers failed to recognize the value of correspondents. Only a small number of party organizations participated in this work and like the paper at an earlier date, its place in the state was not understood.[29] The resolution of the congress on the importance and meaning of correspondents helped to change this attitude. It provided the foundation from which the movement would expand as well as the guidelines along which this expansion was to run. In the period from the 13th to the 14th congress the major questions concerning organization, leadership and participation were considered further and basically solved.

Immediately after the congress Stalin reviewed the function of the correspondent in an interview with a writer for Rabochii korrespondent. "Only as an organized force can rabselcors play, in the course of the development of the press, the part of a mouthpiece and guide of proletarian public opinion, exposing the deficiencies of Soviet society, and the tireless fighter for the improvement of our construction." Stalin, however, felt selection of writers by the editorial boards was advisable, so long as it insured the independence of the correspondent, but he argued against conceiving the movement

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29. Pechat' XIV s"ezdu, p. 28.

as a training ground for future Soviet journalists. Independence was primary. Nevertheless, correspondents must be guided by the paper to which they were attached. "Direct ideological guidance of rabselcors must be exercised by paper editors who are linked with the party. Censorship of articles must be concentrated in the hands of the papers' editors."[30] Stalin struck two new notes in this interview. The first was the apparent abandonment of the voluntary principle in favor of selection, while the second was the possibility of censorship. Selection foretold future party control of a movement that was at its inception spontaneous. Censorship indicated that some state deficiencies were beyond the competence of the correspondent.

The voluntary principle was quickly reaffirmed, however, in a review of the first six months of Rabochii korrespondent by Pravda which confirmed the concept announced by Bukharin at the first congress.[31] Nor was censorship developed at this time by commentators on the movement. Trotsky referred to

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30. Stalin, Joseph Vissarionovich, Sochineniia, vol. 6, pp. 274-6. "On Worker Correspondents". The 13th congress had not considered selection, but the resolution noted the need for party leadership in assisting papers in selecting rabcors.

31. Pravda, July 3, 1924, p. 6. It is possible that Stalin was only choosing between the two non-recommended methods since he did not mention the voluntary principle in his interview.

the realizing Lenin's dictum of continuous criticism and self-criticism as the spirit of correspondents. This meant two guiding principles in fulfilling their assigned task: facts and point of view. The latter must be class. Yet the spirit of criticism must not degenerate into arbitrariness and irresponsibility. "The feeling of responsibility for the fulfillment of work must play a leading role in all his activity. The rabcor is an organ of social conscience, which watches, reveals, demands, insists. It is impossible to be otherwise. The rabcor writes about irregularities and waits for them to be removed."[32] Trotsky's view was supported by Maria Ul'ianova who also stressed the social function of rabcors as a link between the masses and the paper, and through the latter with the party.[33]

The expansion of the correspondent movement and its penetration into the village aroused increasing opposition. Rabcors in the cities and major industrial areas had encountered scattered persecution because of their revelations of abuses and corruption. But for the most part they were accepted as representatives of the working class. In the countryside

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32. Trotsky, Soch, vol. 21, pp. 180-201. "The Rabcor and His Cultural Role"; written in July 1923, also in Pravda, August 14, 1924.

33. Krasnaia pechat', #16-7, 1924, pp. 6-7. "Partiia i rabcor", cited in Sekretar' "Pravdy", pp. 63-4.

the case was different. There the majority of the population was hostile to the Soviet Government and selcors encountered threats, harrassment and persecution almost as soon as they entered the village. Initially this situation was brought to the party's attention in March by the murder of G.I. Malinovskii, a selcor and party member, who had revealed bribery and abuses in the Ukrainian countryside.

Malinovskii's murder became a cause célèbre during the course of the year, attracting greater attention than it might otherwise have deserved because the press used it to whip up public opinion against the persecution of correspondents.[34] The press campaign developed along two basic lines: no mercy for the enemies of the working class, the Kulaks, Papists and speculators who hoped to profit from renascent capitalism, and the attempt to infuse thousands of new members into the selcor movement to expand party influence in the village. Having seized on correspondents as useful tools, the party intended to utilize them fully. But to penetrate the countryside required a vast net of selcors who would spread the gospel, and persecution deterred many from entering the movement.

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34. The trial of the killers received extensive coverage by all the press in October. Bednota devoted several columns to it for weeks, with transcripts and commentary. Persecution in White Russia was about equally dealt out by officials and individuals according to Martselei, Pechat' Belorussii, pp. 141-3. He records two killings and a variety of threats and abuses.

Pravda noted all this and cited it as a political danger that must be eliminated. The Central Organ called on all class conscious elements " ... to take measures for the protection of the life and property of selcors from Kulak banditry."[35]

The instances of persecution were more and more frequently reported in the press. Personal accounts were enlisted to reveal the machinations of counter-revolutionary forces in the countryside, and the opinions of harassed selcors were solicited on the fate of their persecutors.[36] With the beginning of the trial of Malinovskii's murderers in October the publicity campaign reached its peak. The Central Organ of the party ran several first page articles defining the role and importance of the correspondent, his relation to Soviet power and the problem of persecution.

To overcome the ambivalence and even hostility of lower soviet and party institutions, Pravda stressed the great value of selcors to the state. Hardly a day passed without further notices of attacks, and until they were repelled, correspon-

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35. Pravda, September 11, 1924, p. 1, third lead article. Use of the term Kulak seems to have been as elastic in 1924 as it would be during collectivization, since many persecutors were party and soviet officials.

36. In Pravda, September 17, 1924, p. 1, fourth lead article, the Bednota selcor V. Svetsov suggested deprivation of rights and freedom.

dents could not fully use their strength to aid the state in restoring the economy and raising the cultural level of the masses. They must be fully protected against anti-social enemies, and to provide for their families in case of persecution, Pravda reported that it was reviving the Iron Fund. All this was done to assure the movement that the power of the government stood behind it.[37] This message was repeated by Sosnovskii who stressed the inter-relationship of the growth of the Soviet press, its correspondents and the counter-revolutionary struggle. The opposition was given the already familiar names: Kulaks, Whiteguards and SR's, but the murder of Malinovskii had been perpetrated by party members, and this necessitated a thorough examination by party and soviet institutions into their attitude toward the correspondence. Again party organizations were called on to stand behind the rabselcor movement and take decisive measures against the counter-

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37. Pravda, October 3, 1924, p. 1, second lead article. In an interview in Pravda, October 5, Kalinin said that the importance of rabselcors demanded the state's assistance to families of injured correspondents, and put the responsibility on the editors. Correspondents must know that their work was considered socially important by the state which would support them. In the same issue the Central Organ listed twenty cases of persecution ranging from threats to killings, and printed an article by Karpinskii calling for special campaigns in defense of selcors and for special decrees on persecution.

revolution.[38]

As to the work of selcors, Molotov explained it as the defense of the poor and middle peasantry against the Kulaks. They would play an ever growing role in the countryside, since the party had only one member or candidate for every two villages. Even the addition of Komsomols did not raise the influence of the center to the necessary height, so selcors represented an important supplement to the party in the village.[39] Trotsky also explained the importance of correspondents, this time in terms of the freedom of the press.

> "Freedom of the press in the Soviet Republic consists most of all in this, that the worker, peasant and military correspondents have the opportunity and are not afraid to write about all irregularities, excesses, illegalities, violations and abuses which they observe around them. This is real and authentic freedom of the press, taken from the view of the masses. It is necessary no matter what to defend, expand, deepen and strengthen this freedom.
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> The attempts on this freedom come, predominantly, from two sources: from the side of officials who do not like it, when they disturb them and from the side of the kulaks, who do not want them interfering with their plundering."

Trotsky did not absolve correspondents from all blame in prefabricating cases, but felt Soviet officials were overzealous in their defense of Soviet power when they attacked correspon-

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38. Ibid., October 4, 1924, p. 3. The whole central press supported the campaign with a variety of articles and reports on the trial or the movement.

39. Ibid., October 12, 1924, p. 1, second lead article.

dents for revealing deficiencies.

> "Rabcors and selcors -- these are the eyes and ears of the worker Government. The kulak who attempts to blind and deafen the power of the working masses must and will be stopped ruthlessly .... And if the greedy frantic kulak lifts his arm further against the rabcors and selcors, the Revolutionary Dictatorship will use a red hot iron on this fraternity ...."[40]

The activity of the central press and the important party members who wrote on the movement show that by the end of the summer of 1924, the party had firmly and definitely taken an interest in the correspondents, and had become concerned with directing and defending them from any attack inside or outside the party. The occasion of the Malinovskii murder trial, which had been delayed by a prolonged search for the killers, provided an excellent opportunity to galvanize the country behind the movement and solidify central direction. At the same time in the major provincial centers party committees began to break out of their lethargy.

In Smolensk the importance of the various types of correspondents was noted in terms of disseminating the press, participating in wall papers, and as a link with the masses. The local committee called on all organizations to strengthen " ... the systematic leadership of this work, developing and

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40. Trotsky, Soch, vol. 21, pp. 201-6. "With a Red Hot Iron". Published in Pravda, October 18-9, 1924.

deepening it as one of the important branches of the work of the party." This was particularly necessary since previously their efforts had been so weak that some areas had no correspondents.[41]

In connection with the campaign for expanding the movement and attending to its direction, various meetings and conferences were convened to consider past experience and discuss future developments. Izvestiia held its first selcor meeting at the end of October and noted that their correspondence was insufficient and unsatisfactory.[42] At the beginning of Novem-

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41. WKP 10, Circular #43, October 18, 1924, of (to?) Gzhatsk Ucom RCP(b). Only in Smolensk were materials available to see this change of attitude. The reports of the local buros at their second congress support this change showing steady and sometimes dramatic growth in the period of the press campaign. Reports on local congresses, on the Don and in the Northern Caucasus, at the end of 1924 shed no direct light on this, but indicate the competition between local papers for correspondents which was regarded as unhealthy. Krasnaia pechat', #4-5, February 15, 1925, pp. 64-5.

42. Izvestiia, October 24, 1924, p. 3. The congress was also attended by secretaries of volost and agricultural cells who met with the press section and Central Committee. At this meeting the importance of dissemination and the lack of leadership for the movement in the village were noted. Niuremberg of the press section stated, "Not to pay attention to the selcor movement risks, that this movement, which is a powerful weapon in the matter of connecting our party with the non-party peasant mass, will slip from our hands." Izvestiia, October 29, 1924, p. 5. The meeting's Committee for confirmation.

ber Krest'ianskaia gazeta held a conference of its correspondents, at which Iakovlev listed the improvement of rural economy, revelation of all mistakes of Soviet work in the countryside, and promotion of the party in the village as the main tasks for selcors.[43] Information gathered at these meetings and by the press section resulted in a flurry of activity at the center which took the form of decrees and the convoking of the second correspondent congress.

Among the several decrees issued by the Orgburo on December 1, 1924 was one concerning the forms of uniting the paper with its worker and peasant readers. The experience of the year had shown the value of rabselcors in linking the paper with the masses, and this experience had been generalized into an instruction. In the other decrees on that day the Central Committee had given official sanction to recruiting new masses of correspondents, while at the same time explaining their proper position, direction and participation in social life. Their papers were to supplement the instructional work of Rabochii korrespondent by providing individual instructions.[44]

These decrees were supplemented by a circular on corres-

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43. Bednota, November 6, 1924, p. 4.

44. O part i sov pechati, pp. 322-4. "On the Peasant Paper" and "On the Forms of Uniting the Paper with the Worker and Peasant Readers".

pondents, which told party organizations that in the time since the 13th congress the movement had expanded to one hundred thousand members. Because of this expansion their work demanded clarification with special attention to political-educational work in the ranks. The circular reaffirmed the circle as the basic form of organization and ordered all publications to strengthen their links with rabselcors by designating a special comrade solely for this task. Quantitative growth must be tempered by qualitative improvement through study and cultural development. To further their control and leadership of the movement, papers would call frequent and regular correspondent meetings and dictate the most important events and assignments for the discussion of the movement.

Reading between the lines, it appears that rapid expansion had allowed the movement to escape control, a fact that was quickly confirmed. The Central Committee reported the formation of individual and independent correspondent organizations outside the influence of the party with their own discipline and regulations. Many of these were attached to trade union organizations, a clear violation of the party's conception of the movement and of the congress resolution which called for the protection of rabselcors from any type of red tape or bureaucracy. This was bad enough, but the spirit of

capitalism had also invaded the movement. Correspondents began to compete for fees, and many editors, instead of combating this tendency, promoted it by attempting to attract correspondents through monetary incentives. According to the Central Committee decree, systematic political education among the correspondents, through regular meetings, and raising the general educational and political standards of the new entrants, were the means to correct these irregularities. The local press subsection would lead this campaign, reporting regularly on its work to the press section of the Central Committee.[45]

From this decree it became obvious that headlong proliferation had resulted in nearly complete loss of party control. Many correspondents, lacking party background and political education, fell victims to all kinds of non-party and anti-party tendencies. Their crime was abetted by local committees who offered financial rewards for their services and turned their backs to the formation of correspondent organizations not attached to the paper, but under the direct control, apparently, of another institution. These tendencies made a mockery of the voluntary principle and the concept of

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45. WKP 248, To All Orgburos, Central Committees, Kraicoms, Gubcoms, and Okrugcoms RCP(b), December 4, 1924, "On Worker and Peasant Correspondents".

an independent power revealing the deficiencies of the Soviet apparatus, but more important they threatened to render the movement useless as a weapon of the center.

The dispatch of this circular coincided with the second all-union congress of correspondents, which, Pravda asserted, should pay serious attention to the question of party leadership of the rabselcors, reassert voluntary selection, and rebuff all other approaches.[46] The conference considered the whole range of problems which had developed in the course of the movement's growth, and as was noted by Lenin's sister Maria at the opening session, found that the general line of the first meeting was correct.

The voluntary principle was reaffirmed and all tendencies toward official correspondents condemned. Both the secretary of Pravda and Zinoviev spoke against selecting or electing correspondents.[47] Immediately connected with the voluntary principle was the question of the organizational unit. The first (Pravda) congress had adopted the circle attached to the

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46. Pravda, December 6, 1924, p. 1, third lead article.

47. Ibid., December 7 and 9; Izvestiia, December 6 and 8, passim. Some idea of the importance of the congress for the party is indicated by the two full pages that Pravda devoted to it for more than two weeks. It is ironic that Zinoviev should speak against selection since the Leningrad organization resisted the voluntary principle at least until 1926.

individual paper as the basic unit, but organizations arose in many areas on different principles, united to party or soviet institutions and frequently electing or selecting their correspondents. The main argument against unity through the editor was that the latter was already overburdened, while the proponents of editorial annexation stressed that this was the only way to avoid bureaucracy. Party leadership would be exercised over the movement through the editorial boards.[48] Before the discussion was over more than seventy delegates had spoken on the organizational question and split nearly equally into pro and con factions.

No such division arose over the tasks of rabselcors, which remained as before, the revelation of mistakes and deficiencies in the Soviet apparatus. The tasks of the peasant correspondent were spelled out in detail.

> "The basis for the activity of the selcor is defense of Soviet power from perversions, from its seizure by kulak forces in the village. At this point stands the party, the selcor is its assistant. Therefore completely incorrect are those comrades, who say, that selcors must begin with the description of the sunny sides of the village, ignoring the class struggle that is proceeding there."[49]

As usual the results of the conference were incorporated in a resolution that confirmed past lines of progress. The

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48. Pravda, December 10 and 12; Izvestiia, December 8 and 12, 1924, passim.

49. Izvestiia, December 10, 1924, p. 6.

voluntary principle was approved as was the organization of correspondents through the editor or editorial board of the paper. The tasks and functions of the movement remained unchanged, but the instructional journal was renamed Rabochekrest'ianskii korrespondent to reflect the improved and more important position of the selcors.[50] The congress had given its stamp of approval to lines of development dictated at the center, but the struggle with different approaches was only joined. The delegates had hardly left Moscow before the Central Committee reacted sharply to Leningradskaia pravda which attacked the resolutions of the congress. The issue was not only the organizational unit, but the use of non-party personnel in correspondent work. On this occasion Bukharin raised his pen against deviations from the party line, writing that the use of non-party correspondents was not only possible, but in the village, necessary. Continuing the attack on the Leningrad organization, which he had launched at the congress, the editor of Pravda assailed its desire to harness rabselcors to party organizations rather than allow attachment to local papers. The debate continued for two years before resolution at the third rabselcor congress in 1926.

By the end of 1924 the party had attempted to gain firm control of a correspondent movement which permeated all areas

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50. Izvestiia, December 16, 1924, p. 5.

of the state, but had grown too rapidly and escaped direction. Its lines of development had been sketched and its main tasks laid out during the course of the year, but all evidence suggests that the center's concept of the movement had not won general acceptance. In reality the party was trying manfully to assert its control and leadership, and in print assumed that it had, while still trying to convert the theory into practice.

CHAPTER IX

THE PAPER

Staff

At the head of each Soviet paper stood an editor who was responsible for what was printed on its pages. In the first days of the revolution the few party papers had been run by prominent local Bolsheviks. This tradition continued into the October days with the single exception of Petrograd, where the reaction following the July days drove most of the important party members into hiding. After October more important tasks called for the immediate attention of the party hierarchy, and editorships devolved onto lesser lights and in some cases onto non-party personalities.[1]

This tendency persisted until the change to NEP and perhaps after, due to the local committee's failure to realize the value of the press. Only in the period following the 12th party congress did experienced Bolsheviks fill the overwhelming majority of editorships in the Soviet press.[2] Undoubtedly the center's complaints about the quality of the

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1. Pravda, edited by Bukharin from the October revolution, is the notable exception to this trend.

2. Statistics on party editors are rare. The frequent orders from the center to appoint them suggests that until the 12th congress, they were the exception. Two surveys at the end of the period under study indicate that 3 of 121 papers were edited by non-party men, while 94.3% of provincial editors were party members. Krasnaia pechat', #25, 1925, pp. 59-62; #14-5, 1927, p. 6.

local press resulted from the inability or unwillingness of local committees to appoint experienced comrades to editorial positions. The importance of this composition is difficult to underestimate since the editor was held responsible for the direction of his publication and was the party's insurance that it reflected the proper line. Only one example was found to indicate what happened when a paper strayed from the correct path. In a May issue of Ural'skii Rabochii an article attacked Izvestiia and the Central Committee for their German policy. In response to this the Central Committee wrote to the Ural Oblast Committee in June, stating that

> "... the CC considers intolerable similar attacks against the line of the CC or against comrades, who serve at responsible posts.
>
> The CC orders the oblast committee to call to order comrade Safarov and the editorial board responsible for printing such articles."[3]

The position of editor entailed a variety of roles and functions. Since party members lead the press, they always took an active political part in the life of the state.[4] In addition to this function, the editor was " ... the leader, inspirer, main organizer, boss (manager) of the paper." He gave the publication personality and directed its stress and impact. "Without the editor the paper is the same as the army without

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3. Perepiska TsK, vol. III, pp. 86-7.

4. Kerzhentsev, V., Gazeta, Moscow, 1919, p. 20.

without the commander. It can have the most valuable workers, these workers can write fine articles, but in the end, if there is no editor to receive the collection of articles, there is no paper."[5]

In addition to the publication's direction the editor was responsible for its organization, " ... systematically checking the work of the section leaders, correspondents, technical staff of the paper ...." Put in another way, he designated the line of the paper, selected its workers, assigned sections, provided themes for articles or general directives for individual sections and planned every issue.[6]

Another task for the responsible editor was censorship, not in a formal manner, but with the idea of ensuring that nothing counter-revolutionary or anti-party appeared. The formal functions of censorship were exercised by Glavlit, but the editor was responsible for the purity of his own publication.

The performance of these functions depended on the size of the paper. In small wall papers and at the uezd or volost level they could easily be accomplished by a single man, but in gubernia and central publications where there were many sections and extensive materials and correspondence, the edi-

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5. Vardin, Sov pechat', p. 106. "The Paper and the Staff".
6. Kerzhentsev, V., Gazeta, Moscow, 1919, p. 21.

tor's functions were usually dispersed throughout an editorial board. In particular the technical side of the paper was often entrusted to another member of the staff,[7] while leadership of individual sections was almost always exercised by other members of the editorial board. Only responsibility for the whole paper could not be shifted.

The editor, who was generally a member of the organization of which the paper was the organ, wrote most of the editorials and in those papers having large formats and several lead articles, his was the first editorial almost always located in the upper left corner of page one.[8] Since editorials had the force of decrees, the best person within the publishing organization for the position of editor was the committee secretary or the leader of the agit-prop section. In smaller papers the editor assumed a proportionately larger role, directly controlling and running more and more of the publication, until at the wall paper level he might be the whole staff with the exception of the rabselcors. With respect to the rest of the material published in his paper, the editor fulfilled the

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7. Kotlyar, Newspapers, p. 23. A responsible editor was organizer of the publication, but the assistant editor (Secretary) managed the paper. He read galleys, set fees and handled the technical aspects like press runs, distribution and subscription.

8. In party papers editorials were unsigned and a responsible editor was never indicated. Other papers generally signed their editorials and named the responsible editor on the last page.

meaning of his position, editing articles received, changing and adapting them to fit the role envisioned by the party line. The editor also connected various parts of the paper, uniting them internally, and externally linking them to the party, soviets, trade unions, cooperatives and masses.[9]

With the change to NEP and the rise of the correspondent movement, the editor became responsible additionally for the organization of rabselcors about the paper, for their political education and control by the party committee which he represented. In larger periodicals this duty was functionally shifted to the head of "Worker Life", since he published all rabcor notes and letters,[10] but the responsibility for the paper's correspondents still rested with the editor. For the selcors, except in the two leading peasant papers, Bednota and Krest'ianskaia gazeta, there was no similar leader, and editors of peasant publications shouldered this function directly.

Next in importance after the editor and usually a member of the editorial board was the paper's secretary. The secretary assumed greater and greater importance as papers expanded in size. He handled all incoming materials, from letters and notes of readers and correspondents to major articles,

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9. Vardin, Sov pechat', p. 108.

10. Maria Ul'ianova, head of the "Worker Life" section of Pravda is the best example of this functional shift.

directing them to various sections or to the editor. The secretary also executed all corrections indicated by the editor in materials for publication which meant that he was a major factor in the control, administration and publication of the paper. But the number of secretaries who were also party members was far from an overwhelming majority of the total.[11] In addition to the control and distribution of all materials arriving at the paper, the secretary was responsible for the fixing and payment of wages to the various members of the staff.[12]

Due to his technical-administrative duties the secretary had little time to write articles, but acted as the intersection within the publication where staff and materials related to the paper all crossed. This combination of administrative tasks in the person of the secretary resulted in a power not unlike that of the party secretary in the given organization, and it seems likely that while the editor was burdened with responsibility for the paper, the publication was actually run

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11. The surveys already cited indicate that 45 of 121 papers had non-party secretaries in 1924; even in 1926, 46% of leading provincial papers and 69% of other provincial papers had non-party secretaries.

12. The one set of pay scales available dates from the end of 1923. Central editors earned 100r/month while gubernia editors got only 58r/month. Similar scales applied for other staff members. Izvestiia, November 21, 1923, p. 3. Kotlyar claims that wages were controlled to avoid competition with the editors and secretaries receiving a so-called maximum, originally set at 180r/month.

by the secretary, who at the end of 1924 was frequently not a party member.

After the secretary came the other members of the editorial board and the staff, their number depending on the size of the publication. These assistants or section heads assumed leadership of different parts of the paper. Section leaders usually became such by virtue of their continual collaboration in the paper on a given subject, and except for the secretary, the members of the editorial board were invariably heads of individual sections, although the contrary was not always true. The editorial board or college provided a sounding board for discussion of the paper's general work.[13] In Pravda as early as August of 1917, the editorial board numbered twelve, and there is no reason to believe that this number had diminished by 1924. The heads of the various sections were responsible inter alia for local life, party activities, worker life, the peasantry, army, youth, economics, foreign affairs, culture and current events, all of which were deemed obligatory sections at one time or another by the Central Committee.

The rest of the staff consisted of technical people and reporters or correspondents. The rabselcors have already been

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13. Vardin, Sov pechat', p. 108. "Editor and Paper". Vardin argued for wide and narrow editorial boards. The former would run the paper, meeting several times per week. The latter would meet once or twice per month and include all regular contributors and the paper's staff.

considered, but reporters have not. They never developed in the Soviet Union and the term is not found in Soviet literature on the press. Their place was taken by correspondents, telegraphic services of ROSTA and reprints from the central press. Only major papers had reporters (called correspondents without distinction as to type) in important areas of the state and sometimes abroad. Izvestiia, for instance, sent a special correspondent to the Genoa Conference in 1922, and frequently reports from other cities on events of significance bore the interpolation "from our correspondent". But reporters failed to develop and become integral parts of the Soviet paper for two reasons; it was dangerous to be too inquisitive and there was no journalistic base from which to evolve. By the mid 1920's the few reporters in a given area would pool their information since there was no incentive pay for scoops.[14]

On the technical side of the paper were stereo and linotypers, dispatch and expedition people responsible for production and delivery. The technical staff, frequently known as the office of the paper, handled all material aspects of publication and was run by the secretary. These duties included purchase of supplies, subscriptions, advertisements, bookkeeping and expedition. In larger publications there was a

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14. Kotlyar, Newspapers, pp. 14-7.

secretariat which divided these responsibilities in the same way that section leaders divided the work of making up the issue.

The most important of the technical services was expedition upon which depended dissemination of the paper. For a morning publication the process began the night before or early in the morning, after the corrected format had been set in type and the press run begun. Provincial copies had to be at the railroad and postal-telegraph agencies by daybreak to get to their subscribers. The evening paper was not under such pressure since it served only the local area.

Subscription for the individual paper was also handled by the technical staff, but for the most part subscriptions were not gathered at the paper or by its staff. Instead party, soviet and postal-telegraph organizations and rabselcors gathered subscriptions in the localities. In the period 1917-1924 these ranged from five kopeks to 20,000 rubles for individual issues, the latter reflecting the extent of inflation during the 1922 crisis, while the former indicated the success that had attended party efforts to cheapen the press during 1924.

Content and Format

Format of individual papers remained largely unchanged from the day of inception with the single exception of adver-

tisements which became part of every paper by 1922. For the most part Soviet publications were morning papers, although just after the October revolution some evening editions existed. These first evening papers disappeared in 1918-1919 due to the newsprint shortage, but by the 12th congress others had been created or the old ones resurrected.[15] In 1918 it was believed that evening papers were destined for more attentive readers. Because of this their news had to be more laconic than the morning paper, easier to read and giving fresh information. But Kerzhentsev felt that most evening papers could not meet this standard, being almost exact replicas of their morning brothers, and this was their downfall.[16] Content was less important in their demise during the Civil War however than the newsprint crisis.

Evening papers had, according to contemporaries, a high measure of news and apparently employed reporters in the western sense of the word. Their material was lighter and more concise; they paid the best wages and ran at a profit because they catered to their readers in a way that morning publica-

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15. Krasnaia gazeta revived its evening edition in 1923, and Vecherniaia Moskva began to appear at the same time. Kotlyar, Newspapers, p. 20, notes the existence of evening papers in Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa and perhaps Rostov and Tiflis, equating their existence with high prerevolutionary paper standards.

16. Kerzhentsev, V., Gazeta, Moscow, 1919, p. 110.

tions could not match. Partially this distinction existed because the morning paper was disseminated to a far wider audience. Another reason was the non-party-official status of the evening paper that was not saddled with compulsory sections. Kotlyar noted that the revived evening papers were not party or soviet creations, but a concession to the people which, although scorned by the party, continued to flourish.[17]

But the overwhelming majority of Soviet papers were morning publications, initially undifferentiated, but at the end of 1924 divided into types and levels according to party pronouncements. The basic types were worker, peasant and military with a hierarchy of central, oblast, gubernia, uezd and wall papers. Each type by 1924 included a section devoted to the other two, but in the years preceding the 12th party congress, the press was with very few exceptions worker oriented.[18] Following the 12th congress this exclusiveness stopped, and greater stress on the neglected peasant papers attempted to establish links uniting town and country, worker and peasant.

The different levels reflected the party's attention to various strata within the state and focused the attention of

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17. Kotlyar, Newspapers, pp. 21-2.

18. Military papers had predominated during the Civil War, but this is the only exception.

the given publication on its area of competence. The leading central papers had no limit to their coverage, and it was at this level and only at this level, except for the very first years of the Soviet Government, that there was extensive reporting of foreign news. Pravda, Izvestiia and Bednota printed materials on all subjects that were important to the leading ranks of the state, but they paid for this by their isolation from the local scene and their inability to print more than a few of the vast number of letters which were sent to them. Additionally, as has been noted, these papers set the tone and provided the models for their lower counterparts.[19]

The three leading papers had by the end of 1923 settled into a basic format that varied little from issue to issue except on those occasions when a party congress or other major event necessitated larger or revised editions. Basically they were destined for party, workers and peasantry, respectively, but this distinction is one of emphasis. Both Pravda and Izvestiia were worker oriented, yet each covered other

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19. The number of soviet papers declined after October. In their original form none probably survived into the next decade, becoming worker papers by the end of the Civil War if not before. The terms soviet and worker are synonomous for the press.

topics. Of the two Izvestiia had more material on foreign policy, while Pravda was the stronger with respect to the Comintern and ideological questions. No perceptible time difference appeared in their reporting of the same event.

On the other hand Pravda had a consistently higher level of party contributors than either of the other two central papers. In terms of coverage Izvestiia was the most diversified, having in addition to the standard sections on party, worker and trade union life, regular columns on science and technology, art and literature, sports, books, chess and the bourse. Political cartoons were also regular features and Izvestiia's reportage on current events was more extensive. While Bednota and Pravda had some of these sections, neither had them all. Their predominance lay in the area of party and peasant policy and problems.[20]

At the next two levels of the hierarchy, the oblast and gubernia papers, the amount and extent of topics considered shrank, but for most of the period under study publications like Rabochaia Moskva, Leningradskaia pravda and Rabochii put'

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20. Both Pravda and Izvestiia instituted peasant sections after the 12th congress, while Bednota and Izvestiia had sections on party life. It is interesting to note that Trotsky, Preobrazhensky and the opposition were attacked in Pravda from the end of 1923, but not in the other two central papers until the end of 1924.

covered on a smaller scale all the events attended to by their putative leaders including foreign affairs. Only at the end of 1923 did foreign coverage decline noticeably and shift from the front of these publications to the back.

In a similar manner extensive, almost verbatim reporting of congresses and conferences was curtailed with respect to that given by the central organs. This contraction was accompanied, in response to various directives of the Central Committee, by an impressive expansion of the amount of material devoted to the local area, and by format diversity during 1922 in a frantic effort to attract readers. At this level variety exceeded even Izvestiia, including fashions and race results. The most notable difference was the stress on printing local letters, answers to inquiries and frequently lists of upcoming events in all areas of provincial life.

On the gubernia level, at least in Moscow and Petrograd, some of the trends observed generally in the Soviet press, did not obtain. The press crisis of 1922 failed to effect Rabochaia Moskva or Krasnaia gazeta. While central and other provincial publications were forced to reduce their format, both of these papers expanded from six to eight and then to ten pages.[21] Three explanations of this paradox are possible.

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21. Petrogradskaia pravda also resisted the trend toward smaller editions, but did not expand its format in 1922.

Both publications cannibalized local uezd papers. The use of these resources probably accounted for the ability of the two gubernia papers to expand, and the nearly total collapse of uezd nets in the two cities which necessitated greater local coverage certainly provided the material for expansion.[22] Another possibility was their proximity to the population. Certainly their content was less official or theoretical and more factual even before the change to cost accounting, making them more conducive to the masses than was the case with Pravda and Izvestiia. Additionally because of their reading public it was easier for these papers to solicit ads, which meant ready and immediate financial support that was not available to the central publications.

Another peculiarity was the almost complete absence of columns devoted to party life.[23] While Krasnaia gazeta was the Petrograd Soviet publication, which might explain its lack of party coverage, Rabochaia Moskva was the organ inter alia of the Moscow Committee and should have been an obvious candidate

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22. Support for this theory lies in the fate of "Plant-factory" in Rabochaia Moskva which became a regular section in 1922 when the uezd press was cannibalized, and then gradually disappeared as the uezd papers revived in 1923. A similar development occurred in Krasnaia gazeta.

23. The generality of this statement is open to some question. Only three papers existed in extensive sequences for this period, Krasnaia gazeta, Petrogradskaia pravda and Rabochaia Moskva, and they all showed this tendency. A far greater sample would be required to confirm this theory.

for a "Party Life" section. Perhaps the proximity of Pravda made it seem unnecessary. The gubernia paper also avoided the proclivity of the central papers for frequent articles on the peasantry after the 12th party congress. Political cartoons and press photos, which did not appear in the central press until 1921, were among the early innovations of the gubernia papers. Finally these publications conducted a variety of competitions and contests, awarding prizes of Lenin's collected works to the winners, and with the idea of responding better, surveyed their readers' interests and needs.[24]

At the gubernia tier of the hierarchy the problem of special correspondents becomes even more unclear. Some page one articles bore the interpolation "from our correspondent" in another city, and Petrogradskaia pravda had its own correspondent in Berlin. But generally the composition of the reportorial cadre is obscure, and most of the short articles and features had no indication of their source.

The trends in content noted at the gubernia level were more pronounced in uezd publications. By 1924 they had renounced their earlier attempts at worldliness after repeated orders from the center, and had become locally oriented papers.

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24. Petrogradskaia pravda continued the black border obituary habit first adopted by Pravda in 1917. Except for the death of the most prominent party members, this practice had disappeared from the rest of the Soviet press.

Increasingly they became peasant sheets in response to the directives issued at the 12th congress; their reportage of foreign events and central or all-union congresses was curtailed and compressed. The former were soon covered by ROSTA telegraphic summaries and the latter by abridged reports prepared in the press section of the Central Committee and delivered to provincial subsections for inclusion in local papers. The space devoted to correspondence, however, had increased significantly even over the gubernia level. At the lowest level of the hierarchy stood the wall paper, completely oriented toward the enterprise which it served, yet occasionally devoting space to a particular event or decree of national or international importance which affected that institution.

The format of all papers down to the uezd level varied little. Individual sections and content on the lower levels had been regulated by Central Committee decrees in 1921 and 1922. On the higher levels, while the basic sections had been dictated, there remained some scope for change, but in practice none occurred. By the end of 1924 the average central paper had eight pages. Beneath the title line which gave its name and the publishing organization, were printed the editorial and several lead articles that had the force of decrees and divulged the basic party line on a particular problem.

These articles were usually signed and in the central papers were written by prominent party and government officials.[25] Two other kinds of material appeared on the front page.

First was the reportage on foreign events, garnered by correspondents of the paper or more frequently of ROSTA. Political events in Germany, France and the United Kingdom were the most prevalent and comprehensively covered, although the situation in Turkey for the whole period and in China for 1923-1924 were well documented also.[26] Increasingly in 1924, and by the end of that year, nearly all the time, foreign news was shifted to the second and third pages of the leading papers except for editorial comment, and domestic materials took its place.

If the remainder of the front page was not devoted to foreign affairs either because of the absence of something noteworthy, or because of more important domestic problems, it was filled with material on the present press campaign.

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25. In Pravda the editorial was unsigned, but not usually in Izvestiia or Bednota. The level of articles by the party hierarchy was higher in Pravda except for foreign policy in Izvestiia and peasant policy in Bednota.

26. At this point in their development the central papers were not set up days or even weeks in advance as they are today. Nor could it be claimed that there was no news in them. In many cases there were sections devoted almost exclusively to the latest developments, and important events deemed of concern to the masses were quickly and extensively covered. A more accurate description would be that not all the news was reported.

Following the Civil War these campaigns became regular occurrences, describing the famine and its relief, the development of civil aviation or the growth of the peasant press. Election campaigns, the harvest and various congresses were also dealt with in this manner. These campaigns represented a reversion or vestige of Civil War agitation, urging, cajoling and pleading with the masses to strive harder, work beyond their capabilities for the benefit of the particular issue, and recording successes and failures. Any other space on the first page was then filled with short articles or a table of contents which appeared and disappeared in response to some unknown directive.

The next several pages of the central papers varied too much to risk generalization. Generally the obligatory sections on party life, worker life, local news, which was probably used to provide lessons for the country with respect to the particular issue illustrated, peasantry, economics, the Red Army, youth and women appeared on these pages. By the end of 1924 the sections devoted to worker life, party life and local news covered a whole page.

Toward the end of the paper came the official section, largest in Izvestiia, where the most important decrees and laws were printed. The cultural section also appeared at the back of the publication with notices on the arts and occasional bibliographical items. The most important feature at the end of the paper was letters to the editor and it needs some

consideration. Like the editorial a letter was used to indicate a role that the masses should play, except that it did not have the force of a decree. Sources for letters can be divided into two categories and the number of printed epistles grew as the hierarchy was descended from top to bottom.

The first type came from obscure party members of government officials, and illustrated a posture which the party wanted to hold up for the population as exemplary. The following example from Izvestiia illustrates the point:

> "Since 1905 I have been a member of the Menshevik RSDWP. For belonging to the party I was convicted in a Tsarist military court and sent to jail.
>
> Finding that at the present time the Mensheviks are carrying out a ruinous policy and that the real worker party in Russia is only the RCP, I consider it necessary to state, that from 1920 I have broken off all party ties with the Mensheviks.
>
> L.L. Monisov" 27

This letter and others like it were used by the center to point out the propriety of renouncing former non-Bolshevik party ties and to indicate that the Communist Party was the only real friend of the Russian worker. By printing such messages to the editor, the party showed the masses what attitude they should strike with respect to a particular problem. Analogous to it were similar letters in Pravda

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27. Izvestiia, December 15, 1923, p. 5. There were also a number of disavowals of S.R. party ties at the same time.

during 1924, denouncing the opposition fractions in the party and showing the readers that the proper posture was to support the Central Committee.

The second variety was written by prominent party or soviet members. In this case the letter indicated not how someone had gone wrong and was correcting his attitude, but stated a positive position of approval or requested something that was not sufficiently important to warrant an editorial or major article. These letters often proclaimed the successes of minor campaigns throughout the state. In one case Pravda printed a letter from Trotsky, asking for copies of several documents relating to the 1905 revolution.[28] Of the two types the former, baring the soul of comrades who had gone astray, was by far the more prevalent with the latter seemingly reserved for very minor items.

Below the central paper, the pattern changes. Letters became increasingly frequent occurrences as the ladder was descended. On the gubernia level their scope was more limited than at the center, since gubernia publications were restricted in their coverage by the various decrees of the center and since their readership was defined in local rather than national terms. In the Moscow and Petrograd press letters

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28. Pravda, October 25, 1924, p. 8.

tended to consider municipal problems and events, the party at that level, and occasionally the peasantry. Presumably at the uezd level the number of letters published was even greater while their scope was more restricted.

The last page or pages were filled with ads, which had begun to appear at the end of 1921, when the press changed to cost accounting. By 1922 they had taken over the last page of all the central papers and were spreading to the penultimate page. In 1923 many issues of Izvestiia had four of its eight front page columns devoted to ads. As central papers expanded their circulation, however, their dependence on ads declined and by the end of 1923, when these publications began to turn a profit, the number and frequency of their notices fell off sharply.

The variety of ads was legion, ranging from personals for all types of services to institutionals plugging the sale of Gosizdat publications. In the special holiday issues such as May Day and the October Revolution, they filled eight to ten pages. As the economic need for ads declined, the personal variety disappeared, ridding the central publications of the worst aspect of this bourgeois habit. On the gubernia level this state of affairs had not been reached, or at least the personal ads had not vanished by the end of 1924. Probably the reason for this difference lies in the more local reading public and perhaps in the inability of the gubernia papers

to meet their expenses without such ads.

In this early period of the Soviet press two systems were employed to determine policy, at least in theory. The first was the discussion article and the second was the editorial fiat. The procedure in the first system involved the publication of an article by a relatively insignificant party or soviet official, usually on page one of the central papers, concerning a subject about which no decision had been reached. An editorial footnote at the end informed the reading public that the article was for discussion and invited reactions to it. In some cases other articles commented on the initial piece even if it were not so indicated. The problem was then reviewed and examined in the light of the response to the attitude taken by the first article, sometimes in succeeding articles in the same paper, sometimes in other leading or lower papers, and undoubtedly through letters to the paper.

Concerning the press a number of such instances can be pointed out, beginning with the discussion which followed Lenin's article on the press in 1918 and continuing after the Civil War with the discussion of Krest'ianskaia gazeta, and the treatment of rabselcor persecutors. At some point in the discussion the center would decide what the correct position was and end the dialogue with a definitive article such as that by Sosnovskii defining the relation between the two central peasant papers.

Analogous to this system was the use of papers to resolve disputes within the party. In this period the press was no more monolithic than the party, and papers reflected the views of various factions on particular problems. Illustrative of this is the heated dialogue that arose between the Central Organ and Leningradskaia pravda over the question of selecting rabselcors instead of employing the voluntary principle. The contest that was joined over this issue continued beyond the period of this study and was not finally resolved in favor of Pravda until 1926.

Even within a paper, such as the Central Organ of the party, discussion of particular issues occurred. Trotsky's theory of revolution and the proposals of the 46 at the end of 1923, both sparked heated debate in the Central Organ.[29] In this type of discussion however, the central press was used as a weapon, in the manner prescribed by the Central Committee, to reveal the deviations from the party line, defeat any opposition to the center, and indicate the correct approach for the local organizations.

The second method of indicating policy in the press was the editorial decree by a high party member or the editor of the paper. After 1922 the editorial was officially recog-

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29. Since this is not the place to review party policy, but illustrate the uses of the press, it suffices to say that in both of these cases the show of impartial discussion was maintained in Pravda, but the opposition's view was attacked viciously with barely a pretense of support.

nized as a decree by all lower party eschelons which were expected to repeat and execute the policy advanced in it. During these formative years this was apparently not understood at the lower levels or central control was still not sufficiently established in the provinces. Conditions outside the cities made the execution of a dictated policy unreasonable or impossible in many cases. The continued complaints about the failure to carry out central directives and the reiteration of already stated policies concerning the press, alone indicate that the force of editorials was not felt in the provinces.

Thus in the period after the 12th congress, the staff, format and content of the Soviet press became fixed in response to various party decrees or based on the experience gained in the years following the Civil War. The staff was predominantly, but not exclusively party in composition, a trend that would continue until all editors and secretaries were party members. Format had developed in response to decrees of the Central Committee as had content, but there remained a certain flexibility for publications at the top of the hierarchy because of their importance, and at the bottom because control remained weak in the provinces. The room to manuever at both ends would be increasingly curtailed in the second half of the decade when rigorous discipline and direction would eliminate any deviation from centrally established norms.

CHAPTER X
THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF THE SOVIET PRESS

From 1917 to 1924 the basic organizational structure of the Soviet press was laid down by the communist party. In terms of development this era divides into two time periods: from the February revolution to the end of 1922, and from the end of that year to December 1924. The former was a time of trial and error in which the party tried various approaches to the press and in which the very existence of Soviet papers was called into question. During these initial years the press served as an agitational weapon to which the party paid scant attention until the end of the Civil War. Lenin's few pronouncements during the hostilities showed his desire to fit the press into the party's ideology and make it an economic tool, but his efforts were premature at a time when the main concern of the regime was survival.

Despite the general sterility of this period for the actual development and expansion of the press, the ideas generated by the lower eschelons of the party who dealt with Soviet papers during the Civil War, although temporarily unworkable, provided blueprints for the establishment of the press in more normal conditions. At the same time the Central Committee created the apparatus and institutions

within the party through which the press net would operate when peace prevailed. The instruments for this exploratory work were the first two congresses of journalists and the 8th party congress.

1917 had offered little opportunity for developing a diversified press net. But despite the slender resources which obstructed general expansion of the press, even before October the Bolsheviks had experimented with the three types of papers that suited their needs and would continue to be the basis for the Soviet press. Initially completely worker, the party eventually created military and later peasant publications. Neither of the two additional types received much attention in the inter-revolutionary period or until the Civil War began as the party concentrated on worker papers.

The initial unimportance of the military press was followed by a period in which the Red Army meant the difference between the success or failure of the revolution, and during the Civil War military papers became the majority of the Soviet press. The worker press was relegated to the second spot, while the few peasant papers, except for that part of the military which catered to the semiliterate peasant soldiers, were obliged to fend for themselves. The increased size and importance of the military press occurred without benefit of a conscious decision at the center and against

the ideas expressed in Pravda and Izvestiia that there was no need for special Red Army papers.

As for the rest of the press, its fate inevitably was decline. Proliferation of military papers drained resources from the center where the already acute newsprint shortage had made life for the central and gubernia press extremely difficult. Probably the cadre and material-technical base would have been unable to support extensive proliferation in the early post-revolutionary period, but the Civil War exacerbated the situation by channeling the major portion of printing resources into the burgeoning military press. This caused numerous closures and a corresponding decline in circulation of the central press.

In the same period discussions were initiated concerning the press levels that would serve the state and the mechanism of their control. Molotov had begun this discussion in the abortive attempt to establish a separate paper for the Petrograd organization. By the October revolution an embryonic hierarchy had been established by Pravda passing judgment on other Bolshevik papers and by its status as the Central Organ of the party. Concurrently the party asserted its leadership, directing the rest of the press to follow the example and line of Pravda.

However, not until the post-revolutionary period was any

sort of hierarchy actually developed. Uncontrolled proliferation bred scores of papers that had to be organized into a net to serve the masses. The party began consideration of this net at the first congress of journalists in 1918 and decided to construct a press net consisting of leading and mass papers. This decision, taken despite the arguments for a completely mass press, was never realized because of the Civil War, and the net that tended to develop followed the hierarchy of party and to a lesser extent soviet organizations. In practice this meant a central press followed by gubernia, uezd and even some volost papers. Their creation is difficult to trace, because of the confusion of the Civil War, but the net must have developed along these lines since the party focused its attention on these levels when it began to consider the press following the hostilities.

Party leadership of the press up to 1921 also fluctuated, varying from direct control between the revolutions to indifference and preoccupation in the Civil War. 1917 and the first six months of 1918 witnessed firm leadership by the individual party committee since the press was an important weapon in the assumption and consolidation of power. At this time the editor and staff were the leading members of the local committee, and though the press was not monolithic or even completely responsive to the Central Organ, it was controlled by the party. Preoccupation with the war stripped these early party collabor-

ators from the press in large numbers. The removal of the old cadre left the press in untried and inexperienced hands, and at the same time ended its direct control by the local committee which had turned its attention to other tasks.

The congresses of journalists, recognizing this developing vacuum, attempted to establish leadership and control of the press through self-imposed institutions. But Tsentro Buro and Tsekomzhur both assumed powers that they were incapable of executing and unlikely to exercise once the party's attention returned to the press. Neither allowed appropriate party leadership and only in the conditions of the Civil War could they have been conceived. The party on its side was too busy fighting the war to devote proper attention to the press. Only Lenin in articles at the beginning of the hostilities called upon the press to perform new functions. But the possibility of concentrating on economics was swept away in the turmoil of the fighting, and the only creations that survived into the post war period were the servicing institutions such as ROSTA and Tsentro Pechat', that functioned haltingly in the war, but were not crippled by lack of attention.

Following the Civil War the party's attitude changed. Its achievements in the next two years proved ephemeral because of the press crisis, but they continued the experiments and approaches of the previous years. Content was elaborated in the programs on the local press, and the hierarchy that emerged

at the end of the fighting was taken as the basis for future organization. At about the same time the party created its own internal structure that would attempt to direct and control the press from the center. Initially beginning as a division in one of the five subsections of the agit-prop section, the press was elevated into a full section of the Central Committee in the course of four years. In that time span the section initiated a variety of publications to assist the Soviet press and developed its own branches within the party down to the gubernia, and in some cases, on local initiative, to the raion level. Through these institutions the party attempted to control the press. Their literature and trained cadre were sent out to insure its proper performance. At the end of 1924, aided by a constant stream of Central Committee directives and various articles in Pravda, the press section had succeeded in establishing a generally acceptable worker press, while other parts of the Soviet press were less satisfactory.

Begun in 1918 at the first journalists' congress, the various attempts to delineate the state paper net failed because they were so rapidly overtaken by events. In the winter of 1921-1922, the most important of these, which had the support of the Central Committee and the party secretaries, came to naught when the press crisis made a shambles of the effort. Previous attempts had been rendered inoperative by the Civil

War, and following the press crisis attention was directed to differentiating the press instead of delimiting the number of papers at any one level. Implicit in this change was the belief that the existing hierarchy would satisfy the needs of the state and that wall papers, the newest and lowest part of the system, would prove amenable to party control. Only part of this belief was correct. The needs of the state were adequately served by the existing hierarchy, but the proliferating wall papers in 1924 still eluded the control which the party believed necessary.

The differentiation, started after the change to NEP and the press crisis, was not a new idea. Molotov, Vardin and Trotsky had all proposed or supported it before, but for various reasons their suggestions had not been accepted. Molotov had been unable to win approval in 1917 because of the scant press resources; Trotsky's commission in 1921 recorded the failure of diversification for similar reasons; while Vardin's proposals at the journalists' congresses had been unrealizable due to the Civil War.

By the fourth press workers' congress these obstacles had disappeared or been overcome and the initiative begun with Vardin's attack on the role of Pravda became party policy. The fact that the party chose that moment to focus on the developing struggle in the countryside was fortutitous and guarran-

teed that the initiative would not fail for lack of attention at the center.

Once this decision had been taken the party did not stint in its support of the program. The mixed paper was denounced as incorrect and the peasant press developed, on the lower levels often at the expense of uezd worker publications. At the same time the center imparted the importance of the press to its local organizations, and their changed attitude substantially strengthened the forces at work for the press. Additional support came from the rabselcors. This amorphous and rapidly expanding movement provided the eyes and ears of the party in the localities, taking subscriptions, gathering information and disseminating the press into the farthest reaches of the state. Despite the inability of the party to control and guide the rabselcors, this convergence of forces was largely responsible for the tremendous expansion of the peasant press in 1924 and for the further advances made by worker papers in the same year.

While worker and peasant papers had developed along the lines prescribed for them by the state, the other parts of the Soviet net had not been so successful. The deficiencies of military, youth and national press were the results in one case of a premeditated plan of neglect by the center, while in another the papers suffered from a lack of attention

which was coming to an end in 1924. The military press had fallen on hard times following the Civil War. The return to the barracks had insured its continuation, but the 190 publications of 1920 declined to a mere dozen, and only in 1923 did a formal plan for military papers win approval. Youth and national publications had never aspired to the heights which had been the military's in the Civil War. They began to emerge from the shadows in the period following the 12th party congress. Initially undifferentiated, by the end of 1924 they were about to depart on this process and began to draw steady party support. Each faced its own special problems however. Youth papers lacked cadre and a widespread reading public, while the national press needed a better technical base, especially types in the local languages, for its further expansion except in those areas which had had journalistic traditions before the revolution.

The upper levels of this net were well established by the end of 1924. With the majority staffed completely by party members, they responded to the center's directives on the press. Although not totally in agreement with it over all matters concerning the party line, they did adhere to the Central Committee's decrees on format and content. Below the gubernia level and in most of the peasant press, the situation was not so bright. These publications were not staffed by

reliable communists or receptive to the center's direction. Partly because of poorly developed party organizations in the countryside and partly because local conditions demanded more flexibility at the lower levels, the center had not yet gained full control over these eschelons of the Soviet press, and they were regarded as unsatisfactory by the press section of the Central Committee.

Within the limits imposed by the organization and extent of the Soviet press, the party tried to define the message which its papers should deliver and how the press could best be used as an institution. The underground and exile journalistic experience of the Bolshevik leaders from their entrance into the revolutionary movement helped to determine the utilization of the press, while the party's experience with the bourgeois press and the course of events in the first years of the Soviet state influenced the molding of the message which its mouthpiece propagated.

Most party leaders had in the years before the revolution edited or contributed to the various papers of the Russian Social Democratic movement or had published their own ideas in pamphlets or books. The revolutionary press was the arena in which ideological battles were fought, and papers became a medium through which the several factions vied for leadership of the Russian workers. When a party member became involved in such a dispute, he offered to and expected from his opponent no concessions or compromises. The reluctance

of a publication to espouse particular ideas could split the movement. Lenin's withdrawal from Iskra, when it would not support his point of view, is the best example of the uncompromising attitude toward the press and of the Bolshevik's high estimation of it as a weapon in the revolutionary movement.

At the same time party members were expected to write regularly for their paper, defending its positions and refuting or attacking the opposition, a tradition that has remained an integral part of Soviet journalism. While none of the party leaders initially specialized on any topic, they became accustomed to contributing to their press and using it to disseminate the prescribed line on any subject. The party expected the pre-revolutionary activity to continue after the Bolsheviks had taken power, and the continued exhortations by the center for members to be continual contributors to the press reflected the survival of this legacy.

Implicit in the use of the paper to show the party line was the concept that the press was a weapon in the struggle for the victory of Socialism. In the pre-October years, the Bolsheviks had employed the press to attack, ridicule and vilify established authority or rivals in the contest for worker allegiance. In the two years of its legal publication, 1912-4, Pravda had continually claimed that the Bolsheviks were the only true friend of the working class, while re-

vealing the decadence of the Autocracy and irrelevance of other political parties.

This background inevitably played an important role in the utilization of the press after the seizure of power and in the party's attitude toward opposition papers. The Bolsheviks had seen their publications suppressed and harassed by the authorities before the revolution. Adding this experience to the belief that the press should reflect a class view sealed the fate of non-party papers. But the assumption of power demanded changes in the use of the press, since the Autocracy and Provisional Government had disappeared, and a consideration of its function in the new Soviet state.

Reporting of news as such was not its mission, nor was the press regarded as a commercial venture to yield a profit for its owners. Rather papers should promote a particular set of values in terms of party and class. They would serve as the main weapons in the struggle for the new society, as tools to construct a better life, to influence the masses, secure the allegiance of the workers and suppress the counter-revolution. Freedom of the press was conceived from the very first as the freedom of the working class to express its ideas, and the party became the guardian of this liberty, defining and explaining what it constituted.

This definition and the ideological bent of the party de-

manded that Soviet papers see the world as the party saw it. Those that did not would be closed. Yet for the first years of its existence the press, judged by the frequent complaints from the center, failed to realize this ideal, merely continuing bourgeois journalistic habits, and was unable to generate a new message. Worldliness and erudition were flaunted at the expense of information useful to the masses or expressing the party line. Lenin's repeated dictum about printing economic material instead of political sensationalism fell on deaf ears, until the party could spare time to consider the press carefully. Only after the Civil War did these complaints cease.

Yet the Civil War was not a completely sterile period. Despite the inability or disinclination of the localities to execute Lenin's directives, the party developed some guidelines that became integral parts of the operation of every newspaper. The most important of these was the concentration on party and worker life. Sections devoted to these subjects had been central features of the Soviet press since the reorganization of Pravda in August 1917. The decision to institute "Party Life" sections throughout the Soviet press was taken during the Civil War and confirmed in the programs on the local press in 1921, 1922 and 1924, but party life was less fully illustrated than worker life especially in the lower eschelons of the press. This concentration on party and

worker life was a natural response to that part of the population from which the Bolsheviks drew their support and demonstrated the class orientation of the Soviet press. Later, as the revolutionary struggle extended into the countryside, more and more space would be devoted to the peasantry.

Since the press was a weapon aimed at the masses, it played a number of roles in the creation of a new life. The paper was both the mouthpiece of the party and the organizer of the class it served. This duality involved the flow of information in two directions. The press would report what was happening among the masses, their feelings, needs and demands, while at the same time it would organize and lead them, outlining the attitude they should take toward any problem. The party would feed selected information to the masses in an attempt to make them respond as it wanted, while anticipating and channeling their expectations into the press. In that medium they would be lauded when correct, or ridiculed, _pour encourager les autres_, when incorrect.

The 8th party congress added a new vignette to these ideas when it expanded the functions of the press to include influencing the masses. Organizing the workers apparently was an economic function. Influence pertained to the political outlook of the population. The former concentrated the efforts of the proletariat on socialist construction, while the latter involved molding the masses, conditioning them to think-

ing as the party wanted, allowing them to see the world only through the ideological prism provided by the Soviet press, presenting life in the black and white of party doctrine instead of the messy grays of bourgeois thought. In this way the Bolsheviks hoped to rally the population behind the party and extirpate opposing points of view by closing bourgeois papers and flooding the masses with the party line defined in the press. The newspaper became the vehicle by which the party delivered its concept of life to Russia. Having accused the Capitalists of deceiving the workers through their papers, the Bolsheviks proceeded to use the press for exactly the same purpose.

Their success by 1924 was not spectacular. Limitations of circulation and titles impeded the extension of party influence into areas that were not already susceptive to the Bolsheviks. Although blanketing the country with the party message was impossible due to the small number of papers, the monopoly of the printed word assured the Central Committee that no other party would be able to compete with the Bolsheviks. Yet despite this monopoly the Soviet peasant press was so divorced from reality in its first years that it was refused by the muzhiks. Only in 1924 did peasant papers begin to influence the vast majority of the Russian population, expanding their circulation and changing their approach to offer agricultural information and articles that had practical

application in the countryside. The party showed its awareness of this situation by constantly reiterating its demands for influencing the masses from the first program on the local press in 1921 to the Central Committee decree of February 1924.

While the ability to influence the masses was only beginning in 1924, the organizational side of Soviet journalism had had better success. Organizing the masses was intimately linked with the function of critic. Together the two by the time of Lenin's death had succeeded in executing a wide vaiety of campaigns that were undoubtedly instrumental in the revival of the economy. Before the revolution the role of critic had pitted the party press against the Tsar, Provisional Government or other revolutionary parties, but had not examined its own publishers.

With the seizure of power all these functions changed. The part devoted to attacking other parties or potential rivals remained intact and continued to operate as before. But that section which had attacked the government was retooled to reveal the errors and irregularities, mistakes and corruption of socialist construction. While the organizational function of the press recorded the successes or failures of various campaigns and exhorted the masses to struggle for victory on different domestic fronts, as a critic the paper disclosed the obstacles within party and state that impeded

the orderly procession to Socialism. Not all the party accepted the idea of criticism without demur, and its extent and depth is difficult to judge. If the irregularities interfered with the evolution of approved party campaigns and policies, they undoubtedly appeared in the press. Defined and initially limited to the press and its information gathering tools by Lenin in 1918, the role of critic was supplemented following the Civil War by the proliferating ranks of the rabselcors who, better acquainted with local conditions, exposed situations that might have escaped the press. This was the area in which criticism had its greatest effect and the persecution of correspondents showed the success of the press in revealing opposition to the party's policies.

From critic of socialist construction to guardian of party doctrine was no great step, but this role was reserved in theory for the Central Organ. That Pravda defined party policy had been decreed in the first days of 1917. It was repeated in Lenin's articles and on press days, becoming commonplace by the end of 1924. However attacking those who strayed from the Central Committee's line was not designated as a role of the Soviet press until the 12th party congress, and then it became solely the province of Pravda. The Central Organ thus became the oracle of party and press purity.

The deviations of a party organization inevitably meant the delinquency of its paper, and any attack on a particular organization by the Central Committee would sooner or later

entail Pravda's assailing its publication. Presumably the rest of the press would then support the Central Organ. This was the theory. It assumed a compact homogeneous net of papers which did not exist. In 1924 the Soviet press was no more monolithic than the party and not only did various papers disagree on many aspects of Soviet life, but even within a particular paper there might be differences.

In addition to organizing and influencing the population, the press then, was the repository of approved behavior. Guarding the party line and exposing the deficiencies of socialist construction, the press played the role of high priest of the Soviet cult, passing judgment on all phases of life. This meant that definitive statements on every subject were manifested on its pages, and the leading members of the publishing organization provided them in the form of editorials and articles. Such pronouncements appeared in every issue and furnished guidelines for the people. Again however, the theory proved less than perfect. The coming struggle for succession would reveal that press unanimity existed only when the leaders of the party were in basic agreement, or when one of them was able to bend the rest to his will.

These two functions, organizer and critic, limited the press to a domestic role, although the isolated position of the Soviet Union and the need to consolidate support within the country influenced its concentration. The campaigns,

articles and sections of the paper were all destined for particular parts of the population. Additionally differentiation had guaranteed that each layer of the masses would have an appropriate paper, and the small circulation relative to the total population should not obscure this fact. That parts of the net were weakly developed is indisputable, but by 1924 the center had taken steps to secure for each part of the population a circulation commensurate with its needs and those of the party. In the first seven years of power the Bolsheviks had established levers among each segment of the people with which it was attempting to manipulate and influence the masses, winning them over to the party line and assuring their support.

Given these aims, the press reported news that fit the picture which the party wished to paint. In foreign affairs it was one of hostility to Russia. In domestic reportage the Soviet paper wanted to direct the activity of the masses along the lines indicated by the party. This made the press into a newsmaker rather than a reporter. It is true that various meetings, conferences and congresses were extensively reported. But the number of articles and editorials which demanded a certain posture on a given problem indicated that in 1924 the Soviet paper had become a newspaper by providing guidelines for human behavior, by explaining what the party expected from the masses, and equally important, what acti-

vities and attitudes were unsatisfactory or counter-revolutionary.

All of which meant that the Soviet citizen, unless he were privy to information not distributed for the press or to publications not available to the public, obtained only the information which the party saw fit to print. He was also the object of an intensive campaign to mold him into the new Soviet man. Undoubtedly reportage in this period included a greater variety of subject matter than would be available later in the decade. NEP forced a certain catering to the reader in an attempt to make the paper acceptable to the public, and gubernia and evening publications purveyed material which the Bolsheviks certainly regarded with suspicion. But party control of the press in 1924 had not been consolidated to the point where it could curb all deviations from central norms.

The pressure for complete control however, was growing. One indication of the effect of this was the change in general press coverage. In the period before the revolution editors had been denounced for concentrating exclusively on local affairs at the expense of revealing the significance of the revolutionary situation. In the years after the seizure of power this trend was reversed as the party demanded again and again that the lower papers restrict their coverage to the locality, leaving the larger picture to the central pub-

lications. In 1924 this demand had succeeded to the point that even gubernia papers were locally oriented.

By the end of the period under study the Soviet press was qualitatively satisfactory to the party at the top levels and becoming so at the lower levels. This had been achieved with the aid of frequent directives from the center. Circulation was still low and insufficient to meet the needs of the state, but it had expanded steadily since the resolution of the press crisis in 1922, and in all areas the number of titles and copies continued to grow. The supporting branches of the state had also achieved a semblance of respectability, although the dissemination apparatus would work irregularly for several years and ROSTA would be reorganized in 1925 to serve the state better.

The message which this weapon delivered was destined for consumption largely by the working masses. The circulation of peasant papers was rapidly overtaking that of worker publications, but at the end of 1924 the Soviet press was still proletarian. During its development this press had played a variety of roles: weapon of the party, transmitter between the masses and the center, critic of socialist construction, and guardian of party purity.

But the weapon was far from the perfect responsive tool that the party wanted. Some parts still eluded party control and others failed to respond to the directives from the cen-

ter. In a period when the party was about to undergo a divisive struggle for power, the press was run by as many different people as there would be factions in the coming contest. This meant that the Soviet press by the end of 1924 had not yet assumed a completely subservient role to the party and that its readers were still able to secure information that would be completely unavailable later in the decade.

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