

Andrey BAKSHEEV*, Pavel NOVIKOV**, Igor NAUMOV***,
Yuri PETRUSHIN****, Alexey OLEINIKOV*****, Mikhail RYBALKO*****

"THE SOVIET STATE RELIED ON THE NATION'S ENTHUSIASM AND TRADE UNIONS": WORKERS AND BOLSHEVIKS DURING THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY (1921-1929)

-Abstract-

The study aims at considering the influence of the New Economic Policy (NEP) on the development of labor movements and trade unions in Russia between 1921 and 1929. The article studies the impact of the NEP of the Soviet state on the development of labor movements and trade unions, the features and types of labor movements, including certain activities of workers. The study uses the historical-genetic, problem-based and chronological approaches, as well as the method of historical modeling. The article reveals the specifics of admission, membership and exclusion of workers from trade unions, as well as the election of trade union commissions, committees and governing bodies. The authors of the article have concluded that the most popular labor movements during the NEP were production collectives of shock workers, shock guilds and brigades, production conferences and the movement of worker-peasant correspondents.

Keywords: the New Economic Policy; the Soviet Union; labor movement, industrial propaganda; trade unions.

* Krasnoyarsk State Medical University named after Professor V.F. Voino-Yasenetsky, Krasnoyarsk, Russia.

** Irkutsk National Research Technical University, Irkutsk, Russia.

*** Irkutsk National Research Technical University, Irkutsk, Russia.

**** Irkutsk State Transport University, Irkutsk, Russia.

***** Astrakhan State University, Astrakhan, Russia.

***** Irkutsk State University, Irkutsk, Russia.

Introduction

Since the communist doctrine denied private property, only the 'proletarianized' strata of society (hired labor deprived of the means of production) could become the social support of the Soviet state. Therefore, one of the main pillars of the Bolshevik regime was large collectives of industrial workers. When studying relations between the Soviet government and workers, we should emphasize that the state always tried to keep them under control¹.

According to many scholars², collective actions of the working class guided by the party, Komsomol and trade union bodies can be called movements in contrast to the term "collective farming movement", when the initiative attributed to peasants in the collectivization of agriculture was pure propaganda. As a rule, they did not negatively affect the welfare of workers. On the contrary, these movements contributed to the recovery of the industry, which was the fundamental interest of the workers themselves³. It is another matter that the initiative in organizing labor movements was always taken by state bodies and state-controlled socio-political organizations.

It is worth mentioning that the Soviet government did its best to improve the working conditions and everyday life of proletarians⁴. Due to constant economic crises that accompanied the communist construction, it was extremely difficult for the state to create good living conditions for its social support. In this regard, the Soviet state relied on trade unions which, trying to influence as many hired workers as possible, arbitrarily established the rights to receive material benefits for their members⁵.

¹ Baksheev, A.I., "Kontrol gosudarstvennykh organov nad promyshlennostyu Sibiri (1921-1925) [The control of public authorities over the Siberian industry]," *Federalizm* 1(97) (2020): 129–142.

² Lobok, D.V., Gromova, O.N., Kutuzova, E.S., Markov, A.P., Morozov, V.B., Triodin, V.E., *Istoriya sotsialno-trudovykh otnoshenii v Rossii [The history of social-labor relations in Russia]* (Saint Petersburg: SPbGUP, 2020).

³ Ilyukhov, A.A., "Sovetskaya model vseobshchego truda v 1918–1922 gg. [The Soviet model of universal labor in 1918-1922]," in *Rabochie v Rossii: istoricheskii opyt i sovremennoe polozhenie*, ed. D.O. Churakov (Moscow: Editorial URSS, 2004), 182–198.

⁴ Isupov, V.A., Maksimov, A.A., Papkov, S.A., *Opyt regulirovaniya bezrabotitsy v Sibiri v 20-e gody [The regulation of unemployment in Siberia in the 1920s]* (Novosibirsk, 1993).

⁵ Zolina, N.N., "Gosudarstvennaya vlast i profsoyuznoe dvizhenie v SSSR na nachalnom etape industrialnoi modernizatsii: opyt i uroki vzaimodeistviya (1920-1930-e gg.) [State power and trade union movements in the USSR at the initial stage of industrial development:

Methods

When studying the chosen topic, we used the following methods: historical-genetic, problem-based, chronological methods and the method of historical modeling.

The chronological framework of the study covers the period from 1921 to 1929.

The historical-genetic method revealed the origins and development of various labor movements and trade unions. Using the problem-based and chronological methods, we highlighted the corresponding problems common to labor and trade union movements in the specified period. The method of historical modeling or the method of reconstruction was used to analyze pre-conditions for various types of labor movements and various activities of trade unions.

Results

1. Labor movements during the NEP

The replacement of the surplus appropriation system with a food tax and allowed trade revived agriculture. This helped to restore industry and achieve certain industrial results in the first years of the NEP. Normal economic relations began to be established between town and country, i.e. the exchange of food for industrial products. A major role in the rise of agriculture was also played by several state measures conducted by the Soviet government. In one way or another, they were associated with the participation of industries and cities: tax policy, lending, contracting ("production link"), supplying the village with agricultural machines, price policy, agricultural activities, etc. The Bolsheviks stipulated that "certain concessions to demands of the working peasantry were necessary and expedient exclusively for strengthening the alliance, the leading role of the proletariat and socialist construction".

While giving a speech at the 10th conference of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) on May 26, 1921, V.I. Lenin said, "If the peasantry is more tired, more tortured or rather considers itself more tired, then we lose in securing the restoration of capitalism and providing the path to communism [...]. For three and a half years of the proletarian dictatorship (and the Civil War), the proletariat endured

experience and the history of interaction (1920s-1930s)]," in *Rossiya: tendentsii i perspektivy razvitiya*, ed. V.I. Gerasimov (Moscow: INION RAN, 2010), 155–162.

more misfortunes than the peasantry. This is an absolutely obvious and indisputable truth. This is the state of affairs between the proletariat and the peasantry, i.e. the peasantry should come to an agreement with the proletariat and make economic concessions, otherwise, there would be a struggle"⁶.

After the transition to the NEP in large cities, the use of previously developed methods of "shock" workers (voluntary Sunday and Saturday work) was reduced. The first voluntary Saturday work took place on the Moscow-Kazan railway in May 1919, which V.I. Lenin called "a great initiative". Wages were not paid for participating in Saturday and Sunday work because it was work on a communist basis. However, food rations were issued and the public were outraged by the non-isolated facts of ignoring this obligation by public authorities. Moreover, they were required to work at an accelerated pace to celebrate some memorable day, commemorate a significant event or simply satisfy the state necessity with valiant labor^{7,8}.

While understanding the quite natural desire of workers to revive the enterprises where they worked, the Bolshevik leadership intended to turn voluntary work at Saturday into a permanent phenomenon, i.e. to organize *industrial collectives of shock workers*. This idea was first mentioned in the resolution of the 9th Congress of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) "On the Immediate Challenges to our Nation's Food Supply Chain" (April 1920)⁹. The most important industrial enterprises, especially those producing military products, received the title "shock" because they utilized the country's small resources of raw materials and food.

Developing this business, the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions on December 18, 1920, issued an instruction that required factory committees to create shock groups at each enterprise "from conscious advanced workers who, by their own example, would show the entire working mass how productivity could be

⁶ Lenin, V.I., *Polnoye sobranie sochineniy [The complete works]*, Volume 43 (Moscow, 1970), 320.

⁷ Khakimov, R.Sh., "Ekspluatatsiya entuziazma: sovetskii opyt (1918–1991) [Exploiting enthusiasm: the Soviet experience (1918–1991)]," *Vestnik ChelGU* 2(2016): 182–189.

⁸ Gurinovich, A.G., Lapina, M.A., Lapin, A.V., "Administrative And Legal Aspects Of Management Risks In The Economic Sphere," *Quaestio Iuris*, 13(3)(2020) : 1325–1347.

⁹ "Iz rezolyutsii IX sezda RKP(b) "Ob ocherednykh zadachakh khozyaistvennogo stroitelstva". 29 marta – 5 aprelya 1920 g. [The resolution of the 9th Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) "On the Immediate Challenges to our Nation's Food Supply Chain". March 29-April 5, 1920]," in *KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh sezдов, konferentsii i plenumov TsK*, ed. A. G. Egorova, K.M. Bogolyubova (Moscow: Institute of Marxism-Leninism under the Central Committee of the CPSU, 1920), 478–487.

increased by labor"¹⁰. Two months later, the Central Committee of the All-Russian Metalworkers Union developed and circulated instructions for organizing shock groups. It stated that these groups aimed at a) increasing productivity; b) maintaining production discipline; c) combating truancy and fake sickness absences; d) the demonstrational attitude to the performance of the task assigned to an individual worker^{11,12}.

The working methods of shock workers were promoted by the party and subordinate social and political organizations. The Soviet mass media, writers, actors and artists were also involved in this propaganda.

Since 1923, the frequency of Saturday voluntary work has dropped sharply. As devastation and hunger were overcome, the economic importance of work on weekends and holidays diminished. This work remained a means of the Communist education of workers.

In an attempt to give shock work a new impetus, a "second breath" was made at the plenum (August 1924) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks). It studied the unfavorable dynamics of the main indicators of industrial development in the USSR: after many years of complete devastation, wages went up but labor productivity grew at a much slower pace; as a result, the cost of production began to rise. F.E. Dzerzhinsky, who was appointed the Chairman of the Supreme Board of the National Economy of the USSR in February 1924, declared that the gap between these indicators threatened the interests of industry and the state and proposed several stimulating and punitive measures aimed at eradicating absenteeism and increasing labor discipline¹³.

After this plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks), enterprises established strict labor discipline and began to introduce piecework wages, which brought positive results. In the Siberian industry, day-long downtime recorded by state statistics decreased from 6.9 days per worker in 1922 to

¹⁰ Ulyanova, S.B., "Rabochie v massovykh khozyaistvenno-politicheskikh kampaniyakh 1920-kh gg. [Workers in mass economic and political campaigns of the 1920s]," in *Predprinimateli i rabochie Rossii v usloviyakh transformatsii obshchestva i gosudarstva v XX stoletii. The proceedings of the International scientific conference*, ed. A.M. Belov (Kostroma), 83–93.

¹¹ Ulyanova, S.B., "Rabochie v massovykh".

¹² Koshkaryova, S.G., Ilina, V.A., Kamardina, N.V. "Features of the new economic policy in Kamchatka (Russia) in the 1920s," *Laplage em Revista* 7 (Extra D) (2021): 367–375.

¹³ Genkin, L.B., *Stanovlenie novoi distsipliny truda [Establishing the new workplace discipline]* (Moscow: Profizdat, 1967).

0.8 days in 1925¹⁴. As shown by surveys of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, there was considerable progress in reducing inter-shift downtime. An effective means of improving labor discipline turned out to be not punitive but rather incentive measures^{15,16}.

The plenum (August 1924) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) recommended that executives developed the movement of shock guilds and brigades based on Komsomol cells. "Trud" mechanical plant (Novonikolaevsk province) and the Tomsk machine-building plant became the first in Siberia to organize shock guilds from Komsomol members who worked in industrial collectives¹⁷. The activities of shock brigades were put on the agenda of the 8th Komsomol Congress in May 1928. However, many scholars claim¹⁸ that shock brigades had not realized themselves in production until the end of the NEP.

To make workers' collectives participate in the restoration and development of industry, the country's leadership forced trade unions to deploy active production propaganda. In November 1920, the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions sent out a circular letter that indicated the need for the working class to realize the goals that the Soviet government had outlined in the economy. New propaganda bodies in the network of trade unions should involve employees of each enterprise in its problems and help them strengthen labor discipline.

In December 1920, the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions established the Central Bureau of Production Propaganda. It initiated publishing activities and formed initial cells at enterprises¹⁹ that were gradually transformed into *operational meetings*. Thus, trade unions moved from propaganda to involving

¹⁴ Moskovskii, A.S., *Formirovanie i razvitie rabocheho klassa Sibiri v period stroitelstva sotsializma (1920–1937 gg.)* [Forming and developing the working class in Siberia while building socialism (1920–1937)] (Novosibirsk: Izdatelstvo "Nauka", Sibirskoe otdelenie, 1968).

¹⁵ Sokolov, A.K. "Sovetskaya politika v oblasti motivatsii i stimulirovaniya truda (1917-ser. 1930-kh gg.) [The Soviet policy in encouraging and promoting labor (from 1917 to the middle 1930s)]," *Ekonomicheskaya istoriya. Obozrenie* 4(2000): 39-80.

¹⁶ Shakhov, O.F., Shakhova, M.S., Rusakova, E.P., Sizova, Y.S., Ziyadullaev, U.S. "Development of entrepreneurship during the NEP years: Innovation, forms, technologies," *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering* 8(3)(2019): 7401–7405.

¹⁷ Sokolov, A.K. "Sovetskaya politika v oblasti".

¹⁸ Zhuravlev, S.V., Mukhin, M.Yu. "*Krepost sotsializma*": *Povsednevnost i motivatsiya truda na sovetskom predpriyatii, 1928-1938 gg* ["The fortress of socialism": everyday life and labor motivation on the Soviet enterprises, 1928-1938] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004).

¹⁹ Genkina, E.B., "Vozniknovenie proizvodstvennykh soveshchaniy v gody vosstanovitel'nogo perioda (1921–1925) [The introduction of operational meetings during the period of reconstruction (1921-1925)]," *Istoriya SSSR* 3(1958): 30–65.

industrial collectives into direct work to increase labor productivity and reduce production costs. Operational meetings were characterized by large-scale involvement: not only executives, engineers and technicians, administrative personnel and highly qualified workers but also other workers participated in their work²⁰.

However, operational meetings were not permanent. Therefore, *industrial committees* were simultaneously formed under factory committees, i.e. organizational centers of factory meetings that prepared questions for discussion, collected working proposals and conducted surveys on behalf of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. By the beginning of 1926, there had been more than 3,500 industrial committees in Siberia. They employed about 20,000 people, with more than a half of them being workers²¹.

The work of industrial committees and operational meetings under the direct control of the Communist Party and trade unions gradually became too bureaucratic. Many of them got carried away with administrative functions: they fired workers, approved prices, gave all kinds of orders instead of real management. They often dealt with secondary issues, sometimes not even related to production, raised questions that were too general or inappropriate for discussion by workers' collectives, did not seek the implementation of their rationalization proposals. As a result, industrial committees and operational meetings became subsidiary bodies under the administration of enterprises²².

A new impetus to the functioning of operational meetings was given by the address of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) "On economy drive" (April 1926)²³. This address was preceded by the decision of the 14th Congress of the Communist Party

²⁰ Ermushin, M.V., Mitrov, A.G., Belyaev, G.V., "Proizvodstvennye soveshchaniya na predpriyatiyakh sovetskoi promyshlennosti v 1920–30-e gg. v issledovaniyakh sovetskikh, rossiiskikh i zarubezhnykh istorikov [Operational meetings at the Soviet enterprises in the 1920s-1930s as studied by the Soviet, Russian and foreign scholars]," *Vestnik KGU* 2 (2019): 44–48.

²¹ Ulyanova, S.B., "'Leningradskii pochin" (Proizvodstvennye soveshchaniya v sisteme motivatsii i stimulirovaniya truda v 1920-e gg.) ["Leningrad initiative" (Operational meetings in the system of motivating and encouraging labor in the 1920s)]," in *Rynok truda v Sankt-Peterburge: problemy i perspektivy*, ed. B.V. Korneichuk (Saint Petersburg: Nestor, 2003), 72–83.

²² Ermushin, M.V., Mitrov, A.G., Belyaev, G.V., "Proizvodstvennye soveshchaniya".

²³ "Obrashchenie TsK i TsKK VKP(b) "O borbe za rezhim ekonomii" [The address of the Central Committee and the Central Supervisory Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) "On economy drive"]." *Direktivy KPSS i Sovetskogo pravitelstva po khozyaistvennym voprosam*, Volume 1, Moscow, 1957, 577–580.

(Bolsheviks) on the industrialization of the country. It was clear that the course towards industrialization should be ensured only by internal resources. Consequently, it was necessary to enrich the state budget for new construction or radical technical reconstruction of the existing enterprises. The above-mentioned address required the strictest austerity measures from all organizations, institutions and enterprises. Since operational meetings and industrial committees were also involved in the economy regime, it significantly intensified their work²⁴.

According to the relevant statistics, the working class took an active part in operational meetings. In 1925-1926, only individual workers attended such meetings, sometimes even on an elective basis. Two years later, every tenth industrial worker participated in general plant meetings and every fifth worker was an active member of workshop meetings²⁵. The immediate result of such activities was *the invention and rationalization movement* of skilled workers and engineering-technical personnel²⁶.

One more form of labor activity was the *movement of worker-peasant correspondents (public informants about abuses)* which was also formed and controlled by state bodies. However, it was specific in terms of the relationship between the state and the working class. On the one hand, letters from worker-peasant correspondents to government agencies and newspapers often demonstrated their indignation at the abuses committed by the Communist Party and Soviet establishment, economic executives and trade unionists. Responsible workers, who received such letters, fought this form of amateur work despite a clear demand to respond to them as best as they could. On the other hand, the country's leadership contributed to this movement and worker-peasant correspondents served as a fairly objective source of information about the current state of affairs. Such information was necessary to preserve control over the country²⁷.

²⁴ Ulyanova, S.B., "Leningradskii pochin".

²⁵ Ermushin, M.V., Mitrov, A.G., Belyaev, G.V. "Proizvodstvennye soveshchaniya na predpriyatiyakh sovetskoi promyshlennosti v 1920-30-e gg. v issledovaniyakh sovetskikh, rossiiskikh i zarubezhnykh istorikov [Operational meetings at the Soviet enterprises in the 1920s-1930s as studied by the Soviet, Russian and foreign scholars]," *Vestnik KGU* 2(2019): 44-48.

²⁶ Ulyanova, S.B., "Leningradskii pochin".

²⁷ Veselovskii, A.G., "Deistvennost rabselkorovskikh zametok i "Signalov" v 1920-e gg. [The effectiveness of notes compiled by worker-peasant correspondents and "reports" in the 1920s]," *Vestnik TGU* 7(111) (2012): 65-71.

A.Ya. Livshin and I.B. Orlov dated the creation of the institute of worker-peasant correspondents to 1923²⁸, although its formation was not based on any state regulations. The institute arose without prior arrangement in the form of letters to the editorial offices of newspapers. Some of them were published and encouraged correspondents to send new messages. The most acute extracts were combined into themed files and sent to higher authorities. Subsequently, the country's leadership had to consider the "voice of the people"²⁹.

Local leaders negatively responded to the reports of worker-peasant correspondents. The forms of counteraction varied from the confiscation of newspapers in which incriminating articles were printed and calling such correspondents "on the carpet" up to overt repressions, dismissal and imprisonment on false libel charges. Trying to defend their rights, the repressed lodged complaints with the editorial offices of their newspapers³⁰.

The resolution of conflicts related to the persecution of worker-peasant correspondents dragged on for many years. The supervisory bodies held back on checking the facts stated in their articles and letters, while the Soviet and economic authorities did not rush to respond to inquiries about the abuse of their employees reported by worker-peasant correspondents. Local law enforcement officers often slowed down the investigation of abuses committed by local leaders. Even if such facts were confirmed, they did not initiate any criminal proceedings against authorities. Therefore, worker-peasant correspondents asked their editors to transfer copies of their publications, bypassing local authorities, directly to the prosecutor's office, which, unlike the Soviet police, did not leave complaints without consideration³¹.

Due to the practical impunity of local authorities, public correspondents began to sign their letters with pseudonyms. Thus, the flow of anonymous messages increased. However, we cannot assert the targeted repressions against worker-peasant correspondents by the state. On the contrary, receiving "first-hand" information, the government protected public correspondents from the harassment of

²⁸ Litvin, A., Orlov, I., *Vlast i obshchestvo: dialog v pismakh [Power and society: correspondence dialogue]* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002).

²⁹ Elina, E.G., Raeva, A.V., "Formy i funktsii mediakritiki v Sovetskoï Rossii 1920-kh godov [The forms and functions of media criticism in Soviet Russia of the 1920s]," *Izvestiya Saratovskogo un-ta. Seriya: Filologiya. Zhurnalistika* 18(2) (2018): 219–224.

³⁰ Safonov, D.A., "Rabselkory kak yavlenie sovetsoï deïstvitelnoï 1920–1930-kh godov [Worker-peasant correspondents as a phenomenon in the Soviet life of 1920s-1930s]," *Vestnik OGPU* 2(14) (2015): 80–91.

³¹ Safonov, D.A., "Rabselkory kak yavlenie sovetsoï deïstvitelnoï".

local authorities. The central apparatus took active measures to direct the development of this movement in the necessary direction.

In 1925, the Supreme Court of the USSR supported the desire of public correspondents to use pseudonyms and prohibited editorial offices to disclose their real names. Violators of this law were punished with fines or forced labor. Another popular measure was administrative eviction for up to three years. It also provided for a special procedure for considering cases related to the persecution of worker-peasant correspondents for their articles out of order and under the supervision of the prosecutor's office. In relation to those who committed physical violence against correspondents, more severe measures were applied, i.e. imprisonment for up to five years³².

Expanding the rights and strengthening the protection of worker-peasant correspondents contributed to the rapid growth of their ranks. However, the course towards popularizing the movement of worker-peasant correspondents had negative consequences for its development. People tried to use this prestigious title in their interests to progress up the career ladder, conceal a non-prestigious social origin or avoid staff reductions, as well as for score-settling. This negatively affected the objectivity of publications. The share of well-founded (confirmed by the prosecutor's office) accusations against local authorities decreased by 2.7 times (from 80% to 30%) from 1924 to the early 1930s³³.

The critical nature of most articles compiled by worker-peasant correspondents seriously worried the Soviet authorities, who wanted their authors to highlight achievements and successes, send workers to participate in economic and political campaigns to rationalize production, introduce austerity measures, etc. To prevent the undesirable development of this movement, the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) set before the party committees the task of mastering the movement of public correspondents in 1928, using all possible measures: from strengthening ideological control over their activities to the use of repressions against potentially dangerous and independent correspondents. As a result, the movement of worker-peasant correspondents became more politicized and was increasingly used by the ruling elite to cleanse the state apparatus, promote agricultural tax campaigns and win the ongoing internal party struggle³⁴.

³² Skrebnev, V.A. "Metody formirovaniya rabselkorovskogo dvizheniya [The methods of forming worker-peasant journalism]," *Almanakh sovremennoi nauki i obrazovaniya* 7(74) (2013): 133–134.

³³ Skrebnev, V.A. "Metody formirovaniya".

³⁴ Bakshiev, A.I., Novikov, P.A., Safronov, S.A., Koreneva, V.V., Mongush, A.L., Rakhinskii, D.V., "One must pump out excess funds from village using laws": Bolsheviks

2. Workers' unions

Managing various labor movements, the Soviet government pinned its hopes on trade unions. In 1918-1921, the latter had to coordinate the efforts of worker collectives and consumer cooperatives in establishing trade under the conditions of "war communism". Back then, trade was the main component of the country's policy. Thus, all the workers should be members of trade unions³⁵.

Between 1921 and 1922, the New Economic Policy (NEP) was adopted to restore market relations and replace labor duty with civilian labor. Under these conditions, it was necessary to refuse the compulsory membership of all workers in trade unions. In January 1922, the plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) generally recognized the need to establish voluntary membership. The 9th Congress of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks), which took place two months later, formulated the party's policy towards trade unions during the NEP and reaffirmed the need for a transition to voluntary membership in the form of collective entry of labor collectives by decision of their general meeting³⁶.

However, the voluntariness of such membership was relative since each worker had to obey the will of their collective that approved their participation in the corresponding trade union. Based on the tasks formulated by the 11th Congress of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks), the 5th All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions (September 1922) approved a new charter, in which individual membership was recognized as the only possible form of enrolling into a trade union. After the congress, a weekly trade union movement was held in Russia and compulsory membership was replaced with voluntary³⁷.

The attitude towards those who did not want to join a trade union was unequivocally negative, regardless of their class affiliation or political background. At the same time, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) qualified the repression against those workers who refused to become members of trade unions as an "exaggeration"³⁸. According to the directive of the

course for non-market relations in Siberia (Russia) in 1925-1929," *Revista Inclusiones* 7(S4-3) (2020): 31-44.

³⁵ Nosach, V.I., *Profsoyuzy Sovetskoi Rossii v gody grazhdanskoi voiny (1918-1920) [Trade unions in Soviet Russia during the Civil War (1918-1920)]* (Moscow: Profizdat, 1978).

³⁶ Baksheev, A.I. "Problemy sovetskoi demokratii v Sibiri perioda NEPa [The Soviet democracy in Siberia during the NEP]," *Vestnik KrasGAU* 5(80)(2013): 233–238

³⁷ Nosach, V.I., *Profsoyuzy Sovetskoi Rossii*.

³⁸ Kurbatskikh, M.S., "Evolutsiya profsoyuznogo dvizheniya v Rossii: teoreticheskii aspekt [The evolution of trade union movements in Russia: theoretical aspect]," *Vestnik ChGU*, 19(273) (2012): 95-98.

Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), trade union organizers began to actively use methods of agitation and propaganda. Given the impossibility of raising wages and improving working conditions due to the economic crisis, they, as an incentive for workers and employees to join trade unions, launched a campaign aimed at promoting the rights of trade union members associated with participation in the establishment of production and representation in government bodies³⁹.

To attract workers and employees to trade unions, the benefits that were provided to their members were important. Under the Labor Code of 1922, collective agreements were extended to all workers and employees, but union members had several advantages. This also applied to the right to work. According to the resolution of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions of November 12, 1922, trade union members were provided with benefits upon employment and staff reduction. Only four years later, teenage workers and graduates of vocational schools who were not members of trade unions were granted the same rights⁴⁰. In addition, trade unions tried to reach as many employees as possible and arbitrarily established the rights to receive material benefits for their members.

According to the Soviet Labor Code, persons deprived of political rights were considered unreliable and were not allowed to join trade unions. Furthermore, trade unions could not attract workers whose production activities did not yield to state control, including the so-called "petty bourgeois elements". They were self-employed or were part of guilds that did not complete the orders of state enterprises⁴¹.

Preventing the "clogging" of professional organizations with "non-proletarian elements", their leaders often illegally rejected or hindered the admission of peasants, handicraftsmen who worked on state orders and public servants. They refused to renew the membership of those who left trade unions for the non-payment of dues. The rules for excluding from trade unions were also violated. Workers were often deprived of their trade union membership for squabbles, quarrels or criticism

³⁹ Baksheev, A.I., Panasenko, G.V., Aisner, L.Yu., Bershadskaia, S.V., Musat, R.P., Rakhinskii, D.V., "Government regulations of industry in NEP Russia during the period of 1921-1923 and how it worked in practice with particular reference to Siberia," *Opcion*, 34(85) (2018): 854–867.

⁴⁰ Zolina, N.N., "Gosudarstvennaya vlast i profsoyuznoe dvizhenie".

⁴¹ Bukharenkova, O.Yu., "Vzaimootnoshenie gosudarstvennykh organov i profsoyuznykh organizatsii v sfere borby s bezrabotitsei v gody NEPa [The interaction of public authorities and trade unions in combating unemployment during the NEP]," *Omskii nauchnyi vestnik. Seriya: Obshchestvo. Istorika. Sovremennost* 1(63) (2008): 9–12.

of the management, which was qualified as an attempt to discredit the latter, as well as for drunkenness, philistinism, etc.⁴².

Trade union activities affected the peasantry when the Soviet state extended the Labor Code to farm laborers. Such a trade union as the All-Russian Union of Land and Forest Workers (Vserabotzemles) protected the interests of farm laborers. The volost committees of this union, the so-called "volbatrachkom", concluded employment agreements. Vserabotzemles vigorously fought against violations of the Labor Code, i.e. the lengthening of the working day, delayed wages and illegal deductions. The professional organization of farm laborers improved from year to year. By 1927, about two-thirds of all the farm laborers in the USSR had been working under full-fledged contracts.

To revive the work of trade unions, the 6th All-Union Congress of Trade Unions (November 1924) provided the delegatory council with management responsibilities. Factory committees became accountable to the council, and the decisions of the latter became binding on the elected working committees. However, such democratization was still controlled by the party committees since the delegatory council consisted of trade union nominees⁴³.

The elimination of the political opposition allowed the party leadership to use democratic symbols to control workers. In 1925, the party list voting system was abolished and individual elections to trade union committees were introduced for the first time in the history of the Soviet trade union movement. This tactic was based on the indirect control of elections to trade unions through electoral commissions. They were entrusted with tasks, whose solution conditioned the consequences of re-election, including the development of a pre-election campaign; drawing up a draft list of those wishing to take the leading positions and campaigning for them; convening and holding trade union meetings to consider reports of the former employees, discuss and approve candidates for renewing their management⁴⁴.

However, the recommended approach to re-election was not always fulfilled. Some unions either refused to create electoral commissions or organized electoral commissions only at large enterprises with at least 200 employees⁴⁵.

Believing the democratic slogans of the Bolsheviks, most workers participated in the election of trade union commissions and trade union bodies. For

⁴² Lobok, D.V., "Profsoyuzy Sovetskoi Rossii v usloviyakh novoi ekonomicheskoi politiki (1921-1928 gg.) [Trade unions in Soviet Russia during the New Economic policy (1921-1928)]," *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta. Istoriya*. 4(2006): 155–168.

⁴³ Lobok, D.V., "Profsoyuzy Sovetskoi Rossii".

⁴⁴ Zolina, N.N., "Gosudarstvennaya vlast i profsoyuznoe dvizhenie".

⁴⁵ Bukharenkova, O. Yu., "Vzaimootnoshenie gosudarstvennykh organov".

example, attendance in Siberia increased from 40-60% in 1925 to 90-100% in 1926⁴⁶. Thanks to the resumed reporting of trade unions and the introduction of electoral mandates, trade union members also prepared elections. They discussed the reports, made suggestions for improving the work process and assessed their candidates.

The declarative nature of trade union democracy was proved by numerous violations of the rights of trade union members by the governing bodies. The plenum of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (October 1925) noted that the indiscriminate exclusion of their members became typical of professional associations. Workers who were absent from work or participated in strikes were often fired. They received notes in their trade union cards (replaced by employment record books in the 1920s) about the reason for being excluded from the union. They were given passports issued to politically unreliable persons that deprived them of the right to work⁴⁷.

Since the rights of trade union members were sometimes violated by their leaders, it undermined unionization despite the growing working class. If compared to 1924, the share of trade union members among workers and employees decreased from 87.3% to 81% in 1927⁴⁸.

Conclusion

In the course of the study, we have drawn the following conclusions.

The transition to the NEP developed the "shock-worker" movement (voluntary Sunday and Saturday work). Its members were transformed into production collectives of shock workers, the movement of shock guilds and brigades. One more form of the labor movement can be considered operational meetings that moved from industrial propaganda to involving production teams in direct work to increase labor productivity and reduce the cost of production.

Another form of labor activity was the movement of worker-peasant correspondents, which was effectively used by state bodies as a means of communication with the periphery, and vice versa: as a propaganda tool for

⁴⁶ Andreenko, E.A., *Profsoyuzy Zapadnoi Sibiri v period novoi ekonomicheskoi politiki (1921-1929 gg.)* [Trade unions in western Siberia during the New Economic policy (1921-1929)]. An extended abstract of thesis for a Candidate Degree in Historical Sciences. Tomsk, 1992.

⁴⁷ Baksheev, A.I., "Vzaimootnosheniya gosudarstvennykh organov i profsoyuzov Sibiri (1918-1929 gg.) [The relationship of public authorities and trade unions in Siberia (1918-1929)]," *Federalizm*, 3(95) (2019): 88-97.

⁴⁸ Zolina, N.N., "Gosudarstvennaya vlast i profsoyuznoe dvizhenie".

mobilizing the masses to implement the state policy of the Bolshevik Party and as a source of information about social problems.

The study has dwelled on the specifics of admission, membership and exclusion of workers from trade unions, as well as the election of trade union commissions, committees and governing bodies. Unfortunately, this article is not enough to reveal the role of trade unions in implementing the policy of social partnership between the state and workers, as well as the activities of trade unions in resolving conflicts and regulating strikes. These issues will be covered in further publications.

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