

UNEMPLOYED COUNCILS IN ST. PETERSBURG IN 1906

by *Sergei Malyshev*

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The complete elimination of unemployment in the Soviet Union prompted Sergei Malyshev to write his reminiscences of the struggle of the unemployed under the old, hated Tsarist capitalist regime.

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IN ST. PETERSBURG
IN 1906**

By SERGEI MALYSHEV

Proletarian Publishers

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

Sergei Malyshev was born in 1881. When he was eight years old, he was brought by his father, a very poor peasant of the Yaroslav guberniya, to St. Petersburg, and apprenticed to a shopkeeper. He grew into what they called a "fine lad."

However, as he grew older the inclination grew upon him to work in industry and he determined to become a factory worker.

Malyshev joined the Bolshevik organization in St. Petersburg even before the first Russian Revolution. As one of its active workers he was frequently subjected to the persecutions of the tsarist government. In prison, on his way to exile, fleeing from exile, or living as an outlaw, he always continued his party work.

The Revolution of 1905 found Malyshev in Kostroma, a textile centre, under the name of "Pozharni" (Fireman), working in the Bolshevik organization.

When the first Kostroma Soviet of Workers' Deputies was organized in 1905, Malyshev was elected chairman. When the Revolution of 1905 was crushed he fled from Kostroma to St. Petersburg. This pamphlet deals with his work in this period.

After 1908 he again felt the severity of the tsarist government's repression. For many years he lived as an outlaw.

He was one of the most active participants in the October Revolution and after its victory held many responsible positions, chiefly business posts.

The complete liquidation of unemployment in the Soviet Union prompted him to write his reminiscences of the struggle of the unemployed under the old, hated, tsarist, capitalist regime.

UNEMPLOYED COUNCILS IN ST. PETERSBURG IN 1906.

MASS UNEMPLOYMENT OF 1905-1906 AND THE ORGANIZATION OF THE COUNCIL.

Twenty-five years ago, in April, 1906, the first St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Moscow armed uprising were suppressed by the tsarist government. It was then that we, a group of Bolshevik workers and intelligentsia, at the decision of the Bolshevik Party organization, created a new proletarian revolutionary organization in St. Petersburg. We organized the locked-out masses of unemployed and established a general staff for this army—the St. Petersburg Unemployed Council. Our party also tried to organize the unemployed in other industrial centres, such as Moscow, Odessa, etc., but these were short-lived: they were suppressed at the end of 1906. But in St. Petersburg, this organization of the unemployed fought the bourgeoisie and the government for more than two years, and was only destroyed by the secret police and gendarmes in 1908.

Twenty-five years ago, unemployment was artificially created in tsarist Russia to teach the revolutionary workers a lesson. A lockout was declared towards the end of October 1905, and all factories and mills, both state and private, were closed. Thus the government and the bourgeoisie threw hundreds of thousands of workers and their families—in St. Petersburg, Moscow, the Urals, Kharkov, Odessa, and other cities—into the clutches of hunger and poverty. But the rulers of Russia were not satisfied with this. They were always finding new ways in which to punish the revolutionary proletariat. The lockout was not enough. The government organized gangs of the so-called Black Hundreds and incited them to attack the workers' organizations and individual workers in their homes with rifles and bombs.

Battles were fought in almost all the districts of St. Petersburg and in other cities as well. But these activities of the Black Hundreds only stimulated the workers to strengthen their

organizations of self-defense, and the Black Hundreds were severely repulsed.

The lockout which had been declared in St. Petersburg at the end of October, 1905, continued until April, 1906. It was directed by the rulers of Russia and the principal leaders of industry — Ryabushinsky, Gukasov, Nobel, Denisov, and others. And naturally, this and the other means adopted to fight the working classes and teach them a lesson was extraordinarily well organized.

At first, the Soviet of Workers' Deputies took the responsibility for the tens of thousands of workers thrown out on the streets by the lockout. But as soon as the Unemployed Council was organized it took charge of the movement, and registered all the locked out workers. This registration revealed an interesting fact—that 54 per cent. of the workers who had been locked out were highly skilled workers, metal workers; 18 per cent. were joiners, carpenters, stone masons and of other skilled occupations; and that only 21 per cent. were common labourers. These figures showed that the capitalists vented their wrath on those who fought in the front ranks of the working class.

The Soviet of Workers' Deputies was faced at the beginning of the lockout with the problem of finding some way in which to help the unemployed who were hungry and poverty-stricken. Those early months, October, November and December of 1905, had to be devoted largely to questions concerning the unemployed, for, important as the political question was, hunger was making itself felt with increasing force, even though it had not broken the proletarian will to struggle. Questions on how to help the unemployed were raised at almost every meeting of the central revolutionary proletarian paper.

It was at the suggestion of the Bolshevik group of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies that a commission of unemployed was organized, which opened departments in all the working class districts of St. Petersburg. Later the commission adopted the resolution of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies to deduct one per cent. from the wages of all the workers at the factories,

mills, and other institutions, for the unemployed. They also organized a voluntary collection at all meetings and gatherings. These and other measures brought into the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and its commissions some tens of thousands of rubles and made it possible for the commission of unemployed to take some real steps to help the unemployed. A number of dining-rooms were opened in the St. Petersburg districts. Workers with families were given suppers to take home while unmarried workers ate in the dining-rooms. Besides, the commission of unemployed gave financial relief to the workers and their families: 30 kopeks a day for each adult, and 15 and 10 kopeks for children. Liberal groups in St. Petersburg also opened dining-rooms for the unemployed because elections to the State Duma were then approaching and they wanted to benefit politically by giving help to the unemployed.

In its political and economic struggle, the Soviet of Workers' Deputies turned its attention to the St. Petersburg City Duma.* It passed the following resolution, which a special delegation from the Soviet of Workers' Deputies was to present at the City Duma:

1. The Duma must take immediate measures to regulate the supply of food to the numerous masses of workers.
2. It must assign buildings for meetings.
3. It must cease bringing gendarmes, police, etc., into buildings.
4. It must give an account of how the sum of 15,000 rubles, which it received for the workers of the Narvsky district, was spent.
5. It must release sums of money from the public fund, which it has at its disposal, for the needs of those fighting for the freedom of the proletariat, and for the students who went over to the side of the proletariat.
6. It must take immediate measures to withdraw the soldiers from the city water works and place the buildings at the disposal of the workers.

* City Council.

On October 16, at 2 p.m., when the delegation from the Soviet of Workers' Deputies arrived at the City Duma, large detachments of armed police met it in the building, and a company of soldiers was on the staircase of the Duma. The town councillors had been warned by telephone of the proposed visit of the delegation from the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and had not come to the session. Instead, a number of members of the Committee of the Duma received the delegation, heard what they had to say, asked them to clear out, and then, in their absence, decided to refuse all the demands.

And it could not have been otherwise. The mayor, the members of the administration and the councillors of the City Duma were all powerful capitalists or their representatives—lawyers, directors of factories and mills, landlords, judges and other officials; the very ones who had locked out the workers.

STARVATION AMONG THE UNEMPLOYED INCREASES.

In January, 1906, unemployment, want, and hunger grew even more intense. The semi-legal commission of the unemployed worked feebly because it had no money. Money had almost stopped coming in. The locked-out workers had sold their last belongings and were finally faced with starvation.

After the defeat of the uprising in Moscow and other cities I had to leave Kostroma where the terrorism of the Black Hundreds and the armed forces had compelled the Kostroma Soviet of Workers' Deputies to liquidate its activity and go underground, and I—its president—was forced into hiding. On a locomotive, in a soiled jacket and cap, with a grimy face, I was gotten out of Kostroma by some comrades—railroad workers. I determined to go to St. Petersburg where our Bolshevik Party centre was situated, for it was essential to give it a detailed report on everything. Besides, this proletarian capital—St. Petersburg—was more suitable as a place to live underground since I had worked in factories there and had also carried on Bolshevik work underground. It would also be easier for me to hide myself and get a night's lodging from the workers there than in any other city.

On my arrival in St. Petersburg, I immediately presented myself at the party organization headquarters, and after meeting the party leaders, went to the Vyborg district. There I met a good comrade, an underground Bolshevik worker, Simon Loktev. He had also come to St. Petersburg from a district of great revolutionary events only a week before and had already succeeded in learning all the party news. He told me that our Bolshevik leaders had decided to give full support to the unemployed movement which was then just beginning. He invited me that same evening to a meeting of the deputies from the district organizations of the unemployed, to be held in the Lesny district. A member of the Party Committee, Comrade Kairsky, was to speak at this meeting for the St. Petersburg group of Bolsheviks. We had some hours at our disposal before the meeting so we walked up and down the Sampsonovsky Prospect as we compared notes on the past events. We wanted to go into a beer hall, but the state of our finances and the fear of spies held us back. We got into a street car and went to the centre, to the Nevsky Prospect. Passing along the Liteini, on the upper deck of the street car, we watched the moving crowd—quite unlike the group we joined later in Lesny. We were hungry and would have liked to go to Filippov's for some food, but an examination of our pockets convinced us that that was a pleasure we would have to deny ourselves.

Strolling along the Nevsky, we watched the well-fed, contented bourgeoisie. Some—of higher rank—rode in magnificent carriages, with coats of arms and one or two splendid horses; others, a lower estate—a bourgeois crowd—moved on foot along the Nevsky, filling the centre of the city, along Sadovaya, along the Gostin Row. They went into the stores filled with goods, came out with armfuls of purchases, and youngsters, laden with these purchases, dragged after them to their homes. All that there was in these stores, stands, and warehouses, produced by the proletariat, was quite accessible to the bourgeoisie. We also went several blocks up along the Nevsky but we could only look into the Soloviev store. We could not

go in and buy even a quarter of a pound of sausage because the merchant Soloviev's well-fed salesmen would not want to sell such small portions, and further, the price of sausage did not fit the size of our pockets.

To relieve our feelings we swore roundly, linked arms, and turned away from this smug Nevsky. We went along narrow alleys and finally, at Bassein Street, found a cheap restaurant where the two of us filled up on some kind of tripe for two kopeks.

HOW THE UNEMPLOYED COUNCIL WAS ORGANIZED.

At 8 o'clock that evening, we sat in a country house at Lesny where the delegates who were to consider the question of helping the unemployed had gathered and were waiting for the representative of the St. Petersburg Bolshevik group. This comrade was also the chairman of the Unemployed Commission. While we were waiting we acquainted ourselves with the situation in the district. The majority of the delegates were members of our Bolshevik circles. All of them, of course, as the most active workers, had been driven from the factories and blacklisted. But they did not look as if they and their families had been thrown out on to the streets and were starving; the science of Bolshevism had taught them, above all, to control themselves and not break down no matter what happened.

The chairman of the commission arrived, greeted us, and then turned to a student standing there, our host. He wanted to know if everything had been seen to, should the police or the gendarmes raid the place. The shaggy-haired student of the Lesny Institute looked for a second through the windows into the garden and then assured him that every emergency had really been provided for. Guards had been placed in the garden and the park. At the approach of the police, they would immediately inform us, and those who had gathered would have ample time to get away. The chairman of the Unemployed Commission laughed and said that they could be

sure that they would not be taken either by the gendarmes or the police, for they would have to be fed in prison and the bourgeoisie had dismissed them in order to starve them to death. We got down to the business of the day. Our Bolshevik comrade started his report on the condition of the unemployed. The funds of the unemployed were exhausted. The levy on wages in the factories and mills was ceasing because the employers were obstructing the collection, and in some places they had ordered the officers not to give the money deducted to the Soviet of Workers' Deputies. The situation in the districts was desperate.

"This, we suppose," said the speaker, turning to the delegates, "you yourselves know well, but you must remember that such a situation threatens to last. Individuals and entire groups of 'undesirable' workers are being turned out of the factories and mills. All that the unemployed had in the way of clothes and other valuables have been sold or pawned during this period. The term for redeeming these belongings is approaching and there is nothing to redeem them with. The things are being lost. The landlords are throwing the workers and their families into the streets without pity. There are thousands of such cases in all the workers' districts.

"We cannot help these families of the unemployed who are being thrown out on the streets. Some collections are being made for the unemployed at workers' meetings, in trade unions, among the students, but these sums are so small that we cannot do anything substantial. Dining-rooms are being opened by the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and some liberal groups in all districts. These provide some tens of thousands of dinners, but they may be closed because the liberals, who are campaigning for elections to the Duma, will soon stop contributing money for them. There are 24 workers' dining-rooms altogether in St. Petersburg, and the unemployed receive 9,453 dinners a day," read the speaker, bringing the paper closer up to his pince-nez. "The dining-rooms in the Moscow district are supplying 450 dinners a day; in Narvsky there are two dining-rooms giving 385 dinners a day; in Gorodskoy, 4 dining-

rooms give 1,100 dinners; in Vasileostravsky, 4 giving 1,250 dinners a day; in the Petersburg District, 2 giving 550 dinners; and in Vyborg, 2 giving 450 dinners a day."

After he had finished reading the figures, the speaker urged that the delegates immediately organize an unemployed commission at each dining-room which would not only audit the accounts but would direct the business end of the dining-room and administer it generally. Further on, the speaker declared that the situation of the unemployed at the given moment was grave, but not hopeless.

"The Bolshevik group, in whose name I speak now," said the comrade, "supports the unemployed movement and helps us organize ourselves into a strong organization. It is essential to organize all the unemployed and set up a leading body—an Unemployed Council. This council, with the help of the unemployed, must start a struggle for bettering the condition of the unemployed not only through the distribution of dinners and 30 kopeks a day, but chiefly by getting the City Duma to organize large-scale public work for the unemployed. The unemployed are not paupers, they do not want charity. They demand bread and work. The question must be so presented that our demands to the City Duma win the support of all the workers in the factories and mills. The city must organize public work. There is quite enough work of that kind to be had in the city and it is now being given to various contractors who give the city administrators large bribes. The most highly skilled workers of all trades are to be found among the unemployed. They can do all types of work. The city has a number of contracts essential for public welfare; for instance, the construction of tramways. The city has decided to replace horse-cars by electric cars, and it will not be able to do this unless the streets are paved. That opens up the possibility of providing public work for the unemployed. We must take steps to see that the city provides this public work, therefore I move that all the proposals which I have suggested be taken up by the meeting, adopted, and immediately carried out, because hunger and poverty will not wait."

The delegates listened silently and very attentively to the speaker. When he had finished, others got up to speak. Each one welcomed the suggestions made by the Bolshevik organization and spoke briefly and clearly on how to realize them. All the proposals of the speaker were unanimously adopted. It was decided to organize an Unemployed Council by holding elections at the dining-rooms where the unemployed were getting their dinners, and a group of worker Bolsheviks were assigned to carry on the agitation for it and get the elections carried through. The council was to consist of thirty delegates from the unemployed. It was also decided at this meeting to print leaflets calling on the unemployed to organize themselves immediately as the only way out of the grave situation.

This printed appeal of the Bolshevik group of workers actually made it possible to carry on elections to the Unemployed Council within a short period. Thirty representatives of the unemployed were elected to the Council. After several days, the first meeting of the thirty delegates took place and Comrade Kairsky was elected president.

The first things we discussed were the aims and object of the unemployed organization. The following points were adopted unanimously:

1. The general aims and tasks of the Unemployed Council are to lead the unemployed out of their unbearable situation.
2. The most immediate task of the council is to get the city to organize public work for all the unemployed.
3. The council is to rally all the unemployed around these aims on the basis of their common demands and arrange to send the delegates to the City Duma and subsequently seek other means of influencing the City Duma.

After a number of organizational questions and suggestions on what further steps the council should take, the first meeting was adjourned.

On the day following the meeting of the Unemployed Council, Comrade Kairsky and I went to Lenin to report to

him what we had done to organize the Unemployed Council. Vladimir Ilyich* heard what we had to say, and then said he had some doubts as to whether the Unemployed Council alone could fulfil its programme by its own efforts.

"Through this organization alone," said Lenin, "you cannot influence the bourgeoisie; you will not be strong enough, and the unemployed workers themselves will not be able to develop this work on a broad proletarian class basis. Therefore, you must immediately extend the Unemployed Council to include representatives of those employed in all the factories and mills of St. Petersburg. You must now begin to agitate in the factories and mills for this purpose, and immediately arrange for the election of these representatives. The Unemployed Council must consist not only of 30 representatives of the unemployed, but of 100 or 150 representatives from all districts, from all the factories and mills. This will provide the unemployed with a genuine proletarian leading body which will really be able to exert pressure successfully on the City Duma and on the bourgeoisie generally."

At the next meeting of the council, at which the appeal to the Duma was drawn up, it was resolved, in accordance with Lenin's suggestion, to include thirty delegates from the large factories and mills in the Unemployed Council, and elections were held among the employed in all the factories, mills, and workshops. Later, the Unemployed Council was further enlarged and district councils were organized in the Nevsky, Moscow, Narvsky, Gorodskoy, Vasileostrovsky, Petersburg, Vyborg, and Kolpin districts. An executive council of the unemployed and a general city meeting of the Unemployed Council were organized.

Delegates elected by the unemployed at general meetings, one for every 250 workers, and from factories and mill districts constituted the district councils. The district councils managed the dining-rooms, collected money in the factories and mills,

* Lenin's first and middle name, by which he was popularly known.

registered the unemployed, gave material help, etc., and generally conducted the whole campaign in the districts for the struggle for bread and work in accordance with the directions given by the general city meeting of the Unemployed Council.

The Executive Committee consisted of three representatives from every district council, three representatives from the unemployed, and three from the employed. The Executive Committee was to keep in touch with the Duma bodies. All questions which were to be raised for discussion in the Unemployed Council were first taken up by the Executive Committee which was empowered to carry out the general decisions of the Council.

THE UNEMPLOYED ATTACK THE ST. PETERSBURG CITY DUMA.

Under the direct leadership of the Bolshevik Party, the St. Petersburg Unemployed Council began to prepare for the first offensive on the St. Petersburg City Duma. Certain preparations had to be made to win the whole-hearted support of the masses of the workers for the unemployed in their attack upon the City Duma. Besides the agitation it carried on in the districts, the Unemployed Council published a number of appeals to the employed as well as to the unemployed.

A petition to the St. Petersburg City Duma was drafted by the Unemployed Council, couched in the most forceful, Bolshevik-proletarian terms. The petition was discussed by the Unemployed Council, adopted, and sent to all the factories and mills of St. Petersburg and its vicinities to be discussed by the workers and to get their signatures to it. Of course, the discussion of our petition in the factories was carried on at the general factory meetings. But in addition, it was discussed in our proletarian press, except in the paper under the control of the Mensheviks. The Mensheviks (I will prove this later on) opposed the Unemployed Council most energetically and hindered our work in organizing the unemployed at every step. Our Council delegates were to insist on reading

the petition at the meeting of the City Duma before a vote was called for. This petition read as follows:

"Owing to unemployment, numberless workers' families are now without bread. The workers do not want charity, or doles. We demand work. The masters refuse to give us work. They say that they have no contracts. But the city has contracts and can provide work for the unemployed. We think that the way the city disposes of the public funds is scandalous. Public funds should be used for public needs and our need to-day is—work. Therefore we demand that the City Duma immediately organize public work for all the needy. We demand not charity, but our rights, and we will not be satisfied with charity. The public work which we demand must be started immediately. All the unemployed of St. Petersburg must be allowed to do this work; every unemployed worker must receive an adequate wage. We have been delegated to insist on the fulfilment of our demands. The masses who have sent us will not be content with less. If you do not accede to our demands we will report your refusal to the unemployed and then you will not have us to deal with, but those who sent us, the masses of unemployed."

The petition had the thorough sympathy of all the workers in the factories and mills. It was discussed at the general meetings in every factory and afterwards signatures were collected in the shops. Speakers were sent to the factories where after the victimization and lockout only less class-conscious workers were left. Our speakers went with groups of the unemployed, stopped the workers as they left during dinner-time or in the evening during the change of shifts, and held factory-gate meetings on the questions of unemployment and the help which should be given the unemployed. The meetings were always successful. Brief resolutions on the necessity for helping the unemployed were made and signatures were collected for the petition.

But beside raising the spirits of the masses of the workers, which it undoubtedly succeeded in doing, the Unemployed Council had also to rouse a desire among the petty-bourgeois groups to help the unemployed. The Unemployed Council managed to interest a number of liberal newspapers in St. Petersburg in this work. Comrades who had connections with the liberals on these papers were commissioned to speak with the more liberal among them in order to get them to help by writing articles and announcements in their papers. *Tovarishch*, on which Kuskova and Propovich then worked; *Rus*, led by the liberal son of Suvorin; the Cadet paper, *Sovremennoye Slovo*; and even *Birshévka* all published announcements and articles on the unemployed movement in which they advocated the large-scale organization of public work. They supported the unemployed because their petty-bourgeois readers brought serious pressure to bear upon them to do so. The armies of a hundred thousand unemployed had seriously alarmed the petty-bourgeoisie. This tremendous mass of starving people, they reasoned, would spread various epidemics which undoubtedly would first affect those petty officials, office workers, etc., who came in contact with them in the course of their work.

"Help is essential not only in the interests of the workers, but for the sake of the health of the whole population," said the president of the Duma Commission. "It is known that typhus, beginning in the cellars and garrets, claims increasing numbers of victims among the higher groups of society. On the other hand, the prospect of death from starvation may drive the people, embittered by poverty, to extreme measures. That being the case, it is essential to help them now. Help that is given too late may cost us dear."

Sympathy for the unemployed movement increased daily in all districts, factories and mills. Nuclei of the Unemployed Council were formed in factories and mills. District councils were organized. Committees were set up to investigate the condition of the unemployed and to help them in their struggle with the City Duma.

THE MENSHEVIKS FIGHT AGAINST THE UNEMPLOYED ORGANIZATIONS.

But at this point we found ourselves up against unexpected enemies of this proletarian work in the persons of the Mensheviks. As soon as they saw that we had attained considerable influence among the masses and had created a competent body to lead the masses, the Mensheviks on the St. Petersburg Party Committee—Bolsheviks and Mensheviks belonged to the same party at that time—began to oppose us and, particularly, the Unemployed Council. They carried on a campaign against us in all the districts and tried to disrupt our unemployed organization, or at least to arrest its development. But the Mensheviks' efforts were a complete failure in the workers' districts since we had already created a strong organization there, and not a single worker, even with Menshevik leanings, supported them. The Menshevik speakers were howled down at all meetings of the workers in the factories and in the districts, whenever they attacked the Unemployed Council. Then they transferred their Menshevik tricks to the leading organ of the party, to the St. Petersburg Committee in which they then had accidentally an insignificant majority. In the discussions of this question in the committee, the Mensheviks expressed the opinion that the Unemployed Council, led by the Bolsheviks, was provoking the workers to premature action, that the organization of the unemployed was a Bolshevik stunt. Our petition, which had already been circulated through all the districts and factories and had received thousands of signatures, was much discussed at this meeting of the St. Petersburg Committee.

The Mensheviks demanded the deletion of the concluding words of the petition: "If you do not accede to our demands, we will report your refusal to the unemployed and then you will not have us to deal with, but those who sent us, the masses of unemployed." They then demanded categorically that the unemployed delegation be restrained from going to the City Duma. They also opposed the demand for the organ-

ization of public work because, they said, the City Duma could not give the unemployed work—that had to be done by the State. The Mensheviks also strongly opposed the election of representatives from the factories and mills to the Unemployed Council because they saw in this a revival of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies. In conclusion, the Menshevik leaders insisted that the St. Petersburg Committee forbid us, the Bolsheviks, to work among the unemployed and to develop and strengthen this organization, and in the event of our persisting in this, that we be expelled from the party. The leaders of the unemployed told the Committee that such a decision would be harmful to the proletariat and not binding on them, and therefore they would not submit to such a decision. The Committee decided to meet the next day to take up this question at an enlarged meeting. The enlarged meeting, it is true, was called on the designated day, but it was after April 12, after we had already won all our demands from the City Duma. This caused a split in the Menshevik ranks and those opposed to us were left in the minority. No decision against us could be arrived at.

THE FIRST ORGANIZATION OF THE UNEMPLOYED IN THE ST. PETERSBURG CITY DUMA.

After extensive preparatory work for helping the unemployed had been carried on among the petty-bourgeois groups, the Unemployed Council elected a delegation which was to go to the City Duma on March 28 to deliver the signed petition mentioned above.

The delegation consisted of fifteen members, and on March 28 it went to the St. Petersburg City Duma. The town councillors looked with surprise at this group of workers. The mayor invited the delegates into his office in order to learn what they wanted, but the delegates refused to speak with him, declaring that they had been commissioned to take the matter up with the City Duma and not with individuals. There was no meeting of the City Duma on this day, since only a few of the town councillors had appeared; the other

members had received the information that some kind of delegation had come, and had deliberately stayed away from the Duma session. The delegation left, but informed the town councillors and the mayor that they would come again to the next session.

The next regular session was to take place on April 12. Consequently, the Unemployed Council had still two weeks at its disposal to prepare more thoroughly. Agitation was renewed in all the factories and mills and this roused the employed workers to come out even more strongly in support of the unemployed and increase the number of signatures to the petition. The Bolshevik speakers from the Unemployed Council went to all the factories and mills with groups of the unemployed, arranged meetings and got resolutions passed.

During this time not only did the Bolshevik paper *Volna* carry on a campaign for the movement, but so also did some liberal papers, which carried a number of articles favourable to the unemployed organization and urging the necessity for the City Duma to start public work for the unemployed. Public opinion was greatly alarmed by the question of unemployment. Even the whole group of electors* to the State Duma decided to support the delegation of the unemployed to the City Duma.

On April 12, 1906, our delegation, consisting of thirty persons—fifteen from the unemployed and fifteen from the employed—presented themselves at the St. Petersburg City Duma. The entire body of the Unemployed Council consisted at that time of sixty persons, but half of them did not go to the Duma, so that if arrests were made, the Council could continue its work without interruption. The police were already keeping a close watch on the Council and such precautions were necessary. In fact, the day the delegation went to the

* In Russia at that time an indirect system of electors was in operation. The voters did not vote for candidates to public bodies, but voted for electors, and these voted for other electors who finally voted for the candidates.

City Duma, the police suddenly raided the premises where the Council had met formerly and arrested everyone there. But there were no delegates or members of the Unemployed Council among them.

Before receiving the delegation, the City Duma held a private session and decided to admit the delegation and to accede to their demands as far as possible in order not to exasperate the workers. This decision was not known to the general public and the unemployed.

At the beginning of the session, just as we arrive, great numbers of people came into the Duma chambers. Five representatives spoke for the Unemployed Council, and they did not mince words.

"We ask nothing of you; we demand!" said one of the speakers. "We think that all the money at your disposal rightfully belongs to us." "If you do not give work to the unemployed, nothing remains to us but to rob you," said another speaker.

"You have not seen the unemployed," cried one of the representatives of the delegation, a young worker. "I live with them; I can tell you how they live. I can tell you what they who sent me here said: 'Go, talk to the town councillors and the City Duma, and if they will not listen to you, we ourselves will go and grab them by the throat'."

The town councillors listened patiently even to such speeches, and when we had finished they suggested that the delegates leave the hall. But we declared that we would not leave until we had received an answer to our demands. Then the town councillors announced an intermission, cleared out the general public, and then resumed the session with the unemployed delegation present.

Councillor N. N. Shnitnikov was the first to speak, and as the most Left radical of the town councillors he read the town council's estimates of the work that could be given to the unemployed.

"The town council thinks it possible," declared Shnitnikov:

"1. To engage 200-400 workers during June of the current year on constructing canals and filling up the Catherine Canal.

"2. To engage, beginning with May of this year, on the Hallerna Harbour, 300-400 persons on mechanical work, and 2,000-2,500 on hand labour.

"3. To engage 100 persons on the work of regulating the Karnovki River in the near future.

"4. To engage 300 persons on the construction of a Labour Exchange, the Lotzman Market, and a lodging-house.

"5. To engage 400 persons on casual work.

"6. To engage some of the unemployed on the construction of the Panteleimonov, Chernyshev, and Anichkin Bridges."

Thus the town councillors calculated that at most there would be work for some 5,000 persons—500 skilled workers on different types of work and 4,000 common labourers, without counting the workers who would be needed for the construction of bridges or the number which could not be calculated.

Certainly, the City Duma were, as before, hostile to the unemployed movement and to the unemployed generally. But the Bolshevik organizations and the Unemployed Council had succeeded in raising a strong sentiment in favour of the unemployed among all the petty-bourgeois groups and particularly among all the St. Petersburg workers. Therefore the town council was forced to conceal its hostility behind this ostensible desire to help all the unemployed by organizing public work.

In their speeches the town councillors said that the unemployed were justified in their demands, and declared that charity was a most pernicious form of helping persons accustomed to earn their bread by honest labour. They also said that public work did not lower the dignity of the unemployed;

on the contrary, it raised their morale, and therefore it had to be developed first.

Not a single voice was raised against the workers' demands. After the debate, the Duma unanimously adopted a resolution, which read:

"1. To set up a special committee of twelve members to draw up a plan for the organization of public work and to devise measures to prevent distress caused by unemployment. That the committee co-opt representatives of the workers and those organizations which were heard at the previous meeting, to participate in its work.

"2. That the committee consider all the proposals made by the town councillors at the present meeting.

"3. To apply for permission to establish an executive committee consisting of a chairman and twelve members to manage the organization and performance of public work.

"4. To advance 500,000 rubles immediately for the purpose of commencing the above-mentioned work, to be administered by the Council until the executive committee is appointed."

The town councillors and Black Hundreds were so eager to show the unemployed their sympathy, that one of these Black Hundred town councillors, after listening to the proposals, even declared:

"Why only 500,000? I think a million rubles should be advanced when people are dying of hunger."

The answer was that the 500,000 was only a beginning and that later the Duma could even advance a million and a-half, or more if necessary.

At the same meeting of the Duma, a commission of the unemployed was elected with Councillor E. N. Kedrin as chairman. Councillors N. N. Shnitnikov, N. P. Fedorov, Petrunkevich, Falbruk, Planson and others were also elected members of the commission. When the Duma session adjourned, Kedrin came to congratulate the delegation upon their

success and suggested that they nominate three persons to represent them in the commission. But the delegates declared that the workers would agree to be on the commission provided they had a number of representatives equal to that of the town councillors and that they must have the right to vote on the commission. Kedrin flared up, and began to oppose our demand. Finally, he angrily informed us that in that case they would have to work without representatives from the workers. The whole delegation moved to the doors. But Kedrin thought better of it. He ran after us, stopped us, and said:

"Gentlemen workers, the commission has thought fit to accept your proposal. Are you satisfied?"

The delegation answered that they considered the question settled and they would take part in the work of the preparatory commission.

AT THE ROUND TABLE WITH THE BOURGEOISIE.

The city commission and the representatives of the unemployed set to work on the following day. It was decided to investigate the help that was already being given to the unemployed: to find out how many dining-rooms there were and to increase their number. A large number of the unemployed, thrown on the streets, had found shelter in lodging houses, but their children had been sent to stay with comrades who had remained at work; families were thus broken up. It was decided that some action would have to be taken to help the unemployed pay their rent. The question of helping the unemployed to redeem their belongings from the pawnshops, particularly sewing machines and underwear, was also discussed and decided in the affirmative.

The commission set aside 175,000 of the 500,000 rubles placed at their disposal to take care of immediate needs. This money was assigned for the purposes outlined. The Duma, on April 21, considered and approved the plan of action worked out by the commission at its April 19 meeting. It was:

"1. To give the town council the right to exempt the unemployed from paying certain local rates on application from the commission.

"2. To permit no unredeemed property in municipal pawnshops, belonging to the unemployed, to be sold before June 21. Also, to cancel fines for arrears on interest and to postpone the payment of interest for three months.

"3. To permit the town council, at the discretion of the Duma preparatory commission, to use the 175,000 rubles advanced by the City Duma on April 12: (a) for supplying the unemployed with food; (b) for the construction and renting of buildings where wives and children of the unemployed who were homeless could find temporary shelter; (c) for the postponement of interest collected from the unemployed for things pawned in private pawnshops."

The commission and the Unemployed Council immediately started distributing this money among the unemployed. The 175,000 rubles were spent within the first two months on food, rent, and the pawnshops.

The organizing end of the expenditure of money was left to the commission which, with the consent of the Unemployed Council, transferred this function to the union of engineers which had organized a committee to help the unemployed six months previously. The Unemployed Council retained the right to control the activity of this committee and the general management of the work. The Duma commission was to receive the money from the city treasury, transfer it to the committee, check its account, and then make a report in the Duma.

The difficult work of organizing dining-rooms for the unemployed fell to the commission for feeding the unemployed. During this period, the committee opened 33 dining-rooms and furnished three million dinners to the unemployed. The number of dinners distributed was: in June, 495,000; in July, 631,000; etc. In June and July, there were 16-20 thousand dinners daily. The Unemployed Council decided not to take

this difficult work upon itself because that would divert much of its strength which it needed for other agitational and organizational work.

THE CITY DUMA FINANCES STRIKES.

The money to help the unemployed pay their rent came directly from the town councillors of the Duma, and was paid out according to lists drawn up by unemployment councils with a member of the executive committee of the Unemployed Council, or representatives from the district council, supervising. The town councillors and the representatives from the Council assembled all the unemployed in the district who were to receive relief and gave them money against receipts. Many of the unemployed were illiterate, and some placed crosses, some signed for others, etc.

Meanwhile, in all districts of St. Petersburg a wide strike movement had developed. The strikes were political rather than economic. These new cadres of unemployed joined our ranks. Of course, the Unemployed Council had a hand in the preparation of strikes, for the trade unions themselves were still very weak and could hardly have supported the strikers. So, together with the strikes in the Vyborg district, we had also to organize financial assistance for the strikers. For them, two weeks without work meant starvation, unless they were given some assistance. We had only just drawn up a list of 500 persons in the Vyborg district who were to get help to pay their rent. This list included the needy strikers of the Erickson factory. But before Councillor Shnitnikov arrived with the money, I learned that some of the strikers on the list had gone back to work, had become strike-breakers. There were 100 of them. We were in a dilemma. If we left the list as it was, 100 strike-breakers would get the money; if we crossed these names out, the councillor would leave the district with the money he was ready to distribute. What was to be done? We left the list untouched but made some of our strikers memorize these names so that they could answer to

them when the town councillor called them out, and receive the money. All the unemployed lined up in the corridor two by two. The town councillor began to call them into his office singly, one after another, and in our presence gave some 5, others 8, still others 10 rubles, according to the number in their family, and our suggestion. All went along smoothly until Shnitnikov came to Petrova. He called her up and asked:

"Petrova, how much should you receive?"

And the woman answered:

"I am not Petrova, I am Samoilova."

I looked daggers at her. What a mess she was getting us into! She understood, got confused, and then stammered:

"Yes, yes, I am Petrova."

But it was too late. Shnitnikov, a lawyer, immediately understood that something was up. He turned to me:

"What is this, Mr. Malyshev, what is going on here?"

"Nothing in particular, Nikolai Nikolaevich. Names were substituted for others because we found on investigation that those on the first list were less in need than these."

"No, there is something criminal going on. You are unemployed Bolsheviks; the devil knows what you are doing with us."

I sent the working woman away and said sharply that nothing criminal had been done and that there was nothing to be irritated about.

"If you do not want to distribute the money, leave the district."

He quickly seized the money that was left (there was still 50 or 60 rubles undistributed) and without taking leave, ran out of the room, shouting:

"This is all your Bolshevik doings! You have led the City Duma into committing criminal acts!"

We only laughed. The workers dispersed, swearing at the working woman who could not remember the name under which she was to receive money. But this was the only case

which enabled the town councillors to know that we had substituted some persons for others. Actually there were many such cases. We did this regularly and were able to support all the strikes that broke out in St. Petersburg in 1906 and part of 1907 in this way. We carried on the majority of the strikes, and the greatest of them, the strikes of the dockers, the cabmen, the Erickson telephone factory, and others, with the City Duma's funds.

The City Duma spent almost four and a-half million rubles on direct relief for the unemployed and the public work of which I shall tell later. The expenditures on public work were properly checked. Money spent to maintain dining-rooms for the unemployed was also properly checked. But in other, smaller items, the accounts were in pretty bad shape, and this enabled us to use some of the city's funds for strikes and other similar purposes. We had a list which, with the exception of two or three signatures, was signed entirely with crosses. We put a thousand crosses on the list—and that's all there was to it! The town councillors, it is true, would ask the unemployed:

"What, are you illiterate, too?"

And the worker would answer:

"Yes, I'm illiterate. It's not my fault; you didn't teach us to read or write. Only five per cent. of the workers can read and write, and they're at work. The ones who are unemployed are all illiterate."

The town councillors would look up, somewhat surprised, but then would go on with the disbursements.

Two and a-half years later, after I had returned to St. Petersburg from prison, I met the secretary of the Duma commission. He asked me to step into the Duma building. I had been outlawed, but he promised that they would not give me up. In the office of the commission, I saw our lists with the crosses; they were spread out on large tables.

"How is it," asked the councillor, "that all these crosses are alike? If they were written by different persons they would be different from one another, wouldn't they?"

I was really taken aback by this question and was at a loss for an answer. I told him that the workers were hammermen, blacksmiths, fitters, and so on: all who did heavy work, and that perhaps that was the reason why all the crosses they had set down showed the same characteristics. The senator, a member of the commission, raised his eyes from the paper, looked at me, thought a while, and then said:

"Perhaps you are right; yes, it cannot be explained in any other way."

I wished them success and left the commission. Two weeks later this same secretary informed me that the audit commission had decided to put in only a provisional report on these accounts, as it was impossible to make head or tail of the accounts and that after the report of the town council was made, it would be put into the files.

ORGANIZATION OF PUBLIC WORK DELAYED.

The Unemployed Council not only organized dining-rooms, supplied food, advanced money for the payment of rent and for redeeming goods from the pawnshops, but spent all of April and May in the preparation of public work, and kept hammering away at the unemployment commission, at Councillor Kedrin and the City Duma, to get them to accelerate the organization of this work. But the City Duma began to change its attitude to the unemployed. The Cadets and the Black Hundreds who had appeared so eager to help on April 12 began to obstruct the starting of public work as much as possible. They had gotten over the fright they had had when we invaded the City Council, and now wanted to limit the aid to the 500,000 rubles that were then voted. The crafty lawyer Kedrin was carrying out his instructions from the capitalists to lead the workers by the nose and postpone a decision on the pivotal question of organizing public work. The police and the secret police began to interfere considerably with the unemployed organizations. Consequently, there were sharp clashes almost every week between the commission and the

Unemployed Council. Finally, the Unemployed Council presented the following resolution to the commission in the name of the unemployed of St. Petersburg.

"The activity of the Duma for the last two weeks does not conform with the promises given on April 12. All its efforts are towards inventing delays and pretexts to avoid the obligations which it took upon itself. Meanwhile neither unemployment, hunger, nor the impatience of the unemployed has decreased. The unemployed see traps and treachery in the Duma's acts. Therefore the representatives of the workers plainly ask the town councillors: do they intend to fulfil their promises or not? Do they intend to drag the question out indefinitely, or come down, finally, to business, and chiefly, does the Duma intend to organize public work? If the Duma councillors continue to postpone the work and evade their promises, let them not hope that the representatives of the workers will support them in their treachery. The workers' representatives leave themselves a free hand to take what action they see fit."

This statement roused the indignation of the town councillors. They fumed, and called us ingrates. The majority threatened to resign from the commission. But the storm soon died down and they set to work again. Very little was done, however. It was proposed that the Unemployed Council resign from the commission as a protest against these delays, but this was not supported. Then the Executive Committee was commissioned to notify the City Duma that the commission was not treating the question of public work as it should. The Executive Committee adopted the following resolution on this question on May 9, 1905:

"The Executive Committee strongly insists that the organization of public work must be taken up immediately and with the utmost energy. The Executive Committee warns the Duma of the inevitable clash that must come in the event of this work not being organized, but the Executive Committee can take no responsibility for this."

This resolution was sent to the City Duma, but it had little effect; Kedrin took no steps whatever to accelerate the work. Finally, the Unemployed Council informed both Kedrin and the Duma in a special resolution that it found the further presence of Kedrin in the commission injurious to the proper organization of public work and insisted that Kedrin be removed from the chairmanship of the Commission. At that time, there were a number of other clashes with Kedrin and he was forced to send in his resignation.

The first unemployment commission consisted of important servants of capital—Lawyer Shnitnikov, Planson, Kedrin, some engineers and one teacher, Falbruk. These were the people who considered themselves defenders of the interests of the masses. And if we, sitting at one table with them, had not had Bolshevik revolutionary schooling, but had watched them and listened to them with open mouths, instead of fighting with them, they would have undoubtedly hypnotized us from the very beginning and the work of the organization of public work would have been ruined. Therefore, when the most outstanding capitalist lawyer, Eugene Ivanovich Kedrin, realized that it was impossible to fool us, and openly came out for postponing public work, he was thrown out of the commission with public censure. And we continued our Bolshevik line of demanding public work. With the help of the technicians in the engineers' union who sympathised with us and had connections in the City Duma, we found the projects for work which the Duma had drawn up in the technical files of the Duma.

We ourselves discovered projects in the City Duma files amounting altogether to 5,600,000 rubles. We found nine complete projects for new bridges for St. Petersburg over which electric trams were to pass. These bridges were: Mikhailovsky, Silin, Viedensky, Kamunno-ostrovsky, Panteleimonovsky, Kharpovitsky, Rizhsky, Alarchin, Varshavsky. We pulled the projects for the construction of three new markets out of the files—Sitnikovsky, Lotsmansky, and Arsenal, as well as completed projects for the construction of a slaughter-

house, for the Novoderevensky water supply scheme, a project for raising the Halerna harbour, the heating of the tram shed, the construction of trailers, motors for cars, cables for the trolleys, etc. Some of the work we conceded could not be done by the unemployed but most of it we resolved to use, since the unemployed could handle this work. There were many skilled workers among us—fitters, boiler-makers, joiners, carpenters, turners, etc.

The work which we had in mind would need 6,000 persons, and besides that, there was work to be done on the raising of the Halerna harbour which would last over a considerable period. When we started to work out in the commission the form this work was to take we found ourselves up against the obstinacy of the commission, particularly of those councillors who had social-revolutionary and national-socialist party leanings. These socialist town councillors insisted, and the whole commission supported them, that we take the work on an artel* basis, that we organize all the unemployed according to their specialty in artels, and, after receiving the necessary number of engineers and technicians from the union of engineers, start this work on contract. They insisted that otherwise the Duma could not give its consent, because some juridical person must be made responsible for work involving such large sums. It was impossible to simply give the work over to some one without entering into some kind of contractual relations, the town councillors argued. In a word, the lawyers, the members of the commission, the capitalist officials, although they claimed to have socialist leanings, nevertheless regarded themselves as representatives of the bourgeoisie and proposed forms of work which would best serve those interests. Planson was the chief initiator of this artel device. He worked out all these forms for carrying on the work, introduced an arbitration court for settling disputes, the forms of receiving this work, etc.

* A group of workers working together. This proposal would have converted the unemployed into private contractors.

Some members of the Unemployed Council, who were influenced by the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries, were in favour of accepting this form of work. But the Council as a whole and its executive committee realized that work carried on through contracts would be a great misfortune for the unemployed, and perhaps would even result in a complete breakdown of all the public work the promise of which had been obtained with such effort by the St. Petersburg proletariat.

First, it would be necessary to organize the unemployed into a legally competent artel. By the time we had done that the work itself would have slipped out of our hands. Finally, the workers in taking on themselves the whole burden and responsibility for these artels might not be able to set the work going immediately and might spoil some jobs, and thus give the unemployment commission and the town councillors a pretext for stopping public work altogether. Therefore we discussed at great length everywhere how work was to be done; we discussed it in the central and district unemployed councils and in the factories and mills. It was only after we had thoroughly considered this question that we brought it for decision to the Unemployed Council. The Unemployed Council categorically opposed having the unemployed doing the public work on an artel-contract basis. On May 7, it decided, instead, to demand that the City Duma take the full responsibility for carrying on the work.

The Council then passed a number of resolutions on the conditions under which public work should be organized. After thoroughly considering the question of public work proposed by the Duma, and how to make the best use of the unemployed, the Council decided that the proposed public work was but an insignificant part of what the city must do to improve the sanitation and welfare of the city. It renounced all responsibility for the financial-administrative and technical defects of the proposed work, rejected the principle of doing the work on an artel-contract basis, and demanded that the

Duma immediately organize public work and observe the following conditions:

1. The 8-hour day.
2. Prohibition of overtime.
3. Establishment of a daily wage.
4. Observance of all necessary sanitary and hygienic conditions at work.
5. Employment to be given to the registered unemployed at the indication of the Unemployed Council.
6. The right to control all the internal affairs in the workshops by workers' representatives.

The Unemployed Council's rejection of the artel-contract form of work exasperated the City Duma. The town councillors insisted on our carrying on work through artels and even threatened that if we did not agree to carry on the work in this manner the Duma would not organize any work at all.

A NEW DELAY.

By this time we had reason to suspect that the Duma would not carry out its decision of April 12. All the Black Hundreds began to organize energetically against the Unemployed Council. The press, liberal as well as Black Hundred, began to criticize us severely and stir up feeling against the unemployed. The whole capitalist press took advantage of our refusal to accept work on the artel-contract basis to attack the Bolsheviks, and argued that we, the Bolsheviks, were using this movement of the unemployed for our political aims.

The Unemployed Council took every opportunity to expose the insolent conduct of the capitalist, and particularly the Cadet press and their attempt to defend the interests of the bourgeoisie to such an extent that they were even ready to disrupt the public work which had already been decided upon by the St. Petersburg Duma.

But a number of papers were still with us and we also had our Bolshevik paper *Volna* and another through which to carry on the struggle. Through them, particularly through *Volna*,

we exposed the monstrous conduct of the Cadet and liberal press and succeeded somewhat in dispelling its effect.

Thus the whole of May passed. The beginning of June found the state of the organization of public work but slightly changed and the problem unsolved. Nothing was left for the Unemployed Council, and its Executive Committee, but to start, with the help of the Bolshevik Party organization, an active campaign in the factories, and to bring pressure to bear through the masses of the workers on the government and on the petty-bourgeois groups, and particularly on the City Duma. Since our organization continued to grow stronger and was able to bring continuous pressure to bear on the St. Petersburg authorities, the Duma had to elect some additional town councillors to the commission. On May 29, it commissioned this enlarged Executive Committee on the organization and management of public work to do whatever work there was on hand in the city.

By this time we had come to the end of the money which the City Duma had released for the maintenance of dining-rooms and for other forms of relief to the unemployed. But the Duma did not make fresh grants. Rumours were current that the Ministry of the Interior had sent instructions to the City Duma not to make many concessions to the unemployed. The situation grew very serious.

We increased our pressure on the commission through the press. We adopted a number of other measures. We began to activize the movement of the unemployed.

The unemployed were in an extremely grave position. We forced the Duma commission to report to the City Duma on how serious it was and to demand or "beg" funds in order to keep the dining-rooms going throughout the summer. The group managing the dining-rooms estimated that 180,000 rubles were needed for three months for 18,000 dinners daily at 15 kopeks a dinner. In addition, we made the commission go to the Duma to ask for money to help the unemployed pay their rent—12,000 families for three months—180,000 rubles. We demanded in all 360,000 rubles for the summer. The

unemployed commission drew up its report along these lines and presented it to the Duma.

But the Duma did not intend to take it up; nor did it hurry to begin work. We raised a row in the commission and demanded that a special meeting be convened. A special meeting was held and through it we brought pressure to bear on the Duma to assign money for the payment of relief and, chiefly, to organize public work.

Finally, towards the end of May, the town councillors unconditionally refused to take any responsibility for the work and demanded that we find some way of doing this work by which we would be responsible for it. And on May 29, the Duma, after hearing the unemployed commission's report and the town councillors' decision on it, passed a number of resolutions which, on the face of it, seemed acceptable. These were as follows:

1. To reaffirm the right of the executive commission to give all the work which had been already contracted for, or for which the Duma's permission was not needed, to the unemployed.

2. To propose to the city council and the executive commission that only work which the commission on the organization of public work does not think it can carry on itself be given out on contract in the future.

But soon we learned that this decision affected only repair work, and the organization of public work, even after this excellent resolution had been adopted, got no farther.

Days and weeks passed. General weekly meetings of the unemployed, and especially of the workers in the factories and the mills, were held to discuss the situation, and resolutions were passed censoring the disgraceful conduct of the City Duma in regard to the unemployed. The Duma was bent on delaying and nullifying all efforts to get this work done.

The executive commission grew so bold that it even decided not to invite the representatives of the Unemployed Council to the meetings.

The Unemployed Council at its meeting on May 31, 1906, decided to bring matters to a head. A resolution was passed, calling for a joint meeting of the executive commission, the representatives of the Unemployed Council of the union of engineers, and of the central bureau of the trade unions.

This resolution was transmitted to the executive commission but, at the insistence of the Black Hundreds, it ignored it. Again a general city meeting of the Unemployed Council was called. Again it was decided to demand that the executive commission say whether it would carry on the public work or not. But the unemployment commission ignored these resolutions and decisions of the proletariat.

The unemployed grew impatient and indignation was aroused. The districts began to demand that the Council take more effective steps to force the Duma and the executive commission to act. The Unemployed Council tried to prevent individual groups of unemployed from making any provocative moves, at the same time doing everything it could to bring pressure to bear on the City Duma. The spirit prevailing in the districts was such that the Unemployed Council had to distribute leaflets to all the workers of St. Petersburg, urging them to keep calm. This was on June 10, 1906. In this leaflet the Council said:

"The Unemployed Council does not hide from the masses that the Duma is only procrastinating, is only playing with the unemployed and has no intention whatever of keeping its promises. But the Council has not broken its contact with the Duma because to do that would mean to play into the hands of those who want to provoke the workers to premature action. This is exactly what the enemies of the working class, thirsting for proletariat blood, are waiting for.

"At present, the provocation of the unemployed has increased to the highest degree. The Minister for the Interior has given special orders to the Duma and the town councillors not to make concessions to the unemployed. Its aim is quite clear—to provoke the unemployed

to premature action at the time when the employed comrades are not ready to help them, and the Duma, of course, does readily what the Ministry wants it to do. However, we shall not allow ourselves to be provoked by the Duma. We know too well that the sight of the workers' blood does not frighten our enemies but makes them rejoice. We know this too well to take thoughtless action which would enable those who want our blood to rub their hands and say: 'Our ruse was successful. The workers will not forget this lesson quickly, will not recuperate quickly, will not renew their organization speedily.'

"We shall not give the provocateurs this pleasure. Nothing drastic is to be done as long as the Unemployed Council does not call on us to do so.

"This must be the first rule to be observed by all the unemployed. But the Unemployed Council, realizing the seriousness of the situation, will not fail to take this step when the time comes and will take it only in close conjunction with the working masses."

When this draft of the leaflet was read in the Unemployed Council, some sections of the Council, of a more anarchist, social-revolutionary spirit, were dissatisfied; they did not think it resolute enough. There was a split. They demanded that the Council take more resolute steps, force the Duma, etc., etc. But the dust raised by the anarchist social-revolutionaries was swept away when a vote was taken.

THE UNEMPLOYED INVADE THE DUMA A THIRD TIME.

The Unemployed Council decided to send a delegation to the Duma, and to keep its decision a complete secret. They assembled on June 12 and elected a delegation of eighty members, five representatives of the unemployed and five of the employed from each district.

The delegation was to go unaccompanied by the masses, and was to get a clear and definite answer from the Duma whether there would be work or not.

And at 2 p.m. on June 12, a delegation of 75 persons gathered and set out for the Duma. It divided up into two groups of approximately equal size, each with a leader to direct and advise it.

The visit to the Duma was planned in the following way: both groups of the delegation were to go into the Duma Hall simultaneously but through different doors, and demand that the town councillors hear the representatives of the delegation whom it would designate then and there to carry on the negotiations. If the town councillors should run to the doors, the delegation was to prevent them from getting out, and say half-jokingly to them: "Don't be afraid! Don't run away!"

The first group was to come through the treasurers' entrance, through the right door; the second was to make its way into the Alexandrov Hall and enter the meeting hall through the left door. Both groups were to come into the hall noiselessly, at the same time and in absolute order, with the leaders at the head. Having occupied both exits of the Duma, the delegation groups must come together in front of the Duma tribune; its representatives must address the Duma and all the speeches must end with the question: Will the unemployed workers be given the public work promised them, or not?

This plan was really a success, though the group which was to come through the left door, through Alexandrov Hall, was one minute late. One door was left unguarded and the town councillors were quick to take advantage of this accident. As soon as they saw some forty persons coming through the right door, the Duma chairman adjourned the session and all rushed towards the left door. But at that moment the other group appeared from Alexandrov Hall and entered the Duma meeting hall.

The town councillors crowded together; the chairman Dimsha tore off his chain of office and rushed from his place; the mayor tried to follow him. The delegates spoke to them, urging them not to be afraid. They said: "We come to you as representatives of the workers of St. Petersburg with the demand that

you keep your word and tell us—will there be work or not? Don't run away. We're not going to touch you."

But the town councillors would not listen; they made their way past the delegation into Alexandrov Hall and jostling each other, forced their way to the door. The workers' representatives followed them.

When the town councillors learned that these seventy-five persons were alone and there were no more of them on the street, they calmed down somewhat. Some of them even started talking with the members of the delegation and asked them questions, but the delegates would not talk as individuals. Three representatives from the delegation offered to negotiate with the chairman of the Duma, but Dimsha would have nothing to do with them. Finally, some town councillors prevailed upon him to listen to the delegation, and Dimsha asked, "What can I do for you, gentlemen?" The representatives of the workers answered that they had come in the name of the unemployed to ask the Duma when the public work promised the unemployed would finally be begun. And the following conversation took place:

DIMSHA: "You should have given me a written statement, and I would have laid it before the Duma."

THE DELEGATION: "We have come to you because many written statements have already been sent and the work has not moved forward. You can well afford to wait, but hunger does not wait for anything."

DIMSHA: "None the less, I will not admit you to the session. It is illegal."

THE ALLEGED ARMING OF THE WORKERS.

While these negotiations were going on, some one who noticed that the Duma was surrounded by the police, soldiers, and cossacks rushed to the Minister for the Interior for an explanation. The City Governor, it appeared, had informed the Minister that the workers had appeared in the Duma armed with clubs and other weapons, had surrounded the Duma, and were beating up the town councillors.

This report was telephoned to the City Hall and Kedrin repeated it to the people assembled there. This caused a roar of laughter. We immediately collected about twenty canes and umbrellas which we carried, counted them, and offered them to the town councillors, but they refused to take them.

"No, we'll give up our weapons," we declared laughingly. "Inform whomever it may concern that the representatives of the proletariat in the City Duma have disarmed themselves," and our comrades gave the umbrellas and canes to the commissionaire.

By this time, the chief of police, some police officers, and a body of policemen had appeared in Alexandrov Hall. The Duma looked like a military camp. No one was permitted to leave or enter. The Unemployment Council delegation stepped to one side to consider the situation and decided not to leave the place nor to enter into any negotiations with the town councillors unless the police were removed and the delegation was heard.

Someone again went to the Minister and the Governor to enquire why the police had been called. Some liberal town councillors began to scold the others. They pointed to the workers and said:

"See how the workers' representatives conduct themselves. Not a single superfluous word, not a single superfluous gesture. And here, the devil knows what is going on to-day, a veritable bedlam. We must ask the governor to remove the police immediately."

The town councillors quarreled among themselves for a long time. Everyone denied having called the police. But we knew better. Our representatives said, half-jokingly but frankly, to them:

"You are all lying. All of you called for the police and now you deny it."

The town councillors insisted that the mayor and the chairman of the City Duma, Dimsha, ask the governor to withdraw the police and the guards from the City Duma. The mayor and Dimsha said that they would immediately request that the

police be withdrawn from the Duma. The delegation answered that it did not ask them to request this on their behalf but for their own sake, so as not to be ashamed of themselves afterwards.

"But we have one request to make to you," our delegation added. "Continue your session and hear us."

The mayor and the chairman Dimsha went to the Governor and from his office informed us that the Governor had heard that a crowd of workers had broken into the Duma and were beating up the town councillors.

"If the town councillors," said the Governor, "do not consider themselves in danger, and if they do not want to arrest the workers, the Governor agrees to call off the police."

Within five or ten minutes, all the armed forces were withdrawn. After that, in more peaceful conversations, the Duma came to terms with us. The Duma agreed to receive a delegation from the Unemployed Council on June 14, but only a small one.

On that day the executive committee of the Unemployed Council decided to send a delegation of fourteen persons, two representatives from each district; only two of them were to speak in the Duma. The delegation was commissioned to negotiate skillfully and not give the Black Hundred any excuse for breaking up the meeting of the Duma.

When the delegation appeared in the Duma on the appointed day they brought a statement which had been drawn up beforehand with the consent of the Unemployed Council. It read as follows:

"In order to investigate the progress of the organization of public work and to make a report on their needs, the unemployed of St. Petersburg desire to send a delegation of two persons from every district to the meeting of the City Duma. In bringing this to the notice of the mayor, the unemployed also want to point out at the same time that it is absolutely essential for him to receive the delegation and give it a hearing at the meeting of the City Duma."

Having heard our communication, the Duma decided to give the representatives a hearing but would hear the delegates from the unemployed only as experts, so to say.

When one of us, who was to speak before the Duma on July 14, began to approach the Duma tribune in order to speak from it, Dimsha stopped him and insisted that he remain below. We were not proud and agreed to say what we had to say from the floor.

The first speaker said: "The Duma promised us a great deal, but we have so far received nothing. The Duma arranged for the registration of the unemployed. The unemployed thought that they were being registered for work, but there is no work. The only result of this registration is that now the police and every spy knows how many unemployed there are in the city. The Duma preparatory commission worked a long time on the project of public work. The unemployed thought that they would get it, but so far they have not received this work. And in the city the work is slipping, as formerly, into the hands of the contractors. The police closed down the premises when the unemployed held their meetings. We began to meet outside the city, but they drove us from there also, and arrested us. We are being evicted from our houses; the dining-rooms are closing down. That is all we have received from the Duma. Will you organize public work at last? You have deceived us, you have fooled us. These people whom you have fooled have sent us here to bring this question up before you for the last time—will you start public work or not?"

The next speaker emphasized the same thing in a different way and put the same question—"Will you start public work or not?" Then a third speaker spoke, the one commissioned by the Executive Committee to warn the Duma of the results that might ensue if it refused to organize public work. This speech aroused the town councillors to protest.

"A second time we speak with you, gentlemen town councillors," said the speaker, a representative of the unemployed. "Ever since April 12, we have worked in your commissions, worked to take care of the needs of the unemployed. These

needs are near to us since we ourselves have experienced them. You have not experienced want and do not know what it is. Why do we come a second time to you with the demand for assistance for the unemployed? We, the foremost class-conscious workers, are revolutionaries. We fought against those whom you serve. We have suffered for this struggle and we will not cease this struggle until the end. We know what is required to put an end to unemployment. But the mass as a whole does not know. Their unemployment drives them on to rob and kill. You are afraid of this. I do not want to frighten you in speaking of this. We, the vanguard of the workers, also fear it. You fear for yourselves, your wealth. We fear for our strength, since such things weaken and disrupt our ranks. You have given the unemployed promises, not because you acknowledged their right, but because you feared them. We understand this well, but we accepted that help. We conveyed your promises to start public work to our fellow workers, but since you have deceived the workers, we do not want to seem to be traitors with you. If you do not give this help to the unemployed now, if you do nothing to begin public work, we will tell the whole mass of the unemployed that it was lies that fed their hopes. You must tell us, will you start public work or not?"

The chamber was filled with noise and agitation. The town councillors all shouted at once. The Black Hundreds roared.

"Oh . . . you came to frighten us!"

The chairman kept ringing his bell. Many times he stopped the speaker, but our representative, having finished his speech, took out a paper and began to read the demands. The chairman abruptly cut him off and declared that the Duma would not listen to demands. So our speaker agreed to call these demands "points" and then began to summarize them without any further objections from the chairman.

"1. To organize public work immediately.

"2. The workers' representatives in the executive commission to participate in the preparatory commission,

"3. To extend the authority of the executive commission and give it the right:

- (a) to find new work for the unemployed and execute it.
- (b) to satisfy the urgent needs of the unemployed by advancing help in the payment of rent, redeeming things in the pawnshops, etc.

"4. To assign immediately the sum demanded for the satisfaction of the needs of all the unemployed of St. Petersburg.

"5. To arrange immediately for a meeting of the unemployed and regular daily district meetings as well, and to take measures to release the 200 workers imprisoned for participating in the meetings of the unemployed."

After these points had been read, Dimsha demanded that the workers leave the hall. When we acceded to this demand, the town councillors, under pressure from the liberals, decided to permit us to sit behind the railing while a decision on this question was being reached, in spite of the fact that the chairman, Dimsha, had demanded that we leave the hall.

The town councillors began to consider our demands. Some proposed a secret ballot, but they were afraid to decide it by ballot. After the discussion, the chairman of the Duma, Dimsha, put the question:

"Is it the will of the City Duma to adopt the proposal on the preparatory commission, i.e., to organize work and release money?"

Not one of the town councillors could refuse to agree to the stated proposal. The worker deputies, hanging over the railing, watched the voting closely. Fourteen pairs of eyes shone with anger and hatred at these city rulers. Many town councillors glanced at them fearfully. Two Black Hundred town councillors rose. The chairman asked them:

"Are you against?"

But the town councillors, raising their eyes to the railings, and seeing that no one supported them, said hastily:

"No, no. We are for it, for the proposal of the commission to assist the unemployed."

The question of assistance to the unemployed was decided in the affirmative and the following resolution passed:

"1. To assign during the summer the sum of 360,000 rubles for the maintenance of dining-rooms for the unemployed and to help them pay their rent.

"2. To postpone for three more months the sale of the unredeemed property of the unemployed.

"3. To commission the mayor to propose to the Minister for the Interior that additional expenditures for giving work to the unemployed and supplying them with food and other necessities be defrayed by the public treasury.

"4. To commission the mayor to start the necessary negotiations for defraying the expenses for the maintenance of dining-rooms for the unemployed."

Thus the money was obtained, and immediately afterwards permission was given to start the first of the public work, the lifting of the Halerna harbour, to save it from being submerged.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK.

After our visit to the Duma on June 14, the organization of public work advanced considerably. For a number of political reasons, the government did not want to arouse a large organization of the proletariat, such as ours was, and had ordered the Duma Black Hundreds to make concessions. Money was assigned for food, rent, and the other needs of the unemployed and the executive commission was commissioned to organize public work. But this did not mean that we had actually received this work. We had to continue to bring pressure to bear on the Duma councillors. In this way, we approached our goal.

The Halerna harbour, the district where the flood was rising, had to be lifted in some places by half a metre and in others more. If this were done by hand labour and not by machine, some thousand workers would be needed. We had precisely such work in mind, i.e., hand labour, and towards autumn this work which gave employment to more than 1,000 persons was begun. Further, we organized public workshops for making parts of bridges and other metal constructions on the Kagarinsky wharf on the St. Petersburg side. We engaged 1,500 workers on two shifts in these workshops. The locked-out unemployed, who represented in themselves a united mass and were the leaders of the unemployed movement, were concentrated in these shops.

Towards the end of 1906 we started a number of other jobs such as the erection of masonry on the Panteleimonvsky, Mikhailovsky and Varshavsky bridges.

All the St. Petersburg proletariat, through the organized Unemployed Council as well as the district councils, followed the course of this work, heard almost daily reports on it, discussed it, and gave further directions and pointers. For the two years during which public work was carried on, the St. Petersburg workers actually organized and led the industrial undertakings, assigned people for it, saw to it that the best people were to be had, and supervised the work. In a word, they lived their industrial life and tried to raise the level of production to the necessary height. When public work began to break down because it turned out to be extraordinarily expensive, unprofitable, and unable to compete with other enterprises, the Unemployed Council raised the question and called upon us who were managing the work to find out how to make the work pay. The deputies' committee of the Kagarinsky wharf, in accordance with the instructions of the Executive Committee of the Unemployed Council, introduced a form of piece work which did not violate the collective interests of the proletariat. This enabled us to reduce the cost of bridge building from 7 rubles per unit which it had cost until then, to 2 rubles, 80 kopeks. With the eight-hour working day and

the self-organization of labour, i.e., with the committee of deputies directing the work in the name of the Unemployed Council, this was certainly a great achievement.

This saving of many thousands of rubles by the St. Petersburg proletariat was of great educational value for the working masses of St. Petersburg, and now we can say that many of the present leaders of the Soviet Government and of Soviet industry received their first practical lesson at this work. The question of production, of the organization of production, of technical leadership, etc.—questions which under other conditions could never have arisen—became for the first time practical issues for the proletariat of St. Petersburg.

Moreover, this public work helped us to preserve the unity of the proletariat at a time when reaction was blackest, and to advance its revolutionary education. With the organization of the Unemployed Council we developed a number of successful strikes which embodied the spirit of the proletarian masses and developed its class consciousness.

During a period of reaction, of lockouts, of unemployment, savage antagonisms are aroused between the employed and the unemployed in a capitalist country. During this period, throughout the two years of existence of the Unemployed Council, we succeeded in finally removing every trace of antagonism. In the course of its two years' existence, the unemployed organization gave the proletariat a thorough schooling in industrial and economic matters. This organization, which furnished many leaders, not only taught them to organize production, direct it and achieve success, but it taught them how to fight against the capitalists in everyday problems, even while sitting at one table with them. It taught them how to stick to their independent correct revolutionary line and to attain their class aims.

During the second half of 1907, reaction became blacker and blacker. The majority of our party workers were arrested. Others, tearing themselves out of the ring of the Stolypin siege, fled abroad.

And in prison or free, they began to observe the great decline of revolutionary activity. The case of the Unemployed Council was a good example of the state of affairs. The majority of us, organizers and leaders of the Unemployed Council and the city public work, were also arrested or went underground. All the work of the unemployed of St. Petersburg was weakened; part of the unemployed at that time were absorbed by the factories of St. Petersburg and other cities.

In the first half of 1908, I was informed in prison that the tsarist government had put an end to public work. But when the government proceeded to close the public workshops on Kagarinsky wharf, they were so scared that before the gendarmes set about their work, they called out a battery of light artillery, in case of any emergency.

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