Every revolution creates its own myths and the Russian Revolution was no exception. The Bolsheviks proclaimed that it was a proletarian revolution, that is, a revolution in which labor played the leading role and which raised workers to the position of ruling class. Many Western students of the Russian revolution agree that the Bolsheviks could not have triumphed without labor support. Despite a vast literature on the subject, a recent exchange in The Russian Review showed that, as one of the contributors to this debate put it, "the relationship between Russian labor and the Bolshevik Party in the months immediately following October remains a central and contentious issue of early Soviet history."1

This article seeks to contribute to a better understanding of this relationship. It will cover the short period from the October takeover to the spring of 1918, during which the factory committees—factory-based workers' organizations—helped Lenin to extend the Bolshevik dictatorship to the shop floor. The policies of the factory committees sharply contrasted with those of another major labor organization, the trade unions, which in the wake of October supported the creation of a democratic system on the model of the soviets.

Although much has been written in the West on the labor aspect of the Russian revolution, the activities of the factory com-

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1. William Rosenberg, "Russian Labor and Bolshevik Party After October," Slavic Review 44, No. 2 (Summer 1985), 213. Also in the same issue see articles by Moshe Lewin, "More Than One Piece is Missing in the Puzzle," and Vladimir Brovkin, "Politics, Not Economics was the Key."
mittees in the post-October period remain largely uninvestigated. Paul Avrich and John Keep, who are among the few Western historians who have written on this subject, argue that the factory committees' policies after October were motivated by anarchic tendencies and distrust of authority which, in their view, prevailed among Russian workers at the time. Ronald G. Suny in his seminal article on the Western historiography of Russian labor emphasized that the key word in Keep's interpretation is "instinct." The newer generation of Western scholars have cogently challenged this approach. Several recent studies on the history of labor during the pre-October period emphasize rational factors—the aversion to war, the fear of counterrevolution, economic and political pressures, "socialist consciousness," and so on—as playing a critical role in determining labor's policies. As David Mandel put it in his study of Petrograd workers, the radicalization of Russian labor can be understood "without resort to such factors as anomie, anarchistic instincts run amok with the breakdown of authority, or chiliastic moods and demagogic manipulation."

In discussing the policies of the factory committees during the post-October period this article will explain, without resorting to "anarchic instincts" or "chiliastic moods," two main issues: (1) why did the factory committees side with Lenin; and (2) how did their activities contribute to the establishment of the Bolshevik dictatorship? In that connection, the relationship between the factory committees and the trade unions, and also the relationship between the factory committees and rank-and-file workers will be examined. The consideration of these issues will shed new light on the relationship between the Bolsheviks and labor and will also contribute to a better understanding of the Bolshevik victory.