CHAPTER-III
MINERS' STRIKE MOVEMENT OF 1989 AND 1991:
Rise Of Independent Trade Unions And Their Politicization

The history of independent workers' organizations throughout the Soviet period was, until the emergence of Gorbachev, a history of systematic repression. Even the most hesitant efforts to create such organizations presented a fundamental challenge to the legitimacy of the party-state, both in challenging the claim of the party to represent the interests of the working class and in challenging the organizational principle of democratic-centralism.¹

Despite severity of measures against such organizations the Soviet state could not stop the informal organizations of workers at the shop level or sometimes at enterprise level. These workers' organisations were tolerated at this level by management to secure the cooperation of labour for fulfilling plan targets. But they remained outside the managerial apparatus of the state. The extent of independent workers' organizations under the old regime was much greater than had hitherto been suspected.²

Gorbachev sought the workers' cooperation in Perestroika by introducing a law on enterprises in 1987 designed to promote self-management. This law activated the workers but its ambiguities created more conflict than cooperation between management and workers, former not ready to give any real power to the latter which gave rise to many conflicts in the economy. As Perestroika went down deeper,
the ruling class sought its enhanced status by cutting back workers' rights through a new law on enterprises in September 1990 which further intensified the conflict.

The major sources of industrial conflict between 1987 and 1991 were implementation of wage reforms by management (discussed earlier), imposition of wage cut with imposition of quality control, move to self financing, failure to implement 1987 law on enterprises, imposition of black Saturdays and management's right to control.

The leaders of first independent workers' organization were typical activists with a long record of opposition. Vladimir Klebnov's Association of free trade unions which dated back to the late 1950’s in Mekeyevka mine in Donbass, reestablished in 1987, but concentrating on organizing and protecting victimized and dismissed workers, and the emigre-christian democratic (NTS) was reestablished in 1988, while the SMOT (the free interprofessional Association of Workers) re-emerged from underground with the release of its leader in 1987.3

The workers' organizations which developed from 1989 had a rather different base, many of their leading activists being people who had held office in the party or trade unions at primary level in the first years of Perestroika, seeking to mobilize grassroot support for Perestroika 'from below'. For the purpose we see the workers movement in different parts of U.S.S.R., like Sverdlovsk, Leningrad, Togliatti,
Donbass, Kuzbass, Yaroslavl etc.

In Sverdlovsk a workers' union 'Rabochii' was founded by Victor Burtnik at the Turbomoter factory in March, 1987 around the demand for workers' self management following a strike in Burtnik shop. This group with the effort of Boris Kagarlitsky spread to a number of other rural cities like Perm, Magnitogorask, and Chelyabinsk. This group was under close police and KGB attention. Later Rabochi joined rural popular front on its formation in September 1988 which declared itself to be based on 'Leninist conception of Socialism — as the living creation of working masses themselves' and concentrated on helping independent workers' group. At the end of 1988 Rabochi separated from Front and established itself with representatives of 22 enterprises with the aim of accelerating the growth of workers' committees, developing the principles of self management, and raising the theoretical level of workers. Its newspaper 'Robocheye Slovo' gives the impression of organised mass movement publishing reports of organised strikes but in fact they were weak and lacked political direction. It focussed on building its base upwards. This organization was alleged to have links with KGB but a study has denied these links, though a convergence of interests with the Party apparatus can not be ruled out.

In Leningrad, Anna A. Temkina, characterised the workers movement as protest movement. She said, the beginning of the first
stage in the birth of labour movement is difficult to date, although it continued in to spring and summer 1989. In 1986-87 the struggle was carried out mainly by individuals who were unable to force a change in the situation when they fought the will of the administration. In 1987 cases of collective production conflicts occurred. On July 18, 1988 drivers of First Amalgamated Public Bus Service (LPO AT I) declared strike against lowering of the wages. Strikes were also called at several other enterprises, most notably at Zveda associations in Volodarsky Woodwork Factory over distribution of bonuses. In 1987-88 in Leningrad the first club types of workers’ organization arose like 'Robochaya initisiativa', 'Democratizatsiya Profsoyuzov' club and 'L. Pavlov study group'.

'Robochaya initisiativa' announced its existence in October 1987 and its aims were described by its chairman V. Tyagushev, as "keeping people on their toes." It represented intercity club founded in 1987 at Moscow. In April 1989 it was dissolved with continuous attack on perestroika activists but its existence remained, as one of its activist, - G. Kravchenko, was elected as a deputy on the Leningrad Soviet in 1990.

The Democratizatsiya Profsoyuzov Club (KDP) was constituted in February 1989 with 30 active members and around 100 sympathizers. Its programme was to guarantee independence of trade unions from the state and their democratization, democratization of society, the
improvement of workers conditions and removal of anti-worker legislation - by organising various workers activities. The independent trade union 'spravedlivost' was formed on the basis of KDP.

The L.Pavlov study group "Social theory" discussed workers' problems and formulated the ideology of the future trade union 'Nezavisimost'.

Moreover, in 1987-88 (Free interprofessional trade unions) SMOT renewed its activities, in fact its activities goes back to 1978 when its leaders were arrested. L. Valkhonsky, A. Sokobov and V. Sytinsky worked for independent Leningrad trade unions which published the SMOT Bulletin. In later stage SMOT activities linked with those of TU 'osvobozhdeni' and the confederation of free trade unions. The management section of Prestroik club (already discussed) also had links with these organizations in Leningrad.

In 1987-88 campaign for workers' self-management in connection with passing the law on enterprises gave rise to several conflicts in which these clubs participated. In 1989 electoral campaigns there were open calls for independence of Trade unions and legislation for the right to strike.

The organising activities in the work place proved to be far more complex than 'on the streets'. Therefore, initiative for activity at the work place met with weak response. But the 'democratic movement' 'despite
demonstrating its support for workers' struggle at factory floor, did not usually go further than verbal support. A new democratic government was established in Leningrad but, it like the democratic movement did not have strong ties with work collectives.

On June 11, 1989 a meeting of KDP took place, Robochoya initsiativa, the anarchist and other participated in it. IKAR leader L. Pavlov insisted that only workers should be on TU’s, whereas KDP thought of its mixed composition excluding administration. After some time trade unions ‘Nezavisimost’ and ‘Spravedliovost’ establish themselves as independent trade unions.

As regards ‘Nezansimost’, only workers could be its members. It advanced the workers control over wages, over output and administration and finally workers self-management was its basic aim. It viewed its role in terms of working class struggle.

The ‘Spravedlivost’ had as its aim the struggle for more favourable conditions for the sale of labour power, improvement in working conditions and the abolition of disciplinary codes. It was oriented towards wide social base and everybody participated in it, apart from directors and other representative of administration.
In August 1989 a strike commission was formed, largely under influence of miners' strike. On 8 August 1989 democratic forces from the entire city for the first time gave special attention to the question of workers' position in society and in the factory.

On October 22, 1989 nine initiative groups signed a notice addressed to Leningrad workers announcing the foundation of 'Soyuz Robochikh Komitetov Leningrada' (SRKL). It acquired a certain international authority. Its representative participated in Solidarity's Second Congress at Lech Walesa's invitation.

The Nezavisimost' had a dual character. On the one hand, it was oriented towards general political democratization and on the other hand, to the workers class exclusiveness opposing them to the intelligentsia. This organisation supported the minors movement in Vorkuta, provided them some money for support, gave radical slogans for workers class struggle, but did not take any initiative to support Vorkuta on the plea that movement is not mature enough to fight in such a way. Nezavisimost also gave a call to boycott the electoral campaign of 1990 saying that LNF is the liberal wing of ruling party while OFT (Neo Stlanist Front of Workers) as the imperial wing.

Representatives of workers' organizations also participated in All Union initiatives. The Representatives of SRKL, Nezavisimost and Spravedlivost participated in the work of the Congress of independent
workers movement and organization. At the beginning of summer new efforts were made to consolidate the workers' movement and create single coordinating centre at Leningrad in June 1990 a workers 'round table' met, ways of further joint actions were noted, but they were not put into practice.

A new organisation came into being in the same summer of 1990 namely Soyuz Kolektivov Leningrada (SKL). It became very active in workers organization and participated enthusiastically with concrete programme and response to government plan of 500 days programme for a transition to market. It also participated in All Union Congress of Labour Collective Council from August 31 to September, 4, 1990. It gave a call to collectives to seize power at the enterprise level and to become managers, hiring the administration. It also demanded government resignation. SKL at its conference demanded removal of party committee from enterprise territory.

In January 1991 the first stage of the conference of workers' collectives took place at Kirov to discuss transformation of enterprises into shareholding companies. On February 12, Factory workers committees invited Boris Yeltsin to visit Leningrad and Kirov Factory. In March Boris Yeltsin and Prime Minister of U.S.S.R. V. Pavlov visited the Kirov factory. The essence of the issue was to whom will the Kirov factory belong? V. Pavlov proposed that not less than 50% of shares should be the
property of state and not liable to sale, whereas Boris Yeltsin called for its transition to Russian jurisdiction followed by sale of shares. Following it workers' committee discussed the question of enterprise transfer to Russian jurisdiction.

In January 1991 the SKL and various other labour organisations participated in action against the use of armed forces in the Baltic Republics. 78000 people and 426 work collectives participated mainly from research institutes and non-production centers. SKL called on workers' collectives to engage in political acts to support the position of chairman of RSFSR Supreme Soviet, Boris Yeltsin, and Council of Ministers of the RSFSR on securing independence for the Republic, transition to market economy and provisions for social guarantees.

On April 23, 1991 Metro Construction workers demanded the removal of Komsomol and CPSU committees from enterprises and supported the miners' Political demands, arguing that the president of U.S.S.R. should resign, the U.S.S.R. Supreme soviet should be dismissed and that the post of union President should be abolished and power be transferred to a council of the federation. This showed the active public support for miners and close connections between political organisations and workers movement in Leningrad.

The organisations like Nezavisimost and other like minded organisations refused to cooperate with liberal organizations striving for
a capitalist path of development which they did not accept. Leningrad section of socialist party, St. Petersberg organisation of Anarcho-syndicalists and others, were for workers' collectives to determine independently, without any kind of buy-out, the forms of property, management and self management of their enterprises and also rejected the institution of presidential power. In this way a certain part of workers movement was attracted to socialist ideology and consequently cooperation with political movements of a socialist orientation.10

The SOTSPROF

A major ambitious attempt to build an independent workers' organisation was launched by Moscow based Association of Socialist trade unions which was founded in April, 1989, and which co-sponsored the Congress of informal workers' organisations with VTs and SPs in July. It was based on an uneasy alliance between a small number of socialists, who formed the socialist party in December 1989, and a larger group of social democrats, who were themselves divided, with the right wing becoming ardent supporter of Yeltsin and transition to market economy. This led to the acrimonious struggle during 1990, from which the right wing of social democrats emerged victorious.11

'Sotsprof split in summer of 1990, with one faction setting up a separate Russian Sotsprof in September, and expelling Sergie Khramoav,
the President of All Union Sotsprof in December 1990, only to be expelled in their turn by Khramov at second Congress of Sotsprof in February 1991. Meanwhile more active Ukrainian Sotsprof, like other independent trade unions set up its own organization in March, 1990.

Sotsprof was organised on professional lines, and not according to the branch principles. It owned its survival through 1990 not to its organizational activities, but to its political alliance with liberal camp. Boris Kagarlitsky accused the liberals of having 'bought' the organization by bribing members of coordination committee for the support of government programme of austerity measures', to oppose strikes and to purge the socialist from its ranks.12

It was the legal, political and material resources at the disposal of Sotsprof rather than its liberal policies and its cancilatory trade union rhetoric, that gave its appeal to workers seeking to organise outside the official structures.13

Although the total active membership of Sotsprof groups probably numbered in hundreds, it advanced rapidly in 1991 as a result of its political connections. It arranged for negotiations between the Moscow branch of the SOTSPROF and the official Moscow Federation of Trade Unions, and following Yeltsin's counter coup in August 1991 the Sotsprof leaders moved into the corridors of republican power.14
In spite of these workers organizations operating at above mentioned places with different ideological orientations of a number of other workers organizations, formal or informal existed throughout the U.S.S.R., in the period of perestroika especially from 1988 to 91. A local popular front of informal movements in 1988 was established in Togliatti which had its roots in broad informal workers' groups which led to the strike in 1987 at auto diesel plant. Later on it organised a first All Union Conference of Workers' Collectives councils in 1990 Against the new law on enterprises.

Similarly, in Yaroslavl workers' group 'Popular front' composed of major industrial enterprises was established, whose moving force was workers club of motor factory. Not only this, in the township of Andropov in the Lithuanian city of Kaunas, Kaunas workers' union was established to restructure the Trade Union Committee.

Miners' Strike Movement of 1989 and 1991

In the Soviet coal industry over one million people were employed considerably more than in any country. The main coalfields in U.S.S.R. were Donbass in the eastern Ukraine and Kuzbass in western Siberia, supplemented by various smaller coal fields scattered throughout the union. Of the 720 million tons of coal produced in U.S.S.R. in 1986 Donbass accounted for 259 Million tons or 36% whereas Kuzbass produced 160 million tons or 22% of total production. The Donbass is
considerably older and Kuzbass began in the period of industrialization in 1920's. Whereas deep underground mining is practised in Donbass, open cast production dominates in Kuzbass. So Kuzbass coal produced cheaply than Donbass. The output of the coal Mining Industry has stagnated since mid 1970's, in course of the eleventh five year plan (1981-85), the shortfall in coal production amounted to 145 millions tons. The following table show the declining output trend after Mid 1970's.

**Table-1**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Output (Million)</th>
<th>Average annual increase</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>261.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>400.0</td>
<td>27.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>509.6</td>
<td>21.9</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>624.1</td>
<td>11.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>701.3</td>
<td>15.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>718.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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The century of intensive coal production in the Donbass meant that the miners have had to go ever deeper into the earth. The average
depth of underground mines in the U.S.S.R. was 410 meter, but in the
Donbass 79 of the 156 mines were more than 700 meter below the surface
and 15 were more than a kilometer deep.\textsuperscript{16} The deeper the mine, higher
the temperature and greater the complexity and expenses of pumping out
water, ventilation, putting miners down to the coal face, and raising the
coal. In recent years the investment in coal mines lagged behind (in
Modern equipment & mine development) badly because of greater
priority to oil, gas and Nuclear power.\textsuperscript{17} One of the miners remarked that
"My fellow cutter and I am using the same jack and hammers as fifty
years ago."\textsuperscript{18}

The July strike of 1989 could not have been a surprise to the
Soviet authorities, it had been preceded in March by two brief strikes at
Lidiveka and Kirov Mines in Donestek. At the Plenum of Donestek city
Party Committee (Gorkom) on 24 June, 1989 the Miners’ extreme
discontent was expressed in a demand that the Minister of coal industry,
Shchadov, should resign. Gorbachev himself, while visiting Donestek in
June 1989, had been informed of the ferment and its background.

A multitude of discontent contributed to strike, yet the causes
may be separated from Strike demands. Essentially, the outbreak of the
strike was the result of frustrated expectations,\textsuperscript{19} 50% respondents in a
survey said the professional solidarity was the prime cause that led to
strike. If the fear of disruptive economic reform was not in their mind the
appalling economic and social conditions were definitely behind it. The Soviet miners were well off in monetary sense but it was of no use if consumer goods were not available in the market which was the reason cited by 86% of respondents when asked about the specific grievances, followed by low pay 79%, inadequate vacations 62% pension provisions 50%, high price 41%, poor housing 41% and frictions with management 83 percent.

But in all regions there was plenty of evidence of deteriorating labour relations within coal fields, but issue came to head with deterioration of economy, as bonuses were cut, deliveries of essentials and food supplies fell and ‘uneconomic’ enterprises were threatened with closer. In January 1989, the mines which were consistently running at a lose, were supposed to start shifting to full self financing, which seriously compounded the pressure.

The July strike wave began when all the mines around Mezhdurechensk in the Kuzbass followed by the mines of the local Shevyakovo mine on striking, and on July 11th assembled in the town square to present their demands. Although the strike of Mezhdurechensk was settled in four days, it had already spread throughout Kuzbass, reaching its peak on July 17th when 158 enterprises and almost 1,80,000 workers were on strike. A joint party-government-trade union commission was hurriedly dispatched to
Kamerovo on July 16th. It rapidly reached agreement with regional strike committee, which had itself only been established on 16th July and by 21st July everybody was back at work.23

The small but militant Vorkuta coalfield struck work on July 19th, and by 21st all of their demands had been met. The miners of Kazakastan and Donbass were persuaded to stay at work, with promises that the government would meet their demands without the need to resort to strike action, but they began to come out from July 16th, fearful that they would not share the gains won by Kuzbass workers. In Donbass the Miners distrustful of the governemnt did not agree to return to work until July 23rd.

There were four types of demands which were put forward by miners to authorities. First, were those effecting the structure and administration of coal industry itself like, full legal and economic autonomy for the mines from January 1st, 1990 and introduction of leasing and brigade contracting as form of work organization in the mines. The second group may be called 'bred and butter' demands. They ranged from pay, vacation and social benefits better housing and increase quantity of soap rationing. The third group of demands touched work and welfare conditions: Medical care, occupational disease, responsibility for safety and accidents, etc. Finally there were demands for the protection of worker-activists and strike leaders.24
The strikes were led by a relatively small number of activist, many of whom were party members and enthusiast for perestroika. Between 25% and 40% of strike committee members were members of Communist Party, despite party instructions apparently from Moscow, that party members should not get involved into strike.\textsuperscript{25} It seems most likely that in these regions the party apparatus was itself divided, with reformers surreptitiously encouraging the strikes.\textsuperscript{26} The contacts between mines, and even more between coalfields, were limited and haphazard, so that information tended to be transmitted by rumour and press reports.\textsuperscript{27}

The mine managers and local authorities insisted that they were not in a position to meet the workers demands because, although they had became self financing they did not have the resources to do so. In this way they sought to deflect the workers' anger on to the centre, and above all to the coal ministry in Moscow. In this way they channelised the workers' discontent to secure their own independence from Moscow. The Ministry found itself as the scapegoat for all failures of perestroika, caught between local administration and national government.

The Government immediately acknowledged the legitimacy of the miner's grievances, assimilating their demands to the movement of prestroika, and identifying the opposition to the miners as the conservative ministerial system and backward managers, while arguing
that strike action was unjustified and unnecessary because the mines' legitimate demands would be met. It is now known that military intervention was considered, but immediately rejected, although strikers were aware that force could always be used against them. The government negotiators gave in to all the workers' demands.²⁸

Governments' priority in responding to miners was to contain the strike, to neutralise or to co-opt its leadership and to demobilise the workers. Concessions made were largely at the expense of other workers. Food, clothing and Medical supplies were diverted from other towns, while pay increases led to the local inflation hitting those workers who did not benefit from pay hikes. The promised rise in fuel prices would hit both consumer and workers in fuel intensive industries. So it contained the workers' movement by exploiting the divisions among workers that it had opened up.

Government authorities had been very successful in structuring the representations of workers, paving a way to the hierarchical structure to take place to match the hierarchical and bureaucratic apparatus at regional and national level which weakened the workers organization. Only the Kuzbass miners developed a stable regional worker's Committee, while attempts to form nationwide organisation made little progress.
The shift of emphasis from workplace mobilization to political organizations was reflected in the selection of the town and regional strike committees. These committees came to be dominated by those who had the educational background and the organizational and leadership skill to serve as political representatives.29

Among the miners there were plenty of evidence of a powerful workerist anti-intellectualism, expressed in their rejection of cooperation with any informal political organizations, in their reluctance to cooperate with engineering and technical workers, and in their demand for the dismissal of the managers. However this position was represented by a very small minority.

So far the demands of the miners were concerned as already noted were in accordance with the general direction of prestroika, so that miners' strike also provided Gorbachev with an opportunity to attack ministerial powers. But in this struggle the interests of the workers were set aside. A survey in Donbass during strike 1989 showed that only 16% favoured the financial autonomy, although 33% favoured the arenda form of leasing to the work collective.30

The Mines in the Ukraine finally passed to the Republican Sovereignty at the beginning of 1991, without an adequate price increase, immediately provoking a financial crisis. The authorities refused to set new prices. The impending bankruptcy of Donbass Coal Mines meant that
management was not able to respond to the workers demand for pay rises to compensate for inflation, and this was a critical factor in provoking the strikes of spring, 1991 which started in Donbass.

In workers’ committees those who were adopting the position of reforming the existing trade unions and other institutions were dropped from committees paving the way for strengthening neo-liberal tendencies. Within the newo-liberals there were two opinions regarding the role of these committees. First, overriding trade union concern and primary to workers’ interest and second group favoured to dismantle the state first and workers’ interest to be achieved and protected later on.

Miners were not going to put their faith into discredited institutions of official representations. The Regional Committee insisted that strike was only suspended, and would not end untill miners demands were met. The miners strike committees were not dissolved, but became permanent bodies, playing an increasing role at the city, regional and national level. The law on strikes (October 1989) proved ineffective in containing the political mobilization of workers as the court held that it applied only to industrial disputes, not to political strikes.

The political priorities of workers’ Committees at local and regional level meant that activists played little attention to the development of work place organisations, or to the everyday grievances of the workers, and the weakness of independent organizations at
enterprise level underlay the gap which soon emerged between miners committees and the rank and file workers. The formers were preoccupied with political priorities while the later were more concerned with their economic and day to day life demands. Many of the members of these committees were involved with mafia while some others (due to distribution responsibility) got corrupting influences and were caught red handed.

Further the electoral successes of many workers’ committee members in election of local Soviets in 1990 further diluted the movement. An attempt to form wider workers’ organization, the confederation of labour, was made at the end of April, 1990 at a Conference in Kuzbass, but it never got of the ground. Meanwhile the official trade unions also tried to reform themselves with cosmetic changes in operational ways but without success. The leaders of workers’ committees decided that it was essential to pre-empt the attempts of official unions to take back the initiative and established a independent miners’ union. But it made little attempt to develop an effective primary organizations, and many saw it as having no more role than to issue strike calls to its members at the instigation of the workers’ committees. So it had little effective trade union presence at enterprise level.

Now worker’s committees having cut off from their base had no other option than to fall into the arm of one or another faction of ruling
stratum. They are disillusioned with Gorbachev and transferred their hopes to Yeltsin, not because of their love to him but they had no where else to go.

Miners’ Strikes of 1991:

By the end of 1990 the economic environment changed fundamentally, free market prices were rising rapidly, shortages were getting progressively worse, and the production difficulties cutting workers’ bonuses and threatening the solvancy at self financing enterprises. In this situation workers’ interests focussed increasingly on the demand for increased wages to match price increases and for wage indexation. The economic demands of rank and file and political demands of workers’ committee came together once again in massive strike wave of 1991 which eventually brought down the whole system. In 1991 the strike leaders were insistent that strikes were primarily political. The leaders of Kuzbass and Vorkuta committees took the position that there could be no purely economic demands, since miners’ economic aspirations could only be realised on the basis of fundamental political change. The Donbass and Karaganda Committees, while concentrating on political issues, linked political to economic demands, without substituting one for another. In general, miners’ only responded to strike calls when latter expressed their immediate economic demands and were prepared to retire to work once those demands have been met.
we can see Belorussian Popular Front (BPF) getting the workers support or its strike programme in April-May 1991 only after linking its political platform to economic demand of 'Market wages for Market prices.'

The simmering discontent in Ukraine Mines due to the transferred republican sovereignty which consequently led to financial crisis, the Donbass workers committee called for a strike on March 1, 1991 with the demand of 100% to 150% increases in wages. Ukraine government said it could not afford the claim, strike went ahead but with patchy response.

On March 10, 1991 Yelstin met the Kuzbass strike leaders in Moscow, and effectively gave them his endorsement, as a result of which they declared an unlimited political strike in Kuzbass, backing was also received from AFL/CIO in response to the appeal of the NPG.34

In middle of March the various regional committees put forward different and varying sets of economic and political demands, with little sign of coordination among one another. (The Ukraine and Kazak mines now under republican Sovereignty directed their demands against their government) Many mines come out in strike while others seen going back to work leaves the impression of spontaneity.

Although miners had political support from Yeltsin, but the collection of food and money for strikers particularly in Moscow and Baltics by workers demonstrated solidarity. But overall strike wave
lacked organization, momentum and direction. From the middle of March strike escalated but not due to the politicization of workers, but because on March 10, Pavlov the Prime Minister of U.S.S.R. spoke of impending price increase. The proposed prices were confirmed by Gorbachev order of 19th March and which were implemented on 2nd April. It was only when the issue of prices moved to the top of the agenda, that the moods in coal fields changed, and strikes spread rapidly, within ten days the half the coal mines in U.S.S.R. were out and strikes was spreading to other branches of production. The workers in oil and Gas sector, Gold Mining, Metalburgy and social services also held or threatened strikes, escalating their earlier demands oil and Gas workers insisted that the prices for their output be raised to world level and they be given expanded marketing rights and large pay increases.

The miners' worker committees and NPG leaders had met in Moscow to establish an inter-regional co-ordination committee and Deputy Chairman of official Federation of independent trade unions of Russia, threatened a general strike if Gorbachev did not meet with miners representatives.

In the end of March, 1991 the Supreme Soviet of Soviet Union called upon the workers not to strike for the end of year in lieu of grave economic situation and issued a decree for the suspension of the strike. It also instructed cabinet and republican government to look at the
demands of workers and improve working conditions.

The Kuzbass and Vorkuta Committees did not participate in Cabinet Conference on miners in early April on the ground that their demands were political in nature. In this conference miners' were offered doubling of wages in 1992 but on the condition of meeting impossible production targets. This did not satisfy the miners and strike continued, although it did not grow. The Donbass committee called for general strike on April 16th the opening day of supreme soviet. The Ukrainian government accepted some of the demands and strike was called off. The Kuzbass called an All-union general strike for April 17th to force Gorbachev and Union government from power but it met with negligible response. 37

Although Yeltsin had ridden the strike wave by Mid April, there was a danger that it would prove counter productive in pushing political polarization to the point of decisive confrontation, and the devastating impact it would have on Russian economy if it continued much longer. And there is little doubt that these considerations, alongwith the division among miner and non-miner workers, between striking and non-striking miners, and between striking miners themselves, played their part in forcing a 9+1 agreement between Yeltsin and Gorbachev, which passed the jurisdiction of mines to Russian Republic under which mines would be granted financial autonomy, which would then allow them to respond
to the miners' economic demands.\textsuperscript{38}

The agreement was price increase and compensation, transfer of mines to republican jurisdiction and call for an end to strike. Yeltsin went to Kuzbass to sell the deal, bypassing inter-republican committee, but miners rejected it until it was amended and enshrined in joint resolution of U.S.S.R. Cabinet and the Russian Council of Ministers. But Transfer of Mines to Russian Jurisdiction provided enormous pay rises to miners. For Yeltsin, strike was bonanza. In Presidential election in June, 1991 he secure 60\% of popular 70\% polled votes, but in Kuzbass he could not get an overall majority, where Tuleev, who opposed the strikes got 42\% of vote. This brings the point at home that government had been successful in isolating the miners from rest of the working class.\textsuperscript{39}

The "9+1" agreement was a symbol of radical realignment of forces within ruling stratum in which the balance of power shifted decisively in favour of reformist faction as Gorbachev ended his Vacilation, and Yeltsin showed a willingness to compromise. There was a clear split between Prime Minister Pavlov and Gorbachev as former supported the military industrial complex and the Ministerial system of administration, while the later was in favour of priority to consumer goods industry. This led to the process of August Coup and counter coup, which led to the end of Party Monopoly on power and consequently the disintegration of U.S.S.R.
NOTES


2. Ibid., p.22.

3. Ibid., p.147.

4. This can be seen in Simon Clarke (1993), David Mandel (1989-91), Marples (1991) etc.


6. Ibid., p.213.


8. Leaflet No date, quoted from Anna A. Tenkina, op.cit., page 221.


11. Simon Clark and Peterfair brother; op.cit., page 152.


13. Ibid., p.154.


20. Dr.G.Shalygin Conducted Survey quoted from T.Friedgut, L. Seigelbaum, NLR No.183.


22. Ironically, on the very same day 'Trud' Published five demands' addressed by official miners union to newly appointed Coal Minister Schadav.


25. Ibid. p.25.


27. Ibid. p.131.

28. Note that the official TU's were a party of the government negotiating team, sitting across the table from the workers whom they supposed to represent.

29. Result that in Kuzbass Regional Committee dominant figures Avaliani, and Kislyuk were managers, first chair of Varkuta worker committee was an engineer, even those who were workers like Golikov & Boldyrev had higher education.


33. This can be seen from Vorgashorskaya strike in November 1989 which was settled with full economic Independence of mines, They did not join 1991 strikes. Similarly Kuzbass Committee got only a feeble response in January 1991 to its call for political strikes in which merely 300 workers participated.

34. In April B.Yeltsin Sent 4l Million Rubles of Russian government money to NPG in Vorkutu which at that time had a very low level of organization and Membership - a delegation of the 'Democratic worker's Movement' signed an agreement with AFL/CIO in Washington on Ist February, 1991.


38. Ibid., p.166-67.

39. Ibid., p.67.