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**The Building of
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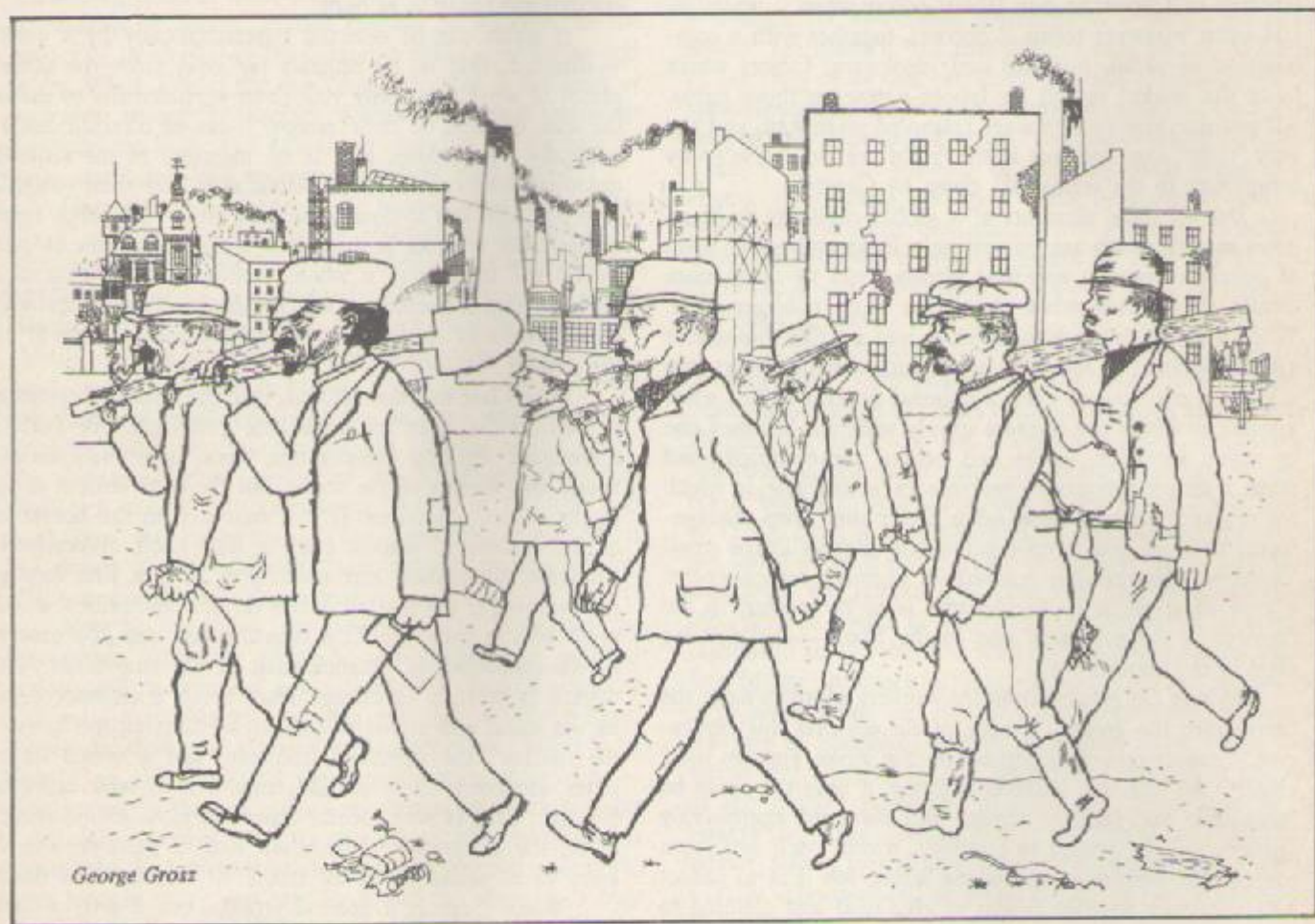
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Ernest Mandel

WORKERS & WORKERS CONTROL & COUNCILS



Every general workers' struggle, which goes beyond immediate and narrowly corporative objectives, poses the question of forms of organization of that struggle that contain the seeds of a challenge to capitalist power.

The Prussian minister von Puttkammer was quite right in his statement that 'Every strike contains the hydra of the revolution'.

A strike for purely economic objectives may be directed solely to a more favourable division — from the point of view of those who sell their labour-power — of the new value they are creating, as between themselves and capital. But even that form of economic strike, if carried out with sufficient energy and combativeness,

is actually challenging small areas of capitalist power. It is an attempt to prevent the boss from buying labour-power 'freely' by forcing the workers into mutual competition, whereas they can only defend themselves against the economic omnipotence of Capital if they can overcome competition within their own class. It is an attempt to prevent the boss from bringing into 'his' factory whomsoever he wishes; that is the condition for any strike being a success. By the same token it challenges the right of the bourgeoisie as a whole — of the bourgeois State — to control roads and traffic; that is the purpose of strike pickets, who become 'the strikers' traffic police' around the works where the strike is taking place.

It also challenges the ruling bourgeois ideology, including bourgeois law, by showing how even the most 'liberal' of bourgeois states, when it comes to defending such abstract principles as 'freedom to work' or 'the right to travel freely on the roads' (i.e. access to factories), far from declaring itself 'neutral' or adopting the role of conciliator in the class struggle, comes down actively on the side of Capital against Labour. For a strike is a statement by the workers of their right to fight against 'freedom of exploitation', and to fight for control of their own labour by the workers themselves as a body. The ruling ideology is bourgeois, but it is also contradictory. Though it proclaims 'freedom of work', it prevents the majority of strikers from exercising their right *not* to work in conditions they find unsatisfactory, while at the same time failing to guarantee them the possibility of always being able to work (full employment). 'Freedom of work' thus becomes merely the freedom of Capital to buy labour-power when it wants to, and upon whatever terms it chooses, together with a combination of social, juridical and ideological factors which *force* the worker to sell his labour-power on those terms. All genuine human rights are trampled underfoot, and the only 'right' that remains is the 'right' not to starve — by submitting to the terms laid down by Capital.

But all these elements of a global challenge to bourgeois society which are present only in an embryonic form in purely economic, sectional strikes, tend to come more clearly to the fore when the strike is on a larger scale. When a strike in one firm develops into a strike throughout a whole branch of industry; when such a strike grows into a local, a regional, or even a national general strike; when a strike in which the workers simply walk out becomes one in which factories, works and offices are occupied; and when a simple occupation becomes an 'active' one, in which the workers start to work again under their own management; then all that is only potentially present in the small 'industrial dispute' has reached its ultimate consequences: a trial of strength to decide who is to be master, in the factory, in the economy, and in the State — the working class or the bourgeoisie.

It is in the organization the workers adopt to wage the battle with the greatest chance of success that this embryonic 'counter-power' produced by the strike appears most clearly. An effective strike committee, if only the strike be large-scale and lengthy enough and managed aggressively enough, will be forced to establish, within itself and from among the strikers, commissions whose job it is to collect and distribute support funds, to give food and clothing to the strikers and their families, to prevent access to the firm's buildings, to organize the strikers' spare-time activities, to defend the strikers' cause to the rest of working-class public opinion, to get information about the enemy's plans, and so on. In these commissions we see the seeds of a workers' power organizing its various administrative departments: Finance, Food, the armed Militia, Information, Leisure and even a 'Secret Service'. Once the strike becomes active, then departments for Industrial Production, for Planning and even for Foreign Trade, will logically follow on from that. And even where it only exists in embryo, the workers' power of the future already gives evidence of its characteristic tendency to try to associate as many people as possible in the exercise of power. An efficient strike committee's objective will be to hold daily general assemblies of strikers and involve a maximum number of workers, their wives and children in the above-mentioned tasks — thereby trying to overcome as far as possible the social division of labour between those who administer and those who are being administered, which is essential to the bour-

geois State, as to every State throughout history which has defended the interests of the exploiting classes.

From the moment we are faced with a local, regional and national general strike, these seeds of workers' power begin to germinate and spread outwards in all directions. Even though its leaders may be relatively moderate, and certainly non-revolutionary, a central strike committee in any large working-class town is forced to start taking charge of arrangements for food supplies and public services. In Liège in Belgium, during the general strikes of 1950 and 1960-61, the strike leaders directed the motor traffic in the town, and banned from entering it any lorry not having an entry permit from the strike committee. The local people, including the bourgeoisie, faced with this *de facto* situation, gave way and went to the union headquarters for their permits just as in normal circumstances they would have gone to the Town Hall. The seed had begun to grow; the embryo was ready to be born.

A strike can be directed bureaucratically by a union — directed, that is, by officials far away from the actual places of work, who only visit them perfunctorily to assess the state of mind of 'their' troops. It can be directed democratically by a union, that is by meetings of the striking unionists, who control all decisions as to how their struggle is to develop. But obviously the most truly democratic form of directing a strike is through a strike committee elected by all the strikers as a whole, whether they belong to a union or not, a committee which submits democratically to the decisions of regularly-convened general meetings of all the strikers.

If this last situation obtains, then the strike is beginning to fulfil more than its immediate purposes. For such a democratic fighting organization does more than merely assure the success of the strike and the achievement of its freely chosen objectives. It is a first step in the liberation of the individual worker from a long habit of economic passivity, submission and obedience. It is a first step in the removal of the burden of the various 'authorities' which crush him in daily life. It is thus the first step in a process of dis-alienation, of emancipation in the true sense. The worker is starting to change from being a creature ruled by the social and economic system, by Capital, the 'laws of the market', the machines, foremen, and a whole lot of other supposed 'facts of life', into a man who can rule himself. That is why careful observers have always recognized the explosions of freedom and of genuine *joie de vivre* to be found in all the major strikes of recent times.

When there is a general strike, even if only a local one; when democratically elected strike committees supported by general assemblies of strikers become established not just in one firm, but in all the firms in the town (and *a fortiori* in the district or the country); when those committees link up and become centralized, and create a body in which their delegates meet regularly; then we see the birth of *territorial workers' councils*, the basic cells of the future workers' State. The first Petrograd Soviet was precisely that: a council of delegates from the strike committees of all the major firms in the city.

Consciousness and the Proletarian Revolution

Though any widespread, lengthy and combative strike contains the seeds of this kind of power which challenges the power of Capital, obviously much more is needed for the seeds to germinate in each case. We must in fact recognize that in most cases they will not germinate at all. For between a potential attack on the capitalist regime and its realization, there is more than just a difference in degree, in breadth of action, in the number of strikers, in the impact of the strike on the capitalist national economy and so on. What divides the one from the other is the *level of awareness* among the workers. Without a series of *conscious* decisions, no strike can effectively threaten the regime; no strike committee will spontaneously turn into a soviet.

Here we come to one of the fundamental characteristics of socialist and proletarian revolutions. All the social revolutions of the past have brought to power social classes which already held in their hands most of the wealth of the country. All they really did, therefore, was to legalize an already existing situation. The working class, on the other hand, is the first class in history which can only take over the means of production and the national wealth when it becomes politically emancipated and achieves power. Without overthrowing the power of the State and the bourgeoisie, it cannot take permanent control of factories and work-sites, any more than it can permanently get rid of the power of the capitalist State without seizing control of the means of material production.

Now to overthrow the power of the State and the bourgeoisie calls for planned and centralized political action; and to organize a socialized and planned economy also calls for coherently worked out and well-formulated moves. In short, the socialist revolution cannot possibly be simply an elemental and spontaneous mass movement — though clearly there is such a movement in every popular revolution, and without it no genuine socialist revolution is conceivable — but must be a complex of planned upheavals, each leading on to the next, in which the absence of only one link in the chain is enough to spell disaster for the whole undertaking.¹

In a more general way, a socialist revolution which will transform the vast majority of workers, and indeed all the exploited and oppressed, from objects into subjects of history, from alienated people into people who guide their own destinies — such a revolution is inconceivable without the workers' own conscious participation in the whole movement. Such a revolution can no more take place behind the backs of those concerned than an economic plan can be put into effect behind the backs of the people managing the economy.

If the seeds of dual power which are present in every large-scale, lengthy and combative strike are to become fully grown, there must be a whole complex of conditions which favour a sharp change, a 'great leap forward', in the class-consciousness of the proletariat. These conditions are well-known. They are those which create all pre-revolutionary situations: an objective crisis in the capitalist relations of production (which may, or may not, be reinforced by simultaneous crises of over-production, now

known as 'recessions'); a crisis in the power of the bourgeois State, involving all the important parts of the superstructure; disunity and indecisiveness within the government and the whole governing class; a massive discontent among intermediate social strata (the petty bourgeoisie); a long build-up of discontent and unsatisfied aspirations in the working class; a growing confidence in their own strength on the part of the workers, which tips the social balance of power in their favour and against the ruling classes; a series of preliminary skirmishes ending without defeat; and the consolidation of a vanguard — which at this stage in the pre-revolutionary situation need not necessarily take the form of a revolutionary party already having a decisive influence on the mass of the workers.²

Once all or even most of these conditions come together, almost any spark can set off the explosion. Strikes, instead of remaining within the traditional framework of a struggle for immediate objectives of a purely economic nature, are taken to the threshold of dual power. Whether or not they cross that threshold depends essentially on the consciousness of the vanguard workers. And that consciousness in turn depends on several factors, of which obviously a major one is the presence of a revolutionary organization among the masses for some time beforehand, and the degree of systematic education it has managed to achieve. The threshold was crossed in Russia in 1905 and in Spain in 1936; it was not crossed in Italy in 1948 or 1969, nor in France in 1968.

The manipulation of the workers' consciousness (and even of their subconscious) by the capitalists and their State, who control the mass media, is today a very fashionable subject for study. But Marxists did not need Herbert Marcuse to tell them that the ruling ideology of every era is bound to be the ideology of the ruling class. It was so in the past; it is so today. The capitalist regime would not last a week if the workers as a whole were fully liberated from the influence of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology. It would be painting far too rosy a picture of capitalism to say that the workers can ever become totally free of the influence of that ideology as long as Capital is in power. For the rule of Capital does not just mean the rule of bourgeois schools, churches, press, radio, television and cinema. It also, and above all, means the rule of the market economy; of universal reification; of the slavery of wage labour, which is forced and alienated labour, and of fragmented work, which cannot fail to create a 'false consciousness' of social reality in the vast majority of people.

The specific characteristic of rule by Capital is that it need not normally be exercised through the medium of any mechanism of domination external to everyday life of a directly political or violent kind. Only at moments of acute crisis for the regime does the bourgeoisie have to use means of massive repression to remain in power. Normally Capital rules through the medium of everyday market relationships which everyone, including the proletariat, accepts as self-evident and inevitable. Everyone 'buys' bread and shoes, 'pays' his rent and his taxes, and in order to do so has to 'sell' his labour-power (unless he happens to possess some capital).

¹ Cf the failure to disarm the former Reichswehr in November-December 1918 in Germany; the failure to distribute land to the peasants in the Hungarian revolution of 1919; the failure to set up a central government based exclusively on revolutionary power structures, established locally and linked together nationally, in Spain in 1936; and so on.

² Cf the role played by the *revolutionäre Obleute* (revolutionary shop stewards) among the Berlin metal-workers in preparing the November 1918 revolution in Germany.

Even workers whose study, thinking and political education have enabled them to draw general conclusions from individual experiences of struggle, and to realize that these capitalist market relations are by no means self-evident or 'natural', but the source of all the suffering in bourgeois society, and that they can and must be replaced by other kinds of production relations; even they are forced in practice to tolerate, submit to and sustain capitalist relationships, unless they are willing to become 'drop-outs'.³

Relatively seldom, then, does a slow building up of resentment, anxiety, worry, indignation, experience of struggle and new ideas produce a sudden upsurge in the consciousness of the toiling masses (or rather of a vanguard among them of sufficient size and influence to involve a decisive number of the rest). People then suddenly understand, be it in an instinctive way, that it is neither 'normal' nor 'inevitable' for the capitalist to order them around, for the machines and factories to belong to people who do not work them. Then they question why labour-power, the source of all wealth, should be relegated to the level of a commodity to be bought as inanimate objects are bought. They realize too that workers from time to time earn less or lose their jobs, not because society is producing too little, but because it is producing too much.

That is the point at which they instinctively seek to change things fundamentally, in other words to change the structure of society and the system of production. And when they see how vast their strength is — not merely in terms of numbers, of cohesion and of the collective force they represent by banding together, but in terms of the strength they feel when they are sole masters of the factory and have the totality of economic power within their grasp — then what is present potentially in every large and militant strike suddenly and consciously becomes a reality.

The workers do then, in fact, challenge the bourgeois 'order'. Their councils do in fact assume the privileges of power. They become actually involved in all the political, economic, military, cultural and international problems of the country. They actually set their class solutions up against all the solutions of the bourgeoisie. Then, as in Russia between the February revolution and October 1917, a genuine dual power emerges. Then the workers' councils act as the organs of a new State power coming to birth. There remains the final confrontation — an insurrection in the political sense, more or less violent depending on the extent of the enemy's resistance — which will decide the victory as between the old bourgeois State (which history has condemned to die, but which may still survive if the energy and clearheadedness of the workers should fail at the decisive moment, or if they lack adequate revolutionary leadership) and the young workers' State already coming into being.

The Strategy of Transitional Demands

Every major strike contains the seeds of the ultimate objective of the class struggle, which is to contest the power of the capitalist in industry, and of the capitalist class in society and the State. If that battle is to develop

its ultimate logic, there must be a favourable relationship of forces. But Marxists are not purely commentators on social and political life. They are not content simply to note the relationship of forces as something given and immutable or to estimate the chances of change in the future. They act in a precise way: they try to alter the relationship of forces between Capital and Labour, by stimulating the workers' confidence in their own strength, raising their class consciousness, widening their political horizon, reinforcing their organization and unity, and creating a revolutionary vanguard capable of leading them to fight and win.

This does not, of course, mean that Marxists are unaware of the limitations imposed by conditions which, in a given situation, may be unfavourable to transforming the workers' self-organization and self-defence bodies into real organs of dual power. It was stirring to see how, after more than twenty-five years of fascism and a senile military dictatorship, the Spanish workers instinctively returned to a form of organization on the factory floor which linked up with the finest traditions of the Spanish revolution: the *comisiones obreras* (workers' commissions).⁴ The moderate and opportunist leaders of the underground Spanish workers' movement (especially those of the Spanish C.P.) tried to transform those commissions into semi-legal trade unions, which was of course precisely what would have suited the book of the employers. But the workers understood instinctively that in a situation of direct political dictatorship by Capital, to limit the activities of their commissions to wage claims and other purely economic functions was out of the question. The *comisiones obreras* saw the logic of the situation as demanding that they try to become representative self-defence bodies for workers, dealing with all sorts of problems arising from the specific situation in Spain. They fought for democratic rights as well as material ones, for the defence of victims of repression and class justice as much as for the recognition of their rights to negotiate in the name of all their fellow-workers. But they could not become real organs of dual power as long as the dictatorship was not on the point of being overthrown by a strong revolutionary upsurge of the mass of the people.

The revolutionary Marxist vanguard cannot 'provoke' pre-revolutionary situations, still less revolutions. These can only come about through the coincidence of a large number of 'molecular' or 'underground' changes. Some of these changes can of course be directly influenced by conscious revolutionary action; others can at least be foreseen; but there are some which are quite outside the realm of accurate prediction, at least in the present state of our knowledge. On the other hand, what the revolutionary vanguard can and must do is to prepare favourable conditions for the workers to make a breakthrough towards socialism, by establishing organs of dual power at the height of a pre-revolutionary period, and by making sure that the revolutionary period culminates in the conquest of power.

Four major elements are involved in that preparatory work. First comes the tireless propagation among the

³ I use this term pejoratively, but not of course in the bourgeois sense. In my view they are 'drop-outs' because they are no longer taking part in a movement to set free the exploited; they are content to live in the illusion of their own individual emancipation in the midst of universal exploitation.

⁴ For more about the workers' commissions see e.g. *Le Commissioni Operaie Spagnole*, Turin 1969.

working class³ of the kind of programmatic ideas which will enable the masses to react in a certain, objectively revolutionary direction once a generalized struggle breaks out. Next is the training of a vanguard of militants inside factories, shops, offices, docks, etc., who will interpret this programme to their fellow-workers and will gain enough hearing and authority among them to enable them to compete for the leadership of the masses once a generalized struggle begins. Next is the grouping of these militants into a national and international organization, in which they are united with manual and intellectual workers, students, revolutionary poor peasants from other factories, districts and countries. This will overcome the narrowness of horizon inevitable in any worker with only a limited experience of struggle, and will neutralize the effects of the fragmentation of work and the incomplete — and therefore false — consciousness arising from it. It will thus, by way of a universal revolutionary praxis, give the worker access to a theory which sees the problems of imperialism and the socialist revolution as a totality, and thereby enable him to advance his practical struggle and bring it to a far higher level of co-ordination and effectiveness. Finally, this vanguard organization (or at least sections of it) must move beyond the stage of propaganda and verbal criticism, and become capable of launching exemplary actions, showing the workers in a concrete way the purpose of the revolutionary socialist strategy which Marxists stand for, as against the reformism and neo-reformism of the traditional, bureaucratized organizations of the workers' movement.

This strategy of transitional demands — which we in Belgium know as 'anti-capitalist structural reforms' — is directed to extricating the actions of the workers from a contradiction which has been inherent in the workers' movement, at least in the imperialist countries, since mass organizations first came into being. Inevitably, workers' actions are always directed to immediate objectives (material demands; social legislation; political rights; resistance to repressive regimes or reactionary coups d'Etat, etc.). Therefore the activities of organizations claiming to belong to the workers' movement have always centred on these immediate objectives, sometimes (though not always) combining these concrete activities with abstract propaganda for 'socialism' (or the 'socialist revolution' or the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', or whatever).

In this way, the historical goal of the labour movement has always been divorced from the practical, day-to-day struggle. This is true as much for the reformists, whether old-style or new — to whom, to paraphrase Eduard Bernstein, the movement for immediate objectives is everything, and the final goal nothing — as for the 'left-wing extremists', who disdain the struggle for immediate objectives and will only accept as worthwhile the struggle for 'the conquest of power' (or 'workers' power', or 'the destruction of the State' or some such high-sounding aim). In practice, the two attitudes both have the same effect, that of consolidating a radical divorce between the concrete everyday struggles of the workers and the 'final goal' of overthrowing capitalism.

The strategy of transitional demands is an attempt to overcome this dualism. With that in mind, it begins by recognizing a basic 'fact of life' about modern capitalism: what has up to now facilitated the survival of that regime is the fact that all immediate demands, however radical they may seem, can always be integrated into that regime as long as they do not question the very basis of capitalism: the domination by Capital of both machines and labour,

as well as of the State.

Of course, whether the capitalist will, at a given moment, resist rather than grant an increase in wages, allow once again a free exercise of the right to strike or a free negotiation of rates of pay, will depend on the economic conjuncture and on the seriousness of the structural crisis threatening a declining capitalism. But however serious its internal problems, *none* of these claims is ultimately too much for the regime to assimilate, none is fatal to it. And when the system faces a really large-scale movement with a serious revolutionary potential, it will always find it preferable to grant those demands rather than risk losing its power altogether. In point of fact it has many means at its disposal for de-fusing any element in those concessions that could become explosive to the capitalist economy, as long as it preserves real power.

If, however, starting with the immediate concerns of the workers, we formulate demands which *cannot* be assimilated by the regime, and if the workers become convinced of the need to fight for those demands, then we shall have made a decisive step towards welding together the struggle for immediate demands and the long-term struggle to overthrow Capital. For in such a situation, the struggle for transitional demands is bound to become a struggle which shakes the very foundations of capitalism, and Capital will be forced to contest it fiercely. The most typical example of the struggle for transitional demands is the struggle for workers' control.⁴

Siren Songs of Participation

In the past the day-to-day class struggle centred upon the problem of how the new value created by Labour should be shared as between Capital and Labour. The political demands which came to be added (such as the demand for universal suffrage) only had the function of additional weapons in the fight to improve the workers' share — e.g. through social legislation and so on. Only in times of acute crisis, like the period immediately after the First World War, has the problem of the 'socialization' of sectors of industry arisen, and that as a result not so much of a big leap forward in working-class consciousness regarding the global nature of capitalist exploitation, as of specific considerations of an economic or a political nature (disorganization of the economy, mass unemployment, acts of capitalists against 'left' governments, etc.).

In recent decades, the axis on which the class struggle turns has gradually shifted direction, not because of any agitation or evil conspiracy on the part of Marxists, but because of the way the capitalist system of production itself has developed. For one thing, the third technological revolution has brought about a speeding up of the cycle of reproduction of fixed capital and of the rhythm of technological advance. This involves the need for big

³ Let me make it clear that in this context I am using the term 'working class' to apply to all those who sell their labour-power, and whose work is indispensable for the production of surplus value.

⁴ In English, there is an ambiguity about the word 'control' which does not exist in other European languages. The phrase 'workers' control' is here used in its traditional Marxist sense, and is *not* identical with workers' management.

capitalist firms to work out very precise plans for the amortization of fixed capital and accumulation of fresh capital, in other words to work out long term cost-planning (including wage cost planning), and to move in the direction of national, and indeed international 'economic programming'. For another thing, the capitalist regime, being even weaker on the international level after the Second World War than it was after the First, can no longer allow itself the luxury of permitting such catastrophic crises of over-production as took place in 1929-32. It must therefore allow for a full range of anti-recession measures, based in essence on the inflation of paper money and credit.

These two factors have meant enormous changes in the conditions governing the traditional skirmishes between Capital and Labour within the bourgeois democratic system. The monopolies often want to avoid strikes at almost any cost, and with this in mind to integrate the union bureaucracy into state bodies whose function is to 'plan' wages just as they also 'plan economic growth' — with incomes policies, 'social programming', government-controlled 'wages policy', 'concerted actions', whatever may be the different names given to these devices in different countries. When the authority of the union bureaucracy becomes weakened by a long-term application of such policies, then it becomes indispensable to penalize 'wild-cat strikes' in order to keep the system functioning.⁷ On the other hand, when there is a general economic climate of inflation together with rapid technological changes, then the attention of the workers will inevitably be drawn to problems like the organization of the labour process, methods of payment, the speed of the assembly-line, job security and investment patterns — especially since there is a general (though far from justified) impression that in a situation of full, or almost full, employment, wage claims will in most cases be met.

This change is the more striking in that the third technological revolution has brought out a further contradiction. There is a gradual decrease in the need for unskilled and purely repetitive work in the production process; consequently there is a demand for a more skilled, better trained labour force, educated to a higher level than in the past — though even this will remain a fragmented education, far below what is made possible, and even objectively needed, by present-day science. But the workers turned out by this improved training find themselves suddenly thrust into an industry where, despite all the refined techniques of 'human relations', of 'delegation of power' and of 'establishing informal communication lines', there is no hiding the fact that the relationship between Capital and Labour remains a hierarchized one, with a straightforward division into those who give the orders and those who have to obey them.

Thus the centre of gravity in the class struggle is shifting from problems concerning the distribution of the national income to the problems of organizing work and production, the problems, that is to say, of the capitalist relations of production themselves. For whether it is a matter of contesting the boss's right to determine the rhythm of the assembly-line, or his right to choose the site for establishing a new factory; whether of objecting to the types of product made by a firm, or of trying to oppose elected leaders to management-appointed foremen or 'managers'; whether the workers are trying to prevent redundancies and a declining volume of employment in an area, or trying to calculate for themselves the rises in the cost of living; whatever they are trying to do amounts, in the last analysis, to one and the same thing:⁸ Labour is no

longer willing to let Capital be in control of industry and the economy. It no longer accepts the logic of the capitalist economy which is the logic of profit. It is trying to reorganize the economy on the basis of quite different principles — the socialist principles which correspond to its own interests.

All intelligent capitalists are well aware of the threat to their entire regime posed by this instinctive revolt of the workers against capitalist relations of production.⁹ They also realize that if that revolt were to unite with the propaganda, agitation and action of the revolutionary vanguard for workers' control, it would endanger the very survival of the system. So they endeavour to canalize and deflect that revolt, with the help of the trade-union bureaucracy, towards class collaboration and away from class confrontation. This is the purpose of all the propaganda for the idea of 'participation', *Mitbestimmung*, 'co-management' and so on, being put forward by large groups among the bourgeoisie in Europe today (and doubtless in Japan and North America tomorrow). The formulae used are generally clear enough to indicate the difference between them and the transitional demands I have spoken of. There is confusion only when the left wing of the union bureaucracy takes up the slogan of workers' control, while giving it an entirely different meaning from that given by revolutionary Marxists.

One can sum up the basic difference between the ideology of 'participation' and 'co-management' on the one hand, and the demand for workers' control on the other, in the following ways. Workers' control rejects the idea that the unions and/or workers' representatives should share in the management of capitalist industry; it demands for the workers a power of veto in a whole series of spheres relating to working conditions on the job, etc. Workers' control rejects any idea of secrecy, with the account books being opened only to a handful of carefully chosen union officials. On the contrary, it demands the widest, most total publicity for all that the workers may discover, not only from their examination of the employer's accounts and the way the firm's money is handled, but also, more important, by comparing those accounts on the shop floor with the economic reality they are supposed to reflect. Workers' control rejects all institutionalization,¹⁰ all notion of

⁷ Note with what fervour the 'socialist' Wilson advocated penalization of this sort!

⁸ In the Pirelli Works in Milan, the workers unilaterally altered their production routines. In the Fiat works in Turin, attempts were made to prevent the boss from shifting the output from popular cars to luxury models; an elected workers' council came into being there at the beginning of 1970. In Belgium, there has been widespread discussion of the right of veto by elected shop stewards against any lay-offs. Etc. etc.

⁹ As long ago as 1963, the highly intelligent French banker Bloch-Laine grasped this, pointing out that the dissatisfaction of workers, because of their alienation as producers, could provoke real revolution if there were the slightest weakening of the economy (*Pour une réforme de l'entreprise*, Paris 1963).

¹⁰ It is on this point that I part company with André Gorz who, in *Stratégie ouvrière et néo-capitalisme* (Paris 1964, pp. 116-17), defends a gradualist concept of workers' control, with graduated objectives, and the idea of a series of achievable intermediate claims which would open a 'practicable way' to socialism. This notion fails to recognize that there must be a revolutionary mass mobilization like that which occurred in May 1968 if workers' control is to be achieved. Nor does it understand the close links between such a mobilization and the question of political power inevitably posed by it, and the impossibility of permanently preserving what Gorz calls 'the balance' between the workers' movement and capitalism — which in such a situation is not in fact a balance at all, but a highly unstable and fragile dual power. Gorz has since then at least partially modified his views on this subject.

becoming, even provisionally, party to the functioning of the system; for its protagonists realize that any such integration would inevitably mean its becoming a tool for class conciliation instead of one for an intensified class struggle.

All this is not just a dogmatic position adopted because of passionate and irrational prejudice. On the contrary, it is the logical conclusion to which one is forced if one analyzes the deepest trends of contemporary capitalism in terms of the class struggle.

Contemporary capitalism is trying, first and foremost, to keep its grip on all the elements required to ensure an uninterrupted expansion in the reproduction of capital. That is the underlying meaning of such phrases as 'economic programming', 'planning means the elimination of chance', and other slogans which express in their various ways the new constraints which, for Capital, result from the speeding up of the cycle of reproduction of fixed capital. Consequently it makes little difference whether certain groups of workers see their 'rights' increased *at any given phase* in the production process, as long as Capital retains, consolidates and strengthens its hold on the reproduction process *as a whole*.

In fact, in so far as certain sectors of the working class agree to become associated in the management of 'their' particular firm, even if they have equal voting power on the board of management and the incentive of 'profit-sharing', they cannot help making the 'firm's interests' their own, as against those of its competitors. In other words, capitalist competition will be brought back into the working class, so that when such competition strikes at this particular firm, that section of the workers will be unable to defend itself otherwise than by sacrificing income and employment for the sake of protecting the firm's profitability.

All this can do nothing but good to the capitalist class in the struggle at the present juncture, even though it may involve an abandonment of certain 'principles' which the bourgeoisie was unwilling to abandon in the past, when the universal stability of its system, and a more favourable balance of power everywhere, did not make such 'sacrifices' necessary and useful.

The working class, however, can only suffer irreparable weakness, soon leading to total paralysis, if it once lets the principle of competition be brought from the capitalist market and bourgeois society into its own organization and consciousness. It must seek to turn the development of society in exactly the opposite direction: to bring into the organization of the economy the principles of association, co-operation and solidarity which it has initially experienced in its own organizations. Far from accepting 'co-management', which can only fragment the force of the working class as a whole, since if the workers are to identify with the 'firm' it is really the capitalists with whom they are identifying, socialists propose instead the principle of 'workers' control' whereby the principle of collective solidarity is opposed to that of the individual firm's profitability.

Irrespective of the "economic inability" of this or that factory, we reject redundancies and unemployment. *Irrespective* of the "interests of rationalization", we reject the speed-up of assembly lines. *Irrespective* of the "need to increase productivity", we reject any introduction of new pay systems which will fragment the unity of the workers in the factory; that is the spirit of workers' control, which must be implanted among the mass of workers. It is in this very clear direction that we have to present propaganda for workers' control as against the

snare and siren songs of 'co-management'.

Is this attitude 'irrational' from the economic standpoint? Far from it: the practical basis for such an attitude is the conviction — confirmed by economic theory — that the *global* viability of the national (and international) economy would be far greater than the sum of 'individual viabilities', if a democratically centralized system of planning operated with a certain minimum of efficiency.

We are told that it is Utopian to hope to see such an attitude adopted by ever greater number of workers, 'except in times of revolutionary crisis'. But this objection corresponds to a non-dialectical concept of the uneven development of working-class consciousness of the working masses and their actions. But the truth is that for large bodies of workers to be capable of fighting for workers' control straight away in movements of great explosions of class struggle, they would have first to have been familiarized, during the period before the struggle, with this demand, and its meaning, and all that it involves. Such preparation cannot be adequately made with written or spoken propaganda alone; it must try, at least occasionally, to move from words to action, and to get workers' control accepted as one of the objectives being fought for in limited confrontations brought about by more advanced sectors of the working class. The practical experience that comes out of such confrontations, their value as object lessons, the involvement they give people in the switch-over to this entirely new orientation — all of this constitutes an indispensable stage in the development of revolutionary class consciousness.

Obviously this is not to say that agitation and action are to be lightly undertaken around such an explosive slogan during a period of lull in the class struggle. All it means is that any revolutionary vanguard worthy of the name should follow with close attention the impact its propaganda for workers' control is having on advanced sectors of the working class. As soon as it becomes clear that the message has got across, and that more and more workers are starting to move in the same direction of their own accord, it becomes the duty of the vanguard no longer to avoid but positively to seek out some limited opportunity for agitation and action. After all, the 'distance' between a period of 'business as usual' and a pre-revolutionary phase might well be crossed as a result of the repercussions of a struggle for workers' control in a particular large factory, town or district.

Reformist Illusions

For a long time reformists have sincerely believed that coalition governments between 'liberal' bourgeois parties and Social Democrats were a step on the way to purely socialist governments. Experience has shown that such governments, functioning within the framework of the bourgeois State, really do nothing to weaken the foundations of the capitalist regime because they *cannot but* defend the fundamental class interests of Capital. In point of fact, such governments are a step towards integrating 'workers' parties into the bourgeois State — the precise opposite of the 'conquest of the bourgeois State' by the working class.

But what is true of the State is a thousand times more true of the economy. The capitalist economy can only function on the basis of profit. Any 'participation' by workers' representatives in the management of capitalist firms must, in such a situation, force them into 'participating' in the constant attempt to rationalize — which notably involves periodic reductions in the number of jobs and continual attempts to increase the exploitation of the individual worker.

Far from being a step on the way to 'taking over industry', this participation is merely the final step in the integration of the trade unions into the bourgeois State; from an instrument for defending the immediate interests of the workers against the bourgeoisie, they become transformed into an instrument for defending the interests of a 'stable' bourgeois society against the workers.

The notion of a gradual achievement of 'economic democracy', without any previous overthrow of the power of the bourgeois State or expropriation of Capital, is as old as Social Democratic reformism itself. It originated with Bernstein at the end of the last century. After the First World War, Bernstein could even boast that international social democracy now took its inspiration from his theory, and not from that of Kautsky and Bebel who had been his opponents in the great controversy over 'revisionism'.¹¹

It is a fact that the turning of the works councils which arose in 1918-19 from embryonic forms of workers' power into instruments of class collaboration within capitalist industry was one of the greatest 'successes' of international social democracy during the early twenties in countries like Germany and Austria. It is true that, as Otto Bauer honestly believed, what was initially intended was 'a first step towards the socialist form of production'.¹² But, 'the relationship of forces having deteriorated', those works councils could soon play only a defensive role. With the economic crisis of 1929-32, their integration into the 'industrial community' became more and more evident. Instead of being a force in the class struggle, they became instruments for paralyzing and dividing the working class.¹³

After the Second World War, the relationship of forces having once again changed to the detriment of the bourgeoisie, the idea of 'co-management' rose from its ashes and the illusion was fostered that, combined with 'democratic nationalization', it could increase the influence of the workers' movement within State monopoly capitalism.¹⁴ However, once again the practice of class collaboration, imposed this time not only by the Social-Democratic bureaucracy, but also by that of the C.P., worked in favour of Capital, whose tottering power was thus steadied and its profits guaranteed.

The notion of 'public control' being exercised over the capital economy by government, parliament, local councils, joint committees of workers and management, etc., remains a myth as long as real economic and political power remains in the hands of the bourgeoisie. For reformists and neo-reformists, participation in coalition governments with the bourgeoisie is justified by 'victories' of this kind which, on a closer look, can be seen to be even more limited and pathetic than those achieved by the German Social Democrats at the beginning of the Weimar Republic.

An Austrian left-wing Social Democrat, Eduard März, is today the last survivor of the Austro-Marxist centrist tradition of the twenties and thirties. For him, 'co-management' is only a stage on the way to workers' management, just as participation in a coalition government is only a stage on the way to full power. All that is

necessary for success is not to remain content with 'co-management at the top', but to insist on also having 'co-management on the shop floor', and to 'give new force to general assemblies of union members on the shop floor', or to 'general workers' meetings', and get them involved in an ever-widening series of controlling and co-managing functions.¹⁵ The left wing of the West German trade unions and Social Democrats are trying to draw projects at present under discussion in their country for generalized workers' participation in industry in a similar direction.

Revolutionary Marxists have obviously nothing to gain by letting themselves get caught up in semantic disputes. If we give the formula of 'co-determination on the shop floor' (*Mitbestimmung am Arbeitsplatz*) exactly the same sense we gave earlier to 'workers' control', without the addition of any element of shared responsibility for the management of capitalist industries, or the capitalist economy as a whole, then the dispute becomes meaningless.

But if instead we envisage this 'co-determination on the shop floor' as functioning in combination with various bodies and mechanisms for workers' 'representation' alongside the representatives of Capital, then there really is a problem. For everything in the logic of the capitalist regime will inevitably act to transform such bodies into agencies of class collaboration, in other words, agencies for reinforcing Capital, while weakening and dividing the workers. Now even the most advanced among the left-wing or centrist Social Democrats allow for the possibility of precisely such a combination. What they are suggesting, therefore, is not a struggle for a new type of workers' control, but a pure and simple repetition of the gradualist class collaboration myths of the past.

One very clever — though also very old — way in which reformists have distorted the idea of workers' control has recently come to the fore once again inside the French P.S.U. Gilles Martinet has enshrined it in a book whose title clearly expresses the concept of reformism: *La conquête des pouvoirs* (The Conquest of Powers). Starting off from the undeniable fact that the power of any ruling class — including, obviously, the capitalist class — is always a social fact that extends to every sphere of society, the neo-reformists go on to conclude that power has therefore to be won in each of those spheres. In this they are forgetting that those 'powers' are linked together in a perfectly articulated way around two central structures: the *mode of production* (i.e. the right of Capital to dominate the major forces of production by means of institutions which constantly reproduce a capitalist economy — private property, wage labour, generalized market economy, integration into the international capitalist market, etc.) and the *bourgeois State*. The gradualist illusion that one can whittle away the 'powers' of capitalism one by one is as

¹¹ For the origins of the concept of 'industrial democracy', see Eduard Bernstein, *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie*, first published in 1899. My reference is to the Dietz edition (Stuttgart 1921), especially pp. 170ff., 186-90.

¹² Otto Bauer, *Die österreichische Revolution*, Vienna 1923, p. 171.

¹³ An interesting summary of the development of the German trade-union leaders' practice in that period is offered by Hannes Heer, *Burgfrieden oder Klassenkampf*, Neuwied 1971.

¹⁴ Eugene Varga, *Essais sur l'économie politique du capitalisme*, Moscow 1967, pp. 73-6.

¹⁵ Eduard März, 'La prospettiva storica della gestione', in *Critica Sociale*, no. 20, 1969, pp. 606-8. This article first appeared in the Austrian Social Democrat review, *Die Zukunft*.

unfounded as the illusion that the nature of an army could be changed by 'conquering' it battalion by battalion.

The same gradualist and unrealistic idea is to be found in the statements of the C.F.D.T. (the second-strongest trade-union federation in France), obviously inspired by some of the experiences of 'active strikes' in May 1968).¹⁶ (I am referring here to the majority of the C.F.D.T., and not to Krumnov's minority tendency which holds positions closer to my own). They propose 'self-management of industries' combined with the abolition of private property in some but by no means all of them. 'Self-management' is presented as 'the best model for the democratization of industry', as making it possible for the workers to achieve 'the power of economic decisions'.

But the 'power of decision' is thus detached from 'power' as such — in other words the power of the State and economic power. 'Democratic planning' appears as something quite apart from workers' self-management. Parliament, too, subsists as something quite separate from the congresses of workers' councils. Even self-management is to be applied not by a workers' council, but by a 'governing body elected by the workers'.

The C.F.D.T. ideologues seem not to grasp that it is completely Utopian to think of such 'self-management' as possible without bourgeois State power first being overthrown. And if that State power is overthrown, any distinction between economic 'management bodies' in the industrial sphere, and 'political leaders' working in the framework of a Parliamentary democracy, will perpetuate the division of citizens into those who rule and those who are ruled — a division which can only serve to accelerate the very process of bureaucratization which the C.F.D.T. activists say they are so anxious to prevent.

In short, the confusion between 'workers' control' demanded within the capitalist regime for the purpose of making workers understand the need to get rid of that regime, 'workers' self-management' achieved only after the overthrow of the rule of capital, and workers' power which means a power that is both political and economic, acting politically through workers' councils (soviets) just as it does in industry, results in a kind of mongrel concept retaining nearly all the illusions of reformism — chief among them the possibility of a gradual advance to genuine workers' self-management actually within the capitalist regime.

Bourgeois State Power Will not Not Simply Melt Away

It is on the shop floor that the universal competition between individuals, 'war of all against all', which is the special mark of bourgeois society, first begins to be overcome among the workers. It is on the shop floor that there arises the kind of spontaneous co-operation and solidarity among workmates which enables the workers to overcome their powerlessness in the face of capitalists who are so much wealthier, more self-confident and better-educated than they. The shop floor has always been the first locus for 'workers power'.¹⁷ As workers' organizations move away from the place of work, and become larger, more complex, less open, more opaque, they always seem to become hierarchized, gradually delegating power in ever

more various ways, until they finally cease to be under the control of their founders and organizers, and even at times do the precise opposite of what they were founded for. So the immediately perceivable realities of working-class life, reinforced by the bitter experience of mass organizations becoming bureaucratized, has led many people to believe that 'workers' power' can only be exercised at the level of the individual work place. Revolutionary syndicalism and the ideas of the *Radenkommunisten* thus join those Proudhonist theories, which Marx attacked so fiercely, and whose Utopian character has so often been confirmed by events.¹⁸

The most far-seeing of the anarchists recognized the flaw: the inevitable tendency of present-day productive forces to become centralized, to grow ever more complex, to be 'socialized' in the objective sense of the word, i.e. *simultaneously* to involve in their own development vast masses of both productive and non-productive workers (using productive here in the sense of profit-producing rather than socially useful). So they dreamed of a world in which another type of technology would operate, which would make it possible to divide factories and producers into ever smaller and smaller self-contained units.¹⁹ This is a good example of a fundamentally petty-bourgeois aspect of anarchism, an ideology which, though it has many objectives in common with Marxism, and supports the historic movement of the proletariat, pursues at the same time an ideal based on the small-scale peasant and craft production of the past. Experience has made it quite clear, however, that the *fundamental* tendency of modern technology (which remains dominant, despite certain conflicting tendencies also present) is to move towards a centralization and socialization of labour, and not the other way; also that this tendency has a powerful emancipatory potential, since it makes possible a radical reduction of the working week and the gradual disappearance of alienating mechanical labour, once capitalism has been overthrown.

The idea that the emancipation of the workers can be reduced to meaning no more than the taking over of individual factories by workers' councils is a Utopian one at several levels. First and foremost — and it is upon this that the Marxist critique of syndicalism has so far concentrated — merely to reject the necessity of the State is not to overthrow it. One cannot simply wait for it to be overthrown as the 'automatic' result of a strike, even a general strike with active occupation of factories. When its back is to the wall, the bourgeoisie will use every means of power at its disposal to defend private property. And

¹⁶ Gilles Martinet, *La conquête des pouvoirs*, Paris 1968; also 'Perspectives et stratégie de la C.F.D.T. — Inventaire des problèmes', pp. 13-14 of the special supplement in no. 1247 of the weekly *Syndicalisme*.

¹⁷ It is true that during the first and second technological revolutions, the bonds of solidarity and class co-operation originally forged on the shop floor were supported and reinforced by collective leisure activities in working-class districts and towns. Here, two factors in present-day capitalist civilization, private cars and private television, tend to replace the collective life outside the factory of the past with a privatization of leisure occupations and of housing. Instead of spending their free time together, in their union halls, educational institutes, cafes and bars, the workers tend to spend it separately, which diminishes class solidarity, and makes the links forged on the shop floor all the more vital.

¹⁸ See Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris ed. Rivière; James Guillaume, *Idée sur l'organisation sociale*, 1876, and a good summary in Daniel Guérin, *L'anarchisme*, Paris 1965. Marx's classic reply is contained in *The Poverty of Philosophy*.

¹⁹ See Peter Kropotkin, *Landwirtschaft, Industrie und Handwerk*, first published in 1898.

it has at its disposal a very powerful apparatus for repression, with the police and the armed forces, and a correspondingly complex network of communications. None of this will melt away like snow in the sun simply because of a general sit-down strike. Such a strike furthermore would to some extent dissipate the power of the workers, not merely as between different factories, but more especially by dividing those who are occupying factories from those who, for whatever reason, remain at home. Dispersed strongholds of workers can be attacked and defeated individually by the concentrated power of the bourgeoisie if they are not linked together among themselves, and if they cannot confront the centralized State apparatus of Capital with a centralization of worker's power. History has given ample confirmation of this: the workers will never succeed in liberating themselves from Capital without overthrowing the bourgeois State by centralized political action, and replacing the apparatus of the bourgeois State by a new kind of State altogether, a workers' State.²⁰

In the present state of development of the productive forces, it is objectively unavoidable for all essential economic activities to be co-ordinated. Basically there are only two possible forms of co-ordination: either consciously planned co-ordination, or spontaneous co-ordination, through the market. By rejecting planned co-ordination, on the ground that it must inevitably result in 'administrative centralization' and bureaucratization, propagandists for the idea that each firm should have its own 'workers' power' are in practice opening the way to a generalized return to the market economy, whose effects would be quite as harmful as those of a central bureaucracy.²¹

The emancipation of the working class does not merely demand the abolition of private property and of the domination of Capital over Labour. The withering away of commodity production, which causes reification of human relationships and alienation, is also an essential precondition. It also demands the gradual withering away of the social division of labour, the fragmentation of work processes and the separation of administrative from productive functions. What it demands, therefore, is not workers attached to 'their' factory, jealously defending 'their' jobs (or, even worse, 'their' share in the profits made by 'their' firm), but workers who, on the basis of a guaranteed standard of living, progressively become familiar with the whole range of work processes and social activities, and consequently achieve a tremendous widening of their horizons, their knowledge and their culture. All this is very different from an 'emancipation' related solely to a single firm, or, still worse, to the 'profits' that firm makes.

If the syndicalist or Proudhonist idea of a seizure of the means of production by the workers in each individual firm is a Utopian one, how much more so is that of a similar seizure by isolated 'co-operative' or 'self-managing' groups within a capitalist society, along the lines of production co-operatives or the Israeli *kibbutzim*.²² Where they are not doomed to rapid failure (like most of the 'communist' colonies in the United States in the last century), such experiments inevitably become businesses which form capitalist and exploitative relationships with the rest of society. Only at a time of revolutionary crisis, when the experiment of workers' control is already beginning to be generalized and is thus in no danger of remaining isolated, can factories occupied by workers experience the beginnings of real workers' management, and thus help to bring the crisis to a head and turn it into the starting-point of the final struggle for a national seizure of power.

For the same reason it would be wrong today to

replace the demand for 'workers' control' with one for 'self-management' as the central point in the transitional programme. The essential function of that programme must be to help raise the level of consciousness among the mass of people by getting them mobilized to the point at which they begin to overthrow the capitalist regime. To agitate for self-management is to behave as though the key problem still to be solved had already been solved. Anyone who believes that the mass of workers in the imperialist countries are today ready to take over the running of the economy at once, without first passing through the school of workers' control, is deceiving himself and others with dangerous illusions as to the true level of consciousness of the masses.

The whole function of agitating for workers' control is to lead the mass of the working class, through their own experience, and starting from their immediate concerns, to discover the need to drive the capitalists out of the factories and the capitalist class out of power. If this highly educative agitation is replaced by agitation for 'self-management', the great majority of the workers will be denied all such experience, and will in practice be encouraged to confine themselves to immediate demands only; there will also be the risk of provoking a few isolated experiments in 'self-management' by vanguard workers, doomed, in the capitalist context, to peter out.

Another harmful result of attempts to put workers' self-management into effect within the capitalist production system when there is no revolutionary situation is that it would tend to transfer the energy of the workers' vanguard, which could be used for agitation, towards production. Instead of organizing themselves in their occupied factories with the object of extending the struggle to other factories in the same town, the same district, the same industry, or even all over the country, the workers taking production into their own hands would have to concentrate all their efforts on the sheer organization of that production, especially given the isolated situation in which they would be working. Instead of taking their stand on the ground where they are strongest—the expanding class struggle—they would be taking a stand on the ground where their inferiority is most evident: competition in the capitalist market.

²⁰ On the general problem of bureaucracy in the workers' State, its origins and ways to combat it, see Fernand Charlier, 'The Roots of Bureaucracy and Ways to Fight it', in *Fifty Years of World Revolution*, pp. 253-74, ed. Ernest Mandel, New York 1968.

²¹ Consider the painful experience of Yugoslavia, especially since the 1965 economic reform. In section nine below we shall be looking at the problems of 'socialist market economy', and its interplay with the dynamics of bureaucratization.

²² See e.g. Eliyahu Kanovsky, *The Economy of the Israeli Kibbutz*, Cambridge, Mass. 1966, pp. 87, 123-4, 138-9, and Martin Pallmann, *Der Kibbutz: ein Strukturwandel eines konkreten Kommunetyps in nichtsozialistischer Umwelt*, Basle 1966, on how the 'profitability' of the kibbutzim depends more and more on the exploitation of outside industrial wage labour. According to Pallmann (p. 171), in 1963-4 this already provided fifty per cent of the kibbutzim's industrial labour force.

Workers Power Soviet Democracy

The elected strike committees originating from a big strike wave or a major revolutionary battle, or constituted in the context of the struggle for workers' control or a confrontation between workers and repressive State power, are the natural agents for exercising workers' power.²³ From the 'workers' committees' spoken of by Marx in 1850, based on the experience of the 1848 revolution, from the 1871 Paris Commune, and the Petrograd soviet of 1905, to the soviets which took power in the October revolution, and the workers' councils established during the revolutions in Germany, Austria, Hungary and Spain, the second Hungarian revolution and elsewhere,²⁴ this form of organizing proletarian power comes to seem ever more inevitable in revolutionary practice, for reasons that are evident.

It is a most flexible form of organization, allowing for a great variety of arrangements, both territorially and in its functioning (with soviets of workers, soldiers, poor peasants, students, sailors, teachers and so on). It makes it possible to involve the mass of those fighting as closely as possible in the exercise of power. It also makes it possible largely to overcome the separation between legislative and executive functions. It makes direct control by the masses easier, enabling everyone to see what is being done, to elect representatives and, equally, to recall them. Above all, it forms the ideal framework for proletarian and socialist democracy. For it constitutes both an arena in which the various workers' parties and tendencies can fight their political and ideological battles, and a rational limitation to those battles, in the unity of action and agreed minimum of discipline in face of the common enemy which constitute the one condition for taking part in the councils (you cannot after all belong to a strike committee without being yourself a striker and a supporter of the strike), and which the masses themselves guard as jealously as they do respect for workers' democracy.

It is improbable that wholly new forms of organization for workers' power will be invented in future revolutions, just as it is improbable that future forms will be merely carbon copies of the Russian soviets at various stages of the Revolution in the former empire of the Czars. What we shall see is a number of varying types of organization modelled on the workers' council: but the basic characteristics which we have sketched out will for the most part undoubtedly remain.

The particular experience of the bureaucratic distortion, and eventual bureaucratic degeneration, of the workers' State in Russia, and above all the experience of the Stalin dictatorship, have created enormous confusion as to the possibility of democracy in a State founded on the power of workers' councils. Later events, such as the violent suppression of the workers' councils in Hungary in 1956, and the less violent but equally damaging stifling of the beginnings of socialist democracy in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic after August 1968, have confirmed, at least in the eyes of objective observers, that Stalinist dictatorship and a State founded on workers' councils — far from being identical — are in fact incom-

patible. However, the myths so warmly defended by the present leaders of the USSR and its satellites concerning Lenin's teachings about the State are all so much grist to the mill of those who deny that any superior, or even genuine, form of democracy could exist outside the framework of bourgeois parliamentary democracy.

In this connection we should recall some elementary truths. Neither Marx nor Lenin ever proclaimed the absurd principle that there is room for only one party in the framework of a dictatorship of the proletariat, or even that the working class itself should be represented by a single party. The whole experience of the workers' movement indicates, on the contrary, that the multiplicity of ideas and parties among the working class corresponds as much to social differences as to the ideological differences inevitable within the proletariat.²⁵ The right to form tendencies and the freedom to form new parties, within a framework of socialist legality, are not just an expression of this situation of fact; they are also a pre-requisite for any long-term effective action. A great many of the problems which the working class in power has to face are new problems, and the various solutions to them proposed by different people can only be evaluated in practice and over a period of time. If the party in power suppresses the right to found new parties, then it is in fact stifling democracy within its own ranks. For internal democracy requires the right to tendency; and it is impossible to avoid the accusation that a tendency waging a fierce struggle on points of principle is a potential new party. In stifling democracy within its own ranks, any party automatically both reduces its own possibility of avoiding political mistakes, and lessens the likelihood that such mistakes will be corrected.

The democracy of workers' councils implies free access to the mass media (press, radio and television), to means of propaganda, to meeting halls, and so on, for any group of workers acting within the terms of socialist legality. All Lenin's arguments for the superiority of soviet democracy over bourgeois democracy, in terms of the mass of workers *effectively* enjoying democratic freedom, were based on such rights. The notion that only the party in power should be able to use the press and the mass media, that it has the sole right to appoint editors to newspapers, and to censor news (an idea fervently defended by Brezhnev and his disciples in various countries, not least Czechoslovakia itself, since the 'Prague spring'), is a flagrant distortion of Lenin's principles of soviet democracy as formulated in *State and Revolution*. I need hardly remind readers that Lenin often stressed that even the question of whether or not democratic rights should be granted to the bourgeoisie was not a matter of principle at all, but merely one of tactics, depending upon the

²³ It is Trotsky who must take the credit for having been the first to recognize the universal application of soviets, in 1906.

²⁴ According to information which seeped through to the West, in spite of severe censorship, the striking workers of the Baltic ports of Szczecin and Gdansk formed workers' councils in December 1970.

²⁵ See in this connection the interesting study by Ossip K. Flechtheim on the sociology of the split in the German workers' movement between the SPD and the KPD (1920-33). What this study shows above all is that at the point of the greatest strength of the workers' movement — the period from 1921 to 1928 — the Communist party actually won the majority in those branches of industry where wages were highest and industrial concentration greatest, whereas the SPD maintained its hold over the less well paid and more scattered bodies of workers. (*Die K.P.D. in der Weimarer Republik*, Frankfurt 1969, pp. 311-21.)

relationship of forces.²⁴ And certainly the idea that the enjoyment of those rights should be withdrawn from the great majority of the workers, simply because they do not accept the line being taken at a given moment by the Communist Party, would never have entered his head.

To get these principles of socialist democracy genuinely and faithfully put into effect obviously depends upon the real class struggle, and not just upon abstract and pious wishes. When its regime has been in danger, even the most liberal bourgeoisie has, on many occasions, suspended the democratic liberties it grudgingly allows the people, established a dictatorship and set up a bloody reign of terror against the oppressed. The workers, anxious to preserve their new-found freedom, will defend themselves fiercely against the attempts of Capital to recover the power it has lost. The less violent that class struggle is, the more stable will be the workers' State, the more relaxed social relations, and the more rapidly removed the restrictions of democratic freedom imposed on its opponents by the new regime. The workers' State, repressive only towards a tiny handful of exploiters, and serving the vast majority of the people, must in any case be a very special kind of State — a State which, as Lenin said, starts withering away, so to say, from birth.

One may agree with Mao Tse-tung that the class struggle can at times become more acute during the very period of transition from capitalism to socialism. But to think that after the final victorious construction of socialism, that is to say of the classless society, a State will still be needed, or that one may even have to envisage at that time an aggravation of the class struggle, is the kind of theoretical absurdity that only a man like Stalin would be capable of formulating. (After all, there can hardly be a class struggle without classes!)

Management of the Transitional Economy

Though Marxist theory is clear enough on how the workers' State itself should be organized, it is far from offering a final picture of how the economy should function during the period of transition from capitalism to socialism. How in practice the planning of the economy — Marx many times declared planning to be the basic principle of a socialized economy — should link up with the exercise of power by the working class, in a system of 'associated producers', remains a matter of dispute. The manifold experiences accumulated at the various stages of development first of the Soviet economy, and later of the economies of the other countries where capitalism has been abolished, present a kaleidoscope of different solutions, from extreme bureaucratic centralization on the one hand to the Yugoslav system based on a combination of factory self-management and 'socialist market economy'.

It must be admitted that theory has not progressed very far on this question. Marx makes one brief allusion to producers' co-operatives in which the members themselves nominate the managers. De Leon had a vague theory of 'industrial unions' which would organize production after the seizure of power. The Bolshevik party drew its inspiration largely from this, and during the first few years after the October revolution it entrusted the manage-

ment of the economy to trade-union organizations. The results were far from brilliant, and there was a gradual transition from a system of mixed management (i.e. managers + trade unions) to the system of 'single management' officially proclaimed by Stalin in 1930.

The idea that the economy should be managed by the factory soviets (workers' councils) was defended by a number of left-wing communists during the years just after the October revolution. It was also widely taken up by left-wing communists in Europe, particularly in Germany and the Netherlands.

Present-day discussion of this question is undoubtedly polarized by the two most extreme examples — the Stalinist experience and the Yugoslav one. Both sides are trying to fit all the possible varieties of management systems into the following dilemma: *either* factories are largely autonomous, and their performance is to be judged by a single, universal criterion, that of financial viability (i.e. profit) as indicated by the market; *or* there must be administrative centralization of major decision-making, which makes any genuine workers' self-management impossible.

The argument that workers' self-management necessarily involves a high degree of economic de-centralization, and an increasing recourse to the 'socialist market economy', is an unconvincing one. Why should workers' self-management not be compatible with a democratic delegation of decision-making powers — not to management, but to people freely elected by the workers concerned (with national, regional and local congresses of workers' councils — and in future, doubtless, international ones)? Actually, a whole range of economic decisions cannot be made at all effectively at the level of the individual factory. To say that 'self-managing workers' are 'free' to make such decisions is to conceal half the truth; their decisions will be rapidly 'rectified' by the market, and may have a result entirely opposite to what the workers intended. What then is the difference between 'economic laws', realizing themselves, so to speak, 'behind the backs' of the 'self-managing workers', and administrative decrees imposed upon them from above? Are not both systems very similar, and both equally oppressive and alienating? Surely the truly socialist and democratic solution would consist in getting all such decisions made consciously, by congresses of workers' councils, at all appropriate levels (for there are, of course, a whole range of decisions that can properly be made at the level of a single factory, or even a single workshop or department).

Nor is it true that the only, or principal, source of bureaucratization, of omnipotence of the bureaucracy, is to be found in its central control over the social surplus product, through the system of bureaucratic planning. The ultimate source of bureaucratization lies in the social division of labour, that is in the lack of knowledge, of skills, of initiative, of culture and of social and political activity among the workers. This is, of course, primarily a consequence of the capitalist past and of the capitalist environment, a consequence of the inadequate development of the productive forces. But all the factors that tend to discourage the workers, that weaken their class consciousness and unity, are likely to increase their passivity, and thus reinforce the control of the bureaucracy over the management of the economy and the social surplus product. Such control may operate through the intermediary of the market, in a system of de-centralized management, just as effectively as through a system of administrative

²⁴ e.g. Lenin, 'The proletarian revolution and the renegade Kautsky', in *Selected Works* in three volumes, vol. III, p. 80, Moscow 1967.

centralization. Among the factors which add to the discouragement of the workers must be noted not only the lack of any real participation in the management of industry (which is among the most obvious causes of alienation), but also the increase in social inequality, the universal commercialization of social life and the reification of all the human relationships flowing from it, the increased competition among different groups of workers, the disintegration of class solidarity, the return of unemployment, and a whole lot of other inescapable consequences of the 'socialist market economy' as developing now in Yugoslavia.²⁷

Marxists firmly believe in workers' self-management of the economy. But they are convinced that the Yugoslav leaders have done the greatest disservice to the cause of workers' self-management by their ill-conceived linking of the idea of self-management with that of the 'socialist market economy'. The genuine de-proletarianization of Labour demands not just abolishing private ownership of the means of production and liberating the economy from bureaucratic management, but also the withering away of commodity relations and of the social division of labour.²⁸ This is not something that can happen from one day to the next, any more than the withering away of the State. But just as the fact that the withering away of the State will be a lengthy process should not be used as a pretext for waiting till Doomsday to get it under way, equally there is no logic in refusing to start working towards the withering away of market relations on the ground that the process cannot be actually completed until an abundance of goods and essential services can be guaranteed to everyone.

In point of fact, workers' self-management, being a process of gradual disappearance of alienation in production relationships, should take place simultaneously at all the levels at which the producer is still subject to alienating economic relationships. It therefore implies that all decisions effecting a given factory, and which can be taken effectively at factory level, should be taken at that level with the conscious participation of every worker involved, by democratically elected workers' councils, free of any outside interference. It implies that where decision of co-ordination must be made, affecting the factory's relationships with other bodies, those decisions should be made, with the full knowledge of all, by congresses elected by the workers' councils. It implies the disintegration of the hierarchical structure of management, and of market relations, as a growing range of goods and services are distributed according to the principle of satisfaction of needs (without payment), and according to priorities democratically determined by the mass of workers themselves. It implies that, in a whole series of areas (education, culture, recreation, health, preservation of the natural environment, town-planning, etc.) the criterion of 'profitability' be abandoned in favour of the criteria of public service and social utility.²⁹ Obviously the capacity of any given economy to achieve all this during the period of transition from capitalism to socialism will depend on its relative wealth. But every economy has the capacity to start taking steps in that direction.

The Self management Camouflage in Yugoslavia

One neo-Marxist variant on the doctrine of workers' councils which is being defended now by Yugoslav theorists amounts to a barely-veiled justification of the contradictory situation now prevailing in Yugoslavia: it is that workers are, or should be, able to exercise power directly only in the economic sphere, by means of factory self-management. In the State, power should belong to the 'conscious forces of society' — in other words, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. The more hypocritical supporters of this theory declare that even in society as a whole, there is no point in establishing any new political structures because the State is withering away. Yet it would be hard to deny that it is still far from dead. Why, then, should the workers' councils not wield the political power always planned for the soviets in Marxist-Leninist political theory? No satisfactory reason has ever been given by the official Yugoslav theorists.

Actually, the most obvious contradiction in the Yugoslav system is that, though self-management is the declared principle on which the economy is based, its political structures are very far from being based on any direct exercise of power by the workers. As we have already seen, in conditions of excessive economic decentralization, of systematic and exaggerated recourse to the workings of the 'socialist market economy', and of an increasing integration of the Yugoslav economy into international capitalist economy, there is a danger that 'self-management' by producers at the shop-floor level will become meaningless. In addition, genuine economic self-management only becomes possible in relation to the economy as a whole (through a congress of workers' councils). But there is another point that should also be noted here: no self-management can be genuine if it exists solely in the context of factory life, whether in isolated firms or even in all

²⁷ The most fanatical apologists for the Yugoslav bureaucracy persist in denying this, and are thus led to make statements that are positively grotesque. For instance, writing in the paper *Student* (18 March 1969), one partisan of the 'socialist market economy' speaks against the strict application of the principle of paying people according to the amount of work they actually contribute to society, on the ground that this principle 'does not allow for differences in talents [sic] and contributions. Such a demand leads to the formation of an omnipotent administrative and bureaucratic force, above production and above society, a force which establishes an artificial [sic, again!] and superficial equality, and whose power results in want, inequality and privilege.' Bureaucracy growing out of the establishment of equality — quite a concept for someone who claims to be a Marxist!

²⁸ I am happy to note that the main Yugoslav theoretician, Edvard Kardelj, after strenuously denying this for fifteen years, has now finally admitted it in his report to the 1971 Sarajevo Congress of Self-managing Bodies.

²⁹ 'This struggle about the legal restriction of the hours of labour raged the more fiercely since, apart from frightened avarice, it told indeed upon the great contest between the blind rule of the supply and demand laws which form the political economy of the middle class, and social production controlled by social foresight, which forms the political economy of the working class.' (Inaugural Address of the Working Men's International Association', Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* in two volumes, Moscow 1958, p. 382-3. Italics mine.)

firms, grouped together in some coherent fashion.

The forms of interaction between economics and politics during the period of transition from capitalism to socialism are endless (indeed, they are already on the increase in the period of imperialism and late capitalism). This phenomenon is well summed up in the term 'economic policy'. Officially, the workers' council may control the part of the social surplus created within the factory; in practice, such 'control' is illusory, when the government's economic policy (its taxation policy, credit policy, monetary policy, commercial policy, foreign policy, etc.) can change at a moment's notice the conditions in which that surplus is 'realised', thereby modifying both its quantity and its quality. Once again, the whole process is a camouflage operation rather than a true dis-alienation.

Furthermore, no congress of workers' councils can have any effective right of decision in planning, in the distribution of the national income and in investment (i.e. economic growth), if it cannot also claim the right of decision in all those areas which have an important influence on the trends in economic development (as listed in the preceding paragraph). If it has not got that right, a dangerous 'duality of power' arises within society. If it does get it, then what functions remain to any other representative central organizations of a parliamentary type? Of course there are certain well-defined spheres (cultural affairs, matters affecting education and public health, etc.) in which they can do useful work. But to give them work in specific areas is hardly consistent with a parliamentary system; it would in fact imply a disproportionate representation for certain social groups in order to foster the closest possible fusion between legislative and executive functions.³⁰

Since key economic decisions are related to basic economic problems, genuine self-management, even at shop-floor level, calls for the 'self-managers' to have the right to intervene actively in 'economic policy' at the national level — in other words, to intervene actively in politics generally. It presupposes the right of every workers' council to present counter-proposals to government long-term economic development plans, to seek allies on that basis throughout the country, to inform public opinion of the alternatives presented, and so on. Genuine self-management thus demands respect for the principles of socialist democracy in the political sphere, and that is something that is far from being assured in Yugoslavia.³⁰

In the absence of this socialist democracy, self-management becomes largely bureaucratized and is deprived of its emancipating force. And since no public debate can produce clear information without *organized* tendencies, the absence of the right to organize other parties which also respect the socialist constitution (as well as the absence of the right to tendency within the League of Communists) contributes to de-naturing self-management still further.

The crowning point in all these contradictions and distortions of the Yugoslav system of self-management is to be found in the theory according to which the problem of modifying production relations comes down in the final analysis to no more than an organization of profit-sharing within individual firms! Self-management then basically means simply the right of the workers to vote on such profit-sharing; everything else is determined by technocrats — and the market. I need hardly point out that this is a typically technocratic ideology which has little in common with Marxism. The relations of production are concerned not primarily with how the fruits of labour are divided but with how production is organized. To see the

distribution of income as the 'essential' economic phenomenon implies acceptance of wage labour and a market economy. It also presupposes that the organization of labour, the determination of the use values produced, i.e. of the goals of production, remain in the main outside the control of the workers. In this situation their continuing alienation is all the more evident.

If carried to its ultimate conclusion, the 'socialist market economy' creates a danger of undermining workers' self-management even in the limited form in which it has been practised in Yugoslavia since 1950. Pressure from the technocrats, managers and bureaucratized elements in industry is obviously going that way: they are trying to shift more and more of the power of deciding how work and production should be organized onto agents outside the workers' councils, on the ground that the workers are not 'experts' — who are, it now seems, the only people 'competent' to decide such matters. The *de facto* abolition of the management council, the proposal to establish long-term contracts between the workers' council and the manager, giving that manager full powers over day-to-day decision-making throughout that period, and even an attempt to turn the workers' council into a body concerned merely with annual incomes and distribution arrangements within the firm — all these are so many practical stages in the direction of dismantling workers' self-management, and are the logical consequences of 'socialist competition', that cornerstone of the 'socialist market economy'.

Despite my outspoken criticism of Yugoslav deviations from Marxism, I would not want my readers to forget that introduction of the self-management system into industry in Yugoslavia has created conditions there which are far more favourable to the emergence of genuine workers' power than those existing in any of the other countries where capitalism has been abolished. My criticism is aimed at enabling revolutionary vanguard workers to escape from the dilemma: *either* Stalinist hyper-centralization, *or* a Yugoslav-style 'socialist market economy'. We can still recognize for what they are worth the Yugoslav experiments in self-management, as points of reference for future revolutions and future workers' States continuing to seek a valid model for economic organization during the period of transition from capitalism to socialism.

Intellectual Work as Wage labour

The changes effected in bourgeois society by the third technological revolution have been manifold. The peasantry and the former middle classes have become so reduced a sector of the economy as to become negligible in some countries. The proportion of people in the liberal professions and the 'new middle class' has barely grown from the point it had reached on the eve of the great economic crisis of 1929-32. On the other hand, the number of wage and salary-earners who can live only by selling their labour has continued to grow. Contrary to a deep-rooted and widespread myth, the inner cohesion of this vast mass — containing between 70 and 85 per cent of

³⁰ Witness the recent wave of bans on journals, e.g. the Belgrade student paper, *Student*.

the active population in most of the industrially advanced countries — is stronger than ever before. Then too, the differences both in income and social status among manual workers, office workers, salaried technicians and all but the top level of officials, have diminished in comparison with what they were at the beginning of the century, or even the beginning of the thirties. And the changes brought about by this third technological revolution mean that even the nature of the jobs performed in semi-automated factories by, say, a mobile squad of general maintenance workers, accountants working with the help of computers, and technicians installing a new machine, is tending to become surprisingly uniform.

The social consequences of this growing homogenization of the work done by wage-earners were evident in the explosion of May 1968 in France, and in the 24-hour general strikes which rocked Italy during the following year. The number of strikers exceeded anything witnessed in the past (ten million in France; fifteen million in Italy). Most significant was the massive participation of white-collar workers, officials, teachers, and even management personnel. Their participation was not just limited to demanding improved working conditions and pay, alongside the workers; it extended to demands which turned these battles into serious confrontations, bringing into question the capitalist relations of production as such — by attacking the whole authoritarian structure of the factories, offices, work-sites and service industries, by contesting the rights of Capital and the capitalist State to control men and machines.

Even before then, students had drawn on the revolutionary Marxist tradition, by demanding such things as 'student control', 'student power' and 'self-management' in schools and universities. What was striking in that revolutionary May in France was the fact that similar claims were being made in areas which, though marginal to the economy as such, can only continue to grow in importance in the present state of development of the productive forces: researchers and scholars, doctors and hospital staff, reporters working for press, radio and television, actors and other workers in the entertainment industry, and so on.²¹

All this was the result of various profound historical transformations of enormous importance for the struggle for socialism. The third technological revolution has brought about a massive reintegration of intellectual work into production in the form of wage labour. This is objectively the basis for the alliance between manual workers on the one hand, and students and intellectuals on the other. Intellectuals are tending to lose their petty-bourgeois character; students are gradually changing from apprentice - bourgeois into apprentice - intellectual - wage-labourers. But this reintegration of intellectual labour into production, in a society in which labour remains more than ever a commodity, means that intellectual labour becomes subject to all the consequences — objective and subjective — of proletarianization: division of labour, more and more hyper-specialization and subdividing of jobs, a brutal subordination of individual talents and needs to 'social needs' which become identified with Capital's needs for profit (involving pre-selection and often decreases in overall skills), an increasing alienation of intellectual work, and so on. This is the objective basis for the universal revolt among students, as well as the possible addition of whole groups of intellectuals, who come as most valuable allies to the workers' revolutionary movement, not only in the struggle to overthrow capitalism, but also in the effort to build a socialist society founded

on planned self-management by all those involved in production.

However, the difference in nature between the labour which provides the material foundation for people's lives, and the activity which is essentially directed to areas outside material production, involves considerable differences in the way in which management should be organized. And this will remain the case as long as we have not reached that state of plenty in which goods and services everywhere can be distributed in accord with the needs of every individual. In the last analysis, workers' self-management means that the producers themselves will determine how hard they will work and what sacrifices they are prepared to make, as long as resources are still scarce so that priorities have to be worked out in deciding upon their distribution. But if one wants to extend this principle to such fields as education, the health services or the mass media, one must not forget that in these fields, it is not a question of the use of material resources by those producing them, but of the use of material resources which the rest of society makes available for these purposes. The community has obviously far more of a right to control the use of these resources than it does those placed at the disposal of factories.

With the press, radio and television, the situation is even clearer. Confronted with capitalist owners, or a State which can cynically doctor the news, journalists are very right to demand control and to defend their autonomy — although one should not forget that printing workers and radio and television technicians also have interests and rights equally deserving of consideration. But in a post-capitalist society with genuine socialist democracy, it would obviously be absurd to make journalists the arbiters of what is and what is not made public. The logic of social democracy in this case would demand that access to the various media of information be extended to society as a whole (to groups of working citizens of a certain numerical strength, perhaps). It could not allow a monopoly of access to or management of the media to a single profession.

Clearly, then, the extension of the slogans of 'control' or 'self-management' to these various fields must be made with the greatest care, allowing for the structural differences I have outlined. It remains true, none the less, that the overthrow of authoritarian structures is fully justified in all these fields. The replacement of an enforced hierarchy by forms of organization based on the principle of councils — with elections, power of the voters to remove delegates from office, continuing control of the summit by the base, the widest possible association of all those concerned with the exercise of administrative functions, the full development of people's creative capacities, etc. — can be considered to be a completely legitimate revolutionary socialist objective in all spheres.²² The notion of socialist society consisting of a vast, planned, and consciously directed complex of producers and citizens who administer their own lives represents the very essence of Marxism.

²¹ See J. Pesquet, *Des soviets à Saclay?*, Paris 1968.

²² In this connection we may recall that the establishment of 'school councils' and 'student councils' was fairly common in the Russian revolution in 1917-18, and still more so in the Hungarian revolution. See, for instance, *Die Jugend der Revolution*, Berlin 1921, pp. 202, 212-23.

Workers Power and the Vanguard Party

There remains one final controversial point to be elucidated: what is the relationship between the activities of the mass of workers trying to get control of the running of their own lives — by means of the struggle for workers' control and workers' self-management, and of the creation of workers' councils — and the effort to form revolutionary vanguard parties? The way the democracy of the workers' councils has been stifled by the bureaucracy in Russia and the countries influenced by her has again given credence in some vanguard circles to theories which historical experience had previously many times refuted. It is therefore important that we re-state firmly what is the essence of Marxist-Leninist theory on this matter.

The objective bases of the need for revolutionary vanguard parties are threefold: first, the partial and fragmentary nature of the experience, whether of bourgeois society or of the class struggle, which groups of workers can gain in one industry or one area (this results ultimately from the capitalist division of labour and its consequences for the level of immediate consciousness which can be achieved by the worker subject to it); second, the inevitable ideological differentiation within the working class, arising both from differences in jobs and in social origins and from superstructural factors (family influence, school formation, the differing ideological influences to which people are exposed, etc.); third, the lack of continuity in the political activity of the masses — the ebbs and flows of the revolutionary tide.

For these three reasons, it is inevitable that a vanguard distinct from the class as a whole should come into being. It is made up of people who, by individual effort, manage to overcome the partial and fragmentary nature of the elementary class consciousness attainable by the wider mass of people. This vanguard makes it possible to weld together the partial experiences of revolutionary struggle from diverse times and places into a single and infinitely richer experience, thus bringing together these partial experiences into a total scientific theory, the revolutionary Marxist programme. Finally, it draws together individuals who, by their awareness, temperament, capacity for dedication and identification with the cause of their class, preserve a high level of activity even during periods when the mass struggle is at a low ebb.

If only for this last reason, the existence of a revolutionary vanguard organization is indispensable, in order to promote the mass revolutionary tide of the future. In periods of ebb, that organization will preserve what has been learnt theoretically; it will prevent the idea of workers' councils from sinking into oblivion and demoralization, educate a new generation in the knowledge of the past, and battle against contrary forces to spread the programme more and more widely. I need hardly point out the fact that, thanks to such activity, the possibility of seeing a new upsurge of workers' councils is far greater than it would otherwise be.

A revolutionary vanguard organization is indispensable if a victorious revolution is to be assured. This will demand a concentration of effort, a sensitivity to the ripe-

ness of specific conditions, a detailed analysis of the enemy's preparations and plans, and the development of a true 'science of revolution' which the masses as a whole could hardly achieve spontaneously. A great many revolutions have broken out spontaneously, but there has never been one which has spontaneously triumphed.

The revolutionary vanguard organization, finally, also constitutes an indispensable tool with which to combat the danger of a bureaucratic distortion of workers' power after the victory of the revolution. Anyone who believes that workers' self-management alone provides a sufficient guarantee against such distortion is failing to grasp its deeper underlying cause, that is to say the partial survival of the social division of labour and of the market economy during the period of transition from capitalism to socialism. This is a time when conflicts of interest among industries, professions, regions and different groups of producers are absolutely inevitable. It is an illusion to suppose that the democratic process alone (i.e. the vote) will automatically result in majority support for the policies which best represent the interests of the class as a whole. Such measures can only win the day through a continuing political and ideological struggle; through a process of political formulation which that struggle can only assist. The organic structuring of differing tendencies into organizations and parties makes it possible to clarify the debate; the confused arguing of vast numbers of non-organized individuals can only make it easier for demagogues or privileged groups to take over.

There is no contradiction between the necessary spontaneity of the masses and the function of revolutionary vanguard organizations. The vanguard channels the spontaneity of the masses in times of upsurge, and sustains it in time of decline. Still less is there any incompatibility between the social democracy of the councils, with full sovereignty exercised by the workers' councils and their congresses, and the activity of a revolutionary vanguard organization. In fact the latter helps to provide the links needed by the former, and ultimately tends to facilitate the exercise of power by the proletariat by setting the various options clearly before them. Similarly, the existence of a revolutionary International makes it possible to integrate the theory and practice of the various national vanguard organizations into a coherent whole; such integration, which cannot be achieved without adequate organization, is absolutely indispensable at a time when all aspects of social life are becoming more and more fully internationalized.

What must be attacked is the notion that any self-proclaimed vanguard group can acquire some kind of material or political privilege by the mere fact of putting itself forward as such. Material privilege should be out of the question in any case. As for political 'privilege', all that the activists in a revolutionary party have any right to claim is the privilege of fighting in the front line for the interests of their class, and of devoting a far larger proportion of their time to social action than other people. This does not give them any additional rights; but it undoubtedly does give them a greater possibility of influencing and convincing their work-mates and fellow-citizens than others have. In a socialist democracy this possibility is open to anyone, and the only form of selection that operates in regard to it is what may be called selection by *praxis*. In any case, it is only when the masses come to begin to accept the leadership of the revolutionary organization that it stops being simply a self-declared vanguard and becomes a real vanguard in the objective sense of the word.

Those who deny the need for a revolutionary vanguard party on the ground that it represses the spontaneity of the masses, or who even try to prevent its being established on the ground that the sovereignty of the workers' councils must not be infringed, are in fact falling into a parallel error to that of the Stalinist single party concept, which rejects the sovereignty of the workers' councils in favour of some universal wisdom which the party is supposed automatically to embody. Both errors allege an incompatibility between the vanguard's duty of political leadership and persuasion on the one hand, and the activity of the organized masses on the other. But for Marxist-Leninism no such incompatibility exists. The need for a vanguard party is seen as an indispensable complement to the organization of the masses in workers' councils. Marx and Engels explained this complementarity in essence at the time of the Communist Manifesto, and I can do no better than conclude by quoting what they said then:

The Communists . . . have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement.

The Communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties by this only: 1. In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality. 2. In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.

The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.²⁰

²⁰ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* in one volume, London 1970, p. 46.

THE STATE CAPITALIST GENEALOGY

Erich Farl

We can divide the theories of those who do not regard the Eastern European states as workers' states into two main camps: theories which analyse them as capitalist states (either classical bourgeois or state capitalist) and those which hold that a 'new class' is in power in these countries.

The first group includes most social democrats (Mensheviks, Otto Bauer, etc.), the Bordigists, the neo-Trotskyist theorists of state capitalism (Grandizo Munis and Tony Cliff) and the Chinese theorists of the restoration of capitalism, as well as their 'sophisticated' variants (Sweezy, Bettelheim). The Yugoslav leaders could be included in this group at the beginning of the fifties.

As far as the second group is concerned, mention should be made of the theories of 'bureaucratic oligarchy' (Lucien Laurat in the early thirties); bureaucratic collectivism (Bruno Rizzi, Max Schachtman, James Burnham); the 'new class' (Milovan Djilas); the central political bureaucracy (Kuron and Modzelewsky); and 'statism' (S. Stojanovic in Yugoslavia).

Of course, any system of classification must be arbitrary to some extent. The differences within these two groups that we have outlined are considerable. Tony Cliff will not much appreciate — with good reason — being placed under the same heading as the Chinese leaders (we shall try to put this 'injustice' right later on by seeing what differentiates them). Some theories are difficult to classify (for example, the ideas of the French group *Revolution!*, which split from the *Ligue Communiste* in 1971 and occupies a midway position between the theory of the new class and that of the restoration of capitalism).¹ But our classification does have the merit of allowing us to distinguish these theories by virtue of what is their central aspect: the definition of the class nature of the Eastern countries.

In the framework of this article we will deal solely with the first group. We will therefore examine theories concerning 'capitalism' (classical or state) in the USSR.

We are dealing here with the group of theories least distant from Marxism. The theories of a 'new class' involve a clearer abandonment of Marxism (the fates of Burnham and Djilas provide us with evidence of this), since they try to invent a new mode of production with new laws of development, different from the Marxist analysis of modes of production and economic-social formations. The theories of 'capitalism' in the USSR are, on the other hand, often based on Marxist texts: on what Engels wrote in *Anti-Dühring* on bourgeois nationalizations; on what Lenin wrote between 1917 and 1923 on state capitalism;

on what Rakovsky said on the manner in which the State bureaucracy can be said to 'own' the means of production; and on what Trotsky wrote about restorationist dangers in the USSR.

Otto Bauer

The oldest of these theories is the one put forward by the Mensheviks. The historical reasons for this are not hard to find: was it not the Mensheviks who thought that the final proof of the adventurism of Lenin and the Russian communists was their seizure of state power in 1917? For them, Russia was too backward to be able to give birth to a workers' state. They believed that a one-to-one relationship existed between the level of development of the material forces of production and the corresponding state superstructures. In spite of all the heroism of the Bolsheviks, therefore, only a bourgeois state could be built in Russia in 1917. Without the intervention of the Mensheviks this state would be an authoritarian bourgeois dictatorship. In the best of cases, with the Mensheviks, a democratic bourgeois republic could be built.

It was Otto Bauer, the theoretician of Austro-Marxism, who gave a more polished expression to these theories.² In his pamphlet *Bolshevism or Social Democracy* written in 1920, he describes Soviet Russia as a 'transitional state', which, through the agrarian revolution, had created the conditions for the future development of a bourgeois class in the countryside, a preliminary to an evolution to bourgeois democracy. 'State socialism in industry, transport and the banking system; co-operative organization of the commune; the private activity of the peasants; the enrichment of the peasants on the basis of poverty in the town; the appearance of the new bourgeoisie thanks to the black market — which is inevitable given a private agricultural sector; the creation of new capitalist enterprises on the basis of special concessions to foreign capitalism: these are the elements which will make up Russia's new economic life' (p.70). In the pamphlet *The new course in Soviet Russia* written in 1922, Bauer sees the NEP as a striking confirmation of his theory. Instead of regarding it as a policy of *controlled concessions*

¹ There are also theories with a foot in both camps: e.g. Gerry Healy (who believes that China is a workers' state and Cuba a bourgeois state), or *Lutte Ouvrière* (who think that the USSR is a workers' state and China a bourgeois state).

² Otto Bauer, *Bolshevismus oder Sozialdemokratie*, Volksbuchhandlung, Vienna 1920; *De Nieuwe Koers in Soviet-Rusland*, De Wilde Roos, Brussels 1923.

by the workers' state, he thought on the contrary that it represented an acceptance of his theories by the Russian Communists. From then on he 'advised' the Bolsheviks to suppress the 'contradiction' between economic necessity and the form of political power. 'The economic turn represented by the NEP should be complemented with a peaceful political turn: the transformation of the dictatorship into a bourgeois democracy' (p.46-7).

Bauer's theory is interesting for us because it demonstrates an aspect that we shall meet again in other authors: an economic *fatalism*, which is due to an over-estimation of the role of the material forces of production coupled with an *under-estimation of politics*. In the framework of this theory, the State has — or should have — only a secondary role, simply registering the modifications resulting from the development of the forces of production.

Another (minor) aspect of Bauer's theory, but again something that we shall see more of when we come to deal with other theoreticians, is his use of Lenin's writings on 'state capitalism'. We shall return to them later.

Amadeo Bordiga

Bordiga — the founder of the Italian CP and initially its foremost theoretician, who passed over to the opposition in the Communist International after 1922 — put forward a left variant of this theory.² For him, the October revolution was an anti-feudal revolution from which the bourgeoisie was absent. For that reason, the proletariat played the chief role in it. But later on, principally because of Russia's prolonged isolation, the new state was 'consolidated' as a political organ of emergent capitalism.

Here again we meet with the economic fatalism that we discovered in Bauer's writings — but under a slightly different guise. Aided by the proletariat of the developed European countries, the Russian working class could have been able to construct a workers' state. Isolated it was unable to do so.

What is missing from both these theories is any concept of a 'transitional' stage between capitalism and socialism. We have either *capitalism* (and a capitalist state) or we have *socialism* (and a workers' state).

Marx and Engels, as we know, envisaged the question in these terms: the 'lower' stage of the new society or 'socialism' (as opposed to 'communism', the higher stage) would be achieved practically immediately after the defeat of the bourgeoisie. It would be characterized by the suppression of the private character of the means of production; by the heightened development of the forces of production; by the absence of the market, money and commodities; by distribution of use values; by the abolition of wage labour and the disappearance of classes.

Most of these characteristics are either entirely lacking or only very partially present in the Soviet Union and the countries of the Eastern bloc. From this point of view, they are paying the price for the detour of history — for the fact that the socialist revolution did not take place, as expected, in the developed countries.

But Bordiga keeps to the old schema. His theory can be qualified as *schematic and normative*. He gives good definitions of what a socialist society and a communist society *should* be like. From these theories we can see in what ways the USSR and the other workers' states fall short of being socialist or communist. But that does not allow us to draw any further conclusions.

Bordiga goes on, however. Capitalism, he says, is a market economy. Well, in the USSR commodity production exists. Therefore, the USSR is a capitalist society. That is Bordiga's syllogism. His conclusion is false

because his starting-point is wrong. Capitalism is not defined by saying that it is a market economy (commodity production exists in pre-capitalist societies). What distinguishes capitalism is that it is a mode of production which *generalizes* commodity production, because under capitalism both *labour power* and *the means of production* become commodities. For capitalism to exist there must simultaneously exist both *wage-earners* and means of production *transformed into capital*. This is what differentiates capitalism from other societies where commodity production takes place.⁴ In a society in transition from capitalism to socialism, commodity production does still exist (for example consumption goods) but not in the essential sectors, which would allow us to qualify the mode of production as capitalist: the means of production are not commodities. The transitional society is a society where commodity production is *progressively restricted*. That is why we say that the mode of production there is *non-capitalist*, since, according to our definition, capitalism is characterized by the progressive generalization of commodity production.

Munis and State Capitalism

Grandizo Munis developed the theory of state capitalism at first inside the Fourth International and later outside (at the end of her life Natalia Sedova Trotsky shared his ideas).⁵ Munis' theory is simple enough. His argument is not based on empirical data (pretty scarce in 1946 as far as the USSR was concerned), but on what he considers to be Marx's model of the functioning of the capitalist economy. Munis took the well-known equation which represents the different elements which make up the value of the product ($P = C + V + S$). Under the capitalist mode of production, he said, the 'centre of gravity' of the formula is S (surplus value). The future increase of capital depends on the size of S. In a socialist society, however, V (variable capital — wages) becomes the centre of gravity. Capitalization will depend on the consumption needs of the masses.

Now this is not the case in the USSR. 'Behind S from this time onwards (the triumph of Thermidorian capitalism) there was, just as under capitalism, a group of men. S thus regains its character as surplus-value to the extent that the bureaucracy usurps power.' (p. 19).

Munis concluded that in the USSR a variant of capitalist exploitation exists, the bureaucracy not yet being finally structured as a capitalist class. He predicted that when that final restructuring took place, the bureaucracy would have to abandon planning.

Munis' error is in his model. It is incorrect to say that, under socialism, the formula for the social product will remain $C + V + S$. By definition this formula can only apply to a system characterized by the working of the law of value. Under socialism the equation $C + V + S$ disappears altogether. To be concerned whether the emphasis passes from one element of the formula to another, therefore, is to pose a completely false question. Munis' formula is strangely close to that of some Yugoslav theoreticians

² A. Bordiga, 'Dialogue avec Staline', in *Programme Communiste* no. 8 1959; 'L'économie soviétique de la Révolution d'Octobre à nos jours', *Programme Communiste*, no. 19, 1962.

⁴ This is very clear in *Capital* and especially in the 'unpublished chapter of Capital' which—irony of ironies—has just been published in France through the efforts of . . . the Bordigist Roger Dengeville (K. Marx, *Un Chapitre Inédit du Capital*, Editions 10-18, Paris 1971).

⁵ G. Munis, *Les révolutionnaires devant la Russie et le Stalinisme Mondial*, Editorial Revolucion, Mexico 1946.

who define self-management as a system where the workers decide the size of V.

Some Soviet economists admit that C+V+S can still be applied to their country, while still pronouncing it socialist. We think that this proves that it is not. But it does not prove that it is capitalist. From this point of view, Munis' demonstration is even weaker than Bordiga's.

Tony Cliff and State Capitalism

As the main theoretician of the I.S. group, Tony Cliff is the best-known of the partisans of state capitalism. He has devoted a book to this question, which has gone through three editions.⁶ When Cliff talks about state capitalism, he talks at the same time about a state, a mode of production, relations of production and society, without making any sharp differentiation between the different levels. It will be useful, therefore, to see how the concept of state capitalism has developed in Marxist literature, so that we can construct a scientific concept to compare with Tony Cliff's ideas.⁷

Lenin used the term state capitalism in several senses. In 'The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat it' (as well as in the Preface to 'State and Revolution') he talks about state monopoly capitalism, meaning by this term a centralization of capital in cartels and trusts (the 'sugar syndicate in Russia'), without indicating clearly whether he is talking about the creation of a *single monopoly per state* or of the creation of a *state monopoly*. The picture becomes clearer when we know that a young Bolshevik militant, J. Larin, had at that time just published some articles (they were later republished as *War-time State Capitalism in Germany*, Moscow 1928) dealing with the economic measures taken during the First World War in Germany. In other words, this state capitalism was not a distinctive mode of production. *It was a particular mode of functioning* — more precisely a *form of organization of capitalist production*.

In other works (beginning with the 1917 text '“Left-wing” Childishness and the Petty-bourgeois Mentality'), and especially after 1921, *state capitalism* takes on another meaning. In these writings Lenin defines the Russian *socio-economic formation* as a society where different modes of production coexist: patriarchal agrarian economy, petty commodity production, 'free' private capitalism and socialism. The state capitalist sector, here, is still capitalist, but it functions under workers' control (*nationalizations* were relatively few during the first months of the Soviet Republic's existence).⁸

But it is above all Lenin's writings from 1921 to 1923 which take up this question of state capitalism. They deal with the *concessions* made to foreign capitalism (American, Japanese) in the framework of the NEP, with the purpose of attracting the capital Russia needed and enabling her to benefit from its higher productivity (see items 3 and 4 in the bibliographical appendix).

In item 7, 'The Tax in Kind', Lenin lists the different forms of state capitalism: concessions to foreign capitalists; petty producers' co-operatives (small employers); commercial capital which plays the role of intermediary to sell the products of State industry; the leasing agreements made with Russian capitalists. He is thus dealing here with capitalist activities — an economic sector where the capitalist mode of production operates. The qualification *state* indicates that these activities are closely *controlled* by the proletarian state (see on this subject items 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13).

What conclusion can we draw from this rapid survey?

We can say that state capitalism for Lenin does not refer to a socio-economic formation, nor to a state, nor to a new mode of production, nor to new forms of property, but to a mode of functioning of capitalism under the control of a workers' state.

In his study Cliff does not refer to these latter texts of Lenin, which deal with state capitalism properly called. He refers to some writings of Engels in *Anti-Dühring* which deal with bourgeois nationalizations and (pp. 113-15) to Lenin's writings on *state monopoly capitalism*.⁹ Cliff's formula, according to which state capitalism is a 'partial negation of capitalism' (p. 110) is, moreover, copied from Lenin's formula on monopoly capital as a partial negation of capitalism. But for Cliff this state capitalism — and here is the crux of the matter — is developed under the protective shadow of a capitalist state, whose ruling class, the bureaucracy, is 'the personification of capital in its purest form' and 'the truest personification of the historical mission of this (capitalist) class' (p. 18).

It is at this point that we find the central contradiction of Cliff's work: *while Cliff uses the term 'state capitalism' for what Lenin called 'state monopoly capitalism' — i.e. a sector of the capitalist economy protected by the capitalist state — his analysis of the economic functioning of state capitalism leads him to the conclusion that it can no longer be capitalism.*

Cliff, in fact, considers that there is no commodity exchange in the USSR as far as the means of production are concerned. He even thinks that labour power is not a commodity in the USSR (p. 158), because only *one* buyer of labour power exists — the State.¹⁰ He admits that investment is not determined by the capitalist law of the tendential decline of the rate of profit (pp. 172-3).

Having admitted all this, it is difficult to talk of capitalism. From the point of view of his analysis of the Russian economy, Cliff is nearer to a theory of a new system of exploitation and a 'new class' than to one of state capitalism.

What arguments does he use to show that, in spite of all these factors, the USSR is a capitalist state? He uses four arguments: the lack of workers' power over the state; the lack of workers' power over the economy; the privileges of the bureaucracy; and the pressure of international capitalism. We will examine each of these arguments in turn.

First Argument

'Can a state not under workers' control be a workers' state?' (p. 132). Such a question demands a negative response — and Cliff does not hesitate to give it one. This first argument is exceptionally weak: it does not take into account the historical possibility of various different *forms* of state power. Thus a bourgeois state can be parliamentary or fascist, with a whole series of intermediate variations. Why, therefore, is it not possible for a workers' state to pass through different forms too, according to the historical context.

⁶ T. Cliff, *Russia. A Marxist Analysis*, International Socialism, London 1955. See too R. Maillé, *Le Trotskysme et l'USSR*, Pouvoir Ouvrier, Paris 1965.

⁷ See bibliographical appendix on Lenin and State Capitalism.

⁸ See E. Lokshin, *How the Nationalization of the Economy was Achieved in the USSR*, Moscow 1965.

⁹ Cliff reserves the term 'State Monopoly Capitalism' for War Economy (p. 154).

¹⁰ We wouldn't go so far. The fact that there is only one buyer or seller on the market does not necessarily mean that the product bought or sold loses its commodity character. It would be different if there was only one seller *and* one buyer.

Second Argument

'The economy of a workers' state and a capitalist economy have many common characteristics . . . Common to both . . . is the division of labour, primarily the division between mental and manual labour. The distinguishing feature is the existence or non-existence of workers' control over production' (p. 98). Since there is no workers' control, we cannot be dealing with the economy of a workers' state.

Cliff forgets that workers' control is not the distinguishing feature of a workers' state: at certain times, workers' control can exist transitorily within the framework of a capitalist state (dual power: the metal factories in Turin in 1920, for example). In a workers' state, it is possible for a whole period for several economic sectors to coexist (antagonistically) — not all of them under workers' control or management. What distinguishes the two economies is that the capitalist economy generalizes commodity production, while the economy of the workers' state restrains it.

Third Argument

'The size of this (the bureaucracy's) income is in itself sufficient to reveal the qualitative difference between the income of the bureaucracy and the wages of the workers' (p. 119). We are not convinced by such an argument. Using this criterion such professions as doctors or architects in the West would be classes. Differences in standards of living or income have never been what defines a social class.

Fourth Argument

Even if the first three arguments were to be allowed, we could only reach the conclusion that the USSR is not a workers' state. We are told nothing about the positive qualification of such a state. At this point, Cliff brings in the pressure of international capitalism. 'The rate of exploitation, that is, the ratio between surplus value and wages (S/V) does not depend on the arbitrary will of the Stalinist government, but is dictated by world capitalism' (p. 159). This argument is not well-founded. The USSR's trade with the capitalist world is extremely limited: it constitutes a mere 35% of its foreign trade. What is more, this percentage lumps together trade with the developed countries (22%) and the underdeveloped (13%). Moreover, foreign trade represents only a small percentage of the total production of the Soviet economy. The argument is accompanied by a 'sub-argument', which invokes military pressure. As the preface puts it: 'The author shows that even after a victorious proletarian revolution, a backward country like Russia, isolated as it was by the defeat of the Socialist revolutions in Europe, and under the constant threat of imperialist attack, can exist only if it achieves military power equal to that of its enemies. Military power can be attained only by massive investments which, under conditions of backwardness, means forced savings, freezing the level of consumption of the masses, extracting as much surplus value from the workers as is possible in order to accumulate capital' (p. 8).

But this means that not only is it impossible to build socialism, but it is impossible even to establish a workers' state and set about preparing the foundations for socialism in backward countries. Once again we meet with the economic fatalism which we discovered in Otto Bauer.

The Chinese Theory and its Epigones

It is difficult to find any Chinese 'theory' about the USSR. We have to reconstruct an implicit theory from articles,

declarations and speeches.¹¹ Whereas the theories that we dealt with before were all more or less *economist*, we are dealing this time with an *over-estimation of the political level*.

Let us look first at a Chinese article where a synthesis is given of the process of capitalist restoration in Russia. This is what it says: 'After Stalin's death, great Marxist-Leninist that he was, the rotten careerist and conspirator Khrushchev, who had sneaked into the party, and his friends judged the moment right to launch a palace revolution. They usurped the leadership of Party, Army and State in the USSR. From that time onwards, the state power of the Soviet Union changed its nature. A dictatorship of the bourgeoisie replaced the dictatorship of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie, through the hands of its agents, carried out a counter-revolutionary restoration.'

The Chinese theory is, therefore, a thesis of peaceful *coup d'état*, a 'palace revolution'. It suffices to take power in the Party and imprint on it a counter-revolutionary line and the class nature of the State will automatically change.

This thesis has two main characteristics: firstly it allows for peaceful transition (gradual or reformist) from one type of State to another; secondly it gives primary importance to the political factor (the politics of the Party) in making an analysis of the class nature of the State.

The Chinese leaders have never explained why they believe that a peaceful return to capitalism is possible, since they admit that the opposite is not possible. We must say in defence of Tony Cliff that he has at least attempted to make this explanation. He thinks that a professional army cannot be peacefully transformed into a popular militia — hence the impossibility of a peaceful transition to socialism. On the other hand, a popular militia can be peacefully transformed into a professional army and the possibility of a peaceful transition from socialism to capitalism follows from this (op. cit. p. 127). However, even if for a moment we allow what he says about the army to be true, this still does not permit us to draw any conclusions about what the class nature of this army might be (the Swiss bourgeoisie still has a militia!) nor about the class nature of the State.

The more 'sophisticated' Maoists have a more refined argument to account for the seizure of power by the bourgeoisie. But it is, however, only a refinement of the same theory. Professor Bettelheim writes that 'the diversity of concrete forms that the power of the working class can take does not modify its class character, as long as the relationship of the organs of power to the masses is not a relationship of domination and repression but a mass/vanguard relationship, allowing the masses to express their opinions and the leadership to centralize the correct ideas coming from the masses. When the organs of power become separated from the masses, however, these organs cease to be those of a working-class state and become those of a bourgeois state pure and simple.'¹²

Here we come across the same arguments that we met with Cliff: a workers' state which is not democratic cannot be a workers' state. This normativism is doubled in Bettelheim's case with a real *salto mortale*. When Bettelheim was a critic of Stalinism, he still regarded the bureaucratic state as a workers' state despite everything.¹³ Today

¹¹ *Peking Review* since 1967. Also see *The Great Chinese Revolution and the Tragedy of the Soviet Union*, and *Let Us Go Forward on the Road Opened by the October Socialist Revolution*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Peking 1967.

¹² Paul M. Sweezy and Charles Bettelheim: *The Transition to Socialism*, Monthly Review Press 1972.

the same Bettelheim, having become an admirer of Stalin, rejects the Soviet state since it is separated from the masses!

In another work Bettelheim puts forward this key idea on the restoration of capitalism in the following way:

1. The concept of vanguard describes the governing workers' party, but only to the extent that it is a workers' party through its social base, through its close links with the immediate producers and through its ideology.

2. If such a vanguard does not exist, in particular if the governing "workers' party" no longer has the characteristics which make it a vanguard of the working class, the political and ideological conditions which permit the domination of planned relations over market forces no longer exist. When this situation has come about, there may well be a document which still bears the name of "plan" but this only serves to mask the absence of real planning.¹⁴

Ideological factors thus have a privileged status. Not only can they be responsible for the stagnation or the blocking of the transition to socialism, but the workers' state can even be destroyed and replaced by another state through their influence! 'The domination of the State bourgeoisie brings about a tendency for the rapid spread of market relations and monetary accounting.'¹⁵ This privileged status accorded to ideology is accompanied by an *under-estimation of the resistance that the working class will put up to the new economic structures and the state and governmental structures accompanying such a transformation.*

Sweezy's point of view is a little more nuanced. 'I consider the process in a slightly different way. The relationship between the development of a new bourgeoisie and the extension of the market is not a simple relationship of cause and effect but rather a relationship of a dialectical type, with reciprocal interaction.'¹⁶ Sweezy evades replying to the question on the nature of State Power itself.

Sailing beside the Cliffs in the China Sea

The *Revolution!* group in France takes an original position.¹⁷ It has developed the theory that a new exploiting class took power in the Soviet Union in 1928, at the time of the final victory of Stalinism. In fact it is the theory of a new class. But this new class has internal differentiations and is giving birth to a classical bourgeoisie. The process is, however, far from being finished.

In other words Russia is passing from a workers' state through state capitalism to classical capitalism.

What is this view based on? Its argument is not so very far from the over-estimation of the political level that we found in Bettelheim. The point of departure is the difference in nature between a bourgeois revolution and a socialist revolution. The first is a *purely political* revolution whose relations of production have *already come into being* under feudalism. The second is a social revolution, *which is still faced with the task of creating new relationships of production.* Up to this point the analysis is correct, as is the conclusion which the *Revolution!* group draws from it. 'We can judge the class character of political power and the existence or otherwise of the dictatorship of the proletariat by the *functions* that the state performs.' But a little further on these functions are described in a more limited way. To examine the nature of state power, we have to look at the relations of production '*whose emergence it assures or prepares*' (p. 11). The function of the state is sharply limited here, for one particular aspect is lost sight of: a state can also be defined by its defence

of existing relations of production, that is by defence of the *status quo*. When they lose sight of this essential aspect, the *Revolution!* comrades are then able to turn the terms of the debate upside down and say that '*the class meaning of the relations of production depends to some extent on the nature of political power*' (pp. 10-11). This is exactly the opposite of what they started out by saying.

In order to be able to over-politicize the relations of production in this way, the *Revolution!* comrades take one precaution: they push the date of the Stalinist counter-revolution back as far as possible, to a date (1927) when they claim the new relations of production did not yet exist, even in an embryonic form; to a time when there was nothing to defend except the Party: 'Under the conditions of civil war, the pressure of the peasantry and the imperialist encirclement and the delay of the European revolution, the proletarian dictatorship was confronted with such difficulties that the revolutionary character of the Soviet state was guaranteed only by the revolutionary line of the Bolshevik leadership' (p. 4). In other words, the counter-revolution has been pushed back so far that *nothing* else except the Party existed in Russia. This analysis overlooks a few details. The new state, the nationalizations (the most important took place in 1918-19), the creation of the first planning bodies (well before 1927), the liquidation of the bourgeoisie, etc. etc.

To explain the second stage (reconstruction of the bourgeoisie), *Revolution!* makes use of the economic reforms. They assert that 'plant autonomy already extends by and large to investments and these latter are therefore at least partially dependent on the profits realized by individual concerns' (p. 62). This demonstrates a great ignorance of the actual facts.

Even after the economic reforms, major investment still remains centralized in the USSR. What is involved is only putting part of the profits at the disposal of individual production units. And only a part of this part is allotted to funds which make self-financing possible. In fact only 8-15% of profits go to enterprise funds.¹⁸ They are divided into three parts: funds for material incentives; money for social and cultural needs and the construction of housing; and, finally, funds for the development of production. With these last funds, pilot enterprises self-finance investments to the extent of some 10-15% of centralized investment. So the situation is a long way away from widespread autonomy! The real meaning of the economic reforms was different. If we look at the first fund (material incentives) we can see that it is to pay bonuses — as much to the workers as to the managerial personnel of the factories. But while the bonuses of the workers are only partially dependent on these funds (another part comes from the wages fund which is still centralized), the whole of the managerial bonuses are financed by the material incentives funds. What this means is that an organization which does not make a profit will not receive any bonuses. This is the 'carrot' that the economic

¹³ See Charles Bettelheim, *La Planification soviétique*, Marcel Rivière, Paris 1945.

¹⁴ Charles Bettelheim, *Calcul économique et formes de propriété*, Maspéro, Paris 1970, p. 91.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁶ Sweezy and Bettelheim, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ *Révolution et Contre-révolution en URSS*, Cahiers Révolution 1, no. 3.

¹⁸ See E. I. Liberman, 'The function of profit in the incentives system of the Soviet economy', and G. D. Sobolewa 'The new Soviet incentives system: study of its functioning in Kiev', *Revue Internationale du Travail*, January 1970.

reform offers to the enterprise bureaucrats so that they show initiative.

We do not dispute that these reforms 'stimulate' the factory bureaucrats to reduce the size of the work-force and wages costs. We will not deny either that the factory bureaucrats — or at least some of them — would like to be free to dispose of more sizeable investment funds. It is obvious that this process can provoke differentiations in the bureaucracy, one wing of which will wish openly for the return of capitalism. Moreover, this is one of the points on which the Fourth International has always insisted, in its criticism of the Soviet economic reform. But we should not confuse a movement with the final destination. For to do so is a characteristic of reformism — including reformism in reverse!

The bureaucracy is still obliged to manoeuvre and its behaviour is still far from that of a ruling class. Before such a transformation takes place, the ruling class in name — the working class — still has time to prepare itself to take back its heritage. For that to happen a political revolution must be made, which will give it the possibility of controlling the state through representative bodies of workers, an anti-bureaucratic revolution, which can alone guarantee that the long journey will reach its end: socialist society.

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OPPOSITION CURRENTS IN THE USSR Ted Harding

The political atomization of Soviet society is perhaps the most difficult of Stalin's legacies to overcome. However, after decades of life under a system of terror which froze society in a state of immobilism and inertia, people in the U.S.S.R. are slowly re-acquiring the habits of forming and expressing independent political opinions. Ever since Stalin's death in 1953, a rise in political consciousness has been increasingly apparent. It has been an uneven process, but the long-term trend is undeniable. Moreover, in the last few years the process has been accelerating. This growing repoliticization, and the various opposition groups it has thrown up, are signs that the beginning of the end of bureaucratic ascendancy is now imminent.

The struggle of the new Soviet oppositions for the political regeneration of their society is taking place under extremely difficult conditions. An appreciation of some of these conditions is central to an understanding of the contemporary dissident movement.

Problems of Opposition

First, there are tremendous obstacles standing in the way of the theoretical development of that opposition. Stalinism bequeathed Soviet society a profound ideological disarray by discrediting the ideas of Marxism. The struggle to discover the real meaning of revolutionary Marxism is the major ideological task facing the Soviet oppositions.

In this struggle for Marxist theory, the Soviet oppositions are without access to information about world revolutionary developments. This means that the Marxist dissident gets little support and encouragement from developments outside the Soviet Union and cannot profit from the discussions and experiences of the international revolutionary left. The May 1968 events in France, for example, whose importance in the rise of the revolutionary vanguards in Europe needs no emphasizing, are totally unknown to the Soviet dissident. All he can know about May 1968 is what he read in his press and what he heard from the Voice of America. The Soviet press presented the events as the sabotage, by a section of students led by 'werewolves' like Cohn-Bendit and backed up by Katanga mercenaries, of the peaceful efforts of the French Communist Party to win better wages for workers. Needless to say, the Voice of American imperialism did not present a much truer picture of events.

Secondly, the Soviet dissident is denied knowledge of his own history. The period of the twenties is a closed book. Documents of that period are all kept under lock and key in closed library sections. It is dangerous for a Soviet citizen even to study carefully books of that period which the authorities themselves have published. One Soviet student was recently expelled from Moscow University for an intensive reading of a Bukharin text on sale at Soviet bookshops. Ivan Dzyuba, a Ukrainian dissident, had his entire Lenin library confiscated for taking an 'unhealthy' interest in Lenin's writings on the national question.

Thirdly, in the purges Stalin eliminated an entire generation of Bolsheviks. An official Yugoslav estimate is that between 1936-8, 3 million people were executed, 6 million were sent to camps (few to return), another 8

million were arrested. This of course does not include the hundreds of thousands who were victims of earlier repression, or the thousands of Trotskyists shot in the Vorkuta camps. With the physical annihilation of an entire generation of Bolsheviks, the revolutionary Marxist tradition in the Soviet Union received a monumental defeat. When sections of Soviet youth began once again to become to some degree politicized, they tried to search out former camp inmates and remaining old Bolsheviks—but these were few and far between. Whenever the youth did come in contact with an old Bolshevik who could answer their questions, and offer a key to the understanding of contemporary society, their political development was remarkably rapid. The old Bolshevik Kosterin, when released from concentration camp, politicized a circle of people whose names read like a who's who of the Soviet opposition—Grigorenko, Yakir and Yakhimovich to name only a few.

Finally, the Soviet bureaucracy maintains a massive apparatus of police repression. The existence of this secret police apparatus is of course a sign of the chronic instability of the regime: it is evidence that social control in the Soviet Union can only be maintained by direct and constant invigilation. The police system penetrates society, isolates the individual and fragments his socio-political existence. Under such conditions, discussion and political debate is an extremely dangerous enterprise. The bureaucracy unleashes one wave of repression after another in a desperate effort to suppress even the most partial repoliticization. Over the last year, the Soviet leadership has opened up its latest sweeping campaign against dissidents. Hundreds of oppositionists have been arrested—over 150 in the Ukraine alone.

So if the Soviet oppositions often appear naive, confused and feeble, Marxists in the West, before leaping to criticize them, should make a serious effort to understand the difficult conditions in which they develop.

Opposition Currents

For Trotskyists, there are four key questions concerning opposition in the Soviet Union. 1. To what extent does it exist within the working class? 2. To what extent do the various dissident groupings understand that the central political contradiction of Soviet society is that between the working class and the bureaucracy? 3. To what degree have they broken with all conceptions of the reformability of the bureaucracy? 4. Do the demands they raise have an anti-bureaucratic revolutionary dynamic?

These questions cannot at present be answered adequately. It is almost impossible to ascertain the relative weight and importance of the various oppositional currents in the Soviet Union, because of the very scanty information that reaches the West and the necessarily clandestine nature of much of their activity. There is no need to dwell on the problems of making a proper analysis, but clearly these are formidable.

There are three broad currents of anti-bureaucratic opposition in the Soviet Union. The most visible from outside the country is constituted by the dissident intellectuals. These have focussed primarily on the issue of civil

rights, fighting for the intelligentsia's most cherished right of free expression and communication. But the denial of such basic democratic rights in the Soviet Union is an absolutely indispensable aspect of bureaucratic rule. The bureaucracy cannot grant such rights as freedom of speech, press and assembly, without fundamentally undermining the very basis of its power. The struggle of the intellectuals for democratic rights is therefore situated within the dynamic of permanent revolution. In order to secure democratic rights, the intelligentsia has ultimately to pose the question of the abolition of the bureaucracy as such.

The second major current of anti-bureaucratic opposition in the Soviet Union is the struggle of the national minorities. In a society where 46.6% of the total population is non-Russian, the issue of national oppression is critically important. The struggle to end national oppression in the Soviet Union is intensifying sharply, as the recent riots in Lithuania indicate. In the non-Russian republics, a powerful indigenous proletariat has been created by the development of industry. It is they who are destined to be the leaders of the national minorities in all their future struggles.

Finally, there is opposition within the working class, which is at present focussed primarily on questions of poor living conditions, price increases, etc. Unfortunately we know least about this most important of all oppositions. In fact, as one Soviet dissident, Amalrik, has written: 'no one, not even the bureaucratic elite, knows exactly what attitudes prevail among wider sections of the population'. The upper strata of society, he continues, have 'a surrealist image if the working masses'.¹

There are, of course, other forms of opposition to the existing regime—some of them extremely reactionary. Among the most important of these are the Jewish movement to leave the Soviet Union for Israel; the various religious groups such as the Baptists; and the various Russian nationalist and Slavophile groups. It would be wrong to leave the impression that these currents are insignificant: quite the contrary.

Russian nationalism/Slavophilism, for example, is becoming a major influence in the upper strata of Soviet society. This current is reactionary through and through. It is racist and chauvinist. It attacks the regime for 'betraying traditional Russian values', and attacks Marxism as a 'foreign transplant'. It rejects the October revolution as 'un-Russian', and eulogizes the 'mystical qualities of the Great Russian soul'. The credo of this current is best expressed by a recent *samizdat* document called 'A Word to the Nation', signed by 'Russian patriots'. The 'patriots' write: 'We are facing the threat of biological degeneration. This danger threatens not only us but the entire white race. If we do not take timely measures we may live to see ourselves playing the part of pawns or at best passive observers in the battle between the black and yellow races for world supremacy. Democratic institutions do not play a healing role, but rather aggravate the disease . . . more important to us than the victory of democracy over dictatorship is the moral reorientation of dictatorship, an ideological revolution of sorts. . . Long live the victory of Christian civilization over the chaos which has risen up against it! Long live a great, single and indivisible Russia!'²

It is well-known in the Soviet Union that Slavophiles have the backing of many high Party and secret police officials. While a left oppositionist like Grigorenko is locked up for over three years in a psychiatric hospital, notorious reactionaries like Osipov produce and circulate their rubbish in relative freedom. The officially sponsored 'Rodina (Motherland) Clubs' are known to everyone in the Soviet

Union as one of the principal centres of this form of reaction.

These right-wing elements of opposition, however, despite their importance, will not be examined in this article, which will confine itself to those with an anti-bureaucratic revolutionary dynamic.

Working-Class Opposition

The struggle of the Soviet working class against the bureaucracy has centred primarily on questions of social and economic inequality, low wages, poor living conditions, price increases, and the severe factory regime. This struggle is bound up with the state of the Soviet economy, which must therefore be described briefly.

The Soviet economy today suffers from a deep malaise. 1971 figures show that the growth of real income per capita has been the slowest for nearly a decade. The 1972 statistics for the yearly plan fulfilment of the current five-year plan show that there has been no significant increase in consumer goods. The plan for housing in 1972 was once again underfulfilled by 10%. In the same period, national income per head grew at around 3% per annum; but if one takes into account recent price increases, then the growth in national income per head is negligible. At the same time as the economy stagnates, the educational level, industrial experience and expectations of the Soviet working class have increased. The promise of a consumer society which the bureaucracy held out to the working class after Stalin's death has failed to materialize, and there is bitter resentment.

Unable to organize itself into genuine trade unions or other autonomous organizations, with no real possibility for expressing its class interests, the Soviet working class has remained seemingly passive. Of course, any organized form of opposition with generalized demands is difficult in the context of a factory regime which keeps detailed files on every worker, where every worker must carry a 'labour book' which registers his work record, and where an extensive system of informers on the shop floor keeps the secret police informed of opinions expressed. Under these conditions, much working-class opposition is an opposition of despair, expressed through individual acts. This takes the form of industrial sabotage, extremely shoddy production, high rates of absenteeism about which the press complains almost daily, rampant alcoholism, and what Soviet bureaucrats call 'acts of organized hooliganism'.

But the Soviet working-class opposition has not been limited to this type of activity. There have been literally hundreds of occasions in the last decade when the working class has broken out into more open protest, often in the form of violent spontaneous outbursts. It is interesting to note the speed with which these outbursts develop, and how quickly they spread if the bureaucracy fails to contain them by cordoning off the city in which they occur. In 1962, for example, when Khrushchev announced increases in meat and dairy products, this action was greeted in many factories in the Soviet Union by sit-down strikes, work stoppages, and street demonstrations. In Novocherkassk the working class marched to the Party headquarters to protest against the increases. This march sparked off a riot, and within a day the riots had spread to other cities in the region such as Donetsk (the mining centre) and Zhdanov. Special KGB divisions had to be flown in to suppress the disturbances. A similar situation occurred last summer,

¹ Andrei Amalrik, *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?*, London 1970, p. 30.

² 'A Word to the Nation', *Survey*, Summer 1971.

when large-scale riots were reported in Dnieprodzerzhinsk and Dniepropetrovsk, sparked off by a strike in protest against low living standards.

An interesting form of working-class protest took place in Krasnodar, in the Kuban, several years ago. Here the working class, exasperated at the shortage of consumer goods, staged a three-day stay-at-home strike. But perhaps the best organized of strikes to have taken place recently was the Kiev Hydro-electric plant strike in the Ukraine. Here the workers actually organized mass meetings which were addressed by their own elected representatives, and where bureaucrats who tried to address the workers were physically evicted from the platform. The strike was about housing shortages. But during demonstrations which the workers organized, banners were raised calling for 'All Power To The Soviets'.

Recently several leaflets circulating chiefly in Leningrad raised the slogan 'For a General Strike'. This example, like the others mentioned, is an indication that it will not be very long before the proletariat re-enters the political arena.

In the context of the economic crisis as felt by the working class, it is important to emphasize the crucial role played by women in the protest actions. There is almost total employment of women in the Soviet Union, but on average they receive 50% of the male wage. Furthermore, they still carry the burden of housekeeping, cooking and queuing, and are therefore more acutely aware of the shortages than men. In Novocherkask in 1962 it was working-class women who, having calculated the cost of the price increases in terms of the family's weekly income, initiated the demonstrations.

A final observation about the pattern of working-class opposition relates to the tendency for unrest to occur most frequently in the peripheral areas of the Soviet Union—that is to say, in areas at quite a distance from the central Moscow-Leningrad region. This does not mean that strikes have not taken place in the central regions—indeed they have, at the Moscow Moskvitch plant for example. But large-scale activity, and mass actions involving all sectors of the working class, nevertheless occur more frequently in the peripheral areas.

There is a good explanation for this. The bureaucracy finds it most difficult to penetrate the peripheral areas, especially the non-Russian republics, and therefore a greater measure of spontaneous action is possible in these regions. Also, the central regions are highly favoured in terms of the flow of consumer goods and employment possibilities. Material shortages and unemployment are much more severe in the 'provinces'. This pattern has serious implications for the process of political revolution, for it means that those areas which are of the least strategic importance have the greatest opportunity for action.

The National Movements

The various movements of the oppressed nationalities are the only significant oppositional current to date to have involved both workers and dissident intellectuals in the same organizations. For example, it was in helping to organize the Crimean Tartars, exiled *en masse* from their homeland by Stalin, that Grigorenko and his group of civil rights activists achieved something like a mass following. In order to understand the national movements, it is essential to grasp some of the main features of the national question as it is posed in the Soviet Union today.

The early Bolshevik nationalities policy encouraged the development of the national languages and cultures in

an effort to raise the educational and cultural level of the non-Russian masses who had been oppressed by the Tsarist regime. It was also part of a policy to ensure that the non-Russian masses could participate in and control the administrative apparatus in their republics—an apparatus which under Tsarism had been totally in the hands of the Russian colonizers. Such a policy was obviously not to the liking of the former Tsarist officials, and this stratum of the colonizing petty bourgeoisie was subsequently to flock to the banner of Stalinist reaction. The essence of the Leninist nationalities policy, expressed by a Communist at the Twelfth Party Congress, was that 'it is better to force ten Great Russian chauvinists and nationalists to learn the language of the country in which they live than to force one peasant to torture his native language in a government office'. For the Stalinists, it was better to force ten peasants to torture their native language than to disturb one Great Russian bureaucrat.

Today, in most of the non-Russian republics, the linguistic division coincides with the social division. Ivan Dzyuba, a Ukrainian oppositionist, writes: '... here the national question again develops into a social one: we see that in city life (in the Ukraine) the Ukrainian language is in a certain sense opposed as the language of the "lower" strata of the population—caretakers, maids, unskilled labourers, newly hired workers, rank and file workers, especially in the suburbs—to the Russian language as the language of the "higher", "more educated" strata of society—"captains of industry", clerks and the intelligentsia. And it is not possible to "brush aside" this social rift. The language barrier aggravates and exacerbates social divisions.' He concludes, 'It is wrong to oppose social problems to national problems on the pretext that the former are more important and immediate. National problems are always social problems as well, problems of political class strategy.'³

The national movements in the Soviet Union vary considerably, involving nations at different stages of development, with radically different historical pasts. I will here examine only the political currents within the Ukraine—the largest non-Russian republic, with a population of over 40 million, a highly developed industry and a territory larger than France. These can be divided broadly into Marxist and nationalist.

The Marxist current in the Ukrainian movement is best exemplified by Dzyuba, by Vyacheslav Chornovil, and by an organization which emerged in the early sixties called the Union of Workers and Peasants. This current attacks Great Russian chauvinism in the name of internationalism, and argues for a return to Leninism. It is also the grouping which has best understood the social consequences of Russification policies for the working class, and that the bureaucracy's nationalities policy is part and parcel of a more general reactionary socio-economic policy. Chornovil, recently arrested, expressed the collective positions of this group when he wrote: 'I categorically state, contrary to all illogical assertions... that I have always firmly adhered to the principles of socialism and continue to do so... I cannot imagine true socialism without democratic freedoms; without the widest political and economic self-government of all the cells of the state organism down to and including the smallest; without a real guarantee—and not merely a paper one—of the rights of all nations within a multi-national state.'⁴

³ Ivan Dzyuba, *Internationalism or Russification?*, London 1970, pp. 135-6, 193.

⁴ *International Socialist Review*, September 1972, pp. 41-2.

The Marxist current has, however, been divided on how to achieve this aim. Dzyuba, Chornovil and others tended to act as individuals, and not as an organized group. Moreover, they insisted on the employment only of peaceful, constitutional means of expression: petitions, open letters, public protests. But last year the KGB carried out mass arrests among this grouping, and there is every indication that there is now serious rethinking of strategies on their part.

The Union of Workers and Peasants took a different approach. They understood the organizational tasks facing the opposition, and set about building a socialist party with a programme and with the intention of carrying out revolutionary propaganda. Although the platform of this group never reached the West, we have a general idea of its contents from the writings of L. Lukyanenko, a former Communist Party ideological worker and founder of the group. He wrote: 'As a result of studying Soviet reality, in 1960 I came to revise the earlier draft programme and began to think that it was not the independence of the Ukrainian SSR that was essential for improving the life of the people, but the liquidation of bureaucratism.' The Union's programme included a call to end the 'curtailment of the rights of the trade unions, whose leaders had become the best tools of the managers in violating socialist legality', liquidation of 'bureaucratic methods of administering the national economy', 'full democratization of the soviets of workers' deputies', and a radical improvement in the lot of the peasantry.¹ Lukyanenko was sentenced to death. After much protest, the death penalty was commuted to 15 years imprisonment.

Within the Ukraine there is also a straightforward nationalist movement. This is strongest in the western regions. It is not 'bourgeois' nationalist, as it does not question the property relations established by the October revolution. But it is nationalist in that it counterposes Ukrainian nationalism to Russian nationalism. Some nationalists, patterning themselves after the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, a partisan group who fought both the Germans and the Red Army, organized conspiratorial parties using clandestine methods of struggle, including terrorism. One such organization was the Ukrainian National Committee, composed of 40 Lvov industrial workers. Two of its members were executed for allegedly planning terrorist attacks.

Russian Dissident Intellectuals

The oppositional current which has attracted the most attention in the west is that of the Russian dissident intelligentsia. The real preface to their dissent was written in 1956 by Khrushchev, when he gave his 'secret speech' exposing Stalin. Khrushchev's revelations were part of an attempt to restore a sense of confidence in the bureaucracy. As part of this new course, the Khrushchev Party leadership permitted two short periods of relaxed controls over political and cultural life in the Soviet Union. It was during this period that the first of the post-Stalin Russian intellectual oppositions arose: the so-called 'cultural opposition'. The cultural opposition was a movement of writers, artists and poets who pressed for a 'thaw' in the intellectual environment. This opposition did not question the bureaucracy as such, nor did it really raise in a clear way fundamental questions of democratic rights. The cultural opposition set out to liberate the creative process: it demanded the right of the artist to render reality in genuinely realistic terms; it fought the total banality of official Soviet culture. Although the debates of that period

may have centred on such seemingly innocuous ground as the 'need for greater sincerity in literature', it became abundantly clear that to grant the writers and poets a freedom of criticism not enjoyed by citizens, and above all by workers, 'was to make artistic creation an inevitable instrument of social criticism'.² By 1965 the bureaucracy was backtracking furiously on its concessions to the intellectuals. It reimposed strict censorship, and began to arrest those writers who still insisted on 'sincerity in literature'. The trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel, two writers who perhaps more than anyone else had come to symbolize the values of the new cultural opposition, ended the period of that opposition and gave birth to the 'Democratic Movement'—an array of individuals and groups who initiated a struggle for democratic rights.

The brutal treatment of Sinyavsky and Daniel, and the arrests of other writers, shocked the dissident intellectuals into a realization that artistic freedom without fundamental political freedom was unthinkable. It was not, however, until 1968, beginning with protests around the trial of Ginsburg and Galanskov, that the Democratic Movement really surfaced. And with the Democratic Movement arrived *samizdat* (literally 'self-published')—the written material increasingly circulated in the Russian underground.

The Democratic Movement's campaign for civil rights is understood by the activists of that movement to mean the democratization of Soviet society. The most frequent demands of this movement are: an end to the arbitrary arrests of individuals by the secret police, strict adherence to the Soviet constitution, an end to press censorship, and the rehabilitation of all former concentration camp inmates. This movement also organized demonstrations against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. And one of its members, Galanskov (who recently died under mysterious circumstances in a concentration camp), marched against the American embassy in Moscow to protest the invasion of the Dominican Republic.

Politically, the Democratic Movement is diverse. It ranges from Leninists like Grigorenko to liberals like Sakharov. These diverse tendencies do, however, take a common stand on the Soviet Constitution, and they stress the importance of law as a mechanism for securing civil rights. But what divides the Democratic Movement is how to achieve a return to socialist legality.

The liberals, usually well-placed figures in the Soviet academic establishment, try to convince the bureaucracy that, in the interests of its own self-preservation, it must introduce a measure of civil rights. As moderate men, the liberals want democratization, but 'without causing undue commotion and mass disturbances'.³ If faced with the choice between the two, they would no doubt beat a hasty retreat into the bosom of the bureaucracy.

But within the Democratic Movement there are also 'radical democratizers'.⁴ The Soviet dissidents best known to the West come from this circle: Yakir, Bukovsky, Yakhimovich, Grigorenko, Litvinov and others. Mobilizing public opinion independently of the bureaucracy, publicizing violations of civil rights with courage and self-sacrifice, they have achieved some success in causing a shift in the public consciousness. But these 'radical democratizers', though vocal on the question of democratic rights, have said little about the economic and political

¹ *ibid.*

² *The Development and Disintegration of World Stalinism*, SWP Education Bulletin, New York 1970.

³ *Intercontinental Press*, 4 December 1972, p. 1,354.

⁴ *ibid.*

rights of the mass of workers and peasants. Acting as individuals, they have had no strategy for drawing the working class into the struggle for civil rights.

With the arrest of scores of 'radical democratizers' last year, a more political current within the dissident movement has emerged, a current which recognizes the limitations of the legalistic-constitutional orientation of the Democratic Movement. Many dissidents have come to the conclusion that what is required is a more scientific analysis of the system they are trying to change. They are also beginning to understand the need to develop new forms of organization—even the need to build clandestine parties with an orientation towards the working class.

Recently quite a few clandestine parties have come to our attention. We know very little about them, because of the strict secrecy which surrounds their activity. We learn of their existence, for example, in one or two sentences in the *Chronicle of Current Events* after members have been arrested. They often apparently number no more than a dozen individuals. Frequently, the only indication of their politics is the name they have chosen. Recent examples have included: the 'Russian Socialist Party', which circulated a leaflet in Leningrad calling on workers to launch a general strike; the 'Party of Non-Party Workers Struggling for the Restoration of Socialism'; the 'Democratic Union of Socialists'; 'The Union of Communards'; 'The Party of Young Workers'; and 'The Party of Real Communists'.

It is too early to assess the role these political group-

ings will play in the coming political revolution. Certainly the economic crisis in the Soviet Union has created a social climate where revolutionary ideas can find a ready response in the working class. Fearing this possibility, the Soviet secret police has intensified its efforts to search out and destroy any incipient organizations. But a clandestine form of organization, as opposed to the 'open protests' of the civil rights activists, has permitted these groups to exist in some cases for a considerable period of time, and to gain invaluable experience for future struggles.

Perhaps as important as the existence of these groups—no matter how much terror they may strike in the minds of the KGB—is the huge body of underground literature, *samizdat*, which the new political attitude has fostered. Today in the USSR there circulate periodicals, full-length books, historical and philosophical essays, translations, and pamphlets dealing with strategic and tactical problems of political opposition. *Samizdat* plays a crucial role in the development of political consciousness. It has become the chief medium for the working out of political ideas.

The bureaucracy has become painfully aware of the threat which the *samizdat* system poses to its hegemony of political expression. It therefore took a decision to put an end to *samizdat* at all costs, and with this aim it unleashed a wave of mass arrests in January 1972. But the production and circulation of *samizdat* literature has nonetheless continued unabated. It will continue to give political expression to the forces which are now increasingly prepared to give battle to the bureaucracy.

James Conway

THE TWO NATIONS DOGMA

According to the British and Irish Communist Organization's 'Two Nations' dogma, the Unionist bourgeoisie is the only section of the bourgeoisie capable of understanding developments in Ireland.¹ It is, of course, necessary for them to assert this since so much of their position is derived from Unionist propaganda. But here there is a strange anomaly. The argument for the Two Nations dogma was initially based on the fact of uneven capitalist development in Ireland, engendered by the different forms of land tenure which existed North and South.² How-

ever, it was not the Unionists but the Nationalists who discovered and stressed the importance of this fact. It was none other than the Catholic-Nationalist bogeyman, George O'Brien, who popularized this explanation, and it was from him that the Unionists, including the BICO, plagiarized it.³

This constituted a fundamental flaw in what appeared to be a neatly wrapped dogma. To attempt to construct the Two Nations thesis on a premise of Nationalist historiography was like trying to build a house on shifting sands. So a new twist in the thesis was called for. Certainly, it was admitted, the uneven economic development of Ireland explains the evolution of the Protestant people as a distinct nation. *But then again, this uneven economic development has itself to be explained.* Accordingly, we are told that 'the uneven economic development itself followed from the fact that there have been two distinct communities in Ireland since the 17th century, in one of which production relations were more advanced than in the other.'⁴ This tautological statement, which asserts that two different forms of production relations developed in Ireland because two different forms of relations existed to begin with, makes sense only if we take it to mean that the Protestant community in the North, due to some innate charisma (Protestantism), was able to develop advanced property relations which the Catholics, as a result of their non-charisma (Catholicism), were unable to do.

Of course, this is no new explanation. It has been advanced for many years by the ideologues of the Protestant community itself. In 1852, for instance, the Missionary

Agent of the Irish Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Edward Marcus Dill, set out to find what reasons 'make Ireland a desert and Ulster its only oasis'.⁵ And the solution he commended was to 'venture the supposition that Romanism is false and Protestantism true, and like some dissected map the most shapeless part of Ireland's puzzle falls into its place in a moment. Observe how it unfolds every mystery in our physical and moral state; and explains why the "Black North" is a garden, and the "Sunny South" a wilderness.'⁶ Dill proceeded at length to explain how 'Romanism' or 'Popery' had been the bane of the Southern Irish. Not only was it responsible for their political and economic thralldom and wretchedness, but it was even the source of their physical deformities!

Faced with this uneven economic development, the venerable missionary suggested the conversion of the Catholic population or, failing this, the extermination of Catholics. While he advocated evangelicism, he did not hide his delight at the Famine (which, of course, was caused by 'Popery') and the consequent outflow of the Catholic peasantry to America. He sent his reverent blessings after them and called for a second plantation of Scottish Presbyterians to take their place.

Naturally, the BICO thesis is a little more sophisticated. After all, the Rev. Dill claimed only to be 'a humble man' and not a 'Marxist'. The BICO, in fact, categorically deny that they in any way attribute economic development in Ireland to religious factors.⁷ Of course, they deny this. Not to do so would immediately expose their dogma for the Unionist propaganda which it is. But such denials do not alter the reality of their views.

The substance of their position is that both the Catholics and Protestants in Ireland laboured under the same yoke of oppression. But because the Protestants came from a higher civilization, which found expression in their religion, they were able to impose capitalist property relations on their landowners. The Catholics, on the other hand, were a backward race, still at a primitive stage of tribal development, which found a cultural manifestation in the community's adherence to reactionary Catholicism. They had no desire to share individually in the ownership of the land and submitted willingly to their tribal overlords. Thus, in its latest stage of refinement, the Two Nations dogma makes the whole of future development hinge on religious factors: Protestantism was the ideological embodiment of new property relations, and being transplanted to Ireland automatically reproduced those property relations. This plainly is the materialist version of historical development turned inside out.

'It was the democracy of Scotland which went to Ulster',⁸ we are told, and consequently 'the fact that the Ulster peasants have been involved in the Presbyterian struggles in Scotland made them particularly well fitted to look after their bourgeois rights.' On the other hand, the clan background and traditions of the Catholic peasantry would have hindered them in generating an independent movement for securing bourgeois rights on the land.⁹ This interpretation contrasts sharply with the position adopted in the original *Economics of Partition*. Here the new property relations are accepted as given and there is no question of them growing out of the alleged struggles precipitated by the democratic traditions of the Scottish Presbyterian religion.¹⁰ But leaving aside the nature of a historical interpretation which sees property relations coming into existence as a result of religious causes, the arguments put forward here are historically inaccurate.

On the one hand, the progress made by the Protestant settlers on the eve of their exodus to Ireland, and the democratic traditions of their religion, are grossly exag-

gerated. On the other hand, the level of development attained by the Catholic peasantry during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is grossly underestimated. The gap which existed between the two communities is not sufficient to explain the divergent lines of evolution and the ultimate uneven economic development of the country. Other factors which we have not space to deal with here have to be introduced to explain this.

The Scottish Peasantry

The ancient Scottish society fused with the Norman system during the twelfth century, and the slow and painful emergence of feudalism in the Lowlands began. The peculiarities of the development hindered the establishment of a stable and secure system of land tenure over a long period. This was true not only with regard to the peasantry but also with regard to the highest grades of the nobility. Lands were continually reverting to the Crown and being regranted. This was due mainly, one supposes, to the instability of the Crown and the strict laws of inheritance which were then recognized.¹¹ The War of Independence initiated a major reallocation, and 'during the next three hundred years', says Grant, 'land was constantly changing hands as the Crown waxed and waned in strength'.¹² In subsequent years, many acts of reallocation were passed, by James II in 1437, James IV in 1488 and 1503, James V in 1535 and James VI in 1587. While the forfeitures had less effect the further one went down the social scale, it is also obvious that the absence of security amongst the aristocracy must have also militated

¹ 'The Ulster Unionist Movement came nearer to comprehending the reality of Ireland as a whole than did the Nationalist Movement' (*The Economics of Partition*, 1972 edition, p. 46).

² See the original edition of *The Economics of Partition*.

³ George O'Brien, who has written a three-volume economic history of Ireland, and who was the most eminent of the Nationalist economic historians, says:

'We have seen that the failure of Southern manufacturers to introduce improvements was due to their inability to amass capital owing to the land system, and it is equally the fact that the reason Ulster was enabled to progress was because capital could be accumulated owing to an essential difference in the land system in the North. The Ulster custom which was observed throughout the Northern counties did away with the worst evils which characterized the land system in the South by encouraging tenants to improve by ensuring that they would enjoy such capital as they succeeded in accumulating.' (From a special introduction to E.J. O'Riordan, *Modern Irish Trade and Industry*, 1920, pp. 44-5.)

Conrad Gill, whom the BICO more or less credit with the formulation of the 'uneven economic development' theses, did not publish his book until 1925.

⁴ *The Home Rule Crisis*, p. iii.

⁵ Rev. E. M. Dill, *The Mystery Solved*, 1852, p. 34.

⁶ *ibid.* p. 92.

⁷ *cf. Aspects of Nationalism*, pp. 37-8.

⁸ *The Economics of Partition* (1972) p. 2.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁰ *The Economics of Partition* (original edition) p. 14. Here religion is correctly viewed as an outgrowth of the productive forces, and not vice versa.

¹¹ I. F. Grant, *The Social and Economic Development of Scotland before 1603*, 1930, p. 244.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 243.

against security for the peasantry. At any rate, Grant is of the opinion that 'the matter is of importance, not only because of the lairds themselves, but because the same conditions have affected the smaller folk'.¹³

It is true that at the beginning of the seventeenth century, security of tenure became more common amongst the nobility, as a result of the farm movement. Feuing consisted in the nobles more or less buying out their holdings and was in no sense a democratic movement of the peasantry towards perpetuity of their holdings.¹⁴ In fact, security of tenure was not common in the peasantry until after the middle of the eighteenth century. 'About the middle of the century (1750)', says Graham, 'there arose a new era in the economic and social conditions of the country. . . . Previously to this period most of the farms had either been let without leases, or on very short tenure—two or four years—which starved all enterprise.'¹⁵ If anything, the position of the peasantry in relation to security of tenure worsened during the period which we are discussing.

So it is that Leyburn, in his important work, describes the Scotland from which the settlers come as the most backward place in Europe, which had not yet escaped from the Middle Ages.¹⁶ In the context of the situation described by Grant, he draws a general picture of the backwardness of the Scottish Lowland peasantry.

Although they were grossly oppressed and exploited by the aristocracy, they did not resist, as the peasantry of England had, but continued to cultivate a primitive kinship with their social superiors. 'The curious point must be made', says Leyburn, 'that the humble farmer, who suffered most, did not attribute his calamities to the noblemen and lairds.'¹⁷ Leyburn, in fact, is struck by the submissiveness of the Scottish peasantry and particularly by 'the notable fact that in Scotland, probably alone among all the countries of Europe, there was never anything approaching an uprising against the lords',¹⁸ and 'whatever grievances and complaints may have arisen against individual landlords, the meagre Scottish records before 1600 show little that might be called democratic stirrings'.¹⁹

The only explanation for this remarkable fact is that class differentiation and awareness amongst the peasantry had not reached a very fine point, with the aristocracy still continued to hold reasonably powerful hegemony over the lower ranks of society. The relationship between the principal classes in the Lowlands was in fact very much the same as what the BICO insists existed in Ireland at the time. 'In actuality', says Leyburn, 'there was a rough and practical sense of belonging that gave humanity to the class system of the Lowlands and kept it from becoming onerous.'²⁰

Parallel with the meagre social development and backwardness of the Lowlands, went a general economic and cultural (in the Marxist sense) primitiveness. By all accounts agricultural production was not very advanced. Again, Leyburn's social survey is very revealing on this point. To him the situation was unbelievable, with the people being unaware of improvements which had been introduced since the Dark Ages. So primitive were conditions that people were even incapable of implementing the few paltry suggestions of the government. The custom of 'ploughing by the tail' has often been invoked to demonstrate the backwardness of the Irish peasantry; but in Scotland, according to Leyburn, instruments and techniques were as primitive as those used in ancient Mesopotamia, and lo and behold, harrows were drawn by the horses' tails!

It is against this background that we must examine the specific nature of the democratic traditions of Presby-

terianism. To interpret the Scottish Reformation simply as a bourgeois democratic movement against the feudal aristocracy is naive and mechanistic in the extreme. There was a complex web of interests and the interests of the peasantry and the nascent bourgeoisie formed only a minor element of this.

It is true that the Reformation began in the urban centres, where a small trading class had crystallized. For historical reasons the trade of these merchants was mainly with the continent, particularly France, where the burghs had been granted free access to the market. But after the wars which swept France in the latter half of the 16th century, these markets became extremely fragmented and their importance to the Scottish merchants diminished.²¹

Simultaneously, the possibility of trade with England increased. One of the main reasons why such trade did not already exist was because of the lack of diversity between the two areas. The importance of this was obvious, vis-à-vis France, to which essential foodstuffs and raw materials were exported and from which luxury goods, especially wine, were imported.²² But the industrial and agricultural development of England during the 16th century laid the basis for commercial exchange and a further integration of both English and Scottish middle classes. It was this change in the relationship between Protestant England and Catholic France which explains the ideological ferment amongst the Scottish middle classes at the time of the Reformation. But this urban stratum was as yet insufficiently developed to challenge the dominant position of the feudal aristocracy, and the Reformation was a movement against feudalism only in a secondary and limited sense.²³

The real meaning of the Scottish Reformation is to be found in the sharpening contradictions amongst the feudal nobles themselves. Without the broad layers of the aristocracy which were drawn into the struggle, the Reformation could not have succeeded. 'Capturing the towns was only the first step', says Smout, 'the burghs were much too small for it to be decisive. It had to be followed by winning a significant number of lairds and magnates who could take the initiative against a hostile Crown with a well-armed offensive army.'²⁴

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 247.

¹⁴ 'Feu was not a democratic movement. The payments which made it worth while to the superior to feu land were fairly heavy. . .', *ibid.* p. 270.

¹⁵ Henry Grey Graham, *The social life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, 1899, Vol. 1, p. 201.

¹⁶ James E. Leyburn, *The Scotch Irish—a Social History*, p. xv. It should be noted that Leyburn is here referring specifically to the Lowlands.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ S. E. Elyth, *The Economy of Scotland (1550-1625)*, p. 169.

²² *ibid.* pp. 215-16.

²³ Donaldson adds that the Scottish burghs preferred an alliance with England because the incessant wars and disputes between both countries was disrupting commercial development. Their support for the Reformation, he holds, was conditioned by this fact. Gordon Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation*, p. 46.

²⁴ T. C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People (1560-1830)*.

There were two important sources of conflict amongst the aristocracy. Firstly, a massive segment of the lesser nobles, who incidentally supplied the leadership and tenantry for the Ulster plantation, were deeply impoverished and strongly resented the payment of tithes to a parasitic and decadent Catholic church. Moreover, they benefited from the expropriation of church lands and wanted to see their gains consolidated by a thorough routing of the Roman Church. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, since the threat of the Angevin monarchy in the 12th century, Scotland and France had maintained a close alliance out of fear on both sides of England's designs. Between 1500 and 1560 there was great alarm that the whole of Scotland would become a subordinate and integral province of France, thus leaving the Scottish nobility further out on the periphery of power and authority. When James V died in 1542, Mary Queen of Scots was only one year old. Almost immediately a struggle broke out over the Regency, between one faction led by the dissenting Earls of Argyle, Morton and Arden, who favoured an alliance with England to offset the dominance of France, and another faction, led by Bishop Beaton of St. Andrews, who favoured the French connection, thus drawing in another powerful layer of support for the Reformation.

Unfortunately, the peasantry does not figure as an independent or even distinct force in the whole process. Certainly, the growth of individualism and the struggle for security of land tenure did not enter into the question, and it is difficult to see what useful conclusion the BICO could possibly arrive at by invoking the participation of the Scottish peasantry in the Reformation. The fact that the Reformation spread rapidly into the Highlands should be sufficient to warn against a vulgar materialist interpretation of the effects of the change in religious outlook on the peasantry or indeed the burghs.²⁵ 'Few countries were more completely Calvinist than Scotland', says Smout, 'yet it is hard to see how any support can be found for Weber's thesis from the situation in this country between 1560 and 1690. Within this period the Reformation cannot be shown in any way to have favoured the rise of economic individualism.'²⁶ And Tawney points out that 'In Scotland the views of the reformers as to economic ethics did not differ in substance from those of the church before the Reformation.'²⁷

To sum up and emphasize the essential features of the sketch we have just drawn, we can say the Scottish settlers who came to Ulster during the period of the Ulster plantation came from a depressed region where economic relations were at a low level; these settlers, while by no means slaves, had not developed the independence attributed to them by the BICO and were certainly not in a position to pioneer bourgeois property relations on the land.

The Gaelic System

It is difficult to make a direct comparison between the Scottish and Irish peasantry of this period, but it will be clear that they did not live in two entirely different worlds. Naturally, the BICO accepts uncritically the superficial view that the primitive clan system still persisted in Ireland at this time. 'The Clan System', they say, 'as it existed in Ireland for many centuries before its abolition smothered all power of independent action by the people.'²⁸ The historical facts when sifted show that this view is completely untenable. The 'Clan System' as popularly conceived probably never existed in Ireland at all, and if it did, it had disappeared subsequent to the Northern Invasion. From that time onwards we find the gradual

development of a particular Gaelic form of feudalism, which while utilizing many ancient institutions, filled them with a new content.

Most authorities deny that this Gaelic system was feudal in nature. This is true of Hayes MacCoy, Cyril Falls and Bagwell, not to mention the BICO 'authorities'.²⁹ Their judgement, however, is not based on sound scientific criteria. Most notably there is no rounded conception of historical evolution in their writings. They fail to see any definite stages in the development of society. For instance, they simultaneously deny that Gaelic society was feudal or tribal but refuse to categorize it in any other way. Instead, they merely isolate various aspects of the Gaelic system which distinguish it from English feudalism, and in this way assert the existence of two qualitatively different social orders.

The two most important peculiarities of the Gaelic system on which they concentrate are: the absence of primogeniture and the lack of *absolute* title of ownership. But neither of these affect the essence of feudalism. Primogeniture was not always and everywhere an inherent feature of feudalism. As Professor Strayer points out, 'In the early middle ages there was no rule of primogeniture and no preference for descendants through the male line. Thus, while there was a tendency to give counties only to men who had some tie of kinship with previous counts, there could easily be a dozen or so candidates who had such ties.'³⁰

If primogeniture is absent, then absolute title of ownership cannot exist, since the noble is unable to pass on his holding as he pleases. In this case title is dependent solely on office. In other words the noble's interest in his title is more or less limited to his own lifetime. So, on this point also we must admit that absolute ownership is not necessary to the functioning of the feudal order.

The confusion which arises on matters such as these can easily be cleared up with the help of a scientific definition of feudalism. To aid us here, we have ready to hand the work performed by Maurice Dobb, under the tutelage of Stalin himself. Notwithstanding the BICO's recent discovery that this particular mentor of theirs has been a life-long revisionist, we believe that they will find his definition of feudalism unexceptionable. Feudalism, according to Dobb, is defined essentially in terms of 'an obligation, laid on the producer by force and independently of his own volition, to fulfil certain economic demands of an overlord, whether these demands take the form of services to be performed, or dues to be paid in

²⁵ The simplistic approach of the BICO is seen in the following passage:

'In the last half of the 16th century Scotland was undergoing a profound bourgeois democratic revolution against feudalism. An important economic feature of this was the struggle for bourgeois rights on the land. Culturally, it involved a break with the Catholic Church, which was the cultural and institutional backbone of feudalism.'

²⁶ Smout, *op. cit.* p. 95.

²⁷ R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, 1962 edition, p. 127.

²⁸ *The Economics of Partition* (1972), p. 14.

²⁹ Speaking of the Gaelic system, the BICO says: 'But the general opinion was that the chief did not have feudal ownership. Even the assumption that Gaelic society was feudal makes many things inexplicable.' (*Was Connolly a Bourgeois Intellectual?*, p. 28.)

³⁰ Joseph R. Strayer, *Feudalism*, p. 32.

money or kind'.²¹ If we go by such a definition, then there is no doubt that the social order which existed in Ireland was feudal in character.

By the 16th century, this system prevailed in most areas. It was spread over most of Ulster, parts of the Northern Midlands, North, West and South Connacht, Thomond, parts of West Cork and Kerry, the central and South Midlands, and parts of Wexford and Wicklow. The system was characterized by the typical hierarchical structure of feudalism. Society was divided between two distinct social entities, the freemen and the peasantry. The freemen themselves were divided into a number of categories: professional people, and lower and higher grades of the land-owning lords. The lower grade of the nobility was the most numerous stratum of the class of freemen. These nobles were subordinate to their overlords by a system of clientship, which was characterized by the overlord advancing them livestock while guaranteeing protection and the underlords paying interest on this livestock and reciprocating this guarantee of protection.²² Groups of such subordinate nobles as were under the same lord formed a distinct unit called the *tuath*, and groups of adjacent *tuatha* formed even greater units known as *ur-riogha*, building up in the form of a pyramid.

Traditionally, the *tuath* was supposed to be a democratic institution governed by the members. However, by the 16th century, the overlord had usually usurped authority. 'Although historically', says Hayes McCoy, 'political power in the *tuatha* belonged to the freemen gathered together in assembly, the lord, captain, chieftain or king of the *tuatha* (the titles as reported are various) appears by the 16th century to have assumed effective rule in his own person.'²³

As we remarked above, inheritance through primogeniture had not yet been established, though we may note that it did exist temporarily in the relative stability following the Norman invasion. But the absence of primogeniture does not mean that there was no form of inheritance.

In fact, inheritance in a wider form existed within the legal family, the *derbfine*, which was composed of a four-generation group, including sons, grandsons and great-grandsons. Inheritance passed through this grouping and a narrowing in towards primogeniture was proceeding through the system which grew up after the Norman invasion. Under this system, the successor within the *derbfine* was chosen while the leader of the *derbfine*, and ultimately of the whole *tuath*, was still alive.

The ultimate caricature of the Gaelic system concerns the system of land ownership. It is often asserted that the land was owned in common by the 'clan', and was periodically redistributed among the members. It is true that gavelkind still prevailed, but only in a form which guaranteed a certain security of tenure. When contemporary historical records speak of redistribution they are referring only to alterations in the pattern of holdings. Very often as a dominant *tuath* expanded, additional parcels of land had to be carved out for the new freemen which frequently resulted in portions of the lands of lesser freemen being annexed. Again this reallocation was confined to the *derbfine* and did not occur on the more general plane of the sept or *tuath*. 'Periodic redistribution appears to have taken place within the *derbfine* and not within the sept as a whole, and it not mean, as Davis claimed, that no man's holding was defined. In the inhabited parts of the country every acre had its owner and each knew what he was entitled to.'²⁴

The Catholic Peasantry

It is difficult to frame a unified picture of the conditions and life-style of the peasantry under this system. From the meagre information we possess, however, it is evident that the BICO have an entirely erroneous impression of what the Catholic peasantry's existence and mode of behaviour was like. They certainly were not the indolent, docile mass, which the BICO have depicted. They neither submitted willingly to their aristocracy, harkened back to their tribal origins or squandered away their time and energy. On the latter point an anonymous Elizabethan testifies that 'There are two sorts of people in Ireland to be considered of, the Kern and the Chorle. The kern bred up in Idleness and naturally inclined to mischief and wickedness, the chorle willing to labour and take pains, if he might peacefully enjoy the fruits thereof.'²⁵

When we piece together the evidence of competent authorities we cannot avoid the conclusion that a new form of tenure was emerging and parallel with this, that the peasantry was acquiring sturdy and independent traits. Montgomery, who was no Catholic-Nationalist, says in his prizewinning essay of 1888, that 'Ireland was steadily progressing towards a modern system of land tenure (at the beginning of the 16th century—J.C.). The extensive growth of the power of the chief makes it evident that in reality the practical development of tenure and even primogeniture was not far distant.'²⁶ George Campbell, who again could hardly be mistaken for a Catholic-Nationalist in his 1869 account, dealt more extensively with the mode of tenure as it affected the ordinary peasantry. From his examination of some legal records and with his wide knowledge of the history of land tenure in Europe and India, he was confident that the village system operated in Ireland during the Tudor period.

'There can be no doubt', he says, 'that the village system formerly prevailed in Ireland. The whole system of settlement and valuation is based on it to the present day, the town-lands being exactly preserved, though the villages have generally dissolved into separate forms.'²⁷

After examining the records of a villeinage in Westmeath in 1682, Campbell draws a sketch of a typical feudal manor. The land was divided into shares called 'plough lands', and the villagers managed their own affairs and paid their rent in lump to the 'landlord'. The function of the lord was merely to collect the rent and settle disputes

²¹ Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, New York 1963, p. 35.

²² G. A. Hayes McCoy, 'Gaelic Society in Ireland in the Late Sixteenth Century', in *Historical Studies*, Vol. IV (1963), p. 47.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.* p. 54. Most authorities base their assessment of the Gaelic system on the observation of Davis, whom the BICO praise as a sharp social analyst. But it must be noted that Davis had a vested interest in claiming that security of tenure did not exist in the Gaelic system, since he was preparing the case for the mass expropriation of the Gaelic nobility.

²⁵ T. W. Moody, *The Londonderry Plantation*, p. 48. See also James Carty (ed.), *Ireland 1607-1782*, p. 40, where George Hill is quoted as saying that the native peasantry were as dedicated

as the Scottish and English settlers to agriculture pursuits.

²⁶ W. E. Montgomery, *The History of Land Tenure in Ireland*, 1889, p. 69. This essay won the York prize in Cambridge in 1888.

²⁷ George Campbell, *The Irish Land*, 1869, p. 27.

amongst the villagers.³⁸

Parallel with the development of tenure the peasantry was also steadily developing as a separate social entity, conscious of its interest in its holdings and challenging the absolute supremacy of the nobles.

As early as mediaeval times the peasantry or betaghs, as they were known, began to assert themselves in struggle. Admittedly, these betaghs were bound to the soil and might be recovered if they fled, and were obliged to perform labour services for their lords. But by the 13th century these services had been commonly commuted to money rent and the process whereby the peasantry would inevitably be emancipated was in motion. Professor Jocelyn Otway-Ruthven has pointed out that, while theoretically the peasant might have been a tenant-at-will, in reality his tenancy was secure by established custom, i.e. by class struggle. 'It is clear from the enumeration of the betagh's obligations given by the rentals', says Otway-Ruthven, 'that he was in fact protected by fixed custom. And when labour services had been generally commuted for money rent the anticipation of the betaghs or villeins was well in sight.'³⁹

By the 16th century we find many references to the resistance and independence of the peasantry. It was not uncommon for the entire inhabitants of an estate to band together and abandon their lord if conditions were not to their satisfaction.⁴⁰ For instance we find the Bishop of Cork writing that the peasantry of Munster 'continued not past three years in a place but ran roving about the country like wild men fleeing from one place to another'.⁴¹ And other examples of this practice, particularly in the North, can be gleaned from the correspondence of Davis and Cecil.

At all events, the peasantry was not a feckless mass which took no interest in individual private ownership of the land. It is true that the evolution of absolutist feudalism in England cut across the path of Ireland's natural development. The Tudor intervention in Ireland led to incessant war and strife, which put a brake on the consolidation of the peasants' drive towards a more advanced form of tenure. While this may have prevented the emergence of a mass national movement amongst the peasantry, it was not sufficient to negate the consciousness and tradition which had already been established. And when the conquest and expropriations of the 16th century led to the decomposition and final disintegration of the Gaelic system, the Gaelic peasantry was not incapable of taking advantage of the new situation. The Catholic-Nationalist economic historian, George O'Brien, who held no brief for the new system imposed by 'the foreigners' was forced to admit that 'the tenants on the confiscated land were in a relatively good position owing to the customs which were growing up and which were becoming generally recognized'.⁴² Another Catholic-Nationalist historian, Sigerson, testifies to the same development.⁴³

Apart from these, however, there are more 'objective' accounts. Montgomery points out that, while the Gaelic nobility was removed from the land in the Cromwellian plantation, the ordinary tenantry was not interfered with. They were not despised by the new owners as mere barbarians who could not be harnessed to produce a steady ground rent. On the contrary, says Montgomery, 'The earth tillers were kept in their holdings for several reasons; firstly they had always been a fairly quiet and toilsome class, and when freed from the influence of the disquieting element . . . might be expected to develop into a peaceful tenantry.'⁴⁴ Montgomery goes on to say that the peasantry was admitted to fixity of tenure even after the plantations.

He draws attention to the fact that Petty, in his famous survey of the confiscated estates, calculated that they were worth only two-thirds their total value to their new owners since a third of the value was held in the form of leases by the tenantry. 'This appears to prove conclusively that he did not regard them (the ordinary peasants—J.C.) as mere tenants at will',⁴⁵ adds Montgomery.

George Campbell also testifies along the same lines. He says that after the expropriations, 'The country was gradually recovering from the effects of war and depopulation and the general tendency during the greater part of the time was rather for landlords to compete for tenants than for tenants to compete hotly for land. The external pressure which kept the village system together being removed, that system gradually went to pieces . . . Without protection of law, the idea of property in their holding again took hold of the Irish mind.'⁴⁶ Indeed, in Campbell's view, a situation was rapidly developing where the new aristocracy would have been quite willing to concede and recognize fixity of tenure and fair rents as a general principle governing their relationship with the Catholic peasantry.⁴⁷

By the beginning of the 18th century the consciousness of the peasantry was at a high enough level, and its traditions of struggle sufficiently entrenched, to steel it against total disintegration and demoralization under the great pressures of the next two centuries which were to elapse before the land question was finally solved. The odds mounted against it were tremendous. The twin aims of English rule in Ireland, as manifested in the penal laws, were to abort economic development and prevent ownership of the land from falling into the hands of the Catholic masses. Central to this policy was the system of absentee landlordism, which was imposed on most of Ireland. This was a massive stumbling-block on the road to the creation of a custom in the whole of Ireland—similar to the Ulster Custom or the customs which prevailed in most of Europe. Without direct contact between the peasantry and their landlords it was impossible to consolidate customary rights, since the landlords had no intimate knowledge of the proceedings on their estates, nor indeed had many of them even laid eyes on them. 'The curse of absentee owners', says Montgomery, 'is responsible in a great measure for that total want amongst the lowest tenants of continuity in their holdings which prevented the growth of customary rights.'⁴⁸

However, notwithstanding the great difficulties, the Catholic peasantry were able to enforce customary rights,

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 32-3.

³⁹ Professor Jocelyn Otway-Ruthven, 'The Native Irish and English Law in Medieval Ireland' in *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. VII, no. 25 (March 1950), p. 10.

⁴⁰ Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁴¹ McCoy, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁴² George O'Brien, *The Economic History of Ireland in the 18th Century*, 1918, p. 53.

⁴³ George Sigerson, *History of Irish Land Tenure*, p. 103.

⁴⁴ Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴⁸ Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

albeit of an elementary nature and at a great price. Taking a look at conditions in the first half of the 19th century, we can scarcely find the BICO's 'helpless peasantry'.⁴⁹ Campbell remarked that in theory the landlord was supposed to be absolute owner of his land. In practice, however, this was far from being the case. In the North East where the Ulster tenant right prevailed it was obviously not so, and in the South the issue was less clear cut: 'by an infinitely more disagreeable process, a similar result is arrived at . . . viz, that the theoretical landlord cannot do what he likes with what he considers to be his land'.⁵⁰ Campbell readily concedes that the Ulster Custom did not exist in the South. But this is not to say that the Southern tenants were a 'helpless peasantry' at the mercy of the landlords. 'A tenant', says Campbell, 'seldom goes, without being bought out by someone, and the feeling of the country is that in some way, regular or irregular, he is entitled to something which amounts to selling his holding'.⁵¹ The fact that such a custom could develop gives the lie to the BICO's caricature of the Catholic peasantry.

We have, then, a picture placed against the background of subsequent developments which, while not exaggerating the level of progress reached by the Catholic peasantry in the 16th and 17th century, differs radically from the popular image and descriptions given by the BICO. When we place side by side the picture of the peasantry already in Ireland, and the picture of the Scottish peasantry which eventually came to the North East as a settler community, we find that the differences which the BICO sees are established only through the most sweeping and unconvincing generalizations. A difference there may have been, but it was not an epochal difference, a difference which took—as the BICO claims—two centuries to bridge!

The Peasant Struggles in Ulster

If, then, the BICO grossly exaggerates the difference between the Protestant and Catholic peasantry, how are we to explain the subsequent gap which widened between them? How did the Protestant peasantry secure permanent tenure and a right to compensation for improvements made, while the Catholic peasantry remained systematically excluded from these rights? The BICO deny that this development had anything to do with official favouritism towards the Protestant community. Indeed, they go as far as to say that the Protestant peasantry was oppressed as much as the Catholic peasantry. With a sweeping statement that the Protestant peasantry came under the operation of the penal laws, the BICO imagine that their point is adequately proven.⁵²

There is no need to labour a refutation of this. The fact that the BICO are forced to adopt such flimsy arguments is evidence of the bankruptcy of the Two Nations dogma. Suffice it to say that only one sub-section of one of the seven Penal Acts against the Catholic population affected the Presbyterian peasantry. This was the sacramental test act included in the sixth penal enactment of 1705. While it placed limited *political restrictions* on those who were not prepared to abide by the Test (and these by no means included the whole Protestant or even Presbyterian community), it did not affect their property rights in the slightest. By contrast, almost all the penal enactments contained some element of economic repression against the Catholics.

Parallel with this, the BICO claims that the Protestant peasantry had to fight tooth and nail for their rights and attempts to construct a history of that struggle. Signifi-

cantly enough, this struggle is represented as only beginning midway through the 18th century. The crucial century and a half before this, in which the essential internal social relations of the settler community were moulded, is not analysed at all. When we come to examine the opinion of the Protestants themselves on the origin of their rights, we will find the good reason for which the BICO skipped over this period. For the moment, however, we will examine the BICO's 'new' addition to Irish history.⁵³

Firstly it should be noted that only two periods of struggle are mentioned: 1700-72 and—making a jump of nearly a whole century—the land struggle which resulted in the Gladstone reforms. Such an episodic form of struggle is hardly the stuff out of which land customs are forged. The strained method of argument is again evidence of the bankruptcy of BICO theorizing. It should be noted that these two periods are not representative of the general relations which existed between the Protestant peasantry and the aristocracy over the three centuries of their existence. The turmoil of the mid-18th century had specific and exceptional causes. And it could not have been otherwise, for as the BICO itself recognizes 'Once the system (of the Ulster Custom—J.C.) had been established it would not have been in the interests of the landowners to revert to the system of rack rent'.⁵⁴

Around 1760 the price of provisions rose significantly and this made a turn from cultivation to pasture, usually through the medium of some urban entrepreneur, a profitable proposition. Perhaps nothing would have come of this in the North-East, where established custom governed the calm relations between the peasant and landlord, except for two important facts. 1. The existence of a small nucleus of absentee landlords, who by the fact of their absenteeism had little respect for the custom. These were the wealthier and more politically important of the landlords, and they set an extremely bad example for the rest of their society. 2. Around this time, many of the original leases from the beginning of the plantation fell through and placed enormous temptation in front of the landlords. Given these exceptional circumstances there was bound to be friction.

The period of turbulence which had been smouldering on since 1760 flared up in 1770 on the estate of the wealthy absentee Lord Donegal. When the leases of his tenants expired, he demanded an impossible levy of £100,000 on renewal. When the tenantry failed to comply they were evicted, and the estate was let to some prosperous Belfast merchants. This example was immediately followed by another wealthy proprietor, Clothworth-Upton, and thereafter by the lesser aristocracy. 'A precedent so tempting and lucrative', says Froude, 'was naturally followed. Other landlords finding the trade profitable began to serve their tenants with notices to quit'.⁵⁵

It is true that the peasantry resisted strongly. The history of their resistance has been covered by the Catholic-

⁴⁹ *The Economics of Partition* (1972), p. 17.

⁵⁰ Campbell, *op. cit.* pp. 6-7.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵² *The Economics of Partition* (1972) p. 10.

⁵³ Even this is not an original concoction of the BICO. It is plagiarized, without acknowledgment understandably enough, straight from the Orange ideologist Hugh Sherman—*cf. Anglo-Irish Relations*, pp. 44-5.

⁵⁴ *The Economics of Partition* (1972), p. 6.

⁵⁵ J. A. Froude, *The English in Ireland in the 18th Century*, 1874, Vol. II, p. 120.

Nationalist historian, Francis Joseph Brigger, and it is not essential to recapitulate on it here. It is, however, necessary to say that the resistance of the Protestant peasantry was only *one* element in the causes which preserved the Ulster Custom at this stage. Other essential elements were the pressures exerted from within the Anglo-Irish aristocracy and by the British Government. Archbishop Boutler recognized that any intensification of the struggle would have had disastrous effects for the Ascendency. 'But the worst of this is', he wrote, 'that it tends to unite protestant with papist and whenever that happens, goodbye to the English interests in Ireland for ever.'⁵⁶ Boutler was astute enough to see the folly of the aristocracy's behaviour and favourably presented the case of the tenantry to Walpole. King George III also showed signs of worry about the situation and ordered his Viceroy, Townsend, to make it known to the landlords that he was not pleased with their new 'infatuation'.⁵⁷ Indeed, Townsend himself had already been trying to do this, by introducing into the Irish Parliament a bill protecting the tenants.

With the massive emigration which occurred during this period, it is not extravagant to say that the Ulster Custom might possibly have been abolished or seriously altered had not the economic motivation of the landlords come into conflict with British policy in Ireland regarding the maintenance of a loyalist garrison. Brigger, who in accordance with the democratic content of his Catholic-Nationalist philosophy, is inclined to emphasize the resistance of the Protestant peasantry, is nonetheless forced to admit that 'by the middle of 1772 the agitation had become less fierce, not by reason of the hearts of steel growing less determined, but because undertakers and magistrates increasingly became more moderate in their dealings, in face of the storm that their many high-handed acts had provoked, and also in view of the royal expression regarding their conduct'.⁵⁸

After this episode calm returned once more to Ulster. Not until the second half of the 19th century do we again find substantial conflict. Once again, specific causes were at the root of it. After the famine the Irish aristocracy in general had become not only politically obsolete, but economically bankrupt. The British liberal bourgeoisie were anxious to liquidate them and thereby eliminate one of the more backward supports for the Tories. The aristocracy itself was willing to be liquidated, provided the price was right. From 1849, with the passing of the Encumbered Estates Act, the process of buying out the landlords was under way. It was such a profitable business that even the comparatively solvent aristocracy of the North-East joined in, and in the North as well as the South many estates began to pass into the hands of financial speculators. The sole motivation of these speculators was private profit and they had little time or regard for the customs which had grown up between tenant and landlord. 'The new proprietors', says the English liberal Thomas MacKnight, who spent many years in Belfast, 'acted on commercial considerations. They were generally less indulgent to the tenants than the old owners. They considered that all they had legally bought they had a right to sell.'⁵⁹ Thus in the death throes of the land system as it existed in most of Ireland, the position of the Protestant tenantry became momentarily insecure. They were in the paradoxical position that while the rest of Ireland was progressing towards fixity of tenure, they who had always had it were now in a precarious state. Understandably they fiercely resisted all infringements by their new masters on the rights they had grown accustomed to.

Another aspect of the agrarian conflict at the time was the collapse of agricultural prices and the fall in the

value of land. In this situation, the tenant's share in the land left him at a loss. When he went to sell his tenant right he found it was almost worthless, and the pittance he received on sale was more likely than not seized by the landlord in payment for arrears accumulated during times of distress. The weakness of the Ulster Custom coupled with the change in the ownership of the land—rather than any major attempt on the part of the landlords to abolish the custom—were responsible for the agrarian unrest in the North-East during the last decades of the 19th century.

Who Was Favoured?

In trying to construct a history of agrarian struggle for the Protestant peasantry, which would explain the existence of the Ulster custom in a way compatible with the theory of a sturdy Protestant community developing into a nation, the BICO simultaneously ignores the popular feelings of the Protestant peasantry on the subject and unwittingly adopts the standpoint of a certain section of the landed aristocracy. As the British liberal bourgeoisie were busy cutting the ground from under the aristocracy, a stratum of the larger, and politically more important, Northern aristocracy fought vainly to retain their old influence and prestige. They realized that the legal recognition of the Ulster Custom which the peasantry was demanding, in the context of a capitalist solution to the land question, would mean the end of the line for them. They were therefore hostile to any steps in that direction, their favourite argument being that the Ulster Custom was the result of agrarian outrages and it would be a gross profanity to enshrine it in legal code. The argument of the landlords was not taken seriously by anybody (until now by the BICO) and least of all by the Protestant tenantry. They remained firmly convinced that the Ulster Custom was a special concession to them in return for their counter-revolutionary services to Britain and the Ascendency.

A popular ballad addressed to the landlords, during the second period of conflict, showed the views of the tenantry:

'We have been kinsmen to your blood and clansmen
to your name;
And now our rights, but favours none, we're asking
at your hands;
We gave our Yeoman services—we'll keep our
Yeoman lands.'⁶⁰

This verse expressed succinctly what the peasantry, and indeed most historians of the Ulster Plantation and Protestant community, knew to be a fact of history. James MacKnight, who was the most popular spokesman for the Ulster tenantry, and who has been described as 'one of the greatest authorities on the Ulster land question from the tenants' points of view',⁶¹ countered the landlords' argument in a pamphlet entitled *The Ulster Tenant Right—an original grant from the Crown*. MacKnight states four

⁵⁶ Quoted in F. J. Brigger, *The Ulster Land War of 1770*, p. 22.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 105 (Our emphasis).

⁵⁹ Thomas MacKnight, *Ulster As It Is*, 1896, Vol. I, p. 107.

⁶⁰ George Gavan Duffy, *The League of North and South*, p. 26. The Yeomen were a counter-revolutionary militia, closely linked with the Orange Order and the aristocracy, which ruthlessly suppressed the 1798 uprising and harried and persecuted the Catholic peasantry.

⁶¹ Thomas MacKnight, *op. cit.* p. 97.

different reasons why concessions had to be granted to the Protestant peasantry. Firstly, without such concessions no-one would have been willing to risk their lives and the lives of their families in coming to Ireland.⁶² Secondly, the aristocracy needed the plebeian masses to protect them against the dispossessed Irish and consequently had to woo them.⁶³ Thirdly, the provisions of the Ulster plantation, as outlined in the 'Collection of Such Orders and Conditions as are to be observed by the Undertakers upon the Distribution and Plantation of the Escheated Lands of Ulster', specifically excluded the return of the outcast Irish. The only meaningful way in which this could be done was through granting fixity of tenure to the Protestant peasantry. Even common sense would tell us that such a concession was essential to the success of the Plantation.⁶⁴ Finally, the Plantation was conceived not solely with financial profit in view. If that had been the case, as he himself pointed out, King James would have kept the plantation lands for himself. But in fact an important aspect of the exercise was to plant a loyal garrison in Ireland, and it would have been counter-productive to have installed a divided community.⁶⁵

After examining the historical records concerning the Ulster Plantation, McKnight comes to the following conclusions:

1. 'That the lands of Ulster never were granted, in simple, feudal ownership, to the original proprietors, who could therefore convey to their successors only such title as they themselves held from the Crown and no other.
2. That, for purpose of State, the money terms required from these were made unintentionally easy.
3. One object of this leniency was that they might be enabled to share the benefits of their own bargain with the tenant settlers for the better encouragement of the Plantation.
4. That this was also one special object of making "fixity of tenure" to be a universal law of the Ulster Plantation, in order that the cultivators as well as the owners of the soil might have a "certain estate" or interest in it.
5. That the successors of the original Undertakers, and, in fact, all persons drawing titles from them, were held by the Crown, agreeably to its own declared intention at the time, to be bound by the Articles of the Plantation, equally with the individuals to whose right they have succeeded.
6. Hence, these successional landlords were bound in every instance to make fixed "estates" to their tenantry, and this too at rents proportionate to the easiness of their own.
7. Hence, also if the landlords were bound by the Crown to grant fixed tenures their tenantry had, under the Crown, a right to fixed tenures, and this by the very terms of the Plantation Articles.⁶⁶

We have, above then, McKnight's view of how the Ulster Custom arose. After such a long quotation we hope that we will not be overtaxing the patience of our readers if we present the testimony of yet another important authority. The most substantial historian of the Ulster Plantation, the Rev. George Hill, wrote that special concessions were made to the aristocracy to attract them to Ireland '... but the benefits which they thus secured', he adds, 'they were obliged to share with their tenants, by letting their lands on the most liberal terms. . . This was done to secure what was called "Civil Plantation" or an

arrangement which would work well in every particular for the peace and welfare of the settlement in Ulster.'⁶⁷

Landlords and the Ulster Custom

The obverse side of the BICO's contention that the Protestant peasantry, armed with their democratic traditions, forced the Ulster Custom on the landlords, is its claim that the landlords were in constant fear of the peasantry. The picture which it projects is one of an aristocracy terrorized into conceding some of its most fundamental property privileges to the plebeian masses. In its typically schematic manner, the BICO gleans a few appropriate passages from the four monstrous volumes of the Devon Commission Report and rests content that it has clinched the argument. The substance of the matter, however, cannot be clouded by a few isolated quotations, no matter how well chosen. There were many good reasons why the aristocracy, far from being coerced, willingly conceded these privileges which, in the words of the Devon Commission, were 'either authorized or connived at by the landlords'.

The principal reason was the aspect of the custom which particularly favoured the landlords. It must, of course, be realized that the custom was not simply a surrender by the aristocracy to the peasantry, but more precisely a compromise which suited the landlords' long-term interests. The custom suited the landlords in that it ensured regular and continuous payment of rent. If a tenant defaulted, it was agreed by the custom that the landlord was entitled to delete arrears due from the sale of the tenant right. And, in the last resort, the custom guaranteed the landlord sovereign right over his property, since it permitted him first option on the tenant right once a sale price had been arranged on the open market.

Considering this, it should come as no surprise to learn that the passages and quotations which the BICO use to substantiate their position are of an extremely one-sided nature. This is most notable in the segment presented from the statement of James Hancock (Lord Lurgan's land agent) to the Devon Commission. Hancock, it is true, says that the peasantry resisted any interference with the custom. But it would be wrong to assume from such an isolated passage that this was the reason why the custom remained in force. In fact, earlier on in his statement he touches on a more likely explanation. 'I consider tenant right beneficial to the community', he says, 'because it establishes a security of land and leads to improvement of the estate, without any expenditure of capital to the landlord. It likewise affords the best security for his rent, as arrears are always allowed to be deducted from the amount the occupier receives for tenant-right.'⁶⁸ Only the BICO could find anything strange in a landlord's agent preaching that what was beneficial to the landlords was 'beneficial to the community'!

⁶² James McKnight, *The Ulster Tenant Right*, 1848, p. 15.

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 39.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 41.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 25. (Emphasis in original throughout).

⁶⁷ Rev. George Hill, *The Plantation in Ulster 1608-1620*, 1877, p. 89.

⁶⁸ *Report of the Devon Commission*, Vol. I, p. 484.

Macciocchi through the Looking-glass

Letters from inside the Italian Communist Party to Louis Althusser, by Maria Antonietta Macciocchi, NLB, £3.95, 341 pp.

Daily Life in Revolutionary China, by Maria Antonietta Macciocchi, Monthly Review, £5.85, 505 pp.

Since the 20th Party Congress of the CPSU and Togliatti's theses on 'polycentrism', the Italian Communist Party (PCI) has permitted more dissent within its ranks than its counterpart in France. But it has always ensured that this dissent did not overflow into a generalized assault on the theory and practice of the party. Whenever the latter appeared to be the case the PCI has acted as firmly as the PCF, a fact well-illustrated by the expulsion of the grouping around the journal *Il Manifesto*. Macciocchi's dissent, however, is within the permitted limits. Her letters to the French philosopher, Louis Althusser, give us a number of valuable insights on the unevenness of Italian capitalism, but no political conclusions flow from this.

Macciocchi is an Italian communist of long standing, who was the Paris correspondent for the party paper *Unità* (of which her husband was the Foreign Editor) for many years. During her sojourn in Paris she entered the charmed circle of the French C.P.'s best-known philosopher, Louis Althusser, and the experience undoubtedly stood her in good stead. Recalled by the PCI to participate in the parliamentary elections of 1968 as a candidate for Naples, she readily agreed. *Letters from Inside the PCI* recount her experiences as a parliamentary candidate, in the form of letters written to Louis Althusser, providing up-to-date information and demanding that it be processed in the theoretical laboratory in Paris (i.e. Althusser's head) and returned. Macciocchi was obviously a bit taken aback at the PCI's electoral apparatus and the way it fought elections. Some of her descriptions certainly add up to a damning indictment of the PCI's claim to be a 'communist' party. But her solutions amount at best to a somewhat naive populism. Althusser's well-meant advice of 'learn from the masses' is interpreted as 'serve the people' or as instant street-therapy and 'consciousness-raising' sessions. What is totally absent from the *Letters* is any understanding of

the need to encourage the self-activity of the masses, to institutionalize this self-activity by constant agitation and initiatives for creating organs of dual power and thus concretely posing the question of workers' power in relation to Italian society as a whole. This is the absent centre of Macciocchi's book and for a leading member of a mass party commanding the support of millions of workers not to pose the question of power is a somewhat serious omission.

Nevertheless her descriptions of the Neapolitan slums, the sub-proletariat, child-labour, the plight of Italian workers forced to sell their labour-power outside Italy, make it a book worth reading. The enthusiasm of many rank-and-file members of the PCI—the lift-boy in her hotel and the PCI members who look up to Che Guevara as a symbol against the bureaucracy are but two examples—is made very clear. But Macciocchi is not capable (and nor, for that matter, is Althusser) of providing them with the answers they need and towards which they are instinctively groping. After all, Maria Antonietta Macciocchi wins the election and becomes a member of Parliament. Despite her doubts, fears, pangs of conscience she knows that her victory is not a personal one. It is the apparatus which has ensured it and the apparatus must therefore not be disturbed too much. The game is over. Macciocchi is firmly within the fold and a part of the PCI bureaucracy (though she was not re-adopted as a candidate in the next elections in 1972).

A useful part of the book is a long letter written after the election, in which Althusser expounds his views on May 1968; these are a sophisticated apology for the physical and political impotence and class-collaborationism pursued by the French Communist Party. Althusser

concentrates his wrath on the 'petty-bourgeois ultra-left students' and the 'groupuscules'. He is forced to admit that the PCF had become isolated from the students and intellectuals and this helped to push the youth towards ultra-leftism and adventurism. What the nature of this 'ultra-leftism and adventurism' was is not specified by our latter-day Plekhanov. Was it ultra-left to fight on the barricades on the night of 10 May? Was it adventurist to march to the factories? Was it incorrect to ruthlessly expose the manoeuvres of the PCF and CGT bureaucrats who were trying desperately to restore the status quo? Althusser is not interested in these questions, but merely in providing a theoretical rationale for the PCF's reformism and giving it a left cover. For those who are still puzzled as to why Althusser remains in the PCF or why the PCF continues to utilize his membership, his comments on May 1968 will provide part of the answer.

While Macciocchi's *Letters*, despite their political shortcomings, nevertheless retain a semi-critical stature, the same can not be said about her travel diaries entitled *Daily Life in Revolutionary China*. Here she seems to have completely lost her critical faculties and the result is not surprising: essays in apologetics, 'a dilettante journalism, reportage with a "left" slant' (as Trotsky described some of the literary output which the 'friends of the Soviet Union' produced after visits to Stalin's Russia).

Macciocchi is the ideal visitor/guest. She accepts everything, questions nothing and proceeds, somewhat loosely, to try and provide theoretical rationalizations for what she is told is happening or has happened. After a bureaucrat explains to her the 'line' on culture and objects of art and describes the destruction of some of the latter by Red Guards (applying Mao's line on combating revisionism in art!), Macciocchi can write by way of comment: 'Every fact, every episode of this first day leads us to one and the same conclusion: a genuine, new and difficult revolution has occurred here.'

It is on 'honoured guests' such as this that the bureaucracy flourishes. She justifies the personality cult, the repressive code of morality (Macciocchi's 'sea of purity'), the magic power of Mao's writings (she actually believes that dockers in Tientsin made a crane increase its productivity after they had read *Mao On contradiction!*), etc. All this is categorized by Macciocchi as attributes of 'a socialist society underpinned by Marxism-Leninism and the thought of Mao Tse Tung'. This approach has nothing whatever to do with either Marxism or Leninism. It is the debased approach of a Western liberal educated



inside a Stalinist party. The contradictions in Macciocchi's book are today so glaring and obvious that one is embarrassed on her behalf. The Ninth Party Congress, she writes, saw the victory of Mao and Lin Piao's line. But what happened to Lin Piao after the Congress? Can a bizarre ritual (for that is what the 9th Party Congress was), in the course of which Lin is anointed Crown Prince (even Stalin refrained from nominating a successor), be considered the conference of a party which supports 'proletarian democracy' and the spirit of the Paris Commune? It is difficult for Macciocchi to provide an answer because she is incapable of even posing the correct questions.

The Chinese Revolution is without doubt the single most important event in the history of the working class since October 1917. No one can deny that the revolution has qualitatively transformed

the lives of millions of Chinese workers and peasants by taking China out of the capitalist world market. No revolutionary can question the heroism of the Chinese Red Army nor many of the tactics adopted by Mao and Chu Teh after the 1927 debacle. We should also understand that for the Chinese C.P. to make the revolution it had *in practice* to break from the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR, without which break a revolution would have been impossible. But to admit all these facts cannot change the serious deformations which have existed in China since 1949: the lack of soviet-type organs of workers' power, the lack of inner-party democracy (except, to a limited extent, for a very brief spell in the fifties), the failure to project the revolution internationally, the existence of cultural censorship, the bureaucratization and statization of the trade unions, etc. Any Leninist would try and understand and explain the reasons for these deformations. would try and relate them to aspects of the 'cultural revolution'.

A forthcoming book by Livio Maitan (to be published by NLB later this year) does take up these questions and attempts to provide a Marxist analysis of developments in China. Macciocchi and her supporters would do well to study Maitan's text. If she did, her simplistic repetition of Althusser's mistaken analyses might appear even to her as a trifle absurd and unrelated to the social reality of China. Her statement that the critique the Chinese make of Stalin is the *only* critique from the *left*, whereas Trotsky's critique was from the *right*, is the most blatant piece of Stalinist falsification from both her and her French mentor, who undoubtedly supplied her with this particular gem. What critique have the Chinese made of Stalin? Does *On the Question of Stalin* constitute a critique

of Stalinism? Only the most myopic apologist could reply in the affirmative. It has been precisely the failure of the Chinese leadership to break with many of the ideological aspects of Stalinism which has prevented them from understanding either the problem of bureaucracy or the real origins of 'peaceful co-existence'. Certainly we can agree with Macciocchi that Stalin was opposed to the Chinese Revolution, and that Mao and the CCP were successful only because they disregarded Stalin's views. But unfortunately the CCP leadership failed to draw the necessary lessons from this fact. Which is why they find themselves isolated *inside* Eastern Europe and the USSR. To appeal to the masses in the USSR and Eastern Europe invoking the memory of Stalin is to display a total inability to understand the nature and role of Stalinism in Europe. In any case it hardly signifies a *left* critique of Stalinism.

What is also somewhat surprising is that Macciocchi, as a representative of the PCI, fails to take up the Chinese characterization of the USSR as a 'fascist', 'capitalist' state run by the 'new Tsars'. This is a somewhat serious omission not only for a member of the PCI, but also for anyone who claims to be a Marxist. Recent events have shown the danger of this characterization of the Soviet Union: it is the USSR which is now regarded by the Chinese as the *enemy number one*—rather than US imperialism. The repercussions of this particular mistake (the new-found détente with US imperialism, the preserver of the status quo in Asia) will within the next few years provide the Macciocchis of this world with even more problems—problems which, if *Daily Life* is any indication, she will simply not be able to understand.

Tariq Ali.



DOCUMENTS-ONE

THE BUILDING OF REVOLUTIONARY PARTIES IN CAPITALIST EUROPE

Draft Theses for the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International, passed by the International Executive Committee, December 1972

The Change in the Objective and Subjective Conditions for Building Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe since 1967

Since 1967, the conditions in which revolutionary Marxists go about carrying out their central strategic task — the building of Leninist parties capable of leading the proletariat toward the victorious socialist revolution — have greatly changed in capitalist Europe. These changes,

which are in part the product of upheavals in other parts of the world, in the final analysis reflect the deepening of the basic crisis of bourgeois society in Europe. This crisis manifests itself at all levels of the society.

1

The Deepening Crisis of Capitalism

The crisis of the international imperialist system underwent a new deepening with the end of the long period of accelerated economic expansion carrying forward the 'Korean war boom' that came on the heels of the end of the post-war revolutionary crisis in western Europe. The West German recession in 1966-7 was quickly followed by a recession in Italy and Japan (1970-71), a new, minor recession in West Germany (1971-2), and a general slowing down of economic growth in all the imperialist countries. For the first time since the second world war, attempts to reduce these crises of overproduction through stepped-up inflation ran into obstacles — inflation went hand in hand with economic stagnation in a whole series of imperialist countries. The stepped-up inflation of the dollar finally precipitated the collapse of the international monetary system created at Bretton-Woods and opened up a profound worldwide monetary crisis that threatens to undermine international credit and, as a result, the expansion of world trade.

The reversal of the general economic climate is the result not only of conjunctural factors but also of profound structural factors. The main stimuli of the rapid expansion of the post-war years are fading away one after the other. The decline of the old industrial branches — such as the coal industry, the textile industry, copper, shipbuilding, and no doubt also steel — is irreversible. At the same time, the pace-setting industries that 'carried' the post-war growth have one by one been hit by an excess capacity and as a result have been forced to cut back their investment. This is already the case in the electrical appliance industry, the automobile industry and petrochemicals; it will also soon be the case in the electrical machine industry and in electronics itself. The declining rate of profit is showing up more and more clearly, choking off rapid growth. This effect is reinforced by the market steadily shrinking in proportion to enormously expanding productive capacity.

The still limited buying power of the bureaucratized workers' states, including China, on the world market does not enable them to provide any important supplementary outlet absorbing some of the excess capacity of imperialist industry as a whole. In certain branches, however (steel pipes, equipment for automobile and petrochemical factories), it has been possible to stave off sharp crises by filling orders from these states — orders prompted, moreover, by specific temporary scarcities in the Eastern countries (cereals, for example).

The slow-down of growth in the international capitalist economy necessarily accentuates inter-imperialist contradictions, including competition in East-West trade (this is one of the reasons for Nixon's overtures to Peking and Moscow). This declining growth rate comes, in fact, in the wake of a period during which the relationship of forces among the imperialist countries underwent a major shift. American imperialism has progressively lost the absolute superiority it enjoyed within the imperialist camp during the immediate post-war period. Its share of the world market — the capital market as well as the commodity market, even if there is several years' lag between the trends in the two — is continuing to shrink to the advantage of Japan, West Germany, and the other imperialist countries in the EEC. The weakening of British imperialism has been especially pronounced during the last fifteen years.

The result of this reversal of the inter-imperialist relationship of forces has in particular been a growing penetration of European and Japanese goods into the domestic U.S. market, which is what prompted the (essentially protectionist) countermove announced by Nixon's speech on 15 August 1971. Far from reducing inter-imperialist competition or the general crisis of the system, these defensive measures on the part of American imperialism can only serve to exacerbate them.

2

The Crisis of Social Relations

The end of the long period of rapid expansion brought with it a sharpening of social contradictions in capitalist Europe that, since May 1968, has taken the form of a *general social crisis* in several European countries (France, Italy, Spain, Great Britain). Any spectacular new upsurge of this crisis could drag in all the rest of capitalist Europe. The socialist revolution is once again on the agenda in Europe, not just in a broad historical perspective (in this sense, it has been on the agenda since 1914), but even from a conjunctural point of view.

The most profound source of this social crisis lies in the fact that the basic contradiction of the system — the contradiction between the level of development attained by the productive forces and the maintenance of capitalist relations of production — has been considerably aggravated by the post-war phase of growth of the productive forces. Even more than the phase of stagnation from 1914 to 1939, this growth has objectively undermined capitalist relations of production.

We are increasingly approaching the limits of the adaptability of these relations of production both as regards the functioning of the market economy, the profit drive of the private trusts, the financing of long-term productive investments and the development of the material and intellectual infrastructure of production, and as regards their ability to satisfy — even in an elementary way — the new needs generated in the working population by the growth of the productive forces themselves. A good part of these new needs, keenly felt especially by the youth, clearly cannot be met within the context of bourgeois society. In this category must be placed requirements of high-quality social consumption, met according to the 'satisfaction-of-needs' principle (health, education, culture, news, retirement, etc.), as well as the need for creative activity radically breaking from alienated labour.

This general crisis in social relations had begun to manifest itself even before the turn in the world economic situation; the turn itself has obviously made it worse. The more growth slows, the more inter-imperialist competition is intensified. The more the crisis of the international monetary system spreads, the less the European bourgeoisie is able to grant new concessions to the working masses and the more it finds itself even forced to call into question a series of gains granted during the preceding phase which are considered by the proletariat as permanent acquisitions. The attempt to make the workers pay the cost of inflation and the general reappearance of unemployment (for two years, there have been about five million unemployed in capitalist Europe) are two aspects of the same basic orientation of big capital, which is trying to restore the rate of profit by intensifying its exploitation of the working class.

Strikes and other forms of workers' struggles have remained on the rise throughout capitalist Europe since May 1968 because of the fierce resistance with which the

workers are meeting this attempt substantially to increase the proportion of surplus value extracted. This upsurge has taken its most spectacular forms in Italy, Great Britain, Spain and France. It is only just beginning in countries like the German Federal Republic, the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and Switzerland. As a result of a fifteen-year decline in the industrial reserve army of labour, the European proletariat has confronted this phase with firm ranks, a higher degree of unionization, and an increased confidence in its own strength. *In these conditions, a rapid and crushing defeat of the working class is virtually ruled out. We must therefore prepare ourselves for years of intense social struggles, in which there will be ups and downs, and for enduring possibilities of revolutionary upsurges, depending on advances in raising class consciousness and strengthening the revolutionary vanguard.*

Contributing to this rise of workers' struggles, in addition to mass reactions against the evils of the system (inflation, factory closings, lay-offs, attacks on the right to strike and the social security benefits won in previous struggles), there are deeper motives disputing in an embryonic way the whole of capitalist relations of production — revolts against speed-up and piece-work that fundamentally challenge the bosses' authority; attempts to raise the question of workers' control and dispute the whole notion of profit as the ultimate goal of production; attempts to enlarge considerably the scope and quality of public services (right to free, high-quality health-care and education; right to free urban transport; right to housing; retirement at 60 on 75% of previous pay; longer paid vacations etc.). These goals of the workers' struggle are all the more important inasmuch as they run counter to the efforts of the capitalists to increase the rate of surplus-value, above all through an increase in the intensity of exploitation, in order to reduce the tendency of the average rate of profit to fall.

The crisis of capitalist relations of production has become a crisis of bourgeois relations as a whole. In the beginning, it was expressed more and more sharply by the youth attending school (the college and high school revolt), and then became generalized as a crisis of all social relations (education, family, church, mass media, etc.). Penetrating into the working class, particularly through young workers and apprentices, this crisis of bourgeois social relations has, in its turn, aggravated the crisis in the capitalist relations of production.

The Political Crisis of the Bourgeoisie

3 Confronted with a worsening of the economic situation and of social contradictions, the bourgeois political system has been, and is continuing to be, shaken by a crisis no less deep — crises in the bourgeois leadership teams; crises of political alternatives; crisis of the bourgeois political parties; crises of the entire governmental system of the bourgeois state. The most striking signs of this crisis have been the spectacular fall of De Gaulle, the semi-paralysis of successive governments in Italy and Great Britain and the persistent political tension in West Germany — long the most stable and the most depoliticized country of post-war capitalist Europe. The increasingly pronounced crisis of the Franco regime fits into this same context.

The basic choice with which the bourgeoisies in capitalist Europe have been confronted is between an 'integra-

tionist' reformism (which tries to break down the combativity of the workers through concessions strengthening the mechanisms of conciliation and class collaboration) and an intensification of repression (involving a frontal attack on working-class freedoms, especially on the right to strike and on free collective bargaining). Both variants, moreover, accentuate the decadence of classic bourgeois parliamentary democracy, continue shifting the bourgeois state's centre of gravity toward an executive that increasingly stands outside of any control, and thus highlight the inherent tendency of monopoly capitalism toward setting up a strong state.

Nonetheless, neither this reinforcement of the executive nor the variant of frontally attacking some working-class rights should be confused with a new rise of fascism. The main characteristics that distinguish fascism from other forms of bourgeois government are on the one hand the total destruction of all workers' organizations (including the reformist organizations), and on the other the mass mobilization of a frenzied and pauperized petty bourgeoisie, greatly magnifying the striking power of the classical repressive apparatus. Today the objective conditions for a new rise of fascism have not yet come about in capitalist Europe. The workers' movement, especially in Germany, has paid too dearly for confusion in evaluating different forms of rule by capital to accept any loose talk about a 'creeping fascization' of the regime.

The slow-down in economic growth, and especially the stepping up of inter-imperialist competition, have undermined the preconditions for implementing a 'reformist' policy. What the bourgeoisie has in fact been able to offer in the form of 'joint worker-boss management', 'profit-sharing', 'payment in stocks' and other reforms, has been too meagre to make a serious dent in the proletariat's fighting ability. The failure of bourgeois 'reformism' is clearest in Italy: neo-capitalist reforms — which are more urgent than ever, even from the point of view of a more rational functioning of the capitalist economy — could not be implemented during an entire decade under the aegis of the 'centre-left'. In Great Britain, the pronounced decline of imperialist economic strength obliges the bourgeoisie even to call into question some of the main reforms granted during the two preceding decades.

But at the same time, the relationship of forces between the classes remains such that an overall repressive assault has practically no chance of succeeding. The forces of the workers' movement, which for the most part remain intact, would respond to such an overall assault on a scale that the bourgeoisie is well aware of and correctly fears. As a result of this fear, for the moment it rejects as provocative any attempt to set up an openly dictatorial regime on the Greek model.

In these circumstances, the most probable political perspective remains a prolonged period of instability, with successive bourgeois teams wearing themselves out in 'centre-right' or 'centre-left' forms of government and with spectacular periodic recoveries by the traditional workers' organizations, but without either of the two contending camps being able firmly to impose its will. The proletariat is still being hamstrung by its crisis of leadership; by the paralyzing role of the traditional leaderships. At the same time, the bourgeoisie remains too weak to impose a radical solution. In France and Italy, where the rise of workers' struggles reached a peak in 1968 and 1969, the bourgeoisie has been able temporarily to resume the initiative, without, however, being able to impose its fundamental solutions. The fighting potential of the proletariat in these countries remains intact.

To be sure, such an unstable equilibrium cannot go on indefinitely. In the absence of a victorious counter-offensive by the bourgeoisie, the very continuation of the social crisis contributes toward solving the crisis of leadership in the proletariat. On the other hand, the continuation of this crisis of leadership, resulting in successive waves of struggles that fail to change anything in the area of state power, ends up tiring out the working masses and lowering their capacity for mobilization, and thus could create favourable conditions for setting up a bourgeois strong state.

There is therefore no reason to look on the present impasse in the class struggle with complacency. If a decisive revolutionary breakthrough does not occur, the bourgeoisie will finally impose *its* solution. But the fact that we are only at the beginning of the deepening social crisis, that neither the extent of unemployment nor the political level of the workers' struggles yet confronts the bourgeoisie with an immediate question of life or death, allows us to envisage a period spread out in most cases over four or five years before the decisive battles are fought.

A specific manifestation of the crisis of European bourgeois leadership can be seen in the political attitude towards the European question. The extension and interpenetration of capitalist enterprises throughout the area (a tendency which the entrance of Great Britain, Denmark, Norway and Ireland into the EEC can only reinforce), and the need to compete with American and Japanese imperialism, would tend to favour a strengthening of European supranational structures of a pre-state nature — European currency, common industrial policy, common executive, autonomous European nuclear striking force, etc. But since each concrete step in this direction involves sacrifices for this or that 'national' bourgeoisie, and since the room for manoeuvre on an international and national scale is dwindling as a result of intensifying inter-imperialist contradictions and social contradictions, the hesitations and political divisions within the European bourgeoisie grow as the hour of decision approaches.

The inability of the Spanish bourgeoisie to 'liberalize' its political structures, however slightly — its feeling that it must perpetuate Francoism even without Franco — is a sign of the explosive character of social contradictions in the Iberian peninsula. At the same time it is a reflection of the political crisis within the European bourgeoisie. It deprives the bourgeoisie of any means of averting the development of a revolutionary situation in the south-west of the continent — a situation whose subjective repercussions, reinforced by the presence of large numbers of emigré Spanish workers in other countries, could cause it to spread rapidly throughout Europe as a whole.

The resumption of the centuries-old struggle of the Irish people for unity and independence coincides with a sharpened crisis of British imperialism and in turn accentuates this crisis. The tendency has been to move rapidly toward higher forms of struggle and to mobilize and organize the vanguard of the masses, above all in Northern Ireland, where dual power existed *de facto* for several months, forcing the imperialists to resort to massive repression.

4

The Crisis of the Traditional Organizations of the Working Class

Alongside the political crisis of the bourgeoisie, the traditional workers' movement has also gone through a deep crisis in the course of the past few years. In part, this has the same roots as the crisis of the instruments of capitalist domination: the aggravation of the social contradictions that undermine the credi-

bility of reformist and neo-reformist orientations; the new rise in workers' struggles, which are beginning to escape the control of the traditional leaderships of the workers' movement; and the general crisis of bourgeois social relations (especially capitalist productive relations), which has freed powerful anti-capitalist energies in the vanguard which can no longer be channelled through traditional reformism. There is yet another reason for this crisis in the traditional workers' organizations: the crisis of Stalinism, which — after the ebbs and flows following the 20th congress of the CPSU, the crushing of the Hungarian revolution, the eruption of the Sino-Soviet conflict and the fall of Khrushchev — has undergone a new, important leap with the Czechoslovak crisis since 1968 and with the rightward turn of the Maoist leadership since 1970.

The new rise of workers' struggles and the radicalization of a sizeable vanguard of the working class are coming more clearly into conflict with two phenomena, whose significance must be analysed without underestimating their limitations — the increasing integration of Social Democracy into the bourgeois state apparatus on the one hand, and a process of social-democratization of the official Communist parties on the other.

Within the Social-Democratic parties during the past decade, an important shift in the relative weight respectively of the representatives of the bureaucracy of the workers' organizations as such, and the representatives of the bureaucracy of the bourgeois state, has taken place. The latter have gained considerably in strength in relation to the former. We have even witnessed high Social-Democratic state functionaries beginning to slide into leading positions in private capitalist trusts. These processes have unquestionably promoted the eruption of conflicts between Social-Democratic leaders trying to express the 'general interest', i.e. the interest of the bourgeoisie, and the unions, including the trade-union bureaucrats, who have traditionally been the most solid props of Social Democracy.

The Khrushchevist Communist parties have in general increased their drift to the right, adopting strategies and tactics aligning themselves with the trade-union bureaucracy (on its 'left' wing) in countries where Social Democracy has hegemony, and orienting completely toward an electoralist and neo-reformist strategy in the countries where they themselves have hegemony. Whatever the complex and contradictory pressures from the ranks for such a turn, when these CPs 'disassociated' themselves from the Kremlin at the time of the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Soviet bureaucracy, they did so under compulsion from the Social Democrats, ushering in a new stage in this process of social-democratization.

Still, the conclusion to be drawn from these two phenomena is not that the Social-Democratic parties have become bourgeois parties, or that the Communist parties have become Social-Democratic ones. Social Democracy remains dependent — in certain countries like West Germany and Belgium, more than ever dependent — upon its

working-class electoral base. This is an electoral base that, unlike that of the Democratic Party in the United States, expresses an elementary class reflex through its vote; that is, the determination to vote for a working-class party instead of voting for a bourgeois party. The class nature of these parties is also reflected in their links with the trade-union movement. The counter-revolutionary and pro-capitalist nature of the policy of the leaders of these parties (a policy that dates neither from today nor yesterday, but that has been a constant phenomenon for almost sixty years) changes nothing in this objective fact, any more than the objective neo-reformism of the CPs allows them definitely to cut the cord that ties them to Moscow.

The crisis in the traditional organizations of the workers' movement is not developing in a straight line. If it is sometimes marked by not unimportant splits (e.g., the 'Manifesto' group in Italy), it can also be expressed through the reappearance of broader centrist tendencies within the traditional parties (the 'Jusos' in West Germany). It can be expressed both by a temporary sag in the electoral strength of these parties (Belgium and Great Britain 1970, for Social Democracy) and by a new electoral thrust — especially when these parties appear to newly politicized layers to be a 'lesser evil' by comparison with the corrupt and bankrupt bourgeois parties. But the main characteristics of this crisis remain no less salient in all the countries where the resumption of workers' struggles and the youth radicalization have been of sufficient scope.

a) The traditional reformist policy is increasingly losing credibility and must be more and more spiced up with promises of 'moving toward socialism', as exemplified by the Common Programme of the CP and SP in France.

b) The common ground in the orientation of the Social Democrats and the CPs — namely the electoralist and parliamentary road — is being increasingly challenged objectively by broad masses, who are rediscovering direct, extra-parliamentary action as the main instrument for defending their interests, even if they continue to vote for the traditional parties.

c) The traditional leaderships are losing their attraction for an important part of the youth — both workers and students — who are becoming open to a political orientation differing fundamentally from the reformism of the Social Democrats and the neo-reformism of the CPs.

d) The fact that the traditional political organizations become compromised by accepting anti-working-class and anti-union measures (which they are inclined to do especially when they are in the government, but also when they are in opposition — note the hardening of the French Communist Party's apparatus against militant strikes in France), together with the absence of mass revolutionary parties, creates a political vacuum to the left of the traditionally dominant working-class political formations (the CP in France, Italy and Spain; Social Democracy in other countries of capitalist Europe). A section of the trade-union movement has tended to fill this vacuum, at least temporarily, by offering an alternative channel for the most radicalized sector of the working class. This was especially true with the trade-union 'left' in Great Britain in 1970-71, the Italian unions in 1969-71, part of the left wing of the Belgian unions, of the CFDT in France and of the Dutch unions. Thus, the identification between the unions and the traditional workers' parties is beginning to blur. A certain room for independent manoeuvre on the part of the union is reappearing. And we are seeing the beginning of a recomposition of the organized workers' movement as a whole. This process can even go so far as

to impel a wing of the unions to assume clearly political tasks, as for example in Great Britain with the struggle against the anti-strike legislation of first Wilson and then Heath, or the 'struggle for reforms' in Italy in 1970-71.

We must not lose sight of the conjunctural nature of this evolution. We must especially not deduce from it that we are witnessing a full, so to speak spontaneous, confluence of the economic struggles and the political struggles of the proletariat. The unions' room for independent manoeuvre remains limited by the bureaucratic nature of their leadership, including its left wing, which has little inclination to undertake a general struggle against the capitalist regime. The nature of the period not only imparts an objectively political thrust to mass struggles, but also carries with it an urgent need to raise the question of political power — a question that the unions take special care not to raise. Still less now than in the past can trade-unionism, including the syndicalist variety, substitute for building a revolutionary party.

On the other hand, it is clear that the reformist and Stalinist bureaucracies cannot remain passive in the face of this incipient recomposition of the organized workers' movement, which threatens to undermine their hegemony over the proletariat — the basis for all their manoeuvres and all their privileges. Therefore, the possibility remains for abrupt adaptations to the radicalization of important sections of the proletariat in an attempt to regain control where it has been lost and to channel the mass movement toward goals that are compatible with the fundamentally reformist strategy of these parties.

5

The Appearance of a New Vanguard

All the above changes result in a change in the objective and subjective situation for building revolutionary parties in capitalist Europe that is of decisive and immediate importance for revolutionists. *A new vanguard of mass proportions has appeared*, by and large eluding the control of the traditional workers' organizations.

This development marks the beginning of a change in the historical relationship of forces, between the bureaucracies of the traditional organizations and the revolutionary vanguard, that resulted from the defeats of the world revolution during the twenties and thirties and from the bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR and the Communist International. For the first time since the immediate post-war period of 1918-23, the revolutionary vanguard has taken a qualitative leap. It arose first of all on the basis of solidarity and identification with the colonial revolution (Cuba, Vietnam), under the influence of the heightened worldwide crisis of imperialism and Stalinism. This is why it developed on an especially broad scale among the radicalized youth (university students, high school students, apprentices). But as the domestic social crisis of the capitalist countries of Europe worsened — beginning especially with the May 1968 revolutionary crisis in France — a powerful current of radicalized workers joined the specifically youth current, reorienting it toward workers' struggles.

The new rise of workers' struggles and the scope assumed by the clearly anti-capitalist demands these have raised, as well as the growing differentiation within the union movement that is impelling layers of the working class out of the control of the bureaucratic apparatuses (as for instance in the wildcat strikes and hard-fought local strikes that are taking place despite the excommunications of the bureaucratic leadership), are becoming the decisive

factors in determining the orientation of the new vanguard. And, progressively, they are bringing about a change in its composition (although this process is still only on a very modest scale in countries like West Germany, the Scandinavian states, the Netherlands, etc.). What chiefly distinguishes this new vanguard from the one we have known throughout the preceding decades is its ability to intervene in the class struggle in its own right, to take political initiatives, and here and there to take the leadership of mass workers' struggles.

In order to define more clearly the nature and limitations of this new mass vanguard, we must combat two illusions. The first illusion is that this new vanguard, as a whole, is revolutionary. The second is that the appearance of this vanguard means a fundamental change in the relationship of forces in the workers' movement and the working class.

Because of its very origins, the new mass vanguard harbours within it numerous elements with a petty-bourgeois consciousness and ideology who, depending on the circumstances and the relationship of forces with the revolutionary Marxist organization, can at best play a secondary role in the unfolding of the struggles, or at worst profoundly distort and pervert the forms and the results of these struggles. This vanguard was born out of a movement of spontaneous revolt against capitalist society and against the adaptation of the bureaucratic leaderships of the workers' movement to it. But the road from spontaneous revolt to effective struggle for socialist revolution can be a long one. Some of the participants in this vanguard, who remain prisoners of spontaneism, sectarianism, ultra-leftist infantilism, apolitical workerism or primitive syndicalism, will never travel this distance. Others will go it only on the condition that the revolutionary Marxist organization acquires a decisive political weight within the vanguard, remaining always equal to the tasks confronting it. While this vanguard has attained a mass character and is for the first time in a long period becoming capable of effective action, it is no less true that it still remains very much a minority within the mass movement, and even more so within the organized workers' movement. The essential task of the vanguard is not constantly to measure its strength against the masses still following the traditional leaderships, but to change the relationship of forces in the mass movement through its ability to impel masses much broader than those consistently associated with it into action that overflows the channels of bureaucratic control. Unless it goes through the necessary apprenticeship in learning the tactics for exploiting this capacity, even a vanguard of 50,000 or 100,000 individuals can become isolated and disoriented in a mass movement of millions of workers. It can be bypassed by events, be buffeted about by partial and temporary setbacks, and vacillate impressionistically between an opportunistic adaptation to the leaders of the traditional workers' movement and sectarian abstentionism and defeatism.

The Central Task

6 From these five changes in the objective and subjective conditions for building revolutionary parties in capitalist Europe, we have drawn and continue to draw the conclusion that *the central task for revolutionary Marxists in the stage that opened in 1967-8 is to win hegemony within the new mass vanguard in order to build qualitatively stronger revolutionary organizations than in the preceding stage, to make the transition from*

revolutionary propaganda groups to revolutionary political organizations beginning to sink roots into the proletariat.

It is illusory, in fact, to think that propaganda groups can transform themselves in one leap into revolutionary parties already possessing decisive political influence over a section of the proletariat — at least in countries like those of capitalist Europe, where there is a long-established workers' movement with a bureaucratic apparatus exerting tremendous weight among the working masses. The masses do not take their orientation in the first instance from programmes, platforms or ideas. Their orientation is determined by their immediate needs and the tools for waging effective struggles that are available to meet these needs.

Only when the revolutionary organizations have demonstrated not only the lucidity and correctness of their programme but also their effectiveness in action, if only on a limited scale, will the defeats brought on by the opportunism of the traditional leaderships and the anti-bureaucratic revolts inspired in turn by these setbacks result in a *massive* influx into our organizations. The stage that leads from the essentially propagandistic group to the revolutionary party, in the scientific sense of the term, is therefore one in which a revolutionary organization begins to sink roots in the class, i.e. begins to achieve through its intervention in the class struggle a relationship of forces enabling it to project itself as a credible alternative leadership for the workers' movement, beginning with a vanguard sector of the working class.

Setting our main goal as winning political hegemony within the mass vanguard follows from the overall analysis of the present stage of the class struggle in capitalist Europe:

a) Unless the revolutionary left achieves such hegemony, there is a danger that the strength of the mass vanguard will be dissipated.

b) Unless this mass vanguard is crystallized out into a serious and powerful revolutionary Marxist organization, its potential for influencing broader masses is in danger of being neutralized and lost.

c) Unless this potential of the vanguard to influence greater masses makes itself felt with increasing forcefulness, the upsurge in workers' struggles will arrive at a dead-end, which in the long run will facilitate a decisive counter-offensive by the bourgeoisie.

It is no easy task for revolutionary Marxists to win hegemony within this new mass vanguard. Such an objective can be achieved neither by adapting opportunistically to the lowest common denominator of this politically disparate vanguard, nor by an (in the final analysis, no less opportunistic) attempt to make a 'synthesis' out of the various currents running through it. Achieving this goal requires a *constant political struggle* within this vanguard to transform it, making it an adequate instrument for recomposing the organized workers' movement.

The upheavals of 1967-8 have created an exceptional opportunity for a breakthrough by a new revolutionary leadership of the European proletariat — the biggest opportunity since 1917-23. But it will not persist indefinitely. Within a finite period of time, we must assemble all the conditions necessary for a qualitative strengthening of the revolutionary Marxist organizations, or else this historic opportunity will be lost.

We reject any spontaneist illusion to the effect that the scope of the present crisis of capitalism and Stalinism — which is, in fact, unprecedented — could, through the pressure of the masses, force the leaders of the trade-union bureaucracy, the leaders of the SPs and the CPs,

to lead a socialist revolution in Europe to a successful conclusion. If a new revolutionary leadership is not built in the time remaining to us, after successive waves of

mass struggles (some of which will certainly surpass even May 1968 in France), the European proletariat will experience new and terrible defeats of historic scope.

Concrete Forms and Content of the Revolutionary Perspectives in Capitalist Europe

7

Revolutionary Upsurge and Dual Power

The experiences of more than a quarter century, as well as our economic, social and political analysis of contemporary European capitalism, make it possible for us to define clearly the revolutionary perspectives of our work. The perspectives can be summed up essentially in two categories of problems: the problems relating to the revolutionary upsurge; and the perspective for the revolutionary struggle for power.

Aside from exceptional cases where bourgeois armies have collapsed as the result of defeat in an imperialist war (e.g. Germany 1918-19), or bourgeois states have completely collapsed owing to defeat and occupation in an imperialist war (Yugoslavia and Greece 1941-4), the upsurges of exceptional mass struggles by the European proletariat during the past half century have exhibited a great number of common features. These characteristics were present equally in the struggles in Germany 1920-23, Italy 1919-21, Great Britain 1925-6, Spain 1931-7, Belgium 1932-5 and France 1934-7 as well as in the more recent examples of Italy 1945-8, Belgium 1960-61, Greece 1963-5, France 1968, Italy 1968-9, and Spain at the present moment. They can be listed as follows:

a) Through mass strikes and general strikes, mass struggles on an exceptional scale can completely paralyze not only the economy but even most of the activities of the bourgeois state apparatus. They thus objectively pose the question of state power even when the masses themselves are not conscious of this and are not in fact setting out to overthrow the bourgeois state. Such struggles are manifestations of the crisis of capitalism's decline and agony, of the workers' instinctive attempt to take the leadership of society and rebuild it along the lines of their socialist programme.

b) The ripening of the historical conditions for socialist revolution is also revealed by the fact that during these explosions of mass struggle, numerous intermediary petty-bourgeois layers are instinctively drawn by the proletarian struggle, rally around the struggling proletariat, and participate in varying degrees in its struggle.

c) Although these explosions often occur suddenly and unexpectedly, they always take place as the culmination of a phase of radicalizing struggles, marked by the appearance of more militant forms of combat, by violent skirmishes between part of the working class and its vanguard, on the one hand, and bourgeois society, on the other — that is, as the expression not only of a structural but of a conjunctural crisis of bourgeois society.

d) The immediate detonator of these explosions can

vary greatly: economic demands (1919-20, 1925-6); acute economic crisis (1923); abrupt change in the economic situation (1960-61); reaction to a violent move by the far right (Spain 1936, Greece 1963); hope for a fundamental political change (June 1936 in France); student revolt (May 1968); monetary crisis; colonial war; defence of rights the worker's movement has won (right to strike, trade-union freedom), etc., etc. It would be futile to attempt to set up a possible timetable in advance. But what should be emphasized is the fact that the detonator, whatever it is, can only play its role after a whole molecular process has taken place in which the proletariat has become radicalized, grown in self-confidence and lost some of its electoralist illusions, while the social and political 'temperature' has risen. Apart from such a trend affecting a considerable part of the proletariat, no limited explosion, no matter how major, will touch off struggles embracing millions of workers.

e) In the imperialist countries like those of Europe, even a weakened bourgeoisie, even one facing a sharp social and political crisis, normally has many resources it can fall back on to absorb objectively revolutionary explosions, as long as the proletariat's level of class consciousness and the breadth (as well as the political ability) of its revolutionary vanguard are not sufficient to prevent it. Such resorts include electoral manoeuvres (turning over the government to left coalitions or parties); immediate economic concessions; selective repression, i.e. repression concentrated against the vanguard alone or the forces spearheading the mass struggle; or a combination of some or all of these methods. Save for exceptional times of imperialist war and occupation, or in an exceptional economic crisis like the one that struck Germany in 1930-33, we have to rule out any notion that the imperialist bourgeoisie will prove incapable of manoeuvring or making immediate concessions to the masses. This is an essential difference between the situation in the imperialist countries and that in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

Furthermore, the vast political experience of the European bourgeoisie has taught it that as long as it retains state power and control over the main means of production and exchange, it can rapidly take back any concession granted during a time of acute revolutionary crisis. The main thing is to preserve these two basic instruments of domination intact, i.e. to see that the mass movement recedes and breaks up. The rest will flow automatically from this.

f) For these same reasons, any tumultuous upsurge of the mass movement is always limited in time. If victory is not achieved, if at least a point of no return — a break with the bourgeois state and capitalist relations of produc-



tion — is not reached (that is, if a situation of dual power does not arise), the mass movement is condemned to go into an ebb, which in such cases is synonymous with a return to the 'normal' functioning of capitalism.

What really characterizes a situation of dual power is the fact that it constitutes a state of affairs that cannot be absorbed into the normal functioning of bourgeois institutions. As long as this dual power persists, a 'return to normal' is impossible. Even a temporary ebb or a partial defeat of the mass movement has no longer the same significance. An overall test of strength between the classes remains inevitable within a more or less short

period of time.

It flows from this that *the main task of revolutionists in case of an explosion of tumultuous mass struggles consists of preparing for and ensuring the appearance of organs of dual power that can prevent the rapid absorption of the upsurge by bourgeois state and economic relations, and, as a result, give the class struggle the form of a series of general confrontations, thereby creating the best conditions for a rapid growth of class consciousness and for a rapid strengthening of the revolutionary party.*

The organs of dual power do not necessarily have to



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grow out of strike committees and take the form of soviet councils from the very start — although that remains the most probable variant. They can grow out of spreading experience of workers' control, or — as during the Spanish civil war — an experience of a large-scale arming of the workers. The essential thing is that such bodies be oriented towards forming a centralized structure that would begin to assume real state-type powers.

Dual Power and Revolutionary Victory

In the industrialized capitalist countries, the main conditions for transforming a revolutionary situation, where organs of dual power have sprung up, into a revolutionary victory are the following:

a) A continuing mobilization — with spontaneous forms and initiatives impossible to specify in advance — of the great majority of the proletariat and working masses around organs of dual power arising to meet the need for solidifying their ranks, for democratically centralized organization, for protecting the masses and defending them politically, economically and by force of arms against bourgeois repression.

b) The weakening and increasing paralysis of the organs of power belonging to the bourgeoisie, whose economic and financial means are more and more cut off by the success of the struggle of the masses in the factories, the banks, the means of communication, etc., and whose subordinate and middle-level personnel feels itself more and more attracted by the revolutionary thrust of the proletariat, or at least neutralized in the decisive test of strength that is building up.

c) The receding and rapid disappearance of all the masses' illusions in intermediate solutions, which, under the guise of maintaining dual power or putting together hybrid forms of power, prevent the destruction of the centres of bourgeois power and thus pave the way for the liquidation of the organs of workers' power.

d) The existence of a revolutionary leadership capable of projecting and organizing the most daring initiatives on a wide scale, of meticulously following the progress of the proletariat makes on the way to political maturity, of assembling the technical preconditions for the insurrection as soon as the majority of the workers are firmly won to the idea of taking power, and of creating psychological and political conditions such as to reduce to a minimum the adversary's will and capacity for resistance.

Contrary to what occurs in the less developed capitalist countries, the economic striking force of the proletariat in the industrialized countries is so great, and the social base of the bourgeoisie's power so narrow, that in the event of a revolutionary upsurge involving the great majority of the workers, the repressive apparatus can be almost totally paralyzed at the outset. This has been confirmed in all the important revolutionary upsurges in capitalist Europe since 1919. It is only by taking advantage of lack of determination, hesitation and an absence of clear goals on the part of the proletariat that bourgeois reaction can launch a counter-attack once the first storm has passed.

The revolutionary Marxist organization's revolutionary education of its own cadres and activists, its revolutionary propaganda in the vanguard, and its occasional exemplary agitation among broader masses must aim at preventing the onset of any such pause that — after the mass movement reaches its first peak, taking the adversary

by surprise and paralyzing him — would give the latter time to regroup his forces and prepare his counter-move. Forming organs of dual power, which are compelled to arm for the purposes of self-defense, and the taking over by the masses and their representative bodies of as many decisive material 'hostages' as possible (means of communication, infrastructure, banks, industrial plants) constitute the most effective means of limiting the cost of the revolutionary victory, in both material and in human terms.

The idea spread by technocrats of the right as well as of the 'left' (and sometimes even of the far left) to the effect that the technical complexity of economic and social life makes a proletarian revolution in this epoch if not impossible, at least much more difficult, is theoretically false and has in practice been contradicted by the initial experience of most of the revolutionary upsurges in our century in the West. The more complex the economic mechanisms are, the more vulnerable they are to a wide-spread mass movement. The more the intricate machinery of the state apparatus has been technologically modernized, the more easily it can be paralyzed by mass action. The nerve-centres of this machinery — power plants, banks and postal checking offices, telecommunication relay stations, radio and television transmitters, telephone and telegraph exchanges — can be taken over by the workers within minutes and used to advance the revolution. For capitalist reaction to substitute parallel centres or oust the workers from the others in order to use them to its own advantage requires political unity and determination on the part of the bourgeoisie, a reserve of fresh forces unaffected by the revolutionary process that it can send in, and a readiness to risk a general confrontation with millions of persons — factors nearly always absent at the outset of a mass revolutionary explosion.

Experience has also shown that the more intellectual labour is reintegrated into the productive process by the third technological revolution currently in progress, the greater the number of highly skilled scholars, engineers and technicians who will pass over into the camp of the proletariat as soon as the revolution gets under way and make sure that the bourgeois side holds no monopoly of knowledge that can prevent the workers from running the productive apparatus and infrastructure in the interest of the popular masses.

Also completely contradicted by recent experience is the idea that the imperialist bourgeoisie and the reformist and Stalinist bureaucratic apparatuses have drawn the main lessons from the revolutionary explosions of the past, thereby making impossible — or at least more and more difficult — any repeat of these kinds of explosions. Underlying this idea is the view that such explosions are attributable to some 'error' committed by the rulers and their servants on the eve of the blow-up — too much rigidity and harshness, according to some; too much cowardice and a tendency to retreat and grant concessions, according to others.

In reality, the explosion of generalized mass struggles has deep objective roots in the social and political crisis confronting the regime. 'Errors' by the rulers can contribute towards touching off such explosions only in the sense of determining the precise moment and occasion, not in the sense of actually causing them or of being able in the long run to avert them. On the contrary, the preceding phase of such explosions has in general been characterized by the successive — or combined — use of every possible variant in policy on the part of the rulers — the repressive variant as well as the 'reformist' variant. One of the factors precisely determining when the explo-

sion will occur is the exhaustion of all these variants and the unconcealable impasse of bourgeois policy that results. The question therefore boils down to this. Is the objective scope of the crisis in capitalist social relations such that *in spite* of all the lessons the bourgeoisie and the reformist apparatuses within the workers' movement have learned from the past, similar blind-alleys *have to periodically* (though obviously not constantly, nor even every two or three years) reappear? Our answer to this question is an unequivocal Yes. It is based on the main lesson of European history since 1914 and arises from the very nature of the epoch — the epoch of the crisis and decline of the capitalist system.

The Inadequacies of the Subjective Factor

9 The failure up to now either to direct the explosions of mass struggles in capitalist Europe into culminating in situations of dual power, or to bring about a revolutionary victory in cases where dual power was achieved (especially Spain 1936-7, and in part Germany 1923 and Italy 1919-20), is not the result, in the final analysis, either of the inherent strength of capitalism or of insufficient combativity on the part of the masses. It is essentially the consequence of *subjective deficiencies* — insufficient level of class consciousness of the proletariat and inadequacy of its revolutionary leadership. In the perspective in which revolutionary Marxists in capitalist Europe are presently working, *their main task remains to overcome these deficiencies.*

The concrete character of these subjective deficiencies during the present stage can be described precisely. In spite of the fact that the working class is beginning, in action, to go beyond its bureaucratic apparatuses, it is still having a great deal of difficulty developing forms of struggle and bodies for leading struggles that truly unite its forces and function independently (elected strike committees, general strike assemblies, federation and centralization of strike committees, etc.). It is still only beginning to break loose from the grip of an electoralist and parliamentarist conception of governmental and state power (this is both the result of prevailing bourgeois ideology and of three quarters of a century of opportunist practices and miseducation by most of the mass workers' organizations). During its initial phase, the radicalization of the proletariat results in fragmented struggles and an even more pronounced separation between those minority layers that are ready to engage in 'tough' action and the majority who continue to follow the established apparatus. The working masses, and even part of the vanguard, have not yet made a clear distinction between the objectives of reformist struggles (which can be co-opted and assimilated within the framework of the capitalist system) and truly transitional and anti-capitalist objectives (which lead to the creation of organs of dual power). For the great majority of workers, the question of arming the proletariat and of disarming the official and semi-official repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie remains an abstract and theoretical problem. They do not really see it as an indispensable necessity on the road to taking power.

We reject the two parallel illusions that up to now have derailed or stifled so many revolutionary plans throughout the history of the imperialist countries: the spontaneist, opportunist and tail-ending illusion on the one hand; and the sectarian, propagandistic and ultimatist illusion on the other.

The spontaneists have the illusion that by the very logic of their struggles, the working masses will come to remove these subjective deficiencies that in the past have blocked the victory of every revolutionary upsurge in the industrialized capitalist countries. The broadening and expansion of workers' struggles create the *precondition* for a rapid rise in class consciousness; but they do not automatically ensure it. There is no reason to suppose that the masses, educated for decades in the spirit of respect for bourgeois parliamentarism and the 'electoral road to socialism', will be transformed, as if by magic, into adepts of the Leninist theory of the state simply because they have unleashed a general strike. It is even more improbable that, just by occupying factories, masses deprived for decades of all class-oriented political education will gain the capacity to put together a coherent programme of transitional demands and to wage a successful fight for this programme against the manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie and the reformist apparatus.

On the other hand, there is absolutely no reason to suppose that, simply by increasing its numbers and expanding the circulation of its press, a revolutionary vanguard organization can succeed through education and propaganda in raising the level of class consciousness among entire layers — let alone the majority — of the proletariat. Only individuals can absorb ideas through reading or study. The masses absorb ideas only through their experience in struggle. Any revolutionary propaganda divorced from the real experiences of proletarian struggle — on the pretext, say, that these experiences were too elementary, reformist, 'purely' economic, etc., etc. — is condemned in advance to remain without effect on the course of history.

By defining the obstacle, it is easier to see how to overcome it. What makes the progressive elimination of the subjective deficiencies of the proletariat *objectively possible* is the opening up of a period of struggles taking on broader and broader dimensions, raising more and more social problems of various kinds, able little by little to politicize wider layers of the proletariat and the working masses, and which are unfolding under the conditions of a progressive recomposition of the labour movement (i.e. of a shift in the relationship of forces between the vanguard and the traditional leaderships, both within the mass movement and within the traditional organizations themselves). This progressive recomposition need not, by the way, necessarily coincide with an organizational restructuring of the workers' movement, although it will inevitably bring about at least a partial one in the end.

What makes a solution to the crisis of the subjective factor *subjectively attainable* is for the revolutionary Marxist organization to have a correct overall orientation (programmatically, strategically and tactically), for it to increase its strength organizationally and politically (that is, to sink roots increasingly in the class), and for its revolutionary propaganda and agitation to gain increasing credibility by making a general political impact and scoring some initial successes here and there.

There is therefore a dialectical interrelationship between the radicalization and the politicization of workers' struggles, the growth of the mass vanguard, the strengthening of the influence of revolutionary Marxists within it, their increasing participation in the workers' struggles, and the response to their general revolutionary propaganda and to the practical steps they take to multiply experiences in which the workers assume the leadership of their own struggles and these are oriented towards transitional demands. It is this dynamic that will smash the barriers on the road to socialism one after the other. This dialectical

interrelationship is one of active intervention and programmatic steadfastness, of initiating action and of mass education; it is one in which revolutionary propaganda leads to action.

10

Our Central Political Tasks

The main political tasks that the revolutionary Marxist organizations must accomplish during the present stage flow from the whole preceding analysis. The following are the tasks whose achievement will stimulate the dynamic of mass struggles and the growth of class consciousness outlined in the preceding

section:

- a) Systematic intervention in all agitation among workers, in all strikes and campaigns around economic demands, striving to link up these actions to the general approach outlined in the transitional programme — that is, to propagandize for a series of demands (essentially around the axis of the demand for workers' control) that objectively lead the workers to challenge the authority of the bosses and of the bourgeois state and to create organs of dual power.
- b) Supporting the day-to-day struggles of the masses around all economic demands, even the most modest and 'reformist' ones, to the extent that these struggles educate the workers to seek solutions through direct action and mass initiative and push them in the direction of broadening and extending their struggles.
- c) Popularizing and spreading so-called 'qualitative' demands that arise out of mass struggles themselves and that either undermine the very foundations of capitalist market economy or serve as a powerful stimulus for solidarity and unity among all layers of the proletariat — i.e. equal wage rises for everybody; no speed-up; free high-quality public services, etc., etc.
- d) Pressing for, spurring on, broadening and, as soon as possible, extending examples of workers themselves organizing their own struggles (democratically elected strike committees, general strike assemblies, shop stewards democratically elected and recallable at any time, councils of shop stewards, etc.) — these are a great school preparing the workers for the soviet-type bodies that will spring up.
- e) Conducting a systematic propaganda campaign in the organized workers' movement around transitional demands and helping in the recomposition of this movement by getting these demands — especially the demand for workers' control — adopted by radicalized sections of the trade-union movement and the traditional workers' organizations.
- f) Organizing a systematic internationalist propaganda campaign around the axis of solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles, solidarity with workers' struggles in other European countries, solidarity with immigrant workers (in opposition to any form of racism and anti-foreignism), and solidarity with the anti-bureaucratic struggles of the workers, students and intellectuals in the Stalinized workers' states.
- g) Educating the workers' vanguard and broader layers of workers systematically in a non-electoralist and non-parliamentarian view of the question of power. Using propaganda for the slogan of a workers' government — including in its concrete form of government by the workers' organizations, as can be appropriate during particular

moments of the political conjuncture — to project primarily the idea of a *government resulting from mass struggles and action*. The use of this slogan in a more electoral sense must be strictly limited to specific circumstances depending on particular conjunctures. Otherwise it threatens to run counter to one of the essential goals to be attained — the systematic destruction of electoralist illusions and reformist ideology.

h) Taking credible steps to initiate unity of action: steps toward immediate unity of the entire vanguard in action around goals for which this unity of action is objectively necessary and possible, despite the various political and ideological differences running through it (cf. funeral for Pierre Overney in France); propaganda for a united front with the traditional organizations once a threshold in the relationship of forces within the workers' movement has been crossed; propaganda for a united front of the traditional organizations when the objective necessity presents itself (struggle against the threat of fascism or a bonapartist dictatorship; defense of the right to strike and working-class freedoms; defense of important strikes that the bourgeoisie is trying to crush, etc.).

i) Through general propaganda, but also and especially by pointing to actions, incidents and concrete events that have an obvious pedagogical value, to systematically educate the workers' vanguard and broader working-class layers on the need for armed self-defense against the violence of big capital, both in its extra-legal variety (fascist gangs, private armed forces of the capitalists, secret police forces, strike-breakers) and its 'legal' variety (police, riot squads and armies). To undertake a campaign of anti-militarist propaganda, including in the bourgeois army itself.

j) Systematically popularizing our 'socialist model' — our conception of socialist democracy, of a state based on workers' councils (councils of the working people), of democratically centralized (planned) self-management, of consciously organizing the withering away of market categories by both gradual means and abrupt leaps forward. This model can inspire political activity in several ways. It can mobilize people against capitalism, strengthen the vanguard vis-à-vis the reformist and Stalinist apparatuses, and help to preserve the future soviet state against bureaucratic deviations.

These central political tasks make up a coherent plan. The aim is to make sure that when the next explosion of mass struggle occurs — whether it takes the form of mass political strikes, a general strike, or a general strike involving an occupation of the factories, and no matter what the occasion and whatever sets it off — there will be a sufficient number of revolutionary worker cadres in the factories, with enough influence and prestige, the revolutionary Marxist organization will be established in enough places, and the broadest layers of workers will have acquired enough experience in struggle, for organs of dual power to spring up in the main factories and regions of the country, for these to federate rapidly into a single system of dual power (a system of the soviet type, even though its name and its origins might vary considerably), and for the logic of a revolutionary situation thereby to unfold fully on all levels. In other words, we are working in the conviction that every success today in sinking revolutionary Marxist roots in the class, in carrying out propaganda for transitional demands, and in recomposing the workers' movement will result a few years from now in a cumulative and qualitative improvement in the pre-conditions for the spread of a system of organs of dual power.

The Central Problems in Building Sections of the Fourth International in Europe at the Present Stage

11

Three Tactics

The *tactic* of party-building to which the central tasks of the present stage correspond — winning hegemony within the mass vanguard, transforming our sections from propaganda groups into revolutionary political organizations in the process of sinking roots in the proletariat — is peculiar to the present stage.

This is neither a tactic of entryism (which was by and large valid during the preceding phase) nor one of massive organic growth by huge influxes of members (which could become valid during a subsequent stage).

These three different tactics in party building — viewed in a non-mechanical way, i.e. in combination with various transitional forms, such as fractions inside mass organizations, groups for sympathizers and contacts, etc., etc. — correspond in a fundamental sense to *three objective perspectives on the predominant form of radicalization*. The entryist tactic for building a revolutionary party proceeded from the hypothesis that the process of radicalization — of forming a new mass vanguard — was taking place for the most part within the traditional mass organizations. Such a hypothesis was shown to be correct in capitalist Europe in the period that extended from the early fifties until the beginning of 1969 (e.g., Bevanite left followed by the Cousins tendency in the British Labour Party; Communist Youth and Ingrao tendency in the Italian CP; opposition tendencies and the UEC within the French CP; Social-Democratic left within the SFIO, giving rise to the PSA and the PSU; Renard tendency inside the Belgian workers' movement; trade-union left and Communist opposition giving rise in Denmark to the SF; etc.).

The error committed in conceiving this tactic did not, therefore, lie in the objective perspective — which events have by and large confirmed — but in underestimating the numerical relationship between our own forces and those we could impel to break with the mass parties, in a social climate where no revolutionary tensions had yet appeared.

The tactic of building the revolutionary party through massive organic growth proceeds from the hypothesis that this party already represents in itself a pole of attraction that can attract radicalized workers and intellectuals directly through its propaganda, its agitation, and its activity (including its united-front initiatives), with whole currents breaking away from the traditional organizations to join it. Such a situation, which is by and large the kind in which the Western European Communist parties found themselves at the beginning of the twenties, around 1934-5 and again following the second world war, does not yet exist in the case of any revolutionary organizations on this continent today.

The tactic for building the revolutionary party which underlies our present orientation in capitalist Europe is based on the fact that the process of radicalization is

already for the most part unfolding outside the traditional organizations, but is not yet taking place around the established pole of a revolutionary Marxist party, and is also having important repercussions — which could even become quantitatively decisive during a later stage — inside the traditional organizations. But the initiatives and general activity of the independent revolutionary Marxist organizations are already, at the present stage, decisive for the overall success of the process of radicalization at work both outside and inside the traditional organizations.

This tactic is based on a dialectical analysis of the relationship — at first glance, an intricate and even contradictory one — between the vanguard's need for ideological clarification and a regrouping and strengthening of its forces, on the one hand, and the rate of progress of that section of the masses who are still largely following the traditional organizations, on the other. We have already emphasized the fundamental fact that today the former process in the long run determines the outcome of the latter as well. There will not be any extensive and decisive splits in the traditional organizations without the appearance of credible enough and strong enough poles outside of these organizations around which such splits can crystallize.

An important factor must be added here that makes it possible to lessen, and within the not too distant future to resolve, the contradictory nature of the tasks imposed by the present stage — namely the fact that in addition to the gradual change in the relationship of forces between the traditional bureaucratic apparatuses and the vanguard, a change is also taking place in the relationship between the traditional parties and the masses who continue to follow them. Today this relationship is much more ambiguous than it was throughout the post-war period. The bitter experiences of the past have not been erased from the memory of the workers. After the experience of four Labour governments since the war, those British workers who are still convinced that Wilson & Co. want to introduce socialism by means of parliamentary legislation have dwindled to a very small number. The number of French or Italian workers who see Social-Democratic ministers as forces capable of overthrowing capitalism is even smaller.

For every capitalist country in Europe a more precise analysis is needed of the specific relationship between the proletarian masses and the traditional workers' parties. Such an analysis would, in any case, show that if the gap between the consciousness of the vanguard and the broader masses is still large, it is nonetheless smaller than that indicated by election results reflecting traditional loyalties and lesser-evil reflexes. There is less of a difference between the ability of the vanguard, on the one hand, and of the broader masses, on the other, to outflank the reformists and the Khrushchevite neo-reformists in action, than there is between the levels of consciousness of these two groups. The tactic for building revolutionary parties suited to the present stage of working-class radicalization must be based on an analysis of these concrete processes.

12 The Uneven Development of the Radicalization

In the same way as we must attach a prime importance to the dialectical relationship between the radicalization of the vanguard and that of the broader masses, so too the dialectical relationship between the radicalization of different layers of the population ready for revolutionary action takes on a great importance

for building our organizations. This dialectical relationship, reflected in the dialectical relationship between areas of activity, comprises the following elements:

a) During the initial phase of the present social crisis, the broadest political radicalization developed within the university and high-school student milieu. Independently of the ups and downs in the student movement proper in the universities and high schools — that is, the movement around the social and material problems specific to this milieu — a broad and highly politicized vanguard has crystallized among the student youth, oriented toward general political problems, primarily problems of solidarity with the colonial revolution and anti-imperialist movements throughout the world.

After May 1968 and, more generally, after the revival of workers' struggles throughout Europe, an irreversible turn has taken place in this milieu everywhere in the world. This milieu takes up a position today primarily in function of intervening in workers' struggles and of the perspectives of these struggles. In view of the continual renewal of the student population, and in view of the continuing explosion on campuses, it remains both possible and necessary to politicize younger layers by means of anti-imperialist propaganda and action, above all in periods of ebb in workers' struggles. Demands peculiar to the university and high-school student milieu continue to provide a ferment of agitation and organization that can radicalize the less politicized layers. But the capacity of revolutionary Marxists to bring these strata to a general understanding of the revolutionary programme and to the revolutionary party depends on the overall activity of the revolutionary Marxist organization and its political initiatives, as well as the extent and effectiveness of its intervention in the working class.

In the present conditions of the recomposition of the workers' movement, of the expansion of the vanguard and growing politicization, it is becoming easier and easier to move from supporting the specific demands of university and high-school students to upholding the revolutionary Marxist programme in its entirety.

b) The most important phenomenon is the radicalization of the working class. This, however, is developing unevenly. The growing militancy of the class has not been accompanied by a corresponding politicization. The radicalization is most extensive among the natural leaders of the class — the worker and trade-union activists who are detonating and leading militant and wildcat strikes, who are constituting the nuclei of class-struggle tendencies within the unions, who are the principal bearers of the radicalization within the traditional workers' organizations (first of all, the unions). The increasing number of examples where the bureaucratic apparatuses have been outflanked as a result of the initiative given by these vanguard worker militants shows how widespread and important this development is. This radicalization is often limited to more advanced conceptions regarding methods of struggle and immediate objectives and divorced from a clear understanding of political problems, notably the

question of power.

Therefore, in the present stage, the recruitment of these working-class leaders into the revolutionary organization is creating manifold problems. These arise from the different levels of politicization of these worker elements and activists coming out of the high-school and university student movements; different life-styles and levels of activity; different interests; etc. The older workers remain less ready in the present stage to join a revolutionary Marxist organization, even if it has already shown its effectiveness in intervening in the class struggle.

The section of the working class in which the most important gains can be made at the present time, both in recruitment and in creating a revolutionary Marxist political periphery in the proletariat, is thus the layer of young working-class leaders and activists, those who personify the new mass vanguard that is developing within the working class, who have already won their first stripes in working-class struggles, are already respected as trade-union builders, and are already winning influence in the eyes of their older workmates.

c) A phenomenon becoming widespread in all the capitalist countries of Europe is the appearance of rebellious young workers and apprentices who represent a kind of extension of the revolt of the student youth into the working class proper. It is vital for the European sections of the Fourth International to respond to this radicalization and win hegemony in this stratum of the youth. There is no mechanical separation between the radicalization of the student youth on the one hand and that of the apprentices and young workers on the other. The average level of the politicization and consciousness of the latter categories has risen considerably in recent years, above all in the big metropolitan centres. In many big plants, the young working-class strata represent an element less easily controlled by the bureaucratic apparatuses and more likely to move into action boldly and to express out loud what masses of older workers are thinking, half hopefully, half sceptically. The struggle for revolutionary Marxist hegemony within the new mass vanguard is in large part a struggle for winning the radicalized working-class youth.

d) Besides the main currents of radicalization affecting the working class and the student youth, there is a secondary current of radicalization manifesting itself in the petty-bourgeois milieu — technical 'new middle strata', scientific and artistic circles, and in some countries, notably France, young peasants. Without shifting their principal focuses of activity, the revolutionary Marxist organizations must keep a close watch on these currents, offering them the perspective of our socialist 'model', which responds to their fundamental concerns, and trying to attract their most advanced elements into our own ranks. Forming ad hoc bodies or publishing ad hoc magazines may be useful in reaching this milieu. But the primary thing is to attract them by our full programme and the full range of our political initiatives.

13 The New Revolutionary Left

Within the mass vanguard that has appeared in the countries of capitalist Europe, we must make a distinction between unorganized elements (unorganized, that is, except in mass organizations like trade unions) who are mobilizable essentially for broad struggles and demonstrations but do not take the path of building specific vanguard organizations, and those elements who are grouped in such organizations. Little by

little, a new organized revolutionary left is taking the place of the 'political mass movement' of preceding years (which was based primarily on a still united high-school and university student movement).

The organization of this new revolutionary left has developed in two stages. The first period was dominated by tendencies that crystallized under the influence of developments in the world revolution (assimilated critically or uncritically, depending on the specific case) and of the first spontaneous reflexes produced by the first reawakening of independent working-class activity. In this stage, we can distinguish, in general, three currents: the spontaneist current, the Maoist current and the Trotskyist current (with a few intermediary phenomena, i.e. Mao-spontaneism). The Maoism that largely predominated in this phase in certain countries (above all, Italy, Sweden and Norway, but also partly in West Germany) was a naive Maoism. It was based largely on the vague formulas of the cultural revolution, which the radicalized student left thought reflected its concerns and solutions. Orthodox, uncritical Maoism, taking its inspiration from Stalin as well as Mao, has remained marginal, like those currents that have kept their bridges open to the traditional SPs and CPs, which are rejected in toto as 'betrayers' and 'revisionists'. The only exceptions are Holland and Finland, where the CPs continue to influence an appreciable section of the student movement, thanks notably to their role in workers' struggles.

During the second phase, a more political, less naive differentiation has been taking place, helped along by the sudden right turn in the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China (e.g. Bangla Desh, Ceylon, Sudan, Nixon's visit to Peking) and the Lin Piao affair. Naive and vague Maoism, and its extreme form Mao-spontaneism, are experiencing a definite decline. Pure spontaneism, which rejects any concept of a vanguard organization, has been reabsorbed into more classical anarchist and semi-anarchist formations and has become marginal. Political currents have evolved or are in the process of evolving toward the following main physiognomies:

a) Classical ultra-left currents (of a third-period Stalinist or a Bordigist type), rejecting as 'capitalist' not only the USSR but China, rejecting the idea that there is any difference between bourgeois democracy and fascism, and often rejecting the idea that there is any need for working in the unions (e.g. Potere Operaio in Italy).

b) Ultra-left Maoist currents (like Cause du Peuple in France), which combine a general lack of understanding of the organized workers' movement and classical ultra-left positions (of a third period type) with an analogous position regarding the USSR, but which at the same time approve (with some minor criticisms) the course of the Chinese bureaucracy.

c) Originally ultra-left currents evolving toward centrism, with large openings toward the mass CPs and SPs, which limit working-class agitation to immediate demands and raise the tactic of the united front to the level of a strategic principle. (The KFml in Sweden, the International Socialists in Britain, Bandera Roja in Spain).

d) 'Purified' and 'orthodox' Maoist currents evolving toward neo-Stalinism and aligning themselves uncritically with all the diplomatic manoeuvres of the Chinese bureaucracy. This current is rapidly declining everywhere (the German KPD and the Unione in Italy).

e) Currents that might be called 'sophisticated semi-Maoists' or 'half-Trotskyist Maoists', of the type of Avanguardia Operaia in Italy or Révolution in France, which, while taking their distance from Maoist foreign policy

and from the lingering Stalinist odours of the orthodox Maoist groups, are trying to hold onto an eclectic political orientation from the previous period, based on a sentimental longing for 'revolutionary unity' or even for a 'third current in the international Communist movement'. The demand for 'theoretical depth' advanced by this current in reality represents an opportunistic refusal to defend a revolutionary Marxist programme for fear of being identified with 'despised and outmoded Trotskyism'. In a general sense, it is the uneven rate of radicalization between the student youth and the rebelling young workers on the one hand, and the organized workers' movement on the other, that is at the root of all the deviations of these currents. They are characterized fundamentally by their incomprehension not only of the organized workers' movement as such but also of the forms and dynamic of the differentiation going on within it. They therefore by their nature oscillate between ultra leftism and centrism, depending on the preponderant conjunctural pressures.

14

The Decline of Centrism and the Reorganization of the Workers Movement

This reorganization of the European revolutionary left coincides with two phenomena that determine its limits and pre-figure its dynamic — the rapid decline of the centrist formations that emerged at the beginning of the 1960s (disappearance of the PSIUP, the break-up of the PSU in France and the VS in

Denmark, the decline of the PSP in the Netherlands and the SF in Norway), and the revival of the influence of the traditional organizations in a not inconsiderable sector of the vanguard (the CP in Great Britain and Italy, Social Democracy in West Germany and to some extent in Sweden).

The revolutionary Marxists struggling for political hegemony within the new vanguard cannot reject all of this organized revolutionary left as simply 'ultra-leftist'. They continue to advocate unity in action of all revolutionaries for precise objectives and at precise moments (e.g. the funeral of Pierre Overney in France) when these objectives coincide with the real interest of the working class and its vanguard. The revolutionary Marxists are striving, as the political differentiation develops, to become the principal pole of regroupment for the revolutionary left, on the basis of their political analyses (China, the USSR, permanent revolution, working-class bureaucracy, attitude toward the unions, transitional demands, organization of workers' struggles, workers' democracy, 'model' of socialism, etc.), which have been confirmed by events, and on the basis of their growing implantation in the working class.

At the same time, the revolutionary Marxists are deliberately trying to bridge the gap that developed in the preceding period between the revolutionary left and the organized workers' movement. In this they have a dual objective. To reduce the risks of the revolutionary left finding itself isolated in the face of repression by the bourgeois state — which in these circumstances would be largely successful — and to bring the weight of the revolutionary left to bear in order to radicalize the organized workers' movement, which is in the process of recomposition. In this regard, specific united campaigns involving

important sections of the organized workers' movement together with the revolutionary left play a vital role. This aim is best served by the campaign in defense of the Vietnamese revolution; the campaign in defense of the victims of repression; the campaign in defense of the unions' right to strike and freedom of collective bargaining; and more generally the campaign in defense of democratic rights that have been undermined or openly attacked by the bourgeoisie.

The role of pivot that the revolutionary Marxists are seeking to play between the revolutionary left and the organized workers' movement by no means represents a centrist scheme of balancing on electoral combinations or inter-bureaucratic agreements, as the PSU and PSIUP have done. To the contrary, it represents a profound understanding of the dialectical inter-relationship that dominates the whole present phase: the interaction through manifold intermediary stages between a mass vanguard forming and going into action, and radicalization in the traditional organizations (a classic example in this regard is what has been happening in Great Britain since the start of the struggle against the 'Tories' anti-strike bill). While we are convinced that the Social Democratic, Stalinist, and trade-union bureaucracies remain an essential roadblock on the path to the socialist revolution — a roadblock that must be shattered, as the workers' struggles broaden and radicalize, by the pressure of rising class consciousness and the strengthening of the revolutionary-Marxist organizations — we are equally convinced that no revolutionary mass party will see the light of day, that no generalized system of dual power bodies can arise from these struggles, without mass currents breaking off from the traditional leaderships on the basis of their own experience. The precise tactic the revolutionary Marxists adopt toward the organized workers' movement, and of whose correctness they try to convince broader sections of the new revolutionary vanguard, has the objective of stimulating, facilitating and politically orienting this polarization and splitting-off process.

The period we have entered into since 1968 — with differences from country to country — is characterized by the fact that the masses are tending periodically to unleash vast struggles which outflank the traditional organizations, and that initiatives by these organizations are no longer indispensable for the spread of such battles. But, on the other hand, the masses are still not capable of projecting general political solutions, and thus of posing the question of *political power*, independently of these traditional organizations. Our orientation of 'unity in action plus outflanking the bureaucrats' takes into account these two sides of reality, thereby avoiding the twin traps of opportunist tail-ending on the Lambertist model and sectarian isolation.

15 Sectors and Forms of Intervention

Transforming the sections of the Fourth International from propaganda groups into revolutionary political organizations which, as a result of winning political hegemony within the new mass vanguard, will be on the way to sinking roots in the working class, calls for recruiting hundreds, and in certain countries thousands, of new members. The objective is to create a political and organizational striking force that can serve as the springboard for this transformation.

Sinking roots in the working class itself raises the

problem of the relationship between the numerically reinforced revolutionary organization and the broader vanguard sectors (in the working class, the student youth and other radicalizing sectors) that the revolutionary Marxists influence and seek to direct politically but which are not ready to join our sections or, if they did join them en masse, would threaten to undermine their political unity and programmatic foundations. There are two sides to the problem — contact and sympathizer organizations and stable alliances.

In the student youth sector and the radicalized petty-bourgeois layers, contact and sympathizer groups are most suitable for broadening the sphere of influence and activity of our sections, at the same time as enabling the youth who have recently come to activity based on the full revolutionary programme to demonstrate political seriousness and consistent activism. By nature these organizations should be broad, which means a large turnover. While this is disastrous for a revolutionary-Marxist organization, it does not threaten structures whose precise aim is to select out the serious revolutionary activists from a mass of people who are active only sporadically. The broader the mass involved in this selection process, the more effective the process will be and the more substantial its results. Thus, we must not artificially limit the expansion of these contact and sympathizer organizations (Toupe Rouge, Red Mole Circles, local groups of the JGS, shop groups, etc.), nor apply to them in practice the standards demanded of probationary members of our sections.

While in specific circumstances this type of transmission structure may be extended to sections of young workers, it is not suited to creating the basis of confidence and mutual collaboration necessary for continuous activity among workers. Besides the factory cells of our sections, a base in the working class necessitates creating permanent bodies linking revolutionary-Marxist militants and worker and trade-union activists who agree with the revolutionists on a programme for their factory or trade-union but are not ready to engage in continuous political activity based on the full revolutionary-Marxist programme. The most adequate bodies for this purpose are trade-union tendencies or worker groups in factories.

Just as trade-union tendencies have proved historically to be instruments of continuous revolutionary activity, so 'struggle committees' always prove to be purely conjunctural instruments. Revolutionary Marxists favour creating such committees for precise objectives, such as preparing for a union campaign or preparing for a strike. But they will try to convince their fellow fighters that transforming such committees into permanent bodies that would continue to exist outside periods of acute struggle is condemned to failure. Such formations shrink rapidly and threaten to cut off the most militant activists from the broader mass, by leading them to act in practice like a small minority union or like a semi- or sub-political group. The basic orientation of the revolutionary Marxists toward these 'struggle committees' in the factories is to transform the potential for militancy and activism that emerges in every bargaining campaign, militant strike or anti-bureaucratic struggle in a plant, into a trade-union tendency that will open up a fight for democracy in the union — and, as soon as the relationship of forces permits, for class-struggle militants taking the leadership of the union.

Just as it is necessary in periods of struggle to outflank the trade-union organizations without fear of possible sanctions in order to create a working-class base, so in periods of ebb or indifference on the part of the rank and

file it is advisable to pay attention to the risks involved in confrontations with the union bureaucracy.

The intervention of revolutionary Marxists in other radicalized groups (women, artists, scholars, users of public services, tenants, groups defending the environment) can give rise to analogous problems. The priority of winning a base in the working class and strengthening the organization and its general political activity has consequences for the involvement of revolutionary Marxists in these sectors. The revolutionary Marxists will organize themselves into communist fractions operating within mass movements or specific existing groups and seek to bring the most advanced elements from these radicalized sectors

first into transmission groups of the *Taupe Rouge* type, and then to recruit them to the revolutionary Marxist organization, on the basis of three types of activity — propagandizing for our full programme; agitating for those immediate and long-term solutions which are most suited to the needs of these sectors, at the same time as being integrated into a firmly revolutionary anti-capitalist orientation and in harmony with the socialist 'model' we support; advocating forms of organizing and mobilizing that stress self-organization, direct action, linking up with the struggles of the working class, and the convergence of the struggle for workers' control and these various forms of struggle for social control.

The Type of Organisation most suited to the Present Capabilities of Revolutionaries in Capitalist Europe

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The Renewal of the European Sections of the Fourth International

In the present stage starting in 1967-8, the Fourth International began a turn towards independent activity aimed at winning political hegemony in the new vanguard. Since its sections had undergone a process of over-specialization in applying the entry tactic, they generally went about making this shift in too slow

and stiff a way. The turn was carried out in the best conditions everywhere there was a youth organization led by revolutionary Marxists existing independently, that could get round the problem of a section identified in the eyes of the vanguard with an entryist orientation.

On the other hand, there was a real danger that youth organizations lacking a sufficient number of experienced Trotskyist cadres would let themselves be caught up in a sectarian (or spontaneist) tendency to underestimate and misjudge the organized workers' movement, and would transmit these pressures, of petty-bourgeois social origin, that were typical of a large part of the new revolutionary vanguard during the first phase, into the Fourth International itself. This danger subsists, moreover, in those countries where this evolution has occurred, or is in the process of occurring, several years behind the countries where the mass vanguard is most extensive (France, Italy, Great Britain, Spain).

For these two reasons, the Fourth International opted for a rather rapid fusion between the pseudo-youth organizations, that in reality were substituting for revolutionary-Marxist organizations that did not function within the new revolutionary left, and the old sections which had kept a varying — but in most cases appreciable — number of experienced Trotskyist cadres rooted in the organized workers' movement. This pragmatic solution has paid off in all cases where it has been applied. It has permitted

a considerable increase in our numerical forces, as well as a broadening of our following in the mass vanguard, without the loss of positions or prestige in the organized workers' movement — in fact quite the contrary. It has enabled us to avoid grave political errors — minor ones of course have been inevitable — as a result of a sudden expansion of our forces and our tasks. The only case where this integration was not carried out in time (Italy) is where we suffered heavy losses, losing the major part of the youth under our influence, along with part of the older Trotskyist cadres.

The position adopted thus opposes building or long maintaining pseudo-organizations of revolutionary youth which, in a given context and in view of the relationship of forces, would continue to function as substitutes for adult revolutionary organizations, while showing many of the failings typical of the radical student milieu. But this position is by no means opposed in principle to building genuine *youth* organizations, that would confine themselves to the specific tasks of youth work on the basis of the sphere of activity, base and influence already achieved by adult revolutionary organizations. The possibility for taking a turn to form (or rebuild) such a youth organization thus depends strictly on the relationship of forces, i.e. the influence that the adult organization has already acquired in the vanguard, its base in the working class, and the number of cadres that can be put at the disposal of the youth organization. As long as it has not reached the critical threshold in forces and roots in the working class necessary to attempting such a project, the adult revolutionary organization will strive to organize sympathizer groupings specifically adapted to youth, such as were mentioned above.

A special problem is raised by the increasing opportunities for members or sympathizers of revolutionary Marxist organizations to win positions of leadership in youth organizations that are not specifically revolutionary (trade-union youth groups, high school and university student organizations, etc.). In each concrete case, it will

be necessary to assess the advantages of such an investment of forces, by weighing the gains that could be made (especially in winning a base in the unions and the plants, achieving mass influence on specific issues, and playing a part in recomposing the organized workers' movement) against the gaps such a deployment threatens to create elsewhere (notably in reducing the number of cadres of leadership ability ready to assume the tasks of leading the organization or directing its open external activities).

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Three Priorities in Employing our Forces

Every small revolutionary organization faces a multiplying number of tasks that overstrain its strength and grow as it grows. The essential job of any leadership worthy of the name is to set an order of priorities based on general analyses and perspectives and to resist temptations to depart from it in an impressionistic way,

under the pressure of new opportunities turning up in this or that sector.

Of course, this order of priorities must be periodically reviewed and revised critically in the light of an assessment of the results achieved and possible changes in the objective situation (conditions in the organized workers' movement also being an element of the objective situation from the *standpoint of the revolutionary-Marxist organizations*). Adhering to these priorities must also be combined with the tactical flexibility necessary to take advantage of abrupt turns and major opportunities that suddenly open up. But such flexibility must play the same role as utilizing reserves in military strategy. It cannot substitute for the strategy itself. Otherwise the basic orientation, the order of priorities, is lost, giving way to impressionistic leaps from one 'opening' to another.

From all the preceding analysis, there flow three priorities for employing our forces, which, moreover, are closely linked together:

— a primitive accumulation of forces, to make it possible to reach the take-off point of effective political intervention on a national scale, without which winning hegemony within the mass vanguard is absolutely unachievable.

— a central political breakthrough to transform our numerically increased forces into a revolutionary political striking force, keeping them from being worn away in discontinuous actions, or those confined to isolated sectors, which would threaten to result in their being caught up in workerist, tail-ending, spontaneist and other deviations.

— a growing implantation in the workers' and trade-union movement, to enable us to transform the numerically and politically strengthened revolutionary organizations into a permanent factor in raising the level of consciousness and organization of the most militant layers of the workers; into a driving force in preparing for future explosions of mass struggle and for their culmination in a system of dual power.

From these combined priorities — which are not the same as the ones in the preceding period and are not yet those of a struggle to win control of the broad masses away from the traditional parties — flow conclusions about the type of organization needed in the present stage, the deployment of our forces, their mode of operating and intervening, etc. These questions are eminently concrete and take on a special character for every section, depending on the point reached in the primitive accumulation of forces, in acquiring the capacity for making a central

political breakthrough, in winning a base in the working class. Nonetheless, a certain number of general rules can already be discerned from the experiences of the last four years.

a) In the present stage, in view of the nature of the mass vanguard and the new highly politicized revolutionary left, no serious progress can be accomplished by means of febrile activism and superficial, primitive agitation. What is absolutely essential is to demonstrate the superiority of our analyses, to defend and illustrate our full programme, to stand out as the main centre of living Marxism in our time. Anything that is not won on this basis, especially in the student and intellectual milieu, will not be definitively won. From this logically flows the importance of cadre training and theoretical and political elaboration on a high level.

b) The vanguard does not recognize, has never recognized and will never recognize self-proclaimed 'new revolutionary leaderships'. This status must be won by the overall activity of the organization. In this regard, it is vital not to let ourselves be deceived and to distinguish carefully between the influence and prestige that can be won by revolutionary Marxist militants *in a specific milieu* in the mass movement, on the basis of their individual talents and leadership abilities, and the influence of the revolutionary Marxist organization as such on sections of the working class, on the basis of the organization's full programme. This second kind of influence is by no means the result of the former, although, among other factors, the respect won by individuals is an essential element in winning general political influence. The most striking example of this distinction is presented by the Communist Party of Great Britain. During the last twenty years, this party has seen thousands of its members win dominant positions in the lower echelons of the trade unions (enabling them to lead major struggles in the last three years), while its political influence on the British working class is doubtless at its lowest point since 1940.

Revolutionary Marxist organizations the size of the present sections of the Fourth International cannot hope to win a general political following in the working class as a whole in one fell swoop. But they can, after reaching a certain threshold, win a political following among a layer of young vanguard workers, by means of two tactics that must be used as much as possible in the present stage:

1. organizing national political campaigns on carefully chosen issues that correspond to the concerns of the vanguard, do not run against the current of mass struggles, and offer a chance for demonstrating a capacity for effective initiative, even if still modest, by our sections; 2. our sections' ability to centralize their forces on a regional and national level in order to break the wall of silence and indifference surrounding certain exemplary, 'wildcat' workers' struggles, and to start off solidarity movements with them.

c) The presence within the working class, in the plants and the unions, of thousands of elements that have an oppositionist attitude towards the traditional organizations and can be drawn into important struggles is confirmed by all the experience of the last years. But these workers are scattered, isolated from one another, often disillusioned by their experiences in new organizations into which they have let themselves be drawn unthinkingly, almost always under the pressure of a threat of repression from the bosses and the trade-union bureaucracy. It is illusory to think that we can absorb these people into our sections in one stroke. Individual cases aside, they will only become a social base for revolutionary Marxist orga-

nizations to the extent that these organizations demonstrate their political and organizational seriousness. And such seriousness involves, in addition to the tasks mentioned above, *regular, persistent, long-term intervention in the plants and unions regardless of the immediate results and regardless of the ups and downs in the class struggle.*

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Centralized Leadership and Autonomy of Activity

The priorities that flow from the whole preceding analysis imply a certain type of revolutionary organization, not just as regards the hierarchy of its tasks but also as regards its own structure.

More than ever the political and organizational strength, the stability and continuity, of the leadership are decisive in successfully carrying out the tasks of the present stage. Without this type of leadership, neither a choice of priorities, nor a correct analysis of the objective situation and its tendencies of evolution, nor a correct deployment of our forces can be achieved. Without the presence of such a central leadership, a sudden numerical growth, the influx of a large number of young militants, would rapidly lead to the development of regionalist and localist tendencies, which would result in grave political errors arising out of incorrect generalizations from particular situations or tendencies. This would also lead to grave political crises, since the need for high-level centralized political elaboration would be felt by all revolutionary militants in connection with the objective tasks of the present stage themselves.

Creating and strengthening such leaderships, for all our sections, therefore takes a top priority, preceding all others. What needs to be stressed is not a purely administrative centralization but political centralization of the Leninist type, which would make it possible to unify the experience of the entire organization, to test the correctness of its analysis in the light of practical experience nationally and internationally. This in turn would make it possible to concentrate forces at the right time in the most opportune sector, thus multiplying the effectiveness of a given number of activists, whose individual effectiveness would be greatly reduced by the absence of a centralized leadership and intervention.

Such a central political leadership needs a certain minimum national apparatus in order to play its role, both within the organization and in the working masses. It must reach out through a series of regional and local relays, through secondary leaderships already formed or in formation. It must have a central press with a certain minimum readership, and a material and financial base (a central print shop and regional apparatuses) that make it possible to intervene rapidly in strikes and various mass movements and support in practice the national campaigns of the organization.

On the other hand, with the growth of the organization, the multiplication of its tasks, and the previously mentioned priorities of the leading bodies, we must aim for more and more independent activity on the part of the cells, the local and regional leaderships, the work commissions and fractions in specific milieus and specific struggles that do not have national significance. The absence of such autonomy would threaten to create continual bottlenecks at the level of leading bodies and tend to interfere with or even overshadow their main role, which is *general political elaboration and setting priorities*. To the contrary, by encouraging such independent analysis and activity at the

lower levels, the revolutionary Marxist organization will be transformed into a permanent school for leaders, which is, moreover, indispensable if it is to become the nucleus of a mass revolutionary party.

The national leadership cannot encourage such a selecting out of secondary cadres by constantly substituting itself for regional and local leaderships, or by intervening constantly in work commissions and trade-union tendencies. In this regard, it must concentrate on the above-mentioned tasks of political centralization, and conceive of its job with respect to the intermediary cadres as one of *training and selection* — which involves, of course, making critical balance sheets periodically. Expanding the central committees of the sections, getting these bodies to function as collective instruments of high-level political elaboration and education, calling periodic national conferences on special subjects and organizing leadership schools, will help solve the problem of training intermediate cadres.

The problem of the press is similar. For this whole period the priority task is to create or strengthen the national weekly of the organization — which is its principal national instrument of political intervention. But at the same time, meeting the organizational priorities mentioned above creates an imperious necessity, at certain stages of the section's growth, for a network of regularly appearing plant papers, complemented by local organs in regions or localities where a stronger base exists, and by a theoretical journal for those sections where the milieu the organization is working in and the nature of its ongoing propaganda organ make it essential to present supplementary political and theoretical analysis of a higher level to a broader public. Coherent structuring of this whole press system depends on the strength of the organization and must remain under the control of the leadership, subject to critical examination at regular intervals.

Similar considerations apply also to problems of finance and the material base of the organization. Solving the central financial problems of the organization (ensuring adequate functioning of the national leadership, publication of the central political organ of the section, a basic minimum of full-timers and technical apparatus) takes top priority. But above a certain threshold it becomes an essential precondition for realizing the benefits of the influence that has been won and for continued progress by the organization to leave the regional and local bodies their own financial resources and for there to be a certain minimum technical apparatus at this level — and, in a later stage, regional and local full-timers. In this area also, the national leadership must follow a flexible system of priorities, subject to periodic review, so as to prevent choices being made in a routine way, under the impact of pressures from the outside, or without taking account of the interests of the organization as a whole.

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The Fight Against Repression

The perspective unfolding is one of rather rapid progressive growth of the revolutionary Marxist organizations, in a climate favouring radicalization of the working class and the gradual infusion of the revolutionary programme into an increasingly broad vanguard. The bourgeoisie is also aware of this perspective, as it realizes the grave risks involved for the survival of its system and its state. It would, of course, be illusory to think that the bourgeoisie is going to sit by passively and watch the development and strengthening of the revolutionary Marxist organizations.

The two principal dangers threatening the revolutionary Marxist organizations in this regard are the following:

a) A *selective state repression* aimed essentially at the revolutionary left, possibly going as far as outlawing it (the way would be paved by a campaign to stigmatize it as 'criminal', like the ones unleashed in France at the time of the vote on the 'anti-wrecker law', in Italy around the Valpreda and Feltrinelli affairs, and in Germany under the pretext of the Baader-Meinhof affair). This danger arises from a precise conjuncture in which the bourgeoisie considers the relationship of forces still unfavourable for unleashing massive repression against the entire labour movement, but seeks to prepare for this by repression against the revolutionary left alone. The foundations must be laid now for a counter-attack, by creating a climate of general solidarity against repression, of defending all the democratic rights of the workers' movement, and of de facto recognition that the revolutionary left organizations are part of the organized workers' movement. Our fundamental line for blocking this first danger is to prevent the revolutionary left from becoming isolated from the mass workers' organizations.

b) The danger of *extra-legal repression* at the hands of hired gangsters acting as supplementary police, private security forces of employers, and armed semi-fascists. This weapon, already used extensively by the Brazilian, Uruguayan, Argentinian and Mexican bourgeoisies, has been imported to Europe via Franco's Spain and the Greece of the colonels, and its use is spreading today in France and Italy. The danger of this method of terror being introduced into most capitalist European countries cannot be underestimated.

The most effective response to this danger is to revive the reflexes of self-defense and preparation for workers' militias on the basis of worker and student strike pickets. But it has already proved indispensable in Spain and France for the revolutionary organizations themselves to take initiatives in self-defense. This may be the case tomorrow in other European countries. Such initiatives must be conceived and executed in such a way that they will be understood and endorsed by the workers, link up with the workers' organizations' tradition of self-defense against fascists, and serve as exemplary strongpoints to encourage more massive forms of self-defense on the part of the working class.

The existence of these dangers, as well as the logic of an objective situation that can shift rapidly toward pre-revolutionary or even revolutionary conditions, oblige the sections of the Fourth International to give special attention to the problems of security and to the systematic preparation of an apparatus that can enable the organization to continue functioning with the maximum efficiency possible when the imperialist repression seeks to drive it underground. The more effective these responses and preparations are, the more the bourgeoisie will hesitate to go further down the road of repression or of using semi-fascist bands.

The spirit in which our sections will have to educate the entire mass vanguard, moreover, is this: to show the bourgeoisie in practice that the price it will have to pay for any attempt to establish an open dictatorship will be a civil war in which both camps will use arms. History has shown that from any point of view, such an eventuality is preferable to an institutionalized civil war in the form of a bloodthirsty dictatorship where the bourgeois camp murders and tortures at will, while the proletariat and the worker militants, disarmed and disoriented, stand by helplessly and watch the massacre of their own.

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Build the International Simultaneously with the National Organizations

Building revolutionary-Marxist organizations in capitalist Europe is inseparably linked to building the Fourth International as an international organization. The two tasks interpenetrate, from the standpoint both of the objective needs of the class struggle and of the specific job of strengthening the Trotskyist current within the mass vanguard.

The internationalization of workers' struggles is an inevitable trend produced by the growing internationalization of capital. The existence of the Common Market, the international interpenetration of capital, the weight of multinational corporations owning factories in many European countries, the trends to more advanced economic and monetary integration in capitalist Europe — all these factors bring international collective bargaining and contracts, international wage actions and Europe-wide strikes more and more onto the agenda.

The revolutionary Marxists who years ago foresaw and predicted this evolution must not limit themselves to supporting or encouraging trade-union initiatives that go in this direction. They must give the indispensable push to move this internationalization of the class struggle beyond the stage of being confined to a purely economic, corporative or sectoral level. The propaganda of the revolutionary Marxists for a socialist United States of Europe — for solidarity not only with economic strikes abroad, but also with the political struggle of the Spanish, Portuguese, Greek and Irish proletariat and with the anti-bureaucratic fighters of the deformed and degenerated workers' states — must lead to organizational results. It must lead on the one hand to broad international fronts of solidarity, and on the other to training the first revolutionary-Marxist cadres, forming the first Trotskyist nuclei and reinforcing the sections of the Fourth International respectively in a series of countries. Likewise the revolutionary Marxists must take concrete initiatives in those sectors where multinational firms have a decisive weight.

A powerful revival of the workers' reflexes of international solidarity, moreover, plays a major role in the development of the class struggle in Europe in the present period in the following ways:

a) To neutralize the negative effects of the internationalization of capital on the efficacy of national strikes, effects that will become more and more important in the years to come.

b) To accelerate the integration of the immigrant workers into the phalanx of the workers' movement and to block attempts by the bourgeoisie to utilize racism and anti-foreignism aimed at these workers as a weapon for dividing the proletariat — attempts which are going to increase.

c) To prepare the European proletariat to resist massively any attempt at counter-revolutionary intervention against a socialist revolution winning victory first in a single country of capitalist Europe — a preparation that must be undertaken in advance and in a systematic way as the proletariat returns to its internationalist traditions.

In the broad framework of their general tasks of solidarity toward the struggles of all oppressed peoples, the European sections of the Fourth International bear a special responsibility to:

a) Defend the Vietnamese revolution by maintaining a high degree of mobilization of the vanguard in support of the victory of this revolution, so as to neutralize to

some extent the pressures of the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies on the Vietnamese leadership to seek a compromise with Washington.

b) To defend the Irish struggle against the attempts of British imperialism to isolate it from the British and European proletariat and crush it militarily.

These internationalist political tasks, moreover, impose specific organizational tasks on the revolutionary Marxists of capitalist Europe: tighter co-ordination in the day-to-day work of the European sections of the Fourth International (on special problems, such as the immigrant workers and anti-imperialist and anti-bureaucratic solidarity; through special campaigns on the occasion of strikes with international ramifications, and so forth). Such co-ordination calls for creating ad hoc bodies under the control of the international leadership.

Closer co-ordination of the day-to-day work of the European sections of the Fourth International will have the goal notably of transforming the still very uneven development of these sections into a combined development. Every success in a given sector, every specific breakthrough by one of its sections, can become a reference point, a training experience and a point of departure for similar successes by other sections. This effort must go hand in hand with a systematic effort to give an international amplification to the most advanced forms of working-class struggle and organization achieved by the advanced strata of the proletariat in one or another European country.

Of all the currents of the new mass vanguard, of all

the currents of the organized workers' movement, the Trotskyist current alone proclaims the necessity of building an international organization simultaneously with the construction of national revolutionary organizations; alone rejects as a reactionary utopia in our time the conception calling for building strong national revolutionary organizations first, in order to arrive later — by a sudden transformation whose secret has never been revealed — at a politically homogeneous International.

The eminently international character of the economy, of politics, of society, of the class struggle in our time is no 'Trotskyist fixation' but a concrete and tangible reality constantly impressed on the vanguard and the conscious workers by the facts. If internationalism — not platonic and literary but practical and organizational — is the distinguishing mark of the Trotskyists in the mass vanguard, this is an argument that already pleads in favour of our movement and will do so more and more powerfully as a result of the lesson of events. Every increase in the strength of the Fourth International, every success in transforming any of our sections from a propaganda group into a revolutionary organization capable of taking the initiative politically and beginning to win a base in the working class, will have favourable repercussions on the construction and growth of all the other sections. In this sense also, building the sections and building the International interpenetrate and form a single organic process, not simply the sum total of national successes or failures.

DOCUMENTS-TWO

Third Congress of the Ligue Communiste December 1972 Political Resolution

1 The crisis of the international imperialist system has deepened in recent years and is marked by a general decline in economic growth in all the imperialist countries. For the first time since the end of the Second World War, attempts to check the crisis of overproduction by increased inflation have run into grave difficulties: dollar inflation finally precipitated the destruction of the international monetary system and led to a monetary crisis which threatens to undermine international credit and, as a result, the expansion of world trade.

The principal stimulants of the economic expansion of the post-war period are subsiding; it follows that the underlying tendency for a fall in the rate of profit is emerging ever more clearly, holding back growth — as too does the restriction of the market relative to the colossal expansion of productive capacity.

U.S. imperialism has progressively lost its position of absolute superiority within the imperialist camp. Its share of the world market is constantly diminishing, as gains are rapidly made by its German, Japanese and E.E.C. rivals. Far from reducing inter-imperialist competition, this inflation, because of the protectionist measures it induces on the part of American imperialism, can only exacerbate it further.

2 In capitalist Europe, the end of the long period of expansion has involved a sharpening of social contradictions which, since May 1968, has taken the form of a

generalized social crisis in several countries (France, Italy, Spain, Great Britain). And so, as new demands flowing precisely from the explosion of the productive forces have been experienced in a particularly sharp manner, the European bourgeoisie has become less and less capable of making new concessions to the working masses. On the contrary, it has often been forced to attack the gains won by the latter during the preceding phase.

The reappearance of substantial unemployment (five million unemployed in Western Europe) is simply the dramatic reflection of this phenomenon. Big capital is seeking to restore the rate of profit by increasing the rate of exploitation of the working class. The European working class has resisted this offensive by launching the biggest wave of strikes seen since the great recession of the thirties. But the current general rise in the level of struggle is occurring in a different context. As a result of a fifteen year decline in the numbers of the industrial reserve army, the European proletariat is entering this phase in a position of considerable strength and with a much higher degree of organization, in an international context marked by the crisis of the Stalinist camp and the political and military defeat of the dominant imperialist power in Indochina.

3 Faced with a difficult economic situation and sharpening social contradictions, the bourgeois political system is in its turn entering into crisis: a crisis of the political parties, a crisis of the forms of political domination (e.g.

the paralysis of the centre-left governments in Italy, the collapse of Gaullist bonapartism, the decomposition of the Franco régime).

The European bourgeoisies, therefore, have before them a fundamental choice between attempts at 'integration'—designed to reduce and nullify the combativity of the working class through concessions, which will reinforce the mechanism of class collaboration but which are economically expensive—and increased repression, involving attacks on democratic rights, the right to strike and the right to free wage negotiation.

These two alternatives, at present being used simultaneously, accentuate the decay of classical parliamentary democracy and shift the centre of gravity of the bourgeois state towards an executive more and more removed from any control, thus underlining the current tendency for the establishment of strong states corresponding more closely to the phase of monopoly capitalism which characterizes our epoch.

The most likely political perspective is that of a prolonged period of instability which will see a succession of different bourgeois governments and attempts at reform led by the traditional workers' organizations.

4 One manifestation of the crisis of bourgeois leadership in Europe is well illustrated by the jerky evolution towards European political unity. The greater interpenetration of capital throughout Europe, accentuated by the enlarging of the E.E.C. and the exacerbation of competition with American and Japanese capitalism, militates in favour of a strengthening of European pre-state superstructures. But each step along this road implies sacrifices for one or other of the 'national' bourgeoisies, thus increasing—as decisive stages approach—the hesitations, the social contradictions and the political divisions. European unity will not come about in the framework of the capitalist system. Its accomplishment would be likely to lead one or more European countries to the brink of a social explosion that could spread throughout the whole system and bring it down.

5 In France, the crisis of May 1968 revealed and precipitated the bankruptcy of the Gaullist bonapartist régime. This has been indispensable for leading the different sections of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie to accept policies necessary to place France on an equal footing with her European rivals; but in the process it has accumulated social contradictions which will finally erupt and destroy it.

The most conscious section of big capital envisages a realistic revision of its objectives and a modification of its forms of political domination, notably by getting rid of the bonapartist forms of the strong state.

This explains the birth of 'Pompidou-ism', whose principal function is to ensure a transition from the bonapartist régime—which arose out of the prolonged crisis of parliamentary democracy—to a presidential régime.

The second priority of the Pompidou presidency is to work towards objectives for the French bourgeoisie more in accordance with its real economic power. This means renouncing Gaullist dreams of world-wide power and accepting the role of a secondary imperialism, with an honourable place—particularly in Europe. This is the explanation of Pompidou's re-orientation of policy on Europe.

6 After May 1968, the first task for the bourgeoisie was to restore a balance of forces which had shifted to the

advantage of the working class—whose militancy has, however, remained at a high level for the past four years.

The Chaban-Delmas government elaborated a policy of integration of the working-class movement. This was based on the one hand upon the exceptional expansion of the years 1968-70, resulting from the increase in domestic consumption provoked by the gains made at Grenelle and from the growth of exports achieved by the revaluation of the franc, and on the other hand upon the inactivity of the workers' organizations, which were afraid of launching a new May if they went too far in pursuing claims.

Despite these two trump-cards, the total balance-sheet of this 'policy of agreement' has remained pretty unimpressive. It is perpetually threatened by the workers' militancy, which is maintained at a high level by inflation and continually rising prices—which the bourgeoisie cannot prevent without severely restricting growth. Despite all the efforts made, Chaban's 'new society', in which it was hoped to gain the voluntary consent of the workers to the norms and limits of the system, has not seen the light of day. It has not been possible to reverse the balance of forces created in 1968.

On the contrary, the objective crisis has raised the combativity of the working class to a level virtually incompatible with the smooth functioning of capitalist society, just as the social layers traditionally tied to Gaullism have entered into open conflict with the policies of rationalization being attempted by the Pompidou régime. Conscious that these policies mean their eventual elimination, small farmers, small businessmen and shopkeepers, etc.—i.e. archaic petty-bourgeois layers—have begun a movement which is taking them into conflict with the régime, which is thus losing its former ascendancy over them.

Finally, within the framework of the current social and political crisis, the government is attempting to give the various bodies which make up the state apparatus repressive and ideological functions more and more openly tailored to its own policies. This is what lies at the root of the various 'malaises'—of the police, the administration, the judiciary, the mass media, etc.—which generate scandals and undermine the authority of the régime.

The erosion of the latter is the product of a combination of factors, all of which impair the authority and legality of the bourgeois state: new forms of working-class struggle, agitation on the part of the petty bourgeoisie, the revolt of young people, the crisis of established institutions, the exposure of scandals.

In a word, the Pompidou-Chaban team did not manage to bring any lasting stability to the régime. A new pre-electoral attempt to achieve this has been made with the formation of the Messmer administration. But behind the change of facade, the policies and methods remain the same; failure is just as predictable.

This is why, in the absence of any immediately credible revolutionary perspective, a number of long-term alternative solutions are being prepared—both by the bourgeoisie and by the traditional workers' movement.

7 Neither the groups allied to the UDR (Giscard, etc.) nor the 'reformers' (Lecanuet and Servan Schreiber) have any strategic objective, either on the economic or on the European plane, which differs from that of the present administration.¹

However, they have serious doubts about the ability of the UDR to achieve its strategic objective. The UDR is merely a bureaucratic apparatus, not properly under the control of big capital, formed in the late Bonaparte's

backwash.

A 'Society of December 10',² a motley crew of upstarts and incompetents, political fanatics and bovine henchmen, this party is incapable of transforming itself without a disastrous internal crisis, nor can it sink firm roots into the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois layers which constitute the social base of the régime.

The presidential régime outlined for the near future must, if it is actually to see the light of day and to establish itself solidly, have a large conservative party upon which to base itself. The objective of those warring brothers the Giscard-centrists and the 'reformers' is to achieve this without provoking too brutal a split within the UDR — which would open a breach in the shaky edifice which has existed since de Gaulle and allow the workers' movement to burst through.

They have chosen not to smash the UDR but to whittle it down gradually, and thus to shift the centre of gravity of the present majority first by a strengthening of the Giscardian wing and then by the entry of the 'opposition' centrists — an operation which Servan Schreiber and Lecanuet are jointly preparing.

The course they have chosen is fraught with difficulties, since any discrediting of the UDR weakens the régime itself which gave the latter its better days, and could operate to the advantage of the Union of the Left, which claims to be a global alternative to the existing order.

Thus a growing polarization is taking shape in bourgeois political life between a reconstituted majority and a Union of the Left dominated by the PCF. The way is being prepared for a decisive confrontation in 1976. In this way the post-bonapartist transitional phase will come to an end.

If the Pompidou régime has succeeded until now in negotiating the rapids without too many buffets, this does not necessarily mean that it will come through safely to its destination. Even if the restructuring of the bourgeois parties may be accomplished smoothly, that does not mean that the game is over. The self-defensive reactions of the wild men of the UDR, seeing themselves forced into a regroupment not of their choosing, cannot be predicted. Moreover, the Union of the Left is itself pregnant with inescapable contradictions and with a dynamic which could burst free of the bureaucratic apparatuses that conceived it.

8 The agreement concluded between the PCF and the PS³ is the response of two reformist parties to the demand for political change which has been evident in the working class since May 1968, in the context of a strong state which has considerably reduced the margins of parliamentary manoeuvre. The common programme is in no sense an anti-capitalist transitional programme lacking only the will and the means to succeed. It places itself explicitly within the framework of the bourgeois state, even of the Fifth Republic, which it seeks to reform from the inside, without calling for the autonomous organization or mobilization of the working class. In a period of intense class struggle, when the bourgeoisie found itself driven into a corner, this programme might well be the last card that a section of the bourgeoisie would play, to try and prevent the success of the revolutionary process. But in the present situation, the PC/PS agreements cannot be characterized as a conscious machination of the bourgeoisie or of a significant section of it. Difficult though the situation may be, it does not justify the risk they would be taking in accepting a governmental solution which involved

the participation of the PCF. Certain sections of the bourgeoisie are only prepared to consider a bonapartist solution in the person of Mitterand if and when he shows that he can utilize for his own ends the strength of a PCF reduced to the role of a hostage, as in 1965. The PC/PS agreement has changed the balance of forces in the short term and temporarily deprived Mitterand of the support of the distrustful rightwingers, which he banks on regaining in time for the presidential elections of 1976.

9 The PC/PS agreement represents the meeting-point of two reformist programmes put forward by parties whose aims are in fact quite distinct.

The leadership of the PCF was forced to come up with a concrete political solution in the face of the demands of a militant workers' movement. The general strike of 1968, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the growth of the revolutionary organizations — these factors made such an initiative necessary.

At the same time, the limitations which a strong state placed on the parliamentary game and the loss of any audience in the working class forced the leaders of the old SFIO to realize that the bourgeoisie would never again be prepared to entrust them with power. Without a credible governmental perspective, the PS found itself adrift. Deferre's electoral debacle in 1969 left it only two possibilities for survival.

The first was an alliance with the centre, which would make it possible to present an alternative to the UDR. But the existing political polarization made this operation too hazardous. From the Poher candidature to Servan Schreiber's 'crusade', the centre appeared too fragile a pole for a bourgeoisie already anxious over the disintegration of the UDR.

The second possibility was an alliance with the PCF, with the hope of regaining a broader social base, among certain layers of highly-skilled workers and among middle strata. One element of this plan was the abandonment of FO in favour of the CFDT.⁴ In order to accomplish this refloating operation, the SFIO accepted Mitterand's strategy almost unanimously, and its right-wing majority left the working out both of the party programme and of the Joint Programme to the left.

The signing of the Joint Programme thus allows the PS to refurbish its image, to strengthen its position vis-à-vis the PCF, and to prepare for the presidential elections of 1976 — in which Mitterand would benefit in the working class from the credit bestowed upon him in the campaigns of 1965 and 1973. He would then be able to make use of the Gaullist constitution of 1958 — which confers on the president the position of an arbiter and guarantees him a relative independence from his allies — and in this way collect the centre votes in the second round.

If the PC/PS agreement is not an acceptable solution for the bourgeoisie in the short term, because of the social dynamic which threatens to engulf it, from the point of view of the PS leadership it prepares the way, at the price of some real risks, for Mitterand's bonapartist operation — which could turn out to be a viable solution in 1976.

10 The contradictions of this kind of game are multiple. A failure for the PS in 1973 would strengthen the right wing of the party, which could then launch a fight for a break with the PCF and an alliance instead with the centre. The PS would then be in danger of a new split. A heterogeneous party — both in terms of the currents it contains and in terms of the conflicting perspectives which

coexist within it — the PS today can be defined neither as a bourgeois party, nor as a working-class party which is bourgeois because of its weak implantation in the working class. The important thing for us is the function which the PS — incapable as it is of reconstituting itself simply on the reduced parliamentary terrain of the strong state — is fulfilling within the workers' movement through its alliance with the PCF.

Through its policies, the PCF is seeking to enhance the credibility of the PS in the eyes of the working class as a force that is indispensable to any social transformation, quite independently of its actual implantation. Already in 1965, the workers voted in their millions for Mitterand. Thus when one considers the contradictory and transitory character of the PS, the PC/PS agreement is not one of a Popular Front type which ties the PC to the coat-tails of a bourgeois party. For the first time, it is actually being obliged to open up some sort of socialist perspective.

11 In fact, in the present context, if an electoral victory for the Left remains unlikely, relative success could be enough to bring closer the beginning of a political crisis, by encouraging the mobilization of the workers and aggravating the divisions within the bourgeoisie. From this point of view, the anti-communist campaign which the bourgeoisie is mounting is not so much evidence of their fear of the PCF's aims as of their real fear of the social dynamic which could be concealed behind that of the PC/PS agreement.

The political solution put forward by the PC/PS agreement necessitates mobilizations controlled and channelled by the bureaucracy — which must at the same time block all struggles which threaten to break through the agreed limits. This contradiction is even more real today, when the working-class bureaucracy has not only spontaneous upsurges to fear, but also the conscious and active role in struggles of the revolutionary left, organized or otherwise, and of ourselves in particular.

Given this contradiction, we may expect to see the Stalinist bureaucracy punctuating the pre-electoral period with a series of national mobilizations and days of action, which will have the combined function of preparing for the elections and of channelling and dissipating the energy which could build up in the working class, by making use, in particular, of the CGT, which it controls, as a kind of electoral agent among the masses. The bureaucracy will endeavour to use these central mobilizations of opinion, altogether different from true class mobilizations.

Nevertheless, insofar as these mobilizations also express the aspirations of thousands of workers highly conditioned to belief in electoralism and the parliamentary system, their combination with an outbreak of sharp struggles, even if these are purely local, will provide very favourable conditions for the intervention and implantation of revolutionaries in the working class. And this is the case even if the battle to explain and denounce electoral illusions has been made more difficult because the signing of the PC/PS agreement gives a certain credibility to the perspective offered by the PCF.

The CFDT will not spare its criticism of the joint programme because it will want to preserve both its autonomy vis-à-vis the CGT and its own political role. It will also try to win a certain prestige on the basis of verbal criticisms of the Union of the Left. But, incapable organizationally and politically of putting forward any alternative solution, it will on the one hand be reduced to tactical battles aimed at increasing its strength in struggles and on the other will, in the final analysis, throw in its lot

with the Union of the Left.

In the months to come, the election campaign will open up a period of political debate which will not be exclusively dominated by the PC/PS agreement. The two allies will have to try to capture the maximum number of votes in the first round, the PC insisting on the role of the working class and the PS claiming for itself, in a series of inexpensive political skirmishes, the role of guarantor of democracy in the alliance (hence Mitterand's interventions on Czechoslovakia and Jews in the Soviet Union).

12 Congress approves the decision of the Central Committee to put up candidates in the election. In the face of the reformist illusions of the Joint Programme, it is of vital importance to present in opposition a revolutionary Marxist perspective.

13 In the second round, our recommendation to vote must make clear our analysis of the PC/PS agreement as a global reformist alternative and not a new Popular Front. In the second round, we will call nationally for a vote for the Union of the Left, except where there is a local proposal to the contrary ratified by a decision of the Central Committee. This does not mean that we will depict an eventual PC/PS government as a workers' government; we will simply explain to the masses who still believe in the electoral system that the reformist traitors will not be able to blame their failure of tomorrow on our defection.

It is unlikely that the effects of the Union of the Left on the working-class movement will emerge clearly between now and the elections. And even if certain indications were to appear, these alone would not be a sufficient basis for a definition of policy on our part. In fact, the influence of the Union of the Left on struggles could be much greater after a relative success (and *a fortiori* after an electoral victory) than in the pre-electoral campaign. We must remember that the erosion of the Gaullist majority in the 1967 elections was not entirely unimportant in preparing the events of 1968. This is what we must evaluate. Our attitude to the second round would only be posed in new terms if the electoral campaign were to lead to a spectacular sabotage of struggles on the part of the PS and the PC. But in this event, as in June 1968, the clearest response to an electoral operation which was in direct opposition to the struggle would be a principled abstention and not a vote for the PC. This is the framework of our approach in the second round.

Of course, our tactics in the elections, as opposed to questions of principle, can only be decided in the light of the indications which emerge from the first round as to the attitude of the masses towards the electoral contest.

14 In this situation, one should not get involved in a discussion of the Joint Programme, reform by reform, to determine whether this or that one is anti-capitalist or not. We must start from a total characterization of the Programme and its underlying purpose, discuss particular reforms above all from the point of view of the problem of power, for which they present no solution, and denounce the fallacious character of the 'socialist' perspective it puts forward.

15 This polemic will give new life to our propaganda for a workers' government as defined in our Manifesto. However, we must be aware that — given the illusions which may be fostered by the PC/PS agreement — this propaganda, which is not made concrete in an alterna-

tive governmental formula, will remain somewhat abstract. The best way of relating it to practice is to intensify our agitation, on the basis of precise examples, on the themes of strike committees, support committees and workers' self-defence, as well as our propaganda for a genuine proletarian government, which can never be parliamentary, i.e. which can never exist without pyramidal structures of power which both support and control it.

16 Under present conditions, the 1973 elections will certainly accentuate the political crisis, by amplifying the disequilibrium of the bourgeoisie. A strong thrust from the Union of the Left, erasing the absolute majority of the UDR, will weaken the 'strong state' and push the UDR into unity with the other bourgeois forces, with the aim of increased repression against the working-class movement.

In the case of a Union of the Left victory, we can expect a development of workers' struggles and a crisis of the political institutions built up under Gaullism. In such a situation, with the danger of fierce counter-attack from the bourgeoisie, the *Ligue Communiste* will make every effort to break out of the framework imposed by the Union of the Left and will impel the struggle forward as far as possible, on the basis of two central themes: the self-organization of the class in a perspective of dual power (occupations, strike committees, workers' control); and the arming of the proletariat, to protect its initial gains against reaction and to make new gains. In this perspective, slogans calling for the establishment of working-class militia for self-defence will be put forward.

Discussion

Value, Surplus Value, Profit, Prices of Production and Surplus Capital— a reply to Geoff Hodgson

Comrade Hodgson's article on the 'Permanent Arms Economy', which appeared in *International* No. 8, is interesting and thought-provoking. Most of the polemics against the particular shibboleths of the I.S. in economic theory one can easily approve of. But these polemics are seriously weakened because, as a result of a mistaken conception about the nature of prices of production, they do not go to the heart of the matter.

Following the tradition established by the debate on the so-called problem of 'transformation of values into prices of production'— a tradition which starts from the German author von Bortkiewicz and has subsequently been taken up by Paul Sweezy and the Cambridge economist Piero Sraffa—comrade Hodgson questions Marx's 'solution' of this 'problem' based upon the theorem that the sum total of values must equal the sum total of prices of production.

Underlying this whole debate is a misunderstanding about the very nature of prices of production. In Marx's theory, 'prices of production' are not 'prices' in the current sense of the word at all, i.e. they have nothing to do with money or monetary units. It is therefore a red herring to bring in inflation and changes of monetary units to question the 'realism' of the theorem that the sum of prices of production must equal the sum of values. By definition, abstraction is made of monetary fluctuations in the analysis of prices of production. To deal in that context with

Footnotes

¹ UDR (Union for the Defence of the Republic) is the Gaullist party which has been in government since de Gaulle returned to power in 1958. Giscard d'Estaing's 'Independent Republicans' are coalition partners of the UDR. Lecanuet, who led the rump of the old catholic centre party, and Servan Schreiber, who took over the remnants of the radicals, joined forces to form the 'reforming' centre party.

² The 'Society of December 10' is discussed at length in the second half of Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*. Marx describes it as follows: 'This society dates from the year 1849. On the pretext of founding a benevolent society, the lumpenproletariat of Paris had been organized into secret sections, each section being led by Bonapartist agents, with a Bonapartist general at the head of the whole. Alongside decayed *roués* with dubious means of subsistence and of dubious origin, alongside ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeoisie, were vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, mountebanks, *lazzaroni*, pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, *maquereaux*, brothel keepers, porters, *liverati*, organ-grinders, rag-pickers, knife-grinders, tinkers, beggars—in short, the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass, thrown hither and thither, which the French term *la bohème*; from this kindred element Bonaparte formed the core of the Society of December 10.'

³ PCF— French Communist Party. PS— Socialist Party (led by Mitterand), incorporating the old SFIO (French Section of the Second International).

⁴ FO (*Force Ouvrière*) is a trade-union federation formed by a split from the PCF-dominated CGT in 1948. It had organic links with the SFIO. The CFDT (French Democratic Confederation of Labour) used to be a catholic trade-union federation, but broke its confessional links and in recent years has assumed a radical/social-democratic role, often outflanking the CGT on the left.

monetary units is to start a useless quarrel with Marx.

Marx introduces the concept of 'prices of production' in Volume III of *Capital* exclusively with one purpose: to show how the sum total of surplus-value produced by productive wage-labour is divided among the capitalists, not in function of the division of wage-labour among individual firms, but in function of the fractions of *total* capital which each of them employs. What Marx tries to solve is not the problem of price fluctuations on the market, but the problem of the *transformation of surplus-value into profit*. 'Prices of production' arise out of the process of equalization of the rate of profit between different capitalist firms: the whole way *Capital* Volume III is constructed makes this crystal clear.

Under these conditions, to question the equality between the sum total of values produced and the sum total of prices of production of commodities is not just to question a mathematical method of computation or an 'arithmetic error' allegedly committed by Karl Marx. It is to question the whole theory of surplus-value, and thereby the Marxist version of the labour theory of value itself, i.e. the very cornerstone of Marx's economic theory.

For once it is understood that 'prices of production' differ from 'values' only as a result of the division of total profits among different industrial firms, it immediately follows that the sum total of prices of production could only differ from the sum total of values, if and when the sum total of profits could differ from the sum total of surplus-value. This then leads to the question: where could this difference come from?

Comrade Hodgson correctly insists on the key rôle which the *production* of surplus-value, during the process of production, plays in Marx's theory. When this process is over, the mass of surplus-value available is a given

quantity. It depends on the division of the total labour time spent by the productive wage labourers between the time necessary for the reproduction of their own labour power (the production of their 'wage goods') and surplus labour, spent on the production of surplus-value. This division is finished for a given period of time, once the process of production is finished and the workers have received and spent their wages. This means that the total mass of surplus-value is pre-determined by what happened in the process of production and wage payment. This mass cannot be changed, neither reduced nor increased, through anything which happens on the market, during the process of competition or circulation of commodities and capitals. The circulation and competition process can only modify the division of the mass of surplus-value, not the quantity of this mass itself. If the sum total of profits were to be lower or higher than the sum total of surplus-value, this basic tenet of the Marxist theory of surplus-value would be destroyed. Profit, i.e. surplus-value, could then somehow 'originate' outside of the process of production, outside of surplus labour produced by wage-labour.

What von Bortkiewicz, Sweezy, Sraffa, and now unfortunately also comrade Hodgson, have been doing, is in fact backsliding from Marx's perfected labour theory of value into Ricardo's imperfect one. Two basic issues are involved in this backsliding, eliminating two other major theoretical conquests of Marx.

In the first place, Marx, as against Ricardo, defined the qualitative substance of the value-producing process. He reduced value to quantities of *abstract human labour*. This implies that any human labour spent on commodity production is value-producing, provided it fulfils a social need in the bourgeois sense of the word, i.e. it finds an equivalent of purchasing power on the market. *All* commodity-producing wage-labour under capitalism is therefore value-producing labour, *abstraction made* of the specific use-value of that commodity, and regardless of whether it enters or not the process of reproduction. Thus capitalist luxury goods output and armaments output is a value and surplus-value output, although these goods do not enter the process of social reproduction. Therefore surplus-value produced in process of production of these commodities is part and parcel of the total surplus-value and profit-producing process in society. One could not very well understand why private capital would otherwise be engaged in the production of these commodities at all: surely not for 'patriotic' reasons.

Secondly, as against Ricardo, Marx understood the *double* function of labour power in the process of production: not only to produce new value but also to conserve the value of the capital with which production occurs. He therefore understood that the rate of profit was not only dependent on the rate of exploitation of the working class (the rate of surplus value) but also on the organic composition of capital.

Ricardo does not make the distinction between the rate of profit and the rate of surplus-value, and therefore, logically, has a 'rate of profit' (in reality a rate of surplus-value in Marxist terms) only dependent on the prices of wage goods (stable wages assumed). His conclusion, to wit that neither the output of luxury goods nor foreign trade nor the relative prices of raw materials influence the 'rate of profit', stems from that basic confusion. It is obvious that the output and costs of luxury goods indeed do not influence in the least the rate of surplus-value (always provided one assumes a stable wage for the workers). But inasmuch as the organic composition of capital in these sectors can be different from that in the means of production and 'wage goods' sectors, it can

seriously modify the average rate of profit, by modifying the average organic composition of capital.

All this was already developed by Marx in his polemics against Ricardo. It cannot be brushed aside for 'mathematical' reasons, without questioning the very essence of Marx's economic theory.

The idea that value and surplus-value production in the armaments sector is 'neutral' to the average social rate of profit leads to absurd conclusions. Does it mean that no profit is made in that sector at all? Does it mean that all profit made in that sector originates only and exclusively from surplus-value produced in that sector, i.e. that somehow the armaments sector is 'insulated' from the process of equalization of the social rate of profit? How is this miracle achieved? Is private capital 'forbidden' to enter or to leave that sector? If, on the other hand, the arms sector participates in the equalization process of the rate of profit — as it obviously does — how can it then not influence the average rate of profit, in function of its own sectoral organic composition of capital, reducing the average rate of profit if its organic composition of capital is above the social average in the other sectors, increasing it if its organic composition of capital is below the social average?

Here lies the real basic inconsistency of the I.S. theory on the rôle of the permanent arms economy. For it is impossible to argue that the organic composition of capital in the arms sector is below the social average, and it is therefore likewise impossible to argue that the arms sector has in the long run increased the average rate of profit or slowed down its decline, thereby stimulating capitalist growth. The real rôle of the arms sector does not lie there at all. It lies in its function to provide *an additional field of investment for surplus capital*. But this then leads to the examination of the whole phenomenon of surplus capital in the age of imperialism, i.e. an entirely different interpretation of the reasons and manifestations of the structural crisis of world capitalism since World War I (and indeed of the origins of imperialism itself) from the one which is current in I.S.'s interpretation of Marxist economic theory and 20th century economic history.

For a similar reason, the use by comrade Hodgson of Shane Mage's statistics on the assumed long-term decline of the rate of surplus-value in the U.S. economy leads to perplexing results. The average organic composition of U.S. capital is supposed to be clearly stable since World War II. The average rate of surplus-value is supposed to decline steeply. It follows that the rate of profit declines uninterruptedly since 1945. How then can one explain the miracle that the capitalist U.S. economy has been *growing* much faster in the period 1945-68, with a strongly *declining* rate of profit, than it grew in the period 1919-40, with a stable or even an allegedly increasing rate of profit? This would make nonsense of Marx's assumption that the rate of profit fluctuations are the basic guide for economic fluctuations under capitalism.

The mystery is easily solved as soon as one submits Shane Mage's calculations to a critical examination. One then discovers that Mage subtracts taxes paid by capitalist firms from the mass of surplus-value — which is of course inadmissible — and adds wages received by service workers (including commercial employees) to variable capital, which is likewise in contrast to Marx's theory. If his figures are corrected on both these counts, the 'declining rate of surplus-value' vanishes and is transformed into its opposite: a constant effort of capital to increase the rate of exploitation of the working class, which is only checked periodically by strong and victorious working-class struggles.

Ernest Mandel.

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