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Ernest Mandel on Imperialism in Latin America

UNITED SECRETARIAT
THESES

The British crisis
and the way out for
the working class



PORTUGAL
AFTERMATH
OF NOVEMBER

WOHLFORTH
ON TROTSKY'S
WRITINGS

DEBATE ON NATIONALISM

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APOLOGY	We apologise for any confusion caused by the misnumbering of the last issue of International. It was numbered correctly as Volume 2 Number 4 on the contents page, but was marked Number 3 in error on the cover. To clarify matters: Volume 2 Number 3 is the issue with the green logo; Volume 2 Number 4 is the issue with the brown logo.
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PORTUGAL: THE AFTERMATH OF NOVEMBER

The Portuguese revolution passed through another important turning point on 25 November with the so-called 'attempted coup' by various leftist military units. 25 November has allowed the Portuguese ruling class, via the Azevedo Government (and the Amadores commandos, under the leadership of the notorious right-winger Colonel Jaime Neves) to seize the initiative. Today *República* is closed. Radio Renascença is back in the hands of the Catholic Church, and the soldiers of the 'red regiment' RALIS (the Lisbon light artillery) are either on permanent leave or in prison with at least 100 other leftist political prisoners.

But the defeat suffered by the working class and its allies as a result of the events of 25 November does not bring to an end the Portuguese revolution. It has allowed the ruling class a greater room for manoeuvre. The gains of the revolution face a grave threat. The workers vanguard is under attack. Within the army the left has suffered a severe setback. However, overall, the working class has not been decisively defeated. There has been no qualitative break in the developing revolutionary situation. The workers commissions still exist. The workers and peasants are still militant. With the catastrophic crisis faced by the Portuguese economy, major class confrontations are on the agenda. It is through such a process that the 'organs of popular power', notably the workers commissions, can be further developed and centralised. In that way they will be able to challenge the bourgeois state and open up a situation of dual power.

Today the bourgeoisie has the stable, repressive strike force it lacked over the summer months. After November, the question of workers self-defence is posed with greater clarity. Likewise the Socialist Party leaders continue to play a major role in the offensive of the ruling class against the gains of the revolution. More than ever, as tensions increase within the SP, the united front tactic must be understood and applied by revolutionaries if they are to break the working class from their reformist leadership.

The events prior to and since November have confirmed the correctness of the line of the Fourth International. It was only the Fourth International that, correctly, understood the 'democratic' counter-revolutionary role of the SP leaders. It was only the Fourth International, following in the great traditions of Lenin and Trotsky, that recognised and fought for the united front of the whole working class, and through that the emergence of organs of dual power. The Portuguese events are the living proof of the correctness of Trotskyist politics. The lessons and future

of the Portuguese revolution are of importance to revolutionaries throughout Europe.

THE LONG HOT SUMMER

In order to understand what happened on 25-26 November, it is necessary to trace the course of events during the previous summer months. It was then that the seeds were sown which later bore such bitter fruits. No history is inevitable. But during the previous weeks the failure of the left to understand the significance of the development of the organs of popular power (the workers commissions, the neighbourhood commissions, the village councils, the soldiers commissions, and the popular assemblies) and the need to extend, co-ordinate and centralise their activities, or to apply correctly what for the Third International had been ABC — the united front tactic — began to flash warning signals for all to see.

The defeat of the right-wing coup of 11 March at the hands of the mass mobilisation of the soldiers and workers had shifted the balance of class forces firmly in favour of the working class. Under mass pressure the Government had been forced to nationalise the banks and, as a result of the close association between the banks and industry, another 201 firms as well. In April the first elections to the Constituent Assembly gave the working class parties over 60 per cent of the vote, clearly reflecting the political sentiments of the workers and peasants.

During this period — despite the important boost received by the Communist Party in countering the March putsch, and the 'victory' of the Socialist Party in the April elections — the relationship of forces between the reformists and revolutionaries had been modified in favour of the latter. The elections also indicated — in a distorted form the growth of the revolutionary vanguard; and with the broader mobilisations of the masses the audience for the political ideas of the far left widened considerably. However, these mobilisations also began to open up cracks within the reformist organisations, between the base and the leadership.

To take account of this situation, and to respond to the desire exhibited in the working class for the broadest possible unity in the struggle against capitalism, required the most flexible and audacious use of the united front tactic. As the resolution of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International on 6 June said of the united front: 'it is

decisive for the revolutionary vanguard both in responding immediately to any reactionary offensive, to any challenging of the democratic rights of the workers movement, and in expanding the influence of the revolutionaries and cutting down on the duration of the reformists' grip on the working class.'

One of the characteristics of this period was the failure of the revolutionary left and the centrist organisations, such as the Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat (PRP) and the Left Socialist Movement (MES), to adopt a united front perspective towards the Communist Party and Socialist Party. At the same time both the SP and CP maintained the divisions within the working class by their sectarian politics. For most of the groups in the Revolutionary United Front (FUR), the united front was of no consequence. As the MES stated in the 5-11 November issue of their paper, *Poder Popular*: 'thus, the social democratic forces serve the advance of the fascist forces; consequently we cannot separate our slogan 'Death to the FLP and those who support it' from the slogan 'Down with social democracy'. Thus no concrete initiatives were made towards the workers influenced by the Socialist Party.'

The attitude of the Communist Party was equally indefensible. Even after the SP had won 38 per cent of the votes in the 25 April elections, the CP leaders of Intersindical refused to allow it a speaker on the May Day platform. On 18 July the CP called its militants to the barricades around Lisbon to block a so-called 'march on Lisbon' led by the SP. Tactics such as these could only consolidate the influence of the SP leadership over the more backward sections of the working class, and consequently did nothing either to unify the working class or establish the basic norms of workers democracy within the workers movement. For the CP the all-important goal became the MFA-people alliance, for which such sectarian tactics were a logical part.

The aim of the CP has been to establish a base for itself within the bourgeois state apparatus in alliance with the MFA. To convince the MFA of its usefulness, the CP had to show it really did represent and control the 'people'. The MFA-people alliance was to become the MFA-CP alliance. To maintain its credibility and hegemony within the working class, the CP was prepared to go to any sectarian lengths.

FROM UNITED FRONT TO SOVIETS

As Trotsky said, the soviet is the highest form of united front. With the bulk of the Portuguese left unable to understand the question of the united front tactic correctly, it is not surprising that the question of the construction of the Portuguese equivalent of soviets also posed them with serious political difficulties.

In the transitional programme, Trotsky defined the soviet as follows: 'Soviets are not limited to any *a priori* party programme. They throw open their doors to all the exploited. Through these doors pass representatives of all strata, drawn into the general current of the struggle. The organisation, broadening out together with the movement, is renewed again and again in its womb. All political currents of the proletariat can struggle for leadership of the soviets on the basis of the widest democracy.'

In the period March-November 1975 bodies such as these began to emerge in Portugal, albeit in a very limited way. In the popular assemblies the local workers, neighbourhood, and soldiers commissions began to coordinate their activities. One of the major problems the revolution then faced – as it still does – was the lack of centralisation on a local, regional or national level of the various commissions. One of the few examples of the embryos of such a development was that of the Pontinha popular assembly. This popular assembly grouped together delegates from the 'assembly of unit delegates' (ADU) of the local regiment fourteen workers commissions, and twenty-five neighbourhood commissions in regular general assemblies.

All the forces of the left, as well as the MFA, understood

the importance of the various commissions – that is, they realised that they could not afford to ignore them. However the Trotskyists of the LCI and PRT campaigned for their coordination and centralisation in local and national popular assemblies. The reformists and the MFA obviously did not accept the assemblies as the basis of socialism, of a workers state, while the centrists merely posed such organisations in a sectarian manner, as appendages of their own brand of ultra-left and opportunist politics.

The Socialist Party, meanwhile, issued a document on 28 July stating that: 'The neighbourhood commissions and workers commissions are forms of popular power that must be developed so long as they do not claim to become a 'parallel power' to the state apparatus.' Thus the SP agreed to tolerate the self-organisation of the working class provided they played according to the laws of the bourgeois game, thus nullifying the main purpose of such bodies – which is to challenge this bourgeois state apparatus. Other sections of the MFA, via the 20 June 'guide document' and the 13 August Copcon document, attempted to integrate the organs of popular power into the functioning of the bourgeois state apparatus.

For the CP, the commissions were fine so long as they helped the CP to maintain its influence with the MFA, acting as a springboard from which the Stalinists could launch their initiatives to exert a little pressure at the governmental level. A resolution from the CP central committee of 16 December said that in recent months the workers commissions had taken on a new dimension, the 'coordinating and conducting of mass demonstrations'. The CP also considered that the popular assemblies could 'acquire an extraordinary importance' by becoming 'complementary organs of local administration, as well as of the municipal councils'. However, the central committee felt it necessary to sound a note of warning, the danger of 'idealistic illusions that lead some sections to see these forms of popular organisations as the future and next organs of state power'.

Perhaps somebody should have warned Lenin and Trotsky. But then somebody did – Karl Kautsky. Lenin attacked him mercilessly: 'Imitating the wisdom of the Mensheviks, who have happily sided with the bourgeoisie against the proletariat, Kautsky 'deduces' that the soviets are all right as 'battle organisations', but not as 'state organisations'. Marvellous! Form up in soviets, you proletarians and poor peasants! But for God's sake, don't you dare win! Don't even think of winning! The moment you win and vanquish the bourgeoisie, that will be the end of you; for you must not be the state organisations in a proletarian state'. (*The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*).

The other common misconception, supported at different times by such diverse forces as Vasco Goncalves, Copcon and the PRP, was the idea of 'organs of popular power without political parties'. While such a position was partially a response to mass pressure against the continual in-fighting between the various political organisations, it negated a fundamental point of proletarian democracy – that the assemblies political currents must have a right to form political tendencies (one has only to look at the functioning of the soviets in 1917 to see that).

Finally the other mistake made by the sectarians was to counterpose their own, politically pure bodies to any other. The classic case was that of the PRP, who set up their own 'revolutionary councils'. Point 10 of their platform of objectives stated: 'Whereas the revolutionary councils are neither opposed to nor a substitute for the workers commissions, which have an economic role, the revolutionary councils are a more directly political form for the seizure of power.' Not only did this relegate the workers commissions to purely economic issues, making the classic social democratic confusion between economics and politics, but it failed to understand how such soviet type organisations would be built in reality, rather than in the heads of certain political groups. It is precisely from the immediate economic issues that such organs can be built, and with the severe

economic crisis faced then and now by Portugal, the only result of such a false counterposition can be the isolation of sections of the vanguard from the masses.

We do not fetishise any one organisational form. Soviet type bodies have emerged in very different forms in the past. The crucial question is the political role they play in the class struggle, in the sense that through them the struggle of the working class can be centralised and coordinated against the bourgeois state. In examining the Portuguese situation, the depth of the economic crisis is clearly the issue over which the balance of class forces must be resolved. In that sense the workers commissions are likely to be the bodies which will increasingly take on the function of organs of dual power – through, for example, the development of generalised workers control and the emergence of a workers plan to solve the crisis in favour of the workers and peasants.

The conception of the PRP Councils, spelt out in point three of their objectives, is totally different, however: 'The revolutionary workers council could begin to be the embryo of the true revolutionary party.' But the party does not equal the soviet. The party strives for the leadership of the soviets, and through that the leadership of the working class and its allies. The confusion of the PRP is reflected in the fact that they have eliminated in a single sentence the need for the masses to be organised in bodies of a soviet type.

Embryos of real organs of dual power were emerging last summer in Portugal, however. At the same time, events within the armed forces were moving at a faster and more favourable rate. In fact, not since 1917 has the revolutionary movement had a more favourable opportunity in terms of the paralysis that existed within the repressive apparatus of the state. However, the overall situation remained one of continual tensions, governmental changes and provocations – with the working class unable to advance its own self-organisation sufficiently to mount an effective challenge to the bourgeois state, and the ruling class lacking the means to inflict a decisive defeat on the workers and peasants. Such a situation, it was clear, could not last.

SOLDIERS UNITED WILL WIN

During July, reaction began to lift its ugly head yet again. In the north the local offices of the Intersindical, the CP, and the revolutionary left were attacked. Rumours were rife about the activity of the ELP (Portuguese Liberation Army – a fascist military organisation). It was in the midst of all this that a new headache for the ruling class began to emerge. For the first time since April 1974 soldiers and sailors were on the streets, fists clenched, with the workers and peasants. A demonstration called by the workers and neighbourhood commissions of Lisbon on 16 July found in its ranks the tanks and armoured carriers, adorned with red flags, of RALIS – and they were joined by soldiers from the Military Police, the RIOQ, and other Lisbon regiments.

The presence of the soldiers reflected the growing penetration of the workers movement into the barracks. The soldiers, tired of not being allowed to take part in the political discussions in which their officers continually engaged, began to organise. On the evening of Saturday 19 July the tank regiment of Oporto held a plenary assembly of soldiers and demanded the removal of the commander. Similar events took place at the RALIS and EPAM barracks. These meetings bore witness to the growing radicalisation and politicalisation of the soldiers, and revealed a deep split between the officers and the soldiers. Furthermore, it also began to polarise the officers themselves.

During July and August the right-wing parties, the CDS and the PPD, openly paraded on the streets of Oporto. The working class organisations were continually harassed and intimidated by rightists. Initially they even had some success within the military, especially as Portuguese army units are recruited on a regional basis. For example, local soldiers in Braga took part in an attack on the CP offices.

Similarly the commander of the northern region, Brigadier Corvacho, who had generally supported the working class, found himself under attack from the rest of the officers. In this atmosphere the left inside the barracks began to coordinate its activities.

Despite the general gains of the Portuguese revolution, the life of the soldiers changed little. Their pay was still less than £5 a month, all of which could easily go on one visit home; military discipline was still imposed; the officers still ate and lived in far better quarters than the soldiers. Following the example of the working class, the soldiers too began to struggle to improve their conditions. But in so doing they immediately ran into the officers – many of whom were members of the MFA – who saw the soldiers' role merely as one of accepting military discipline. Through their own struggles the soldiers were forced to organise independently of the MFA. The myth of the MFA was being broken. 'Soldiers United Will Win (SUV)' first emerged in the open, in Oporto, on 10 September, when 1,500 soldiers marched at the head of 30,000 workers. From then on the slogan of the 'MFA-people alliance' was replaced by 'workers and peasants, soldiers and sailors, united we will win'.

The success of the SUV within the army lay in the fact that not only did it take up the immediate demands of the soldiers and link them into the struggle against reaction, but it combined this with the broadest workers democracy – the sovereignty of general assemblies, the election subject to recall of soldiers commissions, and the free circulation of the workers' and peoples' press. The SUV manifesto stated its function in the following terms: 'To stimulate and deepen the liason with organs of popular power strengthening the power of the exploited through the popular assemblies.'

It was for this reason that the SUV, despite being initiated by the far left (indeed the CP at first tried to counterpose to it its front organisation the ARPF – the Revolutionary Association of Infantry Soldiers), could build a mass base within the barracks: in fact, by posing itself the task of building a mass united front, the SUV won the support of

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SP/worker militants on its demonstrations. Yet again the presence of these militants showed the tensions that existed in the party – hardly surprising, considering the reactionary campaign that the SP leadership was mounting at the time.

THE 'DEMOCRATIC' COUNTER-REVOLUTION

The upsurge of the working class after 11 March, allied to the crisis within the state apparatus, resulted in a situation where the bourgeoisie was unable to deal a decisive blow to the workers movement. The only alternative for the ruling class lay with the reformist misleaders of the Socialist Party. Quite obviously the role of the Soares leadership was counter-revolutionary. However, the counter-revolution can take various forms, and revolutionary marxists must understand the way that this can affect their strategy and tactics.

The important point about the SP in Portugal was that it launched what we can call a 'democratic' counter-revolution. It was, and still is, 'democratic' in the sense that the distinguishing factor of social democracy is still its allegiance to the bourgeois democratic state. Social democrats realise that fascism will mean their destruction – just as they also understand that the impending socialist revolution will equally bring about their end. They thus have a vested interest in the maintenance of bourgeois democracy and of the inviolability of parliamentary institutions. But the role of the SP can also be characterised as counter-revolutionary because their aim has been to stifle the emergence of workers democracy, of the self-organisation and self-defence of the working class, and the breakdown of discipline. Instead they have consistently fought for the maintenance of bourgeois democratic 'freedoms' and the supremacy of the Constituent Assembly.

Hence Soares and the SP leadership became the spearhead of the counter-offensive launched by Portuguese and international capital to halt the socialist revolution.

The most notable historical example where social democracy has previously played such a role occurred in Germany during December-January 1918-19. Here the violence of a social democratic government knew no bounds against the Spartakus uprising. But such violence was intended to defend the bourgeois democratic state against its overthrow, and as such preserve the social democrats. To fail to understand the distinction between the differing role of social democracy and fascism, in terms of precisely the level at which they attack the working class, is to make a dangerous confusion. It was such a failure that led the centrists of the MES and PRP to throw social democracy and fascism into the same bag.

The democratic counter-revolutionary role of the social democrats was understood by Trotsky in 1921, in an article he wrote for *Pravda*: 'By employing the social democratic shield, the bourgeoisie was able to take the best possible advantage of the breathing spell. It recovered from its panic, stabilised its state organs, supplemented them with counter-revolutionary armed gangs, and started hand-picking politicians who are specialists in applying combined methods in the struggle against open revolutionary movements and who operate through intimidation, bribery, provocation, segregation, division, etc. The basic task of these specialists is to engage isolated detachments of the proletarian vanguard in a series of battles, bleed them white, and thus undermine the faith of the working class in the possibility of success.'

The campaign launched by the SP for 'law and order' and 'discipline' involved it in making highly demagogic attacks on the CP and the revolutionary left, which acted as an effective cover for the physical attacks of the right against offices and headquarters of the CP and the far left. At a rally on 18 June Soares called the CP 'social-reactionary and murderous', 'wanting to transform Portugal into an immense concentration camp'. Following the resignation of the SP ministers from the Fourth Provisional Govern-

ment on 10 July, their national secretary called for a 'government of national salvation' whose aim 'should be to create a climate of confidence, labour and discipline in the country'. Obviously it was the Portuguese and international capitalists who desperately wanted such a healthy climate.

While not demanding the banning of the workers commissions, the SP insisted that they must take second place to 'the dignity of the Constituent Assembly'. However, any structure in possession of arms 'should be liquidated within one month', and their members 'severely punished'. On the other hand, the SP reaffirmed that 'the civil power needs the strength of the military arm if it is to impose respect for revolutionary authority'. The attitude of the SP over the *Republica* affair was part and parcel of this offensive. It was not as Soares made out, that the SP's freedom of the press was threatened. There were already other papers reflecting the SP's views. Rather it was part of the struggle to re-establish 'law and order' in the factories and the media – to give the idea of occupations, under workers control, a sharp rap across the knuckles.

As the Fourth International stated at the time, we consider that the *Republica* workers made mistakes in allowing the SP to take the initiative over 'freedom of the press'. The only clear way to undercut this manoeuvre by Soares would have been to counterpose, in the clearest manner, the broadest workers democracy. On this basis the *Republica* workers could have replied: 'We are perfectly willing to publish *Republica* under the old social democratic editors, provided: 1. You give us the right to print our own opinions and the opinions of the various political groups to which we belong as well, either in the columns of your newspaper or in another newspaper printed on the presses you own. 2. You give us veto power over any layoffs in the plant (see Mandel, Maitan, Frank 'In Defence of the Portuguese Revolution' in *Intercontinental Press*, vol 13, no 31, p. 1169). Such a position would have allowed the workers not only to defend themselves against the attacks of Soares and the bourgeois state, but to do it within the context of workers democracy. Nevertheless, despite such criticisms, it is vital to place the *Republica* affair within the context of the general offensive of the bourgeoisie, via the SP, that was underway against the working class. We therefore, critically, defend the workers of *Republica*.

This political offensive, led by Soares, allowed the bourgeoisie to regroup. For the first time for some months the ruling class could take the initiatives without immediately facing a united working class response. These demagogic attacks by the SP leadership against the gains of the revolution, such as *Republica*, served in the same way as the CP's sectarianism towards the SP in July to split and divide the working class.

At the same time a political offensive was begun within the MFA by Major Melo Antunes, who headed the 'moderates' in the 'Group of Nine'. They wanted to 'energetically repulse the anarchism and populism that inevitably lead to the catastrophic dissolution of the state ...'. Both the Antunes grouping and the SP had a twofold aim: to strengthen the institutions of the bourgeois state apparatus against the organs of working class self-organisation; and to recompose the army – cracking down on all those breaking discipline – so that it could play the role of guarantor in the transition to a bourgeois democracy.

Political tensions continued to mount. Within society as a whole the right was still growing. Soares had stirred up a hornets' nest, with the Bishop of Braga adding fuel to the fires of the Catholic, northern peasantry. Inside the army the publication of the Antunes document of 8 August and the reply by members of Copcon, only provoked further political debates among the soldiers. More sections of the SP base became disillusioned in the haranguing of Soares – for example, 50 SP members in Evora left the party at this time. In early September the Fifth Government, led by Goncalves with the political backing of the CP, was replaced by the Sixth Government headed

by Azevedo. Perhaps, the bourgeoisie hoped, this new government could restore order.

THE SIXTH GOVERNMENT

The composition of the Azevedo Government, reflecting its intentions, was four SP ministers, two from the PPD, representatives of the Antunes grouping, and a solitary member of the CP – described by the party as the 'furthest outpost of the working class'. Azevedo did not mince his words: 'What is needed is a strong and firm democratic authority, for peace, order, tranquility and respect for liberty'. The cohesion of the MFA and the discipline of the armed forces are the basic factors that will determine the success or failure of the revolution.'

The politics of the Sixth Government were plain to all – even the PCP. However, for them it became a little more difficult, as at all costs they wanted to maintain the foot they had in the door of the bourgeois state. When *Avante*, the CP weekly paper, reckoned that 'the activity of the members of the PCP in the Sixth Government will be especially complex' they were not joking. The central committee decided to allow its members to serve in the Government (there are CP under-secretaries of state, as well as its single minister), but not as 'official members of the Communist Party'. We can only assume that they are there in a personal capacity!

However the CP was feeling the hot breath of its membership and the broad workers vanguard down its neck. So it became necessary also to draw some lines of divide between the CP and the Government. Thus in September the CP helped to organise general strikes of the metal workers and of the Alentejo agricultural workers, while also talking of unity in action with 'the parties and groups of the left orientated towards revolutionary action', (article by Cunhal in *Avante*, 18 September). The Stalinists were balancing on a knife edge. The correct application of

the united front tactic could have left them totally out-flanked.

The orientation decided upon by the Government and its main backers meant that confrontations were inevitable. They did not have to wait long. As part of Azevedo's aim of re-establishing the 'discipline and cohesion of the armed forces', the Government attempted to break the resistance of the SUV by a case of exemplary discipline, while at the same time reconstituting a repressive strike force, the AMI (Military Intervention Group). In both these limited projects it suffered sharp setbacks. Two members of the SUV from Mafra who were arrested for distributing leaflets were rapidly liberated by a demonstration of 40,000 workers and 4,000 sailors, who in the middle of the night commandeered trucks and buses to take them to the Trafaria fort, whereupon Carvalho signed the release order. Meanwhile the AMI never really got off the ground – the majority of the units assigned to it refused point blank to join such a force, whose repressive nature was obvious.

Three days later, on 29 September, the Government suffered another serious blow. Troops were sent in to take over the radio stations, but in almost every case they did an about-turn and joined the workers defending this important gain of the revolution. The reason why the Government had become so worried about the radio stations was not just that some of them were running under workers control – and thus generalising the struggles that were taking place – but because of the dangerous precedent that had been set when a group of disabled war veterans took over Emissora Nacional with the workers' support. Those in struggle were speaking for themselves, with the assistance of the radio workers. It had to be stopped. But the Government failed.

The events of the last few days of September increased the political tensions. The bourgeoisie had tried and



WHEN THE PRINT WORKERS TOOK CONTROL AT REPUBLICA, THE FIFTH PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT SENT IN THE ARMY; THE WORKERS CONVINCED THE TROOPS TO SUPPORT THEIR STRUGGLE AND DEFEND REPUBLICA RATHER THAN SHUT IT DOWN. THE BOURGEOISIE HOPED THAT AZVEDO'S SIXTH GOVERNMENT WOULD 'RESTORE ORDER'.

failed, basically because they had no control over the soldiers – they had no repressive apparatus on which they could rely. But they quickly learnt from that. It became crucial for the ruling class to weld together some strike force – perhaps few in numbers, but upon which they could definitely count. In retrospect it is interesting that one of the few gains the Government did make in those hectic days was the temporary closure of the worker-controlled Radio Renascença. The unit that carried out the orders – the Amadora commandos led by Jaime Neves.

For the workers and soldiers the events of September deepened their radicalisation, self-organisation and co-ordination. But already the seeds of November were ripening. The overall balance of forces within the workers movement was out of step with that amongst the soldiers. An uneven situation was developing. The result was that certain groups, notably the PRP and the MES, mis-read the crisis. For them the seizure of state power became a military, technical question. As *Poder Popular*, the MES paper, stated (issue of 19-25 November): 'We must create the conditions for the formation of a government of revolutionary unity that holds power until the creation of the National Popular Assembly.' For them the coordination and centralisation of the organs of popular power – and in reality, in many places their birth – could be sorted out after the seizure of power. The PRP had already made its position abundantly clear: 'It is now time for the revolutionary forces and the workers to pose the question of an insurrection' (declaration of PRP, 30 September).

On the other hand, the Goncalvist and CP-backed sections of the army saw the struggle against reaction as being solely determined within the armed forces. The result of both these positions led to the playing down of the importance of the workers themselves developing self-defence via the organs of popular power. As Trotsky always used to say, ultra-leftism and right-wing opportunism are but two sides of the same coin!

The events of September showed yet again the bankruptcy of the reformist leaderships of the SP and CP. In the aftermath of the attack on the radio and TV stations, after the Government had withdrawn the occupation orders, an editorial in *A Luta*, the paper edited by SP leader Raul Telo, commented: 'The soldiers are paid by the people, all the people, both conservative and revolutionary, to give them all a feeling of security. If they are to carry out their duty as citizens, and if they are not simply to demand revolutionary rights, then they must carry out the mission that has been assigned them, which is to maintain security' (2 October). The following day the same paper stated: 'The commandos are not reactionary, they are with the people and the revolution. It needs disciplined armed forces like the commandos.'

Throughout this period the SP had been organising demonstrations of support for the Sixth Government and the commandos, jointly with the CDS, the PPD, and a small Maoist current, the PCP(m-1). The counter-revolutionary politics of Maoism know no bounds in a situation like Portugal! The SP even went so far as to call for barricades around Lisbon on the night of 1-2 October against a mythical coup by farmworkers from the Alentejo. Not even the SP workers in Lisbon responded.

The CP's response to the radio occupations will go down in history: 'Measures of such gravity and repercussions on the present complex and dangerous political situation have been taken without any consultation of the CP'. What did they expect!

To the working class the CP made its position quite clear. Sections of Intersindical had called for strike action the CP blocked it. For the Stalinists the crucial thing was to maintain the unity of the MFA, including the Goncalves/CP wing, and through the crisis extend its own influence within the Government.

In this situation there existed a clear possibility for the revolutionary left to break the hold of the reformists over sections of the SP and CP membership via a series of united front tactics. But the FUR brushed the opportunity

aside, and instead responded in a totally alarmist manner 'Let us mobilise to crush the counter-revolution! The counter-revolution shall not pass!'

NOVEMBER

The months prior to the November 'coup' had been characterised by a lack of correspondence between the disintegration of the state apparatus (and linked to that, the radicalisation of the soldiers) and the relatively low level of development of the organs of popular power. Basically this consisted of a failure to extend and co-ordinate the self-organisation of the class regionally and nationally – which was the only way of overcoming the uneven level of consciousness between the south, the industrial workers, and the northern peasantry – and a failure to understand the necessity to develop workers self-defence out of the struggles in which the class was engaged. In some respects, perhaps, the victories of September and October came too easily – they fostered dangerous illusions.

The phase of the revolution was a transitional one, between a pre-revolutionary stage and an open revolutionary crisis. But such a transition could not last forever. It would be resolved one way or the other, and quickly. Either the bourgeoisie would stabilise sections of the army, and develop a repressive strike force, or the working class would go forward and a situation of dual power would emerge.

The economic crisis, meanwhile, was steadily deepening – partly because of the economic sabotage of European capitalism and the multinationals, and partly as a result of the weak position of Portugal in the face of a generalised world recession, meant that the only viable solution for the working class lay in generalising the measures of workers control and elaborating a workers plan. That obviously required the coordination of the workers commissions, which in fact began to occur. For example, the commissions in the CUF monopoly met and decided to supply the agricultural workers directly with the fertiliser they needed to maintain the agricultural reform. The Lisnave and Setenave shipyard workers passed a resolution which called for 'effective workers control over production and the planning of the economy at a national level, for only in this way can one have a correct notion of the forms of productive reconversion of the various sectors without leading them to a collision' (English version of *Republica*, 17 November).

The Government announced 'an emergency plan to re-establish basic economic mechanisms', including wage restraint, and refused the building workers' demand for a 40 per cent pay rise. The workers then surrounded the Sao Bento palace for two days and two nights, thus 'capturing' the Government, until Azevedo and his ministers granted the wage increase. The emergency plan did not last long. On 16 November a demonstration called by the CP-controlled secretariat of workers commissions of the Lisbon industrial belt rallied 100,000 people against the Government's policies.

The Government also contributed further to the crisis in the army by using the PSP (Public Service Police) and some paratroopers from the Tancos airbase to blow up the Radio Renascença broadcasting tower. The paratroopers were told that they were acting against the right; when they found that they had been deceived they held a special plenary assembly and passed a resolution stating that, 'this action was aimed essentially at the destruction of an information instrument in the service of the exploited class and the toilers. We demand the immediate dissolution of the AMI and repudiate its actions'.

This desperate Government action only underlined the fact that it did not possess the repressive resources to deal a decisive blow to the masses. On the other hand it did not mean that the bourgeoisie lacked the resources necessary to take limited centralised offensives.

The scene was now set for the tragic events of 25-26 November. We do not intend to go into them in detail, but



THE MOBILISATION OF SOME 100,000 WORKERS ON THE NOVEMBER 16th DEMONSTRATION AGAINST GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC POLICY, CALLED BY THE LISBON AREA SECRETARIAT OF THE WORKERS COMMISSIONS, SHOWED THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE PORTUGUESE WORKING CLASS.

rather consider why they could occur as they did. We have said that the ruling class did possess the necessary military resources to launch limited, centralised initiatives. The issue which precipitated the events, the replacement of Carvalho by Vasco Lourenco as commander of the Lisbon military region, had been posed by both the CP and the ultra-lefts as a military matter. Thus when the Tancos paratroopers, the soldiers of the EPAM, RALIS and the military police made their move, they did so without any clear centralised plan or coordination, and with no perspective of following it through to its logical end – that of civil war with involvement of the masses. And the issue over which they had chosen to make a stand was much more favourable to the ruling class – the working class simply did not understand its relevance to them. It is therefore not surprising, even taking into account the lack of action by the CP, that the workers for the most part, stood and waited.

As we have argued, the events leading up to 25 November prepared the ground for ultra-left shoots to flourish. The ultra-left politics of the PRP and the MES must bear a heavy responsibility for the November events. Throughout the crisis at the end of September their dangerous logic could be seen. The over-estimation by the PRP and MES of the strength of the revolutionary left against the reformists; their failure to put forward any notion of a flexible and audacious united front policy towards either the CP or more importantly the SP militants – which logically stemmed from their characterisation of social democracy as being akin to fascism; their under-estimation of the capacity of the bourgeoisie to launch military initiatives, and finally their conception of the seizure of power as a military and technical operation, which the working class would applaud from

the sidelines – all these positions which were shared by sections of the left-wing officers, pointed in the direction of an armed insurrection. This wrong estimate of the relationship of class forces had tragic, but fortunately not decisive results.

THE AFTERMATH OF NOVEMBER

The events of 25 November clearly open up a new phase of the Portuguese revolution. They have shifted the balance of class forces in favour of the bourgeoisie, who now find themselves with far wider room for manoeuvre at the political level. This is primarily because the crisis within the army has been temporarily resolved. The ruling class now has a section of the armed forces upon which it can rely, and is rapidly attempting to reorganise the army to cleanse it totally. In fact it is within the armed forces that the left has suffered a decisive, qualitative setback. Leftist units like RALIS have been dissolved or disbanded, with soldiers put on permanent leave or imprisoned.

On 24 January General Ramalho Eanes, brought back as army chief-of-staff after being purged in the wake of the 11 March abortive Spínola coup, announced that the size of the land army is to be reduced by 40 per cent. More importantly, he intends to construct an operational 'intervention force' of 10,800 men whose role will be not only to defend Portugal against external aggression, but also to 'maintain internal security'. Future class confrontation will thus take place under modified terms. The working class can no longer rely upon a favourable response from the soldiers. The question of self-defence becomes an urgent task in all struggles. In that sense, one of the fundamental flaws of the pre-November struggles will have to be overcome.

However, the changed relationship of forces within the

military does not automatically represent a qualitative change within society as a whole. Because the confrontations of 25 November did not involve the working class directly, not only that the Amadora commandos could seize control, but that the class as such did not suffer a defeat. Quite clearly the vanguard of the class has undergone a period of demoralisation and political crisis, and has also been subjected to a series of attacks — the closure of *Republica* and *O Setubalense*; the return of Radio Renascença to the Catholic Church; the deaths of a number of demonstrators and pickets at the hands of the reactionary Republican National Guard; and the imprisonment of leftists, culminating in January with the jailing of Carvalho.

Nevertheless, the organisations of the working class remain intact. The workers commissions still exist and function, although the neighbourhood commissions have gone into a severe decline — essentially due to their spontaneist nature prior to November. However within these bodies the revolutionary left has lost its ground to the reformists, notably to the MCP. For example, in an election at the Setenave shipyards the CP list won 850 votes; that of the far left (UDP, PRP and LCI) 410; and the SP 250. Prior to November the far left was the dominant political force in Setenave. However, an even more important aspect of the Setenave election was the fact that 402 voters abstained and 2,093 didn't even bother to take part. The working class remains cautious, but not defeated.

During January the first signs of a response to the capitalist offensive could be seen. The Azevedo Government, presiding over a catastrophic economic crisis, launched an austerity plan to make the workers shoulder the cost. It also renegotiated the agrarian law reform with the support of the CP, so as to stop illegal occupations and prevent any land seizures north of the river Tagus. The Government is forced to take such austerity measures of which these were only the first dose, because, as the *Financial Times* noted on 18 December, the Portuguese economy is 'on the brink of a genuine economic collapse'. In 1975 it is expected that the Gross National Product will fall by 15 per cent — a European record for one year; the balance of payments is in the red to the tune of £500 million; foreign exchange reserves have dried up; inflation is currently running at 25 per cent, and likely to reach 50 per cent by the end of this year; unemployment stands at 17 per cent of the active population and is still rising. Statistics such as these can be reproduced endlessly! The ruling class has to inflict a decisive blow to the workers and peasants if capitalism is to survive. Already during January a number of strikes have broken out; the metal workers of the Lisbon industrial belt have stated categor-

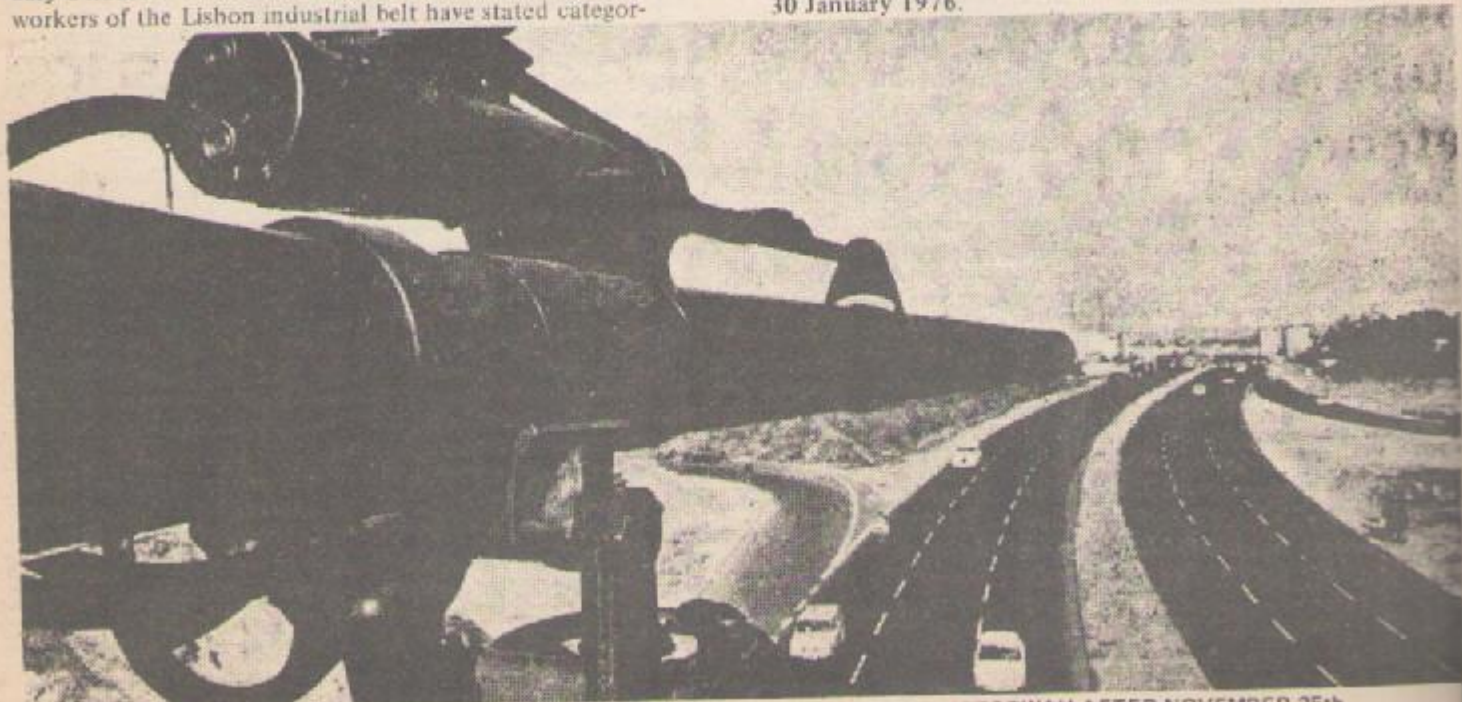
ically that they reject the austerity plan; and 40,000 people supported the Intersindical demonstration in Lisbon on 17 January against the Government's proposals.

Despite the gains made by the ruling class out of 25 November, they have in no way solved their own internal problems. They still lack a cohesive political leadership. Clear differences over the participation of the CP in the Government have emerged between the SP, the Antunes group and a minority of the PPD on one hand, and the CDS and the majority of the PPD on the other. The debate still rages over the future role of the armed forces in Portuguese politics. Prior to the elections of 25 April it is unlikely that the ruling class in Portugal will launch a decisive offensive; it does not yet possess the authority it requires within the army — for example, in January it still preferred not to use soldiers against demonstrators — nor the coherent operational intervention unit, nor a unified political leadership. The elections may give the latter, when it can then claim to have the authority of the 'people'. But prior to April it will continue to regroup its forces for the confrontation to come.

In that period the working class has to prepare itself by the launching of struggles against the present austerity measures and all the attacks of the Sixth Government. A failure to do so will leave the workers commissions bereft of any clear perspective and the class with no leadership. Learning from the errors of the previous period, the key task of the revolutionary left has to be the application of a united front tactic that can encompass the widest possible forces to counter the political and economic proposals of the Azevedo Government. Of necessity that must entail a clear orientation to the militants in the SP and CP.

It is through the unity in action of the class, through the building of workers commissions and popular assemblies, through their coordination and centralisation, and through their own self-defence, that the working class can learn the lessons of last autumn and go forward from the present pre-revolutionary situation. The economic, political and social crisis remains. The next period still holds the potential for that to become a revolutionary crisis — not merely because of events in Portugal itself, but above all because of the simultaneously emerging upsurge of the Spanish workers and peasants. The next months in Portugal and Spain can herald the emergence of the Iberian Socialist Revolution. Long live the Portuguese and Spanish sections of the Fourth International! Forward to the Iberian Socialist Revolution!

30 January 1976.



AFTERMATH OF AN ADVENTURE: GUNS COVER THE LISBON TO OPORTO MOTORWAY AFTER NOVEMBER 25th.

of the working class, which has been able to cling stubbornly to its acquired conquests and prevent any such overhaul at the expense of the proletariat and other exploited strata of society, has been largely inhibited by the labour bureaucracy from replacing the decaying capitalist order with a new workers power, oriented towards the Socialist United States of Europe, which offers the only historically progressive way out of Britain's crisis. Thus a historical stalemate has emerged since the second half of the 1960s, in which neither the capitalist class nor the working class have been able to apply their basic solutions to the social and economic crisis. This has led to a protracted political crisis, taking more and more the form of a near-paralysis of government with regard to long-term strategic solutions. This is strikingly revealed by the terms of the latest Wilson 'plan for modernisation of industry', which is nearly literally the same as the one advanced by the same Wilson.....ten years ago!

The gravity of the crisis of British capitalism is such that the traditional 'British' way of solving difficulties through pragmatic compromises and small, gradual shifts in the political balance of forces becomes less and less operative. This applies to the labour bureaucracy as well as to the capitalist class. The illusions of the official 'Labour Left' in the possibility of using the election victory of 1974, in a framework of increasing reliance of a crisis-ridden private industry upon state orders and state subsidies, for a considerable increase of the area of 'public ownership' and 'public planning' along the traditional parliamentary road have dismally collapsed, given the absolute priority for British capitalism to restore the rate of profit.

Likewise, in order successfully to reconvert itself to the role of a major partner in a European imperialist superpower, on an equal footing with US and Japanese imperialism, British capitalism has not only to integrate itself in the EEC and modernise its industry accordingly. It has to radically overhaul the traditional patterns of its rule, which were established during the period of Britain's global hegemony. But such patterns cannot be mechanically remoulded. The social fabric resists change, and where tensions are great, it tears violently. The growing incongruence of the whole superstructure of British bourgeois society to the needs of the capitalist basis do not lead to an automatic adaptation of that superstructure. On the contrary, they lead to a succession of violent convulsions and conflagrations, where the outcome of the struggle between living social and political forces alone will decide whether big business's 'master plan' will be implemented or not.

The clearest example of this is what happened in Ireland. The strategy of entry into the EEC required a new relationship with the Southern Irish bourgeoisie. To move towards this, the British Government had to move towards 'reforms' in the North. Sensing the changing mood, the oppressed Catholic masses got off their knees and unleashed a civil rights movement which developed to the threshold of a dual power situation in the Northern Catholic ghettos, in reaction to the pogroms unleashed against the civil rights movement by the most militant sections of the Orange bloc. The moment British imperialism saw the beginnings of the arming of the Catholic minority, they sent in the troops in an attempt to disarm the Catholic workers. The resulting conflict drove the Catholic population firmly into the nationalist fold, in opposition to both Stormont and British imperialism. Every new turn by imperialism to try to defuse the situation has only got it further into the mire.

The present stalemate in Britain cannot last for a further prolonged period. It threatens bourgeois society in Britain with near complete paralysis. Revolutionary marxists must be conscious of the fact that a decisive test of strength is progressively approaching in Britain. They must make the British working class, and especially its vanguard, conscious of the high stakes involved in this test of strength.

Either the working class will free itself from the paralyzing shackles of reformism, class collaboration and parliamentary illusions, and it will then boldly advance towards a socialist Britain oriented towards the Socialist United States of Europe, on the basis of the collective ownership of ind-

ustry, banks and finance institutions, wholesale and large retail trade and transport corporations run under workers management, and reconverted on the basis of an overall socialist plan democratically worked out by the people of Britain for the purpose of satisfying priority needs of the toiling masses, guaranteed permanent full employment; high quality free health, education, public transport and housing service; radical reduction of the work week and radical increase in the standard of culture and quality of life for all the inhabitants.

Or the capitalist class will succeed in decisively weakening the militancy of the working class through inflicting upon it a series of defeats which will isolate and repress the vanguard, fragment and split the class, and demoralise large sections of the proletariat, thereby enabling capital to significantly increase the rate of exploitation, shift the rate of profit and of internal capital accumulation suddenly upward, and modernise British industry and the British economy through a sharp reduction of real wages, social services and working class freedoms (in the first place trade union freedoms and the unrestricted right to strike), i.e. removing a large part of the social gains made by the masses since 1945, which will be accompanied by a qualitative strengthening of the repressive legislation and apparatus, and a reduction of traditionally enjoyed civil liberties. The precise form this 'rationalisation' of British bourgeois society would take is still far from predictable. It will depend on a whole series of changes in the relationship of forces, both between the classes nationally and internationally, and between the imperialist powers. It must be understood that such a qualitative change could even occur without the formal destruction of bourgeois parliamentary democracy, as it did for example in France in 1958 with the advent of the gaullist Fifth Republic. But it will in any case mean a grave defeat of the working class, a qualitative change in the conditions in which the class struggle evolves, compared to those of the 1945-75 period.

3 The combined impact of a synchronised international economic recession and the development of a pre-revolutionary crisis in Southern Europe, hitting an imperialist system already weakened by its defeat in Indochina, creates the most favourable international context for the class struggle in every country in Europe, including Britain, since 1917-23. It would however be mechanical and wrong to conclude from this general trend that in every country in Europe the working class now proceeds in a straight line upward in offensive struggles. On the contrary, the uneven development of the relationship of forces between the classes has been markedly accentuated since the beginning of the generalised economic recession of 1974-5 in the different capitalist countries of Europe. While the working class's militancy and objectively anti-capitalist struggles have been strengthened in several countries, they have been temporarily halted or even thrown back in various others, in the first place Western Germany.

Britain itself represents a special case. But the balance-sheet since spring 1975 is clear. The capitalist class, with the main help of Wilson and the labour bureaucracy, has gone over to the offensive and has scored initial gains. The British working class finds itself confronted today with the urgent task of organising its forces to defend its standard of living and social, economic and political gains of the last decades which are threatened with erosion and suppression. Only through a successful defensive battle against all these attacks by the employing class, the Government and the bourgeois State, can the ground be laid for a working class counter-offensive, which would once again put the struggle for a socialist revolution and a socialist solution of Britain's crisis immediately on the agenda.

Evidently, the further unfolding of the class struggle in Britain does not take place in an international vacuum. It will be strongly influenced by international developments.

and in the first place by what happens in the rest of capitalist Europe. In that sense, and leaving aside the extreme unlikelihood of a quick economic world boom of such amplitude as to tide British capitalism over its main troubles in the coming one to two years, any qualitative advance of the revolution in Portugal, Spain and Italy, and even more so in France – not to speak of any conquest of power by the proletariat in any of these countries – would have a profound impact on the British working class, not only at the level of the broad vanguard, but even at the level of the broad masses. It would rapidly shift the relationship of class forces in favour of the working class. It would qualitatively speed up the broadening of the vanguard and the building of the revolutionary party.

In the absence of such a *qualitative* advance in Southern Europe however, the *uneven* nature of the process of maturation of socialist revolution asserts itself more than ever in capitalist Europe. It means that the *immediate* impact of the pre-revolutionary situation in Portugal, Spain, Italy and

France remains, for the time being, restricted to furthering the growth and the politicisation of a *limited vanguard* in Britain. It does not as yet provoke any significant shift in the overall relationship of class forces in that country. It is insufficient to neutralise or throw back the offensive unleashed by the British bourgeoisie against the accumulated strength and gains of the British working class. On the contrary, the short-term possibility of a broad international revolutionary explosion in Southern Europe – which the most lucid circles of international capital understand as well and fear as much as revolutionary marxists foresee and expect it – makes it all the more essential for British capitalism to try to inflict a grave defeat upon the British proletariat, before it can link up with a revolutionary upsurge in Portugal, Spain, Italy and especially France.

For the same reason, a success of the British workers' struggles against the offensive unleashed by the bourgeoisie with the help of the Wilson Government could greatly alter the social and political perspectives for the whole of West-



" ANY QUALITATIVE ADVANCE OF THE REVOLUTION IN PORTUGAL .. WOULD HAVE A PROFOUND IMPACT ON THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS .. EVEN AT THE LEVEL OF BROAD MASSES ."

ern Europe. It would create in all probability a pre-revolutionary situation in Britain too. This would provide a bridge between the upsurge of the South European working class on the one hand, and the still more quiescent North European proletariat on the other hand. It would be a tremendous blow against any imperialist attempt to isolate and blockade the revolutionary upsurge in Southern Europe.

The results of the coming test of strength between the classes in Britain are therefore not only vital for the future of the British working class. They will be of the greatest importance for the future of the class struggle in the whole of Western Europe too. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for revolutionary marxists to adopt a correct principled and tactical approach towards the issues around which this test of strength will evolve.

4 The defensive nature of the working class struggles at the present stage would in itself not be surprising. After all, each economic crisis of overproduction is objectively an aggression against the working class, an attempt by capital to lower real wages through the pressure of mass unemployment, in order to increase profitability. That, together with the massive elimination of inefficient capitalist firms (devalorisation of capital) is one of the main objective functions of a crisis of overproduction, in order to make possible a temporary increase in the rate of profit, and thereby a newstepped-up-rhythm of capital accumulation

However, given the concrete context of political and social relations in Britain since World War II, the working class was completely unprepared for this rapid shift in the economic and social situation. The capitalist offensive came as a big shock to it, which led initially to profound disorientation and disarray, even in the vanguard. To understand this, one has to take into account:

1. The myth of permanent full employment as a priority goal of all British governments since World War II corresponded to a material reality for nearly three decades. The whole organised labour movement was deeply committed to the axiom that a Labour Government would be perfectly capable of realising such a permanent full employment within the framework of the so-called 'mixed economy'. Even during the last election campaign, solemn pledges were unanimously advanced in that sense by the Labour Party, underscored by left-sounding phrases in Labour's election manifesto (if necessary, extension of public ownership in order to ensure full employment).

2. The fact that, immediately prior to the present capitalist offensive, the working class scored important victories against the bourgeoisie: defeating *In Place of Strife*; the 1972 miners' strike; freeing the Pentonville Five; bringing down the Heath Government and its plans to restrict trade union freedoms; increasing the workers' real wages in the first phase of the second Wilson Government, in spite of the unfolding economic crisis.

3. The nature of the political debate inside the organised labour movement prior to and immediately after the formation of the second Wilson Government, which created the impression of an administration 'to the left' of the first Wilson Cabinet, having drawn at least some lessons from the ignominious balance-sheet of the previous Labour Government and intent upon implementing a 'left' policy (extension of the nationalised sector; experiments with 'industrial democracy'; consolidation and expansion of the social services; etc.).

It was the brutal betrayal of all these expectations and hopes of the working class (which were to a great extent the results of illusions both in the nature of British society today and in British social democracy) by the second Wilson Government starting in spring 1975 (the EEC referendum), which has essentially provoked the disarray which enabled the capitalist offensive to score initial points. Britain's membership in the Common Market is maintained. An incomes policy is implemented through the Healey measures. The

standard of living of the workers is cut by at least 5 per cent in six months, with new attacks to come on wages, employment and the social services. Worst of all: no serious central resistance is organised against these attacks either by the trade unions or by the 'official' lefts. The capitulation of the 'official' lefts before Wilson added a big blow to the workers' morale.

Thus, in a very short time, the basic tide of the class struggle in Britain has been sharply reversed. Under the Heath Government and in the beginning of the second Wilson Government, the dynamic was one of a potential generalisation of mass struggles of a clearly offensive thrust — even if the starting point could be defensive, as was the case with the struggle against the Heath anti-union legislation. Revolutionary marxists worked with the perspective of broadening these struggles towards a general strike and the emergence of an incipient dual power situation.

Today the working class is thrown back on the defensive, to the point where the fundamental thrust towards a general strike is objectively no longer on the agenda in the very short run. The relative weakness of the vanguard, combined with the strength of the reformist illusions of the toiling masses, the treachery of the Wilson bureaucracy and the capitulation of the 'official' Labour left, created a situation in which the delay in the generalisation of the workers' struggles permitted the bourgeoisie to pass to a generalised offensive, which the class was not ideologically and politically ready to meet head-on.

Of course, one cannot say that a *qualitative* change in the class relation of forces has *already* occurred. In that sense, it is true that one of the key causes of the initial setbacks of the British workers — especially the *de facto* acceptance of the Healey-Wilson wage reduction by the unions — resides in the bureaucracy's utilisation of the continuing ideological and political weakness of the working class, its readiness to accept bourgeois ideological arguments ('higher wages are pricing you out of your jobs'), its reluctance to 'provoke' a return of a Tory government ('give Wilson a chance. He might just lick unemployment'), rather than in any real strengthening of the British bourgeoisie.

However, to this ideological and political weakness must be added an objective factor: the eroding effect of the initial rise in unemployment over several years, and of the Sisyphus-type permanent militant struggles conducted under increasingly unfavourable circumstances by key sectors of the working class, in its traditional bastions. The struggle of the revolutionary marxists for a *general* strike, which alone was capable of meeting the *general* challenge decaying British capitalism was presenting increasingly to *all* British workers, implied, negatively, that fragmented struggles, however militant, would be less and less capable of achieving results and sustaining morale. This truth has now caught up with the working class.

It should be added that, if the roots of the initial setbacks are to a certain extent ideological and political, its consequences are objective, economic and material. Any prolonged period of mass unemployment, of dismantling of sectors of industry which were traditional militant strongholds (certain car plants, docks, printshops, etc.), of steady decline of real wages without significant and successful mass resistance, could only increase the disarray qualitatively, and weaken the class socially and organisationally. In reverse, a spread of successful massive defensive struggles could rapidly overturn the present trend and put again on the agenda the possibility of generalised struggles, even of a general strike with action committees potential.

5 It is no accident that the Labour Government under Harold Wilson has been the organiser of the first successful offensive against the British workers' standard of living. Given the present social and political relationship of forces in Britain, no other political form of a successful bourgeois offensive was possible. The dismal failure of the Heath

working class offensive fully confirmed that in the existing social relation of forces, any attempt to defeat the working class in open confrontation, without a previous attempt to divide the class politically and gradually erode its tremendous strength, was doomed to failure.

Furthermore, the defeat of the Tory party in February and October 1974 has had extremely serious consequences for the bourgeoisie. It was replaced as the dominant party of the ruling class in Scotland by the SNP finance capital clique. It lost around half of its traditional and indispensable working class vote. As a consequence of the scope of the defeat, the trusted Heath team was replaced by a Thatcher-Joseph leadership whose election every significant section of the bourgeoisie has opposed. This has led to a situation where the Tory party's function as the dominant bourgeois party is at least questioned in bourgeois circles, while simultaneously electoral reform seems unrealisable in the near future. The likelihood of a 'bourgeois coalition cabinet' (Tories-Liberals-SNP) remains uncertain and unstable at the very least, if not thoroughly unrealistic. The bonapartist candidature of Enoch Powell is without any significant chance of success in the short run. The idea of a 'national coalition' is laden with the risk of an outright 'take-over' of the Labour Party by the left, with all the subsequent risk involved in such an eventuality for the bourgeoisie.

Under conditions where the need of the bourgeoisie for a strong party of the ruling class capable of taking on a confrontation with the working class cannot at present be realised, there is no alternative for the British bourgeoisie but to try to implement in the immediate future its plans through a Labour Government. This applies even though a Labour Government is not, as in 1964, part of an attempted long term strategic project of the ruling class. While constantly bullying and blackmailing this Government, thereby helping the 'left' bureaucrats to justify in the eyes of the workers their 'lesser evil' policies ('A Tory cabinet would create more unemployment, lower wages and more cuts in the social services than Wilson; so we have to cling to Wilson as the only possible alternative to the Tories'), British capitalism hopes to have the working class sufficiently divided and fragmented as the result of the blows which Wilson is inflicting upon it, and the militancy of its vanguard sufficiently eroded, to prepare the field for a further and more decisive onslaught, possibly after a crushing electoral defeat of Labour, once the preliminary weakening of the organised labour movement has sufficiently changed the relationship of forces to make such an onslaught practicable and liable to succeed.

This plan is sufficiently realistic to consider as completely irresponsible the cynical calculation of the 'Bennites' who, reflecting their bureaucratic interests, refuse to break in any way with the trade union bureaucracy, and contemplate schemes such as beginning a challenge to the Wilson leadership only after it has led the Labour Party to a disastrous electoral defeat. While reflecting not bureaucratic interests but political confusion, likewise irresponsible is the attempt of those forces on the extreme left which minimise the present setbacks and their potential cumulative results, minimise likewise the qualitatively increased crisis of British capitalism, and deny the need to prepare for a decisive test of strength at short or medium-term distance, satisfying themselves with a 'business as usual' combination of fragmentary and syndicalist militancy and mundane revolutionary anti-reformist propaganda. All these forces strongly underestimate the gravity of the situation and of the challenge it presents to the whole British working class movement.

Thus the combined crisis of British capitalism and of the superstructure of bourgeois society in Britain transforms itself into a potential crisis of the traditional working class movement and of the British Labour Party. The whole future destiny of British capitalism, its possibility of pushing its anti-working class offensive through to a decisive success, to decisively push up the rate of profit and of internal capital accumulation, depends upon the degree to which it will be able to use the Labour Party leadership and bur-

eaucracy to achieve the initial goals of its offensive. The whole possibility of maintaining its conquests of the last thirty years, and transforming them into an unassailable platform from which to launch the struggle for socialism in the short term depends, for the working class, on the way in which it will be able to organise a powerful and massive defence against the bourgeois onslaught, in which it will reach a new level of consciousness, a larger and better coordinated mass vanguard, i.e. an ample recomposition of the organised labour movement, both inside and outside of the Labour Party.

6 The fact that the British Labour Party — or, more correctly, the organised mass labour movement — has today become the arena of the decisive political battle which will decide upon the future of Britain is no more accidental than is the emergence of the Wilson Government as the main initial tool of the British bourgeoisie's anti-working class offensive. This is the result at one and the same time of the tremendous strength of the British proletariat (more than 90 per cent of the British active population is now composed of wage and salary earners), of the powerful increase in its level of organisation (more than 11 million unionised workers; more than 300,000 shop stewards), of the deep-rooted feeling of self-confidence of the class after 25 years of full employment and innumerable struggles won in the 1960s and the early 1970s, of the growing awareness of the class of the decay and weakness of the bourgeois class enemy — all factors which make it clear that it is not the strength of the capitalist class but the treacherous role of the labour bureaucracy and the powerful hold of social democratic, reformist, electoralist, parliamentary, 'syndicalist' illusions over the decisive layers of the working class which allows the continuation of bourgeois rule in Britain. This leads to the highly contradictory function of the organised labour movement (essentially trade unions and Labour Party) in late bourgeois British society. With growing crisis of British capitalism, the contradictions of that function reach a point of explosion.

On the one hand, the reformist nature of the labour bureaucracy has again and again saved British capitalism from being overthrown by impetuous mass struggles. This was the case after World War I ('Triple Alliance') and in 1925-26. It was the case in 1945-50. It was *again* the case in the early 1970s. The present offensive of the bourgeoisie is



" GIVEN THE PRESENT RELATIONSHIP OF FORCES BETWEEN THE CLASSES, SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IS INDEED THE MAIN PROP FOR THE SURVIVAL OF DECAYED BRITISH CAPITALISM. "

further reinforced by racist, sexist and chauvinist sentiments which capitalism and imperialism have created in the working class. Given the present relationship of forces between the classes, social democracy is indeed the main prop for the survival of decayed British capitalism, the main obstacle on the road to victorious socialist revolution in Britain. It is necessary to constantly remind the vanguard of the British working class, and whatever broader layers of the working class we can reach, of this elementary truth.

On the other hand, however, the social democratic labour bureaucracy has only been able to play this treacherous role by permitting the working class to maintain and extend a network of mass organisations in which the class can constantly exchange, enrich and expand its collective experience of struggle, and make them into motors of still more far-reaching struggles. This network has created a qualitatively higher extent of 'nuclei of proletarian democracy within bourgeois democracy' than in any other capitalist country in the world. The way in which the working class identifies itself with this network has in its turn created a powerful potential for mobilisation of the class, including mobilisations in direct action not only on 'syndicalist' issues but also on directly political ones, mobilisations which can occur without the working class breaking politically from the Labour Party. The political mass strikes against *In Place of Strife*; the degree to which the working class went beyond the line of the Labour leadership in the struggle to free the Pentonville Five; the AUEW strike against the NIRC; the refusal of the miners and Ford workers to call off their strikes in February and October 1974 to fit in with the electoral strategy of the Labour bureaucracy — all these facts indicate the degree to which the ability of the Labour bureaucracy to prevent mass struggles involving large sections of the working class has been eroded, even while these same workers, affiliation to and electoral support for the Labour Party remains as yet essentially unchallenged.

So, paradoxically, the very same instrument which is the precondition of the continuous social democratic betrayal of the instinctive socialist aspirations of the British working class becomes more and more the main obstacle to the successful implementation of new betrayals. To put it more concretely: only a largely passive working class, unwilling and unable to react to Wilson's policies, can permit the co-existence of the organised mass labour movement in its present relatively democratic structure, with the betrayal of the labour bureaucracy. Any significant mass reaction of the working class against Wilson's policies will translate itself into a tremendously explosive crisis of social democracy as an organisation, at every level.

7 Despite the initial setbacks on the national political arena and in certain sectors, the level of direct social and political struggles still qualitatively exceeds that seen in any similar period of the post-war Labour governments. Furthermore, a clear radicalisation is taking place amongst the constituency and individual membership organisations of the Labour Party — with, in sharp contrast to 1964–70, not a decline but an initial increase in membership of the CLPs, occurring and a more pronounced rise in the LPYS; the experience of right-wing MPs being removed as candidates by CLPs; the impact of the Clay Cross struggle; the defeat of Healey and other rightists for the Executive of the party; the stunning electoral victory of Benn; two-thirds of the CLPs voting for the resolutions of the 'Militant' group on the economy; probably a majority of the CLPs opposing the Healey measures; etc.

The result of these developments is that, whilst as yet the largest number of workers who have broken with reformism are outside the Labour Party, a recomposition of left social democratic and centrist developments within the trade union and Labour Party is taking place as well as the growth of extreme left currents within the Labour Party.

Given the circumstances of clear crisis at all levels of the

Labour Party, we must avoid all 'infantile left' perspectives that this party, including the whole of its bureaucracy, will simply abandon its hold over large sections of the masses to forces to its left, by remaining monolithically right-wing in the face of a new working class upsurge. While the Labour left is deeply marked by the traditions of reformism, and its bureaucratic layers by their very social nature will not initiate struggles but only follow in the wake of an upsurge, nevertheless it is a *labour* bureaucracy and not part of the ruling class itself. Its role is to defend the historic interests of the capitalist class *within the framework of its own base inside the working class* — the base from which it derives its positions and from which it is able to extract its privilege from the ruling class.

Large numbers of rank-and-file militants who have not broken completely with reformism or social democracy have already passed into opposition to Wilson-Healey. Reflecting this, Tribuneite forces have been forced to take a position of verbal opposition to the Government's policies. The rest of the Labour bureaucracy abstained from any fight against Wilson out of sheer opportunist calculations. They want to cling to the trade union bureaucracy, which will not fight Wilson as long as it is not forced to fight by an unfolding mass struggle.

Once the mass struggle starts, however, the whole logic gets reversed. In that case, the union bureaucrats are faced with the prospect of either losing their positions or in order to save their skins having to go along partially with the masses, as they did in the fight against *In Place of Strife*. And then the Labour left will be under increasing pressure to challenge Wilson's policies from top to bottom, not for 'ideological' reasons but simply to keep the Labour Party together and able to maintain its grip on the working class.

But such a crisis at the base as at the top of the Labour Party means a qualitatively increased crisis for British capitalism at the very moment when Wilson's policies are the only realistic solution for British capitalism's ills. If today the crisis of capitalism has transferred itself into the crisis of British social democracy, the temporary outcome of the crisis of social democracy in the sense of the break of a significant section of the unions and the Labour Party with Wilson's policies would mean a decisive aggravation of the crisis of British capitalism.

8 Under these circumstances, the totality of elements acting in the situation (the organisational flexibility of the Labour Party, which allows openly oppositional activity without a need to make a political or organisational rupture with the party; the emergence of left currents at the base of that party and even amongst the bureaucracy; the smallness of the size of the vanguard which has broken from the party) means that, while a challenge to the Labour Party at all levels, including electorally, will be necessary for the final historic defeat of social democracy, the break of the British working class with social democracy is very unlikely to take the form, in the near future, of the setting up of a rival mass party or of a significant challenge to the Labour Party by the revolutionary left on the electoral field. This break will much more likely take the triple form of a turn away from parliamentary and electoral politics without an organised break with the Labour Party as such (e.g. increasing attempts to solve political questions through extra-parliamentary actions; increasing counter-position of the organisations of the labour movement to the parliamentary institutions, including the Parliamentary Labour Party); of united actions of a broader and broader vanguard, both within and outside the Labour Party; and of a deeper and deeper penetration of revolutionary socialist and communist ideology among the rank-and-file trade unionists and Labour Party members. Only in the case of a huge vertical split of the Labour Party, and the appearance of a mass centrist party of the dimensions of the German USPD, could this basic trend be organisationally overcome. In the immediate future

such an alternative solution is not on the cards.

What this means is to fully understand the dialectics of the uneven development of working class consciousness, including in the vanguard, combined with the historical peculiarities of the British working class and the British organised labour movement. Both the opportunist and the sectarian counter-positions to this analysis are unrealistic and misleading for revolutionists. They lead to a dead-end from a tactical point of view.

The opportunists believe that, because the workers by and large do not stop voting Labour or being formal members of the Labour Party, it is impossible for them to bypass social democratic illusions or leaders in action altogether. From this they draw the conclusion that no significant actions can be initiated by the vanguard anyway, all political solutions having to be advanced in exclusively electoral and parliamentary terms, through the official leadership channels of the Labour Party. The sectarians, on the contrary, believe that as long as the workers are ideologically social democratic, they will be unable to challenge capitalism and its labour lieutenants efficiently in action. Therefore, denunciations of the left Labour bureaucrats in one form or another become the main duty for revolutionists, which implies a retreat into sterile propagandism.

The correct revolutionary marxist position is that the contradictions of bourgeois society and of social democracy have reached the point where millions of British workers can challenge objectively, through their class actions, both the capitalist economy, the reformist misleaders and the bourgeois state, before they break totally with social democracy, both on the ideological and organisational level. Indeed, such a total break will only occur *after* the experience of many such mass actions has been assimilated, thanks to the correct intervention of the revolutionary marxist organisation itself, which has of course to be combined with consistent propaganda against reformism and social democracy.

9 From this analysis flows a clear projection of perspectives, and a clear outline of political and organisational priorities for the British revolutionary marxists of the International Marxist Group, section of the Fourth International.

The most burning immediate task is to overcome the feeling of disarray and disorientation today predominant in the

working class, as a result of the first setbacks suffered at the hands of the Wilson Government. It is possible to overcome this feeling of disarray and disorientation, because the setbacks suffered till now are still marginal, and can still easily be reversed. The absolute precondition for this is a real fight against the effects of the Wilson-Healey austerity measures. The biggest danger is passivity and complacency, the idea that somehow 'things will work themselves out in the long run'. If this were to prevail the marginal setbacks could be turned into a major and stunning defeat. The initial Wilson-Healey measures are absolutely insufficient seriously to redress the rate of profit and rate of internal capital accumulation for British capitalism. They will have to be followed by much graver attacks upon the living standards of the working class.

The fight against the Wilson-Healey measures is possible under the present circumstances, without any specifically political precondition being solved first: this should be absolutely clear, lest our own analysis becomes an additional obstacle on the road of organising a successful defence by the British workers of their decades-old conquests. Even without the prior overthrow of the Wilson leadership or Government; even without a reversal of the majority of the TUC or the Labour Party on the Wilson-Healey policies; even without a prior strengthening of the political vanguard, the fight is possible here and now. This should be the first theme on which revolutionary marxists should unceasingly insist in their daily agitation.

To be sure, this fight will probably be, in the beginning, a dispersed and fragmentary one. A generalised and coordinated fight would be preferable. But to postpone immediately possible struggles in favour of future imaginable, be it ideal, ones, is to play right into the hands of the bourgeoisie and its labour lieutenants. The longer the passivity lasts, the more the weight of disorientation adds itself to that of unemployment in eroding the militancy of the class. Fight now, fight immediately to defend your standard of living, wherever you can: this is the first key task of the hour. That is the first message the IMG should bring today to the British working class.

For these initial fights to be successful, they must be organised on the basis of the broadest possible unity of action of all the forces actually involved, and around the immediate defensive issues concretely raised. This has already started to happen in the case of the demo for the Shrewsbury prisoners, the Medical Committee Against Private Prac-



MCAPP CONFERENCE: "FOR THE INITIAL FIGHTS TO BE SUCCESSFUL, THEY MUST BE BASED ON THE BROADEST POSSIBLE UNITY OF ACTION OF ALL FORCES ACTUALLY INVOLVED, AND AROUND THE IMMEDIATE DEFENSIVE ISSUES CONCRETELY RAISED."

tice conference, the demo against the cuts in education, and especially the 26 November demo against unemployment. This must be repeated on as many concrete issues as possible which give rise to such possibilities: strikes for wage demands guaranteeing the defence of the workers' purchasing power; factory occupations against lay-offs and closures; actions for nationalisation without compensation and under workers control of factories threatened with closure; mass demos against unemployment; mass actions against cuts in the social services; mass actions against increases in rents and public service charges; mass actions against the depletion of health and education services, against inflation and high prices of essential goods etc. Real actions today, even on 'modest' issues, are preferable to ideal actions tomorrow on global issues; without the first, the risk is that the second will not occur for a very long time. Having understood this basic truth, which emerges from the analysis of the precise point we have reached in the class struggle in Britain today, British Trotskyists should appear in the coming months as the exemplary fighters for the unity of action of their class, in defence of its threatened standard of living and conquests, wherever and whenever they have the possibility of intervention.

10 The second important task is the development of an overall political perspective for the British working class – or at least its most militant sectors – which is credible enough in the eyes of the class to make possible the generalisation of the struggles which are initially fragmented, sectoralised and partial in character. Without such an overall political alternative perspective, there is a big danger not only that the first wave of fragmented struggles against the Wilson-Healey measures and policies will peter out, but that they will lead to a series of partial defeats, once they take the form of confrontations between limited sectors of the most militant workers and the Government.

In order to understand this, one has to understand the roots of the present disarray and disorientation of the working class, which is neither social democratic ideology *in general* nor results of past defeats (which never took place), but precisely the lack of a coherent and credible alternative political perspective to that of the Wilson Government. When a society is hit by a social, economic and political crisis of the depth of the one which is hitting Britain now both the bourgeoisie and the working class instinctively feel that only overall political solutions are viable. No serious British working class militant can really believe that he/she is able to defeat inflation in their own plant, trade, town or industry taken separately. Likewise, no serious trade union militant can really think that he or she could solve the problem of unemployment in a plant-by-plant way. While these beliefs do not stand in the way of *initiating* a resolute defence of the standard of living of the working class, wherever it is savagely and cynically attacked, they stand in the way of a generalisation of these struggles, or even of their transformation into a serious test of strength with the Government, as long as no credible alternative is offered to the working class.

In addition, one has to take into consideration the specific forms and limitations of the working class struggles in the past period and their still limited effects upon average working class consciousness. After the initial period of bourgeois reform and struggle inside the Labour Party in 1945–55, the predominant form of mass working class struggles emerged as the ability of the working class to use the colossal strength of its trade union organisations to achieve significant gains in living standards and defence of jobs. To the degree that explicitly political struggles took place, these, while displaying elementary class consciousness, did not in most cases involve a clear break with social democratic aims and goals.

Furthermore, even within the trade union struggles, not merely was the penetration of new forms of struggle into

the working class limited, but even the most advanced struggles were initiated on demands either of a traditional trade union character or of a confused reformist nature, predicated on the belief that the downturn of the economy was purely conjunctural and would be quickly followed by a new boom (expected profitability under new capitalist ownership of the UCS and the Fisher-Bendix and Brians factories, after the initial 'work-ins').

Finally, the extreme organisational flexibility of the Labour Party, allowing not merely individuals but whole areas and unions to carry on actively in contradiction with the line of the party without openly challenging the current overall activity of the national party leadership, meant that the working class was not driven into direct confrontation with the political bureaucracy of the Labour Party but largely ignored it in the struggle.

Today, however, such a stance is no longer possible. The open initiative taken by Wilson in initiating the bourgeois attacks upon the working class standard of living and past conquests makes a head-on challenge with the officially established leadership of the Labour Party unavoidable as soon as even a limited test of strength is on the agenda, not to speak about a generalised struggle against these measures. This means that an alternative political perspective and leadership of the working class becomes a decisive contributing factor for the victory of such tests of strength and the possibility of a generalised counter-attack.

We remain absolutely convinced that only a revolutionary marxist party can both carry through the struggle for socialism and most adequately defend even the immediate interests of the working class. But as yet such an understanding exists at best among a few thousand workers, compared with even the tens of thousands who, without as yet overcoming their allegiance to the Labour Party, are immediately willing to fight the Wilson-Healey measures, not to speak of the hundreds of thousands or even millions who have to be mobilised progressively in order decisively to defeat the attacks of the bourgeoisie. For the majority of the most militant workers who are already, and will be, engaged in these struggles, what is posed as yet is *not* the question of whether they should or should not politically break with the Labour Party, but what policy, programme and leadership should be fought for inside the Labour Party and the labour movement. While the organisational flexibility and political heterogeneity of the Labour Party means that the majority of these militants are not yet forced into collision with this party as a whole and questioning their membership of it, nevertheless they are forced at every step into conflict with the Wilson leadership of the Labour Party and its policies.

Under these conditions, where every objective development creates the need for a generalised political response and leadership of the working class, but at the same time the overwhelming majority of even the most militant workers still give their political allegiance to the Labour Party, such a leadership and political perspective cannot be created in the immediate future – the coming 12–18 months which is the time period posed – outside of the Labour Party if it is to be credible and acceptable to larger sections of the working class. The whole pressure of the situation is thus to the creation of a challenge to the leadership of Wilson-Murray-Jones inside the Labour Party and the labour movement.

It is this objective process which lies behind the increased involvement of the trade unions in the politics of the Labour Party; the growth of the CLPs and the LPYS; the impact of struggles like Clay Cross and Newham; the emergence of elements of the trade union bureaucracy like Scargill; the recomposition of left social democratic, centrist and revolutionary currents within the Labour Party. Despite their disparate starting points, these different developments are part of the same process which is driving towards an explosive crisis of the Labour Party and a clash with the Wilson leadership and its supporters at every level of the labour movement. The task of revolutionary marxists in Britain is not mechanically to counterpose themselves to this process, which in any case they are powerless to alter

but to ensure both that even those workers who do not yet break with their illusions in the Labour Party adopt the most advanced demands and methods of struggle possible, and that the maximum number of workers understand the historical bankruptcy of the Labour Party and the need to form a revolutionary marxist leadership for the working class.

There is no contradiction whatsoever between our projecting the need to fight immediately the Wilson-Healey measures, here and now, without 'waiting' for a political alternative to emerge inside the Labour Party, and the understanding of the fact that the emergence of such an alternative leadership is a necessary precondition for a generalised successful defence and counter-attack, reversing the limited gains scored by the bourgeoisie during the last six months, and bringing the whole level of working class struggle and consciousness onto a qualitatively higher level than today. On the contrary, we must consistently lay before the work-

ing class, and in particular in counterposition to the electoralist and manoeuvrist positions of the left bureaucrats, the fact that the policies of the Wilson Government and the Wilson leadership cannot be defeated by inter-bureaucratic manoeuvres or resolution-mongering within the Labour Party, but only by beginning to alter the relation of forces in society as a whole through the mass mobilisation and action of the working class. We must consistently demonstrate that every strike, every mass demonstration, every form of mass action by the working class is not merely the best way to defend the working class, but a bigger blow against the Wilson leadership than a hundred resolutions by the 'left' bureaucrats. We must consistently understand and point out that only the immediate successful organisation of the partial struggles will create the necessary heat in the unions and the Labour Party, which makes the emergence of a nationwide challenge to the political line and leadership of Wilson inside the Labour Party both poss-



MAY DAY 1972: " EVERY MASS DEMONSTRATION, EVERY FORM OF MASS ACTION BY THE WORKING CLASS IS .. A BIGGER BLOW AGAINST THE WILSON LEADERSHIP THAN A HUNDRED RESOLUTIONS BY THE 'LEFT' BUREAUCRATS."

ible and positive.

Neither in the present circumstances can there be any question of the adoption of a classical entryist tactic by the revolutionaries. The driving forces not merely of the class struggle but even of the crisis within the Labour Party itself come, in this period, from the direct struggles of the workers, carried out above all through the unions, but also in a sense through united front bodies, and not from developments within the Constituency Labour Parties.

11 When we therefore call for the struggle for an alternative policy to the Wilson one in the Labour Party, and an alternative leadership to the Wilson leadership, as the second key task of the hour, we do not in any way create illusions among the British workers that 'left' social democrats are able to solve the crisis of British capitalism any more than Wilson is, while abstaining from overthrowing capitalism.

On the contrary, it is in the course of this struggle that we are most able to show the bankruptcy of the left bureaucrats. At every stage we must explain that their programmes are completely incapable of solving the problems which confront the working class; that on those few issues where the bureaucrats are forced by the pressure of the masses to take up demands which correspond to the interests of the working class, these reformists are unwilling and incapable of waging a real fight for them; that the bureaucrats dread above all the sole means — the mass mobilisation of the working class — which can defeat Wilson. At every stage, we counterpose our own programme of action and methods of struggle to their.

Such a policy, which involves a constant dialectic of united action, ideological and political struggle, outflanking of the left social democracy and attempts at every stage to force them to define their attitude to the mass struggle, does not 'create illusions' in the left social democrats, but is, on the contrary, the sole way to break in practice the illusions which even the militant sections of the workers already have in the 'lefts'. We say to these workers:

'The only way out for Britain is a socialist revolution, the take-over of all the wealth of the country by the working class which created it, the smashing of the bourgeois state machine and the establishment of workers power, based upon democratically elected workers councils. We are convinced that history will confirm this opinion of ours. We know you do not yet agree with this. But we also know that you become daily more angered and embittered against capitalism. You are beginning to understand that, contrary to everything you were told for thirty years, 'welfare state capitalism' can neither guarantee full employment, nor high level social services, and your conquests and standard of living are being whittled away. We also know that you are understanding that Wilson, whom you elected to power to defend your living standards, is acting as the main tool for the attack upon your standard of living today. If you are willing to go into action on a generalised scale to beat the bourgeois offensive by removing Wilson and replacing him with an alternative leadership of the Labour Party, we shall fully support your struggle.

'But we advise you strongly not to repeat the past mistake of giving blind credit to any leaders — 'left' or 'right' — in the Labour Party. Fight to set up the necessary machinery to ensure that future betrayals will become much more difficult than the current and the past ones. Establish a system of strict control of the mass organisations of the working class over the Parliamentary Labour Party. Elect the party leader and the Cabinet yourselves, instead of having them elected by the PLP. Establish a system of rapid recall of any minister or MP who has betrayed his mandate and his electors. Extend party democracy. Lift the ban on the affiliation of communist and revolutionary organisations to the Labour Party.

'And above all: do not have confidence in any person or persons; concentrate on the programme. Make the election

of any alternative leadership dependent upon the adoption of a concrete programme of action which we propose to you — which is that section of our transitional programme which is the answer to your current needs and which will bring us a decisive immediate step forward towards a final removal of the employers' power and the employers' property in Britain, a decisive step forward towards a socialist Britain. For this common programme of action we pledge our full support as revolutionaries. We shall fight with all our strength to establish the broadest possible unity of action inside and outside the Labour Party for this common goal.'

The central points of such a programme in Britain today must be:

- against the erosion of living standards by inflation: rejection of the Healey measures and all forms of incomes policy under capitalism; sliding scale of wages, pensions, unemployment pay, grants and state benefits based on a trade union controlled cost of living index; £40 minimum wage; an immediate freeze, policed by committees of housewives and trade unionists, of the price of all basic goods in working class living standards; total freeze of rents; immediate nationalisation of food, oil and all other industries supplying basic necessities of working-class life.
- for the defence and extension of the social services: rejection of all social expenditure cuts; sliding scale of public expenditure; immediate injection of £1,000 million into the health service; immediate target of building 500,000 houses a year; abolition of all private medical practice and all grammar and private schools; nationalisation of the drugs, health supply and construction industries.
- against unemployment: workers control to impose work-sharing with no loss of pay; immediate introduction of a 35 hour week with no loss of pay; an emergency programme of useful public works; nationalisation without compensation and under workers control of all firms creating redundancy.
- against the scourge of racism and fascism: abolition of the Immigration, Pakistan and Aliens Acts; right of black and other oppressed minorities to form caucuses within the labour movement and to organise to defend their communities; rejection of the right of organisation of fascists and racists.
- towards the liberation of women: free abortion and contraception on demand; equal pay for equal work; free 24 hour community controlled state nurseries; implementation in full of the demands of the Working Women's Charter.
- against the imperialist oppression of Ireland: immediate withdrawal of all British troops; release of all Irish political prisoners; self determination for Ireland.
- against the imperialist policy of wars and counter-revolution: withdrawal from the EEC and NATO; immediate withdrawal of all British forces from abroad; breaking of all links with the Spanish dictatorship; end to the tariff barrier with Portugal and for cooperatives and workers organisations to place massive orders with Portugal; handing over of all British owned firms to the Portuguese workers; solidarity with the Iberian revolution.
- for the defence of democratic rights against the moves to the strong state: abolition of the crime of conspiracy; repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism and Incitement to Disaffection Acts; immediate release of Des Warren and all other political prisoners; defence of working class struggles through the organisation of mass and flying pickets; disbanding of the SAS and Special Patrol Group; ending of joint police-army exercises; full trade union and political rights in the armed forces.
- for the development of a socialist plan for the reorganisation of the economy to ensure full employment and halt the decline in living standards: opening of the books of all capitalist firms, local government and economic departments of the state; immediate nationalisation of banks, insurance and finance institutions; abolition of capitalist

defence expenditure — not a programme of armaments but a programme of public works; penal taxation of all incomes over £10,000 a year and on capital and inherited wealth; take-over of all external portfolios and ban on the export of capital; full workers control of industry; drawing up of a plan for the expansion of the economy on the basis of nationalised industry; nationalisation under workers control of all basic industry.

— for workers democracy: democratic election of strike committees; all major decisions to be taken by mass meetings; annual election, with right of recall, of all union officials; no official to receive more than the average wages of a skilled worker; automatic re-submission to selection at elections of all MPs; election of party leader, Prime Minister and Cabinet by the Labour Party Conference; subordination of the Parliamentary Labour Party to the decisions of the Party Conference and the National Executive Committee; for the abolition of all bans and proscriptions in the trade unions and Labour Party.

It is around the demands of this programme that the decisive blows to defeat the Wilson leadership of the labour movement will be forged.

Today already tens of thousands of British workers can understand such language. Tomorrow millions will understand it. It prepares a qualitative leap forward in the class struggle, as well as a qualitative leap forward in the class consciousness of broad masses. It is the practical way in which millions will break in the coming months and years with some basic tenets of social democracy. To confine ourselves solely to the struggle against 'social democracy as a whole' means to lose a historic occasion for achieving that first decisive break, in favour of propaganda which will only convince at best a few thousands.

12

A third key-task is to weld together the vanguard which is and has been slowly emerging during the last years around the transitional programme in its totality, i.e. in the first place around those concepts which cannot yet be included in the action programme proposed for the struggle against the Wilson-Healey policies: the idea of generalised workers control over the whole economy; of workers councils emerging out of strike committees and action committees in the next wave of mass struggle; of challenging the bourgeois state institutions and state machine at the level of the state.

This task is, at the present stage, still a propaganda task, which has to be systematically pursued both in *Red Weekly* and in special pamphlets written for this purpose. It means a lively ideological debate with other currents of the left, both inside and outside the Labour Party, in which we base ourselves on the past experiences of the British class struggle, the experiences of past socialist revolutions in Europe, and especially the fresh experiences of Chile and Portugal, in order to hammer home a series of key lessons which show the inanity of all reformist and centrist concepts about the gradual and parliamentary road to socialism. In this context we do not take up the question of Portugal and other international struggles solely as separate issues of solidarity, but as an integral part of our global fight against reformism on every question.

This struggle is absolutely essential. Revolutionary marxists do not believe that the working class can spontaneously break with social democratic ideology in its totality. The inevitable fate of social democratic mass currents is defeat and demoralisation, if left to themselves by revolutionary marxists.

But while we believe that through this propaganda campaign and ideological debate we can make significant inroads in the vanguard in order to win individuals and groups to the IMG, and set in motion a process in which the IMG emerges as the potential pole of regroupment for winning over the most consistent militants in the extreme left to the programme and the organisation of the



" WE DO NOT TAKE UP THE QUESTION OF PORTUGAL AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ISSUES SOLELY AS SEPERATE ISSUES OF SOLIDARITY, BUT AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF A GLOBAL FIGHT AGAINST REFORMISM ON EVERY QUESTION."

Fourth International, such a process is in no way opposed to a broader campaign of unity of action of the whole mass vanguard, to become the spearhead of the counter-offensive of the working class and to polarise a larger break with the social democratic leadership within that class.

The present mass vanguard in Britain, willing to go beyond the classical limits of social democratic policies in action, is overwhelmingly proletarian in composition. It includes a large part of the militants who have been leading the mass struggles of the last seven years. It is in no way essentially limited to members of the extreme left organisations. On the contrary, in its great majority it is politically affiliated to the Labour Party through the unions, and in an increasing number individually active in the Constituency Labour Parties and LPYS. This turn towards the Labour Party reflects a potential process of politicisation and the search for a realistic political alternative to reformism, in the only organisational framework where this could have the greatest immediate impact and the greatest short-term efficiency.

As a function of the weakness and sectarianism of most of the revolutionary left, this vanguard — still in quantitative terms in large part outside the Labour Party, and despite its willingness to go beyond the political framework of all current varieties of social democracy over various questions — has had its political attention at least partially focussed by the existence of a 'left trend' within the Labour bureaucracy (for all this left's shallow manoeuvres, opportunism and lack of opposition to the Wilson-Healey measures) in its search for a realistic political alternative. With the present confusion in the vanguard as a whole, despite the weakness and in the last analysis worthlessness of even partially focussing the attention of the vanguard on the 'alternative' posed by the left bureaucracy, the political weight of that sector of the vanguard organised and active around the base of the Labour Party, with such a focus, has increased in the past period in the activity of the vanguard as a whole.

We have to understand this actual composition of the mass vanguard and conduct our fight for the transitional programme in the mass vanguard on the basis of that understanding — i.e. the attempt to create a powerful revolutionary current within the united left movement, which will challenge the Labour left at each turn of the struggle for leadership of concrete actions, and prepare the next decisive step in the break of the working class with social democracy, a step which will become possible as soon as a generalised mass struggle again shifts the consciousness of the working class to a higher level, provided

the building of the revolutionary party, the strengthening of the IMG, gives the vanguard the necessary instrument to achieve that task successfully. The focus that revolutionary marxists must continually orient towards in this regard must be the emergence of a class struggle tendency in the labour movement, of all those forces in struggle but presently fragmented without clear common action against the central enemy, represented by the policies of the Wilson leadership and that leadership itself.

Such a class struggle tendency must group together all those forces who, notwithstanding many differences on long-term strategies for socialism, are nevertheless prepared to fight against the betrayals of the Wilson Government and for the immediate needs of the working class. The forces for such a class struggle tendency are already emerging in the current struggles. The task is to politically clarify and render organisationally coherent these forces and the many other that will come into collision with the role of the Labour Government.

Politically, we fight for such a class struggle left wing to be formed on the basis of the only platform which can provide a real solution to the crisis which confronts the masses: our programme of action. This means fighting continuously to turn this programme into a real element in the class struggle through every form of propaganda, popularisation of exemplary struggles, and above all through fighting for united front action and organisation of tendencies in the vanguard of the working class. While avoiding ultra-left errors which refuse to enter any united action unless it is established on our own programme, or which artificially separates vanguard forces from broader layers prepared to take real action in defence of the interests of the working class; while avoiding all manipulative errors which seek to gain acceptance for our demands on the basis of moves which do not correspond to the real relations of forces within the movement — nevertheless we see united action on less adequate bases merely as temporary compromises, imposed on us by unfavourable relations of forces and in which we seek to win the basis of united action to adequate demands of our action programme. Similarly, where forced through relations of forces to vote for the candidates of the Labour left against right-wing candidates, we maintain our programmatic independence, and the programme that we demand these leaders implement is *our* action programme and not their reformist schemes.

The specific combination of the direct struggle of the masses with the crisis of the Labour Party characterising the present phase of the class struggle in Britain is breaking up old formulas, scenarios and shibboleths of the British extreme left. Those who thought, in the heat of the 1968–73 upsurge, that the political domination of the Labour Party over the working class had disappeared, today find themselves confronted with the re-emergence of left Labourite currents, which present an apparent way forward for large sections of the working class, and which cannot be defeated on the basis of pure militancy, organisational sectarianism and lack of clear political perspectives which achieved temporary success in the period immediately following 1968. Those who for years have immersed themselves purely in the rhythms of activity dictated by the CLPs, today find themselves confronted with direct working class economic, social and political mobilisations which provide not merely the motor force of the class struggle, but also the dominant element of the crisis of the Labour Party itself.

Under these circumstances, the revolutionary left in Britain is passing through a period of splits and regroupments. While the IMG fights to regroup all forces accepting the basic programme of the Fourth International and maintains the full right of tendency and faction for all those who accept this basis but disagree on immediate tasks and tactics, we give priority in the present phase to the attempt immediately to strengthen the British section of the FI by seeking fusion with all those currents which not only agree on the general programme but which are

drawn towards a similar understanding of the immediate tasks ahead in Britain today, for the working class, the vanguard workers and the revolutionary marxists themselves. The strengthening of the revolutionary marxist organisation is, at the same time, an absolute precondition for a successful intervention in the above specified sense, an intervention which requires that an initial threshold of militants and of implantation in the working class should be passed.

At the same time, the IMG strives for the greatest possible unity in action of all the organisations of the extreme left. Through fraternal debate, polemics and the demonstration of the correctness of its line in practice, it seeks to break them away from their original shibboleths and convince them of the need to regroup their forces with the IMG, to create a strengthened and united revolutionary organisation in Britain, under the banner of the Fourth International.

Serious attention should also be paid to the growing crisis inside the British Communist Party. While the party continues to organise the majority of those left trade union militants who are outside the Labour Party, and while it wields not insignificant influence in the broad workers vanguard, its systematic tail-ending of the left bureaucracy (which results in the CP finding itself outflanked not only by the revolutionary left but even by left elements inside the Labour Party), together with the steady erosion of its press and youth organisation, has increased the feeling of lack of perspective inside its ranks. The crisis of reformism thus becomes, at least in part, a crisis of the neo-reformists of the British Communist Party. Combined with the effects of the deepening crisis of world Stalinism, this creates a favourable climate for the penetration of Trotskyist ideas among the periphery and even the membership of the CP, provided we adopt a correct attitude of allying irreconcilable firmness on all matters of principle with a systematic united front approach towards the Communist Party on all matters where the general interests of the British and international working class are at stake.

13 While at all times propaganda on the tasks of a revolutionary workers government retains its value in the pedagogic task of explaining to the working class the conditions necessary to overthrow the capitalist order, in the coming period of working class struggle, with increased need for generalised solutions, increased activity of the working class in relation to the political crisis of the Labour Party, and a clear potential for development towards pre-revolutionary outbreaks if the working class succeeds in defeating the Healey measures and the Wilson Government, it is clear that the IMG will be confronted with the increasing need to formulate clear and precise slogans in relation to central questions of political life and government. The fundamental axis which the IMG must pursue in that respect is the one outlined in the 'Theses on the Construction of Revolutionary Parties in Western Europe' (printed in *International*, Vol 2, No. 1) i.e. to work for the creation of organs of dual power. Such an axis acquires a particular significance in Britain today, not merely from the point of view of its relation to tumultuous working class struggles, but also in relation to the development of left social democratic and centrist currents. The entire line of left social democracy, and of their Stalinist supporters, is summed up in the orientation to 'A Labour government with left policies' — a government which carries through radical measures, but within and on the basis of the framework of the bourgeois democratic state. Such a framework will of course either succeed in sabotaging the implementation even of a left reformist programme, reducing such a government to a farce and creating profound demoralisation within the working class, or if the upsurge of the workers were to threaten to go beyond this framework, would lead to the overthrow of the

government and the unleashing of massive repression by the ruling class.

In counterposition to this line, the perspective which the IMG must advance is that of a government resting not on the institutions of the bourgeois democratic state, but based on and responsible to the mass organisations of the working class. In pursuing such a perspective, the IMG must utilise not merely propagandistic explanation, utilisation of international and historical examples, and partial experiences of workers democracy in mass workers struggles, but must attempt systematically to show the complete infringement and hemming in of proletarian democracy by the framework of the bourgeois democratic state. Every example of coalitionist manoeuvrings, of combining of votes of Labour forces with Tories, of violation of decisions of the workers organisations by the parliamentary clique, must be utilised to convince the widest possible sections of the workers that the bourgeois parliamentary system, far from being the highest, or even the sole, form of democracy is on the contrary an obstacle to, and incompatible with real workers democracy. It is necessary through campaigns for replacement and expulsion of notorious rightists, election of all officials, the responsibility of elected representatives to the workers organisations, for the subordination of the Parliamentary Labour Party to the conferences of the workers organisations, for the election of the government and party leader by the Party Conference, and above all through experiences of workers democracy emerging from mass struggles, to convince the working class of the qualitatively higher form of democracy represented by proletarian democracy and of the way in which not merely the institution of private property but the bourgeois democratic institutions are themselves a barrier to the development of such democracy.

Within this general framework of advance it is particularly necessary, as a radicalisation of the working class taking it beyond its bankrupt leadership progresses, to advance slogans of government which increasingly counterpose all developments of proletarian democracy to purely

parliamentarist conceptions of government. Such a line is of particular significance in conditions where both general theoretical considerations (the necessity of at least partial experiences of organs going beyond the bounds of the bourgeois state to bring not merely a vanguard but the masses to a realisation of the need for a workers state and workers power), international experience (Chile, Portugal), and considerations of the specific nature of the Labour Party (extreme political dominance with extreme organisational flexibility), make it clear that the working class will act beyond the framework of the Labour Party, as in 1926 even up to the creation of embryonic organs of dual power, before it makes a clear political rupture with that party – indeed it is clear that experiences of such a character are a clear precondition for bringing about a rupture of the masses with reformism and with their illusions in the bourgeois democratic parliamentary institutions.

Under these circumstances the general formula advanced by the Transitional Programme, to demand of the reformist organisations and leaders of the workers parties that they break with the bourgeoisie, retains its full validity not merely on partial questions (to demonstrate their refusal to break with the social contract, the Healey measures, etc.) but also to demonstrate their refusal to break with the bourgeois state and its democratic institutions. It is necessary to advance under suitable circumstances slogans clearly counterposing a governmental alternative based on the workers organisations to a parliamentary one, even where the composition of the government would be reformist leaders. In the event of a general strike or similar mass upsurge creating democratic organs of mass struggle it is necessary to advance formulas of the character of a government based on Councils of Action. In circumstances where a clear counterposition on central questions exists between the policy of the mass workers organisations and that of the parliamentary leadership, it is necessary to demand a Labour government responsible to the organisations of the working class and not to Parliament.

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INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS LATIN AMERICA

ERNEST MANDEL

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Since then the article has been widely and frequently quoted and we have received many requests for photocopies. It still remains one of the key contributions on Latin America and its central theses have been fully confirmed by subsequent studies.

We reprint it here so it can receive a wider readership in the English-speaking world.

1. Imperialist capital re-orientates to manufacturing industry.

In the course of the past fifteen years there has been a major change in the area of investment of imperialist capital in Latin America. Although the sector producing primary materials was the traditionally favoured area, a relatively large share of imperialist capital has been invested in the manufacturing sector in recent years. This change has been so marked that by the end of 1966, investment in manufacturing industries had become the most important sector of private foreign capital in Latin America. At this time the division between different sectors of investment was as follows:

	\$ million
Manufacturing industry	5,261
Oil industry (including oil distribution)	4,878
Mining	1,697
Miscellaneous (including plantations, banking, insurance, public service)	3,828
Total:	\$ 15,664 million

(source O.E.C.D.)

As this development has gone further since then, it is likely that by now 40-45 per cent of imperialist investment in Latin America is in the industrial sector and that the 50 per cent mark will be passed in the not too distant future.

The European imperialist powers - especially German imperialism - have undoubtedly played a pioneering role in this process. The big West German monopoly trusts have made a great drive to penetrate Latin America in recent years. These investments have been concentrated almost exclusively in manufacturing industries. American trusts, risking losing important positions (notably their predom-

inance in the Latin American car industry), have been forced to react and follow the trend.

This move by American monopolies nevertheless has deeper roots than a simple reaction to the reappearance of European trusts on the Latin American market. The constant fall in prices of primary materials relative to manufactured products, has provoked a relative fall in the rate of profit in numerous primary sectors. The normal reaction of capital confronted with such a fall is to switch investment from these sectors to those where the rate of profit is higher. This is particularly the case with a series of sectors of manufacturing industries, like the chemicals industry, petrochemicals, electronics, pharmaceuticals, electrical appliances etc.

To give a few examples: in the north-east of Brazil, just in the last few years, the following imperialist firms have established subsidiaries (generally in association with Brazilian capital): General Electric, Dow Chemical, Union Carbide, Pirelli, Phillips, Robert Bosch, General Foods, Fives-Lille, Societe europeenne d'expansion horlogere, etc.

The Capuava petrochemicals complex in Brazil has been created with the participation of not only the World Bank, but the Bank of Worms and the Banque Francaise du commerce exterieur. Shell of Brazil is also to contribute a plant. *Badische Anilin* has just taken a 60 per cent share in one of the major Brazilian chemicals companies, *Suvini*. The Brazilian chemical group *Maniquera* has associated with the American trust, FMC Corporation, and the British trust Laporte Industries Limited. Pechiney is collaborating with the Brazilian ASA to establish an aluminium factory near Recife.

The 'joint ventures' formula has been universally extolled as the best way of 'overcoming nationalistic resistance to foreign capital'. In fact, as expressed by the typical representative of big Brazilian capital, Roberto de Oliveira Compos, national shareholders are 'extremely interested' in the possibilities of such collaboration.

Comrade Vitale, in his pamphlet, *Y despues del Cuatro, Que?* (Ediciones Prensa Latinoamericana, Santiago de Chile), quotes an impressive list of joint enterprises created in the last few years in Chile: Rockwell Standard has associated with two Chilean companies for the production of spare parts for cars: General Motors has associated with Automotora del Pacifico; Philips, RCA Victor and Electromet have invested in the Chilean electronics industry, Phizer and Parke-Davis in pharmaceuticals, and so on. (p. 27). Vitale quotes an article in the review *Punto Final* which states that out of the 160 most important Chilean firms,

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More than half have foreign shareholders.

2. The proportion of industry in total production has increased.

The immediate result of this change in orientation of imperialist investment has been a growth in the proportion of GNP deriving from industrial production in a whole series of Latin American countries. This is clearly not a uniform movement. It has scarcely touched the Central American countries, Paraguay or Ecuador. In Argentina it was sharply restricted. Nevertheless, in the fourteen years from 1953–1966, there was a marked change in a whole series of cases.

It is clear that this increase of the proportion of industry in GNP, resulting from the increase in investment of foreign capital in the industrial sector, has been accompanied, not by a reduction, but by an *increase* in the economic dependence of these countries in relation to imperialism. This increase in dependence can be illustrated by the following phenomena:

All the machinery and a large part of the raw materials necessary to industrialisation have to be imported. Because of this, the dependence of the economy on income from exports (still essentially of primary products)¹ is accentuated, and all new deterioration in the terms of trade provokes an abrupt halt in industrialisation, with all the convulsions that follow from that.

A large part of the real resources which finance foreign investment are mobilised on the spot, thereby draining the capital market and retarding primitive accumulation of 'national' capital.

Under the impulse of private foreign capital, industrialisation causes not only a continual outflow of dividends, interest, etc., but also a continual influx of technicians and highly-paid directors, who in their turn accelerate the net outflow of income from these countries.

For example, in 1967/8, six Latin American countries (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela and Chile), which are also the most industrialised in the continent, were paying out over 25 per cent per annum of their total income from exports as return on foreign investments and the foreign debts they had contracted. (International Monetary Fund: *Balance of Payments Yearbook*, vol. 20).

The Brazilian marxist economist, Theotônio Dos Santos publishes a table in his *Dependencia economica y Cambio Revolucionario* (Editorial Nueva Izquierda, Caracas, 1970), from which he concludes that net North American investment in Latin America for the period 1957–1964 reached \$ 1,500 million, of which less than \$ 180 million was actually exported from the United States, the rest coming either from undistributed returns (i.e. from the surplus value produced by Latin American workers), or from drawing on the local capital market, and banking credits. The sum of \$ 180 million actually going from the US to Latin America during this period should be compared with the sum of \$ 630 million transferred in the same period from Latin America to the US in dividends, interest, etc.

3. The Process of Uneven Development

'Industrialisation' under the impulse of foreign capital investment does not produce the classical effects of industrialisation experienced in the imperialist countries during the nineteenth century.

There is no cumulative growth, no diffusion of industrial techniques to increasingly large sectors of the economy, no major reduction in unemployment, no increase in autonomy of economic policy, and so on. The reasons for this divergence from the old historical norm are easy to understand. They are all related to the dominant context of the international imperialist economy, to the form of industrialisation, and to the growth in dependence which follows from it.

The industries introduced by foreign monopoly capital are hyper-modern industries employing relatively little labour². There is no radical agrarian revolution, and therefore no large-scale reintegration of the rural population into commercial circuits, no division of labour extended into the

country-side, no great expansion of the national market. The rural exodus is accelerated primarily in the form of a marginal urban population which partially replaces the marginal rural population. (Theotônio Dos Santos, *op.cit.*, pp 28–29). The landless peasantry is transformed neither into rural proletariat, nor urban proletariat, but into urban *lumpen proletariat*.

The considerable drain which imperialist trusts make on the internal capital market in Latin America, and the retarding of the primitive accumulation of 'national' capital resulting from this, hold back even more the diffusion of industrial techniques, and the process of industrialisation in breadth and depth which small and middle-sized capitalist enterprises carry out.

The small size of the national market, a correlative of the absence of cumulative economic growth, therefore has a paradoxical result: foreign imperialist trusts established in Latin America in their turn become advocates of a Latin American common market. They aim by this policy, not so much to defend themselves by a common tariff against the influx of merchandise imported from the US, Japan or Western Europe, as to provide an outlet for their industrial production which becomes stifled within restrictive national frontiers as soon as the first factories have been set up. This interest on the part of foreign trusts is shared by 'national' capital closely associated with them, especially in the heavy industrial sector.

4. Changes in the relationship of forces and alliances among the ruling classes of Latin America.

Traditionally the Latin American ruling class has existed in the form of a bloc, an *oligarchy* (landowners and comprador bourgeoisie), in alliance with imperialism. Living essentially on exports, these two forces were favourable to free trade policy and collided with the interests of the so-called 'national industrial' bourgeoisie whose interests demanded protection against the influx of cheap imperialist products. The conflict between imperialism in alliance with the oligarchy, and the 'national' bourgeoisie, was at the same time a real conflict and a limited one. A real conflict because it was a struggle for the redistribution of surplus value (from social surplus product) produced in Latin America; the 'national' bourgeoisie wished to reduce the share of returns going to imperialism, with a view to increasing its own share and thus stimulating a more or less classic industrialisation process. A limited conflict because the social importance of the proletariat was increasing more rapidly so that the national bourgeoisie feared a revolutionary process might overthrow the regime of private property on which its own existence as a class depended. It was therefore necessary for it to lead a movement of *reform* and not a revolutionary anti-imperialist movement.

In order to succeed in this movement for reform of the classic socio-economic structures of Latin America, the 'national' bourgeoisie was prepared to exercise pressure on imperialism with the aid of carefully contained and channeled mass mobilisations. The regimes of Cardenas in Mexico, Peron in Argentina, and Vargas and Quadros in Brazil, marked the highest achievement of which the 'national bourgeoisie of Latin America was capable. The end of these regimes marked at the same time the failure and the resignation of this bourgeoisie, their fear of a revolutionary mobilisation of the masses outweighing their desire for an increased share of the profits, especially after they began to lose their grip on the mass movement.

With the economic transformation effected during the last fifteen years, these traditional political structures have also been transformed. The objective basis for the alliance of 'oligarchy and imperialism' has been reduced. The autonomy of the 'national' industrial bourgeoisie disappears in the face of the imperialist manufacturing trusts. Incapable of sustaining a real struggle to compete with these trusts, 'national' industrial capital has a tendency to associate with them. The number of joining enterpris-

es is continually on the increase. National legislation, more moreover, pushes foreign capital into this course: the case of the car industry is typical in this respect.

So there gradually emerges a new alliance, an association of 'imperialist capital-national industrial capital' with an interest in weakening the oligarchic sectors - not only the big landowners and exporters, but even traditional mining capital. The joint interest of this new bloc is that of assuring even a widening of the internal market and of freeing resources and capital to finance industrialisation and the importation of equipment. The 'industrial capital' opposition to the 'oligarchy' will combine with an opposition to the old oligarchy formed by 'industrial capital plus imperialist manufacturing trusts' (or more precisely, 'industrial capital dominated by imperialist manufacturing trusts').

Comrade Hugo Blanco is therefore perfectly right when he talks of the appearance of a *new oligarchy in place of the old* (*Rouge*, 12 October 1970). However the interlocking of interests of the imperialist manufacturing sector and the 'national' bourgeois layers with an interest in industrialisation, is such that no global anti-imperialist strategy is conceivable, even for purely tactical reasons, for this new-style 'national' bourgeoisie. (A wing of it, moreover, tends to become 'bureaucratised', to be transformed into a layer of administrators directing a nationalised sector, with the aim of stimulating simultaneously private accumulation of industrial capital in general and their own private fortune in particular). The test of such partial anti-imperialist measures, of an effective even if small scale reduction of the dependence of Latin American countries on imperialism, is in fact no longer to be found in the nationalisation of such a mining enterprise or plantation but in the nationalisation of manufacturing enterprises⁴. Not only is that impossible for the representatives of the 'new oligarchy', but the nationalisation measures they carry out are always accompanied by high compensation which allows imperialist capital to do precisely what it requires: to leave the primary materials sectors for manufacturing industry without social convulsions or violent ruptures.

5. The attitude of Imperialism.

The most intelligent representatives of imperialism have fully understood the political and social implications of this

modification of their own interests in Latin America. If European imperialists have played a pioneering role in this field too, the most significant development is the complete recognition of these changes by American imperialism. This is expressed fully in the Rockefeller report. The significance of this recognition lies in the fact that the Rockefeller family, with its great interests concentrated in Latin American oil, once personified the classic attitude of American imperialism towards Latin America, and today represents the changes which are taking place.

One could quote the whole Rockefeller report, which is dominated from beginning to end by an awakened consciousness of the phenomenon we have described. But it will undoubtedly be enough to mention the following passage:-

In the same way that the other American republics depend on the United States for their capital goods needs, the US depends on them for a vast market for our manufactured products. And as these countries regard the US as a market for their raw materials, by selling which they can buy capital goods for their own development, the US regards these raw materials as necessary to our industries, on which the employment of so many of our citizens depends.

But these forces of economic interdependence (sic) are changing and must change. A growing two-way flow of trade in industrial products must replace the present exchange of manufactured goods for raw materials.

(Quality of Life in the Americas. Text of the Rockefeller Mission Report, The Department of State Bulletin, 8 December 1969, our emphasis).

The law discovered by Marx, according to which it is social existence which determines consciousness, has definitely not lost its truth, if one looks at the changes in the consciousness of the American bourgeoisie concerning Latin America. It is necessary to look to this modification of imperialist interests for an explanation of the strange complacency that American imperialism had so far shown in relation to the nationalisations by General Velasco, by General Ovando, and even those being prepared by Salvador Allende.⁵ 'Pay compensation and allow re-investment in the manufacturing sector of your country: that's all we ask' - implying: 'for in this way our hold on your economy and society will be re-inforced and at the same time it will be less strongly contested by the masses'. Such is the attitude of imperialism to 'military reformism'.⁶



CHILE: GENERALS ON PARADE

6. The interrelation of 'Military Reformism' & Imperialism

It would clearly be too simple to reduce the whole problem of the attitude of imperialism to 'military reformism' to the single factor of immediate economic interest. There is a social interest or more exactly socio-political-military interest, which has priority over the material interests of one section or another of the American bourgeoisie, no matter whether it is producing raw materials or manufactured goods. With the victory of the Cuban revolution Latin America entered a period of deep social convulsions. This period has not yet ended and will be prolonged through the next decade at least. The traditional oligarchy is absolutely powerless to crush or effectively repress the social forces demanding radical change in the continent. It is therefore vital for imperialism to support and foster political forces capable of channelling potential revolutionary energies in a direction which does not lead beyond the capitalist mode of production and therefore beyond the international capitalist system.

It is no exaggeration to say that these considerations are to be found in the very text of Nelson Rockefeller's report. Here are some of the reflections of the honourable governor of the state of New York:

....The dynamics of industrialisation and modernisation have stretched the fabric of the social and political structures. The situation is dominated by political and social instability, by pressure which has built up in favour of a radical solution to problems, and an increased tendency towards national independence in relation to the United States.

....The ferment of nihilism and anarchism is spreading throughout the hemisphere.

....Most of the American republics have not yet mobilised the resources necessary for a broad industrialisation of their economies. In differing degrees they need: more and better education, a more effective system for channelling national savings into capital formation and industrial investment, laws which protect the public interest while encouraging the spirit of enterprise, and expanding government services to support industrial growth.

....The dilemma of governments is the following: they know that the co-operation and participation of the United States can contribute greatly to accelerating the realisation of their goals of development, but their feeling of political legitimacy may depend on the degree of independence they are able to maintain in relation to the United States.

....Although it is not yet widely recognised, the military and the Catholic church are also among the forces today agitating for change in the other American republics. This is a new role for them.

....In many Central and South American countries, the army is the most important political grouping in society. The military are symbols of power, authority and sovereignty, as well as the focus of national pride. They have traditionally been considered the ultimate arbitrators of the good of the nation.

....In brief, a new type of military is appearing, and often becoming a major force for constructive social change (!) in the American republics. Motivated by a growing impatience with corruption, inefficiency and stagnating political order, the new military are ready to adapt their authoritarian traditions to the goals of economic and social progress.

(*Quality of Life in the Americas*, op.cit. pp. 502, 503, 504, 505).

Military reformism – as the final stand before 'Castroite or anarchist subversion' – is the strategic line which American imperialism appears to have adopted since the Rockefeller report.

7. 'Military Reformism' and mass movements.

Contrary to the optimistic forecasts of the gradualist school, the form of industrialisation typical of Latin America in the past fifteen years – industrialisation in strict association with imperialist trusts and under their direction – has brought about not a reduction but an increase in social tensions. The explosive character of the social situation is determined by the growth of unemployment and underemployment; the effects of galloping inflation on the standard of living of the masses – sometimes accompanied by a brutal reduction in real wages, as

happened in Argentina and Brazil, and in Bolivia at the time of the Barrientos dictatorship – the distortions of the educational system, which produces equally massive intellectual unemployment (7), the permanent crisis of small and middling enterprises, including small and middle peasants, growing indebtedness in the countryside and so on.

This growth of social tensions implies an increasingly marked radicalisation of the masses, and not only of the vanguard sectors. The once isolated case of the mining proletariat of Bolivia, has today found a powerful replica in the proletariat of Cordoba and Rosario; it is now only a question of time before phenomena of the same kind are reproduced in the proletariat of Chile, Brazil and elsewhere.

In these conditions, the attitude of 'military reformism' to the mass movement must differ greatly from that of the bonapartist leaders who expressed the interests of the 'national' industrial bourgeoisie of former times, such as Cardenas, Peron and Vargas.

The Cardenas, Perons and Vargases had an interest in mobilising the workers, in so far as they were for the most part working for imperialism or for the oligarchy, and where they – the workers – and not the 'national' bourgeoisie, would pay the immediate price for this mobilisation. (The 'national' bourgeoisie could even hope later on to transform a part of this price, through various economic and financial mechanisms, into capital accumulation for 'national' industry). The Velascos and their eventual imitators in Argentina, Brazil and elsewhere, have no interest in bringing about such a mobilisation, for the price would be paid first of all by manufacturing industry, in which the major part of the proletariat now works.

The essential social function of the military reformist regimes is therefore not to mobilise the masses in order to modify the relationship of forces with imperialism. On the contrary, it is to contain the mass movement, in association with imperialism and with its support, offering its reforms and a vaguely anti-imperialist, socialising phraseology. The difference lies in the form of struggle against the 'dangers of subversion': repression and terrorism pure and simple in the case of the bourgeois 'gorillas'; reforms, anti-imperialist demagoguery and 'muted' repression in the case of military reformism. But 'muted' repression can be transformed into bloody repression from one day to the next, as soon as the mass movement goes beyond the narrow limits which the 'enlightened' dictatorship has set it.

That doesn't mean that there are no conflicts of real



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interests among fractions of the native ruling classes, fractions of imperialism and political forces (especially military tendencies) which make an effort to become more independent of the social forces they are supposed to represent. These conflicts exist, they are important and must be integrated into our general analysis, so that we can understand the vicissitudes of the political, social and economic evolution of each specific Latin American country at a specific moment. We have simply tried to define what appears to us to be the *general* tendency and meaning of this evolution, without claiming thereby to resolve all the problems.

Nor does this analysis mean that the toiling masses and the revolutionary organisations should be indifferent to the precise forms worn by the exploitation and oppression they suffer. Every legal or semi-legal possibility for pursuing work of propaganda, agitation and organisation of the vanguard must be fully exploited. Every new reduction of suppression of the freedoms of workers' organisations must be considered as a blow to the movement, and must be vigorously fought.

But it is necessary to avoid all illusions in any kind of return to constitutional regimes of classic bourgeois parliamentary democracy, in any return to an environment in which the mass movement could gradually organise and grow progressively and legally. That corresponds with neither the intentions nor the possibilities of the regimes of military reformism, nor with the interests of the 'new oligarchy' which supports them.

Above all, it does not correspond to the relationship of forces. The ruling classes in Latin America are too weak to be able to afford the luxury of a regime which could temporarily assure their stability at the price of a real rise in the standard of living of the masses.

The perspective which flows from this analysis is of a succession of pre-revolutionary and revolutionary convulsions, intersected by temporary defeats and by attempts on the part of the Latin American bourgeoisie to find solutions of the 'military reformist' type; but they will be attempts which lead, after a certain time, to new convulsions and new trials of strength. The building of an adequate revolutionary leadership of the proletariat and semi-proletariat of town and countryside, is the only way out of the impasse. It is more than ever the central task. The strategy of armed struggle, closely linked and increasingly integrated with the mass movement, in which a growing penetration must be assured: this is the only way to build this revolutionary party in the present historical context of most of the Latin American countries.

Notes.

1. There is nevertheless an important exception. The exports of manufactured products from Brazil have shown a very rapid increase in the last period. According to the Brazilian marxist economist Ruy Mauro Marini, these exports rose from an index of 100 in 1962 to 102 in 1963, 152 in 1964, 317 in 1965 and 272 in 1966. (*Subdesarrollo y revolucion*, p. 115. Siglo Veintiuno Editores S.A., Mexico, 1969).

2. Here are two striking examples. The first concerns Brazil: from 1950 to 1960 manufacturing production increased at an average annual rate of over 9%, the urban population at an average annual rate of 6%, total population of the country at a rate of 3.1%, and industrial employment at barely 3% (Ruy Mauro Marini: *Subdesarrollo y revolucion*, Siglo Veintiuno Editores, Mexico 1969, p. 73). That means that total underemployment has actually grown, and that urban unemployment has grown considerably. The second example is from Colombia. From 1951 to 1960 the urban population grew by 2.6 million. In the same period, industrial employment did not even increase by 100,000. Mario Arrubla: *Estudios sobre el subdesarrollo colombiano*, Editorial La Oveja Negra, Medellin, 1969). Andre Gunder Frank, in his latest book: *Lumpenburguesia, Lumpen-desarrollo* (Editorial Nueva Izquierda, Caracas, 1970), quotes the following net figures: while the share of industrial production in the gross national production of Latin America went from 11% in 1925 to 19% in 1950, 22% in 1960 and 23% in 1967, industrial employment represented only 14% of the total civilian labour force in each of these years! (p. 110).

3. For example, the recent conflict in Ecuador between the Velasco Ibarra dictatorship and the banana exporters who refused to submit to a commercial, banking and monetary policy which

would permit the mobilisation of the country's social surplus production for the purpose of industrialisation.

4. Clearly this does not mean that revolutionaries should remain indifferent to such nationalisations, and that they should not give them critical support against attacks from imperialism or the oligarchy. But it lends much more weight to combined demands for nationalisation *without compensation or return sale and under workers' control*. In particular, it should re-orientate revolutionary propaganda towards the nationalisation of the whole of foreign capital, without priority for that invested in the primary producing sector.

5. I will allow myself to recall that we predicted this turn in the early '60s. Among the imperialist bourgeoisie the interests of those who see the industrialisation of the under-developed countries as the strengthening of a *potential competitor* come into conflict with those who see it above all as the emergence of *potential clients*. Usually these conflicts tend to be settled in favour of the second group, which is that of the big monopolies based mainly on the production of capitalist goods. (*Marxist Economic Theory*, vol II, p. 480, Merlin Press, 1968; first published in English 1962).

6. If imperialism and the Chilean bourgeoisie are afraid of Allende's government, it is not for its economic programme, but because of the dynamics of the mass struggle which it runs the risk of unleashing. The choice with which they are confronted is this: Will those struggles develop further if the Allende period takes its constitutional course, or will they go further still if there is an attempt to prevent Allende from governing?

7. During the period 1950-1965, a whole series of Latin American countries experienced an annual growth of 10% or more in the number of university students. This growth was notable in the cases of Venezuela, Chile, Costa Rica, Trinidad, Mexico, Nicaragua and Ecuador. Clearly the absence of outlets in industry for these intellectuals has increased the pressure for a State sector capable of increasing the number of jobs for university graduates.

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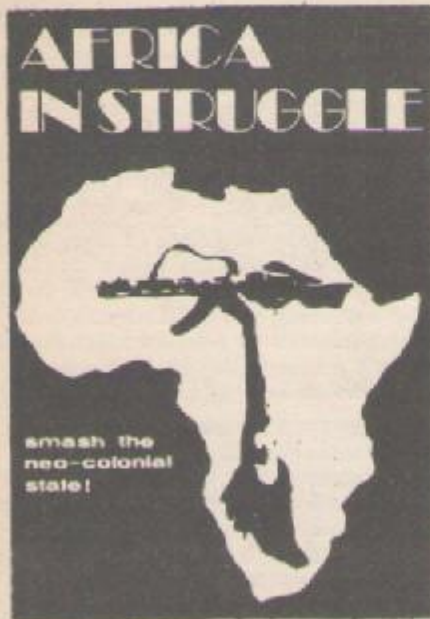
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THE NATION IN THE TRANSITIONAL EPOCH

ALAN FREEMAN

1 INTRODUCTION

No area of human political action has demanded more clarity and decisiveness from socialists than national struggles: that is, struggles for the formation of nations, for the secession of nations, and of nation against nation. For one-and-a-half centuries, the hallmark of authentic class conscious socialism has been support for the struggles of the oppressed nations, vigorous opposition to the wars of conquest and enslavement waged by the imperialist nations, and rigid adherence to the principle of working class independence from all other classes.

The last fifteen years have seen severe tests of these principles in the workers movement at the hands of the anti-imperialist struggles which opened up and inflamed the present phase of revolutionary ferment in Western Europe. A whole generation of revolutionaries owe their existence to the courage, sacrifice and successes of Vietnamese, Cuban, Algerian, Irish and Angolan fighters against the imperialist countries. This generation evolved outside the Social Democratic and Communist Parties precisely because these traditional socialist organisations refused to uphold the traditions of socialism.

These same years have also seen the opening of national struggles of a new kind – in the imperialist heartlands themselves. Imperialism, in its phase of decay, is opening the lid which it closed a hundred years ago on the national minorities of Western Europe. Just as the struggle of the Catalan workers against France's forces developed into one of the most heroic, advanced and testing for the European revolutionary movement in the pre-war years, so the Basque struggle promises the same against Franco's heirs. In France, a

new awakening of nationalist sentiment and struggle in Brittany and in Occitanie has now been joined by the eruption of national struggle in Corsica.

In Britain, the rise of Scottish and Welsh nationalism has been equally pronounced; but instead of the direct action of the masses in struggle, it has taken the opposite form of a rise of parliamentary nationalist parties. But if anything, its effect on the stability of the bourgeois order has been equally spectacular. The Scottish National Party has virtually replaced the Tory Party as the electoral party of the bourgeoisie in Scotland, has brought on one of the major political crises of the Labour Government over devolution, and in regional council by-elections has shown that it can make serious inroads into Labour's working class electoral base. This was capped in January with the formation of a new devolutionist Labour Party: the Scottish Labour Party, which has so far involved two Labour MPs, a solid chunk of its apparatus, and appears to be well on the way to a four-figure membership.

A practical and theoretical challenge to Marxism

The emergence of these new nationalist movements throws down a challenge to Marxism. The challenge is very serious on nearly every occasion when socialism has failed the working class, its failure has turned on one or other aspect of nationalist ideology; and all its major successes have made use of the subtle and difficult tactic of prising loose the weapon of nationalism from the hands of the bourgeoisie

DISCUSSION

This article is a discussion article and does not represent the position of International or of the IMG. It is an abridged version of a much longer article intended for subsequent publication, which we are printing in this form because of the urgency of initiating a serious discussion on the national question amongst revolutionary marxists.

In the context of a new rise of national struggle in Europe, with the continuation of the ongoing struggle in Ireland, the need for clarity among British marxists on the national question has never been greater. We invite our readers to contribute to a very necessary debate on this question by submitting articles for publication in future issues

and harnessing it in the service of the revolution — without simultaneously tying the working class to it.

The *practical* challenge to Marxism is clear: in the coming phase of revolutionary upsurge in Europe, it must satisfy three tasks:

- (i) win the workers movement to an understanding of its duties towards the national minorities and of their revolutionary potential,
- (ii) win over to Marxism those forces in the 'peripheral nationalities' of Europe who are being impelled by the march of events in a revolutionary socialist direction,
- (iii) fight tooth and nail in the workers movement against the use of nationalism by reactionary class forces.

With this practical challenge comes a theoretical challenge. The collapse of the Second International shows how serious this is. In theoretical struggle on national questions, there is no room for any lack of clarity or principle. Only the most rigorous theoretical analysis can provide the basis for the practical victories which are needed.

Any serious analysis of the national question in Western Europe must start from the positions of Lenin and the debates around them in the early 1900s. To do otherwise is not just to throw away the contribution of one of the most consistent, comprehensive and inventive Marxist writers on the national question: far more important, it is to throw away the accumulated experience of the workers movement itself. But Lenin wrote in the period of *ascendance* of imperialism, when it had just become a world system and laid the foundations of the world market. He therefore addressed himself to two situations which preoccupied Marxists of the time: the *annexation* of small nations during the formation of large nation-states of Europe, and the *imperialist enslavement* of foreign territory by the imperialist powers and by finance capital.

The national struggle of each was dominated by the struggle of the national bourgeoisie, emerging out of backward conditions to become an independent political force. The proletariat was not as yet the dominant non-bourgeois force. Not only were the large mass of producers the peasantry, but they produced under either semi-feudal or petty-commodity conditions. Furthermore, the reactionary feudal classes still held a great deal of political sway and had to be overcome as the precondition for an untrammelled struggle against the bourgeoisie. In short, the bourgeois-democratic revolution in all these countries was incomplete.

For this reason, the assertion of *bourgeois-democratic* rights and in particular the *right to self-determination* was the pivot of revolutionary strategy, not only in the oppressed nations but everywhere the bourgeoisie was struggling to conquer political rights against reactionary classes — as in Russia.

Firstly, the workers had to ensure the completion of the bourgeois tasks of the revolution to secure the best possible conditions for their own independent role: elimination of reactionary classes and pre-capitalist production on the land; constituting large-scale industrial production to ensure the social predominance of the proletariat and the economic preconditions which would enable it to embark on the

building of socialism; and securing minimal bourgeois democratic rights to give the workers freedom of operation and organisation in the class struggle.

Secondly, they had to secure the most effective *class alliance* against the bourgeoisie and the reactionary classes. An alliance with the *peasantry* in particular was needed, and Lenin thought that the best way to do this was to offer them the *completion* of the democratic tasks of the bourgeois revolution under the dictatorship of the workers and peasantry, without challenging bourgeois production relations in themselves. This position of Lenin, concretised in the slogan of the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry', was rejected by Trotsky, who instead advocated *proceeding directly to the socialist tasks of the revolution* after the seizure of power by the workers, maintaining the alliance with the peasantry through socialist and democratic measures in their favour carried through by the workers in power.

But neither of these positions assist us in dealing with the actual problems of the nations of Western Europe today, where the tasks of the bourgeois revolution are complete, where we are dealing with imperialism not in the ascendant but in *decline*, where the bourgeoisie has generally abandoned national aspirations, and where its rare national projections (such as in Scotland) are attempts not to *constitute itself a nation* against a stronger and more aggressive external bourgeoisie, but on the contrary aim at *reviving latent national institutions* in an effort to escape the clutches of its more *enfeebled and decrepit* sections.

When in 1917 Lenin abandoned his old positions and espoused those of Trotsky, he did not merely accept in practice the theory of permanent revolution. On the contrary, he fundamentally modified all his previous thinking with an understanding of the role of *proletarian* democracy as a qualitatively higher form of democracy than bourgeois democracy, which could solve both the bourgeois-democratic tasks of the revolution and its socialist tasks. This understanding, sacrificed by the Third International on the altar of 'building socialism in one country', has passed into the hands of the Trotskyist movement alone.

All Lenin's writings from 1917 consistently incorporate this idea; but he *never thoroughly reworded his positions on the national question* — a failure which has cost the socialist movement dear, as it was never immunised against the disease of the 'stages' theory of revolution with which Stalinism has poisoned the workers' movement.

This defines the scope of the present article. Practically, it is aimed at opening a debate on the question of national minorities in Europe. Theoretically, it aims to demonstrate that a rich new vein of insight and clarity exists on the national question through a *Trotskyist critique of Lenin's positions*: through bringing to bear the Trotskyist movement's understanding of the revolutionary role of the proletariat in relation to democratic, bourgeois tasks and by applying this to and synthesising it with Lenin's ideas and doctrines on the national question. It aims to show that such a theoretical enterprise cannot fail to call for a new synthesis of Trotskyist thinking on the revolutionary process.

2 LENIN, NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

Lenin's position on the national question forms an integral part of his conception of the epoch, as being one in which the basic bourgeois tasks of creating a system of unified capitalist nations and a world market have been satisfied, in which it develops monopoly, imperialism, inter-imperialism wars, and in which revolutionary upsurges of the proletariat break out. Although his analysis of imperialism was not set out until 1916, the idea that capitalism has exhausted its progressive potentialities is a consistent theme throughout his work. His position can be summed up in two phrases: international unity and independence of the proletariat,

completely consistent democracy.

From this standpoint, Lenin defends the three cardinal and inter-related positions we quoted at the beginning: support for the struggles of the oppressed nations, vigorous opposition to the wars of conquest and enslavement waged by the imperialist nations, and rigid adherence in either case to the principle of working class independence from all other classes. This is best illustrated by reference to the war of 1914–1918 and to the debate on self-determination. We do not, for the purpose of this article, propose to enter into the otherwise important debate on cultural-national

autonomy.

The great dividing line which separates Leninism from Social Democracy was drawn by the national question in 1914. The Social Democrats supported their own bourgeoisies, and the revolutionaries did not. And as Lenin pointed out, once a workers party espouses the nationalism of its own bourgeoisie, willy nilly it starts on a course which leads it to suppress the national rights of all those people oppressed by its own bourgeoisie; and willy nilly it subordinates the working class to the bourgeoisie.

Because of the need for *consistent democracy*, the working class cannot support any bourgeoisie above any other: this does not mean support for *no wars at all*, but *no support for wars waged to give special privileges to one section of the bourgeoisie* – inter-imperialist wars or wars of oppression or annexation. Because of the need for *proletarian internationalism*, the working class cannot allow itself to be used in the special interest of one section of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat of another country: the only way in which the unity of the working class can be extended is through respect of each section of the workers movement for the rights of others.

The Bolsheviks stood almost alone at the beginning of the war. Amongst those who stood with them, the figures of Luxemburg and Liebknecht stand largest. Yet Lenin took up the most determined opposition to Luxemburg in 1916 on the question of the *right to self-determination*, the opposite side of the coin to his position on wars of annexation or enslavement.

The Polish social democrats had to deal with a Polish nationalism which played a pernicious reactionary role in the domestic and international class struggle, and even within the Polish workers movement itself – which was split along nationalist lines. Rosa Luxemburg developed a position in response to this, beginning in 1896, that no class had any serious political interest in Polish separation, and in particular not the Polish working class. From this position, which led her to argue (in agreement with Lenin) that Polish social democrats should not put forward the demand for Polish independence, she went further to reject support *in general* for the right of self-determination.

In his polemic against Luxemburg, Lenin points out that sectarian rejection of support for the struggle of oppressed nationalities in fact leads quickly to great-power chauvinism:

'When, in her anxiety not to "assist" the nationalist bourgeoisie of Poland, Rosa Luxemburg rejects the *right to secession* in the programme of the Marxists in *Russia*, she is in fact assisting the Great-Russian Black Hundreds. She is in fact assisting opportunist tolerance of the privileges (and worse than privileges) of the Great Russians.'

(Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, p.23)

He advocates a consistent application of the *right to self-determination*, without implying by this support for the slogan of independence in any particular case. From this it follows logically that the working class must support wars or struggles of the people of an oppressed country against attempts to annex it or to colonise it. To fail in this would objectively be to play into the hands of the large nation bourgeoisie in trying to gain *special privileges*, as opposed to *supporting a struggle for equality*.

However, this does not mean universal support for the *programme* of the nationalist bourgeoisie. On the contrary, in general socialists are in favour of the ultimate disappearance of *all* national boundaries. However, Lenin points out that this can occur only *after* national boundaries have been redrawn under socialism 'in accordance with the will of the population', only *after* 'complete democracy in all spheres' has been achieved and the state begins to wither away – for precisely as the state begins to wither away, so 'national boundaries which are synonymous with state political boundaries under such conditions will also wither away.'

What it does mean is a clear distinction between the tasks of socialists in the oppressed and the oppressor nations.

'This example brings us...to the question of the *internationalist* education of the working class. Can such education...be *concretely* identical in great, oppressor nations and in small, oppressed nations, in annexing nations and in annex-

ed nations? Obviously not...

'In the internationalist education of the workers of oppressor countries, emphasis must necessarily be laid on their advocating freedom for the oppressed countries to secede and their fighting for it. Without this there can be *no internationalism*: it is our right and duty to treat every social democrat of an oppressor nation who *fails* to conduct such propaganda as a scoundrel and an imperialist. This is an absolute demand, even where the *chance* of secession being possible and "practicable" before the introduction of socialism is only one in a thousand...

'On the other hand, a social democrat from a small nation must emphasise in his agitation the *second* word of our general formula "voluntary integration" of nations. He may, without failing in his duties as an internationalist, be in favour of *both* the political independence of his nation and its integration with the neighbouring state of X, Y, Z etc. But in all cases he must fight against small-nation narrow-mindedness, seclusion and isolation, consider the general subordinate the particular to the general interest.'

(Lenin, *The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up*, section 7 [Works, vol. 22])

Now it can be seen that Lenin offers no *concrete* guidance on the crucial question of when socialists in the oppressed country should or should not advocate separation, or indeed on their attitude to *any* national demand. So in relation to Poland he *accepts* that the slogan of independence should not be raised 'for the given period'. But he supports the Irish rebellion of 1916 precisely on the basis of the long existence of a mass movement against oppression of a popular character, and heaps scorn on those who termed it a 'putsch':

'The term "putsch", in its scientific sense, may be employed only when the attempt at insurrection has revealed nothing but a circle of conspirators of stupid maniacs, and has aroused no sympathy among the masses. The centuries-old Irish national movement, having passed through various stages and combinations of class interest, manifested itself, in particular in a mass National Congress in America, which called for Irish independence; it also manifested itself in street fighting led by *sections of the workers* after a long period of mass agitation, demonstrations, suppression of newspapers, etc. Anyone who calls such a rebellion a "putsch" is either a hardened reactionary, or a doctrinaire hopelessly incapable of envisaging a social revolution as a living phenomenon.'

(Lenin, *The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up*, Section 10)

What is Left Unsaid: The Tactics of Revolutionaries in the Oppressed Nations

What is at stake here is the *general conduct of revolutionaries in annexed or oppressed nations in relation to demands of separation and the demands of the national struggle*. Lenin's formula is *algebraic*: it covers a whole series of possibilities and its practical meaning depends on the variant which occurs. In each particular case, socialists have to decide whether or not to raise the demand for separation and whether or not to support given national demands or movements. Today, for example, we would not raise the slogan of separation for Scotland but we support separation for Quebec and advance that demand in Quebec. At the same time we would support the struggle on concrete national issues, such as the struggle for an elected assembly, in Scotland; whilst in both Scotland and Quebec we would fight against offering any support to bourgeois nationalist movements and parties.

But of course, it is on precisely this sort of question that all the key debates in the revolutionary socialist movement hinge. And as revolutionary socialists supporting a revolutionary International, with the task of winning the working class of the oppressed nations over to the side of the revolution, provided we are carrying out first the elementary socialist duty of consistent struggle against all oppressive actions of the bourgeoisie of the oppressor countries we have a second duty: *to discuss and decide criteria for the slogans, conduct and tactics of the working class and of revolutionaries in these countries themselves*.

Lenin's *general position* on this question is that the crucial issue is whether or not a given national struggle *advances the working class and weakens the bourgeoisie on a world*



IMG CONTINGENT ON AN INDOCHINA SOLIDARITY DEMONSTRATION

scale. This is why, for example, he is quite categorical that socialists must always support the national movements of colonial countries and advance the demand for separation in these countries. He repeatedly stresses that imperialism has 'divided the world into two great camps', and that there is a concrete, historical *difference* between Marx's time and his own as far as the alignment of world forces is concerned. In Marx's time the large capitalist nations of Europe were assembling themselves *against* feudal reaction dominated by Great Russian tsarism. In the epoch of imperialism, the main reactionary classes are no longer the feudal and aristocratic classes represented by tsarism, but the bourgeois classes of the major imperialist nations, and particularly those sections engaged in most actively promoting imperialist expansion, viz finance capital:

"In what way has the concrete situation changed between the periods of 1848-71 and 1898-1916.....? Tsarism has manifestly and indisputably ceased to be the chief mainstay of reaction, first because it is supported by international finance capital, particularly French, and secondly because of 1905. At that time the system of big national states - the democracies of Europe - was bringing democracy and socialism to the world in spite of tsarism. Marx and Engels did not live to see the period of imperialism. The system now is a handful of imperialist 'Great Powers' (five or six in number), each oppressing other nations; and this oppression is a source for artificially retarding the collapse of capitalism and artificially supporting opportunism and social-chauvinism in the imperialist nations which dominate the world." (Lenin, *ibid*, section 7)

It follows that *almost all* movements of national liberation against the main imperialist powers will have a progressive character (whilst of course this does not mean that the bourgeois leaderships of such movements are capable of carrying through any revolutionary struggle in the country concerned). In his 'Theses on the Socialist Revolution and the Right to Self-determination' submitted by the editorial board of *Socialist Democrat* to the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in April 1916, Lenin makes a threefold division: the advanced countries of Western Europe and the USA, the 'oppressor' nations; the Eastern European nations, where the 'bourgeois democratic revolution has begun but is not yet complete', and the "semi-col-

onial" countries, such as Chile, Persia and Turkey, and all the colonies, which have a combined population of 1,000 million', where the 'bourgeois-democratic movements have hardly begun, or have still a long way to go'.

In the latter, the progressive role of national struggles is so clear for Lenin that he is prepared to advocate support for even bourgeois (never mind petty-bourgeois) movements of national liberation. However, this gives us no guide in the case of *annexed nations which are not oppressed by the process of imperialist enslavement* - as is the case in Western Europe today, where the small nations are either *not* oppressed to any great degree at present (Scotland, Wales) or where their oppression is the result of an entirely different historical process. More important still, it gives us no guide in either case as to the *concrete tactics* of socialists in relation to the bourgeoisie as far as the national question is concerned - and in particular, it says nothing about the *relation between the socialist and bourgeois tasks of the revolution*. It is this which we must now move on to examine.

Self-Determination & Revolution: A Critique of Lenin

Until 1917, Lenin and the revolutionaries posed the right to self-determination 'in a largely negative sense'. Not only is the world divided up by imperialism, but 'the proletariat is divided into two great camps': those who support the imperialists - the social-chauvinists - and the advocates of revolutionary internationalism, with the vast majority under sway of the social-chauvinists. A possibly prolonged, intransigent *defence of principle* is at stake.

After 1917, the principles are the same but the emphasis is transformed: the proletariat is still divided into two great camps, but on the side of the revolution are no longer just the small band of internationalists but the whole 'soviet movement' and the Soviet Republics: the epoch of *wars and revolutions* has become the epoch of *wars and revolutions* (or as Lenin elsewhere terms it, the 'Epoch of Dictatorship of the Proletariat'). And in this situation, Lenin abandons the caution of 1914-1916 and inscribes on the banner of the International the principle that in all colonial countries - i.e. for '1,000 million people' - the task of the revolu-

tionaries is not only to pursue the national struggle but to proceed directly through it to the socialist revolution. Thus in the debate on the colonial countries at the Second Congress of the Third International, he states quite categorically (and the position is endorsed by the International):

'The Communist International should advance the proposition, with the appropriate theoretical grounding, that with the aid of the proletariat of the advanced countries, backward countries can go over to the Soviet system and, through certain stages of development, to Communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage.'

(Lenin, *Report on the Colonial Question to the Second Congress of the Third International*, Collected Works, Vol. 31).

We are still in that epoch. Furthermore, we have entered – after fifty years of retreat – a phase of that epoch which is undoubtedly pre-revolutionary in character, i.e. in which clashes of a more or less pre-revolutionary character are developing in the metropolitan world, in which the bourgeoisie is entering an intractable crisis, and in which the question is once more, 'socialism or barbarism'. We therefore have to consider the tasks of socialists in the oppressed nations, not from the standpoint of the *bourgeois* revolution, but from the standpoint of the *socialist revolution*: i.e. not in the negative sense of adding the peoples of the oppressed nations to the ranks of grudging opponents of the imperialist bourgeoisie, but of turning them into the enthusiastic supporters and leaders of the world *working class*. It is this which leads us to two crucial critiques of Lenin's pre-revolutionary writings.

The first is this: Lenin's formulations on the relation of the bourgeois to the socialist revolution are undoubtedly based on the assumption that the two *chronologically succeed* each other, that there is a definite period in which the tasks of the bourgeois revolution are completed, including the tasks of creating political democracy, *followed by* the socialist revolution. Indeed, this is the core of the different between Lenin and Trotsky. In *Two Tactics of the Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, Lenin expounds quite explicitly the strategic conceptions which he follows:

"A decisive victory of the revolution over tsarism" is the *revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry*. ... There is no-one else who is capable of gaining a decisive victory over tsarism.

'And such a victory will assume the form of a dictatorship, i.e. it is inevitably bound to rely on military force, on the arming of the masses, on an uprising, and not on institutions established by "lawful" or "peaceful" means. It can only be a dictatorship for the introduction of the reforms which are urgently and absolutely necessary for the proletariat and the peasantry will call forth the desperate resistance of the landlords, the big bourgeoisie and tsarism. Without a dictatorship it will be impossible to break down the resistance and to repel the counter-revolutionary attempts. But of course it will be a *democratic*, not a socialist, dictatorship. It will not be able (without a series of intermediary stages of revolutionary development) to affect the foundations of capitalism.... such a victory will by no means transform our revolution into a socialist revolution; the democratic revolution will

not extend beyond the scope of bourgeois social and economic relationships.'

(Lenin, *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, p 45)

The second error, flowing from this, is the assumption that the proletariat can carry through the revolutionary solution of democratic tasks without challenging bourgeois social relations *in their entirety*. If we accept the argument of *Two Tactics*, we are first drawn to the absolutely correct revolutionary position that it is in the interests of the proletariat to see the bourgeois revolution developed and extended to the maximum extent, and to organise to achieve the tasks of the bourgeois revolution in its own manner. This it does to maximise the gains which the workers can make *against* the bourgeoisie – eliminating reactionary classes on which the bourgeoisie can call for support against the working class, preventing the creation of a military-bureaucratic repressive apparatus in the hands of the bourgeoisie, etc... We are then drawn to the correct conclusion that the proletariat must push this process of independent pursuit of the democratic revolution to its logical conclusion by creating a dictatorship, in alliance with the peasantry. But then we are led to expect that this dictatorship will carry through an entire phase of developing capitalism limited to the economic tasks of capitalism, during which the bourgeoisie will patiently and obediently bow to this dictatorship and go about its economic (and political?) business.

The great value of Lenin's earlier formulations is that he admits and in fact fights energetically for the *revolutionary organisation of the working class for bourgeois democratic tasks*. Their great shortcoming, corrected only through the experience of history, is that they do not hit on the central crucial point which is at the core of all Lenin's post-April 1917 writings on democracy, that the proletariat, once it constitutes an alternative state, is necessarily obliged to embark on *all-out war* with the bourgeoisie at every level of society – economic, social and political; and that even before the working class constitutes itself a state, i.e. even when its instinctive form of organisation (the soviets) and its mass interventions into civil life *threaten* the stability of bourgeois rule, the state organisation of the bourgeoisie and the embryonic state organisation of the proletariat constitute mutually antagonistic, interlocking systems at war with each other – *dual power*.

The 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry' which confines itself to 'democratic tasks' is therefore a historical impossibility, a non-existent could-not-be-existent entity, because bourgeois rule is absolutely antagonistic to *proletarian democracy*, the proletarian solution to the tasks of the democratic revolution. After April 1917 Lenin hammers this home in passage after passage, which we shall come to later. But in order to give more concrete consideration to the alternative, we must examine in greater detail the *role of democratic tasks in the socialist revolution*, the manner in which Trotsky poses the organisation of the proletariat for democratic tasks, and the specific origins and nature of the *national* tasks of the revolution.

3 THE DEMOCRATIC TASKS OF THE REVOLUTION

It has always been an axiom of Marxism that revolution means the overthrow of one social class by another. Revolutionary Marxists have always pointed out that this involves, first and foremost, the overthrow of the state and its replacement by a new state, created by the new ruling class. The very term 'revolutionary party' means a party dedicated to this aim. With good reason: any ruling class sustains its rule through state institutions which maintain, not just the formal power of that class, but all those social relations on which its existence is based. For the capitalist class, for example, the state guarantees the right to own capital, to exchange and to exploit; and it stands guard over everything on which

these cardinal rights of the capitalists rest: the structures of the family, customs boundaries, armed defence against other capitalists, the enforcement of laws to safeguard property rights and guarantee civil peace, and so on.

Because all others depend upon them, the most important relations are the relations of production, distribution and exchange. The capitalist class exists through the institution of private property; through production for the market using privately owned capital and hired labour power. Capitalist state structures defend private property. For this reason the first task of any revolutionary class is to transform the relations of production on which the existence of its rival class is

based. The first task of the working class on attaining state power is to commence the destruction of private production for the market and hence of the capitalist, property-owning class itself.

But production relations are not the only relations which exist or define a society. Nor are they the only relations which the revolution must challenge or transform. Nor are they even the decisive relations which actually provoke or organise revolutions. Any real revolution is, in the words of Lenin, 'a festival of the oppressed and exploited': a coming together of all strands of revolt in a mighty social upsurge which challenges the organisation of society from top to bottom.

It is a peculiarly narrow-minded cast of thought which conceives of socialist revolution purely and simply as a seizure of power, as the creation of a workers state and the overthrow of market production and private property. It is very characteristic of the workers movement in Britain: the product of a class which has scarcely been oppressed outside of the oppression of wage-slavery itself; which has rarely been forced to raise its head to listen to the oppressed, and has more usually in fact been the partner, either willing or duped, in the oppression of others by its own bourgeoisie.

Many of the particular weaknesses of British revolutionary groups flow from a narrow or one-sided picture of what a revolution actually is. Syndicalism and economism, both tenacious currents in the British workers movement, regard the social relation of exploitation as the key to opening the door to revolution. Revolution for them is a sort of mass factory seizure, as envisaged in the revolutionary general strike of the early syndicalists in which all workers would rise up against wage-slavery, seize the factories, and the wheels of capitalism would grind to a halt - to be re-started by the revolutionary workers.

A revolutionary process is in fact accompanied by huge movements of social upheaval in all spheres of life: cultural, sexual, economic, juridical, political. The aborted Cuban revolution of 1933 was accompanied by a massive feminist revolt and led to a momentary student government. The Russian revolution of 1917 and the Cuban revolution of 1959-61 both brought with them cultural revolutions of massive dimensions. National, religious and sexual relations are thrown into the melting pot during the course of revolutionary process. If they have emerged from the furnace not transformed but merely distorted, it is not because the revolution never touched them but because it burned out before it could run its course. Furthermore, the initial driving force in any revolutionary process is never a struggle against exploitation pure and simple but comes from all manner of movements for social change, which may or may not spring from the working class but whose cause the workers movement takes up as its own cause: the struggle of the Russian women workers who struck on International Women's Day and started the February revolution; the peasants' petition to the tsar which initiated the 1905 revolution; the struggle against imperialist oppression which was the *raison d'être* of the Vietnamese revolution; the struggle for elementary democratic rights which launched the Portuguese revolution and is now launching the Spanish.

But of course these movements of social change do not occur simultaneously, in one big bang. Nor can any of them bring about any lasting change in society in isolation. The critical goals of any revolution are the seizure of power and the destruction of the old ruling class and the production relations on which it is based. The state contains an enormous concentration of power: to make decisions, laws, and to act to make or break any movement of social change. Left in the hands of the old ruling class, it will always be used eventually to turn each movement of revolt back on itself and finally eliminate the gains of the revolutionary process. Destroyed and with a new state born of the mass struggle triumphant, all the gain of the mass struggle can be concentrated, under the leadership of the new ruling class, in a single-minded assault on the basis of the old class and the old economic relations on which it is based.

So Marxists have always asserted the primacy of class

and state in making revolutions. We say to all forces in revolt against capitalism: 'If you want to make a revolution you must destroy the old state and build a new one; and you must destroy capitalist production relations, you must destroy the capitalist class. All movements of revolt, all movements of social change, must bend their energies to this end, or none will triumph. The only truly revolutionary class is the working class. This is the only class capable of creating new production relations and reorganising a true mass democracy. Therefore, you must fight for your demands to be taken up by the working class, you must declare your common interest with it and struggle beside it: you will only bring about the change you seek if you succeed in this end.'

Marxism cannot stop at this assertion. It must offer to the working class, and to those social forces in potential revolt against capitalism, a *programme* for uniting these movements in a common anti-capitalist struggle, and a means for the working class to achieve leadership. To deduce this programme we must uncover the *mechanism* of each and every oppression and movement of revolt.

At the core of the problem is the fact that capitalism sets itself a series of majestic social goals which it *cannot in fact achieve*; and creates the social forces which require the solution of these social goals for their self-realisation. It brings into being not merely the proletariat, but a whole series of new social goals on the part of existing social layers which demand, for their satisfaction, the destruction of capitalism and the complete victory of socialism. These tasks are the tasks of the 'bourgeois-democratic' revolution - and this is the meaning of the oft-repeated truth that the bourgeoisie cannot complete the tasks of its *own* revolution.

Why bourgeois democracy serves the bourgeoisie

Of course, the bourgeoisie does not offer all dispossessed classes at all times a simple choice between slavery and a struggle to the death. It constantly plays off one section against another; most significantly, it has been able to use the spoils of imperialism to extend very general social benefits and democratic rights to the workers movement of the metropolitan countries, whilst carrying out the most savage enslavement of the colonial world to make it possible. However, the methods which it offers the proletariat for the solution or even amelioration of the ills which afflict it are fundamentally *illusory*, because it offers a form of democracy which offers real power *only to those who privately own the means of production and distribution*, and whose essential function for the working class insofar as the working class has access to it through its reformist parliamentary representatives, is *integrative* that is, it plays the role of persuading the working class to accept the goals and needs of the ruling class without open social conflict.

The bourgeoisie knows full well that the differences between its various sections and between it and other classes are not settled at all by the debates in the parliamentary chamber, but by a series of extra-parliamentary mechanisms, of which the most important are:

(a) the fact that the economic laws of motion of society are governed by the *market*, which operates overwhelmingly outside the influence of both the state and parliament;

(b) the fact that insofar as the state can influence the workings of the economy, the bourgeoisie can use the state to bypass parliament because of the independence of the executive from the legislature (i.e. the independence of the civil service, police and army from parliament);

(c) the fact that working class parties, which have become integrated into the parliamentary farce, can be directly influenced by the bourgeoisie through the commitment of the trade union bureaucracy on which they rest to preserve capitalism. As a result, working class reformist parties are committed to the preservation of capitalism.

What is at the core of these facts, well-known to revolutionary Marxists? The root of the problem is that the

very system of bourgeois democracy itself, the very principles on which it is based, is integral to the private ownership of the means of production. Bourgeois democracy is based on the *delegative* principle, on the separation of the powers of legislation from those of execution, on the divorce of the masses from direct intervention in all aspects of civil life, on the separation of public from private life: on the idea that *representatives* of the various social classes should settle the *conflicts* of these classes 'above the heads' of the classes, 'in private'.

And it is evident that this corresponds, not to a historical accident or freak, but to the very nature of capitalist production itself. What does the capitalist producer do? He produces for *exchange*. To have exchange value, a product must have use value, but what the capitalist strives for is the commodity free of all social obligation, the commodity as pure exchange value, the commodity to buy and sell whether its use is to burn Vietnamese, feed the poor or throw on beef mountains. For this he requires *freedom*, the right to exchange, the right to own.

At the same time capitalist production necessitates a *state* (and hence promotes the formation of nations) in a more categorical, a more essential way than any previous production system: it has to combine guarantees of freedom to own, produce, and exchange with the *defence* of that ownership against other capitalists or anyone else who might come along and remove property by stealth or arms. So it needs a legal system and a police. It has to have a *unified market* within national boundaries; which implies also transport and communications, a unified language or a system for regulating the use of minority languages, a national currency, and so on. It needs a *system for regulating its difference* without recourse to violence, for arbitrating between its various factions. Finally, it needs a *system for integrating social conflict* with other classes without civil strife or open recur-

se to repression, where it can. The 'preferred' instrument for doing this is the parliamentary state.

Side by side with this form of state go a series of democratic *rights* which have to be enshrined in the practice of the state and of society in general to ensure its smooth functioning and the freedom to operate of the bourgeoisie: the right of assembly, to form parties, and of free speech — essential if the bourgeoisie is to use the arbitrating role of the state, rights of peaceful protest and minority rights — essential if various social groupings such as national or religious minorities are to be integrated without provoking violent civil strife; and trade union rights — again essential if the antagonism between capital and labour is to be regulated and proceed without civil strife. Every single one of these rights, and every single one of the institutions which embody bourgeois democracy, is organised around the principle of *minimising* interference in the process of exchange and production, both of the state and of the masses. And this is the key: the limitations of bourgeois democracy, even as a system of democracy as such, are imposed by the fact that the principles which minimise the intervention of the *state* in the process of production and exchange also minimise the intervention of *society as an organised body* into this process, and in particular the *masses as a collective body*; and by the same token they are also based on the *principle of minimising the intervention of the masses as a collective body into all aspects of civil life*. This is the fundamental reason why the bourgeoisie can never satisfy its own goals.

The *delegative principle in selecting governments* is meant to ensure that the masses are awakened to the political issues of national society only every five or so years, that they participate individually instead of collectively at the polls, and cannot intervene until the next time.

The *separation of the legislature from the executive* means that the day-to-day issues of society are in the hands of a



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non-elective body of specialists (civil servants, police) and do not come under the jurisdiction of even the part of the political apparatus on which the workers can get their hands once every five years.

Political parties are constituted on the delegative principle to minimise the access of the masses to their own organisations. Indeed, this was the basis of the division between the Bolsheviks – who demanded the full participation of all party members in its activities – and the Mensheviks; it is at the core of what constitutes a Leninist revolutionary party. The bourgeoisie goes frantic about the prospect of even the minimal degree of subordination of the Labour Party to the masses which was involved in the sacking of Reg Prentice by his constituency party.

Rights of assembly and demonstration are regulated by laws and principles which limit them to a purely protest function. Direct action – occupations, sit-ins, mass pickets – bursts the bounds of bourgeois legality and democracy, and bourgeois democracy howls in protest when the masses do it: because all these forms of mass action involve the *direct intervention of the masses into civil life*.

The right of *free speech* is, for bourgeois democracy, a purely negative right – the right not to be silenced – and not the *active promotion* of democratic discussion. It does not guarantee the right to hear or to be heard. Polite defenders of the Tory faith point their umbrellas tremblingly in the direction of Speakers Corner and tell you that the thirty lunatics who can generally be found there on a Sunday represent all that is best in British democracy. They are absolutely correct, and nothing provides a more convincing demonstration of the bankruptcy of British democracy. In Lisbon until recently *virtually every street discussion* would provoke a street gathering. The setting up of an LCI bookstall on a Lisbon urban camp site and the attempt of the manager to disband it caused not only the whole population of the camp to assemble to discuss the issue, but also caused the Copcon unit brought in to settle the matter to break up and join in the discussion. During any period of dual power or its onset, the most passionate and continuous involvement of the masses in every political issue is the *norm* and not the exception. What a pathetic contrast is provided by British bourgeois democracy!

Even trade union rights play an ambiguous role in the organisation of society. The *strike* is incontestably a form of mass intervention into civil life – the halting of production. Its accompanying activities always tend to draw the masses into action, into mass discussion, into confronting the realities of their situation. But bourgeois society and bourgeois trade union leaders try to enshrine, in trade union rights, a whole series of limitations on the activity of the masses. We have already dealt with the way in which mass pickets are treated. The whole process of free collective bargaining is conducted so as to produce a *prior* agreement without the participation of the masses, without strike action, without democratic discussion. The bourgeoisie always intervenes in any strike so as to try to atomise and individualise it: through the family, by campaigning for secret ballots, and so on. Mass assemblies occur only where the workforce is highly combative or where there has been a conscious intervention by revolutionaries against the reformists to fight for them; and the principles of accountability of the strike leadership to the mass meeting, of recallability, of no secret negotiations, are all the subject of bitter struggle between revolutionaries and reformists throughout the capitalist world.

Workers Organisation and Democratic Tasks

To sum up, capitalist democracy, born as a specific political form in the struggle against the *absolutist state* against the limitations on the free growth of capital imposed by the state is as resolutely and indissolubly resistant to the intervention of the masses. But history has shown that in the last analysis the capitalists will always *revert to absolutist forms of rule* rather than suffer the disruptive effect of prolonged mass intervention. The brutal and bloody experience

of the working class, from the Paris Commune of 1971 to the Chilean coup of 1973, provide a hundred years of testimony to this fact. And they bear testimony to a far more fundamental fact: not only is it impossible for capitalist democracy to satisfy the social goals of capitalism, they can only be satisfied by a qualitatively higher form of democracy – *mass or social democracy*.

It is in this fundamental sense that Lenin's formula of the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' as advocated in *Two Tactics* – linked to the idea that the dictatorship would not undertake socialist tasks and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie – is not merely algebraic but *wrong*, and has to be profoundly modified through the incorporation of the *role of soviet democracy* in the struggle against capitalist social relations.

Lenin, of course, understood this perfectly from February 1917 onwards, and prepares the way to an understanding of the role of dual power in all his subsequent writings. In his *Letters from Afar*, in the Theses submitted to the All-Russian April conference, and in countless other articles and speeches of the time he lays down a completely new strategy for the Bolsheviks. The most commonly emphasised aspect of this strategy is the break with any idea that the revolution will proceed in stages, that the bourgeois stage of the revolution must be carried through to completion before socialist tasks can be embarked upon. But in addition there runs right through the entire work of Lenin at this time and from then on, the idea that the *soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers deputies constitute a new higher form of democracy, and a new, higher, state form in embryo*. Thus, in the section entitled 'The New Type of State Arising in Our Revolution' in *The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution*, he states:

'The most perfect and advanced type of bourgeois state is that of a parliamentary democratic republic: power is vested in parliament: state machinery, apparatus, and organ of administration are the usual ones: a standing army, police, bureaucracy, practically unchangeable, privileged, and standing above the people.

'But revolutionary epochs, beginning with the end of the nineteenth century, bring to the fore the highest type of democratic state, the kind of state which in certain respects, to quote Engels, ceases to be a state: "is no state in the proper sense of the word". This is a state of the type of the Paris Commune, a state replacing the standing army and the police by a direct arming of the people itself. This is the essence of the Commune, which has been so much misrepresented and slandered by bourgeois writers, which, among other things, has been erroneously accused of wishing to "introduce" socialism immediately.

'This is the type of state which the Russian revolution began to create in the years of 1905 and 1917. A Republic of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants' etc. deputies, united in an all-Russian Constituent Assembly of the people's representatives, or in a Soviet of Soviets, etc – this is what is coming into life now, at this very time, upon the initiative of millions of people who, of their own accord, are creating a democracy in their own way.' (Lenin, *The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution*, Theses 11, April 1917)

Even more succinctly, in *State and Revolution*, he writes:

'Here quantity is transformed into quality: such a degree of democracy implies overstepping the boundaries of bourgeois society and the beginning of its socialist reconstruction. Indeed, if all take part in the administration of the state, *capitalism cannot retain its hold*.' (our emphasis)

In other words, mass democracy is intrinsically hostile to capitalism as a *political form*, regardless of its economic content – a far cry from *Two Tactics*.

The crucial difference is the difference between soviet democracy and bourgeois democracy. Once this is seized, everything else falls into place. In fact we can go further than this, and say that Lenin clearly aims throughout to develop every conceivable form of mass action, every conceivable form of mass intervention into civil life, as a systematic alternative to bourgeois rule and as a great educational school for the masses in running society. One of the clearest illustrations of this is the 'Draft Revision of the Party Programme' submitted by Lenin to the April conference of the Bolsheviks in 1917. It is regrettably too long to include,

here, but is worth chasing up for its detailed redrafting of a programme so as to include precisely a *formula for mass sovereignty in every sphere of civil life.*



The Struggle for Soviets

We have so far shown that bourgeois rule is inherently hostile to mass or workers democracy. We have shown that Lenin clearly understood that soviet democracy, as it emerged in Russia in 1917, is a higher form of democracy than bourgeois democracy and an embryonic form of a *workers state*, in which the bourgeoisie can be eliminated and the building of socialism can begin. But in order to understand the full relationship between soviet power and the socialist revolution, we have to understand first *how it is that soviets come about as a generalised mass response to problems faced by the workers.* We can then go on to discuss *how soviets can take on the socialist tasks of the revolution.*

There is a fundamental and frequent confusion in the revolutionary movement in relation between the two, which is a result of *failing to understand the relationship between consciousness and mass action.* Soviets are not an expression of the conscious desire of the workers for socialism. Quite the contrary. They express an *instinctive, unconscious response to the catastrophic failings of capitalist rule*, and have to be won over to socialism by the conscious activity of revolutionaries.

Unlike the bourgeoisie, which first created an embryonic political and economic system and then created states to match it, the working class first creates an embryo state and then has to create a political and economic system to match it. This is often poorly understood because a *section* of the workers movement generally moves far in advance of the rest and begins to understand its historic role in a crude, unsophisticated way. A vanguard of the class can in fact move very far in advance of it, as happened in Portugal with the growth of ultra-left groups such as the PRP and a very rapid growth of revolutionary consciousness in sectors such as the army, who were confronted in its most direct form with the crisis of bourgeois rule. But this vanguard *remains* a vanguard, and if it tries to implement a programme of socialist revolution without winning over the soviets *first*, it brings disaster — as in Portugal on 25 November. The false equation of political consciousness with the existence of soviets leads to both sectarian and opportunist errors: on the one hand refusing to build or organise soviets unless they adopt advanced demands; on

the other hand failing to fight within them for socialist tasks to be undertaken.

In fact the emergence and leading role of soviets is dependent on the *practical* tasks to which they have to match up, and not on the level of consciousness of the workers. It is clear, for example, that in April 1917 in Russia the soviet movement was more developed in the provinces than in the towns. In Petrograd, where the revolutionary *initiative* was taken and the class consciousness of the workers was incontestably *higher*, and where there were *greater* concentrations of proletarians in large factories, the soviet movement lagged *behind* the movement in the provinces because in the words of the April conference report, 'here the largest forces of the bourgeoisie are concentrated'. Where the bourgeoisie was weakest, and where it could not take the initiative from the soviets, the soviets took on the tasks which the *bourgeoisie could not accomplish*: sacking the old authorities, establishing a militia, distributing the land, ensuring the continuity of production through workers control, etc. Because the bourgeoisie could not accomplish these tasks or even offer instruction on the bourgeois way of doing it, the masses instinctively adopted revolutionary-democratic, mass-democratic *methods*, not out of Marxist education but out of *necessity and instinct*; a *militia* instead of a police force, *seizure* of land instead of redistribution by an 'independent' arbitrator, *workers control*, etc.

In fact, of course, mass action and mass-democratic organisation provide a tremendous *school* of revolution in which political consciousness proceeds by leaps and bounds, as the Portuguese revolution shows. But this consciousness will only develop in a complete revolutionary direction if it has a revolutionary *leadership*. This process is reflected vividly today in the events of the Portuguese revolution. The creation of Europe's first embryonic soviets fell not to the unquestionably more educated, more politically cultured workers of Italy or France, but to the 'backward' workers, peasants and soldiers of Portugal. Yet it was the crucial weakness of the revolutionary leadership of the Portuguese people which led them to such a crushing setback on 25 November.

Soviets and Dual Power

It is obvious from the above, and from historical experience, that there is a huge difference between the kind of situation which existed in Paris 1871, Russia 1917, Chile 1971 and Portugal 1975, and the normal operation of a parliamentary bourgeois society. In the latter there are only occasional eruptions of mass activity into the otherwise calm surface of society, combined with a formidable latent proletarian democracy in the organisation of the workers which is diverted into bourgeois democratic channels by the workers' bureaucracy. Paradoxically, in an absolutist capitalist state, latent proletarian democracy *if it exists* is often *more capable* of spilling over into dual power when capitalist rule breaks down than in a parliamentary state, because the absolutist state cannot permit a bureaucracy to grow.

Therefore, a *situation of generalised dual power* is a distinct phase in the development of any revolutionary process which socialists must both be able to fight for and to recognise.

Once we grasp the idea that soviet democracy is an *instinctive mass response to catastrophic failings of bourgeois rule and government*, and not a politically advanced state of consciousness on the part of the masses, and that the essence for us of this response is its mass character, we can understand the meaning of a phrase in the transitional programme: 'The question of power is today posed.' In an epoch in which such catastrophic failings are the rule rather than the exception for bourgeois society, in which it is 'not merely ripe but rotten ripe' for socialism, the duty of revolutionaries is to prepare the masses to rush into each and every such breach: to substitute methods of *mass democracy* for the methods of the capitalists and their lackeys, the reformist labour leaders; workers self-defence, mass pickets, mass demonstrations, occupations, workers control, soldiers' committees, mass assemblies, the right of recall and

the accountability of delegates before the masses, democracy in the workers parties and unions, popular justice for the fascists and police torturers where the absolutist state has fallen, mass mobilisations to deny a platform to the fascists and workers self-defence against them in the bourgeois democracies opening the books and workers' scrutiny of the operations of capitalist concerns and of the state against profiteering, deceit, and corruption, and so on.

Each and every such united action, each and every manifestation of united mass democracy in action, is a training, a preparation of the masses for soviet democracy. It is in this sense that the Fourth International correctly places the task of *preparing dual power* as the central task of revolutionaries today.

In a more definite sense, the actual *call for the formation and generalisation of soviets* corresponds to a time when bourgeois rule in one of its aspects *has broken down on a national scale*, and it is therefore possible for the masses to offer a mass-democratic response *throughout the whole of society* to this crisis. It is instructive to examine the concrete historical circumstances in which soviets have formed to see how closely their formation follows this rule.

First, a *military invasion* which the bourgeoisie cannot resist: the very basis of formation of the Paris Commune, the first soviet; the basis for the heroic mass struggle of the Catalan workers against Franco; and so on.

Secondly, a *mass strike*, i.e. a general strike or a strike of a character which tends to become general, when whole areas of production and distribution are halted, when the entire normal regime of social life is ruptured – as in Turin in 1919, and to a much smaller extent in Britain in 1926.

Thirdly, during a *breakdown in government* – e.g. when an absolutist regime falls, or during a prolonged governmental crisis. Trotsky proposed the call for soviets in Spain when the monarchy fell, *side by side* with the call for a Constituent Assembly, and argued against the lefts who wanted not to call for the Assembly. He argued that the function of the soviets would be to 'organise the distrust' of the masses in the Assembly: to supervise its local operations and see that the struggle against the reactionary classes would be carried through.

Fourthly, around a *defensive struggle against fascism* when it organised to a sufficient extent to threaten the mass organisations of the workers – as in Germany in 1933.

Fifthly, in relation to a *breakdown in the production process*, particularly when brought about by systematic sabotage by the capitalists – withdrawal of credit abroad, closing production, etc. The lorry drivers' strike in Chile, the crisis in food distribution, and the general sabotage of the economy, all provoked mass-democratic forms of organisation – notably the JAPs, which started regulating food distribution, and the *cordones* (local district and factory committees, which took on functions of workers control organisation against the fascists, resistance against the lorry drivers' strike, land seizures, etc).

Sixthly, even a *mass mobilisation of a directly political character* – e.g. against a bourgeois military adventure abroad, against a repressive offensive by the ruling class, etc. During the 'Hands off Russia' campaign, Councils of Action were set up throughout Britain by the TUC, and the workers drew on the experience of this campaign when it came to the General Strike of 1926. This did not constitute fully articulated dual power because an astute bourgeois leadership withdrew before it could become so. But elsewhere in Europe the Russian revolution and the imperialist intervention stimulated huge eruptions of the masses up to dual power and even insurrection. Equally, we should not underestimate the effects which a revolutionary development in Spain will have on the working masses of Europe, even where they are heavily dominated by reformism.

If we examine these situations, we see that in every single case it is the fact that *political questions at a national level* are involved. And this is what provides the crucial qualitative dividing line between a situation in which only the precursors of mass soviet democracy appear, and one in which a

generalised tendency to dual power develops – in which the call for soviets is objectively realisable, in which the masses spontaneously go about creating soviet-type organs.

To the extent that a crisis of bourgeois rule is involved, *at national level*, (and in the term 'bourgeois rule' we include the operation of the government, the state and the economy) dual power can develop. The deeper and more insoluble is this crisis, the more the alternatives to mass-democratic solutions are exhausted, the greater is the tendency to dual power. But to the extent that the crisis can be *ameliorated* or alternative solutions put forward and accepted by the masses, dual power will tend not to be realised. The task of the revolutionaries at any given moment is therefore to struggle for united action on each and every issue which *leads the masses towards mass-democratic solutions of the problems posed for them by the crisis in bourgeois rule*. This is the essence of the Transitional Programme, formulated by the Trotskyist movement in 1938 with the founding of the Fourth International, which combines democratic with transitional demands, relating to the immediate material needs of the masses and the crisis of bourgeois democracy and of the bourgeois economy.

There is not space in this article to go into the byzantine maze of distortions and misunderstandings which the various sectarian groupings begotten by Anglo-Saxon Trotskyism have wreaked upon this notion. We can only paraphrase Omar Khayyam: 'Dual Power doth with logic absolute. The four and twenty jarring sects confute.' Suffice it to say for the purpose of this debate that:

(i) There is no essential difference in function between transitional and democratic demands in the hands of revolutionaries. Each enables revolutionaries to intervene in the crisis of bourgeois rule in all its aspects with mass-democratic solutions to the crisis of bourgeois rule. The only difference is that democratic demands, since they relate to a crisis of state rule, are not in themselves opposed by the bourgeoisie at all times, although the bourgeoisie cannot grant them. What the bourgeoisie oppose is the way in which the revolutionaries struggle for them and the mass-democratic alternatives to bourgeois rule which tend to be thrown up by such methods of struggle.

(ii) Such a conception of the role of revolutionaries in no way precludes them from making compromises on demands of their programme in the interests of united action. On the contrary, *revolutionary duty demands it* on three very simple conditions: that such a compromise aids the mobilisation of the masses, that this mobilisation leads towards and not away from mass-democratic solutions to the problem posed by the crisis in bourgeois rule, and that the revolutionaries use the mobilisation created to lead the masses in such a direction through the struggle for their programme within the united fronts of the workers movement.

(iii) The *prioritisation* of one or some of the demands of the programme in the agitation and propaganda of revolutionaries is equally not precluded, but is determined not by the possibilities for mass mobilisation but by the objective nature of the crisis: in Germany 1927, economic demands against unemployment and inflation; in Germany later on, demands for the mobilisation against fascism; and so on.

Where does this lead us? It is abundantly clear from everything we have said until now that a *prolonged* situation of dual power is absolutely intolerable for bourgeois rule. Dual power therefore represents an *unstable* historical situation. Up until now we have referred to one outcome of this instability – a counter-revolution followed by bloody repression. But we have no interest in such an outcome. We do not accept the Stalinists' puerile apology for the Chilean tragedy that the repression of the Chilean workers 'exposed capitalism before the world'. It is already exposed a hundred times. Nor can we accept the sacrifice of any revolution on the altar of 'defence of Russia' or 'world peace'. The interests of workers the world over are served only by revolution wherever it occurs: this is the only guarantee of peace, the only guarantee of a future for the workers of Russia. If the Vietnamese had given up their fight, would world peace have been more or less secure than it is today, when Congress puts up

enormous resistance to sending arms to Angola?
For this reason we have to study and understand the vital

question of *how the workers can use mass-democracy to carry through the socialist tasks of the revolution.*

4 THE SOCIALIST TASKS OF THE REVOLUTION

There is room for endless discussion of the nature of socialist production. It should *follow*, and not precede, the: *first socialist task of the working class: to seize and hold state power.*

The essence of the seizure of power is not that it is carried out by a working class ready to take on the administration of society, but that it is carried out by one sufficiently convinced and educated by the experience of dual power to have a go at it. This makes the task of revolutionaries pleasantly easy to define, and very hard to execute:

(i) *to develop dual power from its embryonic forms to an articulated system capable of overturning the bourgeois state apparatus and replacing it;*

(ii) *to defend the new state against external intervention and counter-revolutions;*

(iii) *to develop an economic and social programme to be implemented via the new proletarian state which will with the greatest expediency and mass involvement expropriate the big bourgeoisie, concentrate the running of the economy in the hands of the workers, institute social and economic measures to bring over intermediate, vacillating layers into the camp of the proletariat, and begin organising socialist production.*

Now, many of the tasks of the *first character* can be developed to the fullest extent *under dual power*: development of a militia, generalisation and federation of soviets up to a national assembly, generalisation of workers control, dispersion of the principal instruments of counter-revolution (fascist bands, police, reactionary classes, etc.). However, tasks of the *second character* cannot be completed until the seizure of power: and of course, only the possession of econ-

omic power renders possible the *completion* of the tasks of the *first character*, of creating socialist democracy. They *can*, however, be initiated by a *workers' government* in a capitalist state, and their logic then *calls up the intervention of the masses*: to defend these measures against bourgeois sabotage, and to carry through their implementation. (Up until now we have maintained an artificial separation between the operation of the economy and the operation of the state under workers democracy. This separation, as we have analysed, is inherent in the operation of the ideal capitalist economy, but not at all in the operation of a workers state. On the contrary, in the latter the workers must use the economic apparatus at their disposal to work qualitative extensions of democracy — for example, creating a system of guaranteed access to the media by taking it over, turning over the dwelling places and halls of the bourgeoisie for the workers to hold meetings and organise, financing democracy in terms of travel, publication, etc.).

Therefore the revolution needs a programme for the *economic and social re-organisation of society* to place it under the democratic control of the masses. This is not at all to be confused with the old maximum programme of social democracy, which the social democracy undertook to implement when it took power. On the contrary, the essence of such a programme is that it can be fought for before the revolution through the struggle for a *government* which will implement it.

The difference between such demands and transitional demands is that without being legislated by a government they cannot form the instrument of self-organisation of the masses. The masses cannot act as *both subject and object*



HOUSE OCCUPIED BY MILITANTS OF THE LGI, PORTUGUESE SYMPATHISERS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL, TO PROVIDE THEM WITH A BASE OF OPERATIONS. THEY ALSO TOOK OVER A PRINT SHOP AND PERSUADED THE WORKERS TO HELP THEM WITH THE PRODUCTION OF LEAFLETS.

of these demands, cannot undertake to implement these demands in the event of failure to implement them by the existing government, *except by seizing power*. On the other hand, if they *are* legislated. They provide tremendous opportunities for the masses to intervene in civil life, particularly when the bourgeois state and class recoil from their implementation. This potential can be realised only to the extent that a government bases itself on mass sovereignty i.e. makes itself accountable to the masses and their organisations. This is the tremendous educative value of these demands, but also provides their inherent practical limitation.

This is so essential that an illustration is necessary. The demand for a sliding scale of wages allows the masses to act as both subject and object. They demand of the bourgeoisie that it grant it, they demand of the government that it legalise and enforce it, they demand to be the object of legal measures passed by the government and collective agreements entered into with the bourgeoisie. But they are also the subject of this demand. They organise in a mass-democratic way to confront the bourgeoisie on a day-to-day basis to achieve the demand. Assume even that the demand is formally granted by the bourgeoisie, say through a collective agreement between the TUC and an employers' federation. Or say that the government passed a law making it compulsory. The working class would still have to make itself the subject of the demand. It would only be realised to the extent that their self-organisation was successful in implementing it: because the bourgeoisie would struggle in a million and one ways to evade it: haggling over the index or even falsifying it, failing to respect the agreement for weaker sections of the workforce, using the lag between price and wage rises to reduce the cost to themselves, etc. (as has indeed happened where 'indexation' has been introduced). The workers can only overcome this by organising to produce their own index or scrutinise the bourgeois index; entering into systematic agreements of solidarity and organising a workers' inspection to ensure weak sections of the workforce do not fall behind (something the AUEW-TASS used to do in the 1960s to implement its minimum wage – not at all a utopian conception); exercise workers control over price rises; and so on.

The effect of this activity is that the workers become collectively responsible for the operation of the demand on a day-to-day basis. This is what is meant by being the subject as a class of the demand, considered as a social principle.

The same applies to all the standard transitional demands and most of the democratic demands: sliding scale of hours (work-sharing), open the books, rights of assembly and speech, etc. The process of becoming the revolutionary subject of these demands is the process which Marx terms becoming the class 'for itself'. Under bourgeois democracy the class is merely the object of these principles. It is the subject only of those aspects of civil life which it negotiates in daily struggle – its wage rates, etc. *Under proletarian democracy it is the subject of principles of social organisation as well.* Under a workers' bureaucracy it is once again the object and not the subject, but does not suffer the illusion of being the subject: society is atomised.

The 'socialist tasks of the revolution' are therefore clear, and can be summed up very succinctly. *They consist in making the working class the subject as well as the object of all aspects of social existence.* This is to be carried out through the operation of a workers government based on mass sovereignty constituted on a mass-democratic state, i.e. a soviet state.

The National Question and Workers' Government

The role of the national question in the programme of revolutionaries now becomes much clearer. It is obvious that any solution to any national question, be it bourgeois-democratic or soviet, demands the constitution of a national government. Where no such government exists, its creation is an immensely perilous task for the bourgeoisie. It has none of the conventional trappings (reformist parties, a parliament, etc.) which it needs to ensure that the new government will

respond to its needs.

The creation of a government on a programme of revolutionary reorganisation of society even in a small European nation would be an enormous threat to the bourgeoisie, because of the electrifying effect it would have on the working class of Europe as a whole, not to mention all the other small nations. This is why it is so loth to start even minimal democratic reforms such as a local assembly. On the other hand, in cases such as Scotland where a determined section of bourgeoisie has decided it wants economic autonomy, it goes about it with the utmost circumspection. First it creates a parliamentary nationalist party. Then it traipses up to the English parliament to enter into a prolonged haggle about setting up a parliament. The first thing it settles is the meeting place of the parliament – the exclusive school which trained half the ruling elite of Scotland. The correct air of respectability being established, it can risk some open debate about the powers of the assembly. Even then it will be three years at the earliest before the elections are held – long after the whole parliamentary apparatus is fully ready. And during the whole absurd process there has not been a single mass mobilisation.

Socialists clearly have to fight for the most direct and immediate action of the masses around their social needs relating to their national condition, up to and including the formation of their own government by any means necessary. In every way we want to struggle for the masses to be able to determine the character, composition, role and programme of the new national government. And it is this which enables us to determine the nature of the social and economic programme of the working class for the small nations. It needs to espouse those demands which give a solution to its most immediate burning needs, and which if legislated by a government would constitute the most direct assault on the power and freedom of the bourgeoisie, and which would provide the biggest possible stimulus to its own unity and self-activity: in essence, therefore, the revolutionaries should fight for the *kind of solution which immediately post-revolutionary society will be capable of offering.*

This gives the revolutionary programme the dual educative role of preparing the masses for the tasks of the socialist revolution – i.e. by explaining what socialism will do for them – and of preparing for the seizure of power, through the mobilisation of the masses for concrete economic and social demands drawn from the programme, through which they come to understand in practice the need to possess state power. It is in this sense that the totality of the economic, social, political, democratic and transitional demands of a revolutionary programme are aimed at leading the proletariat to become the subject of its own destiny through the seizure of power and the socialist transformation of society by means of socialist democracy.

Revolutionary Tactics and the Programme

Of course, all the remarks made in the earlier section concerning compromise and prioritisation apply *mutatis mutandis*. However, the point must be made that when it comes to the demands of the programme of which the proletariat cannot become the immediate subject but which it has first to impose on a workers government, *the danger of a compromise which leads the proletariat in a reactionary direction is far greater.* The importance of this point will become clear when we discuss the economic section of the programme on the national question.

We therefore have to enunciate a very clear and simple principle: socialists should compromise and offer support to a struggle for a given act of government legislation on condition it in no way compromises or impedes the independent action of the masses. We would support a struggle, therefore, for a Scottish or Welsh assembly to be constituted, but not a struggle to legislate the powers of the assembly through any parliament (including the assembly itself unless it was genuinely accountable to the masses) – above all, not through the parliament of the large nation, because this removes the right of the masses of people in the nation concerned to determine its powers, form and character.


It is because of this that the revolutionaries' approach to the national question cannot just stop at fighting for a government and for the right of a people to determine how it shall be governed. Such a struggle on its own cannot draw the dividing line between the legitimate, democratic national sentiment of the workers and the reactionary, protectionist economic national sentiment of the capitalists. It is necessary for the workers' movement to contest with the bourgeoisie for the programme of such a government, and for them to enter their bid in struggle and not in parliament.

The workers of each nation need a programme of national and regional demands – a programme of social and economic measures to deal with the particular oppression and discrimination which they suffer, to alleviate the particular social ills of their country. This is a programme to be injected into each and every mass struggle of the workers and to comprise the basis of its contest with the bourgeoisie in government.

For the workers of a small nation integrated into a larger one, clearly such a programme is only part of the total programme of revolution of all workers of the large nation. But it is a vital part for workers of the small nation to struggle for, and workers of the large nation to defend: it is an essential tool in forging their unity. The failure to formulate such a programme is probably the biggest single historical failure of the Scottish working class, and one of the major reasons why the agitation of the outstanding Scottish revolutionary John MacLean for an independent Scottish Workers Republic never took root.

Parliamentary Election, November 15, 1922

**John
Maclean's**



**Election
Address**

To the Electors of
The Gorbals Division, Glasgow
The Wage-Slaves of Scotland, and
The Wage-Slaves of the British Empire

THE KEY-NOTE:
World Communism
or a
Rapidly Approaching World
War

Every Vote and all Support for me means the
choice of
World Communism rather than
World War

It is therefore clear, in summary, that the tactics of revolutionaries in relation to the national question revolve around the struggle for a programme of national demands and for a workers government – basing itself on the masses and committed to that programme.

The National Question and the Socialist Reorganisation of Society

We are now in a position to examine the concrete application of this discussion to the national question, by placing it under the general heading of the socialist reorganisation of society.

I will begin with a remark which is somewhat obvious at first sight, but in fact is the source of all the most profound insights which Marxism has to provide on the national question. That is that the constitution of nations, and the constitution of states, under capitalism, are inseparable.

It is, of course, for this reason that any really thorough discussion of the national question unaccompanied by an understanding of the state is an absurdity. It also explains the incompleteness of Lenin's analysis of the national question and of his statement of the principle of the national question and of self-determination, which never grasps how the dictatorship of the proletariat fundamentally modifies the national question. It is for this reason that it is only possible to understand the proletariat's attitude to the national question via a discussion of the role of the nation under the proletarian dictatorship, in the era of the transition from capitalism to communism.

What is the essence of the dictatorship of the working class on a world scale? It is a specific political form of organisation of society constituted and dominated by the proletariat on a national territorial base (i.e. within the state boundaries of district, single countries) as the first essential step to international socialism. In it, centralised state ownership of the means of production for the first time offers the population a qualitative advance in their potential to become the subject, as well as the object, of their destiny – to determine as well as being determined.

It clashes from the outset with the international character of production attained during the imperialist epoch. This is what gives the nation its distinctive, continued role as a feature of the transitional era from capitalism to communism. This is why Marx in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, insists on the *Communist Manifesto's* description of the proletarian state as 'national in form but international in content'.

It inherits a series of features inimical to the full realisation of its potential. Through the struggle against and conquest of these features, it proceeds through the phase of socialism, to communism. These features are:

(i) Production is constituted on an international territorial base through the world market and the international division of labour, whereas the dictatorship is constituted on a national territorial base – its principal political inheritance from capitalism.

(ii) The capitalist class still retains its hold on society through its existence outside the boundaries of the proletarian state; through whatever production it still dominates within the state boundaries; and through the vast network of loyalties, habits, vested interests and allies which conspire to re-establish its rule and thwart the workers.

(iii) The elementary basis for centralised ownership of the means of production is not present for a large mass of backward producers who have not yet introduced large scale socialised production. This applies above all in the countryside, and is the dominant feature of the proletarian state in previously colonial or semi-colonial countries. Centralised ownership and private or local ownership and production thereby coexist, in permanent mutual antagonism, and areas of production crucial to the life of the masses remain out of their collective control.

(iv) The existing means of production and the social needs of the population are not in harmony with each other but are on the contrary in general conflict, a situation termed generalised want or generalised scarcity. This fact, reflecting both the incompleteness of humanity's domination over nature and over itself, means that in the process of attempting to determine social need and bring production into harmony with it, the proletarian state is constantly regulating social conflict and is obliged, as Marx point out in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* to rely on the bourgeois right in distribution – the continued use of wages and a money equivalent for the regulation of private consumption.

To the extent that this brings social groups in society into conflict with the whole of society and with each other, their domination over their own destiny is incomplete. Special mechanisms of coercion therefore still exist, and the state

plays a role of arbitrator of social conflict – what Trotsky has called a ‘policeman role’. To the extent that the state subordinates this role to mass democratic control this has no adverse effect. To the extent that it fails to do so, it develops a specialised elite which dominates the state apparatus and usurps the functions of mass democracy – the bureaucracy.

(v) The role in the production process and the situation of distinct groups within society are not equal; on the contrary, society is dominated by huge inequalities bequeathed by capitalism, which means that the *simple* exercise of mass democracy without safeguarding the rights of the underprivileged in fact confers special political privileges and reduces the effective control of the masses. Not the least of these inequalities, in fact one considered central by Marx, is the role played by the division between mental and physical labour in maintaining separate layers of the population differentially suited to the task of running the state, which for the functioning of mass democracy requires the participation of all the masses. This factor also tends to reinforce the development of bureaucracy.

All these factors, which exist quite regardless of whether or not the dictatorship becomes bureaucratised, are the main features of the dictatorship in what Lenin terms ‘an entire historical era of the transition from capitalism to communism’. They result, according to Mandel, in a transitional society manifesting neither the economic features of communism nor of capitalism but ‘an original combination of both’.

The tasks of a workers government

A little thought reveals that these problems immediately confront, in one form or another, *any workers’ government*. For any government under capitalism which sets about reorganising society in the interests of the workers cannot avoid the fact that its actions will lead to a *revolutionary clash between working class and bourgeoisie which can only end in the victory of one or the other*. The Chilean tragedy demonstrates this starkly. And it is clear that any post-revolutionary government must attack as its most urgent and immediate tasks all these problems and define its tasks from them.

The principles of a revolutionary programme even under capitalism therefore stem from an understanding of how these fundamental problems will be attacked during the revolutionary process. Any concrete programme in a given situation consists of a compromise or selection based on the application of these principles to a given relation of class forces.

Let us go through these features of transitional society, and see how they dictate the tasks of a workers government in a small nation.

The national base of the dictatorship

The first task of the revolution is to *internationalise* itself. This not only means, as is traditional, support for revolutionary movements the world over; it means that any workers government must define its relation to other governments and workers movements in such a way as to give the workers maximum control over the process of production.

In relation to the small nations, and even the large ones, this means a persistent struggle for the establishment of *socialist federation* for the creation of centralised economic planning over the largest possible territorial base. From this comes the need not only for a United Socialist States of Europe, but for the states within that to be based on the federal principle: a Federal Soviet Spain, France, Britain, etc. with federal governments in all the small nations and even in any regions requesting them, relinquishing economic sovereignty over production to the governments of the large nations and eventually to a European government.

This has immediate conclusions for tactics. It means, for example, that socialists should *oppose* separation in the small nations except in the exceptional cases where only

separation can break national oppression on account of the backwardness or weakness of the workers of the oppressor nation – for example Quebec. It means, also, that the programme of a workers government in a small nation would be a rather unique one, for it would be defined as playing a vanguard role in that struggle.

A Scottish workers government, for example, could not possibly hope realistically to carry through the nationalisation of *Scottish industry alone*. It could only hope to hold onto such gains and even make them at all if it waged a consistent fight for their nationalisation by the government of Britain, and saw any local nationalisation as a stage in the fight. Equally, it would have to place itself in the forefront of the struggle against every anti-working class act of the British government, whether or not directed specifically at Scottish workers.

This is why, equally, the Basque comrades of ETA(VI) came to the Fourth International out of an absolutely correct victorious struggle in the ETA for the subordination of the national struggle to the struggle against Francoism and against capitalism as a *whole*, under the slogan of a Federal Socialist Soviet Spain.

The strength of capitalist production abroad and at home

Above all, this is what gives rise to the demand for immediate nationalisation of the large enterprises and banks, regardless of whether generalised workers control exists or whether the workers are ready to run industry. It is vital to get industry *out* of the hands of the capitalists: workers control can then be instituted if it does not exist to secure the co-operation of the technicians and managers and to train the workers in the running of the economy.

In the small nations, as we shall see, this demand is an absolutely central dividing line between capitalism, economic nationalism, and the national programme of the working class. The capitalists wish to create a local protected market and currency in order to hold some portion of the surplus product under their control. They will not halt the plunder of the country by the banks and monopolies; they will merely get their fingers in the pie and withdraw a few crumbs. This makes them incapable of carrying through the measures of social reform which are needed so sorely in these countries. Quite the opposite – since they have overcome the crisis of profit rates they propose to exacerbate the social crisis by large scale reorganisation of industry without any concomitant social reorganisation.

The increasing domination of the small nations by the monopolies and the perfidious role of finance capital in Scotland (where one *third* of Britain’s financial wealth is concentrated, of which only a tiny proportion is ever spent in Scotland) means that the nationalisation of the large companies and the banks plays a particularly central role in the programme of *any* movement seeking the emancipation of the people of such a nation.

The continued existence of backward producers

This is still a major problem in the small nations of France and Spain, where not only is the agrarian questions still alive, but the recent brutal attempts at a solution by capitalism have provoked the most vigorous resistance by the peasantry and new alliances of peasant and workers in struggle. Portugal shows how these producers can be won to the side of counter-revolution. Measures such as the nationalisation of the distribution network, workers and peasants control over the distribution and supply of agricultural materials, voluntary agreements between producers’ co-operatives on sales and production quotas negotiated by committees of producers and consumers are clearly vital.

The existence of generalised want

It is this above all which necessitates a state apparatus, and which presents it with the dangers of bureaucratic



REGIONAL INEQUALITIES OF SOCIAL WEALTH: A RAT-INFESTED SLUM IN GLASGOW.

degeneration or deformation. The only form of state which can offer true self-determination for all parts of society is the *democratic centralist state*. This means both the maximum *decentralisation* of execution of decisions and the maximum *devolution* of administration; it also means the maximum *centralisation* through due process of democratic discussion, of decision making. In this sense it is completely different from decentralised *self-administration* on anarchist lines, which in fact *reduces* self-determination because it denies local units access to central processes which still dominate them whether they like it or not. Self-administration and a developed bureaucracy can *co-exist* as Yugoslavia shows.

But generalised want also means something even more specific: it means that *compulsion* must still exist. Unlike bourgeois democracy which subordinates the majority to the minority, workers democracy with proper safeguards subordinates the minority to the majority. But it still operates compulsion.

Generalised want and compulsion disappear to the extent, not that production is stepped up until it meets consumption needs, nor that compulsion is restricted to meet production. They disappear to the extent that each is brought into harmony with the other. This can only occur through the democratic organisation of society as a community of both *producers* and *consumers*, at all levels of the state. This guarantees the best specialist evolution towards communist society, in which production is for socially determined use and the bonds of compulsion fall away.

The organisation of the workers as consumers is an integral part of recent developments of dual power, provided it is understood that *social* consumption is also consumption — use of houses, schools, social welfare, and even the 'use' of factories as places of work. In Portugal and now Spain there have appeared neighbourhood committees to take up issues precisely relating to such consumption. In Portugal and Chile, consumers' co-operatives sprung up to regulate distribution of goods for private consumption.

But consumption is constituted, unlike production, on a *local* territorial base — essentially, in an area defined by the distance which workers normally travel. Any locality is a complex of houses, hospitals, schools, and places of work organised around a stable community of *consumers*,

as well as a community of producers. Self-determination requires that any social activity shall be controlled by the peoples of the communities who engage in it and are affected by it. So centralised control of production is necessary. Equally, *decentralised* control of administration and of consumption is required. Hence *local* control should be demanded of all aspects of social consumption: transport, schools, housing, education, hospitals, siting of factories and so on.

From this it is an elementary step to see that the programme of a workers government in a small nation would include not only the demand for no external state interference, for complete autonomy in all these matters onto all democratic local institutions within its authority.

The continued existence of minorities and inequalities

It is from this very fact that the continued protection and right of representation for oppressed and minority sections of the population is vital even after the seizure of power: women's right to choose, national and religious minority rights, self-organisation and double representation of minorities and oppressed sections within the structures of soviet power, and so on.

But it has special significance for the small nations of Europe, where *regional inequalities of social wealth* constitute one of the main forms of national discrimination. It is in this sense that Scotland, for example, is discriminated against but not oppressed. However, this discrimination is inherent to the workings of capitalism and the state is generally not implicated, and in fact tries through regional grants etc. to overcome it. We shall analyse its roots in the next section. The crucial point is that it is necessary for the state to alleviate it, but it can only do this by appropriating a far larger portion of the social product than it at present has access to. This is why the capitalist state is incapable in general of righting this inequality.

Therefore, finally, the programme of socialists must include the demand for a *crash programme of social reform* to alleviate this inequality, on the basis of a plan drawn up by the workers of the regions concerned. Such a programme can only be implemented and financed if coupled with the demand for the *expropriation of the large companies and banks* to which we have already referred.

5 NATIONAL MINORITIES IN WESTERN EUROPE

Now we have outlined the general principles underlying the tactics of workers governments in relation to the national question in the transitional epoch. But this still does not tell us what weight the national struggle assumes in the general class struggle, what priority socialists should give it. Not does it say what the concrete tasks of the workers in each of the existing nations are. The answers can only come from a concrete historical examination of the conditions in which the national struggle reached its present stage of development in each such given country. This is what we shall now undertake in relation to the small nations of Western Europe.

At the outset, we can lay down the conditions under which the national questions assume importance in the class struggle. This is when the solution of national tasks will advance the struggle of the workers on a world scale and when failure to solve them will retard this struggle. Historically this has required a combination in varying degree of two factors:

(a) when there are specific social, cultural and economic needs generated amongst the people of a nation by the conditions of production and rule in that nation, which require for their solution a distinct set of social and economic measures and engender *distinct* aspirations in the various classes of that nation for the satisfaction of these needs (for example, recognition and use of a national language, provision of social welfare and amenities, constitution of an independent market, etc., removal of racial oppression etc.);

(b) when there is a suppression of democratic rights which result from the intervention of an externally-based state apparatus against the satisfaction of these needs.

Obviously such conditions will arise from a set of definite historical conditions. Let us turn to the examination of these circumstances.

The nation as the product of class and state.

The nation and nationalities appear as definite entities in conjunction with the state and its precursors. In a certain sense nations are *products* of the state: states tend to produce *uniform administration* and therefore the acceptance or imposition of common customs, morals, languages, etc.; distinct territories, and therefore stable communities – in short, the features of a nation.

However, we are not Hegelians, and we do not believe that the state descends from the sky. The state as a distinct entity, autonomous from society, appears as the result of the action of classes. The state is the body to the ruling class delegates the job of ruling. To be precise, it delegates those aspects of the job of ruling which have to be exercised collectively by the ruling class instead of individually. We cannot discuss the operation of the state without looking at the stage of development of the forces and means of production, and of classes, which gave rise to it.

Furthermore, we should note that national communities are produced not just by the action of the state but by the social relations of production themselves, and hence by the classes which organise these relations. *Commerce* is an obvious activity which *spreads and unifies* language, customs and morals. In a crude sense, a capitalist state demands a nation because there is universal commerce within a national state boundary.

More generally, we would say that nations are produced by the *dialectic* between the state and the action of classes on society through the medium of social intercourse: and that once a combination of factors produces a *generalised* social activity requiring a community of language and custom in a given territorial base, the conditions for the formation of a nation have emerged.

The first class under whose rule any systematic task of national unification began was the landed aristocracy,

through the institutions of the monarchy. But the monarchy itself could be regarded in many ways as an intermediate social institution – an institution which was needed by the aristocracy for collective defence on the one hand; but which was clearly looked to by the emerging capitalist classes for entirely different purposes: as an instrument for building up commodity production in the towns at the expense of the country; for carrying out the clearance in England, for example, to create a class of free artisans, to provide protection for individual capitals and for property rights in the towns, and so on.

The limitations of the monarchy from the point of view of the capitalist class soon become evident. Indeed, the monarchy played a totally ambiguous role, supporting feudal localism in Spain, oscillating between the emerging capitalists and the aristocracy in England, often arbitrating between fiercely independent centres of mercantile capitalism. As soon as capitalism had reached the stage of wanting to extend the market beyond the base of mercantile and petty commodity capitalism, the monarchy became an absolute obstacle.

For a limited period, however, the actions of the capitalist class and the domination of the monarchy over the state co-existed, and during this period most of the modern European small nations were formed. Many mechanisms leading to local development of national communities existed, but the most important was probably the rise of the urban bourgeoisie. This created or used local political institutions which became part of the state structure – local provincial parliaments and the like. It was able to develop and maintain a stable territorial base for a unified language via the natural social intercourse brought about by the activities of the state and of commerce between the towns and the countryside.

In this period emerged the distinctive nations of Occitania, Brittany, the Basque country, Galicia, Catalonia, Corsica, Valencia, Scotland, Wales – all the small nations which now manifest national movements. It is noticeable that all of these nations are peripheral and seaboard nations, generally organised around a large port or two. This shows clearly the role of mercantile capitalism in the process of their formation.

The Impact of the Industrial Revolution

The growth of the capitalist class precipitated a crisis not merely of class rule and state form, but also of state boundaries. Generally, the old imperial boundaries did not correspond to the development of the forces of production: they had been dictated by military, territorial and agrarian features, rather than by considerations such as access to raw materials, markets etc. And the system of perpetually squabbling statelets in places like the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Iberian peninsula, Italy, and Germany were totally inimical to the development of integrated capitalist industrial production. The *industrial revolution* therefore coincides with two great waves of bourgeois state development: a wave of *democratic revolutions*, whose role we have already discussed, and a wave of national *unifications and annexations* leading to the formation of large national states: notably Britain, France, Germany and Italy.

Every conceivable set of relations between the monarchy, the nobility and the bourgeoisie developed. But the bourgeoisie which finally gained access to the state machine in this period faced a huge problem. The operation of a state requires, as we have said, a community of customs, morals, language, etc. The operation of the bourgeois market requires the extension of this into every sphere of society, as it carries through tasks like the extension of capitalist production to the land, creating a mobile education and literacy in the towns for the workers, and so on.

This faces it with an acute choice in relation to every minority language or culture. It either has to integrate it into the running of society by giving guarantees of its use in education and administration, or it has to suppress it violently. And this is what happened. Countries like Switzerland, facing national minorities with a developed bourgeoisie and a stake in capitalist production, had no choice but to instigate *multinational states* with guaranteed minority language rights. Countries like France and Spain undertook the brutal suppression of national minority languages and culture. The French bourgeoisie, for example, waged an absolutely systematic struggle against the Breton and Occitan language and culture. Signs in Brittany read 'Defense de Cracher et de Parler Breton'. Time and time again it was reiterated by the education department that it was necessary to *eliminate* these languages.

More was at stake than this alone: what was involved was whether the local bourgeoisie would persist in an autonomous local development of capitalism or would desert its language, its roots and its culture for partnership with the bourgeoisie of the large nations. Local bourgeoisies therefore faced an acute choice also: merge with the bourgeoisie of the large nation, or fight for separation. Two main tendencies emerged, which converged historically.

Where there was a successful bourgeois revolution in the larger state, small national bourgeoisies generally chose fusion, leaving the nationalities they had created to their fate — as with Brittany, Occitanie, Scotland, Wales, etc. Where the bourgeoisie faced an absolutist state, it prolonged its autonomous role for as long as it could, and developed projects for separation and political autonomy: as with Catalonia, the Basque country, many nations of Great Russia, and so on.

With the important exception of Ireland, what went on was a more or less *convergent historical process*, whose end result was a settled system of bourgeois states, but a system stabilised by the desertion of the bourgeoisies of the small nations and their fusion to form large, unified national blocks operating within the state boundaries of the West European powers, each containing within itself suppressed but not destroyed national communities and institutions.

The Historical Convergence of 1707-1939

Let us therefore draw out the main features of this convergence:

- (i) The essential economic tasks of the bourgeois revolution are complete.
- (ii) The political tasks of the dispersion of the reactionary classes have been accomplished.
- (iii) The local bourgeoisie has been won over and assimilated politically and economically into the bourgeoisie of the large nation states, leaving only the petty bourgeoisie and peasants.
- (iv) The largest element of difference between the social structures of the small nations is the extent of the dispersal of the peasantry and the nature of production on the land. In Scotland and Wales, the peasantry has been almost totally eliminated. In Brittany, it is mainly small economic and middle peasant production, which until recently was a base for clerical-conservative reaction. In Occitanie and parts of Spain the main production is wine-growing, which comprises in the main owner-producers or owner-producer cooperatives.
- (v) The proletariat is either in or is moving into a position of social dominance. In Scotland it is a formidable 70 per cent of the population (90 per cent in Glasgow — the highest in Europe except for Turin); in Spain the proportion of peasants to workers has reversed since 1936; and in all the nationalities of Spain and France this process has been given a powerful boost by the forcing of peasants off the land and into large concentrations of new industry, which has built up a new and very combative proletariat and laid the basis for a whole series of new alliances between workers and peasants.

It is therefore absolutely wrong, both politically and

economically, to dub these nations 'internal colonies' of the large nations. It is wrong to equate their development and domination with the process of colonial enslavement. It is misleading to equate the nationalist revolt in these nations with the anti-imperialist struggle. The analysis of most socialist writers, in the regional movements have been wrong in this respect.

In the first place, these nations were not absorbed in a phase of imperialist expansion, but before imperialism had taken its modern form. In the second place, the bourgeois revolution had in all cases gone through great development *before* they were absorbed, but had completed a political revolution, with the possible exception of Corsica. In the third place, the role of the bourgeoisie in these areas in the period of their absorption was not to develop a subordinate economy dedicated to the extraction of raw materials, but to develop all aspects of capitalist production. It is *since* this time that gross social deprivation, multinational super-exploitation, etc. have occurred.

A new mechanism is therefore involved in the recent movements of national revolt in these nations, which lends them features in common with the struggles in the colonial world, but which has an entirely different historical origin. We have to analyse and understand the objective basis on which these movements have emerged, and judge from this whether they can play a historically progressive role.

The Centralisation of Capital and the New Historical Departure

The most important single process which brings on the new movements of national revolt is the centralisation of capital. This has produced two parallel reinforcing results: firstly, the tendency to political centralisation focussed on the creation of the EEC; and secondly, the emergence of regional disparities created by the geographical redistribution of capital. Because of the general political and economic crisis of capitalism, the bourgeoisie finds itself unable to integrate national responses to regional disparities; and because of this crisis the move to political centralisation is also bound up with an exorable drift towards *strong state* structures.

The tendency to the strong state results firstly because the bourgeoisie finds it can no longer *integrate* the workers via economic concessions and occasional working class governments of social reform. It finds the working class too combative, too well organised, and its own political and economic resources too drained to continue this method of stabilising its rule. It results secondly because the profound crisis of profit rates which afflicts the capitalists of today can only be overcome by a *centralised* re-organisation of industry resulting from a major, preferably world-wide but at least European, defeat of the working class. It needs a state from which can hold down and co-ordinate its different and warring factions and suppress or eliminate them where needed.

But just because the bourgeoisie understands this, it does not mean that it will proceed mechanically to create repressive governments of bourgeois parties. The strength of the working class has forced it to resort to a whole series of stratagems and manoeuvres, and has in fact *decentralised* it so that it does not proceed in a co-ordinated manner.

Also, many of the mechanisms bringing about a strong state are not produced through conscious effort by the bourgeoisie at all, but by the crisis of the state as an institution. Not only do all sorts of autonomous developments in the state apparatus begin, but all the institutions which integrate the working class go into crisis as they are called upon to turn from an integrative role to a repressive one. The crisis is caused by the fact that, contrary to Maoist mythology about creeping corporatism, they *cannot* complete this process without a huge victory over the workers movement and the destruction of its capacity to struggle for an extended period. The effect is therefore of an uncontrolled and decentralised development towards a strong state with great leaps backward and forward, and



ABOVE: DEMONSTRATION OF WORKER AND NATIONALIST MILITANTS IN AUTUMN 1975 AGAINST DEATH SENTENCES PASSED ON BASQUE MILITANTS.

BELOW: CORSICA SUMMER 1975: DEMONSTRATION FOR REGIONAL AUTONOMY.



a development which does not proceed with equal speed in all places.

In France and Spain, the effect in the peripheral regions has been simply to continue the traditional repression of the national minorities. The French bourgeoisie has reacted with gross repression towards the Breton, Occitan and more recent Corsican nationalist movements – armed confrontations, mass arrests, etc. In Spain it is worth noting that in many senses what the Spanish bourgeoisie is trying to carry through is a mutation from an absolutist reactionary state to a strong state, which can brook no national independence at all.

In both these cases the national institutions and customs of the small nations are revived as a *vehicle* for revolt. For the main challenge offered by a large state to local political institutions which are being suppressed is not armed suppression but its *own* local institutions or the rigid supervision from *above and outside* of existing ones. This extends in extreme cases from garrisons down to education departments, the legal system, and so on. The role of language, custom and culture in national revolt now becomes clear. Who is to staff these institutions? How are they to be rendered politically reliable? How is intercourse between them and the large state apparatus to be guaranteed? The best, most stable solution is to impose the language, customs and culture of the large nations on the officials of the state – either by importing them or by training them.

This is clearest in the operation of outright repression. The English were particularly adept at placing garrisons which by virtue of their different evolution of customs and religion would be held loyal to the crown. Even today Scottish regiments are the most extensively used in Ireland. The Spanish state couples this with the use of the antagonism between the land and the countryside – peasants from the Estremadura and from Andalucía patrolling the streets of Bilbao, lost, sullen, rejected, taking their only pleasure in acts of repression to relieve frustration at social oppression.

Therefore the first and the most important effect of the tendency towards the strong state is that it reconstitutes oppressed or absent national sentiment in all classes around the demand for an end to external interference and for local autonomy. It is this fact which above all has given the national struggle its potential revolutionary character in Western Europe. Because of the common national heritage of the populace, an absolutely immediate response is the demand for an end to all external interference by the state, and demands for the defence, restitution or creation of democratic national institutions, up to and including a national government independent of the external state.

The revolutionary potential of this demand is apparent: it amounts to a demand for the removal of the bourgeois state apparatus as at present constituted from an entire territorial area and the constitution of a new one! The revolutionary potential will be realised to the extent that the workers in struggle around class and national demands create their own alternative state.

In Britain, where the strong state has never been implemented and would still present tremendous difficulties to the bourgeoisie, the process is more complex, and involves a chronic crisis of all the integrative mechanisms of bourgeois rule. The effects can be very paradoxical. For example, there is frequently an increase in the number of administrators of the welfare state in the face of cuts in social expenditure, whose role is to repress instead of ameliorate social discontent. Effectively, local governments find themselves increasing administration in order to tell people to get stuffed more efficiently. There is a consequent increase in corruption as the policeman role of the state apparatus increases and the opportunity to divert state money into the pockets of local officials goes up.

At the same time, the contradictions in the workers organisations increase as the bureaucracy faces up to the uncomfortable choice of repressing working class discontent and losing its base in the workers movement, or riding this discontent and rendering itself useless for the purposes of governing as far as it bourgeois mentors are concerned.

This brings about a deadly combination of circumstances for the bourgeoisie: whilst its prized methods for integrating the workers decompose and are either lost to it or turn into repressive instruments, whilst whole sections of the bourgeoisie and state apparatus embark on independent projects for suppressing popular discontent, the bourgeoisie loses centralised control of the whole thing through its inability to impose a strong, central authority capable of combining the adroit and selective use of repression and concession. The result is that the erosion of democracy is greatest, decentralised attacks on the working class most concentrated, and corruption and abuse of the social consumption fund of the working class most widespread where social deprivation is most bitter and the risk of mass explosions of this revolt the greatest. Instead of applying the stick to the rear of the donkey and dangling the carrot in front of it, the disoriented bourgeoisie does the opposite, combining severe provocation with gross insult with the inevitable result – the donkey bolts.

One condition for a progressive role of the national struggle has thus been met – a general suppression of democratic rights as a result of the repressive role of an externally-based state apparatus which intervenes against the satisfaction of local national needs. And it is indeed clear that the constitution of local governments free from veto or obstruction by the large states would present a huge obstacle to the current projects for political centralisation of the bourgeoisie.

But we should now turn to the *other* condition for the national struggle to play a progressive role: are there specific national social, cultural or economic needs generated or preserved in the small nations of Western Europe in the new historical departure? The answer is a categorical yes.

The reason lies with the same historical process which brings on the political centralisation of Europe – the centralisation of capital. In this case, it is the emergence of *extreme regional disparities* produced by the geographical redistribution of capital under the impact of centralisation.

Regional Disparities and the Centralisation of Capital

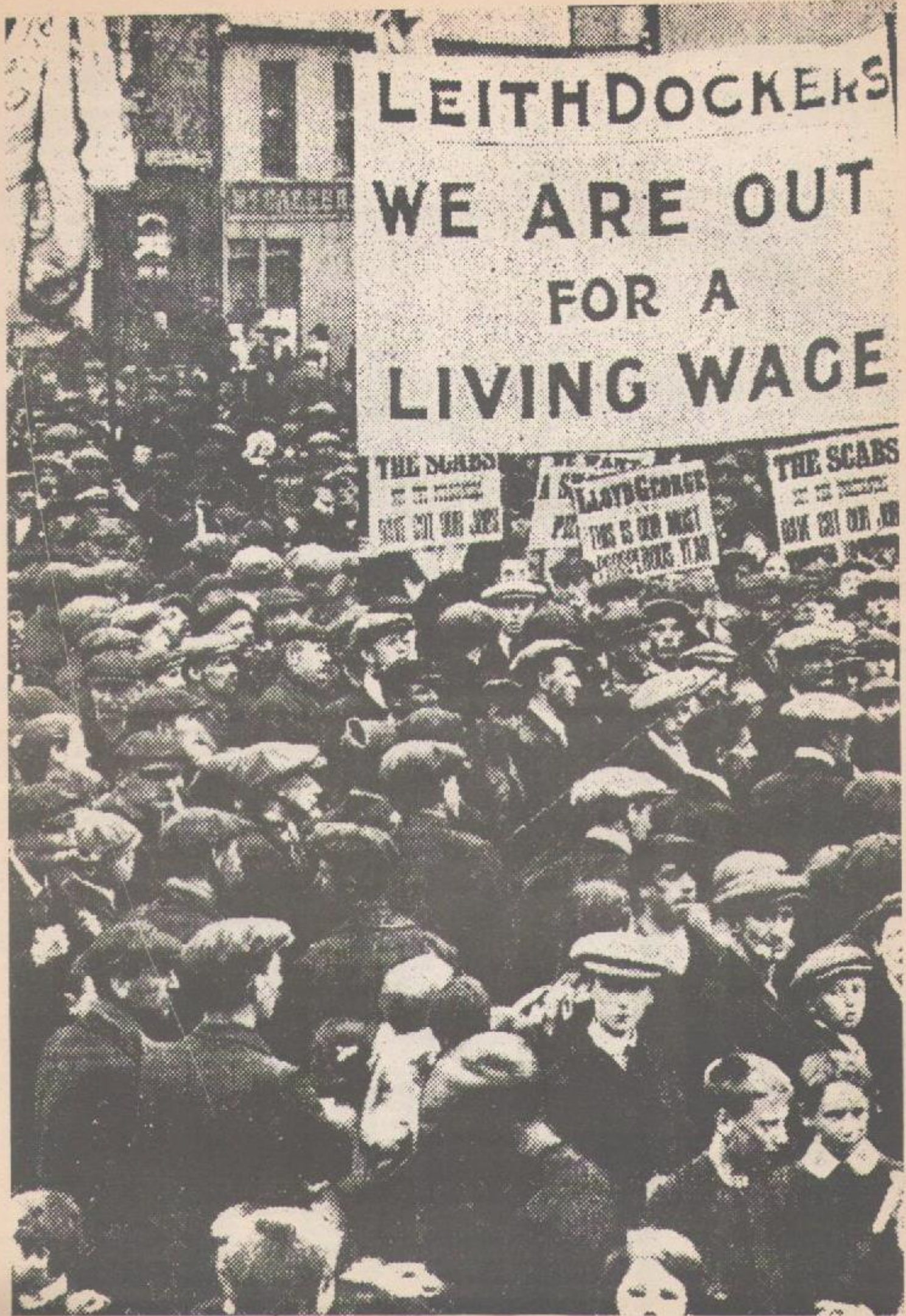
The international centralisation of capital has been dealt with in some degree by the Fourth International.* However, its effects in the deprived regions have never been fully disentangled.

These effects cannot be reduced to a simple exodus of capital from the regions. This does not explain, for example, the rise of multinational investment.

What is actually involved is a geographical redistribution of capital in its various branches. This takes on the peculiarly anarchic form under capitalism of the collapse and run down of old traditional industry, which is integrated into the local market and contributes to the local social stock of capital; the build-up of centralised urban administrative and financial conurbations in the centre at the expense of the peripheral regions; the concentration of social wealth in the centre as a result of the higher proportion of salaried staff, greater expansion of service industry, etc.; and the creation of large industrial concentrations in the peripheral regions based on multinational branch plant investment and tending to the super-exploitation of the workers of the region. In fact this is not an accidental feature of capitalism in Europe, but an inevitable result of late capitalism.

In the early stages of capitalist development the frontiers of capitalist development were established by *mercantile* capital based on the ports and seagoing nations of Europe. Thus the peripheral regions became the most advanced centres of capitalist development. Industrial capitalism could often follow in the wake of mercantile capitalism

* See, for example Mandel's *Late Capitalism* (NLB 1975) and his article *Capitalism and Regional Disparities* reprinted as a pamphlet by the New Hogtown Press (Canada); see also the Scottish IMG pamphlet in the series *Scotland, Labour and Workers Power*. All of these are available from Red Books.



through the development and servicing of processing industries (e.g. textile and tobacco), shipbuilding and engineering industries, and where deposits of raw material were to hand (as in Scotland) extractive and refining industries such as steel, iron and coal. An integrated and balanced local development of capitalism could take place in the regions as a result. They often became prosperous and thriving centres of cultural and economic development.

But capitalism then developed unified transport and communications and a world market. It was no longer advantageous to site production, processing and extraction side by side. Imperialism brought with it the international division of labour, with extractive industry, processing, primary and secondary production increasingly located in distinct centres according to their different needs for labour, technical resources, markets and supply. The frontiers of capitalism were no longer established by the merchants but by the financiers and the large cartels and monopolies, increasingly enlisting the state in their support.

The growth of such a combination of class forces meant that the key urban centres of population and development became concentrated around the institutions of the state and of finance – hence the emergence of large urban administrative and commercial centres such as London, and in certain cases of whole nations organised around the finance bourgeoisie – e.g. Switzerland.

At the same time extractive industry increasingly moved out to the colonial countries, where super-exploitation could yield higher profit rates; and as the old centres of industrial production became technologically relatively backward, the bourgeoisie preferred than modernising and rationalising the old ones against the fierce resistance of the workers to the inevitable attack on their living standards which such capitalist reorganisation would entail.

Thus from 1958 to 1968 the number of yards on the Clyde dropped from seventeen to three with the loss of 15,000 jobs. In the same period the number of pits fell from 166 to 47, and the number of miners from 83,000 to 39,000 – with a parallel decline in almost all traditional branches of industry.*

This process did not result in the departure of industry. Quite the contrary – after a lag, it substituted new forms. What it destroyed was the old local based industry, which because of its strong connections with the local market and because of local ownership added to the stock of social wealth of the community. This is strikingly clear in Scotland, where last century the bourgeoisie was able, without the apparatus of a welfare state to complete a system of universal secondary education and embark on a project of supplying municipalised housing for the entire working class – a venture far in advance of the welfare state at its highest points.

The departure of this kind of industry brought in its stead, after a long period of social stagnation lasting until the 1950s, an entirely new kind of production: branch factories linked into the world market and often the large multinationals, supplying, supplied and owned abroad, and channelling surplus product into the hands of external capitalists or institutions which promptly invested it abroad.

The extremely informative article by Firm in the *Red Paper on Scotland* provides copious data on this in relation to Scotland. We reproduce here two tables which indicate the extent of external investment and ownership by size of plant and the ultimate location of this investment and ownership.

These demonstrate convincingly that:

- (i) externally owned plant now constitute a decisive sector of production,
- (ii) the plant concerned is the most advanced sector of industrial production,
- (iii) that decisive proportions of the surplus product

Location of Ultimate Ownership of Scottish Manufacturing Plants and Employment: 1973

Location of ultimate ownership	Plants		Employers		Average Size of Plant (Employees)
	Number	per cent	Number	per cent	
Scotland	2176	71.6	243,481	81.2	111.9
England	800	21.9	234,999	79.8	167.2
Rest of U.K.	4	0.1	199	-	80.0
EEC	29	1.0	8,700	1.5	302.1
Other Europe	15	0.5	3,800	0.6	253.3
North America	140	4.9	87,700	14.9	562.9
Other	5	0.2	100	0.1	39.0
Joint-owned	24	0.8	11,450	1.9	476.7
Total	3041	100.0	540,700	100.0	194.2

Location of ultimate ownership of Scottish manufacturing employment by size of plant: 1973

Location of ultimate ownership	1-30 Employees		31-100 Employees		101-500 Employees	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Scotland	1307	85.6	178	52.9	421	84.9
England	165	10.0	111	31.9	296	59.4
Rest of U.K.	1	0.2	1	0.2	-	-
EEC	6	0.4	8	1.5	89	1.8
Other Europe	5	0.4	1	0.2	5	0.6
North America	30	2.0	70	1.9	99	1.6
Other	5	0.2	1	0.1	3	0.2
Joint-owned	2	0.4	1	0.1	38	0.7
Total	1526	100.0	329	100.0	503	100.0
Size distribution	90.2	-	17.1	-	25.4	-

Number	%	100-500 Employees		500 and over Employees		Total Plants	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
42	27.5	25	26.8	5	21.4	2176	71.6
45	40.7	48	47.9	7	50.0	800	21.9
2	1.8	-	-	-	-	4	0.1
4	1.6	-	-	-	-	29	1.0
16	14.3	16	19.9	4	28.6	140	4.9
5	2.6	5	3.1	-	-	15	0.5
111	100.0	96	100.0	14	100.0	3041	100.0
5.5	-	1.1	-	0.5	-	100.0	-

generated accrue not to the stock of social wealth but to either finance capital or externally-based enterprise.

(iv) the result is not a specific exploitation by the large nation – England – but a general exploitation brought about by international monopoly and finance capital, particularly its most advanced sectors.

An exactly parallel development of industry has taken place in nearly all the small peripheral nations of Europe, with only one important variation: the development of traditional local industry is less advanced elsewhere. The consequence is merely that social wealth is the less and social deprivation greater and also that modern industry takes its labour force from more backward sections of production, notably the land. The effect is the same – the destruction of those sectors of local production which add to the local stock of social wealth and the substitution of super-exploitation by externally-based and owned production.

Hence the first condition which we laid down at the outset is met with a vengeance – in the combination of social deprivation, enforced migration, and super-exploitation by the multinationals which now dominate every small nation in Europe.

Until recently, only three social forces had entered into struggle over these questions: the petty-bourgeoisie, the working class and the peasantry. This has given the national struggle in much of Europe and above all in Spain a tremendous revolutionary potential and mass character. But most strikingly in Scotland, and it now appears to some extent in Catalonia, appreciable sections of the bourgeoisie have entered national demands.

The most developed project of this nature in Scotland, was made possible by the combination of independent sectors of finance and the discovery of North Sea Oil. The entrepreneurial role of finance capital meant it could rapidly accumulate disposable funds – through portfolio investment for example – far in excess of its real wealth. In this situation, faced with political and economic decrepitude of English capitalism, it was perhaps inevitable that sections of finance capital should fuse with the petty-bourgeois SNP to launch an original

* Figures from Johnstone, Buxton and Mair *Structure and Growth of the Scottish Economy*.

and so far highly successful struggle to secure financial autonomy by parliamentary means.

Space does not permit us to lay evidence to this effect, except to refer to our previous publications in the series 'Scotland, Labour and Worker's Power' and to our analysis in *Red Weekly* (4 September 1975) of the secret SNP policy document leaked last year and circulated extensively by us in the labour movement. But it does allow us to point out in closing, and revolutionary duty insists on it, that the wheel has turned full circle since 1707 — just as the bourgeoisie led the

masses by the nose into the union in 1707, so they are now trying to lead them by the nose out of it. The workers movement can no longer leave the leadership of the national struggle to the bourgeoisie; nor can it subordinate its world-wide interests to the narrow national struggle. Instead it must, through the fight for a Scottish workers government, breathe fresh life into the traditions of the workers movement on the national question and use the new situation facing it to move forward to the European Socialist Revolution.



DYNAMICS OF THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION

BRIAN SLOCOCK

The following text is transcribed and edited from a talk by Brian Slocock at the IMG Summer cadre school in September 1975.

It introduced a discussion on the origins of the revolutionary process in Portugal within the Salazar regime. This discussion laid the basis for a series of sessions on various aspects of subsequent developments.

The collapse of the Portuguese dictatorship on 25 April 1974 opened up a period of deep social and political crisis which has given birth to the sharpest and highest forms of class struggle that have been seen on the European continent for many decades. It has posed in a practical, concrete and immediate sense in Portugal the question of the seizure of power by the working class and the inception of a socialist revolution.

The regime which collapsed on 25 April was a regime of a very particular character (although not a unique one, as its neighbour in Spain indicates), and its particular features gave to the mass upsurge in Portugal many special characteristics which allowed it to go very far and very fast compared with the level and forms of working class struggle elsewhere on the continent. This regime should be characterised as a dictatorship of military origin.

It was not simply a routine form of military dictatorship – that is to say, an attempt to impose and establish a powerful central leadership team for the bourgeoisie with a certain repressive capacity. Rather, it was based on a state machine which attempted to go further than that. This state machine sought to underpin a strong political leadership team for the bourgeoisie by systematically atomising the capacity of the working class and the exploited masses to organise against and resist the operations and decisions of the capitalist state. It extended its tentacles directly into the masses by outlawing all forms of independent trade union, working class and mass political organisation, attempting to substitute for such organisations with its own State controlled institutions.

At the same time it attempted to utilise the intervention of this powerful state machine, built up around an authoritarian and dictatorial government structure, to compensate for the very grave social and economic weaknesses of the Portuguese bourgeoisie. Direct state intervention in a whole series of spheres of social life – particularly in the economy – was used to regulate the social tensions which the bourgeoisie had been incapable of resolving through the normal institutions of bourgeois democracy.

These are the features of a regime of a classical fascist character. But it is necessary to qualify the Portuguese regime as having a number of clear distinguishing features (as we would also have to do for the Spanish regime). In Portugal this apparatus was most established on the basis of a clear fascist political project of the German and Italian type involving the mobilisation of a section of the masses – primarily drawn from the petty-bourgeoisie – for the imposition of this order. In many respects the fascist order in Germany and Italy was created against the will of crucial sectors of the traditional representatives of big capital. In contradistinction to this kind of classic fascist model, the creation of this state apparatus in both Spain and Portugal was carried through with the agreement and the active participation of the traditional representatives and main layers of the ruling class. In particular, it involved the traditional political agents of the Iberian ruling classes – the armed forces. This is certainly a common feature of the dictatorships in both Spain and Portugal.

In the case of Spain, the rebellion which led to the creation of the Franco regime was, of course, launched by the military – albeit in alignment with other political forces, some of which had a clear cut fascist coloration. And that regime might not have taken on even the degree of open fascist coloration which it did, had it not been for the whole experience of the civil war, which forced it to take a much more sharp and intense attitude towards the mass movement than it was originally inclined to do.

In Portugal, the process which led to the creation of the Salazar dictatorship was set in motion by the armed forces which, in 1926, overthrew the anarchic and ineffective bourgeois-democratic machinery of the Republic. But the 'fascisation' of the regime did not really begin until six years later, with the emergence of Salazar. Initially the dictatorship had a fairly conventional military character, but the rise of Salazar as prime minister was accompanied by the imposition of a series of fascist-type measures – in particular, the adoption of a labour law in 1934 which banned all forms of independent trade union organisation and substituted in their place state managed labour bodies. It should be noted that this step provoked the only significant mass resistance to the process of the creation of the new regime, with the launching of a general strike and even a local insurrection in one important working class centre, the town of Marinha Grande.

By the mid-1930s, 'fascisation' of the regime was

complete, and it assumed the characteristics which it was to retain – albeit with certain alterations in political strategy – right through until its collapse in 1974. It was a regime which incorporated many of the traditional layers of the bourgeoisie, in terms of its relations with finance capital, and in terms of its very close relationship with the armed forces, which continued to provide a major prop for the regime throughout its history. This relationship was expressed in certain special privileges which these groups received. For example, it was the rule that whatever the composition of the Government, the Minister of Defence would be drawn from the ranks of the armed forces. And it was equally the case that while the Prime Minister's post remained in civilian hands – first of all Salazar's, and later Caetano's – the Presidency was always occupied by a military figure.

After the Second World War, the regime attempted to continue with the sort of 'isolationist' economic policy which had also been developed by its co-thinkers in Spain. This policy centred around an attempt to follow essentially nationalist policies, designed to preserve and reinforce the self-sufficiency of the economy, minimising its dependence on either foreign trade or foreign investment.

This outlook was tied in with a nationalist ideological perspective which was an important part of the regime's official ideology, in particular in relation to its exploitation of the colonies and the myth of the 'civilising mission' of Portugal. It was also tied in with a desire on the part of the regime to avoid any kind of rapid or uncontrolled economic development which might on the one hand, begin to erode the social base of the regime – primarily based on the rural areas and the independent peasantry – and on the other bring into existence social forces which would have the political and economic capacity to pose a real threat to the regime. The regime thus hoped to regulate the process of industrialisation and the creation of new working class layers. This desire was certainly a conscious one, although not always fulfilled to the degree which the regime might want – because, of course, the Portuguese bourgeoisie wanted to foster such developments in their own interest and the interest of expanding their capital.

The economic policies of the regime were carried out in line with the character of the regime. They were based on developing a special relationship between the fascist state structure and the large monopoly economic groups, which had grown up in Portugal over the preceding period of capitalist development, and controlled the major industrial sectors. These monopolies were accorded various privileges – exclusive rights of operation in certain spheres, generous forms of state assistance, and, in particular, privileges with regard to the colonies. For Portugal, as also for Britain in this period, there was a choice between strengthening its European ties and its integration into the world capitalist economy, and the alternative of developing its national economy, on the basis of its colonial ties and imperialist exploitation. The regime strongly favoured the latter.

This choice, however, was rejected by all the key sections of the Portuguese bourgeoisie – including those monopolies who, at least on the economic terrain, were the closest allies of the fascist state. By a gradual process of economic and political pressure, culminating in a virtual investment strike by the bourgeoisie with regard to the development plans of the dictatorship, the bourgeoisie forced the regime to reorient its economic approach. A new course was launched which favoured the sections of monopoly and finance capital who had developed certain connections with European capital, and who wanted to see Portugal develop more rapidly on the basis of increasing integration into what was then the booming economy of capitalist Europe.

So in the early 1960s, following only three years behind similar reorientation on the part of the Spanish regime, the Portuguese state turned towards increasing integration into the European economy, and increasingly close relations with North American and Western European capital. Restrictions on foreign investment and the major barriers to foreign trade were eased. This created a new set of alignments in which the fascist state was now not simply in a direct part-

nership in the economy with the monopolies, but part of a three-way relationship with, on the other hand, the monopolies, and on the other, foreign capital.

The influx of foreign capital led to a rapid acceleration in the pace of industrialisation in Portugal – again parallel to the situation that was developing in Spain. For the first time there emerged in areas of the country large-scale, technologically modern industry. Partly because of the economic logic of capitalism, but primarily because of the deliberate policy of the regime – wary as always of any processes which would tend to erode its social base or bring into existence new social opponents – this process of industrialisation was heavily concentrated in certain specific geographic regions of the country, in particular the industrial belts around the three main urban centres – Oporto in the north, Coimbra in the centre and Lisbon and its industrial suburbs in the southern part of the country.

Growing out of this reorientation – both of the Portuguese bourgeoisie, and under its pressure, of the regime a number of political problems were posed very sharply from the early 1960s onwards throughout the ensuing decade. On the one hand, there was the crucial question of a 'European' versus a 'colonial' orientation for Portuguese capital. Large sections of the Portuguese monopolies and finance capital, despite the key position which they were ceded inside the colonies, actually found themselves drawn more and more towards the EEC. This was because of the growing interpenetration between Portuguese and European capital, reinforced by the entry of Portugal's main trade partners in the European Free Trade Association into the EEC.

While the colonial connection remained important, in line with the development of the Portuguese economy itself the main sections of Portuguese capital began to develop a policy of 'joint exploitation' inside the colonies. That is, they no longer tried to maintain the African colonies as an exclusive preserve for Portuguese capital, but began to encourage joint enterprises with the major European and American multi-national firms. This served to undercut the traditional basis for Portugal's retention of the colonies – the need to exclude other more powerful imperialist competitors – brought into existence the possibility of some form of 'neo-colonialist' solution in the colonies.

Alongside and related to this particular set of options, was the growth from the early 1960s onwards of large-scale armed resistance inside the African colonies. These wars of liberation began to draw into the huge swamp of the colonial territories a greater and greater proportion of the resources of an already small and impoverished economy. The upshot was the unleashing inside Portugal of an immense social crisis, on a scale unprecedented in Europe outside of a full scale wartime situation.

When the parallel between the situation in Portugal and that in Russia prior to the 1917 Revolution is considered, one's initial reaction is to say – well, the social crisis in Portugal couldn't be nearly as great because the scale of the war in which she was involved was much more limited. But one has to look a little more closely. It is true that the war was geographically remote, and was not a clash between contending capitalist powers, but an attempt to suppress an insurgent movement of popular revolt. But the size of Portugal – small country with a population of less than 10 million – compared with the size of its colonies, meant that the colonial wars involved the kind of drain on Portugal's resources which few states have experienced, except in the context of a major conflagration.

For example, the total size of the armed forces sucked into these colonial wars was about 200,000. We must see this in the context of the fact that the size of the entire industrial proletariat inside Portugal was probably something of the order of 1 million. In other words, something like 15 to 20 per cent of the potential industrial working class was being syphoned off into these wars. Another example: the casualties sustained by Portugal in the course of the war if one extrapolates them in terms of either population or the size of the army, are roughly equivalent to

the casualties suffered by the British armed forces in the whole of the Second World War. This underlines the importance of the present political movement among the war wounded.)

In terms of Government expenditure, not only did the total budget grow sharply, but the share of it consumed by the colonial wars also mounted precipitously, to the point where, by the end of the wars in 1974 - 75, one-half of all state expenditure was devoted to the conduct of the wars and related military activities, accounting for something like 8 per cent of the total output of the Portuguese economy. The implications of that for a country already suffering from the backwardness of its capitalist development, from the pressures of its attempts to integrate into the highly competitive world of more advanced western capitalism and from the domination of its economy by vast monopolies, were disastrous.

The strains that it produced included a very acute labour shortage, particularly for the most technologically advanced elements of the workforce who were either siphoned off to fight in the war or migrated out of the country in order to avoid such a prospect. During the period of the wars, approximately one-third of the 1½ million emigrants who left Portugal did so illegally, and there were at least 100,000 outright dodgers and deserters among those half million illegal emigrants. Secondly, and related to this labour shortage was an acute and chronic series of economic problems which retarded the rate of economic growth, and gave Portugal the highest rate of inflation of all but one or two of the most acutely affected countries of the capitalist world.

Connected with this, and in many ways growing directly out of it, was the increasing organisation of the working class. The nightmare of the fascist dictatorship was now coming true in that the process of industrialisation - despite its geographical isolation and regulation - was bringing into existence a new layer of the working masses, who in terms of their level of class consciousness, their capacity for self-organisation, and their combativity, represented a qualitatively more powerful opponent for the dictatorship. Moreover, the conditions of an acute labour shortage, and economic discontent provided very fertile ground for the beginnings of independent trade union organisation and renewed economic struggle. From the early 1970s onwards there began to arise, even under the conditions of extreme repression and regulation of the labour movement, all sorts of forms of independent working class organisation: attempts to take over the leadership of the state-run trade unions and use them on behalf of working class struggles, the formation of factory committees and the initiation of important mass struggles in the form of strikes, and demonstrations. Whatever repression and setbacks these struggles may have encountered, they did manage to achieve their immediate aim of pushing up the real wages of at least a section of the Portuguese working class, despite the great economic crisis that the country faced, and despite the very high rate of inflation.

Inevitably, these kinds of political upheavals and mass discontent were bound to affect all the different social layers inside the country. It certainly gave to the bourgeoisie an increasing sense of the urgency of doing something to resolve the situation - of the urgency of removing all those obstacles to its closer economic integration with Western Europe, which it saw as the indispensable precondition for solving the economic and social problems of the country. That meant removing the grossest forms, at least in appearance, of dictatorship and authoritarian rule of the country, which constituted serious problems as far as the political integration of Portugal into the Common Market was concerned. This coincided with the bourgeoisie's desire for political structures which could integrate the new layers of the working class and regulate politically the way in which it conducted its struggle, as against the prospect that the existing struggles could assume an uncontrollable and explosive character. The bourgeoisie wanted to bring into office a government able to execute the political manoeuvres necessary to bring to an end the immensely costly colonial wars by reaching a political solution as rapidly as

possible. This, in combination with certain political concessions, would, it was hoped, allow Portuguese imperialism - in partnership with other western imperialist powers - to maintain its economic interests in the colonial territories.

The most important political force in the country at the service of the bourgeoisie remained the armed forces. Under these circumstances it was inevitable that this political debate and these political processes should have tremendous resonance inside the armed forces. What took place were two parallel processes with different effects, but in many ways favouring a common outcome. One the one hand, the acute social crisis produced a real political ferment in the various layers of the army - among rank and file, the masses within the armed forces, but also within the officer corps. Both the professional officers recruited from traditional social layers - and hoping to embark on the traditional career of entry into the highest echelons of Portuguese society - and the conscript officers brought in very large numbers out of the relatively radicalised petty bourgeoisie milieu of the universities in order to staff the swelling ranks of the colonial armed forces, were thrown into a period of political chaos under the impetus of the crisis. In many cases they were inspired not by any particularly high-flown political ideals, but practical questions of self-interest. Thus the origin of the Armed Forces Movement did not lie in any democratic political current or the various movements of Portuguese opposition politics. Rather, it arose from the intense social frustration felt by the professional officer corps at the appearance of a horde of conscript officers with nominally a very similar status to themselves, but who had not gone through the same training or come from the same social origins. This led to the formation of professional grievance committees in the armed forces, set up in order to fight for the preservation of the privileges of the professional officer corps, and it was out of these grievance committees that the Armed Forces Movement was eventually born.

At the same time, in the upper ranks of the armed forces, the process of reorientation to the new desires of the bourgeoisie also have begun to have an effect, even on the highest ranks of the armed forces. On the eve of the 25 April 1974, two senior military officials, the Commander-in-Chief (today President) Costa Gomes, and his deputy Spínola, (whose history has been a little less successful of late) were both influenced by these factors to support the plans for political change being set in motion by the Armed Forces Movement.



MARCEL CAETANO: UNABLE TO END COLONIAL WARS AND REORIENT PORTUGUESE CAPITALISM TOWARDS THE EEC.

What I have tried to do above is to analyse the root cause of the present crisis in terms of the structure of Portuguese society prior to the coup, its particular contradictions, and the way they operated to set a whole series of forces in motion – the bourgeoisie, its instruments and agents inside the armed forces, the Portuguese masses and the population of the colonies – all of whom are contenders in this particular struggle. The period following the downfall of the regime on 25 April did not see the successful realisation of the ambitions either of the bourgeoisie or those of its representatives who played the most important role in bringing the coup about. Corresponding to this failure was an unprecedented upsurge of the mass movement, and the rapid conquests of major material and political gains by the working class. This upset for the plans of the bourgeoisie was due to a number of particular characteristics of the overall situation flowing out of some of the general social and economic factors I have already indicated.

The specific nature of the Portuguese regime meant two important things. First of all, that the State as an institution was an omnipresent force that intervened in and regulated social relations and social processes in a much more direct way than normally exists within the bourgeois democratic forms of political rule. In the regulation of transactions between workers and employers, and in the elaboration of the economic policies of large-scale capital, the State played a very specific and direct role. At the same time this State was what might be termed an 'over-politicised' social entity, from the standpoint of capitalist rule. Not just in the sense that it was at the service of a particular class, which is true of every state, but that its political characteristics, its inextricable association with the regime, and its particular political concepts were self-evident facts to every section of the masses. So there were few illusions among the masses that the State was something above the social classes, and no belief in the 'neutrality' of the state machine or of its repressive apparatus. The State was seen very clearly as an agent of repression, and as an agent of capital.

The consequence of this was that the collapse of the regime touched off inside the state apparatus a much more far-reaching political crisis than would hit that of a bourgeois democratic country in the event of the Government being removed – even in the event of its downfall being occasioned by mass action as happened with the last Tory Government. The collapse of the Tory Government at the hands of the miners didn't produce any kind of real political crisis inside the British state apparatus. People didn't go round tearing up parking tickets, or feeling that they had some kind of new found freedom in their social life, or civil servants start re-thinking their political ideas as a result of the downfall of the Tory Government.

But this was precisely the consequence of the downfall of the Caetano regime. It meant that none of the existing organs of bourgeois authority – the civil service bureaucracy, the mass media, or the police force – any longer had any real authority or credibility among the masses. Moreover a whole series of struggles broke out around the central demand of purging the apparatus, in order to break the connection between the state machine and the political traditions and political forces of the old regime. While the essential content of this struggle was a democratic one, aimed at removing the objectionable fascist centre from the state machine, its logic – given the actual relationship between the state machine and the political forces of the regime – was to create a permanent crisis inside the State. Increasingly wider layers of the apparatus were, under mass pressure, either removed from office – as happened to a series of senior civil servants and top managers in industry – or pushed into a situation where, because of the fear of arousing such mass opposition, they became totally paralysed as a force in the service of capitalism. This political crisis of the capitalist State is by far the most important factor determining the unfolding of the revolutionary process inside Portugal. For whatever political weaknesses and problems existed among the

masses and inside the mass movement, the absence of an effective state machine was a fatal weakness for the bourgeoisie. The absence of an effective central authority, of a body which could expect to have its directives accepted throughout wide layers of society, of a body which could carry out repressive actions against the masses without provoking even larger resistance on the part of the masses, meant that it was impossible for the Portuguese bourgeoisie to develop and implement any kind of viable political strategy in its own class interests. Virtually from the morrow of 25 April up until the present day, this absolutely chronic and insoluble political crisis has sown chaos within the ranks of the ruling class. While there were certain brief periods of 'stability', certain periods during which the bourgeoisie had composed and has tried to implement a relatively coherent political strategy, the they led at each turn – in more and more rapid succession – to a sharp confrontation with the masses. Under circumstances in which the bourgeoisie finds it has no instruments with which actually to win this confrontation, a particular strategy and a particular alignment of forces designed to carry it through, is rapidly swept aside and the struggle continues to mount.

Within the capitalist State after 25 April there was in fact only one force which could be said to any significant degree not to have suffered from this political crisis – and that, of course, was the armed forces. The armed forces, because of their role in carrying through the coup, and because of the fact that associated with this were not merely rank-and-file or a certain section of the junior officer corps, but a number of the leading figures of the armed forces high command, had a degree of stability which no other institution of the capitalist State could even begin to approach.

Of course the bourgeoisie attempted to utilise this institution to control and regulate the mass movement, and on the basis of that control and regulation to strengthen and recompose the apparatus of the entire capitalist State. However, because of the generalised crisis throughout all the other bodies of the State apparatus, the profound ramifications of the social crisis inside the armed forces itself before the coup and the scope and intensity of the mass struggle, the aims of the bourgeoisie to turn the army into a reliable instrument of capitalist policy was blocked.

In fact the army was pulled in the opposite direction – towards a sharp internal political strife and decomposition, with sections of it being drawn, not simply on an atomised basis but on a mass scale, into the orbit of a mass movement.

The problem was that the attempt to have the army carry out the bourgeoisie's political manoeuvres imposed a certain cost. It meant first of all that the army became not simply a force behind the scene preserving some state of general 'law and order', but had to become a political arbiter of all day-to-day conflicts taking place within the society. After 25 April, almost every significant social and political conflict could only be resolved through the intervention of the army. Increasingly, even the most mundane social questions, the regular problems of public order, became unmanageable by the ordinary forces of order. All and any type of problem that arose – whether it was a question of squatter occupying property, workers on strike or engaged in occupations, or even small scale social conflicts like arguments over the prices in a restaurant, – became questions for which the army had to take responsibility. The consequence of this was a situation in which the army was constantly exposed in a massive way to all the political pressures, political struggles and political demands of the mass movement to a degree which it had never faced before. Moreover, this took place under circumstances in which all layers of the army, particularly within the ranks and the junior officer corps, there was a deep-going politicisation and outright radicalisation as the result of the experience of the colonial wars, the destruction of the old regime, and the impact of the mass struggles which followed.

The second element in this situation, alongside the

crisis of the State, of bourgeois leadership and bourgeois strategy, was the spontaneous creativity unleashed in the Portuguese masses. There is a very rich lesson for us as to what we can expect to occur in Spain when any removing of constraints of dictatorship takes place. In a situation in which for half a century the struggle of the Portuguese masses had been deliberately atomised and crushed by the repressive power of the dictatorship, the desire and the will of the masses to go into struggle, to begin to seek out and determine their own course, their own policies and their own solutions, was absolutely uncontainable.

There was a widespread underestimation on the part of most revolutionaries outside Portugal of the capacity of the Portuguese masses to develop their struggle. Two elements were overlooked in making a particular diagnosis of the perspectives in Portugal. First, the degree to which the limited, but nonetheless important, industrialisation of the 1960s and '70s had created a veritable proletarian vanguard in the large-scale, foreign and monopoly dominated industries in the south of the country. This vanguard, in particular around the Lisbon region, has proved capable of leading the most determined struggles and blocking all of the manoeuvres of reaction, whether the 28 September right wing mobilisation or the 11 March abortive coup, while rejecting the attempts of the Communist Party and other reformist forces to channel the mass movement into support for bourgeois political projects. While the overall structure of the Portuguese working class, its overall class consciousness and experience, is in many ways very backward, nonetheless there does exist this important vanguard which, for a period of time and under certain circumstances was able to occupy the centre of the political stage in Portugal.

Secondly, one of the peculiarities of the Portuguese dictatorship – certainly compared with that of Spain – is that it was born in a relatively cold and peaceful fashion. It did not develop out of a period of intense civil war, or a period of mobilisation of big sections of the petty bourgeoisie to engage in the most intense and violent forms of class struggle. It was born out of a relatively undramatic military coup and a gradual process of 'fascisation' of the regime which that coup gave birth to. As a result, it's had what I have described as a very specific character, one of the features of which was the readiness of the dictatorship throughout most of its

history to permit – albeit under tight regulation and not in any permanent form – certain forms of bourgeois democratic opposition. This was something which would have been quite unheard of in Germany or Italy under fascism, and even in Spain up until the most recent period.

So there took place in Portugal under the the Caetano and Salazar regimes a series of staged elections which, while their effect on the actual structure of the regime was nil, provided an opportunity for political debate and a limited degree of political organisation. This had an important effect on the Portuguese proletariat. For example, May Day in Portugal, under the Salazar-Caetano regime, has been celebrated in a more or less mass way since 1944 – for 30 years. The huge May Day demonstration sweeping through the streets of Lisbon on 1 May 1974, which to many of us must have looked like a completely unprecedented experience, had occurred on that scale – with not only tens of thousands but hundreds of thousands of workers on the streets – on at least two previous occasions in Portuguese history: in 1958 and again in 1962. As far back as 1949, the Presidential candidate of the bourgeois democratic opposition, was able to appear on the streets of Oporto, a fairly small city, before a crowd half a million strong.

This occasional political activity did not permit any kind of structuring of the working class struggle it did not permit the creation of independent workers' organisations, but it did produce a deep-going politicisation of whole layers of the Portuguese working class, while began to express itself in an explosive way once the restraints of the old regime were removed. The spontaneous activity of the masses has led to the creation of its own forms of organisation – of workers' committees in the factories, neighbourhood committees in the workers' residential quarters, various forms of democratic organisations inside the army as the political crisis percolates deeper and deeper into the ranks, and most important, moves to begin to coordinate these bodies of working class power through the creation of popular assemblies and committees tying together the various workers' bodies. All of this grows out of the whole previous period of politicisation within the specific context of a powerful vanguard within the major industrial centres.

The coming together of these two factors – the deep crisis of the bourgeois state and the tremendous spontaneity and creativity of the Portuguese working class – have been



MAY DAY DEMONSTRATION IN LISBON: MAY 1ST 1974.

the dual motive force, the two cogs continuously mashing together that have driven the Portuguese revolution so very far and fast.

I want to end by indicating very briefly the limits which this process is now approaching and some of the central problems which therefore flow out of this situation. We are coming more or less to the end of a period in which the pace and direction of the revolutionary process have been governed by the spontaneous upsurge of the masses and the crisis of the bourgeoisie. After a long and continuous period of forward movement, the working class, including its most developed vanguard layers, have reached a situation in which they find it extremely difficult to formulate and set in motion the steps necessary to overcome the political problems and the political fragmentation of the mass movement in Portugal and carry the revolutionary process forward.

This situation stems precisely from the success that has been attained by the working class thus far. Because capitalist class rule in Portugal has been pushed to the very edge of the precipice, imperialism and the pro-capitalist forces inside Portugal are actually reacting to this situation with bitter intensity and desperation. The bourgeois forces in the country, represented clearly by the Sixth Provisional Government are working frantically to construct barriers to the forward movement of the masses which they must learn to overcome if the situation is to go forward.

We have to indicate a number of the problems facing the mass movement. First of all, the extreme regional and social concentration of the vanguard. The creativity and spontaneity of the masses have been led by a relatively small layer of the Portuguese working class. This layer of the proletariat is centred in the most highly developed industries concentrated in one or two areas, and isolated geographically, socially and politically from the majority of the Portuguese masses, who are either small farmers in the rural areas (about 15 to 20 per cent of the population) or workers in small, almost cottage, industries: 50 per cent of the Portuguese working class is employed in factories with less than 10 workers. The average Portuguese worker works alongside only six or seven other workers in technologically backward craft industries, located in small towns.

These conditions are diametrically opposed to those in which that section of the Portuguese working class which has so far governed the pace of events lives and works. So there is this very sharp and dangerous gap born out of the pattern of Portuguese capitalist development and the deliberate policy of the fascist State. Initially this gave an impetus to the struggle of the Portuguese working class but now it is producing an extremely dangerous situation in which this social and geographical isolation of the vanguard has been translated into a political gulf. This gulf was first expressed in the Constituent Assembly elections, and now gives rise to the capacity of the Socialist Party leadership and allied with them a whole host of reactionary forces to set large sections of the Portuguese masses against this vanguard.

So we have a grave problem of disunity within the Portuguese working class. How can this problem be overcome?

Only by the development of genuine organs of dual power. There exists the nucleus, if you want, of a situation of dual power in the forms of organisations created by the vanguard

but they remain almost the exclusive property of this vanguard. The crucial task that lies ahead is for the vanguard to break out of its isolation and extend and implant the organs of working class power it has forced among those layers of the Portuguese working class who at the present moment are not under its influence — indeed, are politically quite hostile to it.

The problem of the unity of the masses cannot be solved without working out clear tactics towards the bureaucratised mass organisations of the working class — especially the Socialist Party. It remains the case that whatever one says about the possibilities of dual power in Portugal, whatever one says about the representative character of bodies of workers power within the limited geographical zone where they exist, the most 'representative' organisations of the Portuguese masses, in terms of ability to claim their political confidence,

are unfortunately, not the Popular Assemblies or the workers commissions, but the mass workers' parties — the Socialist Party and the Communist Party.

At the same time, however, both of these organisations have leaderships that are thoroughly class collaborationist. The Portuguese Communist Party bases its strategy on a class collaborationist project centred around its alliance with the Armed Forces Movement. Certainly this is an ally whose function as the representative of the bourgeoisie is increasingly a feeble one — indeed, the AFM virtually does not exist today as any kind of unified force, having splintered into a series of different factions and local units, among which are currents which have broken with the bourgeoisie and are orientated towards sections of the working class. Nonetheless, the 'unity' of the Armed Forces Movement — on which the PCP fervently bases itself — can only reflect its character as a movement of petty-bourgeois composition growing out of the state apparatus. That unity can only be maintained on the basis of a programme compatible with the continued existence of capitalism.

It is precisely the stress which the PCP places on the need to maintain the unity of the Armed Forces Movement, of all its different factions, as the basis for its own unity with the AFM that gives its strategy a necessarily class-collaborationist logic which facilitates the bourgeoisie's aim of using the Armed Forces Movement as a force to consummate and develop the political project of restoring the authority of the capitalist State. No political force that bases itself on the 'unity' of the AFM can challenge the basic hold of imperialism and capitalism in Portugal. The PCP's class collaborationism is of a slightly peculiar variety, but nonetheless one that is quite consonant with the general orientation of world stalinism and the stalinist tradition.

On the other hand, the Socialist Party is engaged in a much more viable and forthright class-collaborationist project — one in which its allies are the overtly pro-capitalist forces inside Portugal, and the forces of imperialism internationally. The SP leadership has emerged as the most determined spokesman for these interests, the advocate of solving the economic problems of Portugal by reliance on foreign investment, foreign aid, and integration into the Common Market. It is the most determined advocate of the necessity for capitalist political order to be restored and political guarantees made, in order to resume the flow of foreign investment and foreign trade. It is the force which most sharply inveighs against 'communism', against 'dictatorship' etc., in order to attack all of those political processes which threaten the political domination of the Portuguese capitalists. The SP leaders have systematically attempted to use the Constituent Assembly elections to set in motion what is now the main hope of the Portuguese and international bourgeoisie for the restoration of some kind of equilibrium — the construction of a Government with an important civilian complement based on the Constituent Assembly or some similar bourgeois representative body. Such a Government could then try to push the most radicalised layers of the armed forces out of political life and back into the barracks where, with the removal of political influences, bourgeois 'order' and 'discipline' could be restored. On this basis the army could be regained as an instrument of effective capitalist repression, and the mass movement could be 'disciplined' on the basis of a strengthened capitalist state apparatus.

While it is necessary to characterise the Socialist Party in a general sense as a 'workers' party', all these political forces in Portuguese society are new, having exploded onto the scene with a tremendous rapidity. Before 25 April, the Communist Party had about as many members as the International Socialists have in Britain today — albeit in a much smaller country. Today the Portuguese Communist Party has something like a hundred thousand members. The Socialist Party was essentially a small petty-bourgeois clique of intellectuals, lawyers and academics which emerged out of the bourgeois democratic opposition under the old regime — indeed only two years prior to 25 April was it formed as a coherent organisation. It has essentially



PORTUGUESE STREET WALL: SUMMER 1974.

constructed itself, not so much through the growth of its organisation, but on the basis of its success in the election. So you have on the one hand a huge layer of the masses who identify, at least on the electoral plane, with the Socialist Party; and, on the other hand, a small petty-bourgeois leadership clique floating around on top of this mass. We should say the Socialist Party is a workers' party – that's certainly the way in which it appears in the consciousness of those layers of the Portuguese masses who support it – but nonetheless it's a workers' party in which the leadership is far more unattached to the masses, has far more room for manoeuvre, and is far more capable of entering into all sorts of overt deals with capitalism and imperialism than is the case with even the most die-hard and reformist of social democratic bureaucracies, whose position is restrained at least partially by its dependence on the bureaucratised structures of workers' associations.

The political problem which the vanguard and the revolutionary left must face is how can the masses under the influence of these organisations be broken from the class-collaborationist projects on which they have embarked. This poses the problem of the character and nature of the united front in Portugal today. Certainly the unity of the revolutionary forces – as attained to a large degree in the Revolutionary United Front (FUR) – is of prime importance. But we should not allow this to foster illusions that

it is possible simply to push the process forward by some kind of display of will power on the part of the Lisbon proletariat without actually confronting the real problem of the unification of the masses.

So the unity of the revolutionary left must not be a substitute for – but a means to – developing united front tactics towards the mass workers' organisations under reformist and Stalinist leadership. This task poses many problems for the revolutionary left, but two points deserve particular stress. First, the attempt to solve the problem of the united front must continually be linked up with the task of creating bodies of dual power, of extending and building them throughout the country. Secondly, the preservation and defence of the democratic gains of 25 April is a very clear and important task around which united front action must be fought for. This task is now decisive because of the offensive being launched by reaction. But successful creation of mass unity around this pole can lay the basis for taking on the task of carrying the revolutionary process forward through to the rupture with capitalism and the creation of a proletarian state power.

These are the range of problems which are most pressing for the Portuguese proletariat today, and they all have practical implications for the revolutionary struggle throughout the world. Their study and assimilation is essential for the workers' vanguard across Europe.

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ROOTS OF THE LABOUR BUREAUCRACY

DAVID TETTODORO

The following article was transcribed and edited from a talk given by David Tettodoro at the IMG summer cadre school in September 1975. It was the introduction to one of the sessions set aside at that school for discussion on the origins, development and present role of social democracy and the orientation which revolutionaries should take towards it.

Social democracy, as a distinctive political current inside the international workers movement, has just celebrated its 61st anniversary. It may seem at first a little peculiar to be able to assign such a specific date to the birth of such a complex political and social phenomenon. But this is a point on which one of the most perceptive of contemporary commentators – Lenin – was very clear and very precise.

For Lenin, a very specific set of events clearly marked the division of the international workers movement into two: into the camp of class collaboration and the camp of revolution. Those events were the beginning of the First World War on 4 August 1914 and the capitulation of the mass workers parties in all the major European countries – including the two major parties of the Second International, the French and German social democratic parties – to their respective bourgeois governments.

In Lenin's view, writing shortly afterwards, this one set of events represented the final conquest of the major organisations of the European working class by opportunistic and class collaborationist trends which had been growing and developing, as he put it, from a mood into a current, and finally into a distinctive stratum inside the working class. Faced not with just some secondary question of a particular tactical collaboration or compromise with the ruling class, but with the launching on a European and indeed world-wide scale of a major confrontation between the different imperialist powers, this stratum had to make a crucial decision: did it fundamentally support its 'own' bourgeoisies, or was it prepared and capable of launching the sort of revolutionary struggle which could lead to the revolutionary overthrow of these bourgeoisies. These forces chose the former course. Thus differences which had previously been issues of debate, or which had been disregarded in the past, or had been seen as matters of tactical manoeuvres, all became polarised around two very distinctive poles. The international workers' movement was now fundamentally split, unfortunately not in a numerical sense down the middle, but with only a very small fraction holding onto the ideas of proletarian revolution. All those forces and

political currents favouring class collaboration, opportunism and revisionism now crystallised together as the dominant force within the international workers movement, giving birth to 'social democracy' as we now understand it.

The question was then clearly posed in a very sharp way, and indeed is still posed to us today, how such currents could win out within a movement whose origins lay with the revolutionary ideals of Marx and Engels, and whose programme centred around the idea of a social revolution in which the proletariat would be the leading force, and the objective of which would be the destruction of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist society. How could opportunism conquer these parties which had undeniably mass roots within the social class that was to be the gravedigger of capitalism?

The distinctive feature of social democracy, the root of everything else and from which we have to start, is its class collaborationism, its systematic subordination of the historic interest of the working class to the historic interest of the bourgeoisie. That is to say, irrespective of the fact that social democracy may in some sense represent the interests of the working class on one or another particular question, fighting or struggling for this or that particular reform, in terms of the historic organisation of the entire society it subordinates the struggle of the working class for the destruction of capitalism and the creation of a socialist society to the preservation of the capitalist social order.

In attempting to make some diagnosis of this situation, the theory that was propounded most consistently by the analysts of the revolutionary current, what was to become the Third International, was the theory of the 'labour aristocracy', one which still retains a certain amount of influence today. Just to cite one example: in the *ABC of Communism* – Bukharin and Preobrazhensky's commentary on the programme of the Russian Communist Party – the authors write: 'In order to understand the inglorious collapse of the Second International, we must study the development of the working class movement prior to the war. Before this conflict, capitalism in Europe and the USA had largely owed its development to the frantic plunder of the colonies. By brutal exploitation, by robbery, fraud and force, funds were extracted from the colonial nations and were transmuted into profits for the sharks of European and American finance capital. Out of these surplus profits the trust could afford to pay his wage slaves a trifle more than the ordinary wages of labour; not of course to all the wage

workers, but only to those who are usually spoken of as skilled workers. These strata of the working class are thereby won over to the side of capital.'

This is also the position to be found in the commentaries written by Lenin at this time, and also by other representatives of the revolutionary current, in particular by Zinoviev. But in this particular form it represents an oversimplification, a distortion, both of Lenin's own views of the actual trend of events and of the forces that lay behind the growth of opportunism and revisionism, and their crystallisation into international social democracy.

It is certainly true that one of the things which Lenin is eager to establish when he launches into his polemics against the 'social chauvinists', as he termed those who took the line of support of their own bourgeoisie in the war, is the connection between their positions and the historic views of revisionism which were fought for so long inside the Second International. He is equally concerned to establish the connection between the victory of social chauvinism and the growth of imperialism, which he does via the use of the concept of 'labour aristocracy'. This concept is drawn from Engels' description of developments in the British working class in the 1860s, where he attributes relatively passive character and the acceptance of the leadership of the Liberal Party by the British workers to the international monopoly of British capital in the world economy. This, Engels says, has allowed it to re-distribute a certain proportion of the monopoly surplus that it thus accumulates into the hands of a section of the working class, producing a privileged stratum who provide the basis for bourgeois politics within the heart of the labour movement. Lenin says that Kautsky is correct when he argues that there is no longer a British monopoly of the world market, but in its place has grown up imperialism, embracing all of the major countries of the capitalist world. Through the mechanisms of imperialism, Lenin argues, precisely the same sort of process is able to take place in all the industrial capitalist countries as took place in Britain at the time when Engels developed his ideas.

If we look at Lenin's discussion of the empirical content of this concept of 'labour aristocracy' however, a few problems arise. For example: 'A few crumbs of the bourgeoisie's huge profits may come the way of a small group' of labour bureaucrats, labour aristocrats and petit-bourgeois fellow-travellers. Social chauvinism and opportunism have the same class basis, namely the alliance of a small section of privileged workers with their national bourgeoisie against the working class masses.' Here we have essentially the same idea as that put forward by Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, but both here and elsewhere the question is not very clearly answered: precisely *who* are the beneficiaries of this accumulated surplus? Precisely which are the strata that provide the link between the bourgeoisie and the workers' movement?

Bukharin and Preobrazhensky are very clear – they say it's the skilled stratum of workers, the skilled working class. But Lenin is not so clear-cut. He continually talks about a 'small stratum', but never defines it precisely. And indeed, whenever he moves towards greater precision the social group most regularly referred to is what he calls the labour bureaucracy – the functionaries of the trade unions and the social democratic parties. Insofar as the concept of the labour aristocracy is given any clear specificity by Lenin, it tends to centre not on the skilled working class, as others would have, but on the labour bureaucracy.

In that sense, Lenin's concept of the labour aristocracy differs in important respects both from that propounded by Engels and also from the cruder versions prominent inside the Comintern. Of course, there's not an absolute gulf involved here, because the mass organisations of the labour movement in the period in which Lenin is writing, both the political organisations, the social democratic parties, and also for the most part the trade union movement, were heavily based on the skilled stratum of the working class. They were totally dominated by this stratum, and for the most part the unskilled workers and those emerging in the new forms of mass factory production remained both un-

organised economically and unrepresented politically. They may have constituted part of the electoral foundation of the social democratic parties, but were not a major component of the base of those organisations. So when one is talking of the growth of a privileged bureaucratic stratum inside the labour movement in the late 19th and early 20th century, that growth is largely based upon the skilled working class.

But there remain some important differences here. If we were to accept the position that the skilled working class are a stratum won over *en bloc* to the side of the bourgeoisie it becomes hard to explain some very important events, and one is led to extremely pessimistic political conclusions. Because what do the 'privileges' of the skilled working class rest on? On the fact that the skilled workers are that section which has been most capable of organising itself and carrying on the struggle to defend its material interests on the political and the economic terrain. To say that this entire stratum is won over by the imperialist bourgeoisie in any kind of historic sense, as opposed to merely some immediate conjuncture in which this may occur, is to say that the most organised, class conscious and combative sections of the working class are permanently lost to the workers' movement. This would be a situation in which the working class would have lost its vanguard, and what one would have to talk about is trying to recreate a vanguard out of the most impoverished and most backward sections of the working class.

(That, of course, is the way in which the theory of the labour aristocracy has actually been used by some currents, for example in the American New Left and those influenced by 'Third World' ideologies, who argue that the entire Western working class is part of such a labour aristocracy, and that therefore it is necessary to create a new proletariat, a new vanguard, based on those who are most crushed down by capitalist exploitation. And if you take this version of the theory of 'labour aristocracy' seriously those implications are very hard to deny.)

On the other hand, one also has to explain away a number of incompatible facts. For example, within the German Social Democratic Party, the left had its strongest base among the more skilled sections of the workers. It was in those areas of the Berlin Party where there was the highest concentration of skilled metal workers that the proletarian bastions of the left were to be found, both in the struggles against revisionism prior to the First World War, during the War itself (albeit in a much more limited way), and towards the end of the War, as the left began to re-emerge, re-compose itself and find a new mass base.

Moreover, the whole revolutionary wave which swept Europe at the end of the First World War was not fuelled simply by the impoverished masses of the working class throwing off their political backwardness and going into struggle. Rather it was rooted in the breakdown of the *temporary* ability of the bourgeoisie to find support within the skilled layer of the working class, and the emergence of a new set of relationships inside the workers' movement. The skilled working class once again became the source of a class conscious vanguard of the mass movement, and that in turn made possible the revolutionary unification of the most impoverished layers of the proletariat (ordinary unskilled workers, the unemployed, sections of the dispossessed petit-bourgeoisie, etc.) with the organised skilled working class. This was the basis of the various workers' councils movements that sprung up in Britain, Italy, Germany, and first and foremost in Russia itself. In all these instances – in the German, Russian and Italian cases and also in the British shop stewards' movement – the leadership was provided in general by the most highly skilled and in many cases the most craft conscious sections of the working class, the skilled workers involved in war production. It was these workers directly involved in the war industries who provided the impetus for the shop stewards movement in Britain, the workers councils in Germany, the councils movements in Italy, and the beginnings of the Soviet movement in Russia in 1917.

But while this section of the working class, this layer of

skilled workers, which might for a period have been won over by the bourgeoisie, remained at heart a proletarian force still capable of playing a leading part in the historic fight of the proletariat for socialism, the other layer to which Lenin referred, the labour bureaucracy, is a very different phenomenon indeed. In the post-war revolutionary phase this bureaucracy, far from returning to the historic camp of the proletariat along with the skilled working class, became more and more openly, intransigently and aggressively the instrument of the bourgeoisie inside the workers movement. In the case of Germany, where the spectre of proletarian revolution assumed its most tangible form in any country outside Russia, the labour bureaucracy became *the decisive instrument of counter-revolution on behalf of the bourgeoisie*, whose last line of defence was the Social Democratic Government.

Viewing these problems today in a broader spectrum, we can locate the social roots of social democracy more precisely. Certainly they grow out of the general social process that Lenin, Zinoviev and the theorists of the Third International pointed to: the growth of imperialism, the availability to the bourgeoisie of a certain material flexibility with which it feeds concessions to various sections, often very broad sections, of the workers' movement. But we must add that the primary and central factor, flowing out of these general social conditions, is of various forms of organisation at the top of which is born a distinctive stratum — the labour bureaucracy. The social base of social democracy is to be found first and foremost in this bureaucratic current.

Parallel to this social root of social democracy, there are a series of ideological roots closely related to its material foundations. A central ideological feature of the labour bureaucracy, a distinctive feature of its outlook on the world, is that it has no concept of what the actual seizure of power by the proletariat would constitute. As a result, its whole political strategy, its whole approach to the political tasks which it sees facing the workers' movement, is set entirely within the framework of the bourgeois state. This is a constant thread that runs through the very different faces which social democracy has assumed, from its earliest awakenings in periods like the 1880s and 1890s, through until the present moment. At various points in history, political currents which we now see were part of the historical foundations of social democracy acquired very radical images, and made very radical statements about the need to destroy the power of the exploiters, about having nothing to do with the exploiters' state, about the need for the proletariat to take power before any kind of meaningful reform could be attained, etc. — a very different image from that put forward today by Wilson or Schmidt in the name of social democracy. But something links these apparently different phenomena on the level of political outlook and political ideology — and that is their complete attachment to the bourgeois state, to the existing political framework created by their respective bourgeoisies, as the framework within which the class struggle is to be carried on. As a result of that, they share a complete failure to project any concrete form in which the struggle of the proletariat can go beyond the bourgeois state and lay the foundations of proletarian political power and a proletarian state.

What all this represents is the triumph within the workers movement, through this bureaucracy, of what can be termed an essentially petit-bourgeois ideological current. This petit-bourgeois current has two essential ideological components. The first is the actual political tradition of the radical petit-bourgeoisie, the tradition of that layer of European capitalist society who were involved in petty commodity production and provided the mass basis for the great social struggles in the era of bourgeois revolutions, but who in a whole series of European countries did not actually see their own political goals, the goals of radical bourgeois democracy, systematically achieved. This was particularly true in the case of Germany, and is an important fact in explaining the development of German social democracy.

These petit-bourgeois currents were increasingly faced

with the fact that their political aims would not be carried through by the bourgeoisie, who were prepared to enter into various forms of collaboration with the traditional ruling class and the traditional state machine (for example, the German bourgeoisie and the large Prussian landowners reached a compromise on the form of the German state which excluded the revolutionary democratic alternative, which the petit-bourgeoisie had fought for since the revolutionary wave of 1848). Seeing that, the petit-bourgeoisie were forced to look towards the workers movement as the only alternate instrument through which its particular goals could be realised. Certainly one finds at the base of social democracy all sorts of expressions of this, even in terms of individuals. For example, the founders of the so-called 'Marxist' wing of German social democracy, Bebel and Liebknecht, were both clearly, in a social and ideological sense, drawn out of this current. Bebel was an old south German revolutionary democrat, a petit-bourgeois shoemaker by trade. (Obviously one should not reduce ideological and social questions to a matter of individuals, but you can actually see expressed in individuals the forces which had such tremendous sway in forming the political outlook of these organisations.) Bebel, despite the favour in which Marx often held him, remained throughout his life essentially a radical petit-bourgeois democrat; one can find him as late as the 1890s making passionate statements in the Reichstag, that he is a loyal patriot and that the Social Democratic Party has no desire to undermine patriotism, that it is the most loyal defender of the German nation — indeed, a better defender of German nationhood than the Prussian aristocracy and those sections of the German bourgeoisie which supported them.

The second element which, despite an apparent anachronism, one should also consider as part of this petit-bourgeois ideological current, is the economism which holds sway over very large sections of the working class — that is to say, the notion that the aim and goal of working class struggle is to attain significant improvements in the material welfare of the working class, the limitation of the political horizon of the working class to immediate material gains. Certainly in terms of its social influence, this is a *proletarian* element — an idea which finds its expression in layers of the proletariat and arises out of the proletarian condition under capitalism; it flows out of the fact that under capitalism the proletariat is employed in a multiplicity of different enterprises, engaged in a multiplicity of different tasks, on the basis of a wide variety of different forms of education and activity. In other words, under capitalism the immediate social conditions of the proletariat divide and atomise it, and it does not spontaneously obtain consciousness of its global position as a class, as the collective producer of the total product of capitalist society. As a result its vision has a fragmented and atomised character, and the problems which it spontaneously poses for itself are not the historic ones of overthrowing the social order, but the immediate ones of obtaining improved material conditions. Nevertheless, it seems correct to term this a petit-bourgeois ideological element, despite its essentially proletarian location, because what it reflects is the failure of the working class to obtain a political vision corresponding to its actual class position in capitalist society, an atrophying of the class consciousness of the proletariat to the point where it comes to see itself in the same isolated and fragmented way as the petit-bourgeoisie.

What social democracy does is to pull together these two different ideological standards: on the one hand the economism of the working class, and on the other the desire of sections of the petit-bourgeoisie to carry through the thorough democratisation of the institutions of the bourgeois state.

It is out of this that the concept which we have frequently referred to as a fundamental ideological concept of social democracy grows — the separation between the sphere of politics and the sphere of economics, between the political struggle and the trade union struggle. For German Social Democracy this was from the very earliest stage quite a central concept, enshrined with the growth of the trade union bureaucracy in the so-called 'twin-pillars' theory: the notion that the social democratic workers movement as a

whole rested on two equal but distinct 'pillars', that of the party, and that of the trade unions. Neither one nor the other was superior to the other or embraced a higher form of struggle; the fight for the immediate economic improvement of the working class and the fight for the political rights of the working class went hand in hand. In various forms and various guises, this separation between the economic and the political became and remains a central idea of social democracy internationally.

The result of this pulling apart of the political and the economic spheres of struggle, is to make absolute the inability of the working class to go beyond the framework of the capitalist state. Because on what basis can you say that the struggle to obtain political rights and material improvements through the mechanism of the state is divorced from the terrain of the economy, i.e. the terrain on which the working class exists and is exploited as a class? That distinction can only be made on the basis of accepting the sphere of politics as defined by the bourgeois state, its machinery, organs and representative bodies, acquiescing in its radical separation from the sphere of society in which the working class actually lives. To do that is permanently to keep apart the only elements which can in their combination produce a revolutionary alternative to capitalist class rule. One can develop a revolutionary criticism of the capitalist state and present a revolutionary strategy to confront the capitalist class, only insofar as one is able to develop an alternative to it — that is to say, only insofar as one is able to project the possibility of creating a proletarian state. But the possibility of such a state can only flow out of the activities, struggles and organisations of the working class which are created and developed within the central areas of the class struggle — that is precisely those areas which are termed by social democracy the 'economic' struggle and thus permanently amputated from 'politics'. Therefore, this 'twin-pillars' theory, or the 'separation of politics and economics', has the double function of making absolute the blindness of social democracy to any concept of proletarian revolution or proletarian state power on the one hand, and thereby limiting its political activity completely to the framework of the capitalist state on the other. We can say, then, that what social democracy represents in general is the historic subordination of the working class to the bourgeoisie, and that the way in which it does so is by subordinating all the forms of the class struggle to the framework of the capitalist state, falling thereby to pose any alternative to the class rule of the bourgeoisie.

The social root of social democracy lies in the labour bureaucracy, and its ideological roots in its subordinate attitude towards the capitalist state. However, this relationship can express itself in different forms connected with the emergence of different layers within the bureaucracy of the workers' movement. In general, the dynamic is one of subordination of the working class movement as a whole to the capitalist state, and a fusion between the bureaucracy of the workers' movement and the machinery of the capitalist state; that is the historic trend.

This is expressed most clearly in the electoral, parliamentarianist orientation of social democracy, which creates a situation in which an increasingly important layer of the labour movement bureaucracy is based not on the workers' movement itself, but rather on the relationship between the workers' movement and the capitalist state. In other words, this bureaucracy does not consist simply of full-time functionaries who sit in trade union offices, write for party newspapers, or act as secretaries for local party organisations, but includes, as its most influential layer, those who obtain positions within certain structures of the capitalist state which become accessible to the workers' movement — that is to say, within those structures of the capitalist state which have a bourgeois democratic form.

There is some basis for arguing that it is with the emergence of this layer that the bureaucracy first becomes crystallised out as a distinctive social force. But in any event it rapidly becomes the most important layer in the labour bureaucracy. This is so because this layer expresses most

clearly the accommodation of the workers' movement to the capitalist state. In a sense, it is balancing between the two: it occupies a position inside capitalist state institutions, but obtains this position by deploying the political weight and power of the workers' movement to apply pressure on the capitalist state.

Of course we know, from the Leninist attitude towards parliamentary activity, that it is possible for such representatives to play a revolutionary role. But as Lenin's critique of parliamentarism makes very clear, that is possible only insofar as those representatives base themselves on the workers' movement, and on the necessity and capacity of the workers' movement to *destroy* that state structure within which they hold office. In other words, the representatives of the workers' movement, in order to follow any kind of revolutionary course, must see themselves as playing a profoundly *subversive* role — they must be within the capitalist state in order to destroy it. That, of course, is not how social democracy's representatives see their role. They are in the state institutions in order to 'improve' them, in order to fulfil and carry through their 'democratisation', but never ever, ever, in any sense of the word, to actually carry through their destruction. And in that sense they cease to be the representatives of the workers' movement inside the state, and become rather a part of the capitalist state machine — the representatives of the capitalist state within the workers' movement.

As social democracy develops, and as this particular layer begins to play a more direct and crucial role for the bourgeoisie, this relationship becomes stronger and stronger. To take the German case, it moves from a situation where there are a handful of social democratic representatives in the Reichstag, generally playing an insignificant political role, to one in which they constitute, as early as 1910, the largest single political bloc inside the Reichstag where what they do or don't do is very decisive for the political strategy of the bourgeoisie. Then the bourgeoisie begins consciously to draw them into a whole series of different types of administrative machinery in an advisory capacity, and begins to consult them, formally and informally, on a whole series of questions of policy. And of course, lacking any revolutionary alternative, social democracy is quite willing to play this role; they even see this as a sign of their strength, as a victory. Thus social democracy becomes the handmaiden and counsellor of the capitalist state and eventually, in 1918 and 1919 actually forms the government, becomes the executive committee of the bourgeoisie, and takes on the role of a crucial instrument of counter-revolution against the workers' movement. We can see social democracy passing through a similar process in a series of other countries, including Britain.

A more recent development in this process stems equally from the political outlook of social democracy, combined after the Second World War with the need for the bourgeoisie to integrate the working class into a number of social and economic projects it wanted to pursue. Because the post-war boom laid the material basis for such a development, it was possible for a new relationship to begin to grow up between social democracy and sections of the formal functionaries of the capitalist state machine: essentially sections of the state bureaucracy based in the nationalised industries.

In this way, a new layer begins to emerge expressing a further shift in the labour bureaucracy. This new group is the one which rests most clearly and most completely on the capitalist state itself. This layer of functionaries inside the nationalised industries, who share the political outlook and, where it does not compromise their role as state functionaries, even share direct political connections with the organisation of social democracy, carry the process of the incorporation of the labour bureaucracy into the state machine yet a stage further.

This has certain implications for the political development of the labour bureaucracy. The tendency of this process is to create inside social democracy two currents, or, more accurately, a number of currents which pull broadly

two directions. On the one hand there is that section of the labour bureaucracy which is rooted most directly inside the labour movement itself, essentially the functionaries of the mass apparatuses of the working class, and particularly the trade union bureaucracy. On the other hand, there is that section of the bureaucracy whose roots are most deeply inside the capitalist state machine – elected functionaries, in particular those who are drawn into capitalist governments and of course this new layer inside the nationalised industries and other state apparatuses.

What one has here is the social root of the division of social democracy into left-wing currents and right-wing currents. The bureaucracy which is rooted inside the workers movement must, to some extent at least, retain a certain degree of sympathy, a certain degree, if you like, of symmetry with its base, moving at least in the same direction, if not at the same pace, as its base – because the mass organisations of the working class, no matter how bureaucratised they may be, still retain certain levers and mechanisms of control by which the masses can influence the selection, the policies and the direction of that bureaucracy. This particular section of the bureaucracy must, then, to some degree, indirectly and most likely for all manner of devious reasons, reflect the mood of the masses on whom it is based. In a period of acute crisis, in a period in which the masses are set off in new directions, the result of this is to begin to generate left currents based on

this section of the bureaucracy.

The other section of the bureaucracy, however, whose roots are much more within the state apparatus, do not face the same pressures. Their social roots are most directly in the bourgeoisie, and as long as the bourgeois state apparatus remains intact their positions are relatively secure. For them, the logic of a period of crisis is not to push them at all to the left, but rather to begin to push them in the opposite direction. Because, as the working class starts to move into action, to become politically discontented, so does the bourgeoisie. But what the bourgeoisie of course seeks are sounder, surer guarantees for its own social order and the preservation of its own system. The result of that of course is that the bureaucracy which most directly reflects and is based on the needs of the capitalist state, therefore begins to move to the right in order to furnish and provide those kinds of assurances.

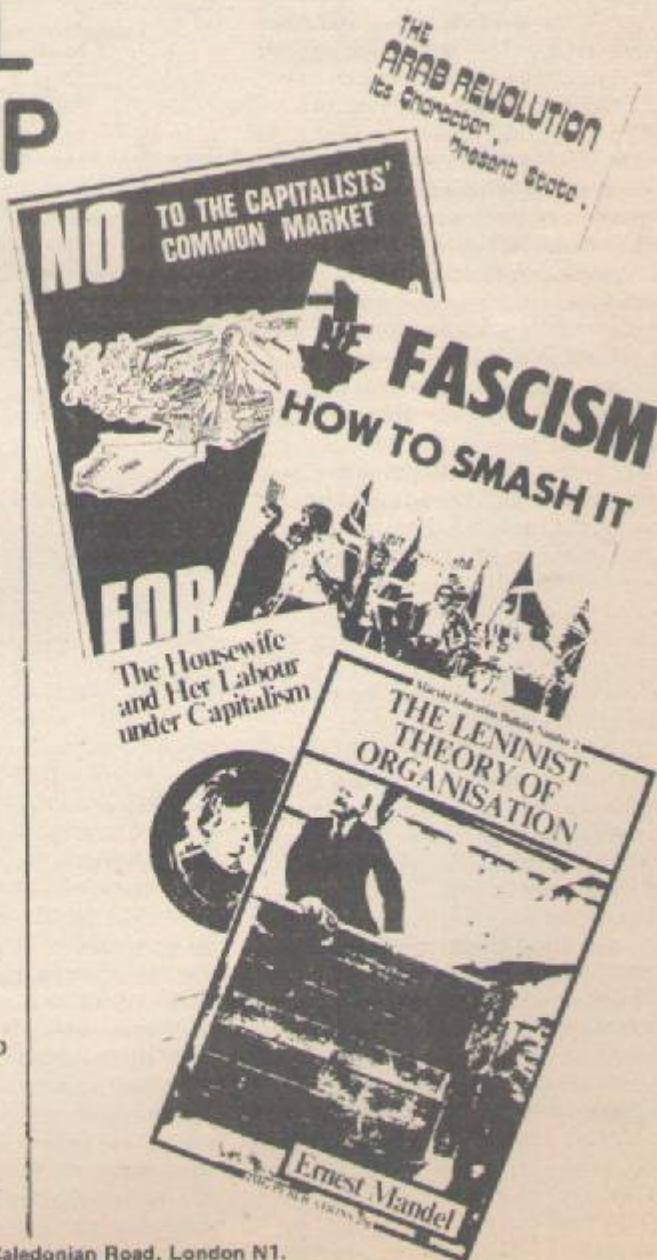
This can lead to an outright rupture, and an outright split within social democracy, a classical model of which is the experience of the British labour movement in the split of the Labour government of 1931. Here a section of the most important and most seasoned bureaucratic representatives of the workers movement actually broke completely from the workers movement and went over lock, stock and barrel, without retaining any residue of organisational ties with the workers movement, to become outright representatives and functionaries of the bourgeoisie.

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REVIEW

Organisations of the Fourth International in the Arab region, *The Arab Revolution: Its character, present state, and perspectives*, IMG Publications, 1975, 30p.

The English translation of this pamphlet on the Arab revolution, issued by organisations affiliated to the Fourth International inside the Arab world, draws the attention of British revolutionaries to the central programmatic questions involving the nature of the revolutionary dynamic in the Arab world. Has there historically evolved a single Arab nation, or many different Arab nations? Does the class struggle simply spread out from individual Arab countries to affect other Arab countries, or, does it on the contrary have a uniquely all-Arab level of existence which structures the more local aspects of the class struggle in each Arab country? What was the nature of the all-Arab defeat in 1967? Is there a need for a single Arab revolutionary party, or for many parties? What are the programmatic and practical links between the struggle against Zionism and that for unification? These are some of the fundamental questions that underlie the pamphlet's historical treatment of the class struggle in the Arab world over the last few decades.

The pamphlet arrives at the important conclusion that there is a single Arab nation, and consequently that the concept of an Arab revolution — as opposed to an accumulation of Egyptian, Syrian, and Palestinian revolutions — corresponds to something real in the life history of the Arab masses. The logical practical extension of these theoretical conclusions is the call for the establishment of a single all-Arab revolutionary party, founded on the objective existence of an Arab nation and on the reality and permanent character of the all-Arab revolutionary dynamic.

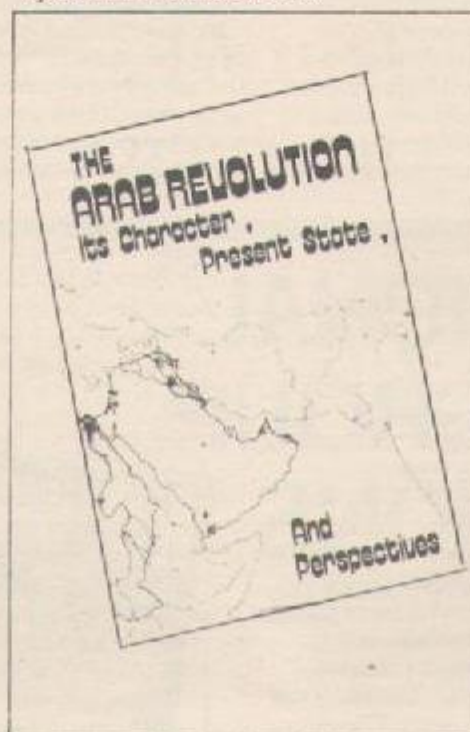
The significance of these general conclusions on the character of the revolution in the Arab countries cannot be underestimated. In fact it would be accurate to say that the debates around these conclusions occupy the same place inside the Arab world as did the debate around the turn of the century amongst the Russian vanguard on the character of the Russian revolution.

It will be recalled that the pivot

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which structured the development of the Russian left was the Agrarian question. Russian Social Democracy was born out of the struggle against peasant populism (Narodnikism) in the course of fierce programmatic battles waged on the role of the peasantry in the Russian revolution. Later, Social Democracy itself split into two opposing wings, with the Mensheviks calling for an alliance of the working class with the liberal bourgeoisie and the Bolsheviks insisting upon the necessity of an alliance between the workers and poor peasants.

In the Arab world it has been the national question, and in particular the question of Arab unification, that has played the role of the agrarian question in Tzarist Russia.



The Stalinisation of the Third International, led to the Arab Communist Parties abandonment of the concept of an Arab revolution, in favour of the concept of a democratic first stage of the revolution in each of the Arab countries. It suited the multi-faceted diplomatic needs of the Soviet bureaucracy to have the flexibility generated by the whole multitude of Arab Communist Parties (as opposed to a single Arab party) each pressurising in varying degrees, their own local Arab ruling class.

Following the defeat of the Arab armies in 1948, however, and the establishment of the Zionist state, this policy was crowned by abysmal failure. From that time onwards the Arab CPs become increasingly marginal to Arab political life in the context of a new and vigorous rise of the Arab nationalist movement. The conception of the revolution that had arisen from the degeneration of marxism under Stalin was replaced by a conception that arose from the radicalisation

around what was fundamentally a bourgeois ideology — i.e. Arab nationalism. The dramatic rise of Nasserism and all-Arab nationalist organisations at the expense of the CP's, best expressed this new situation.

The nationalist mystification of a classless and eternal Arab nation dating back to the Caliphates, was in many ways an inverted version of the Stalinist mystification that there is no Arab nation. However it too failed the acid test of a war with Zionism. The Arab military debacle in 1967 left a political vacuum which was filled as fast as it was created by the meteoric rise of the organisations of the Palestinian resistance movement. The conception of an exclusively Palestinian revolution appeared to replace that of an Arab revolution. But this was in appearance only. For in reality the organisations of the Palestinian masses acted objectively, and in many cases despite themselves, as a vanguard for the whole of the Arab world.

A process of generalised, though uneven, radicalization swept the Arab countries. But this process which was unfolding at the objective level was not translated by the leaderships of the Palestinian resistance into a programme for Arab revolution. On the contrary, these leaderships tended to further the isolation, particularization and localization of the situation of the Palestinian refugees. A strategy of 'non-interference in the internal affairs of the Arab regimes' on the basis of the thoroughly utopian program of a 'Palestinian revolution', was adopted. This in the final analysis, is what led to the catastrophic massacre of September 1970 at the hands of the Jordanian wing of the Arab ruling class.

Thus time after time, Arab political history has driven home its verdict. Either the struggle against Zionism and the Arab ruling class and the struggle for socialism and economic development are combined and waged under the banner of an overall programmatic conception — which is best captured in the formula of an Arab revolution — or else, the revolutionary process will be thwarted and defused. To put it in a nutshell: The Permanent revolution, in the concrete circumstance of the Arab world, has in fact the character of an all-Arab revolution. To quote the pamphlet in which this concept is systematically developed: 'The Arab revolution will be socialist, or it will not be a revolution'.

S. JAAFAR

◦REVIEW ARTICLE◦

The issuing of this volume marks an important stage in the most ambitious publication project of the writings of Trotsky undertaken since the Soviet Union announced its complete works of Trotsky under Stalin's pressure in 1927. This volume actually marks the first of the series, which covers Trotsky's writings during his last exile (1929-40). Now the whole series is available, although three volumes remain to be republished in a new format and with expanded contents.

This means that students of Trotsky can now read the series in chronological order, tracing the development of Trotsky's politics on important world events as well as the development of the internal struggle to construct the Fourth International. Therefore the new volume facilitates study, and for those who have already read some of the volumes, restudy, of Trotsky's eleven-year battle to establish the political basis and to assemble the initial cadres for the Fourth International, the continuity of Bolshevism and of Marxism itself.

These volumes comprise all the available writings of Trotsky except those already published in book form. While a massive amount of material remains unavailable in the closed section of the Trotsky archives at Harvard, particularly material related to the internal development of the Fourth International, these volumes permit us to gain a rich understanding of Trotsky and his thinking.

One of the great advantages of the series lies in its chronological organization. Because of this we find combined into single volumes Trotsky's writings on a number of different countries with some of his writings on the problems of constructing the Fourth International under the particular world situation of the time. Thus we see a picture not just of Trotsky, the great thinker, or the brilliant analyst of world events, but most of all of Trotsky the *party man*, who assessed each development in the world situation from the point of view of constructing a new leadership of the working class dedicated to the sole purpose of establishing socialism worldwide.

The circumstances facing Trotsky during the year of this volume, 1929, were perhaps among the most difficult he ever encountered. Between 1923 and 1928 Trotsky fought for revolutionary policies as a tendency within the Russian Communist party. He faced many difficulties, particularly in the last year of forced exile and isolation in Alma-Ata, but he remained in the USSR and was involved in the political life of the Communist movement there.

Suddenly he was forcibly removed from Russia and transported to Turkey, a country whose language he did not know. He was cut off from old-time collaborators within the USSR, and just when he was beginning to develop relations with colla-

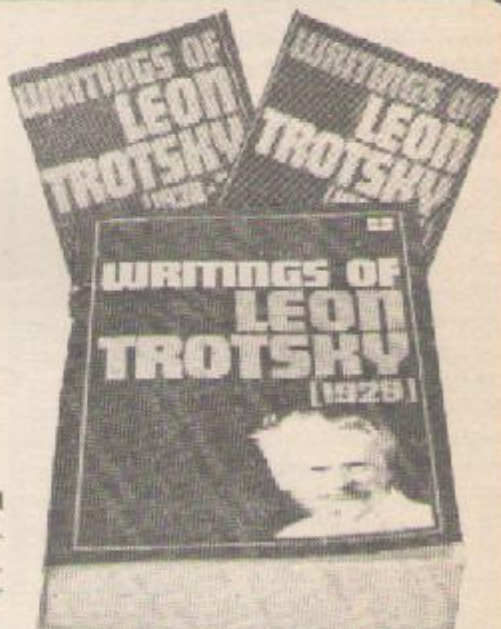
borators in other countries.

At the same time, the world political situation was extremely difficult. The working class had suffered a series of major defeats because of Stalin's leadership of the

Nor were the groups that had rallied to the Left Opposition in various countries untouched by the difficulties of the period. These groups were themselves affected by the defeats and demoralization, some broke

Wohlforth on Trotsky's writings

Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929). Edited by George Breitman and Sarah Lovell. New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc. 1975. 461 pp. \$13, cloth; \$3.95, paperback.



Communist International. The German Communists refused to take the revolutionary initiative in the 1923 crisis provoked by France's invasion of the Saar Basin. Stalin became implicated in the collapse of the great British general strike of 1926 through his alliance with the British reformist trade union leadership. Then the revolutionary opportunities of the second Chinese revolution were destroyed in the 1926-27 period because of Stalin's policy of subordinating the Chinese Communist party to the bourgeois Kuomintang of Chiang Kai-shek. All this demoralized the vanguard of the working class and made things extremely difficult for the small band of revolutionists.

On top of all this came the cynical turn made by Stalin in 1928 and 1929. Faced with the open rebellion of the middle and rich peasants and the virtual collapse of the Soviet economy, Stalin suddenly shifted to an ultraleft position, adopted large portions of the program of the Left Opposition, and in a bureaucratic and totalitarian fashion, imposed a super industrialization drive on the country. In foreign policy Stalin shifted to ultraleftist tactics and phraseology. At the same time that he was stealing part of the Left's program and distorting it, he stepped up his police pressure on the Left Opposition. The result was a series of capitulations in the Left Opposition—Karl Radek, for example—and a further isolation of the Left Opposition from militant workers in and around the various Communist parties of the world who were taken in for a time by Stalin's demagoguery and the prestige of the October revolution.

up into personal cliques, all of them suffered from isolation. In addition, their opposition to Stalin was not in all cases rooted in an alternative struggle for Bolshevism. All may have agreed that Stalin deserved to be criticized, but all did not necessarily agree as to the *causes* of the degeneration of the USSR, or the alternative Bolshevik program around which to assemble the cadres of the Communist movement.

It is perhaps the greatest testament to Trotsky's revolutionary integrity and his profound understanding of Marxism that this man, who had led millions in the struggle for power in a civil war against the imperialists and their agents, could turn with such understanding and patience to work among the tens and at most hundreds of oppositionists scattered around the globe.

Trotsky held no illusions about the difficulties of the period or the immensity of the tasks he now faced in his Turkish exile.

"We are heading for such difficult times that every cothinker, every *potential* cothinker, is precious to us. . . .

"Mass actions tend as a rule to wash away secondary and episodic disagreements and to aid the fusion of friendly and close tendencies. Conversely, ideological groupings in a period of stagnation or ebb tide disclose a great tendency toward differentiation, splits, and internal struggles. We cannot leap out of the period in which we live. We must pass through it. A clear, precise ideological differentiation is unconditionally necessary. It prepares future successes." (Page 80.)

Later he states:

"Revolutionary Marxists have been once again—not for the first time and probably not for the last time—driven into a position of an international propaganda society. By the very nature of things such a situation involves certain elements of sectarianism, which can be overcome only gradually. You seem to be frightened by the smallness of your numbers. This is, of course, unpleasant. It is, of course, best to have organizations numbering millions. But where are we, the vanguard of the vanguard, to obtain organizations of millions the day after the world revolution has suffered catastrophic defeats in the most important countries, defeats produced by a Menshevik leadership that hides behind a false mask of Bolshevism? Where?"

"We are passing through a period of colossal reaction, following the revolutionary years (1917-23). On a new and higher historical stage, we, revolutionary Marxists, find ourselves thrown back into a position of a small and persecuted minority, almost as at the beginning of the imperialist war. As all of history demonstrates, beginning, say, with the First International, such regressions are unavoidable. Our advantage over our predecessors lies in the fact that the situation today is more mature and that we ourselves are more 'mature,' for we stand on the shoulders of Marx, Lenin, and many others." (Page 159.)

Trotsky's approach in this difficult period was to base himself on the conquests of the struggle of the Left Opposition over the preceding five years. This in turn was a development of the basic outlook and strategy of the Bolshevik party and the Communist International under Lenin and the experience of the Great October Revolution. He insisted that there were three basic tendencies within Communism: the right, represented by Bukharin; the center, headed by Stalin; and the Left Opposition.

This assessment immediately brought him into conflict with Boris Souvarine, an early supporter of Trotsky's, who now sought to bring about a fusion of the Left Opposition with the right-wing breakaways from the official Communist parties, most notably Brandler's organization in Germany, which was of some size. Souvarine was typical of a kind of intellectual, demoralized by the rise of Stalinism and the various defeats, who caved in to the pressures of the times, running away from the difficult task of constructing actual organizations on the basis of principle. Before the year was out Trotsky would be forced to break definitively with Souvarine. In an open letter, he concluded:

"I am sure that tomorrow you will not be silent. You will pass to the other side of the barricades. Theoretically, you are already there."

"We record a man overboard and pass on to the next point on the agenda." (Page 189.)

A more difficult problem came from another quarter. Trotsky was forced in 1929 to modify his assessment that there existed three main tendencies within the Commu-

nist movement. He noted the existence of a fourth, though minor, tendency, *ultraleftism*. The main ultraleft grouping was the German Leninbund, led by Hugo Urbahns. This tendency was actually a descendant of the Fischer-Maslow group that led the German Communist party in the period immediately following the passing of the 1923 revolutionary situation. The group, which was closely associated with Zinoviev, attempted to counter the right-wing policies of 1923 by persisting in a revolutionary offensive posture after the revolutionary tide had ebbed.

The main dispute with the Urbahns group in 1929 centered on a serious Sino-Soviet conflict involving the Manchurian railroad. Trotsky defended the right of the Soviet Union to maintain its control over the railroad and opposed its being ceded to China. He felt that under the concrete conditions existing in China at the time, this would mean that the railroad would fall into the hands of right-wing generals in the North and thus endanger both the Chinese revolution and the defense of the USSR. Urbahns insisted it was simply a formal matter of national self-determination, since the area the railroad passed through was populated by Chinese.

However, the dispute actually reflected deeper differences and in that respect was similar to the dispute that broke out within the American Socialist Workers party and the Fourth International in 1939 over defense of the USSR under the concrete conditions of the Soviet invasion of Finland and Poland. Urbahns claimed that the Thermidor (counterrevolution) in the USSR was complete, that a form of state capitalism had been instituted; and he demanded that the Trotskyist forces act as independent parties rather than as an opposition faction within the Communist International.

Trotsky resisted heavy pressure from his own supporters from 1929 until the victory of Hitler in 1933 to write off the Comintern as unreformable. He saw the Communist International and the Russian Communist party as products of the world's first successful proletarian revolution. Although they were caricatures of Lenin's party, Trotsky insisted on continuing the struggle to win over the ranks to Leninist policies. He carried this out without the slightest conciliation to Stalin and his policies. Only when a great objective event, the historic defeat in Germany of the world's strongest and most politically conscious working class, had taken place did Trotsky abandon this policy and move toward the construction of a fourth international. It was the great events of history, not subjective moods or passing events, that proved to Trotsky the unreformable counterrevolutionary character of Communist parties.

Much of the internal polemics of this period dealt with Urbahns, who received some support here and there among confused oppositionists in other countries. The final break between Trotsky and the Leninbund took place in 1930.

We can note certain important features of

Trotsky's approach to all these political problems in assembling the initial cadres of what was to become the Fourth International. First of all, Trotsky proceeded in a principled and objective manner on the basis of principled programmatic positions developed over a period of time. He did not cave in to passing pressures. He knew that he was laying the programmatic foundations for the future, and that these foundations had to be sound if massive revolutionary movements were eventually to be built upon them.

Secondly, he proceeded at all times as an *internationalist*. He proceeded from an international perspective and not from the peculiarities of individual countries and parties separated from this international perspective. He did not judge Brandler solely on the basis of German politics. He did not sort out the forces of the Left Opposition in France on French issues alone.

Thirdly, he was painstakingly patient in his dealings with various oppositionists and potential oppositionists. He corresponded with Souvarine, breaking with him only when such a break was unavoidable. He fought for the Leninbund for over a year, despite the arrogant attitude of the Leninbund's leadership. He understood the objective circumstances causing confusion in the ranks of the oppositionists; and without compromise, but with great objectivity, he fought to the end for each confused individual or group, trying to help them find their way into the ranks of the international opposition. No break was precipitous, or politically unclear. Out of each effort, the small cadre of followers was educated and grew in revolutionary stature.

The period was not without significant small successes, the most important being the development of the Trotskyist forces in France and in the United States. Because of Trotsky's extensive knowledge of France, his involvement as a Comintern representative in the early stages of constructing the French Communist party, and his personal contacts with French Communists, oppositionist activity began earlier in France than elsewhere on the continent. However, at the time Trotsky was sent into exile, the oppositionists were split up. A number of conflicting little groups, whose differences were unclear, formed around different individuals. The groups as a whole were ineffectual.

The major, in many ways historic, break in this situation came with the development of the *La Verité* group through Trotsky's own initiative. This group, consisting primarily of youth, launched a weekly paper as the only way to break out of the impasse and to begin participating in the struggles of workers and reaching the cadres of the CP.

In August 1929 when the weekly *La Verité* was launched, Trotsky greeted it:

"In France the influence of the Opposition is far too slight. This is because there are too many Oppositional groups in France. Many of them are stagnating. From

...in some cases put out an issue of a newspaper containing documents of the international opposition or episodic articles on various questions of French life. The reader digests the contents of the last issue by the time a new one reaches him. It is impossible to break out of this situation. It is necessary to supply the masses with correct and systematic Marxist evaluations of all the events of social life. Politics demands the continuity of thought, words, and deeds. That is why politics demands a daily newspaper.

"The Opposition still lacks the resources today to undertake a daily. You are obliged to begin with a weekly. This is already a step forward; provided, of course, you do not stop here but will continue to stubbornly steer—toward a daily." (Page 222.)

This effort did not receive support from all the opposition groups. Among those opposed was the lawyer Maurice Paz, a figure very much like Souvarine, who was content to "oppose" Stalin as an independent intellectual but who resisted building a principled political movement against Stalin that aimed to become the leadership of Communist workers the world over.

Trotsky's correspondence with Paz, included in this volume, has valuable lessons today for every young revolutionist:

"You do not find expressions forceful enough to disparage the five comrades who 'took their inspiration from Constantinople.' This sarcasm is out of place; and in bad taste. These comrades, however busy earning their living, came to help me at their own initiative and at their own risk, here, to Constantinople, at a very difficult time. Their help was invaluable to me. All of this is proper. But there is another part to the story. I said to myself, after having observed them closely, that comrades who are capable of such initiative and such personal sacrifice are revolutionaries, or can become such, because *it is in this way*, Comrade Paz, *that revolutionaries are formed*. You can have revolutionaries both wise and ignorant, intelligent or mediocre. But you can't have revolutionaries who lack the willingness to smash obstacles, who lack devotion and the spirit of sacrifice. I was not mistaken. These young comrades declared that they were completely prepared to give their time, their forces, their means for a weekly paper, and to mobilize others. So, they are doing what they have promised, and you are sabotaging their work instead of helping them." (Pages 191-92.)

Just as important was the development of the American Left Opposition, led by James P. Cannon, Max Shachtman, and Martin Abern. This group was different from most in Europe because its leadership had considerable experience in the American workers movement and concerned itself from the beginning with the serious task of actually constructing a party organization. Its break with the CP had been more recent and the group was more internally cohesive. It was in this period that Trotsky was able to establish his first contact with the American group and to receive its support in the laborious task of sorting out the

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various oppositional figures and groups and assembling the serious revolutionary cadres the world over. It was also in this period that the *Militant* was launched as a weekly publication, although it was not able to sustain this schedule until somewhat later.

Trotsky's first public communication with his American supporters is included in this volume. The central points raised by Trotsky then are even more pertinent today.

First of all, he recognized the critical role the American working class was destined to play in the world revolutionary process.

"The work to be achieved by the American Opposition has international historic significance, for in the final analysis all the problems of our planet will be decided upon American soil. . . . We must not for a minute lose sight of the fact that the power of American capitalism rests more and more upon the foundation of the world economy, with its contradictions and its crises, military and revolutionary. This means that a social crisis in the United States may arrive a good deal sooner than many think, and have a feverish development from the start. Hence the conclusion: *it is necessary to prepare*." (Pages 131-32.)

In his conclusions Trotsky points out two specific areas that require the special attention of American revolutionists: the young workers and the Blacks:

"Every member of the Opposition should be obligated to have under guidance several young workers, youth from fourteen to fifteen years of age and older; to remain in continual contact with them, help them in their education, train them in questions of scientific socialism, and systematically introduce them to the revolutionary politics of the proletarian vanguard. Oppositionists

who are themselves unprepared for such work should entrust the young workers they have recruited to more developed and experienced comrades. We don't want those who are afraid of rough work. The profession of a revolutionary Bolshevik imposes obligations. The first of these obligations is to win over the proletarian youth, to clear a road to its most oppressed and neglected strata. They stand first under our banner.

"The trade-union bureaucrats, like the bureaucrats of pseudocommunist, live in an atmosphere of aristocratic prejudices of the upper strata of the workers. It would be tragic if the Oppositionists were infected even in the slightest degree with these qualities. We must not only reject and condemn these prejudices; we must burn them out of our consciousness to the last trace. We must find the road to the most unprivileged and downtrodden strata of the proletariat, beginning with the Negroes, whom capitalist society has converted into pariahs, and who must learn to see in us their brothers. And this depends entirely upon our energy and devotion to this work." (Pages 133-34.)

In order to get the most value out of a book, it is important to understand it at all times in relation to the present situation we face. Our situation has certain similarities with that faced by Trotsky in 1929. We have passed through a long period of more than twenty-five years dominated by a world capitalist boom, during which the only revolutionary developments were headed by other forces, particularly the Stalinists. It was a period of great difficulty for Trotskyists, great isolation, which produced splits, divisions, disorientation, and desertions much like those Trotsky faced in 1929.

But 1975 is not 1929. We do not face a long period of defeats. Rather it is a *transitional* period characterized by the deepening crisis of capitalism worldwide, the revolutionary explosion in Portugal on the very continent of Europe, and the beginning of important class struggles in the United States as well. We find ourselves still with many of the problems of the past, the divisions, the confusions. We cannot shed all these problems as one does a winter coat in summer. We must confront these problems as patiently and in as principled a manner as Trotsky did in 1929.

We are, however, entering a political summer. Opportunities for development are on all sides. Small forces can grow significantly in this new situation; and old disputes, and new confusions, can be tested quickly in developments in the class itself. There is no better time than now to study the whole history of the Fourth International as part of the necessary equipment to tackle these problems. We can only urge young revolutionists especially not to let the ever present pressures of day-to-day existence and activities push aside the just as necessary study of the rich lessons from the principled past of the movement Leon Trotsky initiated.

TIM WOHLFORTH

The year 1930 was particularly rich in Trotsky's development of theory and in his efforts to prepare his supporters for the battles ahead. It was Trotsky's second year in exile in Prinkipo, Turkey.

Trotsky's isolation from the main political centers of the world was only physical. Through his contacts with the International Left Opposition, strengthened during the preceding year, he began to grapple with the problems of the revolutionary movement the world over. This volume is filled with articles on Italy, Germany, China, France, and of course his continuing in-depth assessments of developments within the USSR.

In 1929 Trotsky was preoccupied with defining the principled positions of the Left Opposition, developed in the preceding five-year struggle within the USSR against Stalin, defending these positions against ultraleft and opportunist circles in and around the Left Opposition. He spent time, too, in taking the first important steps in developing Opposition organizations in various countries.

In 1930 this work continued, but Trotsky was able to devote more of his writings to the development of perspectives, to strategy and tactics, and to preparation of the vanguard of the working class for the revolutionary tasks he knew lay ahead. Trotsky's understanding was rooted in the experiences of the early Bolshevik movement, the great lessons of the Russian revolution, and the development of these lessons during the first five years of the Communist International. We find in this volume the beginnings of an approach that would flower into the strategy of the united front which he defended so correctly against Stalin during the rise of fascism in Germany, and which he later developed into the Transitional Program of the Fourth International in 1935.

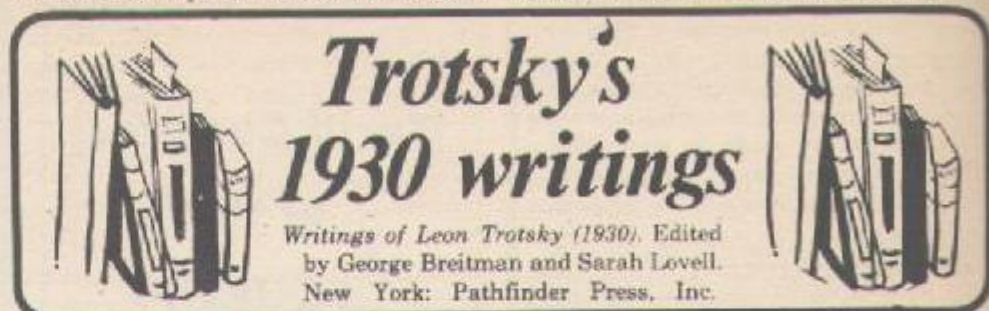
Three basic themes run through this volume: Trotsky's proposals to the Communist International on world unemployment, his approach to democratic demands in fascist Italy and in China under the Kuomintang military dictatorship, and his polemic against Stalin's ultraleftist "third period" course.

The Great Depression, which began with the American stock-market crash in 1929, had by 1930 led to wide-scale unemployment throughout the world. For Trotsky this was not simply a matter for analysis and comment, or for isolated agitation designed to build one's own group. Beginning as he always did from the objective conditions the working class faced, Trotsky proceeded to develop a *policy* that would advance the working class as a whole and undercut the schemes of the capitalists, who sought to use unemployment to dampen the strike action of the unions and to pit workers of one nation against those of another.

At a time when he was fighting inside the Comintern, seeking to free it from the grip of the Stalinist bureaucracy, Trotsky made a proposal based on an understanding of the international character of the struggle of the working class and the incorrectness

of trying to construct socialism isolated in a single country. The Soviet Union, more advanced in its social structure than the capitalist countries but far behind in its economic development because of the back-

For the proletarian dictatorship cannot be imposed upon the popular masses. It can be realized only by carrying on a battle—a battle in full—for all the transitional demands, requirements, and needs of the



wardness inherited from Russia's past, desperately needed trade with the West and the products of these more advanced industrial economies. At the same time, these capitalist countries were plagued by plant closings, excess capacity, and rising unemployment.

In view of this situation, Trotsky urged a campaign for increased trade with the USSR, linking up the interests of unemployed workers in the capitalist countries with the interests of the workers state. On such a basis he felt that the Communist parties could seek united fronts with the Social Democratic parties for a common battle against unemployment. This could only expose these parties in a concrete struggle and strengthen the influence of the Communists among the masses.

Trotsky's writings on Italy and China are also important illustrations of his appreciation of the role played by democratic demands in the struggle of the working class for socialism.

Trotsky's writings on Italy are particularly interesting. Here he deals with the role democratic demands would play during a mass upsurge following the collapse of the Italian fascist regime, a situation with obvious parallels to the recent events in Portugal. Writing to leading elements in the Italian Communist party who were shortly to break with Stalinism and support Trotsky, he stated:

"But does this mean that we communists reject in advance all democratic slogans, all transitional or preparatory slogans, limiting ourselves strictly to the *proletarian dictatorship*? That would be a display of sterile, doctrinaire sectarianism. We do not believe for one moment that a single revolutionary leap suffices to cross what separates the fascist regime from the proletarian dictatorship. In no way do we deny a transitional period with its transitional demands, including democratic demands. . . . If the revolutionary crisis were to break out, for example, in the course of the next months . . . the masses of toilers, workers as well as peasants, would certainly follow up their economic demands with democratic slogans (such as freedom of assembly, of press, of trade-union organization, democratic representation in parliament and in the municipalities). Does this mean that the Communist Party should reject these demands? On the contrary. It will have to invest them with the most audacious and resolute character possible.

masses, and at the head of the masses.

"It should be recalled here that Bolshevism by no means came to power under the abstract slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat. We fought for the Constituent Assembly much more boldly than all the other parties." (Pages 224-25.)

Trotsky's writings in this volume to his new followers in China amplify the same point. Here he fought for an understanding of the critical importance of the struggle for a constituent assembly, even pointing out that if such an assembly had been held in Russia earlier, before the workers insurrection in October, the Bolsheviks would have fully participated in it. Such an experience, in Trotsky's opinion, would have hastened the workers revolution as it educated workers in "the school of revolutionary parliamentarism." Even if it did not hasten the second revolution, it would, he felt, have made the tasks after it easier. (See "The Slogan of a National Assembly in China," pages 164-67.)

Trotsky's principled approach to the problems of revolutionary development came into sharpest collision with the course of Stalin. From 1923 until 1928 Stalin pursued a policy of almost no industrialization, little collectivization of agriculture, and conciliation with the wealthy peasants at home, combined with conciliation with capitalism abroad. The result was almost the complete collapse of the USSR's economy while the proletariat suffered crushing defeats internationally. Then suddenly Stalin veered in the opposite direction. Still clinging to his false theory of building socialism in one country, Stalin went over to a feverish, unrealistic pace of industrialization and collectivization within the USSR combined with a sectarian and ultraleftist course internationally. Stalin's policy abroad was designed as a cover for his domestic policies and helped isolate the Communist parties as he tightened his bureaucratic control over these parties.

Stalin's ideological cover for this course was his theory of the "third period." This "third period," which he saw as beginning with the defeat of the revolution in China, was to be the final period of the onslaught on capitalism worldwide. He sought to pass off a defeat, for which he was responsible, as the opening of the final battle. Abstract demagoguery about immediate revolution, imminent war, general strikes, soviets, replaced the policies of Bolshevism aimed at winning over the mass of workers from

their reformist leaders and preparing them for revolutionary struggle.

On the level of theory, Stalin's concept of the "third period" does not warrant serious attention. Without regard to the conjunctural situation, Stalin substituted the *general revolutionary character of our whole epoch* for a concrete stage in the development of the workers' struggle, disregarding its special problems and tasks or reading them utterly wrong.

Trotsky assessed Stalin's international policy in a pamphlet entitled "The 'Third Period' of the Comintern's Errors" (page 27), which should become must reading for all young revolutionists today. Several key points of Trotsky's argumentation are worth summarizing:

The Comintern claimed that the masses were becoming radicalized. Each strike statistic was featured as proof that the masses were now more radicalized than they had ever been. The radicalization was seen as a simple quantitative matter, something growing ever greater, and—as the crisis developed—ever deeper. "The radicalization of the masses is described as a continuous process: today the masses are more revolutionary than they were yesterday, and tomorrow will be more revolutionary than today. Such a mechanical idea does not correspond to the real process of development of the proletariat or of capitalist society as a whole." (Page 27.)

Trotsky explained that cyclical ups and downs are part of the very nature of the capitalist organism. A *general* period of decline and decay no more signifies the cessation of these cyclical ups and downs than does growing old signify the cessation of a person's heartbeat. These pulsations of the capitalist system affect the consciousness and activity of the masses. In fact, the general nature of the period is expressed concretely through these pulsations and their effect on the lives of workers. As we know, in our general period these cyclical fluctuations are distinguished from those in an earlier period by a growing irregularity in the fluctuations, the tendency toward deeper downturns and weaker rises.

However, we are still only at the threshold of understanding the process by which the masses become radicalized and how we can develop tactics aimed at achieving revolutionary leadership of the masses. Revolution is not directly and mechanically linked to conjunctural ups and downs any more than it is touched off by the general character of the epoch. As Trotsky writes: "The inevitability of revolution flows just as little from the periodicity of crisis as the inevitability of death from a rhythmic pulse." (Page 36.) And further on: "At the same time it must not be forgotten that wars and revolutions in our epoch result not from conjunctural crises but from the contradictions between the development of the productive forces on the one hand and the national boundaries of the bourgeois state on the other, carried to their ultimate conclusion." (Pages 40-41.)

We can say that, in general, conjunctural downturns tend to discourage strike activity

and that strike activity that does take place assumes a defensive character. Revolutionists fighting in the unions under such conditions must recognize this and develop tactics in line with the defensive position of the class. Conjunctural upturns, on the other hand, encourage strike activity, which takes on a more offensive character. At the same time, such class offensives are not necessarily revolutionary, because the same economic forces that make possible small economic gains encourage illusions in purely trade-union nonpolitical activity.

What radicalizes the masses the most and creates conditions for the development of revolutionary political consciousness is precisely the *fluctuations* in the conjunctural situation under general conditions of capitalist decline. This happens *only* if the revolutionary party is capable of developing its *strategy concretely* in the form of *tactics* suited to each stage of economic political and social development.

We can make this critical point clearer if we bring in a specific example—the rise of the CIO in the 1930s. The CIO did not arise out of the conjunctural downturn. The great organizing drive and sit-down movement took place in relation to a mild conjunctural upturn, but an upturn during which fringes, layoffs, and insecurity continued to plague the working class.

Trotsky sums up his approach this way: "If our strategic line is determined in the *final analysis* by the inevitability of the growth of contradictions and the revolutionary radicalization of the masses, then our tactics, which serve this strategy, proceed from the realistic evaluation of each period, each stage, each moment, which may be characterized by a temporary softening of contradictions, a rightward turn of the masses, a change in the relation of forces in favor of the bourgeoisie, etc. If the masses were to turn leftward uninterruptedly, any fool could lead them." (Page 55.)

This alone should make it clear why the working class needs a conscious Marxist leadership. Marxism has nothing in common with sloganeering, dogmas, schemas, ultimatums, and the like. It requires a concrete study of political economy, of historical development, of all, all, the wealth of empirical data that can be gathered, and, especially and above all, continuous contact with the masses to learn what they think, how they change. This is why Marxism is *materialist*, beginning always from the material world, and *dialectical*, seeing everything in its development, in its continuous, contradictory, and often rapid changes.

Ultraleftism remains, of course, very much with us. However, it is important to distinguish between the ultraleftism of Stalin's "third period" course and the development today of what appears on the surface to be similar trends among youth in particular. Stalin's ultraleftism corresponded with the passing political needs of a privileged bureaucracy that had developed a stranglehold on the workers state. Because it was only intended to meet particular political problems facing the

bureaucratic ruling caste at the time, it was later discarded as abruptly as it had been adopted. Since 1933 the Stalinists have never fully reverted to such a position. Instead, they have become more brazen in their collaboration with the world bourgeoisie.

But they can, in face of certain tactical needs, dredge up the old ultraleftist garbage. We have seen this in Portugal, where the Communist party has pursued a consistent policy of collaboration with the bourgeois MFA or a section of it. At times it has even resorted to the old formulas of "social fascism" against the Socialist party when this was useful to cover and defend its obedience to the Armed Forces Movement.

Today, precisely because we are entering a new period of class struggle with revolutionary opportunities ahead in a number of countries, the problem of ultraleftism arises primarily in association with the radicalization of the youth. This ultraleftism is now akin to the trends Lenin and Trotsky had to fight within the ranks of the early Comintern. One of the difficulties is that many fail to arm themselves with the experiences of the past so that they can grasp the method of Lenin and Trotsky, how they approached strategic and tactical questions. Some young revolutionists tend to substitute their own feelings and energies for those of the majority of the working class, which develops at a different pace, shaped by its whole history and experience.

This is one of the reasons why this series of books assembling a large quantity of Trotsky's writings is of such timeliness. Trotsky, like Lenin, always began from an analysis and understanding of the *objective* economic conditions affecting the class struggle. He then worked out a *strategy* to relate the socialist goal to the current struggles of the working class. This strategy was expressed through concrete *tactics* that permitted active participation in the day-to-day struggles of the masses, always from the viewpoint of the development of the working class as a whole, and the construction of a revolutionary mass party.

TIM WOHLFORTH

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