

# Fourth International

JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL MARXISM PUBLISHED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Volume 8 No 1

Price 25 pence

Winter 1972-1973

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Imperialist inroads into the workers' states and the political revolution

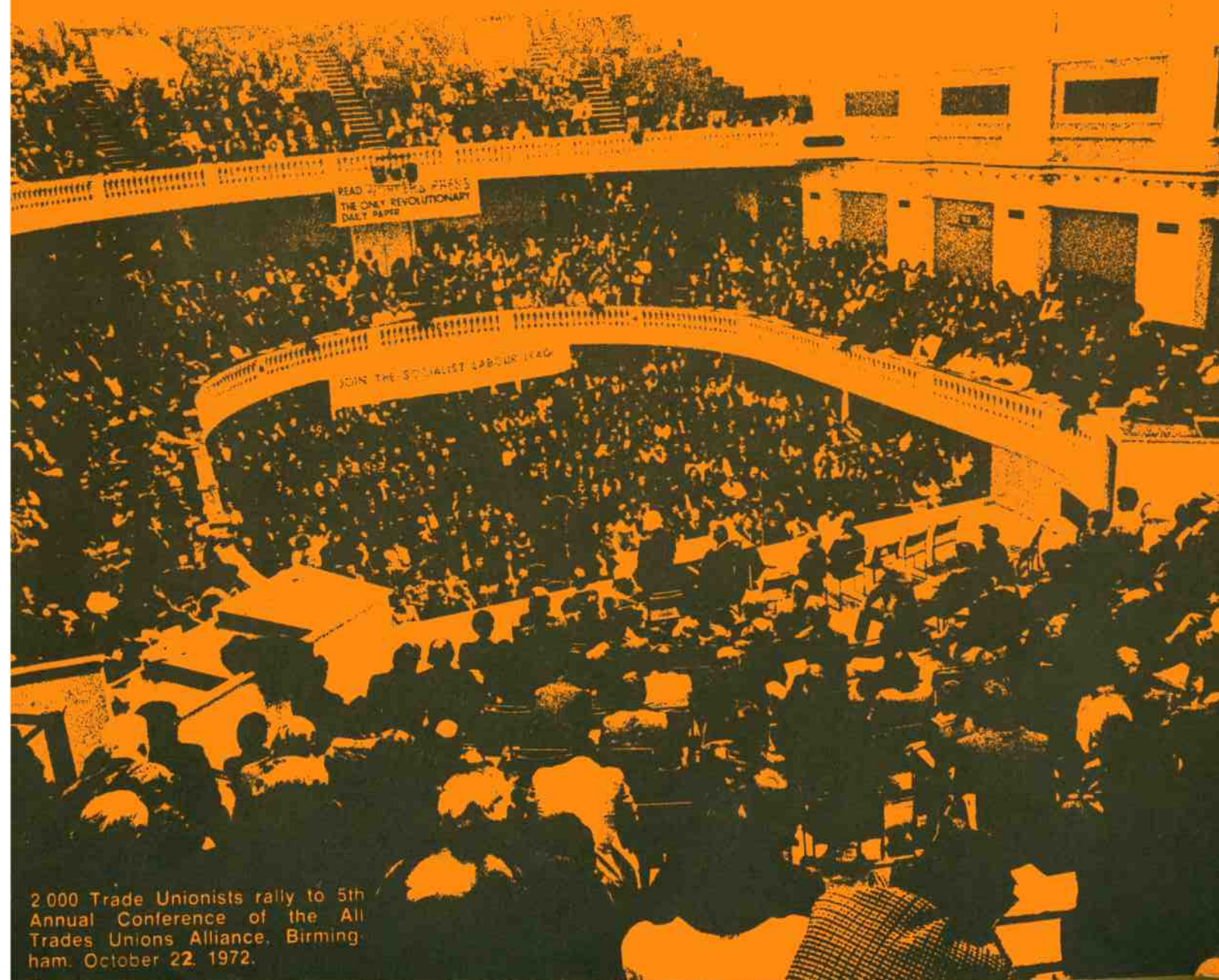
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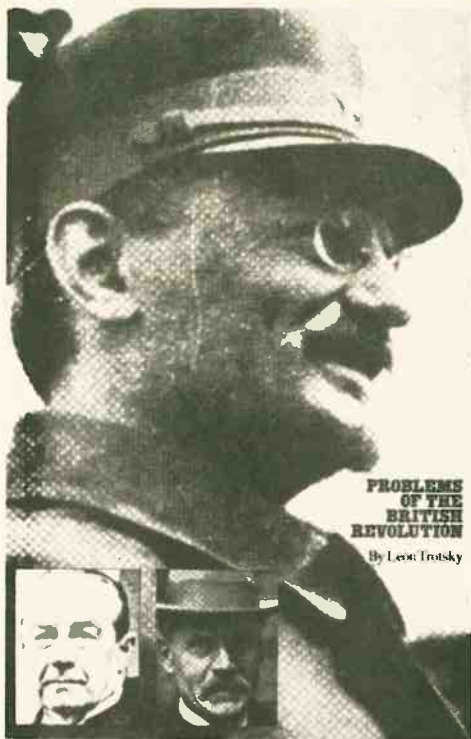
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# Fourth International

A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL MARXISM

VOLUME 8 NUMBER 1 WINTER 1972-1973

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PUBLISHED BY  
THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE FOURTH  
INTERNATIONAL  
186A CLAPHAM HIGH STREET, LONDON, SW4 7UG.

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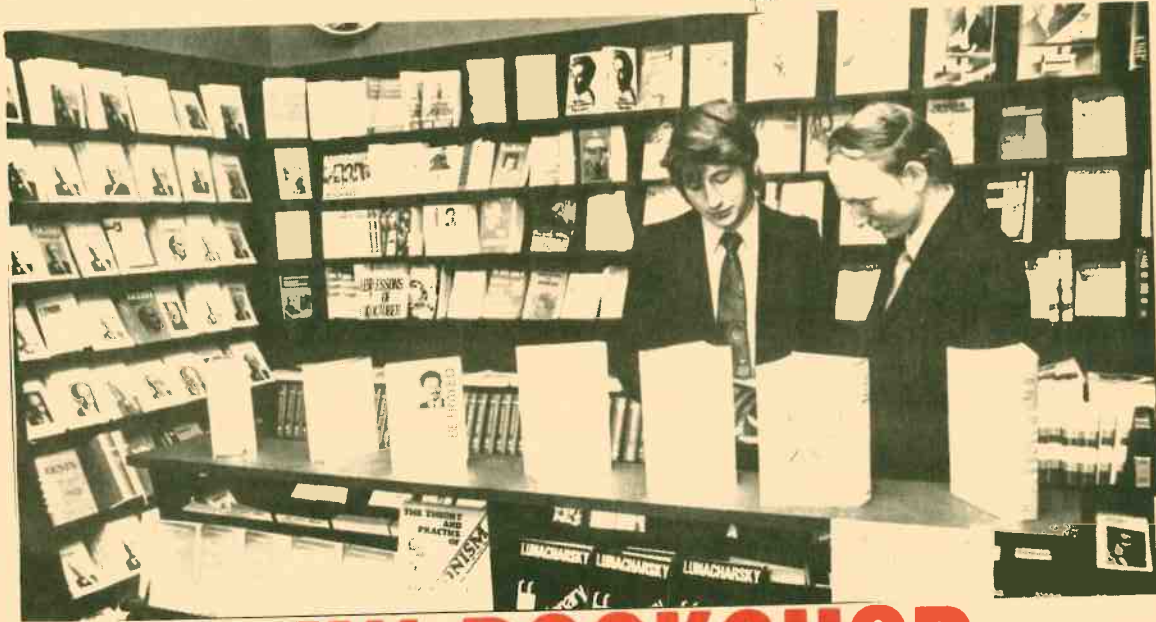
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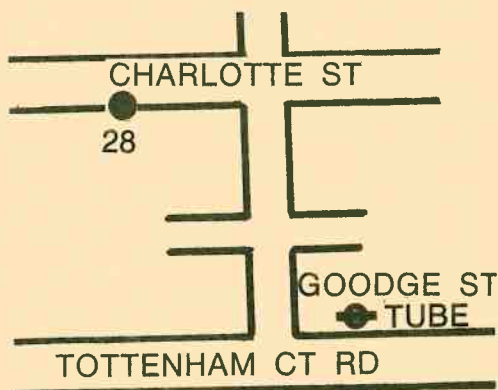


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# Editorial

## Bretton Woods to August 15 1972: International class struggle unleashed

All revolutionary perspectives today depend on the necessity of starting from the watershed of August 15th, 1971. President Nixon's decision on that day to end the convertibility of dollars for gold and to scrap the system established at Bretton Woods in 1944 was a decision forced upon US imperialism by the accumulated contradictions of the long inflationary boom. But the measures taken themselves marked a qualitatively new stage in the crisis. All the tendencies towards uncontrollable inflation, trade war and slump were finally unleashed without restraint. The immediate and inevitable consequence of Nixon's determination to force the burden of the US crisis on to Europe and Japan has been that every ruling class must now shed all the apparatus of 'consensus' politics and go to war against the working class.

Not a single capitalist country is free of the curse of galloping inflation. Not one bourgeois economist is able to understand this phenomenon, and not one capitalist politician has found measures to avert or retard it. Consequently inflation works inexorably to prepare the factor which will turn crisis into collapse: an accelerated decline in the value of money which 'suddenly' reveals itself in complete lack of confidence in the monetary unit. The already insoluble crisis in the world monetary system is hopelessly aggravated by these developments, and every sign that the working class maintains its strength intact in defence of its wages throws into difficulties one 'national' capitalism after another.

The background of the new stage of the crisis is all-important. At one stroke, and without consulting any of US imperialism's 'partners' in the banking houses and governments of the world, Nixon kicked aside the Bretton Woods system. As the Trotskyist movement alone insisted at the time, the consequences were incalculable. Bretton Woods had established the dollar as the dominant currency after World War II, a dollar accepted as convertible into gold at the price of \$34 per fine ounce, the price established by Roosevelt in 1934. Every other currency was stabilised in terms of the dollar and these relations were subject to rigid conditions maintained by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The fixed parities between national currencies, and the mechanisms for sustaining them, were carefully designed in order to prevent the type of competitive exchange depre-

ciations carried out by a series of countries to snatch market advantages after the slump of the 1930s. All this, the framework within which capitalist economy has worked since 1944, and which has provided a basis for the policies of containment of the working class, is ended.

Within the capitalist world after 1944, the most important problem was how to deal with the working class. The Stalinist bureaucracy, aided by social-democracy, provided the treacherous class-collaboration without which the Bretton Woods system could not have been established, particularly in Europe. With this assistance, the now definitive superiority of US capitalism could become a dominant factor for a generation. One manifestation of this strength was that in the 1940s the greater part of world monetary gold was safe in the vaults of Fort Knox. The dollar was scarce and sought-after currency throughout the world. Japan lay prostrate, having once been the newest and greatest threat to US expansion. European capitalism was on its knees, dangerously dependent on the Stalinist parties. The European working class, in many cases armed and confronting an utterly discredited bourgeoisie, was lacking only in leadership. The US capitalists were called upon to put their vast productive resources to the salvage of the world capitalist system.

The economies of capitalist Europe were revived on the basis of dollar loans, the Marshall Plan, and military aid programmes; Japanese capitalism rose from the ashes; discredited and corrupt regimes all over the world were shored up and protected from collapse. The new international monetary system enabled governments to pump credit into the economy to finance post-war reconstruction and pursue Keynesian domestic policies. The working class, although held back by the Stalinist and reformist leadership within the confines of this capitalist programme, nonetheless found itself strengthened by full employment sufficiently to win a long series of wages concessions and social gains. These gains seemed to impressionists to constitute new chains binding the working class to capitalism, but they were to become something quite opposite when capitalism required that they be surrendered. One of the consequences of the revival of European and Japanese capitalism in these circumstances was that US capital took over significant sections of the most modern industries in these countries. The great multinational

firms based above all in the US, vastly extended their activities. Through the greater concentration and centralisation of capital, they attempted to offset the more and more threatening tendency for the rate of profit to fall.

In this new phase of expanded reproduction of capital, which so impressed the reformists and revisionists, the key role was played by the continual outflow of US dollars. By the end of the 1950's this not only caused a chronic balance of payments deficit in the US, but it led also to a reversal of the position of the dollar in the world economy. From the safest it became the most inflationary of all currencies; its scarcity gave way to its superabundance. The United States' stock of gold fell to only one quarter of what it had been at Bretton Woods, and the world monetary system was glutted with unwanted dollars.

The continuation of the reproduction process through the 1960s was thus increasingly bound up inextricably with monetary inflation and monster volumes of credit, at the source of which was the unrestrained outpouring of paper dollars from the US. But now the revived capitalist economies of Europe and Japan began to challenge and threaten the same US master who had revived their fortunes after the war. At the same time the working class in the US, Europe and Japan pressed on unrelentingly with its economic demands. Having yielded to these demands in the old international economic situation, the capitalist powers found it extremely difficult to impose cost-cutting to enable them to undersell their rivals in face of the slowing down of the rate of expansion of world trade. The dollar crisis could not leave other currencies unaffected. Japan and Germany in particular, strengthened over two decades in relation to the US economy and expanding their exports considerably, had continual payments surpluses and their currencies became undervalued in relation to the dollar, again threatening the international system of parities.

Britain, now a weak capitalist country, but with a currency still widely used for international financial transactions, found its exchange rate too high. Failing, even with US assistance, to maintain the old parity, the Labour Government devalued in 1967. This action sparked off a series of currency crises, particularly undermining the dollar and leading directly to the gold crisis of March 1968. The antagonisms between US imperialism and the rivals it had been forced to help to their feet now emerged into the full light of day. The political implications of the maturing crisis were highlighted by May-June 1968 in France.

Nixon's intervention of August 1971 was the sure signal that all attempts at an agreed solution to these problems were exhausted. Here was a declaration of economic war, with the ten per cent imports surcharge as the first shot to be fired. All the meetings of the next few months were used by Nixon's envoys to arrogantly make it plain that the burden of the crisis was to be thrust on to Europe and Japan by every device at America's disposal. Less than one year later, the price of gold on the free market rose to over \$70 per fine ounce, nearly double the 'new' official

price. The so-called Smithsonian agreement of December 1971 solved nothing. Every conference of finance ministers and bankers has broken up without a positive outcome. The mass of unwanted dollars continues to increase. Even at the new rate the dollar remains grossly overvalued. The tottering pound sterling is floating downwards, the Japanese yen and the German mark are undervalued, but to alter them presents insuperable difficulties because both the Japanese and German economies depend on massive exports of manufactured products and imports of raw material. For them a substantial revaluation means an end to expansion and crushing reduction in profits. The world-wide slowing-down of the past two years has hit hard at the weakest sections of industry in the less well-equipped countries. The trade war has begun.

In this trade war, US imperialism threatens the very destruction of its rivals. Its domestic productive power is supplemented by the multinational firms, so many Trojan horses in the enemies' camps. A few stiff tariff impositions would effectively exclude its rivals from the greatest market of all, that of the USA. Japan has the advantage of an enormous, newly-equipped industry and a still relatively cheap labour market, but it is vulnerable to every advance by this labour force, as well as because of its dependence on imported raw materials and high export levels. A young and aggressive imperialism, it now turns to China and the USSR to obtain the markets and materials it needs for continued expansion.

Old Europe confronts both the US and Japan, but is divided into the national states which embodied the historical interests of each bourgeoisie, whose rise and conflicts dominated world history for so long. With the formation of the Common Market these historically established separate ruling classes attempted to overcome the stifling restrictions of the nation state by working towards a single economic unit. In admitting Britain to the EEC, the European capitalists know that they intensify the insoluble problem of reconciling their interests, but they are faced with the dual threat: on the one hand the might of America and on the other the power of the working class. They hope to use their combined strength to defeat the working class and institute the new forms of rule which they would require if ever they were to rationalise and reorganise on the scale required to counter America and Japan. This is the meaning of the talk about an all-European statutory incomes policy and the accelerated agitation for political union.

This all-embracing and universal crisis is the latest and most extreme manifestation of the conflict between capitalist production relations and the development of the productive forces. Now the capitalists of every country are engaged in a race against time. Can they defeat definitively for a whole period a working class which more and more seeks ways of going on to the offensive? Will they be able to do this before a complete collapse of the now very nervous and delicate system of international payments? These are the economic considerations behind world politics today.



# The fruits of 'Socialism in One Country'

## Diplomatic realignment and the Political Revolution

The diplomatic re-alignments of the past year have been closely related to the developing economic crisis of the capitalist world but also to the inseparable crisis of the Soviet, East European and Chinese Stalinist bureaucracies. The counter-revolutionary character of 'peaceful co-existence' has become more apparent and under its aegis the Communist Parties in the capitalist and dependent countries of imperialism prepare new betrayals.

American imperialism has been foremost in seeking a new agreement with the bureaucracy to uphold the *status quo* and to give its economy markets and sources of supply in a period of intensified trade war. The Nixon visits to Peking and Moscow have been followed up by trade agreements or discussion about such agreements of a more far-reaching character than anything previously proposed. The superior technology and immense resources in capital of US imperialism enabled it to take advantage of the internal crisis of the countries ruled by the bureaucracy to drive hard bargains.

The character of this crisis derives from the Stalinist policy of 'socialism in one country' which is adhered to by the Maoists as well as by the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe. Every one of these countries is faced with insoluble economic problems which aggravate the antagonisms between the bureaucracy on the one hand and the working class and the peasantry, especially the collective farm peasantry, on the other. The events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the continued simmering discontent with the Husak regime, the uprisings in the Baltic ports and the subsequent manoeuvres of the Gierak regime, are sharp expressions of this antagonism. The agrarian crisis in the Soviet Union, which has made necessary the passing of huge contracts for the supply of grain with capitalist countries, is the latest expression of the bankruptcy of 'socialism in one country'. Despite the manpower and resources which are devoted to grain-production the Soviet Union is not self-sufficient any more, taking good years with the bad. Yields are too low, there are enormous wastes and inefficiencies arising from bureaucratic mismanagement, the peasantry remains resentful and unco-operative. The legacy of forced collectivisation and the baneful effects of the policy of 'socialism in one country' expose the Soviet Union to capitalist penetration.

The technological lag of Soviet industry is also painfully apparent despite its all-round advance and spectacular successes in some fields. The Soviet consumer remains deprived of a reasonable supply of goods of a quality comparable with those produced under capitalism. The working class sees no diminution in the privileges and power of

the arrogant bureaucratic caste which claims to speak in its name. Worst of all, the bureaucracy is unable to resolve the crisis in the planning system and is forced to look to the capitalist world to make good its own deficiencies.

The policies which, under the heading of 'socialism in one country', led the working class into a series of defeats from the mid-1920s, through the smashing of the German working class to the betrayals which followed the Second World War, leave the Soviet Union itself exposed to capitalist penetration of a deadly kind. One-sided industrial development, the continued pressure of secular backwardness and the inefficiencies and mismanagement of the bureaucracy itself now make it impossible for the Soviet Union even to keep up with the capitalist countries without turning to them for capital and technical know-how.

The Brezhnev-Kosygin leadership has to admit that the 'economic reforms' have not achieved their purpose. It presides over a deep agrarian crisis. It is unable to develop the resources in oil, natural gas and other minerals of the more remote parts of the Soviet Union. The promises made by Khrushchev about raising living standards to the American level have gone by the board. The promises to 'catch up and outstrip' the advanced capitalist countries, less frequent than in the boastful days of the Stalin era, have an increasingly hollow ring.

To safeguard its own position the parasitic bureaucracy turns increasingly to the capitalists for support and assistance in solving its economic problems. The big grain deal with the USA, the joint projects for industrial development which open the way for the penetration of US capital, the plan to develop the resources of Siberia in collaboration with Japanese monopoly capital open up extremely dangerous perspectives.

The imperialists will never give up the goal of restoring capitalism in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and China. For them every deal and every agreement made with the bureaucracy is seen as a preparation for overthrowing the revolutionary conquests of the working class of those countries. In collusion with the bureaucracy if possible, but if necessary by other means, imperialism desires to find access to new sources of raw materials and to open up new outlets for its products. The reincorporation of these countries into the capitalist world market is the logical outcome of the counter-revolutionary role of the bureaucracy.

Every agreement made with imperialism is aimed at the working class and revolutionary nationalist and peasant movements. Peaceful co-existence means the betrayal of the Arab revolution as well as a compromise peace which deprives the heroic

fighters of Vietnam of their fruits of victory. It means that the Communist Parties turn even further to the right, pursuing policies of class collaboration within the framework of bourgeois-democratic institutions. In Britain this means pressure politics and even support for a wing of the Tories said to be moderate and willing to enter a European Security Pact with the Soviet Union. In France it means that the Communist Party guarantees to operate within the Bonapartist constitution of the Fifth Republic, seeks a renewed Popular Front with bourgeois politicians and holds back and divides the offensive movement of the working class. In Italy the Communist Party deliberately cooled down a situation that was becoming increasingly revolutionary to become a mild opposition and a guarantor of the *status quo*.

Just as the actions of the bureaucracy internationally, although designed to maintain the existing division of the world, open the way for the imperialist onslaughts on the revolutionary conquests directly or indirectly following from the Revolution of 1917, so the policies it imposes on the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries, ostensibly intended to advance the interests of the working class, actually prepare the way for betrayals and defeats.

The policy of the Italian Communist Party, far from undermining and isolating the neo-fascists, has pushed many middle class and even working people into their orbit. Unable to offer a clear lead to satisfy the just demands of the masses and clear out the parliamentary scoundrels, the monopoly capitalists and their bureaucratic hirelings, many disillusioned and dissatisfied people look to a strong man and a strong state to answer their problems. The politics of class collaboration and compromise based upon 'peaceful co-existence' open the way for defeats, for a fascist revival.

Maoist policies are essentially no different because they begin from the national requirements of the Chinese bureaucratic caste which accepts the policy of 'socialism in one country', upholds its own version of 'peaceful co-existence' and renounces support for revolutionary movements in other countries except of a purely formal kind. The liquidation of the 'cultural revolution' confirms the ascendancy of the 'moderate' wing under Chou En-lai and has meant a rapid rapprochement with imperialism as shown by Nixon's visit, the agreement with Japan and the welcome accorded to Tanaka and the improvement of relations with capitalist countries and regimes such as that of the Shah of Iran.

The character and extent of this diplomatic reversal should not be exaggerated. The Chinese rulers have never disguised their desire to find a compromise with the imperialists provided that certain of their national interests could be recognised and protected. It was chiefly the United States which stood in the way of China's admission to the United Nations, the 'thieves kitchen' which Lenin denounced. Now the Peking mandarins show themselves the most devoted and respectful upholders of that institution for maintaining the international *status quo* and preventing revolution. Imperialist mistrust, based upon a belief in

Peking's revolutionary intentions rather than any unwillingness on its part to work out a compromise agreement was the main obstacle to China's admission to the UN and the establishment of normal diplomatic relations with the capitalist countries. The required guarantees of good behaviour have been given, at least tacitly, and the bourgeois press echoes with praise for Peking's moderation and Chou En-lai's sterling qualities.

Peking has proceeded with indecent haste to establish its respectability. While denouncing the two 'super-powers' it goes all out to make agreements with the United States today and perhaps tomorrow the Soviet bureaucracy which it still hypocritically denounces for having restored capitalism. Following this logic it welcomes the enlargement of the European Common Market and fails to carry out any struggle against imperialism in Asia. Throughout the world it supports petty bourgeois nationalist regimes and movements and opposes any changes which might have revolutionary consequences. It backed Pakistan against Bangladesh and with the complicity of the Soviet bureaucracy is ready to accept a compromise peace in Vietnam along the lines of the Geneva agreement of 1954 which succeeded in selling out the Vietnamese revolution at that stage. Maoism is bankrupt and its influence on the movement outside China has rapidly dwindled. Meanwhile, its conflict with Moscow makes both bureaucracies even more willing to turn to an agreement with imperialism.

The crisis of the bureaucracy has now reached a stage where the revolutionary gains of the period since 1917 are in peril. Its desire for self-preservation reveals it more openly as an agency of imperialism in the workers' states and the international workers' movement. The struggle against the bureaucracy is an inseparable part of the struggle against capitalism. Support for the opposition in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China and the preparation of the political revolution for the overthrow of the parasitic bureaucracy has become an urgent task.

The struggle of the working class and the communist opposition in these countries cannot succeed unless it is based upon the building of revolutionary parties as sections of the Fourth International. The warning of Hungary in 1956, of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Poland in 1970 is absolutely clear on this score. The working class must fight against the exactions of the bureaucracy, against its crimes and misrule and it has shown time and again that it is ready. The need for revolutionary leadership in the countries ruled by the bureaucracy is an important question which has to be solved in the first instance in those countries. From them will come some of the best cadres and finest fighters for the Fourth International, of that we are confident. There are many signs that sections of workers and youth are finding their way back to Leninism and that they will be forced to recognise that that means re-establishing continuity with the struggle of the Left Opposition, recognising the correctness of Trotsky's stand and rallying to the banner of the Fourth International.



The abortive Bolivian revolution of August-September 1971 which brought the CIA-sponsored regime of Col Banzer to power has had a considerable impact on the Trotskyist movement.

Not only did these events prove the complete bankruptcy of the revisionist forces of the Unified Secretariat in Latin America, but they also revealed the theoretical degeneration and blatant political opportunism of the Lora-Lambert tendency within the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). These grave events gave a vital fillip to a discussion on the philosophical and political roots of the opportunism of the POR (Revolutionary Workers' Party of Bolivia) and its subsequent betrayal of the Bolivian proletariat.

No development of Trotskyism we believe is possible without an understanding and assimilation of the lessons of the revolution and counter-revolution in Bolivia 1970. In the interests of such a discussion we are publishing this critique of the 'Workers' Vanguard' statement on the POR. It has been submitted for publication by the Greek section of the ICFI.



Bolivian miners during street fighting in 1970

# WORKERS VANGUARD AND THE BOLIVIAN REVOLUTION

With its document 'The Bolivian Revolution and the Deviations of the POR' (published in Workers Press from June 29 to July 5, 1972) the 'Workers' Vanguard' of Greece wanted to present to the ICFI its positions on the latest events in Bolivia and on their reflection within the Fourth International.

We must, however, see clearly that this document is something more than a simple presentation of the Bolivian problem or a simple political placement in regard to it: it is at the same time the partial result and manifestation of a whole approach, of a certain

political methodology, not at all new, as much within the Greek as in the world workers' movement.

Marxist criticism must not confine itself to a criticism of conclusions, but advance to an understanding of the way in which these conclusions were reached, to sharpen the method of its criticism by making a criticism of the method which was followed.

## Deviations of the POR

The 'Workers' Vanguard' criticism of the POR does not seem to have set out from this point.

In the introduction to the document, we find, as a methodological 'explanation' of the deviations of the POR, its abandoning '... of the struggle for an understanding of dialectical

materialism as a theory of knowledge', '... its pragmatist adaptation to circumstances and its negligence and disdain of Marxist theory'. This is all the document has to say. Afterwards it returns to the empirical events.

Does the 'Workers' Vanguard' believe that with the ceremonial recitation of a credo on the basic principle of the ICFI on revolutionary theory, the whole subject of the POR's abandonment of dialectical materialism is exhausted? Without showing the principal cause of this anti-theoretical stand? Or, to look at the question from its other side, does the 'Workers' Vanguard' believe that an essential theoretical development of the POR would have been possible, had it taken up the struggle for theory, but carried it out within the stifling

localized framework where Lora's leadership had confined (and still does) the Bolivian Trotskyist movement?

The abstract truth of the necessity for the struggle for dialectical materialism is transformed into its opposite when it remains cut off from the concrete material reality which it reflects.

For us, an enmity towards theory is inseparable from a rejection of internationalism.

The disdain of the POR leadership towards the struggle for theory is inseparably tied to the disinterest it has always shown towards the building of the Fourth International, its persistent refusal to base revolutionary work in Bolivia on the foundations of international revolutionary perspectives.

The struggle for the development of the science and philosophy of revolutionary Marxism cannot be undertaken fruitfully in a vacuum, nor in the solitary studies of isolated learned scholars, nor in the local office of some national party suffering from the characteristic political myopia of the leading group gathered around Lora, as far as international political developments and internationalist responsibilities are concerned.

Marxism is always developed only through permanent struggle against its opposite, the rejection of Marxism — every kind of revisionism — a struggle which does not unfold in the field of academic sword-play, but on the battleground of class conflicts, for the building of revolutionary parties which will lead the working class to power and mankind to the first truly human civilization.

And all those who take their weapons for present-day conflicts from the arsenal of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, are well aware that 'in the present epoch, an international epoch, a national revolutionary party can be built only as a part of an international party'. (L. D. Trotsky, 'Centrism and the Fourth International'.)

Only by starting from an international strategy and an international programme, which are organizationally expressed within the international form of a world party of socialist revolution, can revolutionaries in each country see in a scientific light their national peculiarities and con-

cretize, under local conditions, the tactics and strategy of the smashing of the bourgeois state.

Marxist theory was developed within this internationalist framework, within the struggle for the world party, the International, against every liquidationist trend, against every attack of bourgeois ideology from without or from within

Between the struggle of Marx and Engels against the Bukunin anarchists at the time of the First International; and through the fight of Lenin and Trotsky against the social-traitor reformists of the Second International and against petty-bourgeois leftism for the building of the Communist International; between the struggle of the International Left Opposition and Trotsky against degeneration into a Stalinist bureaucracy for the building of the Fourth International and through the struggle of the International Committee against the liquidationist attempts of Pabloite revisionism, the same red thread runs without a break.

The worldwide struggle of the proletariat does not tolerate breaks.

Often, in times of retreats and defeats, the Marxist vanguard remains concentrated in small minority groups. But it swims against the current, waiting for the next revolutionary wave which will bring it to the head of the masses, guarding all the theoretical and practical experience of the workers' movement which is found embodied in Marxism.

This does not at all mean that the Marxist is transformed into a museum guard.

To the contrary, the Fourth International and the International Committee were able to surpass the imperialist storms and Stalinist brutalities, to defeat all the revisionist attempts at adapting the International to counter-revolutionary defeatism and to arrive armed on the threshold of this new revolutionary epoch, because for three decades, on all fronts of the class war, they defended Marxism in the only genuine way: by developing it further.

What role did Lora and the leading group of the POR play in this whole process of the defence and development of Marxism, within the struggle for overcoming the world crisis

of revolutionary leadership and the building of the International?

Only within this concrete framework can the question of the abandonment of the struggle for theory by the leaders of the POR be posed. About these internationalist responsibilities not taken up by the POR, about the negative international role which it played, the 'Workers' Vanguard' (WV) says nothing in its document. And as we shall see, this is not an accidental omission.

Lora's leadership, at the time of the big split in the Fourth International in 1953, maintained a completely Pabloite stand with regard to the nationalist MNR government which finally prostituted the Bolivian revolution of 1952.

On the Latin American level, he put most of his weight behind revisionist policies, against the ICFI, and bears full responsibility for the liquidation and disfiguration suffered by the Latin American Trotskyist movement at the hands of Pablo, Posadas, Mandel and Maitan.

He came into conflict with the Pabloite Secretariat, proceeding clearly from local criteria and aspirations, while on the other hand he refused repeatedly to take up the struggle of the ICFI for Trotskyism in Latin America.

When he reapproached the ICFI he again took as his starting point the problems which the Pabloite faction of Gonzalez Moscoso created for him. He always was and is in opposition to any attempt whatsoever to base revolutionary activity on internationalist foundations.

This shortsighted localized view and anti-internationalism are at the root of the opportunist adaptation of the POR to bourgeois nationalism, the horizon of consciousness of the local national bourgeoisie.

So we see that in the final analysis, without revolutionary theory (and development of theory) not only can there be no revolutionary practice, there can only be practice (or inaction) adapted to the limits of bourgeois society.

The POR did not act as a revolutionary leadership in the latest revolutionary situation in Bolivia because it lacked the theoretical weapons which are acquired only within the theoretical and practical struggle of



the International, only in the arena where the working class, as an international entity, struggles against the worldwide system of oppression.

This connection between the anti-theoretical and anti-internationalist stand of Lora's group, between the struggle for theory on a national and international level and the revolutionary practice of the International and its sections, does not seem to have been noticed by the WV.

### The crisis of capitalism

This weakness in grasping the dialectic between the international and the national is also evident in the main document, which lacks the first distinctive characteristic of a Marxist document: the correct historical dimension.

In the lengthy diatribe on the counter-revolutionary bourgeois nature of the Torres dictatorship, this regime is nowhere placed as it should be within its international framework.

There is only a reference to the fact that this was a coup d'état that took place within this world crisis of capitalism, which the WV characterizes as 'cyclic'.

This assessment by the WV certainly does not surprise us. In 1966, at the 3rd Conference of the ICFI, when this group was still a minority within the EDE, it agreed with Robertson that we were at least 10 years away from a crisis of capitalism.

So from that time, the position of the WV concerning the world economic situation was diametrically opposed to the ICFI's analysis.

In one of the group's documents again, after April 21, they talk about a crisis which, when at some time it acquires social depth, the dictatorship in Greece will fall...

But in the latest document which we are now studying, we see again that they confront the present-day crisis of capitalism as though it were one of the periodic crises which the process of the accumulation of capital has experienced up to now, and which have always been followed, as Marx's analysis points out, by periods of relative stabilization until the next crisis, and so on.

Such a characterization of

the present-day world economic crisis, which in the final analysis foresees that sooner or later the crisis will be surpassed and replaced by a new boom, would not find a Mandel, for example, in disagreement.

### International strategy

The ICFI, on the contrary, has based its international strategy on an entirely different assessment.

Today's crisis, the collapse of the world monetary system and of all the economic and political relations based on the decisions at Bretton Woods, are more widespread and deep than any that capitalism, in its whole history, has known before now. We are on the threshold of the greatest revolutionary earthquakes that class society has ever known.

It is certainly not enough for a Marxist to acknowledge the crisis that imperialism is undergoing throughout the world and from there to conclude mechanically that for this reason 'therefore the Torres coup took place', for this reason 'therefore a revolutionary situation was created in Bolivia' etc.

The most essential point of a Marxist analysis is the one where it is shown how in every concrete situation and under particular conditions the general trend of the epoch manifests itself. That is, how the need that imperialism feels on a worldwide scale to come into total conflict so as to smash the militant decisiveness of the oppressed masses, in order to survive, in the one case passes through conspiracies for Common Markets, in another wears the mask of the populist demagoguery of the Velasco junta in Peru, or of the popular front in Chile and in yet another passes from the Torres regime to Banzer's coup.

The truth is always concrete, Lenin said.

This presentation of the concrete, the highest point of a Marxist analysis, is not the empirical conception of the raw fact (something Marx called 'the imaginary concrete').

The scientificness of Marxist thought consists of conceiving the concrete as 'the combination of many determinations, as the process of a composition'. (Marx, 'Grundrisse'.)

Revolutionary action needs as its guide concrete theoretical analyses using Marxist method and not formalistic abstractions and schematic generalizations.

In the WV analysis we see Torres and his regime placed not within the material conditions of our revolutionary epoch, but a statue hovering in some timeless, unhistorical circle of Dante's Hell, keeping company with Chiang Kai-shek, Castro, Ben Bella, Boumedienne, Nasser, Gaddafi, Bandaranaike, Aref, Papan-dreou, Suharto, Makarios, Sadat, Hussein, even Thiers.

Let us look at the critique proper which the WV makes of the POR's policies.

It is impressive that the critics themselves are not absolutely sure about their critique. If this impression is wrong, then how can we explain how on the one hand the document condemns the POR for not having advanced the slogan 'Down with Torres' and for having waited for the military government to arm the workers, while on the other hand it comes to the defence of the POR against 'Pabloite slanders' on the same subject by saying: 'The POR did not support Torres... the POR line is crystal clear.'

We would find it rather unclear.

The policies of the POR and the Popular Assembly always stood in support of the bourgeois nationalist government. And they never denied this, much less now that all the organizations of the Popular Assembly together with Torres, his military clique and one section of the MNR (the other section is in power together with the Banzer and the Falange fascists) are together in a common front, the infamous FRA (Anti-imperialist Revolutionary Front).

The WV wants to reconcile the irreconcilable.

How can it on the one hand accuse the POR of 'trying... to avoid the necessity of an uncompromising struggle for the overthrow of Torres,' and on the other hand rebel against the exclusively (it would have us believe) Pabloite accusations about the POR's support of Torres...



At another point the WV accepts that: 'The Trotskyists of the POR did make a distinction of the class antithesis to Torres.'

'They announced that: "The Torres government is not a workers' government", but in saying this they should have characterized it categorically as capitalist, dictatorial and counter-revolutionary.'

Lora did not seem willing however to follow this advice.

Continuing along his 'crystal clear' line, he went on categorically characterizing the Torres government as a 'military nationalist government with bourgeois content, that is with an anti-imperialist orientation.' (Document presented by the POR at the Latin American conference in April 1972, 'La Verité', No 557).

Lora's group wants to 'justify theoretically' even this wretched capitulation to the national bourgeoisie with various tricks by legerdemain.

One of the most seemingly serious is the one that seeks to justify the popular front with the bourgeoisie with references to the positions of the Third Congress of the Comintern which concern the united anti-imperialist front in the colonial countries.

That united front would have permitted combined action of the proletariat and the peasants with sections of the national bourgeoisie for joint defence in a war against imperialism.

The Third Congress of the Comintern defined quite clearly the boundaries of this tactic: 'The working class movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries must first of all win for itself the position of an independent revolutionary factor within the anti-imperialist front as a whole.'

'Only when its importance as an independent factor is recognized and its political independence secured, then provisional treaties with bourgeois democracy are permitted and necessary . . .' ('The Communist International 1919-1943, Documents, Vol I', Oxford University Press).

Lenin and Trotsky particularly emphasized the point that Lora prefers to forget: no amalgam, 'irreconcilable preservation of the independence of the proletarian movement, even if it is in an embryonic stage'.

The WV however ignore all these attempts to present the capitulation as logical.

'The POR did not support Torres.'

His deviation lay in the fact that he formed a popular front with the Stalinists who supported Torres. . . . And what was the danger according to the WV, carried by this united front POR-CPB? They had nothing to say but that 'the Stalinists would have done everything in their power to drag the "united anti-imperialist front" towards guerrilla warfare in the mountains or the cities and to turn the movement into a petty-bourgeois one, leaning it on the peasantry and pushing the proletariat aside . . .'

To whomever has the slightest knowledge of reality and knows the relative positions of the Kremlin, the rabid polemic carried out by all the Stalinist agencies, all the CPs, particularly in Latin America and even more in Bolivia, against guerrilla warfare in the name of the 'peaceful road to socialism', arriving at conscious sabotage and open betrayal, the views of the WV on the fervent passion of the Bolivian CP for a guerrilla war seem ridiculous to say the least.

But we, the Greek Trotskyists, cannot laugh, as perhaps the situation merits, when we hear this *sui generis* 'Trotskyist' group from Greece uttering such insane apophthegms. And this is because we know quite well what their aim is.

By denouncing the guerrilla adventures in Latin America with the ridiculous accusation that they are inspired by Muscovite Stalinism, they are not aiming at the adventurist views of an arch-Pabloite like Livio Maitan which led so many innocent fighters up a blind alley, but they do it from a desire to justify the well-known stand they took at another time, during the guerrilla movement of ELAS in occupied Greece: because the guerrilla army had the Stalinist CPG in its leadership, the present leaders of the WV characterized the whole movement as being 'of a reactionary nature'.

This sectarian and reactionary stand of theirs played a terrible suspensory role in the development of the Trotskyist movement in Greece.

For this reason, we Greek

Trotskyists of the EDE can only feel anger about the opportunistic basis upon which they uphold their criticism of guerrilla warfare 'generally'.

They have raised their views about the communist guerrillas under the treacherous Stalinist leadership in a Europe occupied by the Nazis to a super-historical metaphysical schema, into which they try to fit the most different things: the ELAS guerrillas, the Vietcong, the Bengalese Mukti Bahini, the Chinese partisans, together with the Tupamaros, the Pabloite ERP in Argentina or the various radicalized petty bourgeois of the Latin American *Castroite Focos*.

A second circle of Hell in this Divine Comedy of the WV!

We know from other cases (as for example, that of Shachtman and the 'state capitalists') that usually a hysterical Stalinophobia is the camouflage for an adaptation to the pressure of the bureaucracy, the refusal to come into conflict with Stalinism within the masses, for the raising of the consciousness of the masses.

In the same indictment served by the WV against the 'United Front of the Stalinists and the Lora tendency', the support of the Torres government by the Bolivian CP is characterized as 'Menshevik'.

Lora himself would not disagree at all with this characterization!

On the contrary, he always wanted to justify his whole opportunist alliance with the CPB with the 'theory' that Bolivian Stalinism is 'simply Menshevik', eccentric and radical and is forced to succumb to the pressure of Trotskyism.

The counter-revolutionary character of the 'left' zig-zags of the Stalinist CP is hidden under the screen of the revisionist conception of the 'Menshevik' character of Stalinism.

From the time of Marx and Lenin we know that an imprecise, unscientific characterization comes, most of the time, to cover political opportunisms and capitulations.

Let us now come to the point to which the WV critique attaches most significance: ' . . . the leaders of the POR and of "Informations Ouvrières"-OCI claim the discovery of a new kind of organ for the conquest of power, the "Popular Assembly of a soviet type".'



'Why this distortion of the Soviet theory? Why were they drawn to the parliament-assembly? Why, instead of building soviets, did they try to frame a constitution, with which "the Popular Assembly would deepen its roots in the Committees"?'

'Why the attempt to create a new, Bolivian-type of revolution, in place of the proven October?'

The WV bases its fundamental attack against the POR on a monumental confusion.

Nowhere does it appear to have a clear idea about what this Popular Assembly is and where exactly the opportunism lay in Lora's line.

So does the deviation of the POR lie in the fact that '... perhaps without realizing it (our emphasis) in fighting for the Sovietization of the Popular Assembly ...' they '... omitted their basic duty, to put forward the slogan for Soviets ...'?

Let us try to dissolve the confusion of such statements.

Confusion at times tragicomic, especially when we see the Popular Assembly of La Paz called in one case 'bourgeois parliament', in another 'Constituent Assembly', and another time compared to the 'Small Parliament' of Papadopoulos....

This final insane comparison shows clearly that the WV not only has no idea about the Popular Assembly in Bolivia, but furthermore is drifting on a sea of confusion as far as the situation in Greece itself is concerned.

#### Harmless body

The unbelievable extract from the document reads:

'Similarly in Greece, Papadopoulos created the "small parliament", a harmless advisory body where 3,000 appointed people vote on behalf of 9,000,000—a corporate body cast in the mould of the fascist state of Mussolini or Franco.' (Our emphasis).

Let us leave for another time the spectacle of a Greece where, according to the WV, corporate and long-lived structural institutions of 'fascism' are operating, and let us return to the 'appointed body' in far-away La Paz.

The Popular Assembly was born in January 1971, out of

the mobilization of broad layers of oppressed which followed the seizure of power by the Bonaparte Torres.

This body consisted of 240 members, of whom 60 per cent had been nominated by the trade unions and the other 40 per cent by left organizations. Most of the 240 representatives had been nominated by conferences or assemblies, of the rank and file in the places of work, they were obliged to have a mandate from their electors and they could be recalled at any moment, if they lost the trust of the rank and file. As we see, we are miles away from the 'small parliament' of Papadopoulos.

Most of the disputes on whether the Popular Assembly has a Soviet character or not are carried out, or continue to be carried out, by various trends for the sole reason of defending the policies of each trend and of avoiding discussion on the essence of the matter.

The Pabloites of Moscow denied the Soviet character of the Assembly in an attempt to dissolve the movement into the remains of Guevarism.

Lora and other opportunists defended (and defend) the 'first Soviet of Latin America' by cultivating the illusion of a 'dual power' which would lead gradually, through the struggle against the fascist 'Gorilismo' and with the conditional support of Torres, to socialism.

#### Illusion reigned

This illusion finally reigned within the Bolivian proletariat, even in its most *avante-garde* sections, with the result that on August 21, 1971, it stood face to face with Banzer's fascists, unarmed, counterposing only its unrivalled heroism and its high revolutionary morale.

The Popular Assembly was a pole with continually increasing influence on the political and social life of the people.

Torres, as much as the CIA thugs, did not hide his hatred towards the Assembly, which however was impotent against the imperialist designs, not having any legislative power, tied ideologically and practically to the chariot of bourgeois nationalism.

The Assembly always stood on rotten ideological founda-

tions. The programmatical theses accepted by it were those which had been voted in 1970 in the COB, on the basis of a capitulation of the POR to the Stalinist CP.

The stand defined by the position of the COB towards the Ovando regime was conserved within the conditional support of the Torres regime.

The POR wanted to compare this support with the support given by the Bolsheviks to Kerensky against Kornilov.

It wants however to forget the letter from Lenin to the Central Committee in September 1917, of which Trotsky so correctly reminds us:

'Even now, we do not have an obligation to support the Kerensky government. That would be unprincipled. The question is: then are we not for the struggle against Kornilov? Naturally we are. But this is not one and the same thing. There is a limit to this: it has been surpassed by many Bolsheviks who fell into "reconciliationism" and let themselves be carried away by the flow of events.

'We will fight, we will struggle against Kornilov, but we do not support Kerensky, we uncover his weaknesses. The distinction is much more fine, but very important and it must not be forgotten.

'Wherein lies the change in our tactics after the Kornilov uprising?

'In this, in that we vary the forms of the struggle against Kerensky.' (L. D. Trotsky, 'Germany 1931-1932'.)

The Popular Assembly and the POR gave their trust and support to Kerensky-Torres, just as the 'old Bolsheviks' and Stalin had done. They were waiting for one part of the counter-revolution to arm the Bolivian revolution. And Kornilov-Banzer came in.

#### WHAT does 'Workers' Vanguard' (WV) think the POR should have done that it did not?

'... the comrades of the POR omitted their basic duty, to put forward the slogan of soviets, to work for the country-wide extension of the committees, which to their credit only they had built in the mines and to crown this embryonic soviet organization with a congress of the com-



mittees on a national scale and finally, to work out a soviet constitution.'

As far as the peasants are concerned, what, according to the WV, should the POR have done? 'The poor peasants . . . in their struggle against the landlords, needed peasants' soviets.'

Thus what conclusion must we draw from the Bolivian Revolution, according again to the WV? 'In conclusion, in Bolivia, as elsewhere, we must struggle for soviets [WV's emphasis], in which the masses would recognize the **organ of leadership** [our emphasis] which strikes decisively for power and for a real workers' and peasants' government.'

So the panacea has been discovered. Anyway we prefer to agree with Trotsky and see these 'phraseological genuflections before the soviets' as 'a misunderstanding of their historical function' (L. D. Trotsky, 'Germany 1931-1932').

Let us see better how the inspirer of the Petrograd Soviet in 1905 answered the fellow-thinkers of the WV of 1932 in Germany:

'The soviet *per se* is not the possessor of miraculous powers. It is the class representation of the proletariat, with all the strong and weak points of the latter.' (Trotsky, *op. cit.*)

When Urbans of the centrist Socialist Workers' Party of Germany cried that the leadership of the struggle belongs to the soviets elected by the masses without any involvement of any party, Trotsky answered: 'But to declare that the soviets "by themselves" are capable of leading the struggle of the proletariat for power—is a demonstration of vulgar fetishism for the soviets. Everything depends on the Party which leads the soviets'. (Trotsky, *op. cit.*)

The WV presents us with its soviet panacea, completely ignoring the dialectic between the soviet and the Party, between the masses and the revolutionary vanguard. The POR as well did exactly that. It refused to give the masses revolutionary leadership, it refused to build the revolutionary party whose absence was catastrophic during the Bolivian revolution.

It was impossible to build this party without a struggle to win over, to the cause of

the proletariat, the broad masses of the peasants.

The POR did not do any work with the peasants, it has no programme for them. From January 1971 until August, in its organ 'Masas', the peasants were referred to only once very briefly.

To say that the Bolivian peasants needed soviets is to confuse one means with the end. The peasants would have answered quite materialistically that what they need is **land**, an agrarian reform.

The WV, with its drivel about the leading role of the soviets, retrogresses not only to the positions of the centrist SWP of Germany, but even further to the German KAPD and anarchosyndicalism.

Lenin in 'Left-Wing Communism' and the Communist International at its first Congresses, and with the words of Trotsky, struck out implacably at the middle class and sectarian movement of so-called 'Communism of councils'. This movement not only ignored the dialectic between Marxist consciousness and the spontaneous movement of the masses, but also turned its back on the bloody experience of the European revolutions.

Do we perhaps need to remind the WV about the German revolution of 1918-1919, when the soviets of workers and soldiers filled all of Germany, and yet, because their overwhelming majority followed the Social Democratic Party, not only did they not lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat, but were slaughtered and smashed?

Or must we recall the revolutionary events in Italy during the same period, when the factories were occupied by the workers' councils who took down the signs of the industrialists and raised placards with the names of Lenin and Trotsky. Must we recall how the whole of that terrible movement was defeated because the leading party of the working class was the Socialist Party, which turned back the masses and gave the country to the fascists?

Contrary to the WV, the inspirer of the workers' councils of Turin, Antonio Gramsci, came to the opposite conclusions and fought to build the party, leaving us some of the most important analyses of this

grave task of the proletarian struggle.

Soviet fetishism and a reverent attachment to the spontaneous organizations of the masses are transformed, when the situation calls for it, into their opposite.

The same people who preach the leading role of the workers' councils, are dominated by a fear of the masses. This happened with the KAPD. This happened with the whole movement of 'Communism of councils'.

Their rejection of the dialectic leads them not only to see the role of the party, but also not to see the role of the masses within the fluctuations of the movement.

They see their relationship to the masses as a relationship of indoctrination, of propaganda. Their organizations are propagandist circles, where, as Trotsky observed, in the name of a demogogy about the leading role of the masses, the leaders begin to play a disproportionate role . . .

The sectarian stand of the WV towards the masses appears at another point, and concretely with regard to the French proletariat.

It criticizes the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI) because in May 1968 it did not advance the correct (according to the WV) slogans: 'Down with de Gaulle! Long live the workers' and peasants' government!'

On the contrary, the IC of the Fourth International, not ignoring the fact that the largest and most dynamic section of the French proletariat follows the French CP and the Stalinist CGT, criticized the OCI with the greatest severity for not having advanced the only concrete slogans, the slogans that would have uncovered the counter-revolutionary Stalinists and led the masses to their ideological emancipation from their treacherous leadership: 'Down with de Gaulle: CPF-CGT government'.

The WV's criticism of the OCI (and the POR) was not placed on this Bolshevik basis.

The fact that it does not grasp the whole essence of the dispute that brought the OCI into an alliance with the centrists and into irreconcilable opposition to the IC does not surprise us.

Out of the whole split, it retains only the events in Boli-



via. The Bolivian events and the POR's treachery, which found enthusiastic support from the OCI, are only the consequences of a whole trend and method, the fruits of a whole system of centrist politics.

From the bitter lessons of Bolivia, Marxists are called on now, in the presence of today's huge conflicts, to draw the scientific conclusions in relation to a whole political methodology, as has happened with the lessons of Algeria, Cuba and Ceylon.

The WV does not concern itself with these problems. This is because, for it, they do not exist as problems, but as theses of its own centrist policies.

To Greek Trotskyists it has been well known for a long time that, both as far as the transformation of the 'United Front' from a tactic of a revolutionary party into a strategy (liquidation of the party) is concerned, as well as more generally in their anarcho-syndicalist adaptation to spontaneity, the positions of the WV were and are always identified with those of the OCI and its centrist friends.

## ARCHEIOMARXISM AND TROTSKYISM

All the elements which we have seen in the Workers Vanguard's analysis—confusion, formalism, sectarianism, anarcho-syndicalist ideas, are expressions of the same idealistic method, which is not unfamiliar, as we said at the beginning, to the Greek as well as to the international workers' movement.

Contrary to the Pabloite ideologists of the Novak school, in order to examine a method of thought, we do not make an abstraction of the historical horizon within which it comes into being and functions.

We cannot speak abstractly about empiricism, without seeing its historical development through the process of the English Revolution; nor can we talk about pragmatism, while ignoring the conditions of development of bourgeois ideology in America; nor

about rationalism, independent of the class struggle that first formed it in France.

The WV's formalist method of thought, as well, has a historical origin. It is the method of a quite peculiar centrist sect, the Archeio-Marxist one, which developed before, parallel to and against the Greek Section of the 3rd International, the CPG, against the Greek Left Opposition and against the founder and guide of Greek Trotskyism Pantelis Pouliopoulos.

This great communist leader and fighter of the 4th International had correctly characterized this current as 'a peculiar substitute for social democracy within primitive Greek communism'.

The line of the Archeio was: 'Education first and then action,' 'not just a passive but also a hostile stand against every political and trade union action of the workers' (Circular of the Archeio 1928), 'a systematic cultivation of hatred for every revolutionary organization, a blow and a split by terrorist means of the revolutionary wing in the trade union movement, the armed liquidation of the latter's conferences, a Masonic, despotic type of organization.' (Pouliopoulos 'Democratic or Socialist Revolution in Greece?')

Through the adventurist Molinier they came into temporary contact with the International Left Opposition, they hid behind the books of Lenin and Trotsky until they withdrew and began their fierce anti-Trotskyist efforts against the Greek section of the 4th International, and against the International itself, approaching the temporary international focus of centrism, the London Bureau, in company with the English ILP, the SAP, the POUM etc.

### Blessings of revisionism

After the war, some of its vestiges took part in the regrouping of the Greek section of the 4th International in 1947, with the blessings of rising Pabloite revisionism. Greek Trotskyism joined with just what it had been fighting throughout its whole history up to that time . . .

Stalinism always wanted to make an amalgamation of

Archeio-Marxism and Trotskyism in order to annihilate its opponents. Until now the CPG tries to slander Greek Trotskyism for the criminal policies of the Archeio. And at the time of the Albanian revolution, the arch-Stalinist Enver Hodja used amalgamation, slander and assassination to identify Archeio-Marxism with Trotskyism and to be better able to drown in blood the strong influence of Trotskyist ideas in the Albanian proletariat.

When the EDE took up in Greece the historic continuation of the heroic Greek Trotskyist movement against Pabloite liquidation, in its ranks were Archeio-Marxist elements which crystallized into a minority.

Within the rapidly-developing crisis of Greek and world capitalism, before the imperative tasks of a new revolutionary period when the International is called upon to play the role defined by its founding Conference in 1938 and by the Transitional Programme, no co-existence with centrism was possible, even less with an Archeio-Marxist type. In 1967 the minority was expelled from the EDE and from that time called itself Workers Vanguard.

Some people will say that these are old stories, that the WV cut its ties with Archeio-Marxism and its method. We believe that not only does the WV always follow its method, but also that it consciously sees itself as its continuation. An apparently 'innocent' phrase in their document about the POR suffices to show us this. They write:

'From the time of Warski's support for Pilsudski in Poland, in whom he saw the "democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants", and of the support for the dictator Pangalos in Greece on whom the Greek CP called to "do as you boast, my general" in 1925, the continuity of support for Bonapartist regimes in the colonial and semi-colonial countries is a result of the fellow travelling of the Stalinists with the "democratic" bourgeoisie (as in China, Spain, Indonesia, etc.).'

In 1925, the general secretary of the CPG was Pantelis Pouliopoulos who was condemned by Pangalos' court martial together with other



communists, exiled to Folegandros from where he returned after the fall of the Pangalos dictatorship and fought in the Conference of Cadres of 1926 his first great battle against the ideological and organizational degeneration of the CP by the Stalinists.

In relation to the WV's beliefs, Pouliopoulos writes the following in 'Democratic or Socialist Revolution in Greece?':

'The political immaturity of all the Party cadres the first time, and their uncritical faith in the correctness of the strategic orientation of the 7th Balkan Conference and of the 5th World Congress ("for an immediate workers' and peasants' revolution in Bulgaria"), had initially led the Party to the mistaken idea that it could easily win over many "left-ized" democratic officers, if it simply unmasked the original demagogic pseudo-radicalism of Pangalos before the masses as well as the democratic officers, proposing really radical demands—arming of the workers, alliance with the USSR, taxation, liberties to the proletariat, etc. From here, we have said, came the articles of the "red major", the "down with the masks, do as you boast" etc. (That the Party with these policies supposedly called on Pangalos to overthrow the bourgeoisie at the head of the workers, this is an idiotic slander of the Stalinists, which even small children can understand. No Stalinist believes this. That this is an impudent lie, that it is a disgraceful political slander, can be seen quite clearly also from the fact that it has been happening since 1926, for eight whole years, a very fierce struggle of factions within the party, where all sorts of trivialities and dirt were called up against the Marxist opposition—but even so about such a great crime the Stalinists speak for the first time today in 1934! They had . . . forgotten about it be-

fore! And this now—just in passing. They think: let us go ahead and say it, and whatever sticks in the minds of the new members who know nothing about history, well and good. Calomniez, calomniez, il en restera toujours.)

'If however—we stressed at the conference—the Party, from the very first days of the Pangalos dictatorship, had found the correct orientation and come in at the head of a truly heroic fight against it, (for example, the great anti-Pangalos meeting of refugees in Piraeus, disbanded by guns soon after the proclamation of dictatorship, new persecutions, trials of "autonomists" etc.) on the contrary the "Leninists" further deepened the mistakes . . .

#### Political immaturity

'The fighters of the later opposition, then as yet unformed, by reminding the 1926 conference of all this, were saying that the political immaturity of the new Party cadres certainly explained the mistakes of 1924 and 1925 (later it was revealed that a mature leadership of a fully developed CP, like that of the Stalinist Varsky in the Polish Party, when in May 1926 General Pilsudsky carried out his coup, called on the peasants to support him—something which never happened in the CPG, in spite of the relative Archeio-Marxist slander which, out of factional blindness, some of our more senseless Stalinists brought to the light again).'

We see again, after almost 50 years, the ancient anti-communist slander of the Archeio, used with such enthusiasm by Koutvis-Zachariadis (later to become the butcher of the Greek revolution of 1943-1949) against Pouliopoulos and the Left Opposition of the CPG, served up again in the document of the WV, disguised as an anti-Stalinist attack! The 'political

ichthyosauri' (to use an expression of Trotsky) of the Archeio are repeating past history for the second time, inevitably in the form of a farce this time.

#### A full discussion

In relation to Lora, the statement of the IC of the 4th International on October 24, 1971, said that:

'When he appeared in Europe in 1970, the SLL made it clear from the beginning that it would not support his engagement in the IC without a full discussion on his whole history and an understanding reached on this basis. We do not have one policy towards the LSSP and the Pabloites and another for Lora.'

The EDE again had told its former minority — now the WV, that any work whatsoever within a common framework would presuppose a critical re-examination of its whole history up to now, and a documented rejection of the centrist policies of this Archeio-Marxist group, particularly with regard to the time of the Occupation and the Civil War.

Greek Trotskyism will fight implacably any capitulation to centrism in any form, Pabloite, Archeio-Marxist or other. Now more than ever, in the presence of the mass struggles which have already begun in dictatorially-ruled Greece, any retreat whatsoever before centrism, any carelessness in the struggle against centrism will have catastrophic results.

The centrist policies of the POR again taught the Trotskyist movement bitter lessons. We cannot have one policy towards Lora and another for Archeio-Marxism.

S. Michael, member of the editorial board of the 'Ora tis Allagis', organ of the Central Committee of the Workers International League (EDE), Greek Section of the International Committee of the 4th International.



# THE PERUVIAN REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS PARTY AND THE INTERNATIONAL

Statement by the Communist  
League of Peru

## The Fourth international the International Committee and Centrism

The break with the VR<sup>1</sup> and the founding of the POMR<sup>2</sup> did not represent a break with centrism but were basically a manifestation of the same centrism: they were an empirical response to the political bankruptcy of a centrist party at the moment when there was a radical turn in the spontaneous development of events.

The documents produced in the internal struggle in VR and the documents worked out by the POMR reflect faithfully the extent of the empirical and consequently opportunist nature of the split and the extent to which our 'turn to Trotskyism' was but an act of desperation in the search for a 'theory of justification' for our own spontaneity. The faithfulness and adherence to Marxism, expressed in successive documents of the POMR in this way, only had a formal character.

By 'understanding' theory as

a model ordering empirical facts through which these can be explained, dialectical materialism was totally denied and there was complete adherence to primitive forms of empiricism.

In this way, we repeated old contemplative materialism which Marx criticized so much and which, logically, led to the ignoring of 'revolutionary activity, of critical-practical activity'.

Theory, in this way emptied of its transforming activity, of its revolutionary content, was thus relegated to the field of metaphysical speculation, to mere intellectual dilettantism. Theory, elevated to the celestial spheres, was set free from its material connections and acquired its own independent dynamic in which 'facts' were atomized in 'abstract determination'. The divorce between theory and practice was consummated.

The dualist conception of the world which underlies all empiricist conceptions has always led to complete capitulation to 'objective reality',

which means that conscious activity is useless. The pessimists forecast inevitable social disasters and the optimists assert the existence of 'objective processes' which lead to the 'universal panacea' or to the 'International Republic of Workers' Councils': both conclude always by denying revolutionary activity and, consequently, by refusing to construct revolutionary leadership.

Only by breaking with dialectical materialism could Stalin 'adapt' to the isolation of the October Revolution and work out his 'theory' of socialism in a single country and, similarly, the Pabloites could capitulate to the apparent post-war boom.

All conceptions of spontaneity have implicit in them the rejection of Marxist method and adherence to empiricism or pragmatism. However, such a concession to empiricism has always been denied by its own authors, who have always declared themselves to be the

Marxist theory.

All this is possible precisely because they are empiricists, because for them theory is totally separated from practice and because their adherence to Marxism is a formal adherence from which they are unable to extract the necessary conclusions.

Having reached this point, it is necessary to understand clearly that the POMR may very well have declared its faithfulness to Marxism, but this is an attitude with only a formal content and consequently everyday it capitulates to the basest forms of empiricism.

The fetishist worship of programme was only the inevitable complement of the rejection of Marxism and the dissolution of the party into centrism. By describing the crisis of VR as a 'programmatic

crisis' and by giving it consequently a 'programmatic solution', the fact that programme presupposes a theory and a method is completely left on one side. It was possible to say then that VR, because of its 'class-nature', could not work out a revolutionary programme—this is a conception which presupposes a base capitulation to spontaneity since it implies that revolutionary programme is born spontaneously in the proletariat.

In this way, one of the central aspects of Marxist theory was denied: that class-consciousness does not arise spontaneously from the proletariat but is introduced into it from outside.

It was not because of the VR's 'class-nature' that it could not formulate a revolutionary programme; in fact, Marxism did not arise from the proletariat since the spontaneous development of the working class only leads to what Lenin called 'trade-unionist consciousness', or the politics and ideology of the bourgeoisie in the working class. One has only to read the classics to see that. For example, Lenin affirmed in 'What is to be Done?':

'The doctrine of socialism has arisen from philosophical, historical and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. Marx and Engels belonged because of their social position to the bourgeois intelligentsia.'

Trotsky, in response to Stalin, declared: 'Marx and Engels come from the ranks of the petty-bourgeois democrats and were, as is natural, educated in their culture and not in the culture of the proletariat . . . their theory was formed on the scientific and political basis of bourgeois culture, although they declared on the latter a war with no quarter given. Under the sharp blows of the contradictions of capitalism, the idea of generalizing bourgeois democracy is raised—in its most honest and worthwhile representatives—to the point of genial self-regeneration, and for that end it was the whole critical arsenal prepared by the development of bourgeois science. Such is the origin of Marxism.'

VR could not formulate a

revolutionary programme and develop revolutionary policy because its position was completely outside Marxism, because it had broken with dialectical materialism. The POMR was not formed on the basis of the Marxist understanding of the methodological bases of its centrism, so there was no guarantee that the 'turn to Trotskyism' was not precisely an opportunist manifestation of that same centrism which it declared it was breaking with.

Today there exists more than sufficient evidence to affirm that, in effect, the POMR continues to be a centrist organization. Consequently the only positive solution to the present crisis of the party has its roots in the deepening and extension of the discussion until the methodological roots of its centrism are understood.

Only an implacable struggle for the understanding of Marxist method, for the defence and development of dialectical materialism, will be able to guarantee the future of the POMR as the embryo of the revolutionary party in Peru.

The POMR was founded as an empirical reaction to the crisis of the VR. During the whole of its existence its policy has reproduced the typical traits of centrism—the rejection of theory, expressed in the formal acceptance of theory.

The break with the VR did not take place on the granite base of the understanding of dialectical materialism, so the future of the POMR was inevitably in question. Thus, the rejection of Marxism would imply sooner or later the impossibility of fighting for revolutionary leadership and capitulation to the traditional leaderships in the workers' movement, to Stalinism and petty-bourgeois nationalism.

Today, it is necessary to understand that such a capitulation was implicit in the origins of the POMR and that, consequently, it is necessary to go to the roots in the understanding of the methodological bases which engendered it.

The internal struggle has laid the basis for our total break with centrism and has given rise to a Marxist tendency which struggles implacably to give a positive solution to the crisis in the POMR. We must repeat with

all seriousness: it is necessary to break completely with centrism, it is necessary to undertake a ruthless fight for dialectical materialism. This is the only guarantee for the construction of independent revolutionary parties, and it is the fundamental weapon in the struggle for revolutionary leadership.

In moments in which the joint crisis of imperialism and the bureaucracy sharpens, and bigger and bigger sectors enter the struggle on a world scale, it is necessary to undertake the biggest offensive against all manifestations of bourgeois ideology in a struggle which defends and develops all the gains of Marxist theory. Without carrying forward this struggle, the future will be marked by defeats of the proletariat which will be even more terrible than those of the 1930s.

Hostile to all international perspectives, the POMR is condemned to being converted into the left wing of petty-bourgeois nationalism. The POMR will be built as a revolutionary party only as a section of the Fourth International. However, the POMR leadership has broken completely with this basic principle. It considers the question of the International as a problem of 'relations of internationalist brotherhood', in this way denying all questions of principle.

Without ever discussing in a principled way the problem of the International, the leadership has established relations with parties like the POR and Política Obrera and supports the magazine 'America India' ('Indian America') which, in its name alone, reflects the most reactionary positions of the nationalist petty-bourgeoisie (the narrowest national chauvinism and racialism).

Behind the phrase 'relations of internationalist brotherhood' is hidden the crudest pragmatism and negation of the International as the world party of the proletarian revolution.

The position of the party leadership on the International is just one of the most spectacular manifestations of its total hostility to Marxism. It is necessary to struggle against all such conceptions which can lead to nothing other than the



liquidation of the party and the dissolution of the International into a centrist amalgam.

<sup>1</sup> *Revolutionary Vanguard*. A group formed from a split in the Peruvian Stalinist movement in 1964. They based themselves on the theories of the Peruvian Socialist, José Carlos Mariategui.  
<sup>2</sup> POMR. Revolutionary Marxist Workers' Party. A party formed after a split in VR. The leadership around Ricardo Naipuri supports the position of the OCI (see Footnote 4).

## PART 2

### The International Committee

When Trotsky and his collaborators founded the Fourth International in 1938, the international workers' movement was experiencing a great period of reaction ('the FI arises from the most terrible defeats . . .').

The betrayal of the Second International, and then the betrayal of the Third International had conditioned the defeat of the international workers' movement, and fascism was advancing victoriously through Europe. In such conditions, the objective course of events determined that the FI was reduced in its sections to nuclei of militants basically extracted from the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia and workers linked to intellectuals, but without ever constituting powerful mass movements.

There did not exist any conception of adapting to this, but the composition of the FI was determined by the objective situation and by its historic task in that period. The struggle for the construction of independent revolutionary parties in each country took place then in totally adverse conditions, 'against the tide of history', as Trotsky described it himself.

'When the revolutionary movement in general is in decline, when one defeat follows another, when fascism is spreading throughout the world, when official "Marxism" is the most powerful organization for deceiving workers etc., it is inevitable in that situation that the revolutionary elements will have to struggle against the general tide of history even if our ideas and explanations are as

exact and intelligent as could be expected.' (Trotsky—'Against the Tide'.)

Today the international workers' movement has entered a new period of development as a result of the deepening of the imperialist crisis and the crisis of the bureaucracy. The joint crisis of imperialism and the bureaucracy has only one positive solution within the present framework. The only solution which will open a new epoch of progress for humanity lies with the International Socialist Revolution. The development of the class struggle internationally from 1968, with the French General Strike and the revolution in Czechoslovakia, make the urgent and predominant task the problem of the revolutionary leadership necessary for the taking of power.

Only the FI can resolve the problem of revolutionary leadership and in fact the International Committee (IC) of the FI is the only tendency which subordinates all questions of tactics to the problem of alternative leadership in the workers' movement.

Contrary to what happened in the period in which Trotsky and his collaborators founded the FI, there now exist favourable conditions for its building. The period which has opened up is that in which Trotskyist parties, sections of the FI, are called upon to take the leadership of the workers' movement on an international scale. That is the conclusion of the Marxist analysis of the present period; to consider that we are in a period of 'imminent revolution' or in an 'objective process' which, through different stages, methods and ways, leads to the world revolution, has no other meaning than to deny the struggle for the revolutionary party and to capitulate to pragmatism, to the 'facts' to 'objective reality'.

Our epoch, as defined in the Programme of the FI, has two alternatives: socialist revolution or barbarism, there exists no 'objective process' towards socialism, the central problem is the problem of revolutionary leadership which only the FI can resolve.

The struggle waged by the IC of the FI has been basically the struggle for the defence and the development of Marxism, the only basis on which it

is possible to talk seriously of the struggle for revolutionary leadership. The struggle against all attempts to revise Marxism has been the permanent basis for the building of revolutionary parties.

The revisionist tendencies reflect within revolutionary movements the positions of enemy classes, pressures which are permanent and which imply necessarily the building of the revolutionary tendencies in struggle against them. Only by struggling against all opportunist tendencies can the Bolshevik party be built as a revolutionary party.

The Pabloite leadership of the FI capitulated to the pressures of imperialism, and by doing so broke of necessity with Marxism. The struggle against Pablo began as a rejection of his positions in relation to the Soviet bureaucracy and *entrism sui generis* which led to the refusal to build independent parties of a Bolshevik type.

Pablo's revisionism was aimed at the very essence of the FI:

'The conscious struggle for alternative leadership based on revolutionary theory.'

However, the capitulation of Pablo to the Stalinist bureaucracy supposed a break with the Marxist method, and with dialectical materialism. The IC could only struggle not only against this or that position of Pablo, but from an understanding of the methodological bases of Pabloite revisionism. It is for this reason that the struggle of the IC has been basically the struggle for the development of Marxism and the defence of all the gains of Marxist theory.

What defines a party as revolutionary is only its development of Marxism. A party cannot be defined as 'revolutionary' because of its 'social composition', because of its links with the working class or because of the actual leadership of the working class it might have.

A quotation from Trotsky shows this:

'He who is swimming against the tide is not connected with the masses. Also, the social composition of every revolutionary movement at the beginning is not working class. They are intellectuals, semi-intellectuals or workers connected with intellectuals who



are not satisfied with the existing organization. You will find in each country a great number of foreigners who do not enter the workers' movement in each country very easily. A worker in America or in Mexico will become a member of the FI with much less difficulty. A new radical tendency directed against the general current of history in this period is crystallized around elements more or less separated from the national life of any country and for them it is difficult to penetrate into the masses.'

To accept a quantitative criterion to describe a party means a fundamental break with Marxism and a capitulation to empiricism; the Pabloite crisis was but the struggle between the proletarian Marxist tendency and the petty-bourgeois, empiricist tendency within the Trotskyist movement. Because of the extent which the IC of the FI took up the defence of Marxism, we cannot affirm that the FI was liquidated. The IC of the FI represents the historical continuity of Marxism, of Bolshevism:

'But the sceptics will not keep quiet. But has the moment come to proclaim it? The FI, we reply, does not need to be proclaimed. IT EXISTS AND IS STRUGGLING. Is it weak? Yes. Its ranks are still rather thin, because it is still young. Up to now, it is made up above all of leading cadres.

'But these cadres are the only hope of the revolutionary future; they are the only ones really worthy of this name. If our International is still numerically weak, it is strong in its doctrine, in its tradition and the unrivalled temper of its leading cadres. If that is not seen today, that is not of the greatest importance, it will be more in evidence tomorrow.'

## PART 3

### The International Committee

The struggle of the IC began against the impositions of Pablo and his group of the 'new character of the Stalinist bureaucracy' and *entrism sui generis* etc., all positions which were attacks on the very essence of the FI. It was the majority of the French sec-

tion which began the struggle against revisionism, for which they were expelled bureaucrat-ically by the Pabloite majority of the International.

However, the opposition to the positions of Pablo in 1953 was not a sufficient condition to guarantee the struggle for the building of independent revolutionary parties. The IC could only be constituted in struggle against Pabloite capitulation and the extension of this to the methodological understanding of Pabloism and of the significance of its break with Marxist method.

The SWP<sup>3</sup> which had adhered to the IC, returned to Pabloism as the crisis of imperialism and the bureaucracy got worse. Cannon and the SWP leaders reacted empirically to the capitulation of Pabloism and its bureaucratic manipulations, but were incapable of understanding the theoretical roots of revisionism.

By leaving on one side the warnings of Trotsky on the need to fight pragmatism, the SWP prepared its cadres for the future capitulation.

By abandoning Marxism and capitulating to American pragmatism, the SWP could adapt itself easily to Pabloism, by assuming a narrow nationalist position and denying its international responsibilities. Faced with the crisis of the bureaucracy in 1956 the SWP abandoned the programme of the political revolution and the struggle for the building of revolutionary parties in Eastern Europe, and, faced with the petty-bourgeois leaderships, it capitulated totally by supporting the leaders of Algeria, Fidel Castro in Cuba and the black movement in the USA.

The assassination of President Kennedy provoked a reaction which revealed its total capitulation: they sent their 'condolences' to the widow and published a statement condemning 'terrorist methods'.

The capitulation of the SWP concluded with its participation and its unprincipled 'reunification' with Pabloism in the 1963 Reunification Congress. The SWP leaders carried through their unprincipled reunification with Pabloism by using the argument that the IC ignored the 'new facts' of the world situation, 'facts' which went as far as the natural

evolution of non-Marxist forces and non-proletarian forces like Castro in Cuba and Ben Bella in Algeria towards Trotskyism. Thus, the independent revolutionary party was not the central task any more since there existed an 'objective process' towards Marxism and socialism—and Marxism was distorted to become, in the words of Hansen himself, 'consistent empiricism'.

The struggle against revisionism in the Trotskyist movement, and particularly the struggle in the SWP, revealed a fundamental difference in method. The leaders of the SWP had rejected Marxism and had replaced it with empiricism, had rejected the method which starts from the point of view of the transformation of the world and in its place they devoted their time to 'interpreting it' or 'contemplating it'.

What characterized Pabloism has been its inability to develop dialectical materialism against idealist methods of thought, in particular empiricism and pragmatism. It was by breaking with dialectical materialism that the Pabloites prostrated themselves before imperialism and the bureaucracy. The 19 years of struggle of the IC show that in the struggle against Pabloism there cannot be a simple empirical rejection of its positions or 'theories'. An equally empirical rejection can in no way constitute the basis for the theoretical development of Marxists, since such a rejection cannot be permanent and will be subordinated to the ever-changing 'objective reality'. That is the lesson of the return of the SWP to Pablo and Mandel despite having 'broken' with them in 1953.

Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary practice, and revolutionary practice cannot be separated from the construction of revolutionary leadership. The revolutionary capacity of theory is realized in the conscious intervention in the class struggle to build independent revolutionary parties. Nothing is more alien to Marxism than the establishment of a dichotomy between theory and practice; every concession to empiricism inevitably establishes a separation between the two.

What characterizes empiri-



cism is the considering of reality in the form of an 'object of contemplation' and not as 'sensuous human activity, as practice; not as something subjective'. In this way, the only reality are the 'facts' and the development of theory acquires a speculative dynamic which is typical of idealism. ('Hence the active side was developed in an abstract way, in opposition to materialism, by idealism, which naturally does not know real sensuous activity as such.')

Pabloism reproduces the method of thought of the bourgeoisie which consists in an abundant collecting of empirical data which are then integrated into a 'model' or a rationalist scheme to explain them. For example, Mandel in the Introduction to his 'Treatise on Economy . . . ' says that: 'Marxist method cannot be connived except as the integration of dialectical rationalism with the empirical collecting of facts.'

Such a conception of the dialectic places Mandel in the ranks of the Kantian rationalists in the measure that it was Kant himself who integrated the French rationalism of Descartes and the empiricism of Bacon and Hume. Thus, what is implicit behind Mandel's definition is a dualist conception of the world which considers that human thought can only know scientifically the appearance of things (the phenomena) but not their essence, with the essence consequently being relegated to metaphysical speculation. Dialectical materialism has always had to fight against all these conceptions.

The method advocated by the empiricists, including the Pabloites, which consists in the 'collection of facts' erects an unsurmountable obstacle to the correct understanding of the objective world, since through this method one can only reach what Marx called the 'imaginary concrete' which only leads to the atomization of complete representation in abstract thought. The scientifically exact method is precisely that in which 'the concrete appears in thought as the process of synthesis, as a result, not as a starting point although it may be the real starting point and consequently, the starting point of perception and representation as well'.

Because of their rejection of the dialectical method, the Pabloites and Mandel were prostrate when faced with the apparent stabilization of capitalism and the Stalinist bureaucracy during the post-war boom. The theories of Pablo on the 'imminent third world war' and the 'new role of the bureaucracy' or the theories of Mandel on neo-capitalism and the third industrial revolution, the scientific technological revolution and the new working class, as with the theories now developed by the OCI' on the 'imminent revolution' or the 'objective process which leads to the universal republic of workers' councils' have a common denominator—the capitulation to the 'facts', to 'objectivity', as theories are attempts to justify or adapt to the spontaneous course of events. All these presuppose a rejection of Marxist method and a capitulation to empiricism.

Only by breaking with Marxism could the Pabloites realize their series of betrayals of the international workers' movement and Mandel in particular became one of the greatest present-day apologists for capitalism.

He capitulated to Stalinism in the Hungarian revolution of 1956 and to the petty-bourgeois nationalists in Algeria and Cuba: he played an equally important role in the defeat of the Belgian strike in 1961; he supported Dubcek in the Czech uprising in 1968, gave a cover to the French Pabloites who capitulated criminally to 'student power' in 1968—not to mention the liquidation of the Latin American sections of the Unified Secretariat into OLAS and the Castroite movement.

## PART 4

### The Communist Internationalist Organization (OCI)

Only through an understanding of the opportunist tendencies' profound rejection of the Marxist method is it possible to guarantee the struggle for revolutionary leadership in the continuity of the FI. The experience of the SWP has no other meaning and constitutes a basic stage in the struggle of the IC of the FI.

The International Committee of the Fourth International is the target of the attacks of all opportunists because of its principled position on the struggle in Bangla Desh. The political line up of the OCI with the Pabloites on Bangla Desh is not just an accidental or circumstantial fact. On the contrary, it is a manifestation of its move away from Trotskyism on breaking with the IC of the FI.

In the youth rally celebrated in Essen in July 1971, the OCI broke with the IC of the FI when it opposed an amendment supported by the majority of the IC (English, Irish, Ceylonese, Canadian and Greek sections) which stated that the FI is the only revolutionary international and that its parties are the only revolutionary parties.

Obviously, in their opposition to the amendment of the majority of the IC, they got the support of different centrist and opportunist groups like the Spanish POUM<sup>2</sup> or the right wing NSA (National Students' Association) in the USA, which took the opportunity to campaign for the slogan — supported by the Stalinists — of a 'Popular Treaty for peace in Vietnam'. This action constituted the real break with the IC and the attempt to transform the International into a centrist amalgam. The regroupment of the OCI with the centrists against the FI constitutes the basic question and not the Bolivian revolution or the Bolivian POR.

The amendment presented by the SLL and supported by the majority of the IC is clear enough: 'Without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary party . . . '

When the OCI rejected the amendment, it opposed the FI being built on the basis of dialectical materialism, thus completing its opposition to the defence and the development of Marxist theory which it had already revealed sometime before. The OCI, by refusing to understand and develop dialectical materialism as the theory of knowledge of Marxism, denies the essence of the struggle for the building of revolutionary parties and prevents sections of the FI from transforming the spontaneous consciousness of the working class into class-consciousness.



By adopting the position that only the programme constitutes the basis for the building of parties, it prepares the way for the liquidation of the party into centrism. As the IC of the FI declares: 'Only a fundamental struggle against all the enemies of Marxism, a struggle waged against the spontaneous consciousness of the working class can prepare the youth for the building of the FI.'

The OCI had denied the theoretical gains of the IC and the whole experience of the struggle in the SWP to such an extent that it has had to break with the FI in order to carry forward its opportunist conceptions.

The OCI tells us that we are in a period of 'imminent revolution' which 'proceeds through different stages and in different forms towards the International Republic of Soviets'. It is from this totally spontaneist conception of the struggle for socialism that the OCI works out its position to liquidate the FI. If there exists an 'objective process' towards the 'International Republic of Soviets' why do we need parties? Why do we need the International? Such is the logic which lies behind every spontaneist revision of Marxism.

Thus Pablo stated that the new relation of forces on a world scale after the war and the 'revolutionary processes' which would be generated would force the Stalinist parties and the reformist parties to carry through the revolution in a general way.

According to the OCI itself, parties and leaderships 'correspond' to this 'process'. This is a conscious refusal to fight against Stalinism and the other treacherous leaderships. It is by following these conceptions that the OCI has maintained that the FI and its sections must be 'flexible' organizations and has refused to accept that the FI is the only revolutionary International. All backed up by the argument that we must not be 'sectarian', 'ultimatisit' or that we must remain 'linked to the masses'; in other words, the purest opportunism.

During the Algerian revolution, the OCI raised the bourgeois-nationalist movement to the level of the revolutionary party. Its support for the MNA<sup>6</sup> was in the fol-

lowing terms: 'The programme of the MNA is undeniably a revolutionary programme with a socialist content... Effectively, when we analyse the MNA we must consider that we have before us a revolutionary movement which is almost unique in its form, that we cannot define as a Marxist party, but which, because of its policy and character carries within it all the revolutionary hopes of the Algerian people.'

Such an analysis of the MNA, which is considered as 'revolutionary and socialist' without being Marxist and as a movement which is 'almost unique in its form', only leads to the rejection of the struggle to construct revolutionary parties which are independent, and to placing 'hopes of the people' in movements which in their 'natural or objective evolution' lead to socialism.

Logically, like Torres in Bolivia or the government of Allende or Velasco (which were to protect the workers' government in Bolivia) the MNA had nothing in common with socialism and rather rushed to the UN when the situation sharpened in Algeria.

Since they consider that there exists a 'natural process' towards socialism, the struggle for the independent leadership of the FI can be relegated to the background; in its place can be placed hollow phrases or empty formulas without any revolutionary content, but which are accessible to the masses. The slogan of the United Workers' Front raised to the level of strategy and to which the whole struggle of the party is subordinated is a typical example of this. In opposition to the position of Lenin and Trotsky, the OCI maintains that the UWF is a strategy, a permanent slogan and the body where the party will be built and will win its leadership in the course of the spontaneous development.

For Lenin and Trotsky, the UWF was a slogan which the party could put forward in specific conditions with the aim of breaking the traditional leaderships and winning revolutionary leadership. For the OCI, on the other hand, the UWF is not subordinated to the struggle for independent leadership: it is carried through with the 'present leaderships' of the working-class movement and has as its final objective the 'leading' of

the working class to government and the constitution of the 'party of the victorious proletarian revolution'.

The Bolshevik-Leninist position and the opportunist position of the OCI are completely opposed. As the IC of the FI declares: the position of the OCI on the 'United Workers' Front' is transformed into a complete liquidation of the party and its subordination to the Stalinist and social-democratic parties and the union bureaucracies.

Total abstention in relation to the struggle in Bangla Desh is but the culmination of the anti-Marxist evolution of the OCI and its adherence to contemplative empiricism. Only with that conception which rejects the point of view of the transformation of the world and which breaks consequently with Marxism, is it possible to work out theories like those put forward by the OCI.

They have no other conclusion than the denial of all conscious revolutionary activity and the capitulation to so-called 'objective processes'.

The positions which the OCI has taken in relation to Bolivia, first of all denouncing the theses of the COB and later swallowing these positions completely and even accepting the position of the 'anti-imperialist united front' cannot be understood except by examining the move away from Marxism by the OCI and its adherence each day to opportunism.

Serious and scientific analysis is replaced by a demagogic pose and propagandist activity. Thus, after refusing systematically to support the struggle of the Palestinian people against Zionist aggression, it pompously salutes the 'soviet of Irbid' as part of the 'process' which leads along different paths to the 'universal republic of Soviets'. The combination of the refusal to struggle against treacherous leaderships and demagogic poses are the result of the break of the OCI with the IC of the FI.

<sup>5</sup> POUM. Workers Party for Marxist Unification. A Spanish centrist party with which Trotsky broke when it entered the Stalinist Popular Front in the Spanish Civil War.

<sup>6</sup> MNA. The Algerian Nationalist Movement.



## PART 5

### Revolutionary Workers Party—POR (Bolivia)

From 1952 Lora's POR became the main support of Pabloism in Latin America. Accepting Trotskyism verbally, but denying it in practice, Lora has led the workers' movement in Bolivia to defeat since the revolution of 1952. In fact, Lora supported the MNR<sup>7</sup> in 1952 and was incapable of struggling for the alternative leadership of the POR around a Marxist programme. Later on, when the MNR began its offensive against the masses, Lora changed his position and centred his hopes on the left wing of the MNR.

In the 'Union Theses of the POR', Lora built his strategy on support for the left wing of the MNR against the right wing. That is a grotesque remnant of the policy of Stalin towards the Chinese Kuomintang and the negation, consequently, of the construction of independent revolutionary parties.

The Pabloite crisis meant for Lora a conscious move from any international perspective. Lora fought from 1953 to 1969 against the IC of the FI, when he made a new opportunist turn and decided to 'support it'. During the whole period from 1953 to 1969 Lora carried out a policy of capitulation to petty-bourgeois tendencies; unconditional support for the petty-bourgeois government of Castro and support for guerrilla movements are the most striking proof of this.

### Guerrillas

In the pamphlet 'Revaluation of the method of the guerrillas' Lora declares: 'The POR, from its clandestine position, stated that it was putting to one side the discussion on the place occupied by the guerrillas in the revolutionary struggle in order to give them its determined support.'

In the POR manifesto on Che Guevara's guerrilla campaign, there is the statement: 'The guerrilla is no more than the method of struggle of the people against anti-popular capitulationist *gorilismo* . . .' And later: 'At this time of definitions, the POR says publicly that it solidarizes with and supports the guerrilla

movement which has just broken out, according to official news bulletins in the south-east of the country. It assumes this position without previously considering its weakness or strength, its virtues or defects. The *guerrilleros*, despite all the limitations which they might have, are part of the advanced army of the people. Their objectives are national and social liberation and they are acting on behalf of progress and the advance of history.'

For Lora the construction of the independent revolutionary party, section of the FI, is left entirely on one side and guerrilla warfare is put in its place. In that period Lora capitulated completely to guerrilla warfare and made the whole strategy of the POR depend on 'support' and 'entrism' in the guerrillas.

Lora argues in this way in the same pamphlet: 'When we talk of popular support we are not at all subscribing to the silent sympathy which the masses may feel towards the guerrillas, but concretely to militant support, to the economic and political support which must be given to them, to the co-ordination of guerrilla warfare and agitation in the cities and centres of work. The very existence of the guerrilla centres and the appearance of new ones will become the result of the support of the masses.'

At the extreme limit of his opportunism, Lora even goes so far as to say that 'the guerrilla movement seems to mean a return to Bolshevism of the first period' and calls for entry into the guerrillas, arguing that 'the Bolivian situation requires another kind of guerrilla, that which results from the united front of working-class tendencies'. Only when the *guerrilleros* themselves reject the entry of the POR does Lora criticize them saying: 'Sick and absurd anti-Trotskyism characterized the education of the guerrillas and the attempts which were made to justify them technically. The consequence of this was to keep the POR at a distance, obeying orders from afar and the doors were closed against any future participation by the POR.'

The permanent policy of Lora implies a rejection of the struggle for the building of a

revolutionary party. His theses of support for the MNR for the guerrillas or at the moment the constitution of the RAF<sup>8</sup> are but manifestations of an anti-Marxist conception which believes that the revolutionary party is the result of the spontaneous development of the mass movement.

In his book 'Perspectives of the Bolivian Revolution' Lora declares: 'The exploited, on reaching a certain degree of maturity expressed clearly their central objective: the constitution of their own government and their wish to cease to be fodder for political movements which are alien to it. The existence of the POR is justified because it expresses this basic tendency . . .'

The party is reduced, according to Lora to the 'expression' of the spontaneous development of the workers' movement, and at a given moment the 'expression' of the 'maturity' of the proletariat, in opposition to the Marxist theses that class-consciousness is introduced into the proletariat from outside and that the party is in no way the 'expression' of spontaneous consciousness but quite the opposite that to introduce this class-consciousness, it is necessary to combat at all times this spontaneous consciousness.

When Lora decided 'to support' the IC after 16 years of struggling against it, was it not correct to draw up a balance-sheet of the POR as the English section maintained in the IC? What guarantee existed that the POR had broken with centrism?

However, the French section decided on its own account and without it having been approved on the IC to consider the POR as a member of the IC. Such a decision on the part of the French section was but a manifestation of its capitulation to centrism and a step forward in the attempt to dissolve the International into centrist organizations with the justification of not appearing 'sectarian'.

<sup>7</sup> MNR, National Revolutionary Movement in Bolivia. A petty-bourgeois party led by Paz Estensoro which took power in 1952. The MNR and Estensoro now work in full co-operation with Colonel Banzer.



## PART 6

### Thesis of the COB

The events in Bolivia have shown that the POR never broke with centrism and that its adherence to the IC was only an opportunist manoeuvre by Lora. The responsibility of the POR in the defeat of the Bolivian proletariat obliges Trotskyist militants to draw up a balance-sheet of the events which carried the military group of Banzer to power. This was a defeat for the Bolivian working class because of the incapacity of its leadership.

Because of his total break with Marxism, Lora and his group always developed an opportunist policy of capitulation to Stalinism and petty-bourgeois tendencies, a conscious negation of all international perspective and the rejection, consequently, of the building of independent parties of a Bolshevik type.

From the congress of the COB in 1970 the POR capitulated to Stalinism and to political theses based on the impossibility of struggling consistently against petty-bourgeois nationalism to the extent that an anti-Marxist conception of the latter was developed; the negation of the theory of the permanent revolution and the acceptance of the 'theory' of the revolution in stages; the acceptance of the 'theory' of the 'building of socialism in one country' and also the acceptance of the international policy of the Soviet bureaucracy. It was the French section itself which produced the first criticism of the theses of the COB. This criticism concluded:

'Comrades, we tell you, quite plainly, motivated by deep and anguished conviction, that if this declaration becomes the policy of the Bolivian workers' movement and represents its orientation, and if the POR should adopt it (or even if it maintained a long silence on the fact that it constitutes the result of a compromise which only has circumstantial value), then the thesis of the COB can constitute a noose around the neck of the Bolivian proletariat since it limits it to Bolivia.'

When it justifies and backs up completely everything the POR has done, the French sec-

tion opportunistically avoids this criticism and in particular its final conclusion:

'This party prepared this struggle, was prepared for it, was able to take advantage of the opportunities and at each stage of the revolutionary process developed the conditions for the working class to take the power.'

The defeat of the Bolivian proletariat was the result of the prostration of its leadership. The POR was incapable of posing correctly (or, rather, it never even posed it) the struggle for independent leadership. Its basic break with Marxism led it to capitulate to the traditional leaderships and the union bureaucracies. It is no coincidence that after the defeat, Lora, in his balance-sheet, leaves out all question of working-class leadership. As he expressed it himself, the 'leadership of the workers' movement was correct' and the political policies of the working class were overtaken by the events.

But the main leaders of the working class were the **Lechinists**<sup>10</sup> and the Stalinists.

In an interview which appeared in 'Informations Ouvrières', the OCI's newspaper, he goes so far as to say that Stalinism, pushed by events, was forced to take up 'revolutionary positions'—the same position of Pablo towards the Soviet bureaucracy, except that 'it has become real' for Lora. What is certain is that Lora always accepted the Pabloite theses on Stalinism, theses which led him to affirm that the Sino-Soviet conflict opened up the possibility that a fraction of the bureaucracy would 'debureaucratize' and 'return to Marxism'; a possibility which was reduced to nought by Lora since 'the theoretical discussion did not penetrate to the very root of the problem'.

This metaphysical conception of the bureaucracy is what makes him declare that Stalinism is the same as Menshevism, denying the international nature of Stalinism and the fact that the bureaucracy obtains its power from its control of the means of production and its compromise internationally with imperialism.

The formulation of Lora that Stalinism is only a bridge between petty-bourgeois

nationalism and Trotskyism or the position he describes in the article 'Bolivia between nationalism and socialism'—where he states that the independence of the proletariat is measured by its movement to the left in relation to petty-bourgeois nationalism—can only lead to one conclusion. That is the handing over of the workers' movement to Stalinism and the rejection of the struggle for alternative leadership. It is in line with this policy that the POR supported the CP candidate in the Popular Assembly, thus refusing to stand an independent candidate.

In Latin America the process of the national bourgeoisies has been of such a size that it is relatively easy for 'left' groups to appear which declare their 'faithfulness' to the theory of the permanent revolution and reject the theory of two stages.

However, this phenomenon is not backed by an understanding of Marxism, but is the result of spontaneous evolution. The majority of these groups—outside of the Marxist movement and consequently outside an international perspective—have refurbished the petty-bourgeois criticism of imperialism. This criticism is in essence reactionary and in no way touches the actual basis of imperialism. Such groups have invariably refurbished the Kautskyan conception of imperialism, considering it as super-imperialism and as exclusively a national question.

In this way, they have been unable to break politically with petty-bourgeois nationalism, and have become its critics and its 'left' cover.

The POR, and Lora in particular, outside the Marxist movement, have refurbished this left criticism of petty-bourgeois nationalism—this is the basic content of the statement 'they are limited or inconsistent anti-imperialists'.

Consequently, a complete break with nationalism is never posed; in fact its 'anti-imperialism' is given support. It is no coincidence that Lora should conclude in this article that the governments of Velasco and Allende will defend the workers' state in Bolivia. Logically, Velasco and Allende did not even protect the petty-bourgeois government of J. J. Torres.





# The Political

# Itinerary

of

# GEORG LUKACS

By Balazs Nagy

This article is translated from the French Journal *La Verité*

Third and concluding instalment



## The Political Itinerary of Georg Lukacs (Third and concluding instalment)

IN OUR analysis of Lukacs' itinerary we have arrived at his book *History and Class Consciousness*. It seems to me important to devote the whole of the present article to it. As a preliminary, however, I must reply to certain remarks made about the first two articles. Some have expressed the opinion that it is wrong to criticise points of view expressed by Lukacs a long time ago which he now repudiates. I do not agree. Marxist criticism does not content itself with a simple refutation of such and such a wrong opinion. It must take the erroneous thought in its development, follow its evolution, demonstrate its internal contradictions and links, penetrate through to its root in order to grasp its organic character, its essence. Now such a self-criticism has never been undertaken by Lukacs, a fact which allowed him to have fundamentally the same theoretical position that he took in *History and Class Consciousness* whilst—later—criticising the idealist 'aspects' of the book. But we must go beyond the 'aspects' to reach the essential. In this way, criticism, from a single refutation or opposition which it was previously, becomes a real development.

Moreover, this problem is not limited to the person of Lukacs. Against the betrayals of Stalinism and the painful experiences of its practice and its theoretical falsifications, numerous theoretical undertakings claim to be the bearers of 'true Marxism'. The relative weakness of the Fourth International has allowed these attempts to be made by petty-bourgeois left intellectuals, generally 'disillusioned' as to the role of the proletariat, and, by their nature, mistaking bladders for lanterns. Their main concern is to discover 'real Marxism', and their attempts find much support in the bourgeoisie: they also benefit from the benign attitude of the bureaucracy which gradually adopts these 'theoretical' lucubrations.

Centrists of every variety then hurry, dazzled, to put their stamp of authenticity on these 'theories'. It is on such a composite and very

fertile dung-heap that Lukacs' popularity has grown.

The re-publication of *History and Class Consciousness* (in France 1967, in Britain 1971) and the great amount of publicity surrounding this book have played a particularly important role in this concerted attack against Marxism. Its extent is shown by the fact that criticism of Lukacs still meets with a certain resistance even among revolutionaries who have been influenced by what Axelos, for instance, wrote: according to him, *History and Class Consciousness* is 'one of the masterpieces of Marxist thought of the 20th century'. We must therefore give a detailed refutation of this lying statement.

### On the Circumstances of the Book's Birth

An analysis of Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness* cannot consider the book as a thing in itself; we must place its birth and content in a definite historical framework. This framework is the condition of the class struggle at that time and also the theoretical essays linked to that struggle. It is only through such an analysis that Lukacs' conception becomes comprehensible, and at the same time loses the aura of originality that his enthusiastic, but ignorant, admirers of today try to give it.

The deep crisis provoked by the imperialist First World War and collapse of the Second International could not be entirely overcome by the October Revolution and the founding of the Third International. The revolutions in Germany, Hungary and Italy were unsuccessful; the majority of the proletariat remained under the influence of reformist social democracy. In such a situation, multiple attempts were made, politically and theoretically, to 'palliate' this state of affairs in the name of a demand to go 'further' in the struggle against social-democracy than the Third Inter-



national had done, according to the authors of these attempts. Their roots lay in a petty-bourgeois impatience closely linked to a distrust of the proletarian masses. Politically, this tendency was expressed in ultra-leftism, or a despair which pushed its representatives openly towards the bourgeoisie. In both cases, they spoke of the incapacity of the proletariat to resolve the problems of humanity, or at least the crisis of the proletariat, thus identifying it with its reformist leadership. In fact, they did not set about just this leadership, but rather the whole of the labour movement, whose history and continuity they did not recognise. Theoretically they directed their attacks against the dogmatism of Social-Democracy that they saw essentially and above all residing in its vulgar materialism. Although this critique, along with that against Social Democracy's political opportunism, was entirely justified, they went so far as to eliminate materialism to the benefit of various forms of the neo-Kantian theory of knowledge.

We cannot here take up an analysis of ultra-leftism in general, and Lukacs in particular, which was done in my previous article. *History and Class Consciousness* is its theoretical corollary. As such, this book is not separate from the other books of this type, seen especially in Germany

1923, when Lukacs' book appeared, was also the year when *Marxism and Philosophy* by Karl Korsch appeared, which also fought for the recognition of 'the reality of forms of consciousness and intellectual life' against 'vulgar' Marxism. He too wanted to 're-establish the theory of spiritual realities', like Lukacs, with the help of Hegel's philosophy, or rather Kant's. Concretely, what was under discussion was the relationship between consciousness and being, which is also at the centre of Lukacs' preoccupations.

Korsch declared that

'... on this... point, the conclusions of my book are in many ways close to George Lukacs' dialectical studies... (and despite some differences)... I think I am objectively alongside Lukacs in a critical position with regard to the old and new Marxist orthodoxy...'

(Karl Korsch, *Marxisme at Philosophie*, Editions de Minuit, Paris 1964 pp. 22-23, not in the English edition.)

An examination of Korsch's position would, regrettably, take us too far. It is enough to recall that later Korsch openly abandoned Marxism.

On the other hand, we must stress that because some groups were advocating these positions, Zinoviev and Bukharin at the Fifth Congress of the Comintern criticised Lukacs and Korsch, characterising their ideas as anti-Marxist and idealist. However, this criticism did not go further—despite the more developed articles of Deborin and others—than a limited number of summary statements. This fact enabled Lukacs, in quickly repudiating his book, to make an equally summary and superficial 'self-criticism' whereas an analysis would have forced him to real discussion and a real clarification; such a clarification was necessary and is still necessary today.

For Lukacs' aim is nothing more or less than

'to understand the essence of Marx' method... an interpretation, an exposition of Marx' theory as Marx understood it.'  
(*History and Class Consciousness*, Merlin Press, pp. xlii-xliii, Lukacs' emphasis.)

This intellectual impulse is so strong that it even drives him against 'certain statements of Engels'. For—oh modesty!—'the author... is defending orthodox Marxism against Engels himself' (Ibid xlii).

In the preface, this 'Marxist' has already stated 'that in Marxist theory and method the true method by which to understand society and history has finally been discovered'.

It follows 'that it must be constantly applied to itself', for 'its pre-eminent aim is knowledge of the present'. We can see clearly the direction this 'interpretation' takes—against Engels. According to Lukacs, knowledge is a category apart, considered in itself, for it is the aim of the Marxist method. As if Marx had never written that the task is no longer to explain the world but to change it. Later we shall see that Lukacs does not mean it in this way, but in the sense of distinguishing the superior role of knowledge. There is nothing surprising in the fact that Lukacs takes up arms against the 'vulgar' materialists (it should be noted that throughout his book, materialists invariably receive the epithet 'vulgar' or 'mechanical'), who believe in Marx' own characterisation (in the preface to *Capital*) of his materialist relationship with Hegel. But if knowledge is considered in itself, if it must be applied to itself, and if that is the real interpretation of Marx, Lukacs can state that 'it is common knowledge that Marx himself conceived this idea of writing a dialectics'. For—such is Lukacs' understanding of Marx—even if he did not conceive of such a plan, he would have had to do so. Fortunately and despite the 'vulgar' Engels, Lukacs has arrived. But he is modest. In his Preface he does not promise this 'dialectics'. Not yet. He only proposes to open up a discussion on the dialectical method to establish the real relationship between Marx and Hegel.

Such a claim deserved more attention from the Third International. Mere refutation did not go far enough in answering so ambitious an enterprise. It did not allow the demonstration of its organic kinship with the conception shared by various groups of communist intellectuals, but particularly with the attacks of bourgeois intellectuals against dialectical materialism. Of these I shall mention only Karl Mannheim, Lukacs' former friend.

Mannheim also came from the neo-Kantian circle of Berlin, Heidelberg and Freiburg, along with Lukacs and Korsch. But, as against these, he did not join the Communist Party. He remained a bourgeois. He consequently did not have to disguise his neo-Kantianism with 'Marxist' phraseology. He had no complex preventing him from openly developing what remained more or less hidden with the Korsch of those days and Lukacs. It is revealing that 1922 was the year he had



published his *Structural Analysis of the Theory of Knowledge* from which he developed to elaborate *Sociology of Knowledge*. This conception, proceeds, just as all of *History and Class Consciousness* and Korsch's books do, from the problem of the relationship between being and consciousness, object and subject. But Mannheim is more consistent: at the point where—as we shall see—Lukacs stops half-way, he goes further, so far as to raise consciousness (and with it, the intellectuals) to such a determinant position that the sociology of knowledge can take finished form. But this difference between Lukacs and Mannheim is not fundamental. It is only quantitative. Therein lies the umbilical cord which theoretically links Lukacs to Mannheim, that is to the bourgeoisie.

This is a brief sketch of the framework in which Lukacs' book must be placed. It is part of a huge attempt to take the labour movement beyond the limits of Marxist 'dogmatism'. Exactly the same as the present attempts. This explains Lukacs' attraction nowadays. A critique of his book is therefore as pressing as at the time of its appearance.

### On the Dialectics of Nature

As he promised in the Preface, Lukacs straight away launches a frontal attack on Engels. Under various forms and on different subjects, this attack really constitutes the pivot of his book. His pretention to present Marx's 'real' thought against the dogmatists thus takes the form of a separation, if not an opposition, between Marx and Engels. This attempt, which in places becomes really savage, unmasks and characterizes his fundamental position.

Obviously, from this point of view, the first target is precisely the dialectic in nature, developed in particular by Engels; for it is on the rejection or recognition of the dialectics in nature that one's conception of the essence of dialectics depends.

So Lukacs writes :

'The misunderstandings that arise from Engels' account of dialectics can in the main be put down to the fact that Engels—following Hegel's mistaken lead—extended the method to apply also to nature.'  
(Op cit, note p. 24)

We note in passing that Lukacs here puts Hegel in the dock alongside Engels; they are banished from the realm of those who understand dialectics. This gives us an idea of the size of the horse mounted by the real dialectician, Lukacs !

The problem of the dialectics of nature is of capital importance. It is no accident that an entire legion of 'theoreticians' has been attacking, and today with redoubled effort, dialectics in nature. Particularly active in this attack are certain so-called 'left' intellectuals who in other fields have a rather suspect predilection for dialectics. The basis of the problem rests in this, that those who reject the dialectic in nature are opposed to its universality, to the fact that the dialectic and its laws are inherent in existence no matter what form it takes. They only 'recog-

nize' it in thought, or in society made by man. What emerges clearly from this conception is that it makes the dialectic derive from man, as his creation, and thus leaves the door wide open to idealism. In fact, this is the foundation of idealism. For, at one blow, those who deny dialectics in nature establish a dualism: on the one hand there is society, and thought, where dialectics are valid, and on the other hand there is nature where there is no dialectic. So this dualism rejects as a principle the organic unity of the world, the universe. Hence, inevitably, we arrive at idealism, since the unity of the world, the unity of the universe, rests in its materiality, as the slandered Engels explained.

The supporters of this position are particularly modest and laconic when the question is asked: if there is no dialectic in nature, what then is to be put in its place? As far as Lukacs is concerned he quite simply refuses to answer the question. This great 'dialectician' excludes the examination of nature from his field of investigation. Is it not surprising that the one who claims to explain the foundations of dialectics treats nature as a negligible quantity? To the decisive question, by what method must we begin to explain nature, Lukacs answers, 'Unfortunately, it is not possible to undertake a detailed analysis of these questions here.' (Ibid p. 24.)

I must immediately add that it remained impossible throughout his lifetime. In other words, his position against dialectics in nature remained fundamentally the same.

Now if there is no dialectic in nature, there are not many avenues left open—only two possibilities: either run back to God in his theological or 'scientific' form, or adapt the developed conception based on Newton's mechanics, behind which, again, God can be found. Lukacs carefully avoids this pitfall by renouncing any explanation. But we shall follow him right into his last retreat.

On what basis does he oppose the dialectic in nature? Because :

'the crucial determinants of dialectics—the interaction of subject and object, the unity of theory and practice . . . etc.—are absent from our knowledge of nature.' (Ibid)

Almost as many mistakes as there are words! Firstly because these relations are not the 'crucial determinants' of dialectics. They raise precisely the problem of the opposition between materialism and idealism: in themselves subject and object can have as much an idealist relationship as a materialist one. Consequently, they can be given a crucial place in dialectics only on condition that the dialectic is envisaged only as a method of thought, born and developed in itself. Effectively this is Lukacs' conception.

He sets out his aim :

'We must extract the practical essence of the theory, starting from the theory and from its relation to its object.'  
(This passage is wrongly translated in the English edition p. 18.)



For this reason he attacks Engels' writings. He finds that

'this aspect is nowhere treated in them. . . . He contrasts the ways in which concepts are formed in dialectics as opposed to metaphysics.' (Ibid, p. 20.)

If we strip this statement of its terrible neo-Kantian slang, the unfortunate thing, according to Lukacs, rests in this: Engels opposes the dialectic which is in the essence of things to a method which purports to exist within itself. Now, Lukacs continues: in the dialectical method, 'the most vital interaction (is) the dialectical relation between subject and object in the process of history', and Engels' error is this, that in 'Anti-Duhring', this problem 'is not even mentioned . . . let alone given the prominence it deserves'. (Ibid). But the subject-object relationship is the decisive question of materialism. Engels has a firm materialist position in this sphere, and it is this position Lukacs attacks in reproaching Engels for not diluting the materialist relationship between subject and object into an indeterminate, supposedly dialectical relationship.

Finally, it is false to say that these 'determinations do not exist in our knowledge of nature'. Some comment is required here: Lukacs speaks of a knowledge of nature which he accuses of not being dialectical. The ignorance of the natural sciences at a time when they are bringing major discoveries definitively proving that our knowledge of nature, and consequently nature itself, can only be dialectical—such crass ignorance is rather surprising in a 'corrector' of Engels and Hegel. Probably to correct this crying 'error' of his youth, Lukacs later condescended to recognize the dialectic in the natural sciences. But as to nature itself, for him it remains non-dialectical. Finally, it is equally false to state that these reciprocal actions do not exist in nature itself. I shall return to this problem. But I must remark here that such a statement is valid only if man is excluded from nature by mechanically opposing him to it.

To give a sounder base to his hostility to the dialectics of nature, Lukacs undertakes a systematic attack against the natural sciences. From the fact that the sciences begin to examine facts by isolating them, this illustrious 'dialectician' deduces that they only busy themselves with these isolated facts. Whereas it is well known — and Lenin showed this in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* — that physicists, chemists and other scholars concerned with nature can only conduct their researches as dialecticians. (It is only in the explanations or philosophical generalizations of their researches that they repudiate the dialectic). With this duplicity, characteristic of the greater part of Lukacs' statement, he quite freely assimilates the sciences to capitalist society.

According to Lukacs facts are,

'... precisely in their objective structure the products of a definite historical epoch, namely capitalism. Thus when "science" maintains that the manner in which data immediately present themselves . . . is the appropriate starting point for the formation of scientific concepts, it thereby takes its stand simply and dogmatically on the basis of capitalist society.' (Ibid, p. 7.)

The method of scientific investigation is here identified with fragmented thought, a product of capitalist society. Moreover, in order to strengthen his attack, Lukacs identifies these 'separate facts' with physical constants, for it must be borne in mind that 'scientific exactitude presupposes that the elements remain constant' (Ibid, No. p. 24-25). Here we have an extraordinary confusion, the result first of all of a preconceived hostility to the dialectic and the natural sciences, and then of ignorance. The notion of a constant in science is not at all the same as facts imagined by Lukacs to be rigid and immovable. What is more, the fundamental physical constants such as the speed of light, the elementary electric charge, Planck's constant, etc. have, in their very essence, the eminently dialectical characteristic that they are susceptible to variation; to such a point that there are physical theories according to which, with time, there is a variation of these fundamental constants. But there is an even more important fact: all the great theories of modern physics operate with these fundamental constants, and the heart of these theories is precisely the dialectic. Thus, constants are inseparable from the dialectical movement shown by the invariance of these constants. It is precisely the invariance of the speed of light which has allowed us to explain the non-constant universe by the theory of relativity, in which the invariance of so fundamental a physical notion as time is abolished. Thus, by denying the dialectics of nature, Lukacs inevitably arrives at a mechanical, non-dialectical thought which separates the unity of opposites by making an absolute of one of its terms.

It could be, however, that he was not thinking of fundamental constants in speaking of elements being 'constant'. But what then does he mean by elements? Those of Mendeleev's table or Euclidean geometry? Precision is not the strong point of this philosopher. In any event the closer we get to these 'elements' the more we see that their invariance is quite relative. For example the elements of Euclidean geometry cease to be true with that of Riemann: in our physical universe, the latter conforms to the curvature of space in the general theory of relativity.

Lukacs' conception of a science which sought to 'grasp facts in their purity', the foundation of this being 'the way in which facts are immediately given', is a malevolent fabrication. The whole of quantitative mechanics, for example, is a thorough-going refutation of this statement. It is precisely this theory which grasps facts as semi-facts (if such an expression may be used), and which elaborates a mathematical symbolism to take account of facts incomprehensible in their unity. Heisenberg's famous 'uncertainty principle', which formulates the unity of an undulatory and at the same time corpuscular movement of particles by an uncertainty of their relations, well expresses the dialectic of nature and unmasks Lukacs. The author of *History and Class Consciousness* wrote his book at a time when the theory of relativity at least was known to the general public.

Lukacs' anti-dialectical manner of opposing,



from this point of view, society to nature appears here even more clearly; he declares that the natural sciences must eliminate contradictions, whereas contradictions in the social sciences reflect actually existing contradictions.

'The methodology of the natural sciences . . . rejects the idea of contradiction and antagonism in its subject matter.'

(Ibid, p. 10.)

In social reality, on the other hand,

'These contradictions are not a sign of the imperfect understanding of society . . . (but) . . . belong in an insoluble manner to the nature of reality itself.'

(Ibid.)

Lukacs here maintains and tends to reinforce a dualism between society and nature. According to him, with nature there is no contradiction in 'the essence of reality itself'. He avoids stating, however, his conception of a nature without contradiction, well knowing that in that case it could only be mechanical. It would be useless to discuss such a reactionary view in the second half of the twentieth century, just as it was at the time of its formulation. What should be stressed, however, in Lukacs' demand that the natural sciences must eliminate contradictions or at least tend towards this, is that it coincides with Einstein's dogmatic position in his famous discussion with Niels Bohr and his school.

Einstein then insisted upon the necessity to overcome the contradictions in quantitative mechanics in the sense of an absolute determinism, whereas Bohr and his school, in introducing the dialectical concept of 'complementarity' and arguing against such determinism, fell into the inverse extreme of agnosticism; Louis de Broglie tried, drawing inspiration from Einstein, to get out of the impasse with a sharpened idealism through his conception of a 'sub-quantitative' field. It was no accident that official soviet physics under Stalin followed de Broglie. Lukacs' instinct, in this problem as in so many others, preceded the Stalinist bureaucracy by a long way. Moreover, nor was it an accident that Soviet scholars who tried to develop the dialectical conception of nature were witch-hunted under Stalin.

'The first attempt, to my knowledge, to integrate the recent results and theories of science into the dialectics of nature is that developed by Robert Havemann in his work at Berlin's Humboldt University (Robert Havemann, *Dialektik Ohne Dogma*, Hamburg Rowohlt 1964) but Havemann was severely criticized and driven from the University by the Ulbricht bureaucracy. (Nevertheless, I must point out that if Havemann sets out the dialectic of nature, he ceases to be a dialectician when he discusses the problems of society, liberty, morality, etc. It is the same as Lukacs' dualism, but in the inverse sense: dialectics in nature, no dialectics in society. Its basis is equally a negative relation to materialism).

Once Lukacs has refused to recognize the dialectics of nature, once the dualism of his concept is defined, this dualism will grow throughout the book. It orientates Lukacs' thought (and of course

the reader's) towards the 'real spheres' of the dialectic, society and more particularly knowledge, human thought. Therein, again, can be seen the organic kinship binding him to Mannheim: there, the 'dialectic', supposed to exist only in its human determination, dialectical materialism, and even Hegel's dialectic give way to speculation. The dialectic, as the general laws of motion of matter and society, and of thought inherent in these, disappears and in its place appear categories. Lukacs arbitrarily chooses them as fruits of knowledge, but goes very carefully in that they are apparently very dialectical 'categories'. With this wretched duplicity, he uses these fixed categories as if they were the dialectic. These categories replace materialist analysis and of course, thus suppress the dialectic in the name of the dialectic. These categories of praxis, the subject-object relationship, totality, etc., give him full rein.

Quite naturally, in this he clashes with Hegel who, in his *Logic* resolutely condemned categories in themselves :

' . . . as pure and simple forms distinct from the content, they (categories) are taken in a determination which stamps them with the seal of finity, and renders us unable to understand the truth which is infinite in itself.'

So one of Lukacs' greatest discoveries is the category of totality (very 'dialectical'!) which he uses as a card-player uses the joker. From this standpoint, he condemns, for example, the sciences which only examine facts instead of looking at 'totality', etc.

### From the Rejection of Materialism to Vulgar Humanism

If, unlike Lukacs, who uses this category without ever defining or, still less, clearly establishing what determines it, we analyse his own attitude towards this totality, we get quite a surprise. In fact, the rejection of the dialectic in nature, by establishing a dualism in the conception of the world, destroys its unity. So the famous totality demanded by Lukacs is destroyed by his own needs. The development of such a conception has its own logic. The more the natural sciences develop, the more this dualism becomes a growing gap between one thought reserved for society and another reserved for nature. In the first conception, there is a division and then opposition introduced into dialectical materialism, which not only prevents dialectical materialism from integrating the results of the sciences into its development, but, moreover, declares its weakness as a global conception. Such a view must inevitably be presented as anthropocentrism.

Lukacs writes,

'Hegel does perceive clearly at times that the dialectics of nature can never become anything more than a dialectics of movement witnessed by the detached observer, as the subject cannot be integrated into the dialectical process, at least not at the stage reached hitherto.'

This anthropocentrism, according to which the 'real' dialectic is that in which the subject is inte-



grated, i.e., the bearer of the dialectic is man, necessarily and ineluctably ends with the category of man in general, and founders in that flat humanism so dear to Lukacs. From here it is but a short step to transform Marx into a vulgar humanist, one which Lukacs easily takes and was to develop later: at the end of his life he busied himself writing a 'Marxist ontology' (?) based on human existence.

But at the very time Lukacs' anthropocentrism appeared and developed, the sciences, particularly astrophysics, biochemistry, and biology, liquidated anthropocentrism with supporting proof. Even if, at the time Lukacs wrote his book, the possibility of life on other stellar systems, i.e. the organic unity of the universe, had still not been demonstrated, the deeply reactionary character of his opinion comes out quite clearly. It throws back the scientific conception of the world to that of the 19th century, and with the help of such a conception, transforms dialectical materialism into anthropocentrism. Lukacs' fractious attitude towards the sciences, arts and modern literature, just as much as his reduction of dialectical materialism to a flat, vulgar humanism, an attitude so well known today, is thus already condensed, and not only in germ, in *History and Class Consciousness*. One can recognize that intimate nostalgia with regard to the bourgeoisie of the 19th century which was so great, so fine, so much less decadent. . . .

But in Lukacs' position expressed above we find yet another thing. We find the theoretical key to this viewpoint in the form of a mechanical separation, and therefore opposition, between man and nature: a man stripped of nature, and a dehumanized nature. It is absolutely wrong to abstract man from nature as Lukacs does throughout his book. It is doubly wrong then to affirm that in the movement of nature, man (the subject, as Lukacs says) is not and was not integrated. The development of the relationship between man and nature is a central problem of dialectical materialism, more particularly of historical materialism. The birth and development of man, emerging from the animal world, passing from a state of identity with nature to a state which is distinct from nature but not breaking the unity with it, has been a long process flowing entirely from the dialectic of nature itself. In the course of this process, in which, contrary to Lukacs' statement, there has been an uninterrupted interaction between man and nature, it is the second which produced the first, but not in an automatic way. And this interaction has not yet ceased.

What changed with the birth and development of man is not this interaction but its content. Marx and Engels demonstrated — and modern palaeontology confirms this analysis in its general line—that the birth of man is based at the point where man intervened in the dialectical movement of nature by his transformation of nature itself. . . .

But the unity of man and nature does not cease to exist by this transformation, i.e. production. In fact a new phase is then opened up in the history of nature in which one of the elements

of nature, man, undertakes a long struggle for the domination of all the other elements, including man himself. This struggle is itself developed in a process of dialectical unity in which nature, changing through the action of man, constantly acts as a source, inspiration and stimulant to new developments by man himself. This dialectical interaction constitutes the whole of the development of, among other things, human knowledge. But this long process knows no 'subject', that 'asexual' (?) jargon of philosophy. Man ('subject') did not emerge from nature as such, but by transforming nature through production. Here we must consider the meaning of Marx's famous preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*:

'In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into social relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production.'  
(1971 edition, p. 20.)

Production, as the transformation of nature in a struggle towards controlling it, is therefore the decisive act by which man is born, and differentiates himself from nature, and certain determined social relations. Man, by his very essence, is social and the forms of society constitute the necessary mediation between him and nature. Inversely, if production is the act by which man distinguishes himself from nature, it is that same production which links him to nature, as its element. This organic unity between man and nature is constantly reproduced, although its content is in perpetual change, in the direction of the domination of nature by man.

The dialectics of nature alone allow us to grasp the organic unity of the universe, the unity—not identity—between man and nature. The point at which this unity is welded is the foundation of historical materialism, conceived not 'simply' as an explanation of history written by man but as the materialist and dialectical conception of the development of that species of nature called man. If Lukacs rejects the dialectic of nature, he does so the better to falsify historical materialism.

## Lukacs Attacks Historical Materialism

Abolishing the scientific foundation of historical materialism, Lukacs undertakes a 'theoretical' explanation in which this materialist conception of history is valid only for capitalist society. In a number of places in his book, he develops an argument according to which, on the one hand, historical materialism will no longer be valid, in a socialist society, and on the other hand, its 'application' is extremely difficult for pre-capitalist societies; although this latter application has been 'not without success (and) at any rate . . . has resulted in some very interesting discoveries'. (Op cit, p. 232). Condescendingly, he gives Engels a cavalier pat on the head: well done, son. You produced some 'interesting results', but all in all, you understood neither Hegel nor Marx, and even then you were misled. As the reader will



note, Lukacs does not attack Engels all the time: he is sometimes indulgent with him.

But why does this great man insist on limiting historical materialism essentially to the epoch of capitalism? Why is this method valid especially to that period? In several studies in the book, Lukacs puts forward and develops his argument.

It is founded on a particular conception of what historical materialism is. To present it in the formulations of Lukacs himself, we have plenty to choose from; we could compose an ample selection with his characterizations. We will begin as follows:

'It is not the primacy of economic motives in historical explanation that constitutes the decisive difference between Marxism and bourgeois thought, but the point of view of totality.' (p. 27.)

We will pass over 'motives' and 'totality', and continue. According to Lukacs, dialectics did not become the algebra of revolution simply by giving '...it a materialist twist... In Marx, the dialectical method aims at understanding society as a whole'. (pp. 27-28.)

Even the materialist polemics were directed against the epigones of Hegel, and less 'than at the master who... stood much closer to Marx than Marx himself may have realised...' (p. 34.)

So it seems that Marx himself was unaware of his intimate links with Hegel. Fortunately Lukacs is here to explain that, contrary to Marx' opinion, the materialist overthrow of dialectics was only a secondary, negligible act. For what is wrong in Hegel 'was criticised by Marx who then extended the system...' (p. 44.)

Here we have an attempt to present Marxism as idealism. It is done by establishing a line of peaceful continuity between Hegel and Marx. From this idyll, every trace of split, every break in continuity has disappeared. More precisely, that wretched materialism is expelled from Marxism to allow for the reign of 'totality'.

For,

'when confronted by the overwhelming resources... which... the bourgeoisie possesses... the only effective superiority of the proletariat, its only decisive weapon, is its ability to see the social totality as a concrete historical totality'. (p. 197.)

Here, in Lukacs' conception, appears historical materialism for, according to him, 'The most important task of historical materialism is to deliver a precise judgement on the capitalist social system, to unmask capitalist society'. (Op cit, p. 224.)

Elsewhere he defines it as the 'self-knowledge of capitalist society'. (p. 224.)

So it gradually appears that, according to Lukacs, historical materialism is not the general revolutionary theory and method for the understanding of the laws of history—past and recent—through its determination of the mode and relations of production (and classes) in which, by its own internal laws, is inscribed the mission of the proletariat to bring down the bourgeois order.

Lukacs launches an attack on the basis of this Marxist concept. He dilutes this scientific determination into a vague concept of 'totality'. Then, when he sets about defining its meaning, this 'totality' is concretised as being made up of 'interhuman relations'. On this basis he criticises (from this aspect wrongly) bourgeois historical sciences for being 'incapable of comprehending that the real nature of socio-historical institutions is that they consist of relations between men... (which is)... the true source of historical understanding'. (p. 48.)

For Lukacs, these 'relations between men' appear as such, in themselves, as though they are not materialised as definite relations of production. Having done this, Lukacs then strives to put an equals sign between Marxism and bourgeois theories by speaking about the relation of historical materialism to comparable trends in bourgeois thought (such as Max Weber's 'ideal types'). (p. 81.)

What is obvious is the intrinsic relationship of Lukacs' 'totality' and his undefined 'relations between men' (undefined, hence arbitrary) and Weber's equally arbitrary typology.

Since knowledge of this 'totality' and its 'relations between men' is particularly difficult within capitalism, the means of such knowledge had to be given by historical materialism.

It emerged 'only... because for the proletariat the total knowledge of its class situation was a vital necessity, a matter of life and death'. (p. 20.)

So it emerged as an attempt at self-perfection by knowledge, for, with the particularly difficult conditions within capitalism, a better method of thought was required. So Lukacs thinks. From this standpoint he gives his explanation of capitalism. It appeared as a social order the essential characteristic of which—the one at the centre of the 'relations between men' which realises 'totality'—is 'reification'.

So there we are, slap in the middle of Lukacs' theory, adopted by all of today's petty-bourgeois 'theoreticians'. For page after page, Lukacs explains that 'reification' finds its basis in the division of labour, but forgets to qualify the definite class nature. He even adds,

'If we do not emphasise the class character of the state in this context, this is because our aim is to understand reification as a general phenomenon constitutive of the whole of bourgeois society.' (p. 210.)

We are entering a particular world where everything, without exception, is 'reified'; whereas for Marx, the propertied class delighted in alienation as 'its own power' (*The Holy Family*) whilst the working class 'feel destroyed' by it, Lukacs devotes an entire book to explaining 'reification' as the essence of the bourgeois order, of which everyone is equally the victim.

In Lukacs' own little world, the following are 'reified' in turn. State officials including of course those in high posts of authority, who suffer terribly: Lukacs the humanist therefore commiserates over the fate of these unfortunate agents



of the bourgeoisie (such as Nixon today). The modern theories of a reified technocracy find their basis here. Then comes science, equally a victim of 'reification' and 'debarred from understanding . . . the social character of its own material base' (p. 105). So Lukacs does not speak of 'educated lackeys' of the bourgeoisie, as though Lenin had never thus characterised those reified wretches. But according to Lukacs, the characteristics of 'reification' are 'most grotesque in journalism', where prostitution and lack of conviction are the 'apogee of capitalist reification'. (p. 100.)

Jacques Fauvet, the poor devil. Let us be humanistic and understanding; he is not conscious, he is 'reified'!

We can now understand that to unravel all of this reified knowledge, to cure human knowledge of this sickness, we need a remedy. For Lukacs this remedy is historical materialism. For this reason, according to him, it is linked to capitalist society. 'Reification' of knowledge as a general sickness, and historical materialism as a general cure go together and properly speaking belong to the bourgeois order. It should be considered.

Even the definition is, 'historical materialism in its classical form . . . means the self-knowledge of capitalist society'. (Op cit, p. 229.)

The game is over. By means of his idealist method, raising the phenomenon of the reification of thought to the level of an abstract generality, identical with itself in all men, and endowing it with autonomy, historical materialism, now distorted, is presented as a theory of knowledge. Mannheim had the same preoccupation and the same aim. If he ended up establishing a 'sociology of knowledge' openly declared as such, Lukacs does exactly the same thing with historical materialism, but as a falsifier and distorter. Eventually, historical materialism as such will disappear from his investigations and its place will be taken by a sort of 'sociology of literature'.

## Consciousness and Knowledge

The content of so anti-Marxist a conception of 'historical materialism' as a special theory of knowledge to unravel 'reified' thought is clearly the dissolution of the class antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat. Lukacs takes the bourgeoisie not as a class with its own interests, but as a group of 'reified' individuals: and, as it is 'reified', 'bourgeois thought observes economic life consistently and necessarily from the standpoint of the individual capitalist'. (p. 63.)

This is particularly untrue for the working class faced with a very precise political economy of the bourgeois state, and a no less precise class position of 'economic thought' in the bourgeoisie's lackey scholars. Finally, with a new trick—I repeat, a characteristic of Lukacs—he mixes up two very different notions: knowledge and consciousness. It is well known, since the days of Marx and Engels, that the bourgeoisie, because of its class interests is incapable of an objective 'knowledge' of society; Lukacs naturally—and completely wrongly—then concludes that there

are limits to its class consciousness, incarnated in its parties, states and all its institutions, which prevent the bourgeoisie from reaching objective knowledge. But according to Lukacs, the whole ideological history of the bourgeoisie is 'a desperate resistance . . . to a real understanding of its class situation'. (p. 66.)

But the opposite is true: that history is precisely one of a struggle to impose its own bourgeois class consciousness on the whole of society, on every class. Lukacs completely overthrows the real facts of the class struggle. So what does he want? Where is he going? We shall see.

Since, according to him, the struggle of the bourgeoisie to reach an understanding (!) is 'desperate', and since historical materialism is very good 'theory and knowledge', the bourgeoisie 'is unable to dispense with the scientific method of the proletariat, admittedly in a distorted form.' (pp. 227-228.)

Admittedly . . .

In this light, revisionists do not appear as 'labour lieutenants of capitalism', but represent the fact of 'the capitulation of the bourgeoisie before historical materialism'. (p. 228.)

He enumerates several signs of this capitulation, such as 'the idea of conscious organisation' of the economy by the trusts (!), 'planned economy (conceived) as a theoretical experiment' (pp. 66-67) etc, and to conclude, ' . . . the capitulation of the class consciousness of the bourgeoisie before that of the proletariat is striking'. (p. 75. I have slightly altered the published English translation to conform to the next paragraph, Trans.)

Now what is striking, is that Lukacs regards as a gain for the proletariat, the presence, in the ranks and around the Labour Movement, of bourgeois scholars who have in no way broken with bourgeois ideology, but only concretise the penetration of the bourgeoisie within the Labour Movement. But *de te fabula narratur* (this story is about you), for here is exposed the intimate meaning of Lukacs' entire thought. He joined the Labour Movement without ever belonging to it; it looks just as if, on the plane of ideas, he could only capitulate before Marxism, which appeared to him to be a form of thought. When he discusses it, he can do so only according to his bourgeois nature. In this false consciousness, reality is overthrown, and bourgeois consciousness appears 'unconsciously'. This is not psychology. Lukacs the idealist identifies consciousness with knowledge: he diagnoses its general sickness, 'reification': and then proposes historical materialism as a universal remedy. So there we have the great class conciliation, and Lukacs' bourgeois nature rests precisely in that organically conciliatory attitude. It determines his views on the proletariat's struggle.

But before examining his reactionary views on the struggles of the working class, we must raise a fundamental problem of historical materialism. This is the confusion Lukacs makes of knowledge and consciousness. He identifies them, for, as a



perfect idealist, he regards them both as fruits of thought alone, as autonomous instances, which have no determination or material form. Now already human knowledge is closely bound to the fundamental struggle between man and nature. It is both the product and the means of that struggle, these two functions being in dialectical relationship throughout the development of humanity. Since this struggle can only take place in the framework of definite social relations, the so-called social or human sciences themselves have the material development of humanity for their base. Marx and Engels explained on several occasions that human knowledge is a long process and that

'mankind . . . inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation'. (Preface, *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, p. 21.)

Class consciousness is something very different from knowledge. As a finished idealist Lukacs understands nothing whatsoever about it: himself a representative of the bourgeoisie in the workers' ranks. He spirits away the essential. For him, class consciousness is also a product of speculative thought. In reality, however, it is by expressing its interests in and through struggle that a definite social group determined by its place in the social relations constitutes itself as a class. In a long historical process, through its struggles, the class becomes conscious of its own interests. But it does not become conscious any old way, at school or through reading. It is only through its successive struggles, necessarily giving them an organizational form more and more adapted to its interests, that a class is formed and thus becomes conscious. Its class consciousness is not some sort of cognisant thought, but the expression of its interests embodied in its independent organization, in its institutions. The class as such is materialized in its organization, and cannot exist if it does not have class consciousness. Thus, class consciousness only exists in its materially incarnate form, and not as thought suspended in the air like Mohammed's coffin. For this reason the highest level of historical materialism, the method and theory of the mission of the proletariat, rests in the problems of organization of that class in which the whole of theory is concentrated. It is not by chance that Lukacs dissolves class consciousness into a self-knowledge of society and spirits away the decisive problem, that of organization.

### **On the Struggle of the Proletariat for its Emancipation**

Bourgeois thought and consciousness are presented by Lukacs as given once and for all. Without the material base of that consciousness, without the development of the class struggle, it thus appears uniform. For Lukacs, imperialism, 'the highest stage of capitalism', does not exist in the evolution of bourgeois class consciousness. Thought, consciousness, are not determined by existence. The very ideas of evolution completely escape him. He then applies this conception of a class consciousness given once and for all, without

development and without history, to that of the proletariat.

He writes,

'The essence of the class struggle of the proletariat can in fact be defined by its unity of theory and practice, so that knowledge leads to action without transition.' (p. 225.)

The necessary mediation of the organization as the embodiment of consciousness and, as such, placed at the centre of the interaction between theory and practice, is swept under the carpet. This is even clearer when he writes, 'The relationship between class consciousness and class situation is really very simple.' (p. 70.)

It can be seen that, in the case of the proletariat, Lukacs commits the same idealist error, but in an inverse form. Whereas for the bourgeoisie class consciousness—if it existed—was self-contained, with the proletariat it flows directly, with no mediation, from its knowledge of its own situation. The common root of these apparently opposed views is idealism. Since the bourgeoisie is incapable of reaching an objective knowledge of reality, it is, according to Lukacs, equally incapable of class consciousness. Since the proletariat alone can have such knowledge, class consciousness comes to it quite naturally. This mechanistic idealism constitutes Lukacs' general position in problems relating to the struggle and organization of the proletariat.

The proletariat constituted itself as a class when, through its struggles, it defined itself in relation to all other classes by forming its independent organization. This was a process of repeated, often blind struggles—going as far, for example as the destruction of machines—in the course of which the workers progressively recognized their real interests and the necessity to unite. Class consciousness thus appeared on the basis of workers' struggles being materialized in organization. Class consciousness is not an autonomous thought, but is acquired in and through struggle. Moreover, it is not disembodied but is summed up in the organization. This is its necessary form of existence. Reality is diametrically opposed to Lukacs' idealist notions. The class consciousness of the proletariat is not a knowledge, it is in no way identified with knowledge conceived as a collection of notions in one's head. From the beginning of its formation and throughout its development, it is materially determined, in the last analysis, by the relations of production, by their degree of development, as much as by the material gains of the proletariat in its struggle. It is not, however, a direct product of these relations but the result of experiences made in the class struggle itself, appearing as the generalization of them. This appearance and development of consciousness, sustained and materialized in the gains of the struggle, in workers' conquests, is itself material and not spiritual: it is founded in organization. The evolution and analysis of proletarian class consciousness do not constitute the object of an abstract investigation of its 'reified' knowledge, as Lukacs pretends, but the concrete historical process of the struggle of that class against the



bourgeoisie, through the material historical stages of its gains and organized embodiment: trade union, party, workers' state.

The working class could only be formed beginning from its immediate interests, against the exploiters, on the basis of its position in production. Its first step towards independence was achieved with the forming of trade unions, which represent the consciousness of the proletariat with regard to its own interests against those of the bourgeoisie in the relations of production. Consequently if Lukacs states that the relation between its class position and its class consciousness with that stage of its development, i.e. with trade union. (It should be noted that the formation of the trade unions itself was a historical process of difficult, material struggles.) He limits it to the level of trade union consciousness, in contradiction to several of his own statements. Lukacs' mechanistic and idealist thinking here falls into its own contradictions. In fact, this trade union level of consciousness, whilst real, is still limited. It only reaches as far as the formulation of the proletariat's interests *within* the bourgeois order. Left at this stage the proletariat is still politically dependent on the bourgeoisie. The relation between its class position and its class consciousness, contrary to what Lukacs says, is so far from 'simple' that a long struggle was necessary, with all its experiences, for the working class to gain its political independence by the forming of a class party, the embodiment of a higher level of consciousness.

To go beyond this stage of the development of consciousness, the proletariat needed something qualitatively superior to the simple direct reflection of its place in the relations of production and its experience of struggles. Class consciousness is not the simple fruit of the material data of the proletariat's position and the experiences it goes through, and the party, embodiment of this consciousness, is not a spontaneous product of the class, beginning with its daily experiences.

Such mechanical determinism does not exist. To liberate itself from the influence of the bourgeoisie, it had to raise itself to the level of its historical mission: to defeat the bourgeois order, and establish its dictatorship in order to build a classless society. This historical mission was and is inscribed in the internal laws of capitalism itself. But by the very fact of their existence, these laws do not produce such a raised level of consciousness. It was still necessary to integrate with the proletariat's class consciousness, in a critical way, the achievements of all human knowledge by going beyond them (Hegel's dialectics and classical political economy for example). Marx and Engels accomplished this work, by fusing the critical elaboration of the achievements of the development of all human knowledge with the experience acquired by the proletariat, thus forging Marxist theory. But on the other hand, they did not do it, and would not have been able to do it, as drawing-room scholars. It was a struggle with an intimate connection with the struggle

and experiences of the proletariat being materialized in organization.

*The German Ideology* can only be understood as the programme of the organization founded by Marx and Engels at the very moment of writing it—the Communist Correspondence Committees.

*The Communist Manifesto* and the Communist League are inseparable from each other, and it is only thus that they were a decisive stage in the development of the proletariat's consciousness. At the same time, they could only be born at that definite stage of the development of the relations of production and of the experiences of the proletariat's struggle: whilst integrating with these the developments of human knowledge. This dialectical relationship of the developments of class consciousness is not given once and for all, at the birth of the party, for the development of theory itself is a function of the class struggle and its experiences. The necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat is formulated in the Manifesto, but Marx could analyse the worker's state, and thus develop theory, only by beginning with the experiences of the Paris Commune. On the other hand, theory and its development are inseparable from organization and only thus do they form class consciousness, do they express the degree of its development. Marx worked out *Capital* whilst forging the First International, which embodied a decisive stage in the development of class consciousness.

Now Lukacs, on the other hand, presents class consciousness as 'self-knowledge', some sort of thought detached from that necessary material form, organization. He also analyses it as a single phenomenon acquired once and for all through that knowledge. This view, at the same time idealist and mechanical, breaks the unity between the development of the class struggle and that of organized consciousness. Theory and practice are dissociated, their fusion in organization has disappeared. Lukacs writes that whether or not the final aim remains hidden depends '*entirely upon the class consciousness of the proletariat and not on victory or defeat in isolated skirmishes*'. p. 173, author's emphasis.)

But it is precisely victories and defeats which influence, in some cases for a long time, the consciousness of the proletariat, and it is impossible to introduce such a split between the class struggle and proletarian class consciousness. Everyone knows that the defeat of the German proletariat, the destruction of its organizations and liquidation of militants by Hitlerism signified the destruction of its class consciousness.

### A Disembodied Class Consciousness

Lukacs spirits away organization, the essential weapon of the proletariat. At the same time he completely covers up the fact that this weapon could and can only be won historically, in the development of the class struggle, through bitter battles. We can well understand why, in speaking of 'determinations of the dialectic', he repeats 'totality', carefully omitting to raise contradic-



tion. In reality there is a continuous struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie; class consciousness, embodied in the party, is the prize. This historical struggle has known its ups and downs, it has gone through a development full of contradictions and reverses with stages of progressive evolution along with jumps and sharp breaks. The relationship between class situation and class consciousness is not 'simple', it is so complicated that after the bourgeoisie had succeeded in corrupting class consciousness, i.e. in the Second International, Lenin devoted the rest of his life to resolving this problem through the difficult building of the Bolshevik Party. But Lukacs sweeps aside 'What Is To Be Done', the Bolshevik Party and the Third International with a stroke of the pen. For him they have nothing to do with class consciousness, which is a knowledge of the class situation, disembodied like the spirit, without history-like God.

Having thus accomplished a complete reversal Lukacs treats class consciousness as an immutable ideology, floating above everything. According to this conception, since under capitalism reification of knowledge is the dominant phenomenon, the class consciousness of the proletariat is necessarily contaminated. Thus, Lukacs manages to discover 'an ideological crisis of the proletariat' of which 'the Menshevik parties are the expression' (p. 314). Thus for Lukacs, the phenomenon of the labour aristocracy is inadequate to explain Menshevism (p. 305). Such a statement, apparently correct, is nevertheless duplicity on Lukacs' part, for its purpose is to cover up the fact that the labour aristocracy is not the explanation of Menshevism but its material basis, the foundation of its explanation as the foundation of its being. One further wonders how to explain the so-called 'ideological capitulation' of the bourgeoisie to a proletariat in 'ideological crisis'.

The circle is completed: according to Lukacs, it is not the bourgeoisie, through the intermediary of its reformist 'lieutenants', which attacks the labour movement. No, reformist parties are not the expression of the bourgeoisie within the proletariat, but of the proletariat and, what is more, of its 'ideological crisis'. Of course, if it is an expression of the proletariat itself, moreover an ideological sickness, the task to be carried out clearly cannot be the construction of the revolutionary party against reformism. Instead, when Lukacs asks the question: what is to be done?, or as he formulates it 'is it possible to make the objective possibility of class consciousness into a reality' (p. 79), he gives the following reply:

'(It is) the question of the inner transformation of the proletariat, of its development to the stage of its own objective historical mission. It is an ideological crisis which must be solved before a practical solution to the world's economic crisis can be found'.

Not a single word about the party.

For someone posing as a leader of a party, it would be a mistake to launch a frontal attack against the party. Lukacs never commits such an

error: always he advances his bourgeois conceptions just up to a certain limit. Thus, in *History and Class Consciousness*, after fundamentally diluting class consciousness into idealism and liquidating the party, he returns to an analysis of party organization which is hesitant, ambiguous, formalist.

The idealist nature of Lukacs' conceptions appears under the form of spontaneity when for the first time (1921) he speaks eulogistically of Rosa Luxemburg.

I quote:

'Rosa Luxemburg grasped the spontaneous nature of revolutionary mass actions earlier and more clearly than many others . . . she was also quicker to grasp the role of the party in the revolution . . . Rosa Luxemburg perceived at a very early stage that the organization is much more likely to be the effect than the cause of the revolutionary process'. (p.41.)

Despite its materialist appearance, this spontaneity-ism is directly linked to an idealist and mechanistic opinion on the supposed coincidence between self-knowledge and proletarian class consciousness. Organization, as the material form of consciousness and therefore a necessary mediation in the revolutionary process, is replaced by a fatalistic spontaneity which, contrary to Rosa Luxemburg's conception, rejects the previously existing organization, namely the historical continuity of proletarian consciousness, present in every 'spontaneous' mass action. It is no accident if Lukacs is fundamentally hostile to the continuity of the organized labour movement. Organization thus conceived is not a weapon of struggle for him but a sort of warehouse of knowledge, storing it up in the measure in which the proletariat deposits it.

So it is not surprising when he writes: 'Class consciousness is the "ethics" of the proletariat . . . the true strength of the party is moral' (p. 42).

Capitalism, with its relations of production, its state, its army and police, this real force, disappears behind 'reification', and the party, the organization of the strength of the proletariat and its struggle, is presented as an ideological institution.

Because, 'the strength of every society is . . . a spiritual strength. And from this we can only be liberated by knowledge' (p. 262, author's emphasis).

Lukacs continues, with regard to the revolution 'Only ideology stands in the way of such opposition'.

This is the voice of the liquidator, the one who in 1919 during the dictatorship of the proletariat, wanted to dissolve the party. The one who, after the defeat of the revolution at the time this book was published, was given the responsibility, with others, of rebuilding the party. In this work he does not 'simply' make a total abstraction of the real problems of the reconstruction of party at that time but develops the opposite point of view: 'theoretically' liquidating the party, under



the form of an attempt to transform it into an ideological circle.

But like every idealist brought face to face with reality Lukacs is contradictory even in his conception of the party, alongside his liquidationist opinions he develops apparently opposed views of an omnipotent party. According to Lukacs, once it is founded, the revolutionary party is complete once and for all. In one place he utters a correct idea: that from day to day experience the worker becomes conscious of his situation and tasks. But in this analysis (ibid. p.317) he speaks of the worker as an individual. Whilst the process of becoming conscious effectively proceeds thus, this analysis covers up the essential point. It covers up the fact that this process applies not only to the individual worker but above all to the class as such: Lukacs' conception is that once the revolutionary party is founded, interaction between the class and its party ceases. This is the natural consequence of his conception of class consciousness which has no history but is reduced to a completed knowledge. Lukacs' party immediately influences the action of each individual, and consciously determines development. Now the central question is precisely how it can and must do so. For Lukacs this question does not exist, whereas only the correct theoretical and practical reply to this question can allow the construction of the party.

In fact the party can consciously determine development only by correctly understanding and expressing what is already given in and through that development. On the one hand it cannot ravish history, on the other it cannot make the revolution in place of the masses. The idea that the finished party is automatically destined to lead the class is typically ultra-left and bureaucratic. On the contrary, it must constantly win and win again the confidence of the majority of the class. This is the whole problem of the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International and the discussion launched by Lenin's and Trotsky's Third International against the ultra-left who, like Lukacs, took the party once founded as sufficient to carry through the revolution. Then again Lukacs develops such a conception at the very time the Hungarian CP is destroyed and disjointed, when its reconstruction is the order of the day, in conditions where social-democracy dominates the great majority of the Hungarian working class, after its great defeat. So it is more than an abstraction. It is an inverse liquidation.

### The Class and Its Party

It takes on a clearer form when Lukacs sets out the problems of revolution and, more precisely, of the transition to socialism after the revolution.

According to him 'It is certainly true that even those groups and masses whose class situation gives them a direct interest, only free themselves inwardly from the old order *during* (and very often only *after*) a revolution' (p. 258).

With a single blow he sweeps aside Marx's prime conclusion that 'the emancipation of the

working class will be the work of the workers themselves'. In fact according to Lukacs, the party accomplishes the revolution not leads it. In this connection we can see not only Lukacs' ultra-leftism of that time, but also the anticipated justification of the bureaucracy, these two elements being twins in a common attitude with regard to the link between party and masses.

Lukacs formulates it very precisely: 'The revolution itself can only be accomplished by people . . . who have become intellectually and emotionally emancipated from the existing system' (p. 257).

There we have ultra-leftism quite ready to pass into the service of the bureaucracy.

But he goes further still, again posing the problem of the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

He dares to say that '*The proletariat is forced to take power at a time and in a state of mind in which it inwardly still acknowledges the bourgeois social order as the only authentic and legal one*' (p. 266, author's emphasis). For 'the proletariat cannot possibly gain a consciousness of its own legality through the fact of a *single victory*, (p. 267).

Everything is contained in these insults to the working class. First, for Lukacs, the workers' state in no way represents a new stage in the development of proletarian class consciousness. Then, this workers' state, in its turn, will not be the revolutionary work of the workers themselves, in the course of their struggles, and therefore of a heightening of their consciousness, and the materialized product of that consciousness. It is a pragmatic projection of the Hungarian Councils Republic of 1919. True, in that case the bourgeoisie handed over power to the proletariat without a struggle. And the majority of the class remained under the influence of social democracy which through the mouth of the trade union bureaucracy effectively declared the dictatorship of the proletariat illegal. But Lukacs, instead of drawing Marxist conclusions, pragmatically raises these facts to the level of a generalised 'theory'. The results are: the identification of the trade union bureaucracy (and with it all of social-democracy) with the proletariat—which 'theoretically' prepares the later association with the Stalinist bureaucracy—and the responsibility for the defeat of its dictatorship is thrown on to the working class.

In a theoretician, this impressionism can only be explained by his relationship to the bourgeoisie. In this relationship, irreconcilable antagonism, and therefore merciless struggle, disappear, giving way to an admittedly ideologically opposed relationship, but which is resolved by the peaceful conquest of power, obtained through the development of knowledge.

Inevitably, Lukacs manages to justify in advance, although implicitly, the bureaucracy and its theory 'Socialism in one country'. For according to him 'Despite the victory gained by the proletariat, its struggle with the bourgeoisie is still unequal and it will remain so until the proletariat



acquires the same naïve confidence in the exclusive legality of its own system of law' (p. 268).

So it is not the world revolution which is necessary for victory, but a feeling of legality which, at the outset, is here denied to the proletariat as if the destruction of the bourgeois state had not been its own work. Lukacs does not deny the proletariat the possibility of gaining this feeling of legality, but—of course—this can be done without the world revolution and consequently in a single country.

To the question: what is required for the proletariat to have that legality? Lukacs replies: 'The recognition of Soviet Russia by the bourgeois powers . . . (is to) recognize the legitimacy of the world revolution' (op. cit. pp. 269-270).

So we have to ask the bourgeoisie! According to Lukacs the proletariat has to have its work sanctioned by the bourgeoisie! So the proletarian revolution becomes legitimate only with that sanction. If the world bourgeoisie was forced by the proletariat to 'recognize' Soviet Russia, it never looked on the proletarian revolution as being 'legitimate'.

Only a bourgeois posing as a communist, such as Lukacs, and the Stalinist bureaucracy could see things in this way. We can easily recognise not only 'socialism in a single country' but also 'peaceful co-existence'.

It is impossible for me critically to sieve through all of Lukacs' statements on the problems of the class struggle and, particularly, on organization and the workers' state. We need only say that in his analyses there is lacking the dictatorship of the proletariat and its functioning, instead we have a vague rambling about violence in general: he never speaks of the world revolution, but presents Soviet Russia as being completed when it comes to an understanding with the bourgeoisie. The basis of this whole book, *History and Class Consciousness*, is an attempt to reconcile materialism and idealism, proletariat and bourgeoisie. Lukacs is a born conciliator who in this book, without even realizing it, is preparing to serve the Stalinist bureaucracy in which all these reconciliations are united. He goes so far as to formulate concretely some important programmatic points for the bureaucracy before it grasps them itself. In his pamphlet written a year later, *Lenin*, he goes even further along this road.

### Some Final Remarks

Without being able to develop a detailed analysis, this critique would, however, be incomplete without a few remarks. The first concerns Lukacs' attempt to give a philosophical basis to his idealism. It is done by an attempt to reconcile materialism and idealism, resorting to Kant. He defends Kant against the criticisms of Engels whom he accuses of misunderstanding him. Putting the subject-object relationship at the centre, and basing himself on the conception that the dialectic is determined by the subject, quite naturally he ends up alongside Kant against Engels.

He takes a stand against 'a rigid opposition between thought and being' (p. 202) not quite as Kant did, finding rather a 'solution' worthy of

Mach: 'It is true that reality is the criterion for the correctness of thought. But reality is not, it becomes—and to become, the participation of thought is needed.'

So he tries to find the same bridge between materialism and idealism—of course to the benefit of the latter—that Lenin criticized in Mach's theory of knowledge.

The second remark concerns Lukacs' indescribable attitude to Rosa Luxemburg. In his first work devoted to her, he puts Rosa Luxemburg above everything else—for example, he puts her *Accumulation of Capital* in first place, not mentioning Lenin's *Imperialism*.

A year later he completely changed his opinion and launched a brutal, disloyal attack against her—just as Stalin did later, to which Trotsky replied that for Stalin, Rosa Luxemburg is:

'An ever new and isolated figure about whom he must in each new situation ask the question: is she a friend or an enemy?' (Trotsky, *Ecrits*, vol. 1, p.330)

This evaluation applies to Lukacs too. First as a spontaneist, Lukacs could use Rosa Luxemburg by distorting her thought. Then Lukacs moved to a position which crystallized in that of the bureaucracy: from a friend, Rosa Luxemburg became an 'enemy'. Lukacs uses Lenin's criticism of the 'Junius Pamphlet'. But if we compare the tone used by Lenin to Lukacs, we are struck by the latter's brutal invective as against Lenin's fraternal attitude. According to Lukacs, Rosa Luxemburg only made propaganda without organizing the party—whereas Lenin's criticism, written before Rosa Luxemburg became founder of the German CP, is circumspect, characterized by this passage:

'On the whole, the Junius pamphlet is a splendid Marxist work, and its defects are, in all probability, to a certain extent accidental.' (*Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 306.)

Lukacs accuses Rosa Luxemburg of being a spontaneist, of underestimating organization, although she had been founder of the German Communist Party. Lukacs continues to pour insults on Luxemburg, for she 'dared' criticize the Russian revolution. But contrast this outraged neophyte to Trotsky's article 'Hands off Rosa Luxemburg' written a long time afterwards.

There Trotsky characterizes Rosa Luxemburg's position very differently: she '... incorrectly criticised very severely and in its entirety Bolshevik policy, whilst she was in prison in 1918. But even in this work, which counts among her worst, we can still see her eagle's wings'.

Attacks against Engels, Rosa Luxemburg, sometimes against Hegel, eulogistic quotations from 'philosophical abortions' like a Simmel, or a Lukacs, 'benevolent' condescension towards Bukharin, and here and there towards Engels, an obsequious attitude towards Lenin and Trotsky—that is the style of *History and Class Consciousness*, written in the jargon of the neo-kantians. It is a milestone in the peaceful and natural passage of Lukacs from the bourgeoisie—after the 'accident' of revolutions—into the camp of the Stalinist bureaucracy.



# FROM THE ARSENAL OF MARXISM

(Reprinted 'Fourth International' October 1941)

These three historical documents date back to the year 1926, a crucial year in the struggle of the Left Opposition against the bureaucratic degeneration of the party. They have not been published before in any language.

The first of these documents comprises extracts from Trotsky's diary, in which, in November 1926, he jotted down for future reference—a in thesis form—a series of basic propositions concerning the development of the USSR. They provide additional irrefutable evidence that Trotsky never cherished any illusions about the meaning and gravity of the struggle against the bureaucratic tendencies which had then gained the ascendancy in the state apparatus, in the party, and in the country. These November 1926 theses were later expanded by Trotsky in a large

number of speeches, articles and books.

Here, in the most generalized form, is Trotsky's analysis of the most complex historical problem, namely, the mechanics of class society as expressed in the oscillations between revolutionary epochs and events and those of reaction and counter-revolution. To young Bolsheviks these theses supply an object lesson in the method of Marxism. Trotsky here applies the dialectic to explain how the struggle for the emancipation of the working class is conditioned and determined by vast social processes, their political ebbs and flows, their effects on the psychology of the masses and other phenomena in the superstructure. From this kind of analysis and synthesis is derived our programme which alone makes possible a conscious interven-

tion in events. Above all, these theses teach the lesson that in our epoch the decisive struggle is the struggle for the correct inter-relationship between the party and the class.

The other two documents which likewise pertain to this same year (1926) cast a graphic light on the conditions under which Trotsky conducted this great struggle. The ideological leader of the rising bureaucracy was none other than Bukharin to whom these two personal letters are addressed.

In a certain sense, they constitute an appeal to Bukharin; at the same time they sound a warning about the disastrous consequences of the course on which Bukharin had embarked, and for which he paid with his own life, 12 years later, in the third of the Moscow frame-up trials.

THE EDITORS



## The Interrelationship Between Revolution and Counter-Revolution

November 26, 1926

1. Revolutions have always been followed by counter-revolutions in history. Counter-revolutions have always thrown society back, but never back as far as the starting point of the revolution. The succession of revolutions and counter-revolutions is the product of certain fundamental features in the mechanics of class society, the only society in which revolutions and counter-revolutions are possible.

2. Revolution is impossible without the participation of the masses. This participation is in its turn possible only in the event that the oppressed masses connect their hopes for a better future with the slogan of revolution. In this sense the hopes engendered by the revolution are always exaggerated. This is due to the mechanics of class society, the terrible plight of the overwhelming majority of the popular masses, the objective need of concentrating the greatest hopes and efforts in order to insure even the most modest progress, and so on.

3. But from these same conditions comes one of the most important—and moreover, one of the most common—elements of the counter-revolution. The conquests gained in the struggle do not correspond with and in the nature of things cannot directly correspond with the expectations of the broad backward masses, who are awakened for the first time in the course of the revolution itself. The disillusionment of these masses, their return to routine and to futility is as much an integral part of the post-revolutionary period as the passage into the camp of 'law and order' of those 'satisfied' classes or layers of classes who had participated in the revolution.

4. Closely bound up with these processes, parallel processes of a different and, to a large measure, of an opposite character take place in the camp of the ruling classes. The awakening of broad backward masses upsets the ruling classes from their accustomed equilibrium, deprives them of direct support as well as confidence, and thus enables the revolu-

tion to seize a great deal more than it is later able to hold.

5. The disillusionment of a considerable section of the oppressed masses in the immediate conquests of the revolution and—directly connected with this—the decline of the political energy and activity of the revolutionary class engender an influx of confidence among counter-revolutionary classes—both among those overthrown by the revolution but not shattered completely, as well as among those which aided the revolution at a certain phase, but were thrown back into the camp of reaction by the further development of the revolution.

## The Conditions of the Rise of Stalinism

20. It would be wrong to ignore the fact that the proletariat today (1926) is considerably less receptive to revolutionary perspectives and to broad generalizations than was the case during the October overturn and in the ensuing few years. The revolutionary party cannot passively align itself in accordance with every shift in the moods of the masses. But it cannot ignore any alteration which is produced by causes of profound historical order.

21. The October revolution, to a greater extent than any other in history, aroused the greatest hopes and passions in the popular masses, first of all, the proletarian masses. After the maximum sufferings of 1917-1921, the proletarian masses improved their status considerably. They cherish this improvement, hopeful of its further development. But at the same time their own experience has shown them the extreme gradualness of this process of improvement which has only today reached the pre-war standard of living. This living experience is of incalculable significance to the masses, especially the older generation. They have grown more cautious, more sceptical, less directly responsive to revolutionary slogans, less receptive to major generalizations. These moods which unfolded after the ordeals of the civil war and after the successes of economic restoration, and which still remain undisturbed by new shifts of class forces—these moods con-

stitute the basic political background of party life. These are the moods which bureaucratism—as an element of 'law and order' and 'tranquility'—banks on. The attempt of the opposition to pose new questions before the party ran up against precisely these moods.

22. The older generation of the working class, who made two revolutions, or the last one, beginning with 1917, is now nervous, exhausted, and, in large measure, fearful of all convulsions bound up with the perspectives of war, havoc, famine, epidemics and so on.

A bogey is being made out of the theory of the permanent revolution precisely for the purpose of exploiting the psychology of a considerable section of the workers, who are not at all careerists, but who have put on weight, acquired families. The theory of the permanent revolution which is being utilized in this sense, is of course in no way related to old disputes, long relegated to the archives, but simply raises the phantom of new convulsions—heroic 'invasions', violations of 'law and order'; a threat to the conquests of the reconstruction period: a new zone of great efforts and sacrifices. Making a bogey out of the permanent revolution is, in essence, speculation upon the moods of that section of the working class, including Party members who have grown smug, fat and semi-conservative.

## The Interrelation Between the Party, the Youth and the Class

24. The young generation, only now growing up, lacks experience of the class struggle and the necessary revolutionary temper. It does not explore for itself, as did the older generation, but falls immediately into an environment of the most powerful party and governmental institutions, party tradition, authority, discipline, etcetera. For the time being this renders an independent role more difficult for the young generation. The question of the correct orientation of the young generation of the party and of the working class acquires a colossal importance.

25. Parallel with the above-indicated processes, there has been an extreme growth in the



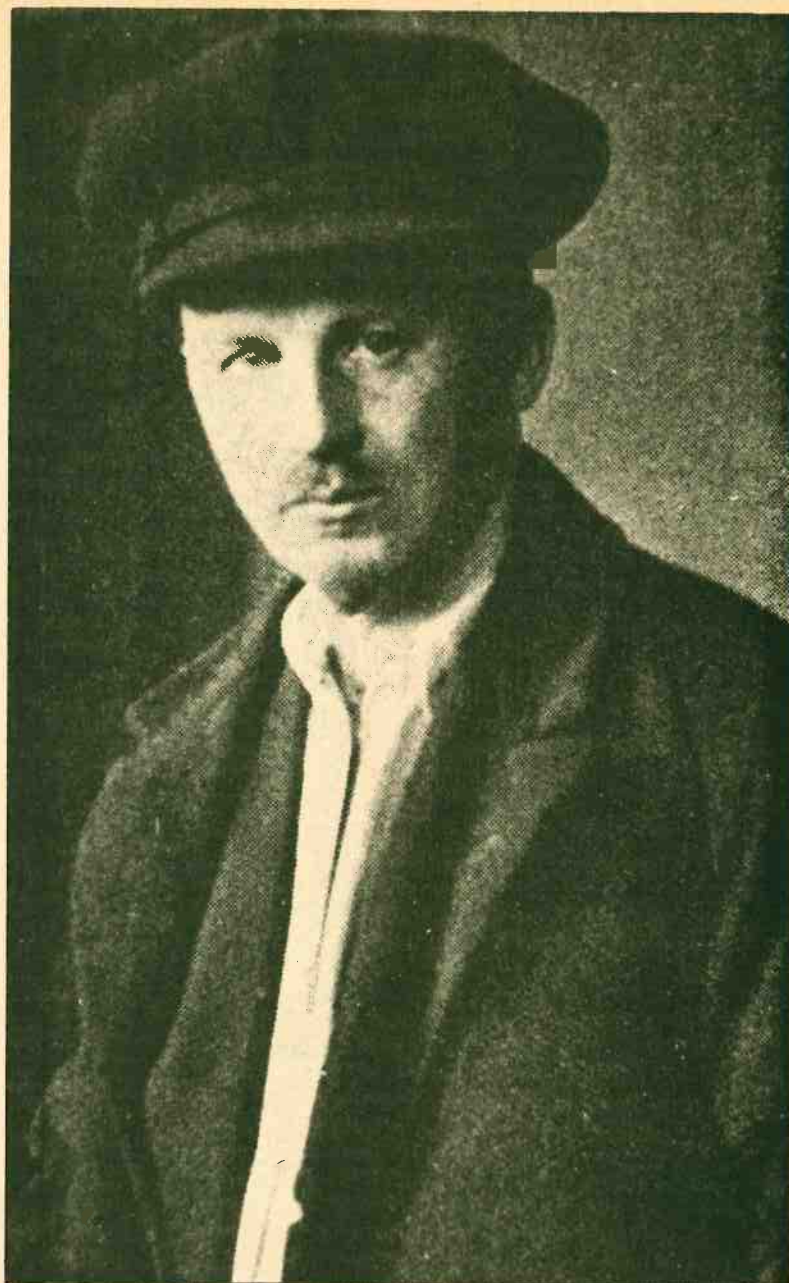
role played in the party and the state apparatus by a special category of old Bolsheviks, who were members or worked actively in the Party during the 1905 period; who then left the Party in the period of reaction, adapted themselves to the bourgeois regime and occupied a more or less prominent position within it; who were defencists together with the entire bourgeois intelligentsia and together with the latter were propelled forward in the February revolution (of which they did not dream at the beginning of the war); who were staunch opponents of the Leninist programme and of the October overturn; but who returned to the Party after victory was secured or after the stabilization of the new regime about the same time that the bourgeois intelligentsia stopped its sabotage. These elements, who more or less accommodated themselves to the June 3 regime, can be, naturally, only elements of the conservative type. They are in general in favour of stabilization, and generally against every opposition. The education of the Party youth is largely in their hands.

Such is the combination of circumstances which in the recent period of Party development has determined the change in the Party leadership and the shift of Party policy to the right.

## The Soviet Thermidor

6. The official adoption of the theory of 'socialism in one country' signifies the theoretical sanction of those shifts which have already taken place; and of the first open break with Marxist tradition.

7. The elements of bourgeois restoration lie in: a) the situation of the peasantry, who do not want the return of the landlords but are still not interested materially in socialism (hence flows the importance of political ties with the peasant poor); b) in the moods of considerable layers of the working class, in the lowering of revolutionary energy, in the fatigue of the older generation, in the increased specific weight of the conservative elements.



Bukharin in 1926 was the ideological leader of the rising bureaucracy.

## Two Letters to Bukharin

January 8, 1926

Nikolai Ivanovich:

You will perhaps recall that two years ago during a session of the Politbureau at my home I said that the mass of the Leningrad party<sup>1</sup> was muzzled more than was the case elsewhere. This expression (I confess, a very strong one) was used by me in an intimate circle, just as you used in your personal note the words: 'unconscionable demagoguery'.

To be sure, this did not prevent my remark concerning the muzzling of the party mass by

the Leningrad party apparatus from being broadcast through meetings and through the press. But this is a special item and—I hope—not a precedent... But doesn't this mean that I did see the actual state of things? However in contrast to certain comrades, I saw it a year and a half, and two and three years ago. At that time, during the same session I remarked that everything in Leningrad goes splendidly (100 per cent) five minutes before things get very bad. This is possible only under a super-apparatus regime. Why then do you say that I did not



see the actual state of things? True, I did not consider that Leningrad was separated from the rest of the country by an impenetrable barrier. The theory of a 'sick Leningrad' and a 'healthy country' which was held in high respect under Kerensky was never my theory. I said and I repeat now that the traits of apparatus bureaucracy, peculiar to the whole party, have been brought to their extreme expression in the regime of the Leningrad party. I must however add that in these two and a half years (i.e. since the autumn of 1923) the apparatus-bureaucratic tendencies have grown in the extreme not only in Leningrad but throughout the entire party.

Consider for a moment this fact: Moscow<sup>2</sup> and Leningrad,<sup>3</sup> two main proletarian centres, adopt **simultaneously** and **furthermore unanimously** (think of it: **unanimously!**) at their district party conferences two resolutions aimed against each other. And consider also this, that our official Party mind, represented by the press, does not even dwell on this truly shocking fact.

What are those special (?) social (?) conditions in Leningrad and Moscow which permit such a drastic and 'unanimous' polar opposition? No one seeks for them, no one asks himself about them. What then is the explanation? Simply this, that everybody silently says to himself: **The 100 per cent opposition of Leningrad to Moscow is the work of the apparatus.** This, N. I., is the gist of the 'genuine state of things'.

But Leningrad does not stand alone as regards 'day-to-day routine'. In the past year we had on the one hand, the Chita business, and on the other, that in Kherson. Naturally you and I understand that the Chita and Kherson abominations<sup>4</sup> are exceptions precisely because of their excesses. But these exceptions are **symptomatic**. Could the things that happened in Chita have occurred had there not been among the Chita summits a special, binding, mutual amnesty, with independence from the rank and file as its basis? Did you read the report of Schlichter's investigating committee on Khersonovism? The document is instructive to the highest degree—not only because it characterizes some of the Khersonovist personnel,

but also because it characterizes certain aspects of the Party regime as a whole. To the question why all the local communists, who had known of the crimes of the responsible workers, kept quiet, apparently for a period of two-three years, Schlichter received the answer: 'Just try to speak up—you will lose your job, you'll get kicked into a village, etc., etc.' I quote, of course, from memory, but this is the gist of it. And Schlichter exclaims apropos of this: 'What! Up to now only oppositionists have told us that for this or that opinion they have been **allegedly** (?) removed from posts, kicked into a village, etc., etc. But now we hear from Party members that they do not protest against **criminal actions** of leading comrades for fear of being removed, thrown into a village, expelled from the party, etc.' I cite again from memory.

I know that certain comrades, possibly you among them, have been carrying out until recent times a plan somewhat as follows: give the workers in the nuclei the possibility of criticizing factory, guild and regional matters, and at the same time, crack down resolutely on every 'opposition' emanating from the upper ranks of the Party. In this way, the apparatus-regime as a whole was to be preserved by providing it with a broader base. But **this experiment was not at all successful.** The methods and habits of the apparatus-regime inevitably seep down from the top. If every criticism of the Central Committee and even criticism inside the Central Committee is equated, under all conditions, to a factional struggle for power, with all the ensuing consequences; then the Leningrad Committee will carry out the self-same policy in relation to those who criticize it in the sphere of its plenipotentiary powers, and under the Leningrad Committee there are districts and sub-districts.

When in 1923 the opposition arose in Moscow (without the aid of the local apparatus, and against its resistance) the central and local apparatus brought the bludgeon down on Moscow's skull under the slogan: 'Shut up! You do not recognize the peasantry.' In the same apparatus-way you are now

bludgeoning the Leningrad organization, and crying, 'Shut up! You don't recognize the middle peasant.' You are thus terrorizing in the two main centres of proletarian dictatorship the best proletarian elements, re-educating them from expressing aloud not only their views, correct or erroneous alike, but also their alarm concerning the general questions of the revolution and socialism. And meanwhile, the democratic rights granted to the rural areas are unquestionably being strengthened and entrenched.

Can't you see all the dangers that flow from this?

March 4, 1926  
Personal

N(ikolai) Ivanovich,

I write this letter in long-hand (although I have grown unaccustomed to it) in as much as it is embarrassing to dictate to a stenographer what I have to say.

You are of course aware that in accordance with the Uglanov<sup>5</sup> line there is being conducted against me in Moscow a half-concealed struggle with all sorts of sallies and insinuations which I refrain from characterizing here as they deserve.

By all sorts of machinations—in part and wholly unworthy of and degrading to our organization—I am not permitted to speak at workers' meetings. At the same time rumours are being spread systematically through the workers' nuclei that I give lectures 'for the bourgeoisie' and refuse to speak to workers. Now just listen to what luxuriates on this soil, and this, once again, not at all accidentally. I cite verbatim from a letter of a worker party member.

'In our nucleus the question has been posed why you arrange to give paid reports. The prices of admission to these reports are very high and the workers cannot afford them. Consequently only the bourgeoisie attends. The secretary of our nucleus explains to us in his talks that for these reports you charge fees, percentages for your own benefit. He tells us that for every one of your articles and for your by-line you also take a fee, that you have a big family and, says he, you run shy of funds. Does a member of the Politbureau really have to sell his by-line?



etc., etc. You will ask: isn't this silly nonsense? No, to our sorrow, it is not nonsense. I have verified it. At first it was decided to write a letter to the Central Control Commission (or Central Committee), signed by several members of the nucleus, but then they decided not to, saying: "They will drive us out of the factory, and we have families." . . .

In this way a fear has seized the worker-Party member that if he tries to verify the most infamous slander against a member of the Politbureau, he, a Party member, can be driven from the factory, for following Party procedure. And you know, were he to ask me, I could not in all sincerity say that this would not happen. The same secretary of the same nucleus says—and again not at all accidentally: 'In the Politbureau the sheenies are running wild.' And again no one dared to say anything about it to anyone—for the self-same openly formulated reason: they will drive us out of the factory.

Another item. The author of the letter which I cited above, is a Jewish worker. He, too, did not dare to write about the 'sheenies who agitate against Leninism'. The motive is as follows: 'If the others, the non-Jews, keep quiet, it would be awkward for me . . .' And this worker—who wrote me to ask whether it is true that I sell

my speeches and my by-line to the bourgeoisie—is now also expecting that he will be driven any hour from the factory. This is a fact. Another fact is that I am not at all sure that this won't happen—if not immediately, then a month from now; there are plenty of pretexts. And everybody in the nucleus knows 'that's how it was, that's how it will be'—and they hang their heads.

In other words: members of the Communist Party are afraid to report to the Party organs about Black-Hundred agitation, thinking that it is they who will be driven out and not the Black-Hundred gangster.

You will say: Exaggeration! I, too, would like to think so. Therefore I have a proposal to make: Let us both take a trip to the nucleus and check up on it. I think that you and I—two members of the Politbureau—have after all a few things in common, enough to calmly and conscientiously verify: whether it is true, whether it is possible that in our party, in Moscow, in a workers' nucleus, propaganda is being conducted with impunity which is vile and slanderous, on the one hand, and anti-Semitic, on the other; and that honest workers are afraid to question or to verify or try to refute any stupidity, lest they be driven into the

street with their families. Of course you can refer me to the 'proper bodies'. But this would signify only closing the vicious circle.

I want to hope that you will not do this; and it is precisely this hope which prompts this letter.

Yours,  
L. TROTSKY.

<sup>1</sup> Controlled by Zinoviev-Kamenev allied in 1924 with Stalin.

<sup>2</sup> Controlled at the time (1926) by the right wing of Bukharin-Rykov-Uglanov in a bloc with Stalin.

<sup>3</sup> Controlled at the time (1926) by Zinoviev and Kamenev who had broken with Stalin and entered into a bloc with the Left Opposition.

<sup>4</sup> In 1925-1926 numerous cases were laid bare of criminal abuse of power by ranking provincial bureaucrats. The Chita and Kherson affairs were the most notorious instances at the time of corruption, grafting, terrorization of the Party membership and of the populace, and other crimes.

<sup>5</sup> Uglanov was one of the right-wing leaders of the inquisitions and purges against the Left Opposition during the period of the Right-Centre Bloc (1925-1929).

# ON THE HISTORY OF THE LEFT OPPOSITION

**Editorial Note:** This discussion on the history of the Left Opposition was held in Coyocan in April 1939. The summary (it is not a detailed stenogram) was made by Comrade Johnson; it was not checked by Comrade Trotsky.

Trotsky: Comrade Johnson has studied this subject with the greatest attention and the numerous annotations I have made are evidence of the care with which I have read his memorandum. It is important for all our comrades to see our past with insistence on revolutionary clarity. In parts the manuscript is very perspic-

cious, but I have noticed here the same fault that I have noticed in 'World Revolution'—very good book—and that is a lack of dialectical approach. Anglo-Saxon empiricism and formalism which is only the reverse of empiricism.

C. L. R. James makes his whole approach to the subject dependent on one date—the appearance of Stalin's theory of 'socialism in a single country', April 1924. But the theory appeared in October 1924. This makes the whole structure false.

In April 1924 it was not clear whether the German revolution was going forward

or back. In November 1923 I asked that all the Russian comrades in Germany should be recalled. New strata might lift the revolution to a higher stage. On the other, the revolution might decline. If it declined, the first step of the reaction would be to arrest the Russians as foreign agents of disorder.

Stalin opposed me: 'You are always too hasty. In August you said the revolution was near; now you say that it is over already.'

I didn't say that it was over, but suggested that this precautionary step should be taken. By the summer of 1924





Above: the German revolution. 'What was wanted in Germany in 1923 was a revolutionary party . . .'

Stalin had convinced himself that the German revolution was defeated. He then asked the red professors to find him something from Lenin to tell the people. They searched and found two or three quotations and Stalin changed the passage in his book.

The German revolution had more influence on Stalin than Stalin on the German revolution. In 1923 the whole party was in a fever over the coming revolution. Stalin would not have dared to oppose me on this question at the Central Committee. The Left Opposition was very much to the fore on this question.

Johnson: Brandler went to Moscow convinced of the success of the revolution. What changed him?

Trotsky: I had many interviews with Brandler. He told me that what was troubling him was not the seizure of power, but what to do after. I told him 'Look here, Brandler, you say the prospects are good, but the bourgeoisie are in power, in control of the state, the army, police, etc. The question is to break that power . . .'

Brandler took many notes during many discussions with me. But this very boldness of his was only a cover for his secret fears. It is not easy to lead a struggle against bourgeois society. He went to Chemnitz and there met the leaders of the social democracy, a collection of little

Brandlers. He communicated to them in his speech his secret fears by the very way he spoke to them. Naturally they drew back and this mood of defeatism permeated to the workers.

In the 1905 Russian revolution there was a dispute in the Soviet as to whether we should challenge the Tsarist power with a demonstration on the anniversary of Bloody Sunday. To this day I do not know for certain whether it was the correct thing to do at that time or not. The committee could not decide, so we consulted the Soviet. I made the speech, putting the two alternatives in an objective manner, and the Soviet decided by an overwhelming majority not to demonstrate. But I am certain that if I had said it was necessary to demonstrate and spoken accordingly we would have had a great majority in favour. It was the same with Brandler. What was wanted in Germany in 1923 was a revolutionary party . . .

You accuse me also of degeneration when you quote Fischer. But why did I give that interview? In revolution it is always wise to throw on the enemy the responsibility.

Thus in 1917 they asked me at the Soviet: 'Are the Bolsheviks preparing an insurrection?' What could I say? I said, 'No, we are defending the revolution, but if you provoke us . . .!'

It was the same thing here. Poland and France were using

the Russian Bolsheviks as a pretext for preparing intervention and reactionary moves. With the full consent of the German comrades I gave this interview, while the German comrades explained the situation to the German workers.

Meanwhile I had a cavalry detachment under Dybenko ready on the Polish border.

Johnson: You would not agree with Victor Serge that the bureaucracy sabotaged the Chinese Revolution, in other words, that its attitude to the Chinese Revolution was the same as its attitude toward the Spanish?

Trotsky: Not at all. Why should they sabotage it? I was on a committee (with Chicherin, Voroshilov, and some others) on the Chinese Revolution. They were even opposed to my attitude, which was considered pessimistic. They were anxious for its success.

Johnson: For the success of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Wasn't their opposition to the proletarian revolution, the opposition of a bureaucracy which was quite prepared to support a bourgeois-democratic revolution, but from the fact of its being a bureaucracy could not support a proletarian revolution?

Trotsky: Formalism. We had the greatest revolutionary party in the world in 1917. In 1936 it strangles the revolution in Spain. How did it develop from 1917 to 1936?

That is the question?

According to your argument, the degeneration would have started in October 1917. In my view it started in the first years of the New Economic Policy. But even in 1927 the whole party was eagerly awaiting the issue of the Chinese revolution.

What happened was that the bureaucracy acquired certain bureaucratic habits of thinking. It proposed to restrain the peasants today so as not to frighten the generals. It thought it would push the bourgeoisie to the left. It saw the Kuomintang as a body of office-holders and thought it could put communists into the offices and so change the direction of events . . . And how would you account for the change which demanded a Canton Commune?

Johnson: Victor Serge says that it was only for the sake



of the Sixth World Congress that they wanted the Commune 'if only for a quarter of an hour'.

**Trotsky:** It was more for the Party internally than for the International. The Party was excited over the Chinese Revolution. Only during 1923 had it reached a higher pitch of intensity.

No, you want to begin with the degeneration complete. Stalin and company genuinely believed that the Chinese Revolution was a bourgeois-democratic revolution and sought to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.

**Johnson:** You mean that Stalin, Bukharin, Tomsky, Rykov, and the rest did not understand the course of the Russian Revolution?

**Trotsky:** They did not. They took part and events overwhelmed them. Their position on China was the same they had in March 1917 until Lenin came. In different writings of theirs you will see passages which show that they never understood. A different form of existence, their bureaucratic habits affected their thinking and they reverted to their previous position. They even enshrined it in the programme of the Comintern, Proletarian Revolution for Germany, dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry for semi-colonial countries, etc.

Comrade Trotsky here asks V. to get a copy of the Draft Programme and the extract is read. I condemned it in my 'Critique of the Draft Programme' . . .

**Johnson:** What about Bukharin's statement in 1925 that if war came revolutionists should support the bourgeois-soviet bloc?

**Trotsky:** After Lenin's Testament Bukharin wanted to show that he was a real dialectician. He studied Hegel and on every occasion tried to show that he was a realist. Hence, 'Enrich yourselves', 'Socialism at a snail's pace,' etc. And not only Bukharin, but I and all of us at various times wrote absurd things. I will grant you that.

**Johnson:** And Germany 1930-1933?

**Trotsky:** I cannot agree that the policy of the International was only a materialization of the commands of Moscow. It is necessary to see the policy



**Above: Chinese Nationalist troops: 'Stalin and company genuinely believed the Chinese Revolution was a bourgeois-democratic revolution'**

as a whole, from the internal and the international points of view, from all sides.

The foreign policy of Moscow, and the orientation of the social-democracy to Geneva could play a role. But there was also the necessity of a turn owing to the disastrous effect of the previous policy on the Party inside Russia. After all the bureaucracy is dealing with 160 million people who have been through three revolutions. What they are saying and thinking is collected and classified. Stalin wanted to show that he was no Menshevik. Hence this violent turn to the left. We must see it as a whole, in all its aspects.

**Johnson:** But the British Stalinist, Campbell, writes that when the British delegation in 1928 was presented with the theory of social-fascism it

opposed the idea, but soon was convinced that it was correct . . .

(It was agreed to continue the discussion. During the interval Comrade Johnson submitted a document. Discussion continues:)

**Trotsky:** I have read your document claiming to clarify the position, but it does not clarify it. You state that you accept my view of 1933, but later in the document I see that you do not really accept it . . .

I find it strange that on the Negro question you should be so realistic and on this be so undialectical. (I suspect that you are just a little opportunistic on the Negro question, but I am not quite sure.)

In 1924, Stalin's slogan ('socialism in a single country') corresponded to the mood of the young intellectuals, with-



out training, without tradition . . .

But despite that, when Stalin wanted to strangle the Spanish revolution openly, he had to wipe out thousands of old Bolsheviks. The first struggle started on the Permanent Revolution, the bureaucracy seeking peace and quiet. Then into this came the German revolution of 1923. Stalin dared not even oppose me openly then. We never knew until afterwards that he had secretly written the letter to Bukharin saying that the revolution should be held back.

Then, after the German defeat, came the struggle over equality. It was in defence of the privileges of the bureaucracy that Stalin became its undisputed leader . . .

Russia was a backward country. These leaders had Marxist conceptions, but after October they soon returned to their old ideas. Voroshilov and others used to ask me. 'But how do you think it possible that the Chinese masses, so backward, could establish the dictatorship of the proletariat?'

In Germany they hoped now for a miracle to break the backbone of the social democracy; their politics had failed utterly to detach the masses from it. Hence this new attempt to get rid of it . . .

Stalin hoped that the German Communist Party would win a victory and to think that he had a 'plan' to allow fascism to come into power is absurd. It is a deification of Stalin.

Johnson: He made them cease their opposition to the Red Referendum, he made Remmele say, 'After Hitler our turn,' he made them stop fighting the fascists in the streets.

Trotsky: 'After Hitler our turn,' was a boast, a confession of bankruptcy. You pay too much attention to it.

F.: They stopped fighting in the streets because their detachments were small CP detachments. Good comrades were constantly being shot, and in as much as workers as a whole were not taking part, they called it off. It was a part of their zigzags.

Trotsky: There you are! They did all sorts of things. They even offered the united front sometimes.

Johnson: Duranty said in 1931 that they did not want the revolution in Spain.

Trotsky: Do not take what Duranty says at face value. Litvinov wanted to say that they were not responsible for what was happening in Spain. He could not say that himself so he said it through Duranty. Perhaps even they did not want to be bothered about Spain, being in difficulties at home . . . But I would say that Stalin sincerely wished the triumph of the German Communist Party in Germany 1930-1933 . . .

Also you cannot think of the Comintern as being merely an instrument of Stalin's foreign policy.

In France in 1934 the Communist Party had declined from 80,000 to 30,000. It was necessary to have a new policy. We do not know the archives of the Comintern, what correspondence passed, etc. At the same time Stalin was seeking a new foreign policy. From one side and the other we have these tendencies which go to make the new turn. They are different sides of the same process . . . The French Communist Party is not only an

agency of Moscow, but a national organization with members of parliament, etc.

All that, however, is not very dangerous, although it shows a great lack of proportion to say that our whole propaganda has been meaningless. What is much more dangerous is the sectarian approach to the Labour Party.

You say that I put forward the slogan of Blum-Cachin without reservations. Then you remember, 'All power to the Soviet!' and you say that the united front was no Soviet. It is the same sectarian approach.

Johnson: There has been difficulty in England with advocating a Labour government with the necessary reservations.

Trotsky: In France in all our press, in our archives and propaganda, we regularly made all the necessary reservations. Your failure in England is due to lack of ability; also lack of flexibility, due to the long domination of bourgeois thought in England. I would say to the English workers, 'You refuse to accept my point of view. Well, perhaps I did not explain well enough. Perhaps you are stupid. Anyway I have failed. But now, you believe in your party. Why allow Chamberlain to hold the power? Put your party in power. I will help you to put them in . . .'

But it is very important to bring up these questions periodically. I would suggest that you write an article discussing these points and publish it in our press.

COMRADE Johnson agreed that he would.



# AGAINST THE TIDE

*NOTE: The following is a rough uncorrected transcript of a discussion held in April 1939, between Trotsky and an English Fourth Internationalist, who had raised a number of questions concerning the development of the Fourth International in France, Spain, Great Britain and the United States. In his reply, Trotsky sketched the main reasons for the isolation and slow progress of the Fourth International in the first stages of its development and pointed out how a new turn in the world situation, like the present war, would inevitably lead to a radical change in the tempo of development, social composition and mass connections of the Fourth International.*

Trotsky: Yes, the question is why we are not progressing in correspondence with the value of our conceptions which are not so meaningless as some friends believe. We are not progressing politically. Yes, it is a fact which is an expression of a general decay of the workers' movements in the last 15 years. It is the more general cause. When the revolutionary movement in general is declining, when one defeat follows another, when fascism is spreading over the world, when the official 'Marxism' is the most powerful organization of deception of the workers, and so on, it is an inevitable situation that the revolutionary elements must work against the general historic current, even if our ideas, our explanations, are as exact and wise as one can demand.

But the masses are not

educated by prognostic theoretical conception, but by the general experiences of their lives. It is the most general explanation—the whole situation is against us. There must be a turn in the class realization, in the sentiments, in the feelings of the masses; a turn which will give us the possibility of a large political success.

I remember some discussions in 1927 in Moscow after Chiang Kai-shek stilled the Chinese workers. We predicted this ten days before and Stalin opposed us with the argument that Borodin was vigilant, that Chiang Kai-shek would not have the possibility to betray us, etc.

I believe that it was eight or ten days later that the tragedy occurred and our comrades expressed optimism because our analysis was so clear that everyone would see it and we would be sure to win the party. I answered that the strangulation of the Chinese revolution is a thousand times more important for the masses than our predictions. Our predictions can win some few intellectuals who take an interest in such things, but not the masses. The military victory of Chiang Kai-shek will inevitably provoke a depression and this is not conducive to the growth of a revolutionary fraction.

Since 1927 we have had a long series of defeats. We are similar to a group who attempt to climb a mountain and who must suffer again and again a downfall of stone, snow, etc.

In Asia and Europe is created a new desperate mood

of the masses. They heard something analogous to what we say ten or 15 years ago from the Communist Party and they are pessimistic. That is the general mood of the workers. It is the most general reason. We cannot withdraw from the general historic current—from the general constellation of the forces. The current is against us, that is clear. I remember the period between 1908 and 1913 in Russia. There was also a reaction. In 1905 we had the workers with us—in 1908 and even in 1907 began the great reaction.

Everybody invented slogans and methods to win the masses and nobody won them—they were desperate. In this time the only thing we could do was to educate the cadres and they were melting away. There was a series of splits to the right or to the left or to syndicalism and so on. Lenin remained with a small group, a sect, in Paris, but with confidence that there would be new possibilities of arising. It came in 1913.

We had a new tide, but then came the war to interrupt this development. During the war there was a silence as of death among the workers. The Zimmerwald conference was a conference of very confused elements in its majority. In the deep recesses of the masses, in the trenches and so on there was a new mood, but it was so deep and terrorized that we could not reach it and give it an expression. That is why the movement seemed to itself to be very poor and even this element that met in Zimmer-



wald, in its majority, moved to the right in the next year, in the next month. I will not liberate them from their personal responsibility, but still the general explanation is that the movement had to swim against the current.

Our situation now is incomparably more difficult than that of any other organization in any other time, because we have the terrible betrayal of the Communist International which arose from the betrayal of the Second International. The degeneration of the Third International developed so quickly and so unexpectedly that the same generation which heard its formation now hears us, and they say: 'But we have already heard this once!'

Then there is the defeat of the Left Opposition in Russia. The Fourth International is connected genetically to the Left Opposition; the masses call us Trotskyists. 'Trotsky wishes to conquer the power, but why did he lose power?' It is an elementary question. We must begin to explain this by the dialectic of history, by the conflict of classes, that even a revolutionary produces a reaction.

Max Eastman wrote that Trotsky places too much value on doctrine and if he had more common sense he would not have lost power. Nothing in the world is so convincing as success and nothing so repelling as defeat for the large masses.

You have also the degeneration of the Third International on the one side and the terrible defeat of the Left Opposition with the extermination of the whole group. These facts are a thousand times more convincing for the working class than our poor paper with even the tremendous circulation of 5,000 like the 'Socialist Appeal'.

### Against the stream

We are in a small boat in a tremendous current. There are five or ten boats and one goes down and we say it was due to bad helmsmanship. But that was not the reason—it was because the current was too strong. It is the most general explanation and we should never forget this explanation in order not to become pessi-



Above : Trotsky.

mistic—we, the vanguard of the vanguard.

There are courageous elements who do not like to swim with the current—it is their character. Then there are intelligent elements of bad character who were never disciplined, who always looked for a more radical or more independent tendency and found our tendency, but all of them are more or less outsiders from the general current of the workers' movement. Their value inevitably has its negative side. He who swims against the current is not connected with the masses. Also, the social composition of every revolutionary movement in the beginning is not of workers. It is the intellectuals, semi-intellectuals or workers connected with the intellectuals who are dissatisfied with the existing organizations.

You find in every country a lot of foreigners who are not so easily involved in the labour

movement of the country. A Czech in America or in Mexico would more easily become a member of the Fourth International than in Czechoslovakia. The same for a Frenchman in the US. The national atmosphere has a tremendous power over individuals.

The Jews in many countries represent the semi-foreigners, not totally assimilated, and they adhere to any new critical, revolutionary or semi-revolutionary tendency in politics, in art, literature and so on. A new radical tendency directed against the general current of history in this period crystallizes around the elements more or less separated from the national life of any country and for them it is more difficult to penetrate into the masses. We are all very critical toward the social composition of our organization and we must change, but we must understand that this



social composition did not fall from heaven, but was determined by the objective situation and by our historic mission in this period.

It does not signify that we must be satisfied with the situation. Insofar as it concerns France it is a long tradition of the French movement connected with the social composition of the country. Especially in the past the petty-bourgeois mentality—individualism on the one side, and on the other an *elan*, a tremendous capacity for improvising.

If you compare in the classic time of the Second International you will find that the French Socialist Party and the German Social Democratic Party had the same number of representatives in parliament. But if you compare the organizations, you will find they are incomparable. The French could only collect 25,000 francs with the greatest difficulty but in Germany to send half a million was nothing. The Germans had in the trade unions some millions of workers and the French had some millions who did not pay their dues. Engels once wrote a letter in which he characterized the French organization and finished with 'And as always, the dues do not arrive'.

Our organization suffers from the same illness, the traditional French sickness. This incapacity to organization and at the same time lack of conditions for improvisation. Even so far as we now had a tide in France, it was connected with the Popular Front. In this situation the defeat of the People's Front was the proof of the correctness of our conceptions just as was the extermination of the Chinese workers. But the defeat was a defeat and it is directed against revolutionary tendencies until a new tide on a higher level will appear in the new time. We must wait and prepare—a new element, a new factor, in this constellation.

We have comrades who came to us, as Naville and others, 15 or 16 or more years ago when they were young boys. Now they are mature people and their whole conscious life they have had only blows, defeats and terrible defeats on an international scale and they are more or less acquainted with this situation. They

appreciate very highly the correctness of their conceptions and they can analyse, but they never had the capacity to penetrate, to work with the masses and they have not acquired it. There is a tremendous necessity to look at what the masses are doing. We have such people in France. I know much less about the British situation, but I believe that we have such people there also.

Why have we lost people? After terrible international defeats we had in France a tide on a very primitive and a very low political level under the leadership of the People's Front. The People's Front—I think this whole period—is a kind of caricature of our February Revolution. It is shameful that in a country like France, which 150 years ago passed through the greatest bourgeois revolution in the world, that the workers' movement should pass through a caricature of the Russian Revolution.

Johnson: You would not throw the whole responsibility on the Communist Party?

Trotsky: It is a tremendous factor in producing the mentality of the masses.

The active factor was the degeneration of the Communist Party.

### From Isolation to reintegration with the masses

In 1914 the Bolsheviks were absolutely dominating the workers' movement. It was on the threshold of the war. The most exact statistics show that the Bolsheviks represented not less than three-fourths of the proletarian vanguard. But beginning with the February Revolution, the most backward people, peasants, soldiers, even the former Bolshevik workers, were attracted toward this Popular Front current and the Bolshevik Party became isolated and very weak. The general current was on a very low level, but powerful, and moved toward the October Revolution. It is a question of tempo.

In France, after all the defeats, the People's Front attracted elements that sympathized with us theoretically, but were involved with the movement of the masses and we became for some time more isolated than before. You can



Chiang Kai-shek who turned on the Communist Party and murdered its members in 1927.

combine all these elements. I can even affirm that many (but not all) of our leading comrades, especially in old sections, by a new turn of situation would be rejected by the revolutionary mass movement and new leaders, fresh leadership will arise in the revolutionary current.

In France the regeneration began with the entry into the Socialist Party. The policy of the Socialist Party was not clear, but it won many new members. These new members were accustomed to a large milieu. After the split they became a little discouraged. They were not so steeled. Then they lost their not-so-stealed interest and were regained by the current of the People's Front. It is regrettable, but it is explainable.

In Spain the same reasons played the same role with the supplementary factory of the deplorable conduct of the Nin group. He was in Spain as representative of the Russian Left Opposition and during the first year we did not try to mobilize, to organize our independent elements. We hoped that we would win Nin for the correct conception and so on.

Publicly the Left Opposition gave him its support. In private correspondence we tried to win him and push him forward, but without success. We lost time. Was it correct? It is difficult to say. If in Spain we had an experienced comrade our situation would be incomparably more favourable, but we did not have one. We put all our hopes on Nin and his



policy consisted of personal manoeuvres in order to avoid responsibility. He played with the revolution. He was sincere, but his whole mentality was that of a Menshevik. It was a tremendous handicap, and to fight against this handicap only with correct formulas falsified by our own representatives in the first period, the Nins, made it very difficult.

Do not forget that we lost the first revolution in 1905. Before our first revolution we had the tradition of high courage, self-sacrifice, etc. Then we were pushed back to a position of a miserable minority of 30 to 40 men. Then came the war.

Johnson: How many were there in the Bolshevik Party?

Trotsky: In 1910 in the whole country there were a few dozen people. Some were in Siberia. But they were not organized. The people whom Lenin could reach by correspondence or by an agent numbered about 30 or 40 at most. However, the tradition and the ideas among the more advanced workers was a tremendous capital which was used later during the revolution, but practically, at this time we were absolutely isolated.

Yes, history has its own laws which are very powerful—more powerful than our theoretical conceptions of history. Now you have in Europe a catastrophe—the decline of Europe, the extermination of countries. It has a tremendous influence on the workers when they observe these movements of the diplomacy, of the armies and so on, and on the other side a small group with

a small paper which makes explanations. But it is a question of his being mobilized tomorrow and of his children being killed. There is a terrible disproportion between the task and the means.

If the war begins now, and it seems that it will begin, then in the first month we will lose two-thirds of what we now have in France. They will be dispersed. They are young and will be mobilized. Subjectively many will remain true to our movement. Those who will not be arrested and who will remain—there may be three or five—I do not know how many, but they will be absolutely isolated.

Only after some months will the criticism and the disgust begin to show on a large scale and everywhere our isolated comrades, in a hospital, in a trench, a woman in a village, will find a changed atmosphere and will say a courageous word. And the same comrade who was unknown in some section of Paris will become a leader of a regiment, of a division, and will feel himself to be a powerful revolutionary leader. This change is in the character of our period.

I do not wish to say that we must reconcile ourselves with the impotence of our French organization. I believe that with the help of the American comrades we can win the PSOP and make a great leap forward. The situation is ripening and it says to us, 'You must utilize this opportunity.' And if our comrades turn their backs the situation will change. It is absolutely necessary that your American comrades go to Europe again and that they do

not simply give advice, but together with the International Secretariat decide that our section should enter the PSOP. It has some thousands. From the point of view of a revolution it is not a big difference, but from the point of view of working it is a tremendous difference. With fresh elements we can make a tremendous leap forward.

Now in the United States we have a new character of work and I believe we can be very optimistic without illusions and exaggerations. In the United States we have a larger credit of time. The situation is not so immediate, so acute. That is important.

Then I agree with Comrade Stanley who writes that we can now have very important successes in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. We have a very important movement in Indo-China. I agree absolutely with Comrade Johnson that we can have a very important Negro movement, because these people have not passed through the history of the last two decades so intimately. As a mass they did not know about the Russian Revolution and the Third International. They can begin the history as from the beginning. It is absolutely necessary for us to have fresh blood. That is why we have more success among the youth in so far as we are capable of approaching them. In so far as we have been capable of approaching them, we have had good results. They are very attentive to a clear and honest revolutionary programme.

April 1939



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