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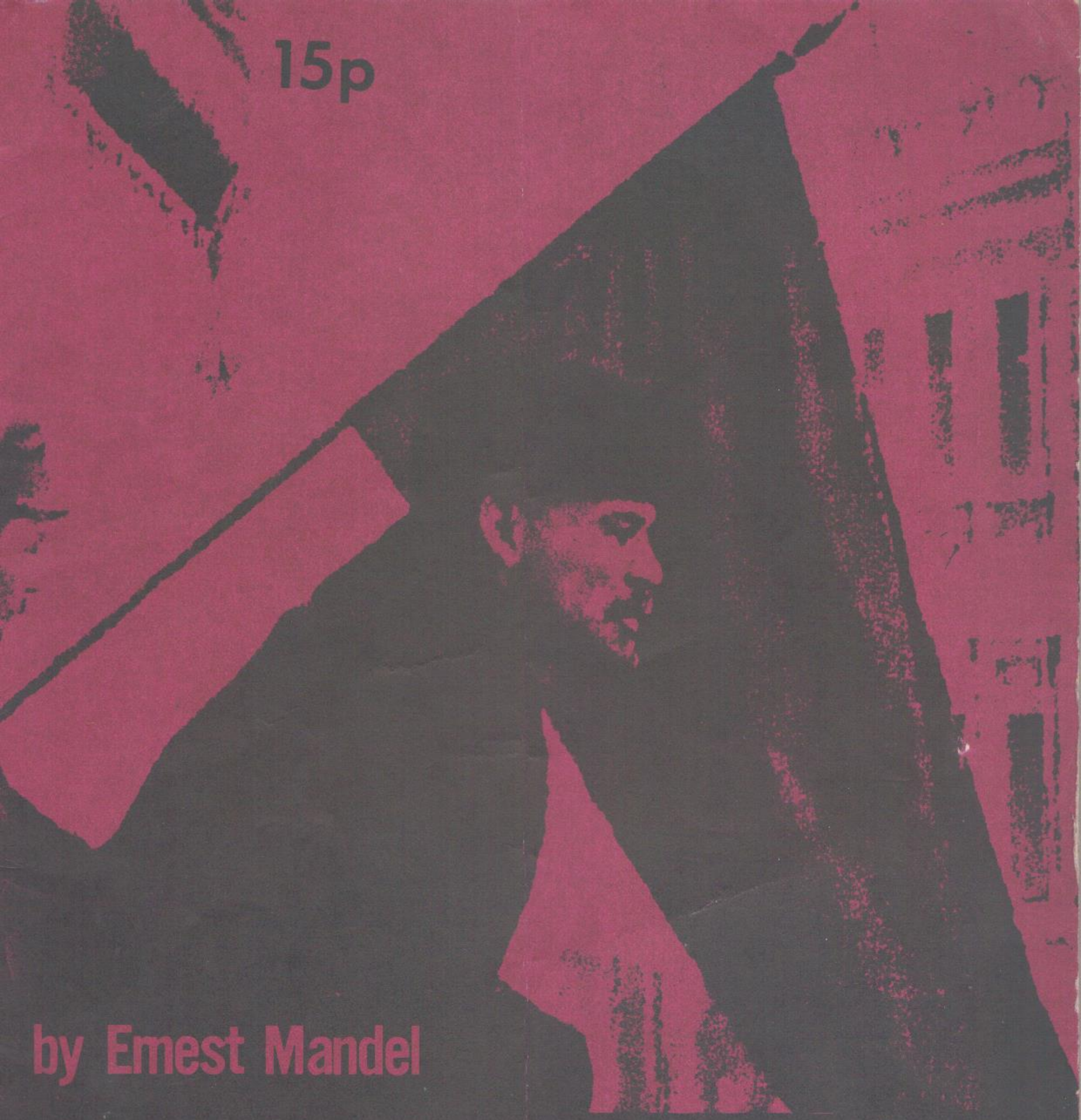
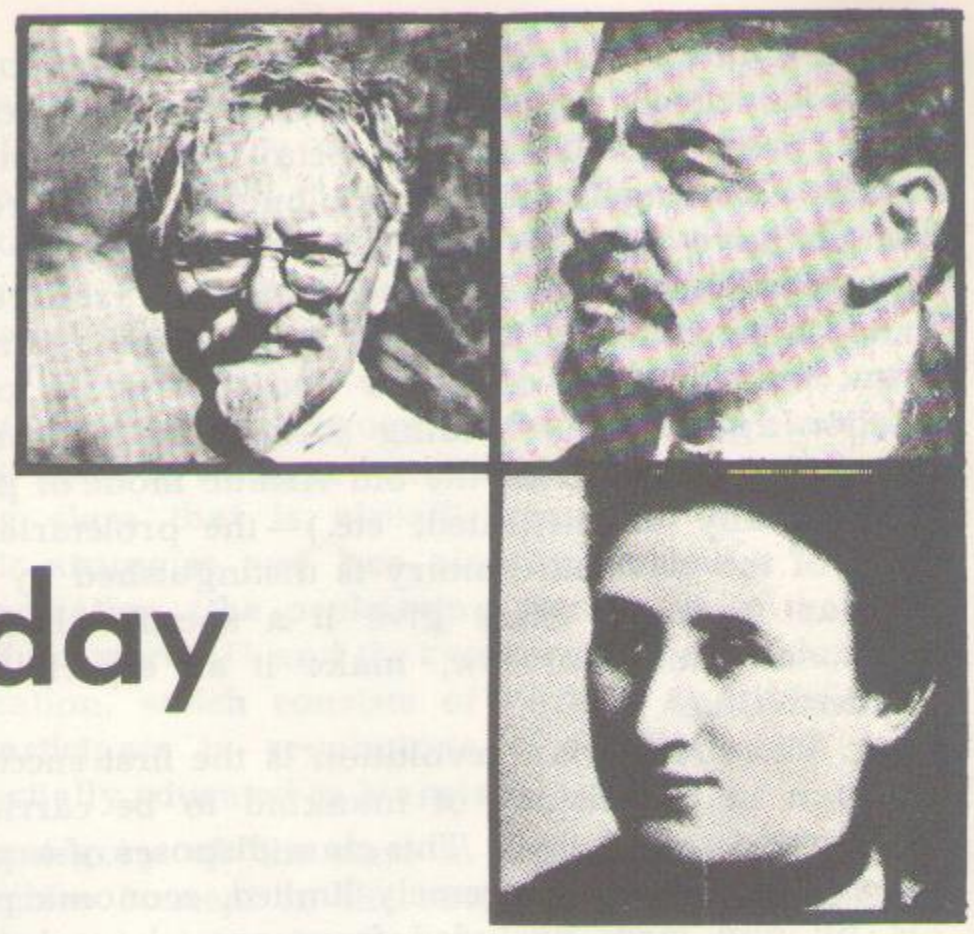


by Ernest Mandel

The Leninist Theory of Organization

The Leninist Theory of Organization: Its Relevance for Today



by Ernest Mandel

Translated by David Thorstad in collaboration with Theodore Edwards

The Leninist concept of organization explains the relationship between the masses, the advanced workers, and the revolutionary party. Mandel clarifies the process by which class consciousness is developed, and explains the role of the party in that process.

A serious discussion of the historical importance and current relevance of the Leninist theory of organization is possible only if one determines the exact position of this theory in the history of Marxism — or to be more precise, in the historical process of the unfolding and development of Marxism. This, like any process, must be reduced to its internal contradictions through the intimate interrelation between the development of theory and the development of the actual proletarian class struggle.

Approached in this way, the Leninist theory of organization appears as a dialectical unity of three elements: a theory of the present relevance of revolution for the underdeveloped countries in the imperialist epoch (which was later expanded to apply to the entire world in the epoch of the general crisis of capitalism); a theory of the discontinuous and contradictory development of proletarian class consciousness and of its most important stages, which should be differentiated from one another; and a theory of the essence of Marxist theory and its specific relationship to science on the one hand and to proletarian class struggle on the other.

Looking more closely, one discovers that these three theories form, so to speak, the "social foundation" of the Leninist concept of organization, without which it would appear arbitrary, nonmaterialist and unscientific. The Leninist concept of the party is not the only possible one. It is, however, the only possible concept of the party which assigns to the vanguard party the historic role of leading a revolution which is considered, in an intermediate or long-range sense, to be inevitable. The Leninist concept of the party cannot be separated from a specific analysis of proletarian class consciousness, i.e., from the understanding that *political* class consciousness — as opposed to mere "trade union" or "craft" consciousness — grows neither spontaneously nor automatically out of the objective developments of the proletarian class struggle.[1] And the Leninist concept of the party is based upon the premise of a *certain degree of autonomy of scientific analysis,* and especially of Marxist theory. This theory, though conditioned by the unfolding of the proletarian class struggle and the first embryonic beginnings of the proletarian revolution, should not be seen as the mechanically inevitable product of the class struggle but as the result of a theoretical practice (or "theoretical production") which is able to link up and unite with the class struggle only through a prolonged struggle. The history of the world-wide socialist revolution in the twentieth century is the history of this prolonged process.

These three propositions actually represent a deepening of Marxism, i.e., either of themes that were only indicated but not elaborated upon by Marx and Engels, or of elements of Marxist theory which were scarcely noticed due to the delayed and interrupted publication of Marx's writings in the years 1880-1905.[2] It therefore involves a further deepening of Marxist theory brought about because of gaps (and in part contradictions) in Marx's analysis itself, or at least in the generally accepted interpretation of it in the first quarter century after Marx's death.

What is peculiar about this deepening of Marx's teaching is that, setting out from different places, it proceeds toward the same central point, namely, to a determination of the specific character of the proletarian or socialist revolution.

*Footnotes begin on page 19.

In contrast to all previous revolutions—not only the bourgeois revolutions, whose laws of motion have been studied in great detail (in the first place by Marx and Engels themselves), but also those revolutions which have hitherto been far less subjected to a systematic, generalized analysis (such as the peasant revolutions and those of the urban petty bourgeoisie against feudalism; the uprisings of slaves and the revolts of clan societies against slaveholding society; the peasant revolutions that occurred as the old Asiatic mode of production periodically disintegrated, etc.)—the proletarian revolution of the twentieth century is distinguished by four particular features. These give it a specific character, but also, as Marx foresaw,[3] make it an especially difficult undertaking.

1. The proletarian revolution is the first successful revolution in the history of mankind to be carried out by the lowest social class. This class disposes of a potentially huge, but actually extremely limited, economic power and is by and large excluded from any share in the social wealth (as opposed to the mere possession of consumer goods which are continuously used up). Its situation is quite different from the bourgeoisie and the feudal nobility, who seized political power when they already held in their hands the actual economic power of society, as well as from the slaves, who were unable to carry through a successful revolution.

2. The proletarian revolution is the first revolution in the history of humanity aimed at a consciously planned overthrow of existing society, i.e., which does not seek to restore a previous state of affairs (as did the slave and peasant revolutions of the past), or simply to legalize a transfer of power already achieved on the economic field, but rather to bring into being a completely new process, one which has never before existed and which has been anticipated only as a "theory" or a "program."[4]

3. Just like every other social revolution in history, the proletarian revolution grows out of the internal class antagonisms and the class struggle they inevitably produce within the existing society. But while revolutions in the past could by and large be satisfied with pushing this class struggle forward until a culminating point was reached—because for them it was not a question of creating completely new and consciously planned social relations—the proletarian revolution can become a reality only if the proletarian class struggle culminates in a gigantic process, stretching out over years and decades. This process is one of systematically and consciously overturning all human relations, and of generalizing first the independent activity of the proletariat, and later (on the threshold of the classless society) that of all members of society. While the triumph of the bourgeois revolution makes the bourgeoisie into a conservative class (which is still able to achieve revolutionary transformations in the technical and industrial fields, and which plays an objectively progressive role in history for a rather long period of time, but which pulls back from an active transformation of social life, since in that sphere its mounting collisions with the proletariat it exploits make it increasingly reactionary), the conquest of power by the proletariat is *not the end but the beginning* of the activity of the modern working class in revolutionizing society. This activity can end only when it liquidates itself as a class, along with all other classes.[5]

4. In constrast to all previous social revolutions, which by and large have taken place within a national or an even more limited regional framework, the proletarian revolution is by nature international and can reach its conclusion only in the worldwide construction of a classless society. Although it certainly can achieve victory at first within a national framework alone, this victory will constantly be endangered and provisional so long as the class struggle on an international scale has not inflicted a decisive defeat upon capital. The proletarian revolution, then, is a world revolutionary process, which is carried out neither in a linear fashion nor with uniformity. The imperialist chain breaks first at its weakest links, and the discontinuous ebb and flow of the revolution occurs in conformity with the law of uneven and combined development. (This is true not only for the economy but also for the relationship of forces between classes; the two by no means automatically coincide.)

The Leninist theory of organization takes into account all these peculiarities of the proletarian revolution. It takes into consideration the peculiarities of this revolution in light of, among other things, the peculiarities and contradictions in the formation of proletarian class consciousness. Above all, it expresses openly what Marx only intimated, and which his epigones scarcely understood at all, namely, that there can be neither an "automatic" overthrow of the capitalist social order nor a "spontaneous" or "organic" disintegration of this social order through the construction of a socialist one. Precisely because of the uniquely conscious character of the proletarian revolution, it requires not only a maturity of "objective" factors (a deepgoing social crisis which expresses the fact that the capitalist mode of production has fulfilled its historic mission), but also a maturity of so-called subjective factors (maturity of proletarian class consciousness and of its leadership). If these "subjective" factors are either not present, or are present to an insufficient extent, the proletarian revolution will not be victorious at that point, and *from its very defeat* will result the economic and social possibilities for a temporary consolidation of capitalism.[6]

The Leninist theory of organization represents, then, broadly speaking, the deepening of Marxism, applied to the basic problems of the social superstructure (the state, class consciousness, ideology, the party). Together with the parallel contributions of Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky (and, in a more limited sense of Lukacs and Gramsci), it constitutes the *Marxist science of the subjective factor.*

Bourgeois ideology and proletarian class consciousness

The Marxian proposition that "the dominant ideology of every society is the ideology of the dominant class" appears at first glance to conflict with the character of the proletarian revolution as the *conscious* overturning of society by the proletariat, as a product of the conscious, independent activity of the wage-earning masses. A superficial interpretation of this proposition might lead to the conclusion that it is utopian to expect the masses who, under capitalism, are manipulated and

exposed to the constant onslaught of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideas, to be capable of carrying out a revolutionary class struggle against this society, let alone a social revolution. Herbert Marcuse, who draws this conclusion, is (for the time being) simply the latest in a long series of theoreticians who, taking as their point of departure the Marxian definition of the ruling class, finish by calling into question the revolutionary potential of the working class.

The problem can be solved by replacing the formalistic and static point of view with a dialectical one. The Marxian proposition simply needs to be made more "dynamic." The dominant ideology of every society is the ideology of the dominant class in the sense that the latter has control over the means of ideological production which society has at its disposal (the church, schools, mass media, etc.), and uses these means in its own class interests. As long as class rule is on the upswing, stable and hence hardly questioned, the ideology of the dominant class will also dominate the consciousness of the oppressed class. Moreover, the exploited will, as a rule, tend to formulate the *first phases* of the class struggle in terms of the formulas, ideals and ideologies of the exploiters.[7]

However, the more the stability of the existing society is brought into question, and the more the class struggle intensifies, and the more the class rule of the exploiters itself begins to waver in practice, the more will at least sections of the oppressed class begin to free themselves from the control of the ideas of those in power. Prior to, and along with, the struggle for the social revolution, a struggle goes on between the ideology of the rulers and the new ideals of the revolutionary class. This struggle in turn intensifies and accelerates the concrete class struggle out of which it arose by lifting the revolutionary class to an awareness of its historical tasks and of the immediate goals of its struggle. Class consciousness on the part of the revolutionary class can therefore develop out of the class struggle in spite of and in opposition to the ideology of the ruling class.[8]

But it is only in the revolution itself that the majority of the oppressed can liberate themselves from the ideology of the ruling class.[9] For this control is exerted not only, nor even primarily, through purely ideological *manipulation* and the mass assimilation of the ruling class' ideological production, but above all through the actual day-to-day workings of the existing economy and society and their effect on the consciousness of the oppressed. (This is especially true in bourgeois society, although parallel phenomena can be seen in all class societies.)

In capitalist society this control is exerted through the internalization of commodity relations, which is closely tied to the reification of human relations and which results from the generalized extension of commodity production and the transformation of labor power into a commodity, and from the generalized extension of the social division of labor under conditions of commodity production. It is also accomplished through the fatigue and brutalization of the producers through exploitation and the alienated nature of labor, as well as through a lack of leisure time, not only in a quantitative but also in a qualitative sense, etc. Only when the workings of this imprisonment are blown apart by a revolution, i.e., by a sudden, intense increase in *mass activity outside of the confines of alienated labor*—only then can the mystifying influence of this very imprisonment upon mass consciousness rapidly recede.

The Leninist theory of organization therefore attempts to come to grips with the inner dialectic of this formation of political class consciousness, which can develop fully only *during* the revolution itself, yet only on the condition that it has already begun to develop *before* the revolution.[10] The theory does this by means of three operative categories: the category of the working class in itself (the mass of workers); the category of that part of the working class that is already engaging in more than sporadic struggles and has already reached a first level of organization (the proletarian vanguard in the broad sense of the word);[11] and the category of the revolutionary organization, which consists of workers and intellectuals who participate in revolutionary activities and are at least partially educated in Marxism.

The category of "the class in itself" is linked to the objective class concept in the sociology of Marx, where a social layer is determined by its objective position in the process of production *independent* of its state of consciousness. (It is well known that the young Marx—in the *Communist Manifesto* and in his political writings of 1850-1852, for instance—had put forward a subjective concept of the class according to which the working class becomes a class only through its struggle, i.e., by reaching a minimum degree of class consciousness. Bukharin, in connection with a formula from *The Poverty of Philosophy*, calls this concept the concept of "the class for itself," as opposed to the concept of the "class in itself.")[12] This objective concept of the class remains fundamental for Lenin's ideas on organization, as it did for Engels and the German Social Democracy under the influence of Engels, Bebel and Kautsky.[13]

It is only because there exists an objectively revolutionary class that can, and is periodically obliged to, conduct an actual revolutionary class struggle, and it is only in relation to such an actual class struggle, that the concept of a revolutionary vanguard party (including that of professional revolutionaries) has any scientific meaning at all, as Lenin himself explicitly observed.[14] All revolutionary activity not related to this class struggle leads at best to a party *nucleus*, but not to a party. This runs the risk of degenerating into sectarian, subjective dilettantism. According to Lenin's concept of organization, there is no self-proclaimed vanguard. Rather, the vanguard must win recognition as a vanguard (i.e., the historical right to act as a vanguard) through its attempts to establish revolutionary ties with the advanced part of the class and its actual struggle.

The category of "advanced workers" stems from the objectively inevitable stratification of the working class. It is a function of their distinct historical origin, as well as their distinct position in the social process of production and their distinct class consciousness.

The formation of the working class as an objective category is itself an historical process. Some sections of the working class are the sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons of urban wage laborers; others are the sons and grandsons of agricultural laborers and landless peasants. Still others are only first or second genera-

tion descendants of a petty bourgeoisie that owned some means of production (peasants, artisans, etc.). Part of the working class works in large factories where both the economic and the social relations give rise to at least an elementary class consciousness (consciousness that "social questions" can be solved only through collective activity and organization). Another part works in small or medium-sized factories in industry or in the so-called service sectors, where economic self-confidence as well as an understanding of the necessity for broad mass actions flow much less easily from the objective situation than in the large industrial plant. Some sections of the working class have been living in big cities for a long time. They have been literate for a long time and have several generations of trade-union organization and political and cultural education behind them (through youth organizations, the workers press, labor education, etc.). Still others live in small towns or even in the countryside. (This was true into the late 1930s, for instance, for a significant number of European miners.) These workers have little or no collective social life, scarcely any trade-union experience, and have received no political or cultural education at all in the organized workers movement. Some sectors of the working class are born from nations which were independent for a thousand years, and whose ruling class oppressed for long periods other nations. Other workers are born from nations which fought for decades or centuries for their national freedom—or who lived in slavery or serfdom no more than one hundred years ago.

If one adds to all these historical and structural differences the various personal abilities of each wage worker—not just differences in intelligence and ability to generalize from immediate experiences, but differences in the amount of energy, strength of character, combativity and self-assurance too—then one understands that the stratification of the working class into various layers, depending on the degree of class consciousness, is an inevitable phenomenon in the history of the working class itself. *It is this historical process of becoming a class which, at a given point in time, is reflected in the various degrees of consciousness within the class.*

The category of the revolutionary party stems from the fact that Marxian socialism is a *science* which, in the final analysis, can be completely assimilated only in an individual and not in a collective manner. Marxism constitutes the culmination (and in part also the dissolution) of at least three classical social sciences: classical German philosophy, classical political economy, and classical French political science (French socialism and historiography). Its assimilation presupposes at least an understanding of the materialist dialectic, historical materialism, Marxian economic theory and the critical history of modern revolutions and of the modern labor movement. Such an assimilation is necessary if it is to be able to function, in its totality, as an instrument for analyzing social reality and as the compilation of the experiences of a century of proletarian class struggle. The notion that this colossal sum of knowledge and information could somehow "spontaneously" flow from working at a lathe or a calculating machine is absurd.[15]

The fact that as a science Marxism is an expression of the *highest* degree in the development of proletarian class consciousness means simply that it is only through an *individual* process of selection that the best, most experienced, the most intelligent and the most combative members of the proletariat are able to directly and independently acquire this class consciousness in its most potent form. To the extent that this acquisition is an individual one, it also becomes accessible to other social classes and layers (above all, the revolutionary intelligentsia and the students).[16] Any other approach can lead only to an idealization of the working class—and ultimately of capitalism itself.

Of course it must always be remembered that Marxism could not arise independently of the actual development of bourgeois society and of the class struggle that was inevitably unfolding within it. There is an inextricable tie between the collective, historical experience of the working class in struggle and its scientific working out of Marxism as collective, historical class consciousness in its most potent form. But to maintain that scientific socialism is an historical product of the proletarian class struggle is not to say that all or even most members of this class can, with greater or lesser ease, reproduce this knowledge. Marxism is not an automatic product of the class struggle and class experience but a result of scientific, theoretical production. Such an assimilation is made possible only through participation in that process of production; and this process is by definition an *individual* one, even though it is only made possible through the development of the social forces of production and class contradictions under capitalism.

Proletarian class struggle and proletarian class consciousness

The process whereby the proletarian mass, the proletarian vanguard and the revolutionary party are united depends on the elementary proletarian class struggle growing over into *revolutionary* class struggle—the proletarian revolution—and on the effects this has on the wage-earning masses. Class struggle has taken place for thousands of years without those who struggled being aware of what they were doing. Proletarian class struggle was conducted long before there was a socialist movement, let alone scientific socialism. Elementary class struggle—strikes, work stoppages around wage demands or for shorter working hours and other improvements in working conditions—leads to elementary forms of class organization (mutual aid funds, embryonic trade unions), even if these are short-lived. (It also gives rise to a general socialist ideal among *many* workers.) Elementary class struggle, elementary class organization and elementary class consciousness are born, then, *directly out of action*, and only the experience arising out of that action is able to develop and accelerate consciousness. It is a general law of history that only through action are *broad masses* able to elevate their consciousness.

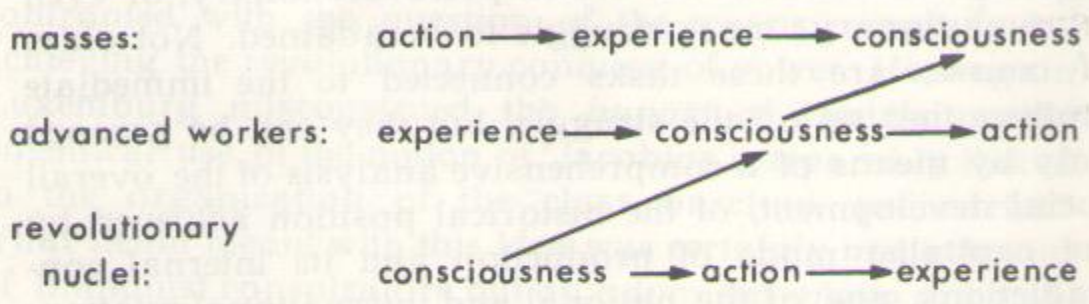
But even in its most elementary form, the spontaneous class struggle of the wage earners under capitalism leaves behind a residue in the form of a *consciousness crystallized in a process of continuous organization.* Most of the mass is active only during the struggle; after the struggle it will sooner or later retreat into private life (i.e., "into the struggle for existence"). What distinguishes the workers vanguard from this mass is the fact that even during a lull in the struggle it does not abandon the front lines of

the class struggle but continues the war, so to speak, "by other means." It attempts to solidify the resistance funds generated in the struggle into ongoing resistance funds—i.e., into unions.[17] By publishing workers newspapers and organizing educational groups for workers, it attempts to crystallize and heighten the elementary class consciousness generated in the struggle. It thus helps give form to a factor of continuity, as opposed to the necessarily discontinuous action of the mass,[18] and to a factor of consciousness, as opposed to the spontaneity of the mass movement in and of itself.

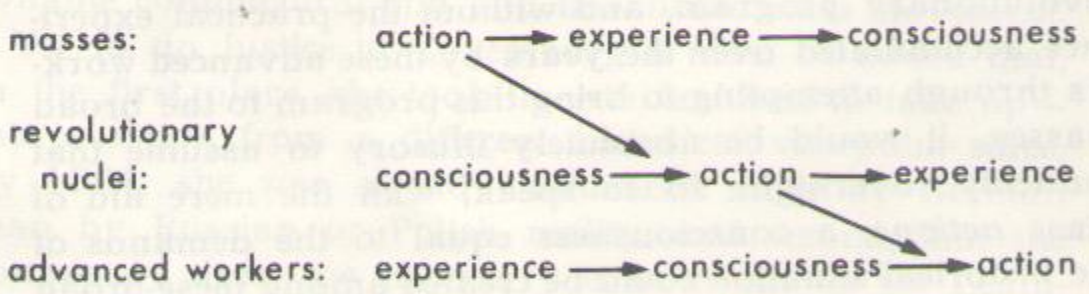
However, advanced workers are driven to continuous organization and growing class consciousness less by theory, science, or an intellectual grasp of the social whole than by the practical knowledge acquired in struggle. Since the struggle shows[19] that the dissolving of the resistance funds after each strike damages the effectiveness of the strike and the working sums in hand, attempts are made to go over to the permanent strike fund. Since experience shows an occasional leaflet to have less effect than a regular newspaper, the workers press is born. Consciousness arising directly out of the practical experience of struggle is *empirical and pragmatic consciousness*, which can enrich action to a certain extent, but which is far inferior to the effectiveness of a *scientifically global* consciousness, i.e., of theoretical understanding.

Based on its general theoretical understanding the revolutionary vanguard organization can consolidate and enrich this higher consciousness, provided it is able to establish ties to the class struggle, i.e., provided it does not shrink from the hard test of verifying theory in practice, of reuniting theory and practice. From the point of view of mature Marxism—as well as that of Marx himself and Lenin—a "true" theory divorced from practice is as much an absurdity as a "revolutionary practice" that is not founded on a scientific theory. This in no way diminishes the decisive importance and absolute necessity for theoretical production. It simply emphasizes the fact that wage-earning masses and revolutionary individuals, proceeding from different starting points and with a different dynamic, can bring about the unity of theory and practice.

This process can be summarized in the following diagram:



If we rearrange this diagram so that certain conclusions can be drawn from it, we get the following:

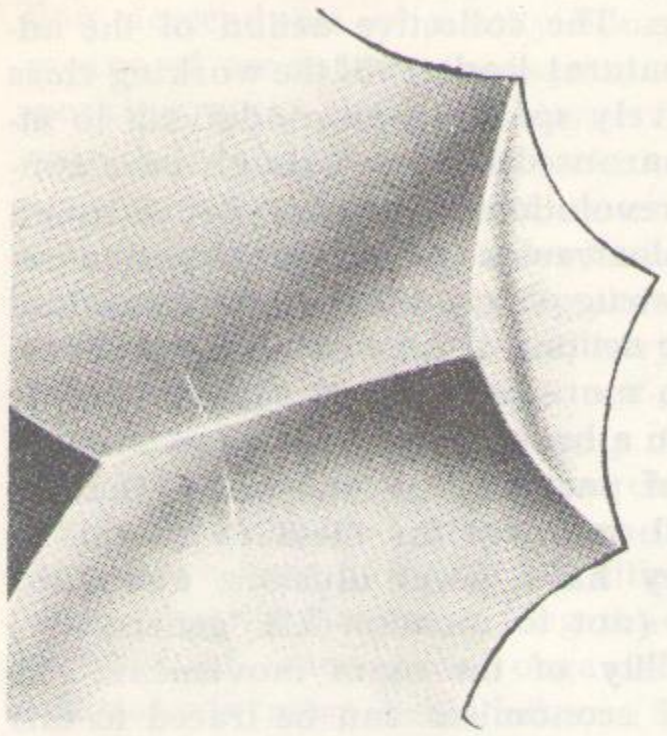


This formal diagram reveals a series of conclusions about the dynamics of class consciousness which were already anticipated in the analysis but which only now obtain their full value. The collective action of the advanced workers (the "natural leaders" of the working class in the shops) is, relatively speaking, more difficult to attain because it can be aroused neither through pure conviction (as with the revolutionary nuclei) nor through purely spontaneous explosiveness (as with the broad masses). It is precisely the struggle *experience*—the important motivating factor in the actions of the advanced workers—that makes them much more careful and cautious before they undertake action on a broad scale. They have already digested the lessons of past actions and know that an explosion is not at all sufficient for them to be able to reach their goal. They have fewer illusions about the strength of the enemy (not to mention his "generosity") and about the durability of the mass movement. The greatest "temptation" of economism can be traced to this very point.

To summarize: the building of the revolutionary class party is the merging of the consciousness of the revolutionary nuclei with that of the advanced workers. The ripening of a prerevolutionary situation (of potentially revolutionary explosion) is the merging of action by the broad masses with that of the advanced workers. A revolutionary situation—i.e., the possibility of a revolutionary conquest of power—arises when a merging of *actions* by the vanguard and the masses with the *consciousness* of the vanguard and revolutionary layers has been accomplished.[20] For the broad masses, the elementary class struggle arising from the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production is always kindled only by matters of immediate concern. The same is true for all mass actions, even political ones. Thus the problem of the broad mass struggle growing over into a revolutionary one depends not only on a quantitative factor, but also on a qualitative one. This requires the existence of sufficiently advanced workers within the masses or the mass movement who, on the basis of the stage of consciousness they have already reached, are capable of sweeping broader masses into action around objectives that challenge the continued existence of bourgeois society and the capitalist mode of production.

This also highlights the central importance of transitional demands,[21] the strategic position of advanced workers already trained in propagating these transitional demands, and the historical importance of the revolutionary organization, which alone is capable of working out a comprehensive program of transitional demands corresponding to the objective historical conditions, as well as to the subjective needs, of the broadest layers of the mass. *A successful proletarian revolution is only possible if all these factors are successfully combined.*

We have already stated that Lenin's theory of organization is, in fact, above all a theory of revolution. To have misunderstood this is the great weakness of Rosa Luxemburg's polemic against Lenin in 1903-1904. It is characteristic that the concept of centralization which is attacked in the essay "Organizational Question of Social Democracy" is—and this is clear if it is read attentively—a purely organizational one. (Yet while it is attacked, it is also confirmed. On this point modern "Luxemburgists" ought to read their "Rosa" more care-



The revolutionary party must make all progressive demands and movements of all oppressed social layers and classes its own

fully and more thoroughly!) Lenin is accused of advocating an "ultracentralist" line, of dictating the composition of local party committees, and of wishing to stymie any initiative by lower party units.[22]

When we turn to the Leninist theory of organization as developed by Lenin himself, however, we see that the emphasis is by no means upon the formal, organizational side of centralization but upon its *political and social function.* At the heart of *What is to Be Done?* is the concept of the transformation of proletarian class consciousness into political class consciousness *by means of a comprehensive political activity* that raises and, from a Marxist point of view, answers all questions of internal and external class relations:

"In reality, it is possible to 'raise the activity of the working masses' *only* when this activity *is not restricted* to 'political agitation on an economic basis.' A basic condition for the necessary expansion of political agitation is the organization of *comprehensive* political exposure. *In no way* except by means of such exposures *can* the masses be trained in political consciousness and revolutionary activity."

And further:

> The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe *every* other social class in *all* the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical, and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of all aspects of the life and activity of *all* classes, strata, and groups of the population. Those who concentrate the attention, observation, and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone are not Social Democrats; for the self-knowledge of the working class is indissolubly bound up, not solely with a fully clear theoretical understanding—it would be even truer to say, not so much with the theoretical, as with the practical, understanding—of the relationships between *all* the various classes of modern society, acquired through the experiences of political life.[23]

And it is for the same reason that Lenin emphasizes so strongly the absolute necessity for the revolutionary party to make *all* progressive demands and movements of *all* oppressed social layers and classes its own—even "purely democratic" ones. The central strategic plan advanced by Lenin in *What is to Be Done?*[24] is therefore one of party agitation that unites all elementary, spontaneous, dispersed and "merely" local or sectional protests, revolts and movements of resistance. The emphasis of centralization clearly lies in the political and not in the formal, organizational sphere. The aim of formal organizational centralization is only to make possible the realization of this strategic plan.

Although she does not recognize this essence of Lenin's "centralism," Luxemburg is compelled in her polemic to indirectly counterpose to it another conception of the formation of political class consciousness and the preparation of revolutionary situations. Her doing so emphasizes even more poignantly how utterly wrong she was in this debate. Luxemburg's concept that "the proletarian army is recruited and becomes aware of its objectives in the course of the struggle itself"[25] has been completely refuted by history. In even the broadest, longest and most vigorous of workers struggles, the working masses have *not* gained a clear understanding of the tasks of the struggle, or did so only to an insufficient degree. (One need only recall the French general strikes of 1936 and 1968, the struggles of the German workers from 1918 to 1923, the great struggles of the Italian workers in 1920, 1948 and 1969, as well as the prodigious class struggles in Spain from 1931 to 1937, to mention only these four European countries.)

Experience in struggle is by no means sufficient for clarity on the tasks of a broad prerevolutionary, or even a revolutionary, mass struggle to be attained. Not only, of course, are these tasks connected to the immediate motives that set off the struggle, but they can be grasped only by means of a comprehensive analysis of the overall social development, of the historical position achieved by the capitalist mode of production and its internal contradictions, and of the national and international relationship of forces between classes. Without protracted and consistent preparation, without the education of hundreds and thousands of advanced workers in the spirit of a revolutionary program, and without the practical experience accumulated over the years by these advanced workers through attempting to bring this program to the broad masses, it would be absolutely illusory to assume that suddenly, overnight so to speak, with the mere aid of mass *actions*, a consciousness equal to the demands of the historical situation could be created among these broad masses.

Actually, one could turn Luxemburg's proposition around and say that the proletarian army will *never* reach its historic objectives if the necessary education,

schooling and testing of a proletarian vanguard in the working out and agitational application of the revolutionary program in struggle has not taken place *before* the outbreak of the broadest mass struggles, which by themselves create only the *possibility* of the broad masses attaining revolutionary consciousness. That is the tragic lesson of the German revolution after the first world war, which was crushed precisely because of the lack of such a trained vanguard.

The objective of Lenin's strategic plan is to create such a vanguard through an organic union of individual revolutionary nuclei with the vanguard of the proletariat. Such a fusion is impossible without a comprehensive *political* activity that takes the advanced workers beyond the confines of a horizon limited to the trade union or the factory. Empirical data available to us today confirm that Lenin's party, before and during the revolution of 1905 and after the mass movement began to pick up again in 1912, was in fact such a party.[26]

To fully grasp the profoundly revolutionary nature of Lenin's strategic plan, it must be approached from yet another point of view. Any concept based on the probability, if not the inevitability, of a *revolution* occurring in the not too distant future, must inevitably deal with the question of a direct collision with state power, i.e., the question of the conquest of political power. As soon as this difficulty is built into the concept, however, the result is one more argument in favor of centralization. Lenin and Luxemburg agreed that capitalism itself and the bourgeois state exert a powerful centralizing influence on modern society,[27] and that it is in turn absolutely illusory to think that this centralized state power can be gradually dismantled, as for instance a wall can be taken apart brick by brick.

In the final analysis, the ideological essence of the reformism and revisionism rejected by Luxemburg and Lenin with equal passion[28] was rooted in the illusion that this could be done. Once the question of the conquest of state power is no longer placed far off in the distance, however, but is recognized to be an objective for the near or not-too-distant future, the revolutionary is immediately confronted with the question of the means necessary for achieving the revolutionary conquest of power. Here again Luxemburg misconstrued the *import* of Lenin's purely polemical use of the notion of "Jacobins inseparably linked to the organization of the class-conscious proletariat." What Lenin meant with this idea was certainly *not* a brand of Blanquist conspirators but *an advanced group oriented, like the Jacobins, toward an unremitting attempt to carry out the revolutionary tasks,* one that does not permit itself to be diverted from concentrating on *these* tasks by the inevitable conjunctural ebb and flow of the mass movement.

Yet to do justice to Luxemburg it must be added that, in the first place, she took up—in fact *had* to take up—this question from a different historical viewpoint since, by 1904, she was already influenced more by German than by Russian or Polish reality; and second, that she completely drew the necessary conclusions in the Leninist sense as soon as it became clear that in Germany too the coming of the revolution was an immediate possibility.[29]

The young Trotsky likewise made a serious error in his polemic against Lenin when he reproached him for this "substitutionism," i.e., the replacement of the initiative of the working class with that of the party alone.[30] If we remove the core of this reproach from its polemical shell, we find here too an idealistic, inadequate conception of the evolution of the class consciousness of the proletariat: "Marxism teaches that the interests of the proletariat are determined by its objective conditions of life. These interests are so powerful and so unavoidable that they eventually [!] compel the proletariat to bring them into the scope of its consciousness, i.e., to make the realization of its *objective* interests into its *subjective* interest."[31] Today it is easy to see what a naively fatalistic optimism was concealed in this inadequate analysis. Immediate interests are here put on the same level with historical interests, i.e., with the unraveling of the most complex questions of political tactics and strategy. The hope that the proletariat will "eventually" recognize its historical interests seems rather shallow when compared to the historical catastrophes that have arisen because, in the absence of an adequate revolutionary leadership, the proletariat was not even able to accomplish the revolutionary tasks of the here and now.

The same naive optimism is even more strikingly manifested in the following passage from the same polemic:

> The revolutionary social democrat is convinced not only of the inevitable [!] growth of the political party of the proletariat, but also of the inevitable [!] victory of the ideas of *revolutionary* socialism within this party. The first proof lies in the fact that the development of bourgeois society spontaneously leads the proletariat to politically demarcate itself; the second in the fact that the objective tendencies and the tactical problems of this demarcation find their best, fullest and deepest expression in revolutionary socialism, i.e., Marxism.[32]

This quotation makes clear that what the young Trotsky was championing in his polemic against Lenin was the "old, tested tactic" and the naive "belief in the inevitability of progress" à la Bebel and Kautsky which prevailed in the international Social Democracy from the time of Marx's death until the first world war. Lenin's concept of class consciousness was incomparably richer, more contradictory and more dialectical precisely because it was based on a keen grasp of the relevance of the revolution for the present (not "finally some day," but in the coming years).

To round out the historical development it must be added that following the outbreak of the Russian revolution in 1917, Trotsky fully adopted Lenin's analysis of the formation of proletarian class consciousness and hence also Lenin's theory of organization, and until his death he stubbornly defended them against all skeptics and archpessimists (who claimed to detect in them the "embryo" of Stalinism). Thus he wrote in his last, unfinished manuscript:

> A colossal factor in the maturity of the Russian proletariat in February or March 1917 was Lenin. He did not fall from the skies. He personified the revolutionary tradition of the working class. For Lenin's slogans to find their way to the masses, there had to exist cadres, even though numerically small at the beginning; there had to exist the confidence of the cadre in the leadership, a confidence based upon the entire experience of the past. To cancel these elements from one's calculations is simply to ignore

> the living revolution, to substitute for it an abstraction, the 'relationship of forces,' because the development of the revolution precisely consists of this, that the relationship of forces keeps incessantly and rapidly changing under the impact of the changes in the consciousness of the proletariat, the attraction of backward layers to the advanced, the growing assurance of the class in its own strength. The vital mainspring in this process is the party, just as the vital mainspring in the mechanism of the party is its leadership.[33]

The revolutionary vanguard and spontaneous mass action

It would be a great injustice to Lenin to characterize his life work as a systematic "underestimation" of the importance of spontaneous mass actions as opposed to their "appreciation" by Luxemburg or Trotsky. Apart from polemical passages, which can only be understood when seen in context, Lenin welcomed huge, spontaneous outbreaks of mass strikes and demonstrations just as enthusiastically and just as explicitly as Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky.[34] Only the Stalinist bureaucracy falsified Leninism with its increasing distrust of spontaneous mass movements—which after all is characteristic of any bureaucracy.

Luxemburg is completely correct to say that the outbreak of a proletarian revolution cannot be "predetermined" by the calendar, and nothing to the contrary will ever be found in Lenin. Lenin, like Luxemburg, was convinced that these elemental mass explosions, without which a revolution is unthinkable, can neither be "organized" according to rules nor "commanded" by a row of disciplined noncommissioned officers. Lenin, like Luxemburg, was convinced of the mighty arsenal of creative energy, resourcefulness and initiative that a truly broad mass action unfurls and will always unfurl.

The difference between the Leninist theory of organization and the so-called theory of spontaneity—which can be attributed to Luxemburg only with important reservations—is thus to be found *not in an underestimation of mass initiative but in an understanding of its limitations.* Mass initiative is capable of many magnificent accomplishments. But by itself it is not able to draft, in the course of the struggle, a complete, comprehensive program for a socialist revolution touching upon all social questions (not to mention socialist reconstruction); nor is it alone capable of bringing about a sufficient centralization of forces to make possible the downfall of a centralized state power with its repressive apparatus resting on a full utilization of the advantages of its "inside lines" of communication. In other words, the limitations of mass spontaneity begin with the understanding that a victorious socialist revolution *cannot be improvised.* And "pure" mass spontaneity always boils down to improvisation.

What is more, "pure" spontaneity exists only in books containing fairy tales about the workers movement—but not in its real history. What is understood by "spontaneity of the masses" are movements that have not been planned out in detail ahead of time by some central authority. What is *not* to be understood by "spontaneity of the masses" are movements that take place without "political influence from the outside." Scratch off the blue coat of an ostensibly "spontaneous movement" and you will find the unmistakable residue of a bright red veneer. Here a member of a "vanguard" group who set off a "spontaneous" strike. There a former member of another "left-deviationist" affiliation, who has long since left it but who received sufficient mental equipment to be able, in an explosive situation, to react with lightning speed while the anonymous mass was still hesitating.

In one case, we will be able to detect in "spontaneous" action the fruits of years of "underground activity" by a trade-union opposition, or a rank-and-file group; in another case, the result of contacts that, for a rather long period of time, have patiently—and without apparent success—been nurtured by shop colleagues in a neighboring city (or a neighboring factory) where the "left-wingers" are stronger. In the class struggle too there is no such thing as a goose "spontaneously" falling from heaven already cooked.

Thus, what differentiates "spontaneous" actions from the "intervention of the vanguard," is not at all that in the former everyone in the struggle has reached the same level of consciousness, whereas in the latter "the vanguard" is distinct from "the mass." What differentiates the two forms of action is also not that in "spontaneous" actions no solutions have been carried into the proletariat from "outside," while an organized vanguard relates to the elementary demands of the mass "in an elitist fashion," "imposing" a program upon it. Never have there been "spontaneous" actions without some kind of influence from vanguard elements. The difference between "spontaneous" actions and those in which "the revolutionary vanguard intervenes" is essentially that in "spontaneous" actions *the nature of the intervention of the vanguard elements is unorganized, improvised, intermittent and unplanned* (occurring by chance in this plant, that district, or that city), while the existence of a revolutionary organization makes it possible to coordinate, plan, consciously synchronize, and continuously shape this intervention of the vanguard elements in the "spontaneous" mass struggle. Nearly all the requirements of Leninist "supercentralism" are based on this and this alone.

Only an incorrigible fatalist (i.e., a mechanical determinist) could be convinced that all mass explosions *had* to take place on a given day just because they broke out on that day, and that, conversely, in all cases where mass explosions did not occur it was because they were not possible. Such a fatalistic attitude (common to the Kautsky-Bauer school of thought) is in reality a caricature of the Leninist theory of organization. In any case, it is characteristic that many opponents of Leninism, who in opposing Lenin have so much to say about "mass spontaneity," at the same time fall into this vulgar, mechanical determinism without realizing how much it contradicts their "high esteem" for "mass spontaneity."

If, on the other hand, one proceeds from the inevitability of periodic spontaneous mass explosions (which occur when socio-economic contradictions have ripened to the point where the capitalist mode of production in fact *has* to periodically produce such prerevolutionary crises), then one has to understand that it is impossible to determine the exact moment when this will happen

since thousands of minor incidents, partial conflicts and accidental occurrences could play an important role in determining it. For this reason, a revolutionary vanguard which at decisive moments is able to concentrate its own forces on the "weakest link," is incomparably more effective than the diffuse performance of large numbers of advanced workers who lack this ability to concentrate their forces. [35]

The two greatest workers struggles to take place in the West—the French May 1968 and the Italian fall 1969—entirely confirmed these views. Both began with "spontaneous" struggles prepared neither by the trade unions nor by the big social-democratic or "communist" parties. In both cases individual, radical workers and students or revolutionary nuclei played a decisive role in here or there triggering a first explosion and providing the working masses with the opportunity to learn from an "exemplary experience." In both cases millions upon millions came into the struggle—up to ten million wage earners in France, up to fifteen million in Italy. This is more than ever before seen—even during the greatest class struggles following the first world war.

In both cases the spontaneous tendency demonstrated by the workers went way beyond the "economism" of a purely economic strike. In France this was attested to by the factory occupations and numerous partial initiatives, in Italy not only by huge street demonstrations and the raising of political demands, but also by the embryonic manifestation of a tendency toward self-organization at the point of production, i.e., by the attempt to take the first step toward establishing dual power: the election of *delegati di reparto*. (In this sense, the vanguard of the Italian working class was more advanced than the French, and it drew the first important historical lessons from the French May. [36]) But in neither case did these powerful, spontaneous mass actions succeed in overthrowing the bourgeois state apparatus and the capitalist mode of production, or even in advancing a mass understanding of the objectives that would have made such an overthrow possible within a short period of time.

To recall Trotsky's metaphor from *The History of the Russian Revolution:* the powerful steam evaporated for lack of a piston that would have compressed it at the decisive moment. [37] Certainly, in the final analysis, the driving force is the steam, i.e., the energy of mass mobilization and mass struggle, and not the piston itself. Without this steam the piston remains a hollow shell. Yet without this piston even the most intense steam is wasted and accomplishes nothing. This is the quintessence of the Leninist theory of organization.

Organization, bureaucracy and revolutionary action

There is a difficulty in this connection, however, which Lenin, during the years of the most heated disputes with the Mensheviks, recognized either not at all (1903-1905) or only to an insufficient degree (1908-1914). And it is here that the full value of the historic work of Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg becomes clear in facilitating an understanding of the dialectical formula "working class—advanced workers—workers party."

A vanguard party and a certain *separation* between the party and the mass are made necessary precisely because of the inevitably inadequate level of class consciousness on the part of broad working masses. As Lenin repeatedly stressed, this is a complex dialectical relationship—a unity of separation and integration—which totally conforms to the historical peculiarities of the revolutionary struggle for a socialist revolution.

This separate party, however, originates within *bourgeois* society which, with its inherent features of a universal division of labor and commodity production, tends to bring about a reification of *all* human relations. [38] This means that the building of a party apparatus separated from the working masses involves the danger of this apparatus becoming autonomous. When this danger develops beyond an embryonic stage, the tendency arises for the self-preservation of the apparatus to become an end in itself, rather than a means to an end (successful proletarian class struggle).

This is the root of the degeneration of both the Second and the Third Internationals, i.e., the subordination of the mass social-democratic as well as the Communist parties of Western Europe to conservative, reformist bureaucracies which, in their day-to-day practice, have become part of the status quo. [39]

Bureaucracy in workers organizations is a product of the social division of labor, i.e., of the inability of the working masses, who are largely excluded from the cultural and theoretical process of production under capitalism, to themselves regularly take care of all the tasks which must be dealt with within the framework of their organization. Attempts to do this anyway, as was often done at the onset of the workers movement, provide no solution because this division of labor completely corresponds to *material conditions* and is in no way invented by wicked careerists. If these conditions are overlooked, primitivism, ignorance and the brawling it produces will place the same limitations on the movement as would otherwise be set by the bureaucracy. Having taken a different point of departure here—that of organizational *technique* instead of the level of consciousness—we have run up against the same problem which we had already cleared up earlier: namely, that it would be giving the capitalist mode of production too much credit to assume it to be a perfect school for preparing the proletariat for independent activity, or that it automatically creates the ability of the working masses to spontaneously recognize and achieve all the objectives and organizational forms of their own liberation.

Lenin, in his first debate with the Mensheviks, very much underestimated the danger of the apparatus becoming autonomous and of the bureaucratization of the workers parties. He proceeded from the assumption that the danger of opportunism in the modern labor movement was a threat coming mainly from petty-bourgeois academicians and petty-bourgeois "pure trade unionists." He made fun of the struggle of many of his comrades against the danger of "bureaucratism." Actually, history showed that the greatest source of opportunism in the Social Democracy before the first world war came from neither the academicians nor the "pure trade unionists," but *from the social-democratic party bureaucracy itself*, i.e., from a practice of "legalism" limited on the one hand to electoral and parliamentary activity, and on the other to a struggle for immediate reforms of an economic and trade-

union nature. (To merely describe this practice is to confirm how much it resembles that of today's West European Communist parties!)

Trotsky and Luxemburg recognized this danger more accurately and earlier than Lenin. As early as 1904 Luxemburg expressed the thought that a "difference between the eager attack of the mass and the [overly] prudent position of the Social Democracy" was possible.[40] The thought is hardly expressed before it is discarded; the only possible validity it might have would be in the imaginary case of an "overcentralization" of the party along Leninist lines. Two years later Trotsky already expresses this with more precision:

> The European Socialist parties, particularly the largest of them, the German Social-Democratic Party, have developed their conservatism in proportion as the masses have embraced socialism and the more these masses have become organized and disciplined. As a consequence of this, Social Democracy as an organization embodying the political experience of the proletariat may at a certain moment become a direct obstacle to open conflict between the workers and bourgeois reaction. In other words, the propagandist-socialist conservatism of the proletarian parties may at a certain moment hold back the direct struggle of the proletariat for power.[41]

This prognosis has been tragically confirmed by history. Lenin did not yet see this until the eve of the first world war, whereas the German left had long before shed its illusions about the social-democratic party administration.[42]

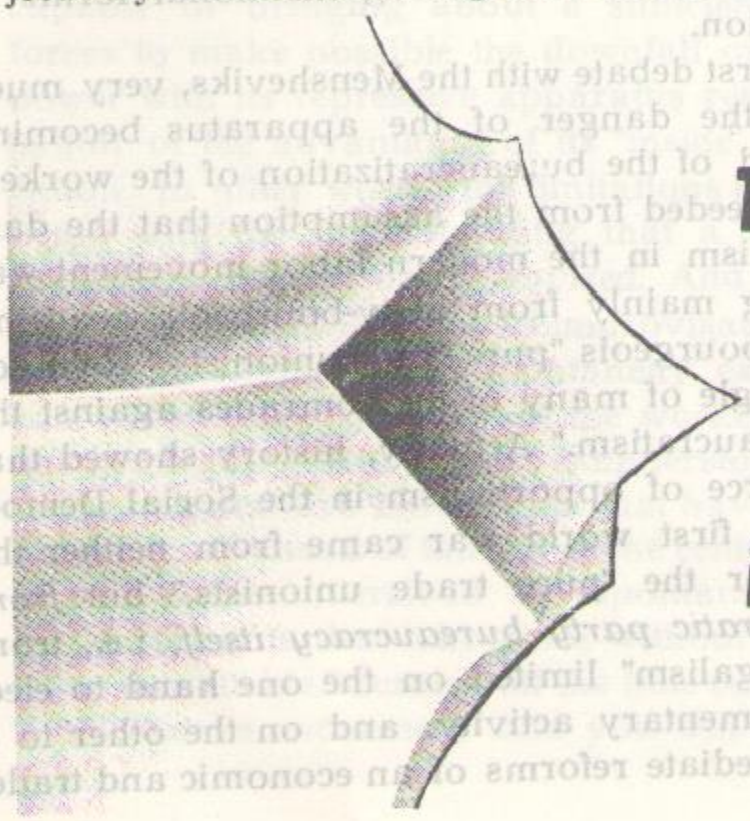
Organizational theory, revolutionary program, revolutionary practice

After the traumatic shock suffered by Lenin on August 4, 1914, however, he too made a decisive step forward on this question. *From then on, the question of organization became one not only of function but also of content.* It is no longer simply a question of contrasting "the organization" in general to "spontaneity" in general, as Lenin frequently does in *What is to Be Done?* and in *One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward.* Now it is a question of carefully distinguishing between an objectively conservative organization and an objectively revolutionary one. This distinction is made according to *objective* criteria (revolutionary program, bringing this program to the masses, revolutionary practice, etc.), and the spontaneous combativity of the masses is consciously preferred to the actions or even the existence of conservative reformist mass organizations. "Naive" organizational fetishists might claim that after 1914 Lenin went over to the Luxemburgist view of "spontaneism" when, in conflicts between "unorganized masses" and the social-democratic organization, he systematically defends the former against the latter, or accuses the latter of betraying the former.[43] Lenin now even regards the destruction of conservatized organizations as an inescapable prerequisite for the emancipation of the proletariat.[44]

Yet the correction, or better yet completion, of his theory of organization, which Lenin undertook after 1914, was not a step backward to the worship of "pure" spontaneity, but rather a step forward toward distinguishing between the *revolutionary* party and organization in general. Now, instead of saying that the purpose of the party is to develop the political class consciousness of the working class, the formula becomes much more precise: The function of the revolutionary vanguard consists in developing *revolutionary consciousness* in the vanguard of the working class. The building of the revolutionary class party is the process whereby the program of the socialist revolution is fused with the experience the majority of the advanced workers have acquired in struggle.[45]

This elaboration and expansion of the Leninist theory of organization following the outbreak of the first world war goes hand in hand with an expansion of the Leninist concept of the relevance of revolution to the present. Although before the year 1914 this was for Lenin limited by and large to Russia, after 1914 it was extended to all of Europe. (After the Russian revolution of 1905, Lenin had already recognized the immediate potential for revolution in the colonies and semicolonies.)

Consequently, the validity of the Leninist "strategic plan" for the imperialist countries of Western Europe today is closely tied to the question of the nature of the historical epoch in which we live. From the standpoint of historical materialism, one is justified in deriving a conception of the party from the "present potential for revolution" only if one proceeds from the assumption—correct and provable, in our estimation—that beginning with the first world war, and no later than the Russian October revolution, the worldwide capitalist system entered an epoch of historic structural crisis[46] which *must* periodically lead to revolu-



The function of the revolutionary vanguard is to develop revolutionary consciousness in the vanguard of the working class

tionary situations. If, on the other hand, one assumes that we are still in an ascending stage of capitalism as a world system, then such a conception would have to be rejected as being completely "voluntaristic." For what is decisive in the Leninist strategic plan is certainly not revolutionary *propaganda*—which, of course, revolutionaries have to carry out even in nonrevolutionary periods—but its focus on revolutionary *actions* breaking out in the near or not distant future. Even in the ascending epoch of capitalism such actions were possible (*cf.* the Paris Commune), but only as unsuccessful exceptions. Under such conditions, building a party by concentrating efforts on preparing to effectively participate in such actions would hardly make sense.

The difference between a "workers party" in general (referring to its membership or even its electoral supporters) and a revolutionary workers party (or the nucleus of such a party) is to be found not only in program or objective social functions (which is to promote, not pacify, all objectively revolutionary mass actions, or all challenges and forms of action that attack and call into question the essence of the capitalist mode of production and the bourgeois state), but also in its ability to find a suitable pedagogical method enabling it to bring this program to ever-growing numbers of workers.

One can go further, however, and formulate the question more sharply: Is the danger of the apparatus becoming autonomous limited only to opportunist and reformist "workers" organizations, or does it threaten *any* organization, including one with a revolutionary program and a revolutionary practice? Is not a developing bureaucracy the *unavoidable* consequence of *any* division of labor, including that between "leadership" and "membership," and even in a revolutionary group? And is not, therefore, every revolutionary organization, once it has spread beyond a small milieu, condemned at a certain point in its development and in the development of mass struggles to become a brake on the struggle of the proletarian masses for emancipation?

If this line of argument were accepted as correct, it could lead to only one conclusion: that the socialist emancipation of the working class and of humanity is impossible—because the supposedly inevitable "autonimization" and degeneration of any organization must be seen *as one part of a dilemma,* the other part of which is represented by the tendency for all unorganized workers, all intellectuals only partially involved in action, and all persons caught up in universal commodity production to sink into a petty-bourgeois "false consciousness." Only a comprehensive, revolutionary practice, aiming at total consciousness and enriching theory, makes it possible to avoid the penetration of the "ideology of the ruling class" into even the ranks of individual revolutionaries. This can only be a collective and organized practice. If the above argument were correct, one would have to conclude that, with or without an organization, advanced workers would be condemned either not to reach political class consciousness or to rapidly lose it.

In reality, this line of argument is false since it equates the beginning of a process with its end result. Thus, from the existence of a *danger* that even revolutionary organizations will become autonomous, it deduces, in a static and fatalistic fashion, that this autonomy is *inevitable.* This is neither empirically nor theoretically demonstrable. For the extent of the danger of bureaucratic degeneration of a revolutionary vanguard organization—and even more of a revolutionary party—depends not only on the *tendency* toward autonomy, which in fact afflicts all institutions in bourgeois society, but also upon existing *counter-tendencies.* Among these are the integration of the revolutionary organization into an international movement which is independent of "national" organizations and which constantly keeps a theoretical eye on them (not through an apparatus but through political criticism); a close involvement in the actual class struggle and actual revolutionary struggles that make possible a continuous selection of cadres in practice; a systematic attempt to do away with the division of labor by ensuring a continuous rotation of personnel between factory, university and full-time party functionaries; institutional guarantees (limitations on the income of full-timers, defense of the organizational norms of internal democracy and the freedom to form tendencies and factions, etc.).

The outcome of these contradictory tendencies depends on *the struggle between them,* which, in turn, is ultimately determined by *two social factors:*[47] on the one hand, the degree of *special social interests* set loose by the "autonomous organization," and on the other hand, the extent of the *political activity* of the vanguard of the working class. Only when the latter decisively diminishes can the former decisively break out into the open. Thus, the entire argument amounts to a tedious tautology: During a period of *increasing passivity* the working class cannot be actively struggling for its liberation. It does not at all prove that during a period of *increasing activity* on the part of advanced workers, revolutionary organizations are not an effective instrument for bringing about liberation, though their "arbitrariness" can and must be circumscribed by the independent activity of the class (or of its advanced sections). The revolutionary organization is an instrument for making revolutions. And, without the increasing political activity of broad masses of workers, proletarian revolutions are simply not possible.

Organizational theory, democratic centralism and soviet democracy

The objection was made to Lenin's theory of organization that through its exaggerated centralization it would prevent the development of internal party democracy. But this objection is a confused one, for inasmuch as the Leninist principles of organization restrict the organization to active members *operating under a collective control,* they actually expand rather than reduce the scope of party democracy.

Once a workers organization surpasses a certain numerical size there are basically only two possible organizational models: that of the dues-paying electoral club (or territorial organization), which corresponds today to the organizational forms of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany and of the French Communist Party; or that of a combat unit based on the selection of only active and conscious members. To be sure, the first model in

theory permits a certain latitude for grumblers and opponents to fool around in, but only where matters of secondary importance are involved. *Otherwise, the great mass of the apolitical and passive membership provides the apparatus with a voting base that can always be mobilized,* and which has nothing to do with class consciousness. (A not insignificant number of these members are even materially dependent on the apparatus—the bulk of the municipal and administrative workers and employees, the employees of the workers organization itself, etc.)

In the combat organization, however, which is composed of members that have to exhibit a minimum of consciousness simply to become members, the possibility of finding independent thinking is actually much greater. Neither "pure apparatchiks" nor pure careerists can take over as easily as in an ordinary electoral club. So differences of opinion will be resolved less in terms of material dependency or abstract "loyalty" than according to actual substance. To be sure, the mere fact that the organization is composed in this fashion is no automatic guarantee against bureaucratization of the organization. But at least it provides an essential condition for preventing it.[48]

The relation between the revolutionary organization (a party nucleus or a party) and the mass of workers abruptly changes as soon as an actual revolutionary explosion occurs. At that point the seeds sown over the years by revolutionary and consciously socialist elements start sprouting. Broad masses are able to achieve revolutionary class consciousness at once. The revolutionary initiatives of broad masses can far outdistance that of many revolutionary groupings.

In his *History of the Russian Revolution,* Trotsky emphasized in several instances that at certain conjunctures in the revolution the Russian working masses were even ahead of the Bolshevik Party.[49] Nevertheless, one should not generalize from this fact, and above all, it must not be separated from the fact that, prior to Lenin's April Theses, the Bolshevik Party's strategic conception of the nature and goal of the Russian revolution was insufficiently worked out.[50] It ran the risk of having to pay for this until Lenin took decisive action with his April Theses. He was able to do so with such ease, however, because the masses of educated worker-Bolsheviks were pushing him in that very direction and were themselves a reflection of the powerful radicalization of the Russian working class.

An objective, i.e., comprehensive, view of the role of the Bolshevi Party organization in the Russian revolution would no doubt have to be formulated somewhat differently. While the leading cadre of the party proved several times to be a conservative block preventing the party from going over to Trotsky's position on the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat (soviet power), at the same time it became evident that the crystallization of a revolutionary workers cadre schooled in two decades of revolutionary organization and revolutionary activity was instrumental in making this decisive strategic turn a success. Should one wish to construct a correlation between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the "Leninist concept of the party," one would at least have to make allowances for this decisive element of intervention. *Stalin's victory was not the result of the Leninist "theory of organization" but the result of the disappearance of a decisive component of this concept: the presence of a broad layer of worker cadres, schooled in revolution and maintaining a high degree of activity, with a close relationship to the masses.* Moreover, Lenin himself would have in no way denied that in the absence of this factor the Leninist concept of the party could turn into its opposite.[51]

The soviet system is the only universal answer discovered thus far by the working class to the question of how to organize its independent activity during and following the revolution.[52] It allows all of the forces within the class—and all the laboring and progressive layers of society in general—to be brought together in a simultaneous, open confrontation between the various tendencies existing within the class itself. Every true soviet system—i.e., one that is actually elected by the mass of the workers and has not been imposed upon them by one or another selective power apparatus—will for that reason only be able to reflect the social and ideological diversity of the proletarian layers emphasized above. A workers council is in reality a united front of the most diverse political tendencies that are in agreement on one central point: the common defense of the revolution against the class enemy. (In the same way, a strike committee reflects the most widely differing tendencies among the workers, yet with one exception: It includes only those tendencies that are participating in the strike. Scabs have no place in a strike committee.)

There is no contradiction whatever between the existence of a revolutionary organization of the Leninist type and genuine soviet democracy, or soviet power. On the contrary, without the systematic organizational work of a revolutionary vanguard, a soviet system will either be quickly throttled by reformist and semireformist bureaucracies (*cf.* the German soviet system from 1918 to 1919), or it loses its political effectiveness due to its inability to solve the central political tasks (*cf.* the Spanish revolutionary committees between July 1936 and spring 1937).

The hypothesis that a soviet system makes parties superfluous has one of two sources. Either it proceeds from the naive assumption that the introduction of soviets homogenizes the working class overnight, dissolves all differences of ideology and interest, and automatically and spontaneously suggests to the entire working class "the revolutionary solution" to *all* the strategic and tactical problems of the revolution. Or, it is merely a pretext for giving to a small group of self-appointed "leaders" the opportunity to manipulate a rather broad, inarticulate mass in that this mass is deprived of any possibility of systematically coming to grips with these strategic and tactical questions of the revolution, i.e., *of freely discussing and politically differentiating itself.* (This is obviously the case, for example, with the Yugoslav system of so-called self-management.)

The revolutionary organization *can,* therefore, guarantee the working masses in the soviet system a greater degree of independent activity and self-awareness, and thereby of revolutionary class consciousness, than could an undifferentiated system of representation. But of course to this end it must stimulate and not hold back the independent action of the working masses. It is precisely this independent initiative of the masses which reaches its fullest development in the soviet system. Again we reach a similar

conclusion: The Leninist concept of organization, built upon a correct revolutionary strategy (i. e., on a correct assessment of the objective historical process), is simply the collective coordinator of the activity of the masses, the collective memory and digested experience of the masses, in place of a constantly repetitive and expanding discontinuity in time, space and consciousness.

History has also shown in this connection that there is a substantial difference between a party *calling* itself a revolutionary and actually *being* a revolutionary party. When a group of functionaries not only opposes the initiative and activity of the masses but seeks to frustrate them by any means, including military force (one thinks of Hungary in October-November 1956 or Czechoslovakia since August 1968), when this group not only finds no common language with a soviet system springing spontaneously from mass struggles, but throttles and destroys this system behind a pretext of defending "the leading role of the party"[53] — then we are obviously no longer dealing with a revolutionary party of the proletariat but with an apparatus that represents the special interests of a privileged layer deeply hostile to the independent activity of the masses: the bureaucracy. The fact that a revolutionary party *can* degenerate into a party of bureaucracy is, however, no more an argument against the Leninist concept of organization than the fact that doctors have killed, not cured, many patients represents an argument against medical science. Any step away from this concept toward "pure" mass spontaneity would be comparable to reverting from medical science to quackery.

Sociology of economism, bureaucratism and spontaneism

When we emphasized that Lenin's concept of organization in reality represents a concept of the current potential for proletarian revolution, we already touched upon the central factor in the Leninist theory of proletarian class consciousness: the problem of the definition of the revolutionary subject under capitalism.

For Marx and Lenin (as well as for Luxemburg and Trotsky, although they did not draw all the necessary conclusions from this fact until some time before 1914), the revolutionary subject is *the only potentially, only periodically revolutionary working class* as it works, thinks and lives under capitalism, i. e., in the totality of its social existence.[54] The Leninist theory of organization proceeds directly from this assessment of the position of the revolutionary subject, for it is self-evident that a subject, thus defined, can only be a *contradictory* one. On the one hand it is exposed to wage slavery, alienated labor, the reification of all human relations, and the influence of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology. On the other hand, at periodic intervals it passes over into a radicalizing class struggle, and even into open revolutionary battle against the capitalist mode of production and the bourgeois state apparatus. It is in this periodic fluctuation that the history of the *real* class struggle of the last one hundred and fifty years is expressed. It is absolutely impossible to sum up the history of, say, the French or the German labor movements of the past hundred years with either the formula "increasing passivity" or "uninterrupted revolutionary activity." It is obviously a unity of *both* elements with an alternating emphasis on one or the other.

As ideological tendencies, opportunism and sectarianism have their deepest theoretical roots in an undialectical definition of the revolutionary subject. For the opportunists, this revolutionary subject is the *everyday worker*. They tend to imitate the attitude of this worker in everything and "to idolize his backward side," as Plekhanov so well put it. If the workers are concerned only with questions limited to the shops, then they are "pure trade unionists." If the workers are caught up in a wave of patriotic jingoism, then they become social-patriots or social-imperialists. If the workers submit to cold-war propaganda, they become cold-warriors: "The masses are always right." The latest and the most wretched expression of such opportunism consists of determining the program — let it be an electoral program — no longer through an objective scientific analysis of society but with the aid of . . . opinion polls.

But this opportunism leads to an insoluble contradiction. Fortunately, the moods of the masses do not stand still but can change dramatically in a rather short period of time. Today the workers are concerned only with internal shop questions, but tomorrow they will throng the streets in a political demonstration. Today they are "for" the defense of the imperialist fatherland against the "external enemy," but tomorrow they will be fed up with the war and again recognize their own ruling class as the main enemy. Today they passively accept collaboration with the bosses, but tomorrow they will move against it through a wildcat strike. The logic of opportunism leads — once the adaptation to bourgeois society has been excused through references to the attitude of the "masses" — to resistance *to these very masses* as soon as they begin in a sudden reversal, to move into action against bourgeois society.

Sectarians simplify the revolutionary subject just as much as opportunists, but in the opposite sense. If only the everyday worker counts for the opportunists — i. e., the worker who is assimilating and adapting to bourgeois relations — for the sectarians it is only the "ideal" proletarian, one who acts like a revolutionary, who counts. If the worker does not behave in a revolutionary fashion, he has ceased to be a revolutionary subject: he is demoted to being "bourgeois." Extreme sectarians — such as certain ultraleft "spontaneists," certain Stalinists, and certain Maoists — will even go so far as to equate the working *class* with the capitalist *class* if it hesitates to completely accept the particular sectarian ideology in question.[55]

Extreme objectivism on the one hand ("everything the workers do is revolutionary"), and extreme subjectivism on the other hand ("only those who accept our doctrine are revolutionary or proletarian"), join hands in the final analysis when they deny the objectively revolutionary character of huge mass struggles led by masses with a contradictory consciousness. For the opportunist objectivists these struggles are not revolutionary because "next month the majority will still go ahead and vote for the SPD (West German Social Democrats) or DeGaulle." For the sectarian subjectivists they have nothing to do with revolution "because the (i. e., our) revolutionary group is still too weak."

The social nature of these two tendencies can be ascertained without difficulty. It corresponds to the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia: The opportunists for the most part

represent the intelligentsia tied to the labor bureaucracy in mass organizations or in the bourgeois state apparatus, while the sectarians represent an intelligentsia that is either declassed or merely watches things from the sidelines, remaining outside of the real movement. In both cases, the forced separation between the objective and subjective factors at work in the contradictory but undivided revolutionary subject corresponds to a divorce between practice and theory which can lead only to an opportunist practice and to an idealizing "theory" embodying "false consciousness."

It is characteristic, however, for many opportunists (among others, trade-union bureaucrats), as well as many sectarian literati, to accuse precisely the revolutionary Marxists of being petty-bourgeois intellectuals who would like to "subjugate" the working class.[56] This question also plays a certain role in the discussions within the revolutionary student movement. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze more closely the problem of the sociology of the bureaucracy, of economism, and of spontaneism (or, of the "handicraftsman's approach" to the question of organization).

The mediation between manual and mental labor, production and accumulation, occurs at several points in bourgeois society, though at different levels, for example, in the factory. What is meant by the general concept of "intelligentsia," or "intellectual petty bourgeoisie" or "technical intelligentsia" corresponds in reality to many diverse activities of such mediation whose relation to the actual class struggle is quite distinct. One could essentially distinguish the following categories (which in no way do we claim constitute a complete analysis):

1. The genuine intermediaries between capital and labor in the process of production, i.e., the secondary officers of capital: foremen, timekeepers and other cadre personnel in the factories, among whose tasks is the maintenance, in the interest of capital, of labor discipline within the factory.

2. The intermediaries between science and technique, or between technique and production: laboratory assistants, scientific researchers, inventors, technologists, planners, project engineers, draftsmen, etc. In contrast to category 1, these layers are not accomplices in the process of extracting surplus value from the producer. They take part in the material process of production itself and for that reason are not exploiters but producers of surplus value.

3. The intermediaries between production and realization of surplus value: advertising managers and offices, market research institutes, cadres and scientists occupied in the distribution sector, marketing specialists, etc.

4. The intermediaries between buyers and sellers of the commodity labor power: Above all, these are the trade-union functionaries and, in a wider sense, all functionaries of the bureaucratized mass organizations of the labor movement.

5. The intermediaries between capital and labor in the sphere of the superstructure, the ideological producers (i.e., those who are occupied with producing ideology): a section of the bourgeois politicians ("public opinion makers"), the bourgeois professors of the so-called humanities, journalists, some artists, etc.

6. The intermediaries between science and the working class, the theoretical producers, who have not been professionally incorporated into the ideological production of the ruling class and are relatively able, being free from material dependency on this production, to engage in criticism of bourgeois relations.

One could add a seventh group, which is partially included in the fifth, and partially in the sixth. In classical, stable bourgeois society, teaching as a profession falls into category 5, both because of the unlimited predominance of bourgeois ideology and because of the generally abstract and ideological character of all professional teaching. With the growing structural crisis in the neocapitalist high schools and universities, however, a change in its objective standards takes place. On the one hand, the general crisis of capitalism precipitates a general crisis in neocapitalist ideology, which is increasingly called into question. On the other hand, teaching serves less as abstract, ideological indoctrination and more as the direct technocratic preparation for the future intellectual workers (of categories 2 and 3) to be incorporated into the process of production. This makes it possible for the content of such teaching to be increasingly tied to a regained awareness of individual alienation, as well as to social criticism in related fields (and even to social criticism in general).

It now becomes clear which part of the intelligentsia will exert a negative influence upon the developing class consciousness of the proletariat: It is above all groups 3, 4 and 5. (We need say nothing about group 1 because in general it keeps its distance from the workers organizations anyway.) What is most dangerous for the initiative and self-assurance of the working class is a symbiosis or fusion of groups 4 and 5, as has occurred on a broad scale since the first world war in the social-democratic and today already partially in the Moscow-oriented Communist mass organizations in the West.

Groups 2 and 6, on the other hand, can only enhance the impact of the working-class and revolutionary organizations *because they equip them with the knowledge that is indispensable for a relentless critique of bourgeois society and for the successful overthrow of this society, and even more for the successful taking over of the means of production by the associated producers.*

Those who rail against the growing union of workers organizations with groups 2 and 6 of the intelligentsia objectively assist groups 3, 4 and 5 in exerting their negative influence on the working class. For never in history has there been a class struggle that has not been accompanied by an ideological struggle.[57] It boils down to a question of determing *which* ideology can sink roots in the working class; or, to phrase it better, whether bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology or Marxist scientific theory will develop among the workers. Whoever opposes "every outside intellectual influence" within the working class in struggle either forgets or pushes aside the fact that the influence which groups 1, 3, 4 and 5 exert on this working class is *permanently and unremittingly* at work upon the proletariat through the entire mechanism of bourgeois society and capitalist economy, and that the ultraleft "spontaneists" have no panacea at their disposal for putting an end to this process. To thunder against the influence of Marxist intellectuals within the working class means simply to allow the influence of

History has shown that there is a substantial difference between a party calling itself revolutionary, and being revolutionary

the bourgeois intelligentsia to spread without opposition.[58] Still worse: By resisting the formation of a revoutionary organization and the education of professional proletarian revolutionaries, Mensheviks and "spontaneists" are objectively forced to help perpetuate the division between manual and intellectual labor, i.e., the spiritual subjugation of the workers to the intellectuals and the rather rapid bureaucratization of the workers organizations. For, a worker who continuously remains within the capitalist process of production will most often not be in a position to globally assimilate theory, and will thereby remain dependent upon "petty-bourgeois specialists." For that reason, a decisive step can be taken within the revolutionary organization toward the intellectual emancipation of at least the most advanced workers and toward an initial victory over the division of labor within the workers movement itself through the intermittent removal of workers from the factories.

This is not yet the final word on the sociology of spontaneism. We must ask ourselves: In which layers of the working class will the "antipathy" and "distrust" toward intellectuals have the most influence? Obviously in those layers whose social and economic existence *most sharply exposes them to an actual conflict with intellectual labor.* By and large, these are the workers of the small and medium-sized factories threatened by technological progress; self-taught workers who, through personal effort, have differentiated themselves from the mass; workers who have scrambled to the top of bureaucratic organizations; workers who, because of their low educational and cultural level, are the furthest removed from intellectual labor—and therefore also regard it with the greatest mistrust and hostility. In other words, the social basis of economism, spontaneism, the "handicraftsman's approach" to the question of organization and hostility toward science within the working class is the craft layer of this class.

On the other hand, among the workers of the large factories and cities, of the extensive branches of industry in the forefront of technological progress, the thirst for knowledge, the greater familiarity with technical and scientific processes, and the greater audacity in projecting the conquest of power in both the factory and the state make it much easier to understand the objectively necessary role of revolutionary theoreticians and of the revolutionary organization.

The spontaneous tendencies in the labor movement often, if not always, correspond exactly to this social basis. This was especially true for anarcho-syndicalism in the Latin countries before the first world war. This was also true for Menshevism, which was thoroughly defeated by Bolshevism in the large metropolitan factories, but which found its most important proletarian base in the typically small-town mining and oil-field districts of southern Russia.[59] Attempts today, in the era of the third industrial revolution, to revive this craftsman caste approach under the pretext of guaranteeing "workers autonomy" could only have the same result as in the past—namely, to dissipate the forces of the advanced and potentially revolutionary working class and to give a boost to the semi-craft, bureaucratized sections of the movement that are under the constant influence of bourgeois idelogy.

Scientific intelligentsia, social science and proletarian class consciousness

The massive reintroduction of intellectual labor into the process of production brought about by the third industrial revolution, which was foreseen by Marx and whose foundations were already laid in the second industrial revolution,[60] has created the prerequisite for a much broader layer of the scientific intelligentsia to regain the awareness of alienation which it had lost through its removal from the process of direct production of surplus value and its transformation into a direct or indirect consumer of surplus value. For it, too, is overcome by alienation in bourgeois society. This is the material basis not only for the student revolt in the imperialist countries but also for the possibility of involving increasing numbers of scientists and technicians into the revolutionary movement.

The participation of the intelligentsia in the classical socialist movement before the first world war generally tended to decline. Though it was considerable at the start of the movement, it became smaller and smaller as the organized mass movement of the working class became stronger. In a little known polemic against Max Adler in 1910, Trotsky revealed the causes of this process to be on the whole materialistic: the intelligentsia's social dependency on the big bourgeoisie and the bourgeois state; an ideological identification with the class interests it thereby serves; and the inability of the workers movement, organized as a "counter-society," to compete with its counterpart. Trotsky predicted that this would probably change very quickly, in a revolutionary epoch, on the eve of the proletarian revolution.[61]

From these correct premises, however, he drew what were already incorrect tactical conclusions, when for instance he failed to see the great importance which in 1908-1909 Lenin accorded the student movement (which was re-emerging in the middle of the victorious counter-revolution), considering it an albatross for the subsequent, new rise in the revolutionary mass movement (that was to begin in 1912).

He even went so far as to maintain that it was the "fault" of the leading revolutionary intelligentsia in the Russian Social Democracy if it was able to spread "its overall social characteristics: a spirit of sectarianism, an individualism typical of intellectuals, and ideological fetishism."[62] As Trotsky later admitted, he at that time underestimated the *political and social significance* of the faction fight between the Bolsheviks and the Liquidators, which was only an extension of the earlier struggle between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. History was to show that this struggle had nothing to do with a product of "intellectual sectarianism," but with the separation of socialist, revolutionary consciousness from petty-bourgeois, reformist consciousness.[63]

It is correct, however, that the participation of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia in the building of the revolutionary class party of the Russian proletariat was still a pure product of individual selection without any social roots. And since the October revolution, this has inevitably turned against the *proletarian* revolution, for the masses of the technical intelligentsia were not *able* to go over to the camp of the revolution. At first they sabotaged economic production and the methods of social organization on the broadest scale; then their cooperation had to be "bought" through high salaries; and finally they were transformed into the driving force behind the bureaucratization and degeneration of this revolution.

Inasmuch as the position of the technical intelligentsia (especially category 2 above) in the material process of production has today decisively changed, and since this technical intelligentsia is gradually being transformed into a section of the wage-earning class, the possibility of its massive participation in the revolutionary process and in the reorganization of society stands on much firmer ground than in the past. Frederick Engels had already pointed to the historically decisive role this intelligentsia could play in the construction of the socialist society.

> In order to take over and put into operation the means of production, we need people, and in large numbers, who are technically trained. We do not have them. . . . I foresee us in the next eight to ten years recruiting enough young technicians, doctors, lawyers and teachers to be in a position to let party comrades administer the factories and essential goods for the nation. Then our accession to power will be quite natural and will work itself out relatively smoothly. If, on the other hand, we prematurely come to power through a war, the technicians will be our main opponents, and will deceive and betray us whenever possible. We will have to use terror against them and still they will shit all over us.[64]

Of course, it must be added that in the course of this third industrial revolution the working class itself, which is much better qualified than in 1890, exhibits a much greater ability to directly manage the factories than in Engels' time. But in the final analysis, it is technical abilities that are required for the broad masses to be able to exert political and social control over the "specialists" (a matter about which Lenin had so many illusions in 1918). A growing union between the technical intelligentsia and the industrial proletariat, and the growing participation of revolutionary intellectuals in the revolutionary party, can only facilitate that control.

As the contradiction between the objective socialization of production and labor on the one hand, and private appropriation on the other, intensifies (i.e., as the crisis of the capitalist relations of production sharpens)—and today we are experiencing a new and sharper form of this contradiction, which underlay the May 1968 events in France and the mass struggles in Italy in 1969—and as neocapitalism seeks to win a new lease on life by raising the working class' level of consumption, science will increasingly become for the masses a revolutionary, productive force in two regards: With automation and the growing mountain of commodities, it produces not only a growing crisis in the production and distribution process of capital, which is based upon generalized commodity production; it also produces revolutionary consciousness in growing masses of people by allowing the myths and masks of the capitalist routine to be torn away, and by making it possible for the worker, reconquering the consciousness of being alienated, to put an end to that alienation. As the decisive barrier which today holds back the working class from acquiring political class consciousness is found to reside less in the misery of the masses or the extreme narrowness of their surroundings than in the constant influence of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois ideological consumption and mystification, it is precisely then that the eye-opening function of critical social science can play a truly revolutionary role in the new awakening of the class consciousness among the masses.

Of course, this makes necessary the existence of concrete ties with the working masses—a requirement that can only be met by the advanced workers on the one hand and the revolutionary organization on the other. And this also requires the revolutionary, scientific intelligentsia not to "go to the people" with the modest populist masochism that restricts it to humbly supporting struggles for higher wages but to bring the awakened and critical layers of the working class what they are unable to achieve by themselves, due to their fragmented state of consciousness: the scientific knowledge and awareness that will make it possible for them to recognize the scandal of concealed exploitation and disguised oppression for what it is.

Historical pedagogy and communication of class consciousness

Once it is understood that the Leninist theory of organization tries to answer the problems of the current potential for revolution and of the revolutionary subject, this theory then leads directly to the question of historical pedagogy, i.e., the problem of *transforming* potential class consciousness into actual class consciousness, and trade-unionist consciousness into political, revolutionary consciousness. This problem can only be resolved in the light of the classification of the working class delineated above—into the mass of the workers, advanced workers, and organized revolutionary cadre.

To assimilate its growing class consciousness, each layer requires its own methods of instruction, goes through its own learning process and needs to have a special form of communication with the class as a whole and with the realm of theoretical production. The historical role of the revolutionary vanguard party Lenin had in mind can be summed up as that of jointly expressing these three forms of pedagogy.

The broad masses learn only through action. To hope to "impart" to them revolutionary consciousness through propaganda is an endeavor worthy of Sysiphus—and as fruitless. Yet although the masses learn only through action, all actions do not necessarily lead to a mass acquisition of *revolutionary* class consciousness. Actions around immediately realizable economic and political goals that can be completely achieved within the framework of the capitalist social order do not produce revolutionary class consciousness. This was one of the great illusions of the "optimistic" Social Democrats at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth (including Engels) who believed that there was a straight line leading from partial successes in electoral struggles and strikes to revolutionary consciousness and to an increase in the proletariat's revolutionary combativity. [65]

This has proven to be historically incorrect. These partial successes certainly played a significant and positive role in strengthening the self-confidence and combativity of the proletarian masses in general. (The anarchists were wrong to reject these partial struggles out of hand.) Yet they did not prepare the working masses for revolutionary struggle. The German working class' lack of expe-rience in revolutionary struggles on the one hand, and the existence, on the other hand, of such experience in the Russian working class, was the most important difference in consciousness between the two classes on the eve of the first world war. It decisively contributed to the dissimilar outcome of the revolutions of 1917-1919 in Germany and in Russia.

Since the goal of mass actions is generally the satisfaction of immediate needs, it becomes an important aspect of revolutionary strategy to link to these needs demands that objectively cannot be achieved or coopted within the framework of the capitalist social order, and which produce an objectively revolutionary dynamic that has to lead to a test of strength between the two decisive social classes over the question of power. This is the strategy of transitional demands which, through the efforts of Lenin, was incorporated into the program of the Communist International at its fourth congress, and which was later elaborated by Trotsky into the main body of the program of the Fourth International. [66]

The development of revolutionary class consciousness among the broad masses is possible only if they accumulate experiences of *struggles* that are not only limited to the winning of partial demands within the framework of capitalism. The gradual injection of these demands into mass struggles can come about only through the efforts of a broad layer of advanced workers who are closely linked to the masses and who disseminate and publicize these demands (which normally do *not* spontaneously grow out of the day-to-day experiences of the class) in the factories, experimenting with them in various skirmishes, and spreading them through agitation, until a point is reached where favorable objective and subjective conditions converge, making the realization of these demands the actual objective of great strikes, demonstrations, agitational campaigns, etc.

Although revolutionary class consciousness among the broad masses develops only out of the experience of *objectively revolutionary struggle*, among advanced workers it flows from the experience of life, work and struggle in general. These experiences do not necessarily *need* to be revolutionary at all. From the daily experiences of class conflict, these advanced workers draw the elementary conclusions about the need for class solidarity, class action and class organization. The programmatic and organizational forms through which this action and organization are to be led will differ greatly depending upon objective conditions and concrete experiences. But the advanced workers' experience of life, work and struggle leads them to the threshold of understanding the inadequacy of activity which seeks merely to reform the existing society rather than abolish it.

The activity of the revolutionary vanguard can make it possible for the class consciousness of the advanced workers to cross over this threshold. It can fulfill this role of catalyst neither automatically nor without regard for objective conditions. It can only fulfill it when it is itself equal to the task, i.e., if the content of its theoretical, propagandistic and literary activity corresponds to the needs of the advanced workers, and if the form of this activity does not trample underfoot the laws of pedagogy (avoiding ultimatistic formulations). At the same time, this kind of activity must be linked to *activity of a practical nature* and to a *political perspective*, thus enhancing the credibility of both the revolutionary strategy and the organization putting it forward.

In periods of abating class struggles, of a temporary decline in the self-confidence of the working class, during which the stability of the class enemy appears temporarily assured, the revolutionary vanguard will not be able to achieve its objectives even if its activity is completely equal to the task of catalyzing revolutionary class consciousness among the broadest layer of advanced workers. The belief that a mere defense of "the correct tactic" or "the correct line" is sufficient to miraculously generate a growing revolutionary force, even in periods of declining class struggle, is an illusion stemming from bourgeois rationalism, not from the materialist dialectic. This illusion, incidentally, is the cause of most splits within the revolutionary movement because the organizational sectarianism of the splitters is based on the naive view that the "application of the correct tactic" can win over more people in the as yet untouched periphery than it can among revolutionaries who are already organized. As long as the objective conditions remain unfavorable, these splits for that reason usually result in grouplets that are even weaker than those whose "false tactics" made them seem so worthy of condemnation in the first place.

This does not mean, however, that the work of the revolutionary vanguard among the advanced workers remains useless or ineffectual during unfavorable objective circumstances. It produces no great *immediate* successes, yet it is a tremendously important, and even decisive,

preparation for that turning point when class struggles once again begin to mount!

For just as broad masses with no experience of revolutionary struggle cannot develop revolutionary class consciousness, advanced workers who have never heard of transitional demands cannot introduce them into the next wave of class struggle. The patient, persistent preparation carried out, with constant attention to detail, by the revolutionary vanguard organization, sometimes over a period of years, pays off in rich dividends the day the "natural leaders of the class," still hesitating and not yet completely free from hostile influences, suddenly, during a big strike or demonstration, take up the demand for workers control and thrust it to the forefront of the struggle.[67]

To be in a position, however, to convince a country's advanced workers and radical intelligentsia of the need to extend broad mass struggles beyond the level of immediate demands to that of transitional demands, it is not enough for the revolutionary vanguard organization to learn by heart a list of such demands culled from Lenin and Trotsky. It must acquire a twofold knowledge and a two-sided method of learning. On the one hand, it must assimilate the body of the experiences of the international proletariat over more than a century of revolutionary class struggle. On the other hand, it must carry on a continuous, serious analysis of the present overall social reality, national as well as international. This alone makes it possible to apply the lessons of history to the reality at hand. It is clear that on the basis of the Marxist theory of knowledge, only practice can ultimately provide the criterion for measuring the actual theoretical assimilation of present-day reality. For that reason, international practice is an absolute prerequisite for a Marxist international analysis, and an international organization is an absolute prerequisite for such a practice.

Without a serious assimilation of the entire historical experience of the international workers movement from the revolution of 1848 to the present, it is impossible to determine with scientific precision either the contradictions of present neocapitalist society—on a world scale as well as in individual countries—or the concrete contradiction accompanying the formation of proletarian class consciousness, or the kind of struggles that could lead to a pre-revolutionary situation. History is the only laboratory for the social sciences. Without assimilating the lessons of history, a pseudo-revolutionary Marxist today would be no better than a "medical student" who refused to set foot inside the dissecting laboratory.

It should be pointed out in this connection that all attempts to keep the newly emerging revolutionary movement "aloof from the splits of the past" demonstrate a complete failure to understand the socio-political nature of this differentiation within the international workers movement. If one puts aside the inevitable personal and incidental factors involved in these differentiations, one has to come to the conclusion that the great disputes in the international workers movement since the foundation of the First International (the disputes between Marxism and anarchism; between Marxism and revisionism; between Bolshevism and Menshevism; between internationalism and social-patriotism; between defenders of the dictatorship of the proletariat and defenders of bourgeois democracy; between Trotskyism and Stalinism; between Maoism and Khrushchevism) touch upon fundamental questions relating to the proletarian revolution and to the strategy and tactics of revolutionary class struggle. *These basic questions are products of the very nature of capitalism, the proletariat and revolutionary struggle.* They will therefore remain pressing questions as long as the problem of creating a classless society on a world scale has not been solved in practical terms. No "tactfulness," no matter how artful, and no "conciliationism," no matter how magnanimous, can in the long run prevent these questions from rising out of practice itself to confront each new generation of revolutionaries. All that is accomplished by attempting to avoid a discussion of these problems is that instead of raising, analyzing and solving them in a methodical and scientific fashion, this is done unsystematically, at random, without plan, and without sufficient training and knowledge.

However, while the assimilation of the historical substance of Marxist theory is necessary, it is nevertheless in and of itself an insufficient prerequisite for conveying revolutionary class consciousness to the advanced workers and the radical intelligentsia. In addition, a systematic analysis of the present is required without which theory cannot furnish the means for disclosing either the immediate capacity of the working class for struggle or the "weak links" in the neocapitalist mode of production and bourgeois society; nor can it furnish the means for formulating the appropriate transitional demands (as well as the proper pedagogical approach to raising them). Only the combination of a serious, complete social and critical analysis of the present and the assimilation of the lessons of the history of the workers movement can create an effective instrument for the theoretical accomplishment of the task of a revolutionary vanguard.[68]

Without the experience of revolutionary struggle by broad masses, there can be no revolutionary class consciousness among these masses. Without the conscious intervention of advanced workers, who inject transitional demands into workers struggles, there can hardly be experiences of revolutionary struggle on the part of the broad masses. Without the spreading of transitional demands by a revolutionary vanguard, there can be no possibility of advanced workers influencing mass struggles, in a truly anticapitalist sense. Without a revolutionary program, without a thorough study of the history of the revolutionary workers movement, without an application of this study to the present, and without practical proof of the ability of the revolutionary vanguard to successfully play a leading role in at least a few sectors and situations, there can be no possibility of convincing the advanced workers of the need for the revolutionary organization and therefore no possibility (or only an unlikely one) that the appropriate transitional demands for the objective situation can be worked out by the advanced workers. In this way the various factors in the formation of class consiousness intertwine and underpin the timeliness of the Leninist conception of organization.

The process of building a revolutionary party acquires its unified character through jointly expressing the learning of the masses in action, the learning of the advanced

workers in practical experience, and the learning of the revolutionary cadre in the transmission of revolutionary theory and practice. There is a constant interrelationship between learning and teaching, even among the revolutionary cadre, who have to achieve the ability to shed any arrogance resulting from their theoretical knowledge. *This ability proceeds from the understanding that theory proves its right to exist only through its connection to the real class struggle and by its capacity to transform potentially revolutionary class consciousness into the actual revolutionary class consciousness of broad layers of workers.* The famous observation by Marx that the educators must themselves be educated[69] means exactly what it says. It does not mean that a consciously revolutionary transformation of society is possible without a revolutionary pedagogy. And it is given a more complete expression in the Marxist proposition that "In revolutionary activity the changing of oneself coincides with the changing of circumstances."[70]

FOOTNOTES

1. This concept was by no means invented by Lenin but corresponds to a tradition leading from Engels, through Kautsky, to the classical doctrines of the international Social Democracy between 1880 and 1905. The Hainfeld Program of the Austrian Social Democracy, drafted in 1888-1889, explicitly states: "Socialist consciousness is something that is brought into the proletarian class struggle from outside, not something that organically develops out of the class struggle." In 1901, Kautsky published his article "Akademiker und Proletarier" in *Neue Zeit* (19th year, Vol. 2, April 17, 1901) in which the same thought is expressed (p. 89) in a form that directly inspired Lenin's *What is to Be Done?*

It is well known that Marx had developed no uniform concept of the party. But while he sometimes totally rejected the idea of a vanguard organization, he also formulated a conception which very closely approaches that of "introducing revolutionary-socialist consciousness" into the working class. Note the following passage from a letter, written by him on January 1, 1870, from the executive board of the First International to the federal committee of Romanic Switzerland:

"The English possess all the necessary *material prerequisites* for a social revolution. What they lack is a *spirit of generalization and revolutionary passion.* That the executive board alone can remedy, and in doing so, hasten the development of a truly revolutionary movement in this country, and hence *everywhere.* The great successes that we have already achieved in this regard are being attested to by the wisest and most distinguished newspapers of the ruling class . . . not to mention the so-called radical members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, who only a short time ago had quite a bit of influence on the leaders of the English workers. They are publicly accusing us of having poisoned and almost suffocated the *English spirit* of the working class, and of having driven it to revolutionary socialism." (Marx-Engels, *Werke*, [Berlin: Dietz-Verlag, 1964], Vol. 16, pp. 386-387.)

The concept of the "current potential for revolution" in Lenin was first formulated by Georg Lukacs, as is well known, in *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* and particularly in his *Lenin.*

2. This is especially true for the crucial Marxian category of *revolutionary practice*, which was developed in the then unknown *German Ideology.*

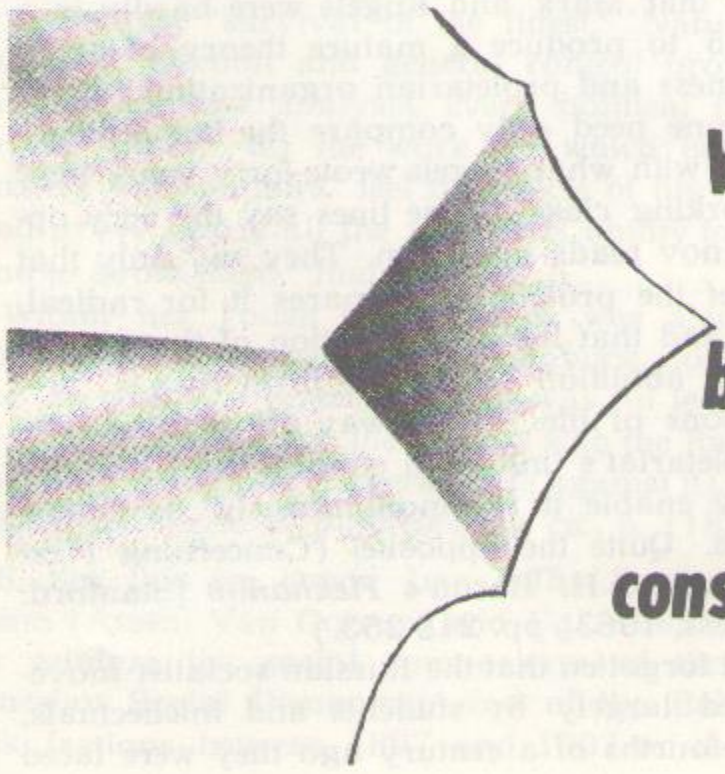
3. It is in this sense that, among others, the famous statement by Marx at the beginning of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* must be understood, in which he stresses the constant self-critical nature of the proletarian revolution and its tendency to come back to things that appeared to have already been accomplished. In this connection, Marx speaks also of the proletariat as being hypnotized by the "undefined magnitude of its own objectives."

4. In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels state that communists "do not set up any special principles of their own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement." In the English edition of 1888, Engels substituted the word "sectarian" for the word "special." In doing so, he expresses the fact that scientific socialism certainly does try to advance "special" principles in the labor movement, but only those objectively resulting from the general course of the proletarian class struggle, i.e., from contemporary history, and not those peculiar only to the creed of a particular sect, i.e., to a purely incidental aspect of the proletarian class struggle.

5. This thought is poignantly expressed by Trotsky in the introduction to the first Russian edition of his book, *The Permanent Revolution* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1969). Mao Tse-tung too has more than once called attention to this thought. In sharp contrast to it is the notion of a "socialist mode of production" or even of a "developed social system of socialism" in which the first stage of communism is regarded as something fixed and not as simply a transitional phase in the permanent revolutionary development from capitalism to communism.

6. Note Lenin's well-known statement that there are no "inextricable economic situations" for the imperialist bourgeoisie.

7. Thus the rising bourgeois class consciousness, and even the rising plebeian or semiproletarian class consciousness in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were expressed within a completely religious framework, finding the way to overt materialism only with the full-blown decadence of the feudal ab-



Without the experience of revolutionary struggle by broad masses, there can be no revolutionary consciousness among these masses

solutist order in the second half of the eighteenth century.

8. Gramsci's "concept of political and ethical hegemony," which an oppressed social class must establish within society before it can take political power, expresses this possibility especially well. *Cf. Il Materialismo Storico e la Filosofia di Benedetto Croce* (Milan: Einaudi, 1964), p. 236; and also *Note sul Machiavelli* (Milan: Einaudi, 1964), pp. 29-37, 41-50 *ff.* This hegemony concept has been criticized or modified by numerous Marxist theoreticians. See, for example, Nicos Poulantzas, *Pouvoir politique et classes sociales* (Paris: Maspero, 1968), pp. 210-222. Concerning the significance of overall social *consensus* with the material and moral foundations of bourgeois class rule, see Jose Ramon Recalde, *Integracion y lucha de clases en el neo-capitalismo* (Madrid: Editorial Ciencia Nueva, 1968), pp. 152-157.

9. This is expressed by Marx and Engels in the proposition in *The German Ideology* that "this revolution is necessary therefore, not only because the *ruling* class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class *overthrowing* it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew." Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), p. 87. *Cf.* also the following observation by Marx in 1850 against the Schapper minority in the Communist League: "The minority substitutes a dogmatic approach for a critical one, and idealism for materialism. For it, the driving force of the revolution is mere will power, not actual conditions. We, on the other hand, tell the workers: 'You will have to go through 15, 20, 50 years of civil wars and people's struggles not only to change the conditions, *but in order to change yourselves* so you will be capable of exercising political rule.' You, on the contrary, say: 'If we can't take power right away we might as well go to bed.'" Karl Marx, *Enthullungen Ueber den Kommunistenprozess zu Koln* (Berlin: Buchandlung Vorwartz, 1914), pp. 52-53.

10. Note Lenin: "Our wiseacre fails to see that it is precisely during the revolution that we shall stand in need of the results of our [prerevolutionary—E. M.] theoretical battles with the Critics in order to be able resolutely to combat their *practical* positions!" *What is to Be Done?* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), p. 163. How tragically this came true seventeen years later in the German revolution.

11. In this connection in *What is to Be Done?* Lenin speaks of the "social-democratic" and "revolutionary" workers in contrast to the "backward" workers.

12. N. Bukharin, *Theorie des Historischen Materialismus*, (published by the Communist International, 1922), pp. 343-345.

"Economic conditions had first transformed the mass of the people of the country into workers. The combination of capital has created for this mass a common situation, common interests. This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle, of which we have noted only a few phases, this mass becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself." Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), p. 173.

13. *Cf.* the section of the SPD's "Erfurt Program" that was not criticized by Engels, in which the proletarians are described as simply the class of wageworkers separated from the means of production and condemned to sell their labor power, and in which the class struggle is described as the objective struggle between exploiters and exploited in modern society (i.e., without relation to the degree of organization or consciousness of the wage earners). Following this objective fact, which is established in the first four sections, comes the following addition to the conclusion of the general body of the program:

"The task of the social-democratic party is to mold this struggle of the working class into a conscious and homogeneous one and to point out what is by nature its essential goal." This once again explicitly confirms that there can be classes and class struggle in capitalist society without the struggling working class being conscious of its class interests. Further on, in the eighth section, the program speaks of the "class-conscious workers of all countries," and Engels proposes a change which again underlines the fact that he made a definitive distinction between the "objective" and the "subjective" concept of class: "Instead of 'class conscious,' which for us is an easily understandable abbreviation, I would say (in the interests of general understanding and translation into foreign languages) 'workers permeated with the consciousness of their class situation,' or something like that." Engels, "Zur Kritik des sozialdemokratischen Programmentwurfs 1891" in Marx-Engels, *Werke*, Band 22 (Berlin: Dietz-Verlag, 1963), p. 232.

14. Lenin: "The basic prerequisite for this success [in consolidating the party—E. M.] was, of course, the fact that the working class, whose elite has built the Social Democracy, differs, for objective economic reasons, from all other classes in capitalist society in its capacity for organization. Without this prerequisite, the organization of professional revolutionaries would only be a game, an adventure. . . ." Lenine, *Oeuvres Completes*, Tome 12 (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1969), p. 74.

15. To counter this view, many critics of the Leninist concept of organization (beginning with Plekhanov's article, "Centralism or Bonapartism" in *Iskra*, No. 70 [Summer, 1904]), refer to a passage in *The Holy Family*. The passage states: "When socialist writers ascribe this historic role to the proletariat, it is not, as Critical Criticism pretends to think, because they consider the proletarians as *gods*. Rather the contrary. Since the abstraction of all humanity, even of the *semblance* of humanity, is practically complete in the full-grown proletariat; since the conditions of life of the proletariat sum up all the conditions of life of society today in all their inhuman acuity; since man has lost himself in the proletariat, yet at the same time has not only gained theoretical consciousness of that loss, but through urgent, no longer disguisable, absolutely imperative *need*—that practical expression of *necessity*—is driven to revolt against that inhumanity; it follows that the proletariat can and must free itself. But it cannot free itself without abolishing the conditions of its own life. It cannot abolish the conditions of its own life without abolishing *all* the inhuman conditions of life of society today which are summed up in its own situation. Not in vain does it go through the stern but steeling school of *labor*. The question is not what this or that proletarian, or even the whole of the proletariat, at the moment *considers* as its aim. The question is *what the proletariat is*, and what, consequent on that *being*, it will be compelled to do. Its aim and historical action is irrevocably and obviously demonstrated in its own life situation as well as in the whole organization of bourgeois society today. There is no need to dwell here upon the fact that a large part of the English and French proletariat is already *conscious* of its historic task and is constantly working to develop that consciousness into complete clarity." Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Holy Family* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), pp. 52-53.

Aside from the fact that Marx and Engels were hardly in a position in 1844-1845 to produce a mature theory of proletarian class consciousness and proletarian organization (to become aware of this, one need only compare the last sentence of the above quotation with what Engels wrote forty years later about the English working class), these lines say the very opposite of what Plekhanov reads into them. They say only that the social *situation* of the proletariat prepares it for radical, revolutionary *action*, and that the determination of the general socialist objective (the abolition of private property) is "prescribed" by its conditions of life. In no way do they indicate, however, that the proletariat's "inhuman conditions of life" will somehow mysteriously enable it to "spontaneously" assimilate all the social sciences. Quite the opposite! (Concerning Plekhanov's article, see Samuel H. Baron's *Plekhanov* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963], pp. 248-253.)

16. Today it is almost forgotten that the Russian socialist movement too was founded largely by students and intellectuals, and that around three-fourths of a century ago they were faced

with a problem similar to that of the revolutionary intelligentsia today. Similar, but of course not identical: Today there is an additional obstacle (the reformist, revisionist mass organizations of the working class), as well as an additional strength (historical experience, including the experience of great victory which the revolutionary movement has accumulated since then).

In *What is to Be Done?* Lenin speaks explicitly of the capacity of intellectuals to assimilate "political knowledge," i.e., scientific Marxism.

17. *Cf.* Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy.* An absorbing description of the various early forms of trade unions and of workers resistance funds can be found in E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968).

18. The necessarily discontinuous nature of mass action is explained by the class condition of the proletariat itself. As long as a mass action does not succeed in toppling the capitalist mode of production, its duration will be limited by the financial, physical and mental ability of the workers to withstand the loss of wages. It is obvious that this ability is not unlimited. To deny this would be to deny the material conditions of the proletariat's existence, which compel it, as a class, to sell its labor power.

19. See a few examples from the first years of the metal workers union of Germany: *Funfundsiebzig Jahre Industriegewerkschaft Metall* (Frankfurt: Europaische Verlaganstalt, 1966), pp. 72-78.

20. We cannot describe in detail here the differences between a prerevolutionary and a revolutionary situation. Simplifying the matter, we would differentiate a revolutionary from a prerevolutionary situation in this way: While a prerevolutionary situation is characterized by such extensive mass struggles that the continued existence of the social order is *objectively* threatened, in a revolutionary situation this threat takes the form, organizationally, of the proletariat establishing organs of dual power (i.e., potential organs for the exercising of power by the working class), and *subjectively* of the masses raising directly *revolutionary* demands that the ruling class is unable to either repulse or co-opt.

21. See below the Leninist origins of this strategy.

22. Rosa Luxemburg, "Organizational Question of Social Democracy," in Mary-Alice Waters, ed., *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), pp. 112-130.

23. Lenin, *What is to Be Done?*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

24. For a relating of this plan directly to revolution, see *What is to Be Done?*, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-166. It is true that there are also *organizational* rules for centralization in *What is to Be Done?*, but they are determined exclusively *by the conditions* imposed by illegality. Lenin recommends the broadest "democratism" for "legal" revolutionary parties: "The general control (in the literal sense of the term) exercised over every act of a party man in the political field brings into existence an automatically operating mechanism which produces what in biology is called the 'survival of the fittest.' 'Natural selection' by full publicity, election and general control provides the assurance that, in the last analysis, every political figure will be 'in his proper place,' do the work for which he is best fitted by his powers and abilities, feel the effects of his mistakes on himself, and prove before all the world his ability to recognize mistakes and to avoid them." *Ibid.*, p. 130.

Within her Polish party, which was also defined by highly conspiratorial restrictions, Luxemburg, for her part, practiced (or accepted) a centralism that was no less stringent than that of the Bolsheviks (*cf.* the conflict with the Radek faction in Warsaw and the serious charges made against it).

25. *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, op. cit.*, p. 118.

26. For this see David Lane, *The Roots of Russian Communism* (Assen: Van Gorcum and Co., 1969). Lane has attempted to analyze the social composition of the membership of the Russian Social Democracy and of the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions between 1897 and 1907 on the basis of empirical data. He comes to the conclusion that the Bolsheviks had more worker members and activists than the Mensheviks (pp. 50-51).

27. "Generally speaking it is undeniable that a strong tendency toward centralization is inherent in the social-democratic movement. This tendency springs from the economic makeup of capitalism which is essentially a centralizing factor. The social-democratic movement carries on its activity inside the large bourgeois city. Its mission is to represent, within the boundaries of the national state, the class interests of the proletariat, and to oppose those common interests to all local and group interests.

"Therefore, the social democracy is, as a rule, hostile to any manifestations of localism or federalism. It strives to unite all workers and all worker organizations in a single party, no matter what national, religious, or occupational differences may exist among them." *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, op. cit.*, p. 116.

28. *Cf.* the thesis put forward by Andre Gorz, according to which a new party can be created only "from the bottom up" once the network of factory and rank-and-file groups "stretches out over the entire national territory." ("Ni-Trade-Unionists, ni Bolcheviks," *Les Temps Modernes*, [October, 1969]). Gorz has not understood that the crisis of the bourgeois state and the capitalist mode of production does not develop gradually "from the periphery toward the center," but that it is a discontinuous process which tends toward a decisive test of strength once it reaches a definite turning point. If the centralization of revolutionary groups and combatants does not take place in time, attempts by the reformist bureaucracy to steer the movement back into acceptable channels will only be facilitated—as quickly happened in Italy, in fact while Gorz was writing his article. This in turn quickly led to a setback for the "rank-and-file" groups. It did not at all lead to their spread throughout the whole country.

29. *Cf.* Rosa Luxemburg's article on the founding of the Communist Party of Germany entitled "The First Convention": "The revolutionary shock troops of the German proletariat have joined together into an independent political party." (*The Founding Convention of the Communist Party of Germany* [Frankfort: Europaische Verlangastalt, 1969], p. 301.) "From now on it is a question of everywhere replacing revolutionary moods with unflinching revolutionary convictions, the spontaneous with the systematic." (P. 303.) See also (on p. 301) the passage from the pamphlet written by Luxemburg, *What Does the Spartacus League Want?*: "The Spartacus League is not a party that seeks to come to power over or with the help of the working masses. *The Spartacus League is only that part of the proletariat that is conscious of its goal.* It is that part which, at each step, points the working-class masses as a whole toward their historic task, which, at each separate stage of the revolution, represents the ultimate socialist objective and, in all national questions, the interests of the proletarian world revolution." (Emphasis added.) In 1904 Luxemburg had not yet understood the essence of Bolshevism—that "that part of the proletariat that is conscious of its goal" must be organized *separately* from the "broad mass."

It is a complete confirmation of our thesis that as soon as Luxemburg adopted the concept of the vanguard party, she too was then accused by Social Democrats ("left" Social Democrats at that) of wanting "the dictatorship over the proletariat." (Max Adler, "Karl Liebknecht und Rosa Luxemburg," *Der Kampf*, Vol. XII, No. 2 [February, 1919], p. 75.)

30. Leon Trotsky, *Nos taches politiques* (Paris: Editions Pierre Belfond, 1970), pp. 123-129.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

33. Leon Trotsky, "The Class, the Party and the Leadership," *Fourth International* [predecessor of the *International Socialist Review*], Vol. I, No. 7 (December, 1940), p. 193.

34. Numerous examples of this could be mentioned. See, among others, Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 18 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1963), pp. 471-477; Vol. 23, pp. 236-253; Vol. 10, pp. 277-278.

35. The impossibility of "spontaneous" concentration of the revolutionary vanguard elements on a national scale was demonstrated with particular clarity in the French general strike of May 1968.

36. Yet here too these initial forms of independent organization were unable, in the absence of an organized revolutionary vanguard, which would have carried out the necessary preparatory work, to neutralize for long, let alone to smash, the conservative centralization of the trade-union and state apparatuses, and of the entrepreneurs.

37. Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957), p. xix.

38. See among others Georg Lukacs, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (Berlin: Malik-Verlag, 1923), pp. 180-189 *ff.*

39. The defense of the political and material special interests of these bureaucracies is nevertheless the social substructure upon which the superstructure of this autonomy and its ideological sediment are able to arise.

40. *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, op. cit.*, p. 121.

41. Leon Trotsky, "Results and Prospects" in *The Permanent Revolution, op. cit.*, p. 114.

42. *Cf.*, for instance, Clara Zetkin's biting scorn for the SPD executive committee (as well as Kautsky's lack of character), which she expressed in her correspondence concerning the party leadership's censorship in 1909 of the publication of Kautsky's *The Road to Power*: K. Kautsky, *Le Chemin de Pouvoir* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1969), pp. 177-212. Contrast this with the respect shown by Lenin for Kautsky in the same year.

43. Lenin, "Der Zusammenbruch der II Internationale" in Lenin and Zinoviev, *Gegen den Strom* (published by the Communist International, 1921), p. 164.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

45. Lenin, "'Left Wing' Communism, an Infantile Disorder" in *Collected Works*, Vol 31 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1966), pp. 17-118.

See also the above-mentioned passage from the pamphlet *What Does the Spartacus League Want?*, written by Rosa Luxemburg.

This conclusion was superior to that of Trotsky in 1906 or Luxemburg in 1904. In the face of a growing conservatism on the part of the social-democratic apparatus, they had illusions about the ability of the masses to solve the problem of the seizure of power with the aid of their revolutionary ardor alone. In "The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions," (in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-219) Luxemburg even shifts the problem temporarily onto the "unorganized," i.e., the poorest, section of the proletariat that for the first time attains consciousness during a mass strike. In his writings after 1914, Lenin too explicitly contrasts these masses to the "labor aristocracy," in a somewhat oversimplified manner, in my opinion. At that time the workers in the large steel and metal processing plants, among others, belonged to the unorganized sectors of the German proletariat, and while they turned to the left *en masse* after 1918, they did not at all belong to the "poorest" layers.

46. This so-called general crisis of capitalism, i.e., the onset of the historical epoch of the decline of capitalism, should not be confused with conjunctural crises, i.e., periodic economic crises. These have occurred during the period of rising, as well as declining, capitalism. For Lenin, the epoch beginning with the first world war is the "era of beginning social revolution." See, among others, *Gegen den Strom*, *op. cit.*, p. 393.

47. Herein undoubtedly lies the greatest weakness of this fatalistic theory. Out of the tendency toward growing autonomy, it automatically deduces a *social danger*, without including in its analysis the transmission of potential social power and specific social interests. The tendency for doormen and cashiers to develop their own interests does not give them power over banks and large firms—except for the "power" of robbery, which is effective only under very specific conditions. If the analysis of this tendency toward autonomy is to have any social content, therefore, it must be accompanied by a definition of these conditions.

48. The formal rules of democratic centralism are, of course, part of these prerequisites. These rules include the right of all members to be completely informed about differences of opinion in the leadership; the right to form tendencies and to present contradictory points of view to the membership before leadership elections and conventions; the regular convening of conventions; the right to periodically revise majority decisions in the light of subsequent experiences, i.e., the right of minorities to periodically attempt to reverse decisions made by the majority; the right of political initiative by minorities and members at conventions; etc.

These Leninist norms of democratic centralism were rather strikingly formulated in the new party statutes drawn up before August 1968 in preparation for the fourteenth convention of the Czechoslovakian CP. The Moscow defenders of bureaucratic centralism reacted with the invasion. In fact, this proposed return to Leninist norms of democratic centralism was one of the most important "thorns" in the side of the Soviet bureaucracy as far as the developments in Czechoslovakia were concerned.

49. Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution, op.cit.*

50. Between 1905 and 1917 the Bolshevik Party was educated in the spirit of achieving the "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants," i.e., in the spirit of a formula with its eye on the possibility of a coalition between a workers party and a peasant party within the framework of capitalism—foreseeing, in other words, a *capitalist* development of Russian agriculture and industry. Lenin clung to this possibility until late 1916. Only in 1917 did he realize that Trotsky had been correct back in 1905 when he predicted that the agrarian question could only be solved by the dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialization of the Russian economy.

Hartmut Mehringer ("Introduction historique" in Trotsky, *Nos taches politiques, op. cit.*, pp. 17-18, 34 *ff.*) is completely wrong to link Lenin's theory of organization with his specific strategy in the Russian revolution, to explain it in terms of the "subordinate" role (?) of the working class in this struggle, and to trace Trotsky's theory of the gradual extension of class consciousness to the entire working class to the theory of the permanent revolution. Aside from the fact that Mehringer gives an inadequate and inaccurate outline of Lenin's revolutionary strategy (Lenin was for the *absolute independence* of the Russian working class in opposing the Russian bourgeoisie, and was completely in favor of this class playing a leading role in the revolution); and aside from the fact that, like Lenin, Luxemburg rejected as premature any attempt to establish the proletarian dictatorship in Russia and assigned the revolutionary struggle of the Russian proletariat the mere goal of carrying out the historical tasks of the bourgeois revolution (while at the same time she fought against Lenin's theory of organization), it appears obvious to us that the very theory of permanent revolution (i.e., the task of establishing the proletarian dictatorship in an underdeveloped country) can be grasped with a minimum of realism only through the utmost concentration on the revolutionary tasks in general. Thus it leads not away from Lenin's theory of organization but straight to it. See in this regard also the excellent pamphlet by Demise Avenas, *Economie et politique dans la pensee de Trotsky* (Paris: Maspero, "Cahiers Rouges," 1970).

51. Lenine, *Oeuvres Completes*, Tome 12 (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1969), p. 74.

"The pamphlet *What is to Be Done?* repeatedly emphasizes that the organization of professional revolutionaries which it proposes makes sense only insofar as it is connected to the 'truly revolutionary class irresistibly rising up in struggle.'" Lenin underlines the fact that the sickness of small group existence can only be overcome through "the ability of the party, through its open mass work, to reach out to proletarian elements." (*Ibid.*, p. 75.)

52. Maspero in Paris will soon publish an anthology by us enti-

tled "Workers Control, Workers Councils and Workers Self-Management" which attempts to prove this thesis. Europaischer Verlaganstalt has announced plans to publish a German edition in 1971.

53. For Lenin the "leading role of the party" in the soviet system is a political one, not one of substitution. It is a question not of substituting itself for the majority in the soviet, but of convincing them of the correctness of the communist policy. The "leading role of the party" is not even mentioned in his basic work on soviets, *State and Revolution*. And if, in times of the greatest confusion and civil war, he sometimes made sharp sallies on tactical questions, arguments can be found in his writings against "soviets without communists," but no arguments in favor of "communists without soviets."

54. Georg Lukacs (*Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein, op. cit.*, p. 306 *ff.*) is wrong to think that he discovers one of the roots of Luxemburg's "theory of spontaneity" in "the illusion of a purely proletarian revolution." Even in countries where the numerical and social importance of the proletariat is so overwhelming that the question of "allies" becomes insignificant, the separate organization of the vanguard remains absolutely necessary in a "purely proletarian revolution" because of the internal stratification of the proletariat.

55. A striking example of this are the Chinese Maoists, for whom one wing of their own party (including the majority of the central committee that led the Chinese revolution to victory) is said to be made up of "defenders of the capitalist line"—and even "capitalists" pure and simple.

For the Italian Bordigists, the general strike of July 14, 1948, had nothing to do with proletarian class struggle because the workers were striking in defense of the "revisionist" leader of the CP, Togliatti.

Cf. also the lovely formulation of the French spontaneist Denis Anthier: "When the proletariat is not revolutionary, it does not exist, and revolutionaries cannot do anything with it. It is not they who, by assuming the role of educators of the people, will be able to create the historical situation in which the proletariat will become what it is; this can only be done by the development of modern society itself." (Preface to Leon Trotsky, "Rapport de la delegation siberienne" [Paris: *Spartacus*, 1970], p. 12.) This quote also shows how clearly extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism are related. And how is it explained that despite huge struggles the proletariat does not achieve victory? "Circumstances are to blame, the objective conditions were not ripe." Behind the ultraleft mask one can see those well-known "spontaneists" Karl Kautsky and Otto Bauer eagerly nodding their wise heads. The ridiculous conclusions to which this extreme fatalism and mechanical determinism lead become clear as soon as the "development of modern society itself" is expected to explain to us in concrete terms just why at a given moment the majority of factory A and city B (but not of factory C or city D) come out in favor of the dictatorship of the proletariat and against reformism. Yet for better or for worse, the outcome of the revolution depends upon the answer to this question. As long as the "development of modern society itself" does not drop *all* factories and *all* cities like ripe fruit into the lap of the revolution, the "educators of the people," according to Anthier, should presumably refrain from doing violence to "objective conditions," by seeking to win over the workers of C and D.

56. This reproach against Lenin and the Leninists was made by the Russian "Economists," and now today's spontaneists have rediscovered it.

57. *Cf.* on this subject Nicos Poulantzas, *Pouvoir politique et classes sociales, op. cit.*

58. It is interesting to confirm that after the split in the Russian Social Democracy there were many more intellectuals, including professional revolutionary intellectuals, with the Mensheviks than with the Bolsheviks. See in this connection David Lane, *The Roots of Russian Communism, op. cit.*, pp. 47, 50.

59. David Lane too emphasizes the preponderance of the Bolsheviks in the cities with large factories and an old, stabilized working class. (*Ibid.*, pp. 212-213.)

60. In his last work ("Zum allgemeinen Verhaltnis von wissenschaftlicher Intelligenz und proletarischen Klassenbewusstsein," *SDS-Info*, No. 26-27 [Dec. 22, 1969]), Hans-Jurgen Krahl brought out "the" Marx quotation on this question which we are reprinting here. (It comes from the unincorporated section "Sechstes Kapitel, Resultate des unmittelbaren Produktionsprozesses" in the draft of Chapter Six of Book One of the first volume of *Capital*, which was published for the first time, in the "Marx-Engels Archives" in 1933.) We should like to dedicate this article, which was intended to promote discussion and understanding with him, to this young friend who so tragically passed away.

"With the development of a real subsuming of labor under capital (or in the specifically capitalist mode of production), the real functionary in the overall labor process is not the individual worker, but increasingly a combined social capacity for work, and the various capacities for work, which are in competition with one another and constitute the entire productive machine, participate in very different ways in the direct process of creating commodities—or, more accurately in this sense, products—(one works more with his hands, another more with his head, one as a manager, an engineer, a technician, etc., another as a supervisor, and a third as a simple manual laborer, or even a helper). As a result of this, the functions of labor capacity will increasingly tend to be classified by the direct concept of productive labor, while those who possess that capacity will be classified under the concept of productive workers, directly exploited by capital and subordinated to its process of consumption and production." (Karl Marx, *Resultate* [Frankfurt: Neue Kritik, 1969], p. 66.)

61. Leon Trotsky, *The Intelligentsia and Socialism* (London: New Park Publishers, 1966).

62. Leon Trotsky, "Die Entwicklungstendenzen der russischen Sozioldemkratie," in *Die Neue Zeit*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2 (1910), p. 862.

63. Already in his first polemical book against Lenin (*Nos taches politiques, op. cit.*, pp. 68-71, for example), Trotsky had undertaken an effort to represent the entire Leninist polemic against "Economism" and the "handicraftsman's approach to organization" in *What is to Be Done?* as a pure discussion between intellectuals, or at best an attempt to win over the best forces of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia to the revolutionary Social Democracy. He did not understand that it was a question of repelling the petty-bourgeois, revisionist influence *upon the working class*. His polemic against Lenin from 1903 to 1914 was characterized by an underappreciation of the catastrophic consequences of opportunism for the working class and the labor movement. Only in 1917 did he overcome this underappreciation once and for all.

64. August Bebel, *Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Engels* (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1965), p. 465.

65. The sole difficulty for the revolution seemed to them to lie in a necessary reaction to any possible repeal of universal suffrage, as might happen in case of war. In contrast, Luxemburg had, in dealing with the question of the mass strike, undertaken a conscious attempt to develop the proletariat's forms of struggle by going beyond electoral and wage struggles and closely following the example of the Russian revolution of 1905.

Even today, Lelio Basso, in an interesting analysis of *Rosa Luxemburgs Dialektik der Revolution* (Frankfurt: Europaische Verlagsanstalt, 1969), pp. 82-83, attempts to present as the quintessence of Luxemburg's strategy a centrist reconciliation between day-to-day struggles and ultimate objectives which is limited to "sharpening the contradictions" of objective development. The fact that the deeper meaning of the mass strike strategy escapes him as a result of this error does not need to be dwelt on here in detail.

66. See the discussion of program at the fourth congress of the Communist International (*Protokoll des Vierten Kongresses der*

Kommunistischen Internationale [published by the Communist International, 1923], pp. 404-448). It provisionally concluded with the following declaration of the Russian delegation, signed by Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Radek and Bukharin: "The dispute over how the transitional demands should be formulated and in which section of the program they should be included has awakened a completely erroneous impression that there exists a principled difference. In light of this, the Russian delegation unanimously confirms that the drawing up of transitional slogans in the programs of the national sections and their general formulation and theoretical motivation in the general section of the program cannot be interpreted as opportunism." (*Ibid.*, p. 542.) Trotsky seemed to foresee such a strategy already in 1904 when he wrote: "The party stands on the proletariat's *given lack of consciousness* . . . and attempts to implant itself in the proletariat by *raising* this level . . ." (*Nos taches politiques, op. cit.*, p. 126.)

67. Georg Lukacs (*Lenine*, [Paris: E. D. I., 1965], p. 57) is completely correct when he concludes from similar considerations that the Leninist revolutionary party cannot "make" a revolution, but can accelerate the tendencies that will lead to one. Such a party is *both* producer and product of the revolution—which amounts to a resolution of the antithetical positions of Kautsky ("The new party must prepare the way for the revolution") and Luxemburg ("The new party will be created by the revolutionary action of the masses").

68. Hans-Jurgen Krahl (*op. cit.*, p. 13 *ff.*) is quite correct when he reproaches Lukacs for his "idealizing" concept of the totality of proletarian class consciousness, and when he accuses him of an inability to combine empirical knowledge and abstract theory—itself based on an inability to transmit revolutionary theory to the working masses. He should have been able to conclude from our essay, however, that such a transmission can be completely achieved on the basis of the Leninist concept of organization—that it, in fact, lies at the very heart of this concept. Since he makes a sharp distinction between "alienated lot in life" and alienated process of production, however, he is predisposed by the Marcusian tendency to see the "alienation of the consumer" as the central problem, and as a result to regard the "civilized satisfaction of needs," which the neocapitalist system ostensibly makes possible for the working class, as an obstacle on its way toward acquiring proletarian class consciousness. Yet the Achilles heel of the capitalist mode of production must more than ever be sought in the sphere of alienation in the production process; there alone can a truly revolutionary rebellion begin, as the events in France and Italy have demonstrated. With that we are brought back to the process, which we described, of formulating and conveying class consciousness. In describing it, we, like Krahl (and, we are convinced, like Lenin and Trotsky), in no way substitute the naive concept of the "omniscient party" for that of the evolution of revolutionary theory *as a specific and permanent ongoing process of production.*

69. Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," third thesis: "The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educators themselves." (Marx-Engels, *The German Ideology, op. cit.*, p. 660.)

70. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

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