

# THE BULLETIN OF MARXIST STUDIES

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Liberation at Columbia - France - Czechoslovakia - Trotsky's Marxism

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# THE BULLETIN OF MARXIST STUDIES

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## Note to Readers

This issue of the Bulletin while having a number of articles which at first sight seem to be somewhat disparate does have a certain unity. The connection between the pre-revolutionary situation in France this year and the Trotsky reprint will be apparent when one measures the reality of the actions of the French Communist Party with those that the situation required. Chris Arthur's item on Parliamentary Democracy also throws light on this question.

Although the response to our first issue was quite good we still need many more subscriptions if the Bulletin is to become financially self-supporting. Nor, it might be added are we above accepting donations! Whilst each individual can help in this, by taking out a subscription, there is another way they can assist. This is by bringing the Bulletin to the notice of their friends, and by taking a few copies to sell.

All communications should be sent to the above address.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the editors.  
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## CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The brutal and unprovoked invasion and occupation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic on August 21st was an act that all socialists should resolutely condemn.

There can be no justification for such a violation by one workers' state against another. We feel that it is superfluous for us to even examine here the flimsy and ludicrous excuses put forward by the Kremlin, because these have been completely falsified by events since they occupied Czechoslovakia.

We have printed elsewhere in this issue a statement by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International on this question, and we are in complete agreement with it. Therefore we will not repeat what is said there, but we will take up some issues that are not dealt with in that statement.

Firstly, we feel that the support of Cuba and North Vietnam for the Soviet Stalinist action should be a sharp reminder to some Marxists that they have been forgetting some elementary propositions. One of these is that as Marxists we give unconditional support to any workers' state under attack from imperialism, but this in no way implies unconditional support for the particular political regimes of such states. Hero worship has been put in the place of objective assessment in some quarters and because of this there is now some confusion. Our task as Marxists is not to form fan clubs for individuals or even countries, but to sympathetically and critically learn from them and at the same time point to any mistakes that we feel are made.

Secondly, the Stalinist invasion of Czechoslovakia should put paid to any illusions about 'liberalisation' for those who had them (and we did not). Stalinism can only be eradicated by a political revolution that will remove the bureaucracy from the seat of power and privilege. Despite the reforms that were introduced in Czechoslovakia after January of this year, it is now quite clear that bureaucrats such as Dubcek cannot defend the working class of that country. Socialist democracy is not something that can be bargained about in Moscow, it can only be exercised in practice.

However, we feel that these extraordinary events indicate, very clearly, that a simplistic approach to the question of the development of political revolution in the deformed workers' states is one that cannot be sustained, any more than it can be in relation to our own labour movement. We shall be returning to this subject and deal with it in some detail in our next issue.

Lastly, we feel that whatever differences there may be among Marxists on this question they should not allow them to obscure their basic, elementary duty - and that is to demand the end to the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia. A united front on this question should not be prevented by other considerations. The enemies of socialism will squeeze every drop of propaganda out of these events; we should not assist them in their hypocritical task.

## FRANCE - WHAT ARE THE LESSONS?

Despite the fact that large quantities of ink have been spilt on the question of the events in France in May and June, and that new problems have come to the fore on the international scene, we make no apology for taking up this question. The reason is, or should be, very obvious, and this is that the French events were of such a character and scale as to make them of prime importance for Marxists, especially in the advanced capitalist countries.

What we witnessed was, at the very least, the most powerful general strike in history. This in itself would be sufficient to make us examine the event carefully. However, that is not all, it was the greatest general strike in a specific country at a specific time. Both the place and the time have an extraordinary importance and significance. The pre-revolutionary situation in France can be seen as a qualitative change in the West European situation, and marks the opening of a new period.

Contrary to what many Marxists have assumed - Marcuse, Sweezy et al - about the combativity of the working class in neo-capitalist society, this strike demonstrated that the working class is still the most powerful, dynamic and potent factor for revolution. This has, in effect, taken the controversy out of the books and into the streets and in the process laid to rest the whole idea that somehow workers have become less revolutionary because of the relative material well being they have enjoyed since the end of the last world war, or at least since the mid-fifties. Those people who talked about the workers becoming 'bourgeoisified' etc. were men who talked about 'what is' and not 'what could be', they were men of 'common sense' and therefore could not see any further than the end of their noses.

Each period of capitalism has brought specific problems to the fore and these have tended to be magnified out of proportion by those who have become submerged in their own environment. Each period has brought about its own crop of revisionists, many of them making significant contributions to our understanding, even if only - at the lowest level - because they had to be rebutted. The period 1890 - 1914 saw the blooming of Bernstein's revisionism, and the interwar period the proponents of the apocryphal 'final crisis' of capitalism, sometimes known as the third period. Both of these schools of thought in their own way were victims of the inability to grasp the historical methods of Marxism. This is also the case with our latter day 'revisionists'.

What was the immediate background to the events of May/June? On the economic front, there had been a decline in the workers' standard of living. In the ten years preceeding there had been an increase of consumer prices of 45% and a fifth of the industrial labour force had a take home pay of less than £8 per week. In January of this year there were half a million men unemployed, brought about by a combination of deflation and a decline in world trade in 1967. Among these unemployed were a high percentage of young workers.

Along with this there was of course the regime of the General, which for ten years had hung like a pall over France, blocking all efforts at even the most timid reforms. This had been a period of growth and expansion

for the monopolies, who today dominate the French economy.

Nevertheless, the upsurge of ten million strikers when it came was unexpected. This was not a crisis that had grown and matured in the open. It is true that the students had been active for some time, and this activity had been gathering momentum. Starting from small groups clashing with the police, anti-Vietnam war demonstrations, it escalated to the occupation of Nanterre and finally erupted into the erection of the barricades and the occupation of the Sorbonne and the Odeon. But even then this was not qualitatively different for society, even though it was for the students. There have been other clashes between students and police, most European countries have witnessed this to some degree or other in recent years. However, even these clashes have been between minorities of the students, albeit very large ones. The French situation became qualitatively different because for the first time the majority of the students became involved. The significance of this event should not be passed over for it represented a new stage.

But it was the eruption of the French working class which dramatically raised the whole movement onto a new plane and opened up a new perspective. When the workers became involved it was like a volcano erupting. Again, this is an aspect that needs careful consideration. If one compares the slow, almost painful, trundle of the TUC up to the 1926 General Strike with the mercurial flare up of the French workers in 1968 the contrast is startling. Leaving aside the obvious differences, e.g. 1926 was a defensive strike, 1968 offensive, this rapidity of action reveals that the apparent stability of neo-capitalism is poised on a razor edge. Beneath the gloss of the 'consumer society' there are explosive forces at work. The relative economic stability of the post-war years have produced new antagonisms, new contradictions which are in many respects even more explosive than the old ones, e.g. Students, Black Power. But right at the heart of these is still the determinant contradiction of capitalism, that between labour and capital.

This contradiction is still the one that must in the last analysis provide the motor force for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. The fact that it has been overlaid somewhat in the post-war years should not obscure its central reality. This became clear after the night of the barricades (10th May). The original reason for the workers striking was the disgust and rage at the brutality of the police and CRS towards the students in the battles in the Latin Quarter. However, this soon became submerged in a generalised battle between labour and capital. Many of the demands of the students became merged with those of the workers, the demand for student power, i.e. control of the universities, became part of a general demand for control of the factories by the workers. But such demands did not become the focal point for the whole movement, they were subordinated to the economic or trade union demands.

Disoriented by the long years of boom, many Marxists have either come to regard the working class as a spent force or to assume that old style clashes between labour and capital would not be the motor force of social change. Both these assumptions have been dramatically faulted by the events in France. It is very necessary to re-emphasise that no society can

indefinitely escape its own internal contradictions, nor can the central, determinant one be swept under the carpet.

In view of the role that the student movement played in sparking off the French events, there is a danger of the illusion being sown that the only thing necessary to begin such an upsurge in Britain is that British students should be drawn into similar actions. In fact the French events point to precisely the opposite lesson.

Let us look at this point further. There is no doubt that today students as a body cannot be viewed in the same way as in the past. Both in form and content their life and struggles become increasingly proletarianised. The university explosion that the needs of neo-capitalism has engendered has brought large new layers of youth into university life and there has developed a crisis within the universities because of this changed condition. The joke about certain institutions becoming degree factories is in reality no longer a joke, they are institutions for providing monopoly-capitalism with necessary technicians etc. to man the technological revolution.

However, one important fact must not be obscured. The ability of students as students to directly and immediately affect the capitalist class is very limited. They have no role in production. Therefore their ability to disrupt bourgeois society is one that has to be mediated through other agents.

There is no doubt that the student movement in France acted as a vanguard during May/June of this year. Moreover the JCR came to the fore as the most widely supported and respected organisation in the student movement, most of its competitors being discredited during the course of the struggle. Because of this the JCR emerged as the vanguard of the whole movement.

But if one compares the scope of the struggle, the militancy and the mood of the French workers with the results there is an obvious and glaring discrepancy. Only those who wish to cover up the perfidious role of the French Communist Party argue that there was not a pre-revolutionary situation in France during this period. The reactionary and counter-revolutionary role of the CPF has been well testified to, not only by Socialists of all complexions but also by the bourgeois press, so we do not intend to dwell upon this point. However, the role of the CPF needs to be examined from another angle. The possibility of the CPF playing this role rested upon its continued ascendancy within the working class. Therefore it is not enough to denounce the role of the CPF - which must not be taken to mean that this should not be done - but an understanding of the process by which it maintains its dominance must be sought.

When one begins to look at the problem in this way certain lessons begin to emerge. The most obvious and overriding one is that there was no socialist revolution in France in May/June because there was lacking a revolutionary mass party. And the mass party of the working class barred the way. These two things are not the same. Given the existence of this mass reformist party - the CPF - which had a clear line of counter-revolution, this meant that the possible emergence of an alternative mass

revolutionary leadership was ten times more difficult. In Western Europe it is not only because the bourgeois regimes are much more deeply entrenched than in the third/<sup>world</sup> which makes revolution much more difficult, it is the presence of the traditional working class leaderships having political hegemony. These leaderships, as both France and Britain demonstrate, act as transmission belts for bourgeois ideology within the working class.

Without the presence of such leaderships it would be possible during such upsurges as in France for a new leadership to be thrown up much more rapidly, and perhaps decisively, given the premise that such a leadership had been in the process of formation over a period beforehand. Therefore one conclusion that we draw is that although the importance of student politicisation should in no way be underestimated, nor seen as something separate from working class struggles, they - in and of themselves - cannot be decisive. Moreover, it becomes very obvious that for revolutionary struggles to be successful such vanguard elements as do arise within the student milieu should consciously orientate themselves to building strong links with other sections of the working class, i.e. those within productive industry. Any idea that students can act as a substitute for the working class received its death blow in France (as did theories of spontaneity). Only slow and patient work among all strata of the working class can build the necessary mass party capable of overthrowing capitalism. We do not doubt that the events of May/June will have speeded up this process in France.

For us here in Britain there need to be some lessons drawn. Firstly, although the Labour Party has seemed to be on the verge of disintegration at certain times this year - because of the catastrophic by-election results - it would be most unwise for Marxists to conclude that this has in fact happened, and that the role of Social-Democracy as a mass party here has finished. Hopes of a collapse of the Labour Party should be put firmly to one side, life is never that easy. Until there is a Marxist party that is capable of challenging the L.P. for the leadership of the working class it -Social-democracy- will continue to serve its purpose. The history of the working class indicates that this process can only be carried through by struggle inside the existing organisations, and in the British context the trade unions are of great importance. Secondly, Marxists need to become more flexible in their approach to questions of tactics. There is no doubt that for large layers of the young an open and direct appeal to them on the basis of revolutionary ideas will invoke a ready and increasing response. Thirdly, the development and building of a Marxist cadre, one that is rooted in the working class, one that is capable of a real ideological challenge to the bourgeoisie, one that groups together cadres in a dialectical unity, i.e. one that rejects monolithic practices - this becomes the most pressing task before us. Fourthly, Marxists need to fully understand their role in changing objective conditions. Without becoming wildly voluntaristic, we need to understand that the relationship between the objective and subjective elements in a given situation are dialectical and therefore dynamic. Boldness tempered by understanding must be the key.

## MARXISM AND PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

by Chris Arthur

Why has the Marxist movement always been so certain that the parliamentary road is not the road to socialism? Why is 'parliamentary cretinism' one of the surest signs that someone has abandoned a Marxist position for a social-democratic one?

Although this touchstone is often referred to, it is rare that the question is analysed beyond vague references to Parliament being the purest form of bourgeois rule. But what does this mean? Or again, for purposes of proletarian revolution is the problem simply that, when pressed, the ruling class will tear up its own constitution and rely nakedly on "special bodies of armed men"? (Lenin)

The question of the state, and of bourgeois democracy, is especially interesting, as a matter of fact, because it was here that Marx's own development started. Before he studied any economics at all, and before he even formulated his historical materialism, he had already provided a devastating critique of the contradictions of bourgeois political theory. The results were published in 1843 as Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, and On the Jewish Question.

According to Marx, man in modern society led a double life, a public political one, as a citizen of the State, a participant in popular sovereignty, a bearer of the general will, on the one hand; and, on the other, a private, personal life, in which he pursued his own particular interests, and treated others as means to his own ends. The sphere of his public life was the State which represented the community, and legislated universally for all and everyone, without kowtowing to particular persons. The sphere of his private life was civil society, a term Marx took over from Hegel, and which stood for the network of relationships set up by private dealings of individuals. In contrast/<sup>to</sup> the supposed universality of the public sphere, life in civil society was supposed to be thoroughly egotistical. Each individual sought only his own advantage, shunning from no stratagem to pursue his own interest up to the limit which the law laid down.

Having identified these two spheres, in which bourgeois political theory portrayed man as acting, Marx goes on to stress the abstract character of the citizen, and the ideal, allegorical, character of men's common life in the State, as opposed to the actuality of the individual man and the materiality of civil society.

It is an illusion to think of the State as standing above society ruling it. On the contrary, the state is an institution of society which has translated into it the power relationships of that society, and this no matter how democratic it might be.

To understand the basis of this critique it is necessary to examine carefully the nature of political emancipation. Under feudalism political relationships were fused with social ones. Your social class at the same time defined your political position. Indeed politics as the science of public affairs in a sense doesn't exist because affairs of State are the



private affairs of the monarch.

The peculiar character of the emmanicipation carried through by the bourgeoisie was that, while freeing man politically, it left him in bondage socially. It freed the State from social distinctions only by presupposing them at its basis. Thus in freeing itself from religion the State left man in bondage to religion. It said that as far as your political rights are your religion is irrelevant. In private life people are distinguished as Jews, Christians, but as citizens they are not.

"...the state as a state abolishes private property (i.e. man decrees by political means the abolition of private property) when it abolishes the property qualifications for electors and representatives..."

"But the political suppression of private property not only does not abolish private property; it actually presupposes its existence. The state abolishes, after its fashion, the distinctions established by birth, social rank, education, occupation, when it decrees that birth, social rank, education, occupation are non-political distinctions; when it proclaims without regard to these distinctions, that every member of society is an equal partner in popular sovereignty, and treats all the elements which compose the real life of the nation from the standpoint of the state. But the state, none the less, allows private property, education, occupation, to act after their own fashion.... Far from abolishing these effective differences, it only exists so far as they are presupposed; it is conscious of being a political state and manifests its universality only in opposition to these elements." (Marx; On the Jewish Question)

Now, not only is it transparently obvious that the political freedom so loudly trumpeted by the bourgeoisie leaves quite untouched the social despotism of capital but it is also clear that it is quite disingenuous, in fact thoroughly ideological, to treat these social distinctions as unpolitical distinctions. The fact of unfreedom in class society permeates the political sphere too, transforming the freedom claimed there into a formal, abstract unreality.

According to democratic ideology the state represents all its citizens, and furthermore all equally - 'One Man One Vote' ensures this. It matters not whether you are rich or poor you only get one vote just the same. In paroxysms of democratic frenzy we abolish property qualifications, literacy qualifications, residential qualifications, racial qualifications, and hereditary qualifications - all distinctions are abstracted away, leaving little more than ability to put a cross on a paper. In this ability we are all equal. Therefore the people have the state in their hands and the state rules society - what have you to complain about?

Thus claims the ideology of bourgeois democracy.

But it is not so simple. There is something a little too abstract about the political agent left when the constitution has finished abstracting him away from his actual empirical characteristics. Take wealth for example - is this an unpolitical distinction? Of course not, it provides the material means of political activity .i.e. propaganda etc. Is education unpolitical? On what basis can you choose when you don't know the facts, the arguments and

counter arguments? Or, more correctly, when you have been taught bourgeois ideology instead of facts. Is occupation unpolitical? Who has more time for politics - a leisured individual or a harassed mother of eleven children? Race and religion unpolitical? In a society full of prejudice and bigotry?

The dominance of politics by social life is aptly expressed in the extreme social unrepresentativeness of the members of representative institutions. No examination of formal constitutions will explain this. Nothing there lays it down that most M.P.'s have to be directors! A little reflection on social facts and it is obvious what happens. Little wonder then, that a society characterised by social injustice and class distinction can survive long periods under a democratic constitution. The formal freedoms of the constitution become meaningless in face of the slavery of social life. The idea that politics takes place in a rarified atmosphere above the sordid realities of life is an illusion of constitutions. In fact the state is an institution of society like any other. Politics is therefore a function of the totality of social life (though since it is itself a part of social life it is not just an epiphenomenon of it - this would be the mechanistic error parallelling the idealistic one.) To believe otherwise is to fall victim to an ideology that the more sophisticated bourgeoisie, who have heard of political sociology, don't believe themselves.

The democratic state is the perfect form of bourgeois rule because it is the most consistent with its ideology and hence cloaks its rule in the maximum of mystification. A man is most truly a slave when he thinks he is free.

A representative democracy of a bourgeois type is an institution which is designed with a particular view of the nature of man and of the state in mind. This combines an atomistic view of the individual with a thoroughly ersatz and illusory unity at the level of the state as a whole. This can be seen most clearly in Rousseau who lays down that there should be no institutions such as a party mediating between the individual and the State. (Social Contract)

The form in which the individual participates in exercising sovereignty is atomistic in the sense that it is not taken for granted, as it was in feudalism, that there is a class or interest group to which he belongs e.g. the Estate, and through which he could be represented. Actually in constituency based systems this is not quite true because the individual is represented via a geographical delimited grouping. But it is clear that this method does not express, or result in, any genuine interest group. The number of occasions on which an M.P. speaks in order to express a constituency interest are relatively rare and the importance attached to them is minor just because it is known to be a local issue. The really important debates are always conducted in terms of the national interest, and the interests affected always cut across constituencies rather than between them. The only interest grouping which bourgeois ideology is prepared to recognise is therefore the nation itself. It is typical of bourgeois parties that, whatever their actual base, they will always pretend to be 'national parties'. Thus the Labour Government would never say it was introducing socialist measures in the interest of the working class. It always says its measures are required by the 'national interest'. (If it still wants to call them socialist

then this merely makes them national-socialist - and indeed such measures as the incomes policy are clearly based on corporate-statist premises.)

One of the main results of the Marxist class analysis of society is to demonstrate that 'the national interest' is an utterly spurious creation and that the basic interests of people lie with their class - the propagation of nationalist ideology is the main defence of the ruling class in obscuring this. Correspondingly, all traitors to the working class movement begin by capitulating to nationalist ideology. A nadir in Britain was reached when Tribune propagated in CND the slogan 'For a British Lead' - a slogan almost tailor-made to divert people from moving towards socialism. Likewise in the recent revolutionary situation in France Waldeck-Rochet signaled quite clearly the capitulationist character of the CPF when he boasted in a speech that the Tricolour always flew side by side with the red flag at C.P. meetings! Fancy waving in the faces of the workers the flag of black reaction from Dreyfus to the Gaullist demonstration of May!

The Parliamentary mode is tailor-made for demobilising the working class. It scatters them into atoms and regroups them in meaningless geographical units. This context of action is quite divorced from their real life experience and the loyalties and interests generated there. The nature of this displacement makes it quite possible for interests which are clear to every<sup>one</sup> in a dispute at shop-floor level to become fogged in ballot boxes. Note well that up to a million French strikers may have voted for De Gaulle in the June elections.

When one considers the bourgeois stranglehold on wealth, education, the propagation of ideology, and the organs of repression for dealing with any vanguard that may appear, the task of dislodging them seems almost insuperable. Certainly if one insists on accepting this essentially foreign field of battle and plays by the rules set up by the bourgeoisie, there is no hope. I say this even before taking into account the character of the state machine which the reformists envisage as being a neutral instrument which can be taken over and used for socialist purposes. However, it is clear that the handpicked forces in the Civil Service, the Army, and the Police, are firmly linked to the bourgeoisie, often by family, and always by ideological commitment. Ask a Greek.

Fortunately there is another field and another politics and another kind of party for which we may hold out hope. (Not that Parliament may not have a minor role - see Lenin's polemic against Left-Wing Communism) It was the fundamental insight of Lenin in State and Revolution that the bourgeois state is bourgeois territory, and that new institutions of class rule were necessary for the proletariat. The experience of revolution from the Paris Commune onwards has filled out this abstract formula. But whether it was a question of Soviets or a guerrilla army, historical experience has shown that countervailing institutions are a must, a state within a state must be built up and finally displace the old one.

In a country like Britain with a developed working class, one that constitutes the majority of the population, the main life experience of the mass of the people is centered on the factory. It is here that the fact of bourgeois rule is most clearly present to them, and it is on this experience

that countervailing institutions of class power are most readily built up. The common situation and interests of the workers in a factory vis-a-vis the boss generates solidarity which expresses itself fairly readily in trade unions and workers loyalty to them. Some people such as revolutionary syndicalists, believe that these institutions alone are capable of carrying through revolution, and Lenin wrote What Is To Be Done to refute this thesis.

Nevertheless when Lenin stresses the need for a vanguard party this does not mean that the field of action of this party is restricted to that of non-Marxist parties. In brilliant editorials in 1920 Gramsci put the question like this:

"The revolutionary organisations .... are born in the field... in which the relationships of citizen to citizen subsist: the revolutionary process comes about in the field of production, in the factory, where the relations are those of oppressor and oppressed, of exploiter to exploited, where liberty for the worker does not exist, where democracy does not exist; the revolutionary process comes about where the worker is nothing and wants <sup>to be</sup> everything.... So that is why we say that the birth of the workers' factory councils represents an historical event of profound significance, represents the beginning of a new era in the history of the human race...." +

Representative institutions combining workers in units centered on the place of work are therefore key transitional institutions of the revolutionary process. This is because it is here the workers spend most of their waking time, and, most importantly, it is here that the class-contradictions are expressed in directly unmediated forms - not at one step removed as in the state, education, culture etc. Furthermore it is here that the workers experience exploitation as a collective - they are all faced with the same problems and can test leaders and policies in action around them. (On this necessary objective basis for solidarity and collective action, note how much easier it is to organise council tenants faced with one landlord and one policy than private tenants with many landlords who negotiate rents individually. Again employers are well aware of the advantages of negotiating salaries with their white collar workers individually.) If there was a revolutionary party of any size and intelligence the Incomes Policy would have been met by using it as the objective lever for forging a nationwide unity of workers against it. Instead of this we have the miserable spectacle of unions each trying to smuggle their own particular group through some loophole or other.

From the point of view of this analysis the Workers' Control Campaign has an absolutely central part to play in the revolutionary process. It is not just another single issue campaign, because on this issue is focussed the struggle for power in society.

Obviously there are dangers. On the one hand it may lose its identity as an organ of class struggle and become subsumed in collaborationist, participatory schemes which the more far-sighted bourgeoisie, including the Labour Government, are dangling before it. On the other hand there may develop anti-political, anti-organisational, anarcho-syndicalist tend-

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+ Workers' Control and Revolution, Antonio Gramsci. Published by the Institute for Workers' Control, 91, Goldsmith St. Nottingham price 1/-

encies. Against both these dangers the only remedy is for a core of revolutionary Marxists to integrate themselves wholeheartedly into the movement and bring into this core and politically sophisticate a whole range of key militants as speedily as possible. Those who shy away from such tasks may save the purity of their own souls, but they will loose contact with a living and growing movement.

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LIBERATION AT COLUMBIA

by Jonah Raskin

/Editors note. The events discussed in this article arose out of two issues. Firstly, the building of a gymnasium in Harlem park by the University authorities. This, in effect, robbed residents of Harlem of the use of part of the already totally inadequate community facilities in that area. This had distinct racist overtones, since the local residents were offered 'separate but equal' use of the gym. Secondly, it was discovered that the University was working on projects for the Institute for Defence Analysis, and this was directly involved in the Vietnam war. Around these two issues there coalesced a student protest movement that led to direct action and the occupation of the university. As was to be expected the police eventually moved in and used the unrestrained brutality typical of the U.S. police against the students. We print this account because it comes from a participant, and also because we think that it points some very useful lessons./

The struggle at Columbia University, New York, April/June 1968, transformed middle class students into student revolutionaries. It revealed the archaic forms of non-education at Columbia, and it illuminated the whole political, economic, military relationships of American society. During the movement of revolt everything was revealed. It was an education, a liberation of minds and bodies. Student poets were inspired to write political verse.

In Marx's Park,  
You can run.  
People get married.  
Into this Garden  
No Cops come,

one poet wrote, expressing the sense of joy, the feeling of euphoria released by the revolt. The prolonged sense of joy was partially illusionary, but it was necessary for it gave renewed confidence that liberation was desirable, needed, and possible. In their little revolt, students felt the release of energy which whole classes and national groups feel during a revolution.

The poet calls Columbia campus "Marx's Park", and while it is true that Marx's portrait was displayed in one of the buildings controlled by the students, Marx was not the dominant or only political hero. Few of the students had a coherent ideology. Economically, they were homogeneous, they come mostly from middle and upper-middle class families, but politically they take different roads, and the wall posters, for the blacks, flashed

the faces of Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Rap Brown, and for the whites, Marx, Che', Fidel, and Mao. The blacks have their own leaders, while the white students have only Chinese and Cuban leaders for their heroes. Nor was Herbert Marcuse, who is often touted as the ideologue of the American student left, a noticeable influence. Students were cautious and sceptical about leaders, about historical patterns, about relying on the lessons of other revolutions. The events of the Chinese and the Cuban revolutions are instructive for students, but for them it was a time of exploration for new theory, rather than reliance on old theory. What was discovered, above all, was that there is nothing like action, and that theory can often be inhibiting, that theory must flow from action. Not that students rejected a dialectical interchange between theory and action, but they felt that action, often anarchy, is primary. Working without an ideology, but within a framework of attitudes, the movement is adaptable, and attractive to diverse groups, but lacks a coherent hard centre to push forward at crucial moments. This situation also permitted flexibility between leaders and rank-and-file, allowed rank-and-file people to speak and exert their pressure on the leadership. The relationship between leaders and the masses was always tense, and the Students for a Democratic Society's theory - "participatory democracy" which they contrast with "democratic centralism" - is often by-passed by the leaders themselves, and it often confuses the situation.

That there is a need for leaders, as there is a need for ideology, is a feeling that students are beginning to learn. A month after the first building was seized, after the first arrests, after order returned, on the surface, to the campus, a building was seized again. In the vote on whether to stay and face arrest, or leave, those who were in favour of leaving were in the majority by far, but the minority included the SDS leaders, refused to be bound by the majority decision and convinced the bulk of the students to remain. Pressure of this sort was exerted continually, though it wasn't the major force. Mostly students held fast because they believed in the integrity of their demands, although they were sometimes forced by social pressure to accede to the views of the minority.

During the Columbia revolt people made love, read poetry, ate communal meals, and got married. The significance of the marriage which took place in one of the liberated buildings was, first of all, that it indicated how peoples' lives were completely changed by the struggle, that students were willing to give themselves emotionally and physically to the revolt, and that they rejected, in large part, the mores of bourgeois society. For a week 1000 students controlled a campus; entertainment was provided, leaflets issued hourly, theoretical papers prepared, political discussions held continually, communications between allies and enemies maintained. One of the failures was that there was no daily paper. A newspaper could have focused discussion, provided needed information, and rallied the strikers. A second fault was that discussion in some of the buildings was devoid of nearly all political content. During the summer the Strike Committee has run a Liberation School offering courses, ranging from the Chinese Revolution to Karate, American literary Realism to Womens liberation, but a Revolutionary University run by students would have helped the political struggle during the strike.

Instead of discussions and courses, the white students celebrated the marriage of two of their fellow students. The marriage was important for it indicated that people were willing to accept the rules of the revolutionary body. Life style is a concept as important as any for the Columbia rebels. It means, in its broadest sense, rejecting bourgeois conventions, and trying to live now as one would want to live in a liberated society. Of course, it can't be achieved, and the effect is to bring splits into individual lives (the couple married in the students' commune was also married by the bourgeois officials), but it means a daily resistance to the corroding power of American capitalism. To make revolution one has to live it, to accept it. To be a revolutionary is to live one's daily life in the present in accord with one's future social expectations.

Not all students accept the concept of revolutionary 'life style' in equal measure. Nor do all accept the theory of 'counter institutions'. For those who do the film "The Battle of Algiers" was important. It showed <sup>how</sup> the Algerian rebels in the Casbah organised their own state within a state. The black movement has also been influential, for groups like the Black Panthers have created their own communities. Another group, rejecting the theory and practice of counter institutions, proposes that revolutionaries remain within the establishment but try to change it, without being changed by it. These views were embodied in a variety of slogans: "A Free University in a Free Society", was shouted by those who believe you can only have a good university in a socialist society, while others who believe one can have a better university in a capitalist society said, "A Freer University in an Unfree Society". At the moment no hard line separates groups: the students themselves attend both the Liberation School and Columbia University, they work within the establishment to change it, but also create their own organisations. For the time being it looks like there can be fruitful interchange between both groups.

The Columbia Campus was never a Utopia under student control, and the police unfortunately descended brutally upon their world. Liberty, equality, fraternity, were words chanted by all, but the campus was also split by factions, and conflicts. In contrast with the feeling of liberation, the actual political scene was fairly fixed, predictable patterns emerged groups played roles, forces remained inflexible. Students, faculty, administration, the State, lined up in all too predictable fashion. The student revolutionaries made the situation more fluid.

The major conflict was between the students and the administration. Columbia is run by a board of trustees, a self-perpetuating institution. The trustees are bankers, industrialists; the President of the New York Times is on the board as is the President of the Columbia Broadcasting System. Columbia receives nearly 50 per cent of its budget from the Federal Government, and along with the Catholic Church, is the largest owner of property in New York City. Since it is a non-profit making institution all its properties are tax-free. Its President Grayson Kirk was an influential Cold War ideologue, its former President was Dwight Eisenhower, who was given the post to tidy his image for the American Presidency. Columbia has long been an instrument in the running of monopoly capital. Hiding behind the mask of 'progressive education', and behind the masks of liberal professors

like Lionel Trilling and Richard Hofstadter the University works hand in hand with imperialism at home and abroad. In its laboratories professors do secret research for the Government on chemical and biological warfare; in its committee rooms professors draw up schemes for defeating guerillas. Columbia helps American expansion abroad, and also expands on its own territory in New York, evicting poor black and Puerto Rican families from buildings, demolishing them and building new laboratories for secret research.

To the students it seems as if they can only get an education at the expense of the poor and oppressed, and they want none of it. It's a matter of conscience. Columbia's students are mostly from New York, many are Jewish many go on to become lawyers, doctors, university teachers. Most of their parents can afford to pay the annual tuition fee of 1800 dollars. These students, who belong to a privileged social class, found their privileges removed. They were subject to the military draft, ready to be sent to Vietnam. Just as no aspect of the whole American scene is comprehensible without reference to Vietnam, so too is the Columbia situation inexplicable without remembering the Vietnam war. Pure scientists did work on napalm, political scientists studied ways of defeating guerilla movement, and students themselves were raw material for the war machine. The lie was revealed: the University was no pure, autotelic community, but part of the society at large, implicated in its exploitation, violence and corruption. The Columbia situation was neat: the local and particular issues were directly linked with national and international conflicts.

There were also more narrowly academic problems, which were of more interest to the liberals than the radicals. University curriculum, matters of appointment and tenure, the whole university educational policy, was and is still in need of revision. Courses had little to do, intellectually and emotionally, with contemporary problems. The students were alienated from a bureaucracy which served the Government, administration, and professors, but not themselves. For years students had put on pressure, by petition, investigation and reports of problems, but the administration never acknowledged that any difficulty, or need for change existed. Administration rules were strictly autocratic.

Students saw their professors in a different light too, during the struggle. The faculty, by and large, played a reactionary role; thinking of themselves as power holders, but in reality victimized by the administration, they attempted to divide, and confuse the student rebels. But it is the faculty, and the liberal students who will probably win most from the struggle: from the efforts of the radicals, the centre forces and moderates will gain and consolidate power. The crisis at Columbia has also meant clear victory at other schools, where there was far less direct confrontation. Parodying Che', the Columbia rebels shout, "Create 2-3, many Columbias", and University presidents have acted in fear and have often granted rights and powers to faculty and student groups. Also, many universities have severed connections with government agencies doing military research. What the overall effect of the struggle at Columbia will be, it is too early to say, but it is already clear that all across the country, it has sharpened the struggle, that the position of students everywhere has been strengthened.



For nearly eight years Columbia has had a well organized, and articulate radical movement. The present situation demonstrates that day to day efforts of small groups over a long period of time pays off, but also that nothing advances revolutionary causes more than a forceful, dynamic confrontation. In a real sense the Columbia struggle was spontaneous. Students had long talked of questioning the authority of the University, but had never known how to go about it. Just before the seizing of the buildings the power of SDS, it was agreed by all, was at its lowest. Calling a meeting to protest at the expulsion of its leaders from Columbia, SDS found that the mass of the students were willing to seize and occupy buildings.

The most important, the most energizing split was between black and white students. Blacks occupied one building by themselves; they agreed with the basic demands, never double-crossed their white allies. Most important their militancy moved white students to take the radical position they did. Black and white students were suspicious of each other: the blacks often said that the whites were only middle class kids playing at revolution, the whites claimed that the blacks would be bought off, would become the black bourgeoisie. But despite the cunning attempts of the faculty, administration, and the news media to divide black and white students, they held firm through the struggle. They are going their separate ways now, quietly. If the struggle is to make any headway there needs to be an alliance based on equality between black and white students, along the broad lines sketched by Eldridge Cleaver and the Black Panthers.

The cops did finally come on the Columbia campus. They handled the black students gingerly, while they beat the whites. New York's Mayor, John Lindsay, knew that if blacks were beaten by white cops, there would be rioting in Harlem. Many of the whites resented the fact that the blacks agreed to leave the building peacefully, while they had to be carried out brutally, for they saw it as a compromise with the establishment. But the arrests united students rather than divided them: they stood together against the power of the State.

What will students do in the autumn? It is likely that there will be more buildings seized, more violent action, more police. Radicals will probably again take a clear stance, be trounced by the cops, and will then be joined in sympathy, by the great mass of the students. The students are still demanding an end to Columbia's part in the war, an end to its racial policies in New York, still demanding that the 100 students who were expelled for their political activities be reinstated. They want a change in the framework of the University, an end to the trustees as they are presently constituted, and they demand that students have a share in the running of the University. What they discovered last spring was that they could disrupt the University, could prevent it from going about its normal business. Some students thought that by occupying buildings they held power; that was an illusion. At present students can act as anarchists and break up the University machine, but they can not take power and run it. The events of last April and May were a rehearsal for a revolution; people began to learn their rules, their lines. The spirit of revolution was kept alive in a non-revolutionary period. Still, it is also important to change the institutions of learning now, to reform them, and while students must retain

their faith in revolution, they need also, to work here and now to change the rules and regulations of Columbia University. Struggle is sure to rage again in September and October. The free-wheeling, anarchist SDS slogan "Up against the wall, Mother Fucker", is sure to echo again, to purify Columbia's prison-like atmosphere.

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DONOVAN

by Tony Topham

There is a general assumption, encouraged by the Press and by orthodox writers on Industrial Relations, that the Donovan Commission on Trade Unions+ has, in its recommendations, followed the "traditional" British attitude by opting for the reform of industrial relations through voluntary methods, rather than through the strengthening of legal sanctions against trade unions. In fact the abstention of the law in dealing with trade unions is more apparent than real. A mass of labour legislation exists already, and the case law of the Courts and judges has often in the past imposed restrictions on trade union action. The legal profession in this country, quite simply, behaves as the guardian of bourgeois values and interests, in its interpretation of Statutes and Common Law.

Yet the Donovan Report has succeeded in throwing a certain amount of dust into trade union eyes by apparently concentrating upon the non-legal aspects of structural change in the field of collective bargaining. Its well-known thesis is that the trend of collective bargaining, - away from industry-wide national bargaining agreements, towards plant and company level bargaining, - should be encouraged and formalised. Donovan finds a conflict between the formal national agreements, and the post-war evolution to local bargains. He hopes that this conflict may be resolved by formalising the local bargain, and raising its relative significance as against the national agreement. This recommendation can be given a liberal appearance; the status and the role of the local trade union and its representatives, the shop stewards, would apparently be raised by such a development. In fact, the report is primarily concerned with the disorderly nature of the present situation. Some acute critics have suggested that a count of the number of times the words "order", "disorder", "orderly", "disorderly", appeared in the Report would show that this concern amounts to an obsession. For example:

"The central defect in British industrial relations is the disorder in factory and workshop relations and pay structures promoted by the conflict between the formal and the informal systems. To remedy this, effective and orderly collective bargaining is required over such issues as the control of incentive schemes, the regulation of hours actually worked, the use of job evaluation, work practices and the linking of changes in pay to changes in performance, facilities for shop stewards and disciplinary rules and appeals. In most industries such matters cannot be dealt with effectively by means of industry-wide agreements. Factory agreements can however provide the remedy." X

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+Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, 1965-68.  
(Chairman Rt.Hon.Lord Donovan) Report. H.M.S.O. June 1968 Cmmd.3623.  
X Donovan: page 262, paras 1019-1020

The purpose of Donovan's search for Order is quite clearly not the raising of the power of local shop stewards, but their integration into the system, through a combination of consensus and status-appeal, supported by greater legal and managerial discipline. The Donovan formula, worked out in detail within its pages, is in essence: 'decentralise the bargaining machinery, concentrate employers' authority at the level of the firm, support this authority with a new national "order" in legal and institutional machinery, and in these ways, deflate the power of the working-class and the shop stewards'. This concern for order and the consequences of dis-order is apparent in Donovan's treatment also of trade union structure and internal government: "...certain features of trade union structure and government have helped to inflate the power of work groups and shop stewards." (para 1016)

The Donovan Commission is naturally obsessed above all by the problem of strikes, and particularly of unofficial strikes. The growth of strike action in post-war years is, predictably, ascribed to the lack of order in the institutions of industrial relations, and orderliness will, we are assured, go far towards reducing its incidence. But what kind of order should be established? Should it be achieved through the reform of machinery and institutions, or through greater legal sanctions? The Commission's choice is apparently directed towards the former: much emphasis is placed upon the passing of an Industrial Relations Act, and the establishment of an Industrial Relations Commission whose role would be to prod, probe, suggest, and register the new-style collective agreements concluded at factory level. This sounds permissive, but an agency of this kind would greatly strengthen the policing of the incomes policy; the restrictive arm of the state acting in defence of wage restraint and in favour of greater work-intensity (productivity bargaining) would be made vastly more efficient and intrusive.

The old Ministry of Labour, renamed under Barbara Castle the Ministry of Employment and Productivity, police the incomes policy, and ensure the application of the stringent criteria for "approved" productivity bargains. There are clearly too few of these Ministry men to cover the whole ground. The proposed Industrial Relations Commission would be a welcome addition to the states armoury against "wage-drift".

At the same time, as we shall see, the Commission does not neglect the possibilities of extending legal controls over the trade unions, and over the "temporary combinations of workers" which emerge in unofficial strikes. Before dealing with this section of the Report in detail however, let us first summarise some of the peripheral recommendations.

The Commission proposes that workers should be given the right of appeal to a Labour Tribunal (the present tri-partite Industrial Tribunals, renamed, and with the powers of a Court of Law), in cases of unjust dismissal. (There should be exemption however, from this procedure, for firms with 'sound' private schemes of appeal.) The burden of proof would be on the employer in such cases. But an employer can, by reason of his status qua employer, always find reasons for dismissal which a bourgeois court will accept as reasonable. (The tri partite constitution of the Tribunals should not mislead the unions into supposing that they are not bourgeois dominated. The trade union panels on the Industrial Tribunals are very weak at present, and in any case their verdict, and that of the employer, can be

relied on to cancel each other out, leaving effective power of decision to the chairman - invariably, a lawyer!) Furthermore, the Commission does not propose that these Tribunals should have the power to re-instate a dismissed worker against the wishes of the employer. (In cases where Labour Courts exist in other capitalist countries, there is a similar limitation on their powers.) We may conclude that in crucial cases, where legal protection may be needed by victimised workers, the Tribunals would prove quite inadequate. Would the seventeen sacked shop stewards at Fords, in the infamous 1963 case, have received protection from these Tribunals, had they existed? One has only to ask the question to realize that the Commission certainly did not intend that employers' powers to hire and fire should be restricted in that kind of situation.

The Commission rejects the idea that unwilling employers should be compelled to recognize trade unions. The proposed Industrial Relations Commission should confine itself to persuasion in this field. The Commission believes that Courts of Inquiry should be given extended powers to compel witnesses, to enforce attendance, and to commission evidence. All Arbitration bodies should be placed under statutory compulsion to observe the government's Price and Incomes policy. The majority of the Commission do not recommend that the law should be changed to compel "worker directors" to be included on Boards of Directors.

Concerning trade union law, the Commission recommends that the definition of a trade union should be altered to exclude "temporary combinations" of workers. Only registered trade unions, in other words, would come under the scope of laws which protect combinations, including strike law. The rules of trade unions should contain certain unspecified requirements relating to discipline, expulsions, "arbitrary" refusal of admission, the role of the shop stewards, etc. A dispute between a union and the Registrar of Trade Unions on these matters should be resolved by an "independent" review body. Many of the customary rules which are here challenged by the Commission relate, significantly, to the job control which workers have established through their trade unionism. On strike law, the majority of the Commission recommend that Section III of the 1906 Trades Dispute Act, which protects strikers against civil action for damages, should apply in future only to registered trade unions. The effect of this would be to place all unofficial strikers at the mercy of the litigating employer. The Commission is involved in an interesting contradiction here. For they also record their belief that no new legal sanctions<sup>should</sup> be introduced against unofficial strikes as such expressing their faith that the institutional reforms which they propose will effectively reduce the incidence of strike action. They argue at length against the wisdom of penal sanctions. (They print as an Appendix the splendid evidence of an ex-Ministry of Labour official, who had to prosecute several thousand striking Kent miners during the 2nd World War. The story of that incident and the Schweik-like conflict between the law and the strikers, is worth all the rest of the Report put together!) Yet the Commission betrays the expediency which lies behind its fine words, not only in the recommendation on Section III of 1906, but in its conclusion that, if the institutional reforms should fail to reduce significantly the number of strikes, then the position would have to be reviewed again!

Reviewed again it almost certainly will be. The press reception of the Donovan Report showed clearly the disappointment of the leader writers

and the labour columnists (who merely reflect the heightening tension of the contemporary class struggle) that the Commission failed to "grasp the nettle" of legal sanctions against strikes. The Conservative Party's own policy, contained in their slyly-titled pamphlet, "A Fair Deal at Work", is crystal clear, in all those areas where Donovan is evasive and ambiguous. The Tories promise the most stringent legal restraint upon the independent formation of trade union rules, and working practices. They will make collective agreements enforceable at law, and they will outlaw unofficial strikes. They will introduce American style legislation to order strikers back to work for a "cooling-off" period. They will do all this in the name of those "orderly" industrial relations for which Donovan searches with such assiduity through the dreary lengths of its pedestrian pages. For although we are likely to see a major political conflict between the impending Tory Government and the working class movement, on the issues of the right to strike and independent trade unions, we should recognize very clearly that it was the Donovan Commission, appointed by Wilson and Gunter, despite the declarations made by Labour Leaders at the time of the 1964 election, and operating in the climate of anti-unionism generated by Gunter, and Wilson himself (remember the seamens strike) which lifted the curtain on that conflict.

The hopes of the Donovan Commission, that formalised, "orderly" factory agreements can accomplish the incorporation of the working class and its representatives, are doomed to disappointment. The move towards factory agreements is already advanced; it is explicit in the drive for productivity bargains. There is little evidence that this is leading towards peace and harmony. In the bus industry, the failure of trade union leadership (and it should be said, the confusion sown by some rank and file delegates at their hastily summoned conferences in recent months) may have avoided a head on clash. But there is no shadow of doubt that the divisive tactics employed by the Government in the bus men's case, the attempt to drive them back onto a productivity bargain which is weighted against them from the beginning, has produced an unprecedented level of frustration, bitterness, and militancy. The abominable productivity bargain which the Rootes workers "accepted" earlier this year, is already leading directly to intensified conflict in the Midlands car industry, and much more is to come in that region. The I.C.I. Manpower Utilisation and Payments Scheme, an elaborate company level agreement which seems to meet all the ideals of the Donovan Commission, has been held up for nearly three years by important sections of that company's workers, and has generated a new level of consciousness amongst them. From all corners for those who listen, comes the angry note of disillusion from shop stewards who have already concluded apparently successful factory-level productivity bargains.

Really, the Donovan Commission's proposed "structural" changes, its suggested reforms of the "institutions" of collective bargaining, are not innovations at all. They are simply the formalisation of a development which is already far advanced. In the 1950's, this development probably benefited the fragmented and a-political tactics of the shop steward bargainers. In the straitened economic and political circumstances of the 1960's, the trend has been seized by the employers and government in an attempt to turn it against the working class. (The reduction of unit labour-costs is the criterion above all by which the employers and Barbara Castle test a productivity bargain. Such a reduction means of course, a shift towards property income, away from income for work.) The Donovan Commission aims

to strengthen this trend. It does so with relative diffidence, when compared with the forthright declarations of the Tory Party. But it does so without any conciliating offer to the trade unions. Its failure to offer anything substantial - however ambiguous in form or content - reveals the serious weakness (indeed the complete bankruptcy) of the reformist stream in British political life today. When the Whitley Commission was established to solve a parallel crisis of "disorder in industrial relations" towards the end of the 1st World War, it came up with a variety of proposals, some of which were concrete though limited value to the unions.

The extension of minimum wage machinery in unorganized trades, the provision of a permanent arbitration Court, and the encouragement given to collective bargaining through Joint Industrial Councils, coincided at least in part to genuine reform aspirations within the trade unions. And the endorsement of the "advance" practice of Joint Consultation by Whitley offered an ambiguous snare in which the trade unions became entangled for two generations. The Whitley pattern survives today as that formal machinery which the Donovan Commission believes is preventing the formalisation of the factory bargain. There is of course no reason for socialists to hope or expect that trade unions will defend Whitley against Donovan. But Donovan fails entirely to discover a formula of structural change which offers any inducement to the unions to move on into the new corporate design. The key blunder of the Commission (on its own terms of course) is clearly the failure to take the question of "participation" more seriously. Wilson, learning from Whitley (and de Gaulle?), appears to be shaping up to remedy that omission. Participation is the last shot in the locker of this Government, and for any foreseeable successor. The trade union movement has the potential to withstand that shot; if it does we may look forward to the argument turning to the real issue - that of authority and control in industry and the state.

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#### WHO IS PLOTTING AGAINST WHO?

The recent spate of stories in the press about an alleged plot involving 400(!) militants, who it is said are making bombs and collecting arms; plus the raid on the office of the Black Dwarf, should not be dismissed as hysteria or a part of the press silly season.

All of this scare campaign is directed against the activities of the Marxist movement, and particularly against those involved directly in the anti-Vietnam war campaign. However, it may be that such stories are not only designed to prepare public opinion for 'mob violence' (and we all know what that means) on the October 27th demonstration; the ground may be being prepared for a witch-hunt campaign demanding arrests and trials.

Upto now the revolutionary left has been able to pursue its activities openly and legally in this country. This may not continue for much longer. France has some lessons for the British bourgeoisie, and they may be preparing to take action before it 'is too late'. At the very least we can expect to see an increase in harassment, arrests, increased fines or prison terms.

Therefore we ask who is plotting against who?

## THE TIMETABLE FOR REVOLUTION

Is it possible to fix a definite date for  
a counter-revolution or a revolution ?

by Leon Trotsky

"Of course it is not possible. It is only trains which start at certain times, and even they don't always..."

Exactitude of thought is necessary everywhere, and in questions of revolutionary strategy more than anywhere else. But as revolutions do not occur so very often, revolutionary conceptions and thought processes become slipshod, their outlines become vague, the questions are raised and solved somehow.

Mussolini brought off his 'revolution' (that is, his counter-revolution) at a definitely fixed time made known publicly beforehand. He was able to do this successfully because the Socialists had not accomplished the revolution at the right time. The Bulgarian Fascisti achieved their 'revolution' by means of a military conspiracy, the date being fixed and the roles assigned. The same was the case with the Spanish officers' coup. Counter-revolutionary coups are almost always carried out along these lines. They are usually attempted at a moment when the disappointment of the masses in revolution or democracy has taken the form of indifference, and a favourable political milieu is thus created for an organised and technically prepared coup, the date of which is definitely fixed beforehand. One thing is clear: it is not possible to create a political situation favourable for a reactionary upheaval by any artificial means, much less to fix a certain point of time for it. But when the basic elements of this situation already exist, then the leading party seizes the most favourable moment, as we have seen, adapts its political, organisational, and technical forces, and - if it has not miscalculated - deals the final and victorious blow.

The bourgeoisie has not always made counter-revolutions. In the past it also made revolutions. Did it fix any definite time for these revolutions? It would be interesting, and in many respects instructive, to investigate from this standpoint the development of the classic and the decadent bourgeois revolutions (a subject for our young Marxist savants!), but even without such a detailed analysis it is possible to establish the following fundamentals of the question. The propertied and educated bourgeoisie, that is, that section of the 'people' which gained power, did not make the revolution, but waited until it was made. When the movement among the lower strata brought the cup to overflowing, and the old social order or political regime was overthrown, then power fell almost automatically into the hands of the Liberal bourgeoisie. The Liberal savants designated such a revolution as a 'natural', an inevitable revolution. They gathered together a mighty collection of platitudes under the name of historical laws: revolution and counter-revolution (according to M. Karajev of blessed memory - action and reaction) are declared products of historical evolution and therefore incapable of being arranged according to the calendar, and so forth. These <sup>laws</sup> have never prevented well prepared counter-revolutionary coups from being carried out. But the nebulosity of the bourgeois-liberal mode of thought sometimes finds its way into the heads of revolutionists, where it plays havoc and causes much material damage....

## Contrast of Bourgeois and Proletarian Methods

But even bourgeois revolutions have not by any means invariably developed at every stage along the lines of the 'natural' laws laid down by the Liberal professors; when petty bourgeois-plebian democracy has overthrown Liberalism, it has done so by means of conspiracy and prepared insurrections, fixed beforehand for definite dates. This was done by the Jacobins - the extreme left wing of the French Revolution. This is perfectly comprehensible. The Liberal bourgeoisie (the French in the year 1789, the Russian in February 1917) contents itself with waiting for the results of a mighty and elemental movement, in order to throw its wealth, its culture, and its connections with the State apparatus into the scale at the last moment and thus seize the helm. Petty bourgeois democracy, under similar circumstances, has to proceed differently: it has neither wealth nor social influence and connections at its disposal. It finds itself obliged to replace these by a well thought out and carefully prepared plan of revolutionary overthrow. A plan, however, implies a definite organisation in respect of time, and therefore also the fixing of a definite time.

This applies all the more to proletarian revolution. The Communist Party cannot adopt a waiting attitude in the face of the growing revolutionary movement of the proletariat. Strictly speaking, this is the attitude taken by Menshevism: to hinder revolution so long as it is in process of development; to utilize its successes as soon as it is in any degree victorious; and to exert every effort to retard it. The Communist Party cannot seize power by utilizing the revolutionary movement while standing aside, but only by means of direct and immediate political, organisational, and military-technical leadership of the revolutionary masses, both in the period of slow preparation and at the moment of decisive insurrection itself. For this reason the Communist Party has absolutely no use whatever for a Liberal law according to which revolutions happen but are not made, and therefore cannot be fixed for a definite point of time. From the standpoint of the spectator this law is correct; from the standpoint of the leader it is, however, a platitude and a banality.

Let us imagine a country in which the political conditions necessary for proletarian revolution are either already mature, or are obviously and distinctly maturing day by day. What attitude is to be taken under such circumstances by the Communist Party to the question of insurrection and the definite date on which it is to take place?

When the country is passing through an extraordinary acute social crisis, when the antagonisms are aggravated to the highest degree, when feeling among the working masses is constantly at boiling point, when the party is obviously supported by a certain majority of the working people, and consequently by all the most active, class conscious, and devoted elements of the proletariat, the task confronting the party - its only possible task under these circumstances - is to fix a definite time in the immediate future, that is, a time prior to which the favourable revolutionary situation cannot react against us, and then to concentrate every effort on the preparation for the final struggle, to place the whole current policy and organisation at the service of the military object in view, that the concentration of forces may justify the striking of the final blow.



## The Russian Experience

To consider not merely an abstract country, let us take the Russian October revolution as an example. The country was in the throes of a great crisis, national and international. The State apparatus was paralyzed. The workers streamed in ever-increasing numbers into our party. From the moment when the Bolsheviki were in the majority in the Petrograd Soviet, and afterwards in the Moscow Soviet, the party was faced with the question - not of the struggle for power in general, but of preparing for the seizure of power according to a definite plan and at a definite time. The date fixed was the day upon which the All-Russian Soviet Congress was to take place. One section of the members of the Central Committee was of the opinion that the moment of the insurrection should coincide with the political moment of the Soviet Congress. Other members of the Central Committee feared that the bourgeoisie would have made its preparations by then, and would be able to disperse the congress; these wanted to have the congress held at an earlier date. The decision of the Central Committee fixed the date of the armed insurrection for October 15 at the latest. This decision was carried out with a certain delay of ten days, as the course of agitational and organisational preparations showed that an insurrection independent of the Soviet Congress would have sown misunderstanding among important sections of the working class, as these connected the idea of the seizure of power with the Soviets and not with the party and its secret organisations. On the other hand, it was perfectly clear that the bourgeoisie was already too much demoralized to be able to organise any serious resistance for two or three weeks.

Thus after the party had gained the majority in the leading Soviets, and had in this way secured the basic political condition for the seizure of power, we were faced by the necessity of fixing a definite calendar date for the decision of the military question. Before we had won the majority, the organisational technical plan was bound to be more or less qualified and elastic. For us the gauge of our revolutionary influence was the Soviets which had been called into existence by the Mensheviki and the Social Revolutionists at the beginning of the revolution. The Soviets furnished the cloak for our conspiratorial work; they were also able to serve as governmental organs after the actual seizure of power.

## Strategy in Absence of Soviets

Where would our strategy have been if there had been no Soviets? It is obvious that we should have had to turn to other gauges of our revolutionary influence: the trade unions, strikes, street demonstrations, every description of democratic electioneering, etc. Although the Soviets represent the most accurate gauge of the actual activity of the masses during a revolutionary epoch, still even without the existence of the Soviets we should have been fully able to ascertain the precise moment at which the actual majority of the working class was on our side. Naturally, at this moment we should have had to issue the slogan of the formation of Soviets to the masses. But in doing this we should have already transferred the whole question to the plane of military conflicts; therefore before we issued the slogan on the formation of Soviets, we should have had to have a properly

worked out plan for an armed insurrection at a certain fixed time.

If we had then had the majority of the working people on our side, or at least the majority in the decisive centres and districts, the formation of Soviets would have been secured by our appeal. The backward towns and provinces would have followed the leading centres with more or less delay. We should have then had the political task of establishing a Soviet Congress, and of securing for this congress by military measures the possibility of assuming power. It is clear that these are only two aspects of one and the same task.

Let us now imagine that our Central Committee, in the above described situation - that is, there being no Soviets in existence - had met for a decisive session in the period when the masses had already begun to move, but had not yet ensured us a clear and overwhelming majority. How should we then have developed our further plan of action? Should we have fixed a definite point of time for the insurrection?

The reply may be adduced from the above. We should have said to ourselves: At the present moment we have no certain and unqualified majority. But the trend of feeling among the masses is such that the decisive and militant majority necessary for us is merely a matter of the next few weeks. Let us assume that it will take a month to win over the majority of the workers in Petrograd, in Moscow, in the Donetz basin; let us set ourselves this task and concentrate the necessary forces in these centres. As soon as the majority had been gained - we shall summon the workers to form Soviets. This will require one to two weeks at most for Petrograd, Moscow, and the Donetz basin; it may be calculated with certainty that the remaining towns and provinces will follow the example of the chief centres within the next two or three weeks. Thus, the construction of a network of Soviets will require about a month. After Soviets exist in the important districts, in which we have of course the majority, we shall convene an All-Russian Soviet Congress. We shall require fourteen days to assemble the congress. We have, therefore, two and a half months at our disposal before the congress. In the course of this time the seizure of power must not only be prepared, but actually accomplished.

#### Timetable of Operations

We should accordingly have placed before our military organisation a programme allowing two months, at most two and a half, for the preparation of the insurrection in Petrograd, in Moscow, on the railways, etc. I am speaking in the conditional tense (we should have decided, we should have done this and that), for in reality, although our operations were by no means unskilful, still they were by no means so systematic, not because we were in any way disturbed by "historical laws", but because we were carrying out a proletarian insurrection for the first time.

But are not miscalculations likely to occur by such methods? Seizure of power signifies war, and in war there can be victories and defeats. But the systematic method here described is the best and most direct road to the goal, that is it most enhances the prospects of victory. Thus, for instance should it have turned out, a month after the Central Committee session of

our above adduced example, that we had not yet the majority of the workers on our side, then we should, of course, not have issued the slogan calling for the formation of Soviets, for in this case the slogan would have mis-carried (in our example we assume that the Social Revolutionists and Mensheviki are against the Soviets). And had the reverse been the case, and we had found a decisive and militant majority behind us in the course of fourteen days, this would have abridged our plan and accelerated the decisive moment of insurrection. The same applies to the second and third stages of our plan: the formation of Soviets and the summoning of the Soviet Congress. We should not have issued the slogan of the Soviet Congress, as stated above, until we had secured the actual establishment of Soviets at the most important points. In this manner the realisation of every step in our plan is prepared and secured by the realisation of the preceding steps. The work of military preparation proceeds parallel with that of the most definitely dated performance. In this way the party has its military apparatus under complete control. To be sure, a revolution always brings much that is entirely unexpected, unforeseen, elemental; we have, of course, to allow for the occurrence of all these 'accidents' and adapt ourselves to them; but we can do this with the greater success and certainty if our conspiracy is thoroughly worked out.

Revolution possesses a mighty power of improvisation, but it never improvises anything good for fatalists, idlers, and fools. Victory demands correct political orientation, organisation, and the will to deal the decisive blow.

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## TROTSKY'S MARXISM - A REPLY TO NICOLAS KRASSO

by KEN TARBUCK

(Editors Note. This article was first written in October 1967 in response to an essay that appeared in New Left Review 44. Although it was submitted for publication in NLR - and tentatively accepted - it has not yet been published. One reply to Krasso has been published in NLR 47 by Ernest Mandel and it is well worth while for readers to obtain this and the original essay. The present article stands in its own right, since the points in dispute have a significance beyond the pages of NLR. The place of Trotsky in the history of Marxism is one that still has topical import.

Since the original article and the reply were written major events have taken place that demonstrate both the validity of Trotsky's contribution and of its relevance for politics today. Both the French events and the Czechoslovakian events, each in their own way, have shown the relevance of Trotskyism to today's world.

The present article has been amended slightly from that version which was first submitted to the NLR in October 1967. However, in the main it still stands as it was written then.)

Nicolas Krasso's article attempting to appraise Trotsky's place in the history of Marxism was both too long and too short. It was too long in the sense that it tried to cover such a long time span, one that was explosively full of history making events; too short because the nature of the material handled meant that nearly every point could only be touched upon in a generalised way. Perhaps this is the price that is paid for initiating such a discussion. However, this has raised certain problems in the writing of this reply, it has meant that not every point could be taken up and argued but only those that seem to have an important bearing on the central issues.

### Permanent Revolution

The first point I would like to take up is the question of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Nicolas Krasso calls this an "inept designation which by evoking the idea of a continuous conflagration at all times and at all places - a metaphysical carnival of insurrection - it lent itself to distortion in the polemic both of Trotsky's opponents and his followers". We are told that Trotsky's formula conflated two quite distinct problems, the character of the Russian revolution and its ability to maintain itself without an international extension of the revolution.\*

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\* On the point of a "metaphysical carnival" it might be pertinent to point out that Marx himself originated the phrase permanent revolution in 'The Class Struggles in France' when he wrote "This Socialism is the declaration of the permanence of the revolution...." (p. 196 Moscow FLPH ed. 1952.) If Trotsky was guilty of being inept then he erred along with Marx.

Nicolas Krasso contends that "The illegitimate nature of this process is all too obvious", but is it? The illegitimate posing of the problem only arises if one views the question from a formal logical position. The question of the survival, or otherwise, of a successful revolution in a hostile capitalist world did hinge on the character of that revolution. If one compares the reaction of the capitalist world generally, and the Allied Powers in particular, to the February 1917 revolution and the reaction to the October revolution, one sees the conflation that is objected to taking place in real life. Nor was this hostility manifested merely because the Bolsheviks sued for peace, interventions continued and grew in intensity after the defeat of Germany. Is Nicolas Krasso going to suggest that had Kerensky continued in office, with all that that would have implied, that there would have still been interventions; or on the other hand that the interventions that did (and still do) take place were merely fortuitous? To attempt to separate the two aspects of any revolution today, after all the experience that we have of imperialist interventions is to take the discussion back half a century.

Moreover, it can be seen from living experience, that of Cuba, that the international conditions at a given time and place help to determine the nature and scope of a revolution. Any examination of this experience will show that the particular course of this revolution has been profoundly influenced by the intervention of U.S. imperialism and the support for the revolutionary regime gathered from the Workers States. There is another aspect to be considered, this is the international effects a victorious workers revolution would and does have. This side of the theory of permanent revolution implies that revolutions do not take place in isolation, but are part of an international process. Again one can point to living experience for the validity of this proposition since 1945. The victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949 and the Cuban revolution in 1959 are not two separate disconnected events, rather they form parts of that permanent revolution that Marx and Trotsky wrote about. Nicolas Krasso injected the phrase "metaphysical carnival of insurrection" and then proceeds on the assumption that this was also Trotsky's view. This is an utter distortion of Trotsky's real views. It is interesting that Trotsky was not allowed to 'speak' for himself about this matter, perhaps because no quotation could be dug up to prove that he ever said that the Soviet Union could only be saved by "simultaneous revolutions in Western Europe". Such nonsense will not be found in Trotsky's writings. Deutscher presented a balanced synthesis of the permanent revolution when he wrote - "Trotsky's theory is in truth a profound and comprehensive conception in which all the overturns that the world has been undergoing (in this late capitalist era) are represented as interconnected and interdependent parts of a single revolutionary process. To put it in the broadest terms, the social upheaval of our century is seen by Trotsky as global in scope and character, even though it proceeds on various levels of civilization and in the most diverse social structures, and even though its various phases are separated from one another in time and space." (P.19. Introduction to 'The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology'.) Krasso's attempt to refute the theory of permanent revolution is an attempt to refute the process of life in the modern world. The theory is no longer one that lives solely between the

pages of a book. Since 1917 it has been subject to empirical verification and has been endorsed in the process.

### Socialism in One Country

Krasso's muddled thinking on the question of permanent revolution leads him to serve up an historical and theoretical pastiche on the question of 'Socialism in One Country'. We are told "It was naive to speculate whether revolutions would or would not occur in the West, in general. Bolshevik strategy should not be based on the presumption of an occurrence of a European revolution; but nor should the possibility of one be discarded. After Lenin's death, however, this dialectical position disintegrated..." This imputes a view to Lenin that he did not hold. Lenin said very specifically on a number of occasions that "World imperialism cannot live side by side with a victorious advancing social revolution". On April 23 1918 Lenin said "Our backwardness has thrust us forward and we shall perish if we are unable to hold out until we meet mighty support of the insurrectionary workers of other countries". These and many more references put him without question in the camp of those who thought that an isolated workers state would not survive for long. If as Nicolas Krasso implies, the Bolsheviks had a non-committal attitude (it is a misuse of language to call it dialectical) to revolution in the West why was there such enthusiasm for the creation of the Third International? Moreover, the Third International did not 'speculate' about revolutions in the West but was viewed by nearly all the leading Bolsheviks, Lenin included, as being the world party of revolution in a very concrete and active way. Indeed any reading of the early days of the Russian Revolution makes it very clear that it was seen as a prelude to revolution in the West.

However, this was not the only aspect of 'Socialism in One Country' that was opposed by the Left Opposition in the 1920's. The other aspect concerned the type of society that was envisaged when one spoke about socialism. The point of departure for the Opposition was the fact that capitalism had created a world market, world economy and a world wide division of labour. Therefore in the age of imperialism national boundaries become more and more restricting on the development of productive forces. If socialism is to develop the productive forces on such a scale that standards of material well-being are far superior to those under capitalism and men freed from routine drudgery then this international division of labour will have to be carried to a much higher pitch. To talk about the building of socialism in backward Russia was an essentially reactionary and utopian idea, it implied the abandonment of a perspective of international revolution, and along with it the best defence for a backward workers state.

### The Intelligensia and Socialism

The line of argument pursued by Krasso in this section is rather obscure. He accused Trotsky of bitter hostility towards intellectuals bringing forward an article written in 1910 as evidence. Trotsky is said to view the intelligensia in a "wholly pre-Leninist manner" and hence his views are un-Marxist! Apart from the setting up of Lenin as an ikon, this

interpretation is very misleading. Trotsky, in the article in question, was analysing the role of intellectuals as a social layer within capitalist society. Lenin, in contrast, wrote about and directed his activity towards intellectuals breaking from this environment and becoming revolutionaries. Trotsky did not dismiss the intelligensia in toto, he postulated conditions under which they would move towards socialism. He said "The intelligensia might go over to collectivism if it were given reason to see as probable the immediate victory of collectivism, if collectivism rose before it not as an ideal of a different, remote and alien class but as a near and tangible reality; finally, if and this is not the least important condition - a political break with the bourgeoisie did not threaten each brain worker taken separately with grave material and moral consequences". It is obvious that here Trotsky was concerned with the conditions which went to mould the intelligensia, and the forces that operated against it allying with the working class. It certainly could be argued that such conditions are today not so pressing, particularly here in Britain. But it would be unwise to assume that such conditions are no longer operative at all.

It would also be well to recall that Trotsky was writing in 1910 and that his assessment of the role and attitudes of the intelligensia in relation to the working class was a realistic one. Looking at the British Labour movement of 1910, for instance, one could see that intellectuals as a social layer played a minimal role, the Webbs et al notwithstanding. When numbers of the intelligensia did move into the Labour Party, after 1918, they further debased the dominant Labourism. However, it must be noted that even today the intelligensia, as a social layer, have not decisively gone over to socialism here in Britain, even of the Labour variety let alone revolutionary socialism. It is clear that only when individual members of the intelligensia commit themselves to a working class party does their role inside become a critical one. If today more individual intellectuals commit themselves to socialism does this prove Trotsky wrong? It certainly does if one attempts to read him as a sort of Gospel or Holy Writ. However, it does not prove him wrong if one takes into account the October, Chinese and Cuban revolutions. Collectivism is no longer a remote ideal but a living reality. On the other hand one of the lessons of all three revolutions is that, along with the dispossessed ruling class, large numbers of the intelligensia also flee and take up hostile positions to the new regimes. Even those that stayed in Russia after 1917 had to be wooed by special privileges. One is not being bitterly hostile to them because one acknowledges the truth about their position in society. This position is that they are dominated by the hegemonic ideology of the ruling class and help to perpetuate it.

To try to insert Gramsci's concept, of a new type of intellectual produced by a revolutionary party, into a discussion about intellectuals as a social layer is to befog the issue. The roles of the individual intellectual and that of the intelligensia are separate problems, even though obviously related. Krasso writes that "the party...an autonomous structure ...recombines and transforms two different phenomena - the intelligensia and the working class". This is indeed an odd way of putting it. How can an autonomous structure - the party - recombine two classes? If this

autonomous structure were to carry out this feat it would not be autonomous and class and party would be synonymous! The charge of identifying class and party which is laid at Trotsky's feet should be laid elsewhere. The modified elements which engage in new political practice, i.e. the revolutionary party are not the intelligensia and the working class but only individuals and perhaps sections from these two social formations. To say otherwise is precisely to confuse class and party as Nicolas Krasso does.

### 1917 - 1921

It is necessary to have a clear factual understanding of history if one sets out to interpret it. Unfortunately Nicolas Krasso does not have this. This is evident when he says "Trotsky was determined to strengthen the power of professional military officers with a Czarist past in the Red Army, and he fought the imposition of control over them by political commissars appointed by the party". This is very far wide of what the real situation was. The dispute over the employment of the ex-Czarist officers was if they should be used at all, and this was only a subsidiary question to the wider one of a centralised army v militia. This was debated at the 8th Congress of the Bolshevik Party. Trotsky wanted to use these officers in their capacity of military experts, but at the same time made a specific request to the Central Committee to supply him with reliable Communists to act as commissars. Deutscher says that Trotsky 'implored' the Central Committee for these men. There was never any question of the ex-Czarist officers having more power since all their orders had to be countersigned by their political commissars.

Krasso uses these unfounded assertions to insert the idea that Trotsky was an essentially military figure, more at ease in a command situation. He says "He [Trotsky] had authority ab initio to organise the army; as People's Commissar for War he had all the prestige of Lenin and the Soviet State behind him. He did not have to win this authority in a political arena by persuading his peers to accept him". Again, this is a perversion of the real situation. Deutscher puts the matter differently;

"The new campaigning season was approaching, but even now, a year after Trotsky had become Commissar of War, his military policy had not yet received the party's blessing - he carried it out as if on his own responsibility".

(p. 429 Prophet Armed).

It was not until the 8th Congress that the party formally endorsed this military policy of Trotsky. But even then it would be grossly misleading to suggest that the role of a military leader was only one of command. In any civil war situation appeals and persuasion play a far greater role than routine authority or command. In the case of the creation of the Red Army this was particularly so. There was no tradition, no historical precedents, no hegemonic ideology holding undisputed sway. It is in this light that Trotsky's role must be viewed, and this was essentially a political one. The early formations of the Red Army were entirely voluntary, only when a reliable proletarian military cadre had been formed was it possible to resort to conscription. Even when conscription was used it must be seen in



a very different way to 'normal' induction. In a civil war there is no guarantee that your conscripts will not desert in large numbers to the other side, or perhaps just desert, if there is not a firm political basis laid.

Krasso tells us that "The voluntarist is in his element harranging crowds or dispatching troops - but these roles should not be confused with the ability to lead a revolutionary party." What he forgets is that before anyone can 'dispatch troops' he must have them at hand. Therefore the art of a revolutionary military leader is the gathering of the troops and convincing them of the need to be 'dispatched'. This is where Krasso utterly fails to see the similarity, and at times identity (Cuba), between a revolutionary army and party.

Again, Krasso misunderstands the reality of the early days of the Soviet Republic and the nature of the military policy. He says that Trotsky "...as a pillar of the Soviet State...had to give orders to his subordinates for precise purposes. His task in either role was to ensure the means to a previously determined end. This is a different task from that of ensuring that a novel end prevails among various competing opinions in a political organisation". This improperly assumes that the end of a civil, or any other, war are predetermined. This is not so, the only end predetermined in a war situation is that the enemy should be defeated. Also in a revolutionary party the only end predetermined is that there should be revolution. In both situations the means, methods, tactics, etc. will be subject to discussion and debate. This is not to suggest that in a civil war the debate will be conducted at all levels within the army, but neither will it be in the party; the nature of the situation sometimes precludes it. Furthermore, even if one assumes that for the Red Army per se ends were predetermined by the Central Committee, Trotsky played a part in arriving at the decisions. He was not a passive onlooker waiting for his orders to be handed down to him.

Trotsky could hardly be called a pillar of the Soviet State until late in the civil war, because no such state existed in the accepted use of the term. The term pillar is misleading; it conjures up a picture of a solid well founded and established regime, when in fact very often the continued existence of the regime hung in the balance. What we are given, by implication, is a picture of Trotsky moving in an orderly, established structure of known and given dimensions, when in fact society and every subordinate structure, including the revolutionary party, was in a condition of flux. Only holding a static and unreal vision of revolution could lead one to see Trotsky, or any other Bolshevik leader, in a command situation in those early days.

## 1921 - 1929

Krasso here turns to the theme of substitution and identity in the relations between party and class implying that Trotsky fell into the 'error' of identity, i.e. of seeing the party and class as identical. He presents us with a quotation from the 'New Course' which seems to bear him out; but it would have been better had he completed the quotation. It

would have given an accurate picture of what Trotsky said. Here is the quotation with the missing sentences restored.

"The different needs of the working class, of the peasantry, of the state apparatus and its membership, act upon our party, through whose medium they seek to find a political expression. The difficulties and contradictions in our epoch, the temporary discord in the interests of the different layers of the proletariat, or of the proletariat as a whole and the peasantry, act upon the party through the medium of its worker and peasant cells, of the state apparatus, of the student youth. Even episodic differences in views and nuances of opinion may express the remote pressure of distinct social interests and, in certain circumstances, be transformed into stable groupings; the latter may, in turn, sooner or later take the form of organized factions which, opposing themselves to the rest of the party, undergo by that very fact even greater external pressure. Such is the dialectics of inner-party groupings in an epoch when the communist party is obliged to monopolize the direction of political life."

(p. 27 New Course. emphasis added)

The underlined sentence is the key to a proper understanding of what Trotsky was discussing; only by leaving it out was Nicolas Krasso able to present his interpretation to an unwary reader. The chapter that this comes from is 'Groups and Factional Formations'. In this Trotsky was discussing the politics of a one party state, as the above makes clear. He was not talking about parties in general, nor was there any suggestion that party and class are identical. What he was doing was to explore the nature of groups and factions in a situation where only one party was the prescribed form of political activity, and in so doing was breaking new ground. For socialists and Marxists the situation in the Soviet Union was a novel and unprecedented one. Certainly in 1917 no one foresaw such a situation. The subsequent developments in the 1920's seem to have borne out what Trotsky was saying in 1923. Indeed, later on the experience of the monolithic one party state indicates that unless the party does reflect these differences then it ceases to be a party in the accepted use of the term.

We are also told that Trotsky was guilty of 'sociologism', and this first led him into the trap of equating party and class in the theoretical field; and in practical politics urging the proletarianisation of the party as an antidote to bureaucracy. Further, we are told that Stalin followed this advice with disastrous results for - Trotsky! However, Deutscher puts the matter rather differently -

"The triumvirs /Stalin, Kamenev and Zinoviev/ resolved to open at once a spectacular recruiting drive in the factories. But while Trotsky had advised a careful selection, they decided to recruit en masse, to accept any worker who cared to join, and to waive all customary tests and conditions. At the thirteenth conference they recommended the recruitment at a stroke of 100,000 workers... This was a mockery of Bolshevik principle of organisation which

required that, as the elite and vanguard of the proletariat, the party should only accept the politically advanced and the battle hardened."

(p. 135 The Prophet Unarmed).

Trotsky indeed made the point that the process of recruitment of workers should be slow and then "only under conditions of noteworthy economic advance" (pp.20-21 The New Course). Here a different picture emerges from that of a primitive sociologism - workers good, bureaucrats bad - here we see Trotsky grappling with a real problem, that of declining worker membership, and its implications for the future of the party. Nicolas Krasso seems to imply that the social composition of a revolutionary socialist party is of no consequence. Perhaps what he means is that such a party should be for the workers but not necessarily of them? Surely, Trotsky was making the point that the socialist revolutionary party, especially one in power, with only a minority of workers was a long term determinant contradiction. Therefore he urged that steps should be taken to rectify the situation. It is somewhat bizarre to imply that Trotsky had an idyllic view of workers in Russia at this time. He wrote a considerable amount about the low level of culture during this period, and had a lively appreciation of the political problems this posed.

#### Collectivisation and Industrialisation

The question of industrial development in underdeveloped countries is still one that has a burning topicality, especially for those countries which have broken free of the capitalist orbit. In such circumstances the question will arise 'where will the surplus come from?' This is indeed a crucial point. However, Nicolas Krasso paints far too black and white a picture - "Bukharin advocated an ultra-right policy of private peasant enrichment at the expense of the towns: 'We shall move forward by tiny, tiny steps pulling behind us our large peasant cart'. Preobrazhensky urged the exploitation of the peasantry (in the technical economic sense) to accumulate a surplus for rapid industrialization". Of course it is possible to show these formulations as being violently contradictory, since they are men of straw. To talk of Lenin's policy is, in this context, misleading, since he did not have time to formulate a fully coherent and articulated one before his death. Bukharin and Preobrazhensky are presented in a way which belies their respective attitudes. Another point should be added - Trotsky was not wholly in agreement with Preobrazhensky's ideas as put forward in 'The New Economics'; but there is no doubt that they were in agreement on the practical policies put forward by the Opposition. Therefore one should make some distinction between Trotsky and Preobrazhensky.

Bukharin, essentially, argued that the development of industry should be geared to rural demand, and that light, or consumer goods industry should be given priority. Such a policy did in fact encourage the revival of capitalist elements in the countryside, and meant that in practice the state industries became subordinated to the market. However, it would be wrong to say that Bukharin urged the enrichment of the peasants at the expense of the towns, since this would have meant the exploitation of the

working class. What he no doubt intended was that his policy would generate the surplus in the countryside and this would lead eventually to accumulation. He failed to appreciate that an agricultural surplus does not necessarily lead to accumulation, and indeed the evidence is that in underdeveloped countries in the capitalist orbit this surplus is largely squandered or invested in land and usury. Only by consciously breaking the law of value (not ignoring it) can this be overcome.

Preobrazhensky's analysis was, originally, a theoretical one which posed the conflict between the private sector of the economy (mainly agricultural) which was the majority and the small state owned industrial sector; and the need for a fast rate of industrial accumulation. He designated a law of primitive socialist accumulation in this way -

"The more backward economically, petty-bourgeois, peasant, a particular country is which has gone over to the socialist organisation of production, and the smaller the inheritance received by the socialist accumulation fund of the proletariat of this country when the social revolution takes place, by so much the more, in proportion, will socialist accumulation be obliged to rely on alienating part of the surplus product of pre-socialist forms of economy".

(p. 124 The New Economics).

He argued that because of the small absolute and relative amount of surplus available in Soviet industry the main contribution must come from agriculture. This does imply 'technical exploitation' of the peasants, but this process should be explained since it is possible to forget one half of the term - technical - and concentrate on the other - exploitation. Preobrazhensky explained the matter very clearly. -

"The task of the socialist state consists here not in taking from the petty-bourgeois producers less than capitalism took, but in taking more from the still larger incomes which will be secured to the petty producers by the rationalisation of the whole economy, including petty production, on the basis of industrialising the country and intensifying agriculture."

(p. 89 The New Economics. emphasis in original)

Nicolas Krasso injects into this debate an essentially static view of economics when he says - "For the poorer the peasantry was, the less surplus it had over and beyond what it consumed itself, and the less it was 'exploitable' for industrialization. Bukharin's conciliation of the peasantry and Preobrazhensky's counterposition of it to the proletariat were equally distortions of Lenin's policy, which was to collectivise but not crush the peasantry, not wage war on them." Now clearly, if one views national income, or the social product, as a given quantity, then one is justified in arguing that an increase in one class's share is based on another class's share decreasing. However, if one views national income as a stream that is increasing in size through time, then it is possible for all to have an increasing total consumption, but at the same time one

section of society may have a smaller percentage share than previously. \* However, this is a very simplified approach to the particular problem.

A first approach to a proper understanding of the problem is to clearly distinguish between maximum and optimum rates of accumulation in the short run. This is where Nicolas Krasso is mistaken in assuming that Stalin took over (and denatured) the Left Opposition's economic policies. The first five year plans were in fact based on the premise of a maximum rate of accumulation but turned out to be increasing production at a slower rate than if an optimum rate had been aimed for.

Some would consider an optimum rate of accumulation in purely economic terms to be that rate which increases the social product by a maximum amount in a given period. But no Marxist could accept such a definition because it leaves out the class forces involved. A policy which reduces the living standards of the working class, creating demoralisation and political apathy would be totally unacceptable. Moreover, one could not accept any assumption which postulated that productivity of labour was independent of the level of consumption. This is what the Stalinist bureaucracy did with disastrous results for Soviet agriculture and for the Soviet working class in the first two five year plans. In the frenzy to achieve a maximum rate of accumulation there was in fact a lowering of the maximum increase of the social product that could have been gained, had an optimum rate of accumulation been adopted.

Another point is that Nicolas Krasso uses the term peasantry indiscriminately; none of the protagonists in the original discussion made such an error. If he looks at the 'Platform of the Left Opposition 1927' he will see that an analysis was made of the "Class differentiation among the Peasants". In trying to assess the situation in rural Russia in the mid-twenties such a mistake as Nicolas Krasso's is impermissible. The Left Opposition had a policy of support for the poor landless and middle peasants along with proposals for generous credit terms and a speedy introduction of mechanisation into agriculture; and of course collectivisation via co-operatives. They certainly had a policy of containing and finally eliminating the Kulaks (as a class), who were becoming the basis of a new capitalist development within the Soviet Union. Does Nicolas Krasso think this wrong? Stalin, to whom Nicolas Krasso accords the accolade of being "confirmed by history", had, along with Bukharin, pooh poohed the warnings of the opposition, but was later thrown into a panic by the growing power and resistance of the Kulaks. This problem was 'solved' in a brutal and bloody repression. To suggest that the policy of the Left Opposition had any connection with this is to stretch credibility too far.

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\* This may sound like the familiar arguments put forward by Wilson and Co. with their appeals for higher productivity. Formally it is a correct argument, in the short run, but for Marxists the real question is who does what with the surplus? If the extra surplus is privately appropriated or bureaucratically misused that is where the fight should begin. We have no argument per se against increased production.

Perhaps the biggest mistake that Nicolas Krasso makes over the debate on industrialisation is to suggest that this was primarily concerned with administrative options, whereas the debate over 'Socialism in One Country' only concerned international articulations. Planning in any transitional regime will be essentially the 'allocation of scarce resources'. This commonplace of bourgeois economics will then become a reality, for the allocation will then be done by conscious decision and not by the anarchy of the market. Nevertheless, the basis for political economy will still be the relationship of men (and classes) to each other in the distribution of scarce resources, i.e. to the means of production. It is this fundamentally different approach that distinguishes Marxist economics. Nicolas Krasso makes the error of assuming that economics is a 'technical' or 'administrative' subject, and thereby confuses techniques and ideology. The debate in Cuba over moral v material incentives was an interesting example of the fusion between economics and politics. The particular techniques that are used or that are chosen, will, by and large, reflect (even if only in a diffused way) the political decisions they are based on. For instance, the decision by Wilson in 1964 not to devalue the pound debarred him from using a number of techniques for grappling with the economic crisis. The original decision was a political one. It is possible to argue about this or that aspect of policy since then, and indeed we should, but unless one takes into account the central political decision then one can get lost.

Therefore, to suggest that the debates on economic policy and 'Socialism in One Country' were separate and unconnected does not stand up to investigation. The economic debate was around how much surplus was to be generated and who would benefit. Socialism in One Country was the reaction of the bureaucrats wanting to hang on to their share. Both arose from the backwardness and isolation of the Soviet Union.

#### 1927 - 1940

Despite some notable theoretical writings in this period we are told that Trotsky led an imaginary political movement and therefore the activities of these years were futile. I am not concerned here to argue the merits or demerits of the Fourth International. What I want to do is pose some questions myself. How is it that 30 years after it was founded this body - the Fourth International - exists at all? When one considers a) that it was founded at a time of working class defeats, b) that many of its small cadre were killed in Europe, either by the Gestapo or the Stalinists, and c) that in the years immediately after 1945 Stalinism seemed to be greatly strengthened, then one perhaps begins to ask the right questions. When one looks around the international scene for the other numerous anti-Stalinist groupings that existed in the thirties and forties one looks in vain. When one examines the pathetic attempts to create a Maoist 'international' with the resources of a great state behind the venture, one can begin to measure the real strength and resilience of the international Trotskyist movement. Nor is this body a group of aging cultists (despite certain bizarre manifestations in England), on the contrary there has been a steady replacement by youth, which in recent years has increased and this has been a worldwide phenomena. The question remains why? I think this is best

answered by reference to Che Quevara when he wrote -

"How soon we could look into a bright future should two, three or many Vietnams flourish throughout the world with their share of deaths and their immense tragedies, their everyday heroism and their repeated blows against imperialism, impelled to disperse its forces under the sudden attack and increasing hatred of all peoples of the world."

(Vietnam Must Not Stand Alone. p.90 NLR.43)

What Che Guevara demanded was an international strategy against imperialism. The time and the situation demand it. The concept of proletarian internationalism is not an abstract theory. The maimed, the dying and the fighters in Asia, Africa and Latin America cry out for, and are testimony to the need for, such a strategy. The question of the formation of a new revolutionary international was implicit in the holding of the OIAS conference, even if such an international has yet to emerge. It is this that gives the founding of the Fourth International in 1938 its historical validity; all the sneers about a mythical movement cannot erase it. Trotsky was too much of a realist to assume that the small body that gathered round him in 1938 would be THE international. What the Fourth International does offer to new and rising generations of revolutionists is a historical continuity with the best of classical Marxism and a programmatic analysis of the modern world that is unrivalled on the international scene.

### The Dead Dogs of Stalin

The picture that Nicolas Krasso presented of Trotsky was remarkable only for its rigidity, its lack of development, and its pedestrian quality. It was a lifeless picture and we are given no feeling that Trotsky learned, profited or matured from his mistakes.

Reading the article one is left with the impression that Trotsky sprang onto the stage of politics fully equipped, warts and all, and that there were no real changes. As such the figure is a cardboard one.

The portrait of Lenin is painted in the same style. Lenin is made to appear as some sort of deus ex machina that popped up at the right moment and pulled his muddle headed party out of trouble. This puts Lenin in the role of a political Svengali, not of a leader. There is no doubt that Lenin played a tremendous role in the Bolshevik Party, and at times this was crucial, but one should not fall victim to a one-sided appraisal. In the last analysis such a picture does no credit to Lenin and certainly not to the Bolsheviks.

But why discuss Trotsky's concept of the party now? What was the object of the exercise? Above all the other faults in Nicolas Krasso's article the absence of conclusions is the most startling. Can it be that this long essay was only an exercise in 'historical' analysis? Not only here in Britain under the Wilson Government, but internationally the question of a Marxist party has a burning topicality. Yet on this Krasso is silent. Implicit in the article is the view that there is a need for a Leninist party here and now, and leaving aside the implied difference

between this and Trotsky's concept of the party, one would have thought that if this was the case then it should have been stated. But on this important question we are left, not even with a question mark, but a blank. This brings into question, not Trotsky's Marxism, but Nicolas Krasso's. For what is the object of Marxist theory? Is it merely to hone and bring to razor edge individual intellects or should it have as its aim a guide to action? One need not espouse a vulgar interpretation of this axiom, yet any perspective must also incorporate a programme. And this is where Nicolas Krasso's essay shows its grave deficiencies - there is no programme.

Another aspect of this deficiency is the lack of any analysis of Lenin's or Trotsky's concept of an international party; a very strange omission for someone who delved so deeply into a relatively minor article such as the one Trotsky wrote on the intelligensia. How can this be squared? Such scholarly searchings must have disclosed something on the question of an international, but a reader of the original article would find no hint of this. Only Nicolas Krasso would be able to explain this absence but it would be unwise for the reader to conjecture at it.

A discussion of Trotsky's contribution to Marxism could have been stimulating and rewarding. It certainly should have been critical, but criticism should be tempered with knowledge and understanding. Unfortunately, we were presented with undigested historical data laced with a Lenin 'fixation'; neither help in arriving at a sober assessment. In the preface to "The Prophet Armed" Isaac Deutscher referred to the "mountain of dead dogs" that covered Trotsky's place in history, and that the events of 1956 (Hungary etc.) saw half that mountain blown to the winds. Unwittingly, Nicolas Krasso is throwing a few of the canine corpses back onto the remains of the mountain. Looking at the world around us today it would seem that he engaged in a rather Canute like occupation. His obvious talents deserve a better use.

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DECLARATION OF THE UNITED SECRETARIAT OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL ON THE  
SOVIET OCCUPATION OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International energetically condemns the military occupation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic by the troops of the Warsaw Pact nations.

The pretexts are cynical, the troops have been called, they say by "statesmen" who have yet to be identified 48 hours after the event. The arrival of the troops they pretend, is approved by a majority of the Communist leaders at the time when the emergency Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia which, convened under the influence of the rank and file organisations, condemned the intervention by an overwhelming majority.

The justification is no less scandalous; the "counterrevolutionary danger" which was invoked did not exist. There was without doubt the right-wing course of the Czechoslovak leaders which was fundamentally similar to that practised by the Soviet leaders themselves. Their brutal intervention is however/<sup>not</sup> explained by the Czechoslovakian right-wing course but by their fear in seeing the first beginnings of a workers democracy which began to be timidly introduced in Czechoslovakia, stimulating the struggle of the young avant-guard, intellectuals and workers in Poland, Hungary, East Germany, and above all in the Soviet Union itself. This intervention displays the fundamental weakness of their bureaucratic dictatorship.

In fact what the Soviet bureaucracy demonstrated by its military intervention in the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia is that its dictatorship, its power, and its privileges are incompatible with any form of workers democracy. The return to the Leninist norms of internal life in the Communist Parties mortally frightens the bureaucracy. The suppression of censorship; the open political discussion; the participation of the working masses in political life; the proposed statutes of the Czechoslovak Communist Party which contained the right of minorities to present their platform to the party congress and to defend their positions inside the party, this is the number one danger for the Kremlin. It knows only too well that when the workers conquer these rights, they enter onto the road of workers council democracy, on the road to the true power of the soviet type foreseen by "State and Revolution".

In intervening militarily in Czechoslovakia the Soviet bureaucracy trample on the elementary principles of proletarian internationalism, the Soviet constitution confirms the right of national minorities to separate themselves even from the USSR, if they so desire, but to the Czech people is now denied the right to elect the Communist leadership of their own choice.

It is impossible to throw more oil on the fire of anti-communist agitation, to feed more effectively the propaganda machine of imperialism. The Kremlin has not even hesitated to invoke in favour of its intervention "the balance of forces." in Europe, that is to say the Yalta agreements, confirming through this the justification invoked by American imperialism for its counter-revolutionary intervention in its own "zone of influence".

The occupation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic by the Warsaw Pact troops has delivered a blow to the cause of communism, to the socialist

revolution in the entire world. Its first effect has been the disintegration of the international communist movement under pro-Soviet leadership. Even if this disintegration will favour in the beginning the social democratisation of several large communist parties in imperialist countries it will bring the world crisis of Stalinism to its peak, out of which develops and will continue to develop, more and more forces for the reconstruction of an authentic revolutionary Leninist vanguard in the world.

The impact of this counter-revolutionary act will thus not be what the rulers in Washington expect.

The world of 1968 is no longer the world of 1956. The heroic resistance of the Vietnamese people against the imperialist aggression has encouraged a world revival of revolutionary struggles. While condemning the crimes of the Kremlin, the workers must not forget for one moment the bloodier crimes committed by imperialism every day in Vietnam. Let us tear away the hypocritical mask from imperialism, which sheds crocodile tears on the violation of the right of the Czechoslovak people to determine their own destiny, but which prevents through a rain of napalm and poison gas the Vietnamese people from determining the government and social regime of its choice.

The revolutionary uprising of May in France has encouraged the working class vanguard in Czechoslovakia, in favour of a true socialist democracy. The perspective which opens up following the May uprising is that of a European Socialist Federation, the Socialist United States of Europe in the framework of which the Czechoslovak workers would be able to construct their society and socialist economy under much more harmonious conditions.

The Czechoslovak masses face a military occupation in a context, and with organisations and perspectives more favourable, than that in which the Hungarian workers were obliged to conduct their isolated struggle in November 1956.

The local and regional Communist Party committees which were basically renewed during the last months; the action committees which are being formed spontaneously could constitute the backbone of mass resistance.

This resistance, beginning with a general strike and street demonstrations, could transform itself into a prolonged resistance. It could take on many different forms of action, harassing the occupation troops through constant propaganda in their respective languages, reminding them of Lenin's teachings, and the right of self-determination and socialist democracy, on freedom of discussion and the rights of minorities within these Communist parties. This resistance must ostracise all the collaborators and quislings of the occupation forces. It could use the weapon of unannounced demonstrations, of surprise strikes, of constant refusal by the proletarian and working masses of the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia to accept the regime of bureaucratic dictatorship which the Kremlin seeks to impose by force of foreign bayonets.

By conducting the struggle in the spirit of proletarian internationalism, by creating in the course of this resistance the committees which will be the organs of the free workers and peasants power of Czechoslovak socialism, the proletariat of the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia will not only secure its own liberation, it will also make an exceptional contri-

tribution to the struggle for Soviet democracy in the USSR, Poland and Hungary as well as trigger off the socialist revolution in capitalist Europe.

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International appeals to the Soviet, Polish, Hungarian, Bulgarian and East German troops to immediately leave the territory of the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia as the Czechoslovak working masses have asked them to do. Socialism is not endangered in Czechoslovakia, except by the crimes of the bureaucracy.

The United Secretariat demands the immediate liberation of Dubcek, of Cisar, of Smerkovsky, of the Czechoslovak Communist leaders, journalists, intellectuals and militants who have been arrested. Woe to the henchmen of the Soviet bureaucracy who put in prison communists whose only crime is to have taken into account the opinions of the workers of their country.

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International recalls the treachery of the Kremlin in Hungary in 1956 in the case of Imre Nagy, who left the Yugoslav embassy in Budapest under a safe conduct guarantee of the Soviet leaders, and who nevertheless was arrested and executed by the agents of the Soviet bureaucracy. This crime must not be allowed to be repeated in the case of the Czechoslovak leaders.

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International calls upon all communists, all Czechoslovak workers, to resist; do not give the occupiers and their agents a single day of peace. It appeals to the workers, intellectuals and students of the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and East Germany to support with all their strength the struggle of the Czechoslovak masses for their right to socialist democracy.

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International reminds the workers of all the capitalist countries that the best thing they can do to help the struggle of their Czechoslovak brothers is to redouble their efforts to overthrow the capitalist regime and to commit themselves even more to the road of socialist revolution.

WITHDRAW ALL OCCUPATION TROOPS FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA!

SOVIET TANKS TO VIETNAM!

DOWN WITH THE SOVIET BUREAUCRACY WHICH USURPED THE POWER  
IN THE USSR, AND FROM WHOSE HANDS THE SOVIET PROLETARIAT  
WILL RETAKE THE FLAG OF COMMUNISM.

LONG LIVE THE WORLD SOCIALIST REVOLUTION.

United Secretariat,  
Fourth International  
August 22nd, 1968.