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Editor: Bob Purdie

Editorial Board: Pat Jordan, Marie-Therese Ligougne, Bernard Reaney, John Ross

Business Manager: Connie Harris

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Editorial: the Soviet Bureaucracy & the Indo-Chinese Revolution

The new escalation of the imperialist aggression in South-East Asia, with the invasion of Cambodia by American and puppet troops, has once again highlighted the crying disparity between the concentration of international counter-revolutionary forces on the Indo-Chinese peninsula and the dispersion of anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist forces throughout the world. The lack of a strong and coordinated response to this attack has confirmed the idea of the imperialist overlords in Washington that they did not go wrong in their calculations and that the Kremlin will not react. This conviction remains unquestionably the main factor encouraging imperialist aggression in the world today.

Confidence in the passivity of the Kremlin is not the result of pure speculation on the part of American imperialism. Every time Washington has escalated its aggression—from dispatching the first "military advisers" to South Vietnam and the Tonkin Gulf "incident" up to the invasion of Cambodia—the Pentagon and State Department military and diplomatic experts have not been satisfied with "estimating the risks" of more massive Soviet intervention. They have observed what was going on in Moscow and the area. Their conclusions have not been based on suppositions but on the facts.

For example, in the wake of the Geneva accords on Laos in 1962, for which the ground was prepared by the Kennedy-Krushchev meeting in Vienna, the American imperialists stepped up their military intervention in the country without Moscow doing anything whatever to discourage them. One Sullivan, former U.S. Ambassador to Laos, could boast before a subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee: "I know of no direct diplomatic protest by the USSR to the royal Laotian government and it is for sure that they have never made one to us." (*Le Monde*, 4 June, 1970.) It can hardly be disputed that such an attitude on the part of the Soviet bureaucracy encouraged the extension of the imperialist aggression to South Vietnam and North Vietnam.

This whole scenario has been repeated for the third time in the Cambodian affair. After the reactionary coup in Pnom Penh—when Norodom Sihanouk has established a government in exile and a united front of struggle has been officially proclaimed between the Cambodian resistance movement, the NLF of Vietnam and North Vietnam— the Soviet bureaucracy still keeps a diplomatic mission accredited to Lon Nol's fascists. For good measure Moscow maintains the fiction that this puppet regime—which formally called the American imperialists and their Thai mercenaries onto Khmer territory—is "neutralist"! And the Kremlin "warns" this government that if it continues to commit acts of this sort . . . civil war might break out in the country.

The fact is that this civil war has been raging *for years*, that Lon Nol and his coup d'etat represents only one episode in this civil war, that Cambodian "neutralism" has been broken down by explosive social contradictions which have led almost all the Khmer people to line up either with the revolutionary or the counterrevolutionary camp. All of this the masters of the Kremlin pretend not to notice. What admirable "disciples of Lenin" these are . . .

Repeating the ultra-opportunist analysis it advanced at the time of the massacre of over a million communists and socialists in Indonesia, the Soviet bureaucracy has gone so far as to accuse the Chinese of having "provoked" Lon Nol's counter-revolutionary coup by its "adventurism" and "great-power nationalism". Chinese "nationalism" has nothing to do with the Cambodian civil war where no direct Chinese intervention has made itself felt. As for the accusation of "adventurism", it is misplaced on three accounts. First because it smacks of a reformist and Social Democratic conception of the class struggle—a conception that fascism is a response to the ultra-left, extremist or communist threat. Next because it is completely out of line with the facts. The Chinese, in fact, repeated the opportunist error they already committed in Indonesia, giving 100% approval to the "left Bonapartism" of Norodom Sihanouk, who put the very Generals who would eliminate him in their positions. And finally this accusation is out of place because in reality it is directed against the Vietnamese revolutionists, whose ties with the Red Khmers are well known. Thus it represents a despicable betrayal of those who have been on the firing line in the battle against imperialism for years.

The panic the Soviet bureaucracy feels at the extension of the revolutionary process in Southeast Asia is *not* a fear of the risks of an extension of the war throughout the world. To refute the hypocritical pretexts often advanced on this score by the lawyers for the Kremlin, we need only recall the much bolder Soviet intervention in the Near East. And this is despite the fact that this area is much closer to the zones that are vital for imperialism, thereby increasing the risks of a direct confrontation between Soviet and American "advisers". But the Kremlin regards Nasser as a trustworthy figure, capable of canalising the revolutionary process in the Arab world and staying within the strict limits acceptable to the Soviet bureaucracy. On the other hand, the Vietnamese revolutionists and their allies are "stubborn and irre-

sponsible" men who turn up their noses at the compromises brewed by Moscow and Washington. They are capable of keeping a revolutionary fire going that is slowly spreading to a growing number of countries.

It is understandable in view of this cynical attitude by the Soviet bureaucracy, which willingly grants to the petty-bourgeois nationalist Nasser the planes and pilots it refuses to its own "comrades" in Indo-China, that the Indo-Chinese have moved back towards Peking.* The difference in the treatment Norodom Sihanouk has had in Peking and Moscow has not escaped any international observer, just as it has not escaped any observer that the imperialist aggression against the Khmer people has not aroused a single protest demonstration in the Soviet capital. In the eyes of the Kremlin, the close collaboration between the united front of the "Khmer resistance, the Pathet Lao, the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam" and Peking constitutes added justification for reticence towards the Indo-Chinese revolution.

In order to exploit this more sharply rightward course of the Kremlin, the Chinese leaders have moderated somewhat the excesses in their denunciation of the "new czars, accomplices and allies of American imperialism". It has been noted that Mao's May 29th statement on the new world-wide rise of the anti-imperialist struggle concentrated all of its fire on Washington. There was, in fact, a total absence of diatribes against the "new czars". This was doubtless the price Mao had to pay to obtain a new alliance with the North Koreans, who moved away from him when the "cultural revolution" reached its highest pitch, as well as to achieve closer collaboration with the Vietnamese. After years of failures and growing isolation, this represents an appreciable success for Chinese diplomacy.

Of course, the Kremlin is continuing to aid the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and this material help plays an important role in the Vietnamese revolution's capacity for resistance. But this carefully doled out assistance has just one function and one function alone. It is enough to enable the Vietnamese to hold on, awaiting the "compromise" that the Kremlin is trying to negotiate behind the scenes. It is absolutely insufficient as a response to the scale of crimes that imperialism is committing against the peoples of Indo-China. Above all, it is insufficient to assure their victory.

In these conditions, the denunciations—which moreover are less and less numerous—coming from Moscow, of Peking's purported "sabotage" in the supplying of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam with arms seem suspect, to say the least. We are and remain advocates of a united front of all the anti-imperialist forces, including all the bureaucratised workers states, for the defence of the Indo-Chinese revolution. But it is clear that in order to really aid the cause of this revolution, such a united front must include two precise provisions.

It must safeguard the complete political independence of the revolution, that is, be accompanied by firm resistance to any attempt by the Kremlin to get concessions, in return for increased arms deliveries, which would threaten the survival of the revolution. (Moscow follows a

tradition in this regard which began with the Spanish Civil War and continued through the Yugoslav and Greek civil wars, the first Indo-Chinese war, and so on.) Secondly, in the event of a stepped-up response to imperialism, those on the firing line—and the Chinese must be included among these—must get a clear guarantee of support against an escalation of imperialist aggression. Such a guarantee, moreover, is the best means of discouraging the escalation which looms up on the horizon every time a new phase of imperialist aggression in South-East Asia fails to produce the expected "victory". In recent days, there has again been talk in circles close to the Pentagon of the threat of a nuclear war.

It is the Kremlin's refusal to meet these two conditions which is the *principal* cause of the lack of a real anti-imperialist united front for the defence of the Indo-Chinese revolution. The sectarianism and verbal excesses of the Maoist bureaucracy are only a secondary cause. And this is all the more true inasmuch as this sectarianism could not be kept up for long in the face of any practical gesture by the Kremlin. The cause of the Vietnamese revolution is so dear to the masses of the world and to the masses who consider themselves communists that all ideological claptrap will vanish in the face of a definite action supporting this revolution. If the Chinese really send volunteers to Cambodia, as it has been claimed they will in circles close to Sihanouk, the criminal passivity of the Kremlin will stand out even more.

This passivity is already felt to be so intolerable today by the world anti-imperialist forces that the Communist Parties of capitalist Europe, although they also are ultra-opportunist and right-wing, found themselves forced to issue a common statement in the wake of the aggression against Cambodia which was clearly to the left of the Kremlin's formal protestations. The Italian and French C.P.s have even organised anti-imperialist rallies that have mobilised tens of thousands of people. But one is still struck by three facts. These rallies were much less militant than the spontaneous demonstrations in the United States, in Germany, and in Italian cities like Milan. They were not coordinated internationally. They were carefully planned to prevent any spill-over of the anti-imperialist struggle into working-class action, although the PCF [Parti Communiste Francais—French Communist Party] and the PCI [Partito Communista Italiano—Italian Communist Party] control the main union federations in their respective countries.

The new revolutionary vanguard arising internationally is naturally in the front ranks of the anti-imperialist struggle. It is concentrating its efforts on broadening and radicalising this struggle, developing better international coordination, and extending the fight into working-class activity which can stay the criminal hand of the imperialist aggressors.

Nothing could better confirm the necessity and the urgency of building a revolutionary international, the necessity and urgency of building the Fourth International, than this crying disparity between the indignation of the masses of the world against the imperialist aggression and the dispersion of their efforts to halt this aggression and deal it a stinging defeat.

The Mystifications of State Capitalism

In his attempt to answer our criticisms of the theory of "state capitalism"[1] Chris Harman carefully avoids all the main problems. He does not tell us whether "state capitalism" is a mode of production equal to or different from the capitalism analysed by Marx. He does not prove that, if it is equal to "capitalism", its 40-year history in the USSR can be explained by the "laws of motion" as revealed in *Das Kapital*. He does not even give us an inkling of the mysterious "laws of motion" which guide Russian "state capitalism" as different from those of capitalism—if it is a different mode of production. He does not explain to us whether the (re)introduction of "state capitalism" in a relatively backward country having successfully achieved the overthrow of capitalism is inevitable, in the absence of victorious world revolution, as a result of "pressure from the world market", or whether it can be avoided (and if so, how). He does not answer the question whether there is an inevitable period of transition between capitalism and socialism, wherever the socialist revolution takes place. He does not relate the emergence of "state capitalism" on one-third of the globe to the question whether capitalism has still a globally progressive role to play or not, i.e. whether we are justified in speaking of an epoch of "general crisis of capitalism", whether world revolution is on the agenda or is for the time being only a utopian pipedream. And he does not relate the theory of "state capitalism" to the realities of the class struggle on a world scale in the last twenty years, except by the childish device of talking about "national liberation movements led by the petty-bourgeoisie"—presumably unrelated to the capitalist mode of production, capitalist private property and the imperialist world system. We do not know whether for Harman, more than for Michael Kidron, the "tropical trotskyists" have a choice or no choice, whether capitalism can be overthrown in a country like Ceylon or not, and we are left with the preposterous proposition that it has somehow not been overthrown in China, Cuba, North Korea, North Vietnam, and is not in the process of being overthrown in South Vietnam.

Having left out all the key questions, the only thing Harman can do is to make numerous debating points, mostly without any interest.[2] He skulks around, throwing a few pebbles into the pond. This is then called "serious and scientific debate" which we are supposed to be incapable of. But even these pebbles contain their pinch of worth, because they underline once again how, when you start from the incorrect theoretical presumption, you are forced not only to make incorrect political conclusions, but also to "develop" theory further and

further in a mystifying way: instead of explaining reality, hide it all in a cloak of formulas which sound very "deep" but tend to obscure real social relations and real social struggles.

First Mystification: Commodity Fetishism

Harman concedes that capitalism as a system of *generalised commodity production* is a "fair summary" of part (?) of Marx's conception of that system's nature. That concession already deals a death blow to Kidron's contention about our having missed the "central capitalist dynamic": the very term "commodity production" was lacking from Kidron's definition of capitalism. But Harman, being an adept of the school of "state capitalism" which hinges on the assumption that there can be " capitalism " in a country like the USSR where obviously there is not generalised commodity production, has to try and take back his concession as soon as he made it. He therefore finds a way out by accusing us of " leaving the concept of 'commodity' as unproblematic ", of not taking up " a point central to Marx's whole analysis of commodity production.....that the commodity cannot be taken at face value."(3)

In our naivety we thought that the mysteries of commodity production had all been revealed in *Das Kapital*. In particular we quoted Marx as explaining that (at the beginning of *The Inconsistencies of State Capitalism*), " objects of use only become commodities because they are products of private labour, carried on independently from each other." But this, you see, leaves the concept "unproblematic". Harman will teach us some deeper, "below the surface", truths about commodities. But what we get is *exactly the same quotation* which we quoted from part IV of Chapter I of *Das Kapital*, into which Harman simply proceeds to inject a mystification. We can catch the mystifier red-handed, so to speak, in the following passage:

> **Yes, capitalism is, as Mandel argues, competition on the basis of commodity production. But to fully understand it one has to go further (?) and see that what makes man-produced objects—and above all labour power—into a commodity, is precisely competition between producing units that has advanced to the point where each is compelled to continually rationalise and rearrange its internal productive processes so as to relate them to the productive process of the others."(4)**

Now, that is *not* what Marx says in part IV of Chapter I of *Das Kapital* (the famous passage on "commodity fetishism"). He says clearly that "the fetish character of the commodity" results from the "specific social character of labour which produces commodities." He precises that use values become commodities only because they are products of private labour carried out independently from each other. And he goes on to make his point crystal clear. In a society divided by division of labour, but in which mutual dependence of individuals—i.e. the social character of labour—continues to assert itself (where every family does not live completely autarchically and independently from other units), there are *two ways* in which this inter-relation can be established. In a society in which there is common (collective or cooperative—Marx uses the word "gemeinschaftliche") property of the means of production, labour is

immediately social, i.e. it is the community (or its leaders, e.g. the elders in certain tribal communities) which consciously allots resources to different branches of production. On the contrary, in a society in which there is private property, social labour is not directly recognised as such. Private individuals establish connections between each only as "commodity owners", appearing on the market. The social nature of their labour is only recognised *post festum*, to the extent to which they succeed in selling thejr commodities. Commodity fetishism consists in this, that relations between things, commodities, hide and obscure a specific relation between men, *resulting from the fragmentation of social labour into private labours carried on independently from each other, i.e. resulting from private property.*

Now we can re-read this whole sub-chapter of Marx's on commodity fetishism from A to Z, not once will we find a mention of the mystifying formula of Harman's: "What makes man-produced objects...into a commodity, is precisely competition between producing units that has advanced to the point where each is compelled to continually rationalise and rearrange its internal productive processes so as to relate them to the productive process of the other". And the reason why Marx could not follow Harman's "deeper" analysis of the commodity is of course the fact that he knew quite well that commodity production had been going on for thousands of years *before* capitalism blossomed as a separate mode of production—and that only under that separate mode of production does commodity production lead to "competition between producing units...compelled to continually rationalise and rearrange its internal productive processes". Mediaeval handicraftsmen were commodity producers, but their "productive processes" were not "continually rationalised and rearranged"; they remained very stable for long periods, sometimes several centuries.

Harman's mystification begins by defining the commodity by its end-result, capitalist competition, instead of defining capitalist competition as a result of generalised commodity production. It puts the historical sequence and the theoretical analysis on its head. It then goes on by mystifying competition itself. Once one "forgets" that for Marx, commodity production is essentially social labour fragmented into "private labours carried on independently from each other", one can then separate "compulsion to continually rationalise and rearrange productive processes so as to *relate* (sic) them to the productive process of the others" from its social basis and economic purpose, deny that competition born from commodity production is always in the last instance competition for selling commodities owned by different proprietors on a market, and discover that the "compulsion" which exists *for any workers state*, even managed by the most perfect system of workers control, to defend itself against imperialist armaments, or to relate, in some way or to some extent, its output to that of the outside world, is "proof" of the existence of....capitalism. A very nice way of "deepening" Marx's analysis indeed.

Second Mystification: "Reification of the Plan"

No wonder that Harman, not having understood the relation of *commo-*

dity production to *private* labour, cannot understand what *planning* really means in relation to *social* labour, and accuses us of "reifying the plan". For, according to him, in Russia

> **"a total system of reified relations is set up in which the anarchic and unplanned (sic) interaction of the products of labour determines the labour process, in which dead labour dominates living labour, in which every concrete act of labour is related to abstract labour on a world scale—in which, although there may be many partial (!) negations of the law of value, these are on the basis of the law of value."(6)**

Again we are faced with a breathtaking revelation, completely unproved and completely mystifying. Why does arms production competition with the West "determine the whole development of the Russian economy"? Through what economic mechanism? By what economic results? One could make a point of saying that arms competition with the West would be a factor slowing down the increase in the standard of living of the workers, or the rate of economic growth, that it would prevent the building of a fully developed socialist society (obviously the impossibility of "socialism in one country" is related to the class struggle going on on a world scale, and the attempt of the world bourgeoisie to reintroduce capitalism into the USSR). But by this, one has not yet proved that, as there is not yet socialism, there has to be capitalism "in which every concrete act of (Soviet) labour is related to abstract labour on a world scale".

Harman takes for granted what he assumes, but in the absence of any concrete proof, this can only be called a mystification. Otherwise he should prove that Soviet prices are "in the last analysis" (or in the long run) determined by prices on the capitalist world market; that Soviet wages are determined by "competition" with, say, USA or British (or should one say: Indian?) wages; that investment flows from one branch to another according to "relative profitability" (the search for surplus profit); that the inferiority of Russian productivity of labour, as compared to American, has *prevented* the industrialisation of the country, like it did prevent the industrialisation of all under-developed countries encompassed in the worldwide imperialist system, governed by "the law of value". If he cannot prove anything of the sort, then the whole talk about "every concrete act of Soviet labour" being related to "abstract labour on a world scale" and "anarchic and unplanned interaction of the products of labour" determining Soviet labour processes (all because Soviet Russia had to defend itself against Hitler's armies and the American A- and H-bomb, like any workers state would have to!) is just a lot of hot air.

> **"The only 'need' plans in general have is that of ensuring a proportionate division of inputs to produce desired outputs; people...not 'plans' determine whether this output should be large or small, and for that matter whether it be the result of an 'optimal utilisation of resources' or otherwise"(6)**

says Harman. He does not seem to notice that exactly one sentence after having castigated us for "ascribing human properties to things,

of accepting reified appearances", he repeats exactly the same "mistake": for what is this "need" of "plans" in general "to ensure proportionate division of inputs to produce desired outputs", independently of social relations between human beings?

The solution of the riddle lies in the understanding of what a planned economy resulting from an overthrow of capitalist property relations really means. "State capitalists"—and not only they—generally tend to reduce production relations to relations between producers and "overseers of labour" at factory level. But that is of course a gross oversimplification, and a distortion of Marxism. For Marx, production relations are *all* relations between producers which are indispensable for the "production of their material life" at a given level of development of productivity of himan labour. This means that they encompass not only the relations *inside* factories, but also those *between* factories. Production could not go on for one week in Russia without raw materials being sent from one factory to another, machines going to where they are needed (inclusive to raw material producing units), material resources being constantly shifted from one place to another.

Under capitalism, the "law of value" governs these shifts. All producer goods are commodities. All producing units react to increases or decreases of sales of their commodities on the market, to increases or decreases of profits. The "law of value"—i.e. commodity production—allocates and re-allocates resources behind the backs of the producers in a society in which social labour is fragmented into private labours as a result of the private property of the means of production.

Once these means of production are collectively owned, however, they are no more commodities. They are not sold and bought on the market. The "law of value" ceases to govern their allocation and reallocation between different producing units. "Competition" between "commodities" or "capitals" has ceased to be the basic force to regulate investment. And then the only other means to assert the social nature of human labour is planning.

In other words: conscious economic *"planning", far from being "reified appearances" or "a thing", is a specific set of relations of production resulting from the suppression of the private property of the means of production and the beginning of the withering away of commodity production, through which labour performed in collectively owned factories is recognised as immediately social labour.* (8) And this essential part of the conquest of the socialist October revolution not only should not be eliminated from the Soviet economy by the coming political revolution against the bureaucracy, but it should be consolidated, strengthened and generalised: for there is no other alternative to the rule of the "law of value". Even those who call the coming revolution in the USSR a "social" one should recognise this.

Now, when we wrote that "the inner logic of a planned economy calls for maximising output and optimising deployment of resources", Harman shouts triumphantly: "A 'plan' has no inner logic to accumulate" (p. 38). We beg his pardon: the word "accumulate" (especially:

accumulate capital) has been surreptitiously introduced by himself. *We* didn't speak about an "inner logic to accumulate". *We* spoke about "the inner logic of a planned economy for maximising output and optimising deployment of resources". What does that mean, in the light of what we just stated about the nature of planning as a specific set of production relations arising out of the suppression of private property of the means of production by a socialist revolution? Obviously, that when means of production have stopped being commodities, but when there is still a scarcity of consumer goods, and therefore a need to ensure rapid economic growth, the *interest of the producers* (i.e. their inclination to "minmise" inputs of labour and "maximise" their standard of living) *calls for such an optimal deployment of resources.* The farther this will be from realisation, the greater will be the workload for the producers, and the smaller their consumption. This rule, which would even be true on a world scale (after the victory of the world revolution)—as long as we are in a period of transition, as problems of industrialisation and increasing *per capita* output are still very urgently with us; as saturation of demand of basic consumer goods has not yet been achieved for all men—is of course much truer in a relatively backward country and under capitalist encirclement, which imposes the supplementary constraint of military self-defence against imperialist threats (the *main* constraint remains that of overcoming backwardness, i.e. the low standard of living and of culture of the mass of the producers).

We stress again that we are talking of "maximising output" and of "optimising deployment of resources". We are not talking of "accumulation of *capital*", or even of "maximising investment". We tried to prove that excessive investment (like that practised under the two first Five-Year Plans) does *not* lead to maximum output and optimum deployment of resources[9]. That is one of the aspects where the bureaucratic management of the economy comes into conflict with the "inner logic of planning" (i.e. the production relations born from the October revolution)—and by no means the only one. We think that "in the long run", the conflict is irreconcilable. Either the workers will consolidate and harmonise planning by eliminating bureaucratic mismanagement, or the "consumer interest" of the bureaucratic managers of the economic will destroy planning and reintroduce private property. These, like several other basic contradictions of the Soviet economy, are incomprehensible in the light of the theory that some form of "capitalism" exists in the USSR. They can only be understood in the light of the theory which sees the Soviet economy and society as a society of transition between capitalism and socialism. And in the light of the same theory it is evident that Harman's identification of "maximisation of output" with "capital accumulation"—of use values with exchange values—is exactly the same "theoretical" mystifying sleight-of-hand which Kidron was guilty of, and which we revealed in *The Inconsistencies of State Capitalism.*

But aren't the Soviet workers exploited by the bureaucrats, Harman thunders on? Doesn't Mandel "forget" the wage labour/capital relationship (which he is accused of "forgetting" even in his definition of capitalism)[10]? We don't "forget" anything; we just tried to explain the

specific nature of the relationship between labour and capital, as against all other forms of "exploitation".

Producers have been exploited in all societies since the beginning of disintegration of primitive communism (even in the "society of transition" between tribal communism and the first form of class society, there was exploitation of labour—see the misuse of communal labour in favour of tribal chiefs).

What is *specific* under capitalism is not simply that part of the product of labour is appropriated by other classes or layers of society, as part of the social surplus produced by the Soviet workers is, for sure, appropriated by the bureaucracy. What is specific of capitalism is that exploitation takes the form of labour power becoming a commodity, which is being bought by the owners of the means of production, and whose price is determined by the laws of supply and demand on the "labour market", and the fluctuations of the reserve army of labour. Having sold their labour power to the owners of the means of production, the producers have to abandon the property of the products of their labour to that very same class which monopolises the means of production. This class thus appropriates the surplus value contained in the products of labour, realises that surplus value by selling the commodities, and transforms it into additional property, additional capital.

None of these processes are at the basis of the "exploitation" of Soviet labour. If anything, wages have gone down not when unemployment went up, but when it disappeared. And since the Second World War, they have gone up in the most rapid way, when frictional unemployment reappeared, in the '50s, and after Krushchev's fall, in the middle '60s: they are, in other words, unrelated to any "fluctuations on the labour market".

The largest part of the social surplus product in the USSR does not consist of surplus-value (which must be realised through the sale of commodities), but in additional machinery and raw material, given as use-values. It is precisely because "accumulation", in the USSR, is "accumulation" of use-values and not of capital, that the bureaucracy is in no way a necessary agent for economic growth—which could perfectly have been realised, since 1927 till this very day, by the "associated producers", within the framework of a planned economy. And for the very same reason it is preferable not to speak about "exploitation" of the Soviet workers in the scientific sense of the term, but to state that the bureaucracy appropriates in a parasitic and pilfering way an important part of the consumer goods product produced by the Soviet working class. Social parasitism is not the same as exploitation, and the mediaeval robber barons were not a class "exploiting" the merchants which they regularly plundered, as long as they had the political power to do so.[11]

Third Mystification: The Industrialisation Process in the USSR

Harman argues that, if we were right in saying that the consumer needs of the bureaucracy do not provide any socio-economic mechanism for

assuring maximum economic growth, this growth could only be explained by the "pressures of rival ruling classes outside Russia".

> **"Pressures of world capitalism led to a rapid change in the mode of production in agriculture on an unprecedented scale... This was necessitated not by the arbitrary 'desires' of the bureaucracy, still less by the 'logic of the plan', but by pressures to build up heavy industry on a scale that could not be sustained without forcible pumping of surplus agricultural produce out of the countryside... Secondly, in industry there was also a change in the mode of production... Building up of heavy industry in competition with the West was on the basis of such measures. It was that which brought them about. In other words, production and the conditions of production were no longer determined by the needs of the people, i.e. by the production of use values, but by the 'needs' of competition, the production of exchange values."**(12)

The *petitio principis* is worthy of a textbook: the "exchange values" suddenly pop up at the end of the reasoning, without having been defined, demonstrated or even proved to exist with so much as a single word. It will be hard for Harman to prove that the machine-tools of the factories of Magnitogorsk, that the equipment of the Dnjepostroy, or the lathes of the automobile works of Moscow suddenly became commodities, only because the workers who produced them received lower wages, or because their "conditions of labour" were no more determined by their needs. And as long as you don't have commodities, you have no exchange values.

But the mystification goes much deeper. Harman presents things as if industrialisation sprang up because of "pressures of rival classes" (presumably the international bourgeoisie) outside Russia. He should admit that a point could be made about this pressure coming above all from *inside* Russian society (kulaks and Nepmen). In fact, hadn't Trotsky and the Left Opposition foreseen *years before 1927* that as a result of the NEP (i.e. of the reintroduction of wide-scale petty commodity production) there would be a process of primitive accumulation of private capital which would cut across the needs for developing state industry, and that this would lead to a sharpening of the class struggle which would express itself in an attempt of rich peasants to starve the workers by making a delivery strike of grain surplus? Wasn't this exactly what happened in the winter 1927-8?

That this "internal pressure" (more correctly: sharpening of the class struggle and polarisation of class forces) in Russia was linked to "external pressure", neither Trotsky nor any Trotskyist would deny. Let us leave aside the question which of them was basic, and which was—at that moment—subordinate. Isn't it clear, however, that *accelerated industrialisation and siphoning off of part of the agrarian surplus product* to further industrialisation were also (a) in the interests of the working class; (b) in the "logic of the plan" (i.e. of the new production relations created by the October revolution); (c) indispensable to thwart the tendency towards restoration of capitalism which would come about as a result of strengthened primitive private capital accumulation in Soviet

society trying to link up with the capitalist world market? Wasn't it precisely Trotsky and the Left Opposition who were clamouring for more rapid growth, more planning, more industrialisation, before 1928? Were they perhaps the spokesmen of "state capitalism", or expressing the "pressures of rival ruling classes abroad" by doing so?

By differentiating "growth" before 1928 and "urge to accumulate" after 1928, Harman commits a double mystification. Before 1928 *growth was too slow for fulfilling the needs of the people* (i.e. the workers and poor peasants). After 1928, there was no "urge to accumulate" (Harman hasn't proved the transformation of means of production into commodities, exchange values, capital, after 1928) *but a speed-up of growth (industrialisation) under specific forms.* But without a speed-up of industrialisation, not only could the needs of the people not have been satisfied, but the transformation of the means of production into commodities, capital, i.e. the restoration of capital, would have been unavoidable. So the "state capitalists' " sleight-of-hand appears here again in a striking way. What was in reality an empirical, panicky, uncalculated and barbarous attempt to *prevent the reintroduction of capitalism* into Russia, to prevent the absorption of Russia by the capitalist world market and the "law of value", is presented as a succumbing to pressure of capitalism!

Of course industrialisation and collectivisation of agriculture were introduced *under such a form and under such leadership* that the immediate and long-term interests of the Soviet proletariat were deeply harmed. They were introduced under the leadership and to protect the interests of a specific social layer of Soviet society, the Soviet bureaucracy, which during this period crystallised into a hardened caste. (Incidentally, when Harman dismisses the "desires of the bureaucracy" as a motive force for the way the change occurred, he mystifies and reifies social relations: how can the "pressure of world capitalism" lead to changes inside Soviet society unrelated to the interests and "desires" of specific layers of that society?) The *specific form* of Soviet industrialisation resulted from a political and social defeat of the working class from the hands of the Soviet bureaucracy. But that industrialisation itself meant also a political and social defeat of capitalism (as well Russian capital, or semi-capitalist primitive capital accumulation, as international capitalism) from the hands of the bureaucratically deformed workers state. It is because they are unable to understand this specific and unforeseen *combination* of social and economic conflicts in Russia and on a world scale, that the adherents to the theory of "state capitalism" cannot make head or tail of the world they have been living in over the last thirty years.

Let us formulate the question in other words. Was it in the interests of Russian producers to greatly and rapidly increase the mass of modern means of production in Soviet society in the late '20s? Only an ignoramus can answer this question with "no". Was it therefore in their interest to "accumulate means of production" (as use values, of course)? Again the answer must be emphatically "yes". Does it therefore make sense to present such a rapid increase in industrialisation as a result of the "pressure of world capitalism", this meaning an adaptation to capi-

talism (of course, workers also make strikes as a result of the "pressure of capitalism"; but strikes are not exactly an adaptation to capitalism; they happen to be means to fight against it)? There is no sense whatsoever in such a mystifying statement—except the old-time Menshevik and social-democratic "sense" that a socialist revolution in a backward country is impossible and that, whatever you do, capitalism, and only capitalism, can flower there.

But, clamours Harman, industrialisation was realised through lowering the standard of living of the workers. Quite true. Wasn't that therefore an "adaptation to capitalism"? Wasn't that "accumulation of capital"? "Accumulating" his sophisms, Harman has forgotten his starting point. The "pressure" was supposed to have taken the form of the need to build a strong armament industry, "heavy industry", "in competition with the West"; it was decidedly not the pressure of "competition" for selling goods on an international market. But it is only such a "competition" which would have made it imperative to lower wages. *When Harman says that only through lowering the standard of living of the Russian workers could there have been rapid build-up of heavy industry and armament industry in Russia, he in reality swallows the classical apology for Stalinism hook, line and sinker.* He implies that, without lowering wages, there could have been no heavy industry, no armaments industry in Russia. But as, without such an armament industry, the USSR would have ceased to exist long since, given Hitler's onslaught, it then follows that Stalinism—"lowering wages" and all the miserable rest—was really unavoidable. Stalin saved the USSR. "You couldn't make an omelette without breaking eggs", etc., etc., *ad nauseam.*

In reality, this classical Stalinist apology is rotten and false through and through. The excessive rate of investment did not increase but decreased the "rate of accumulation of means of production" in the Soviet Union. Forced collectivisation did not help, but disorganised, "heavy industry" and "armaments industry". "Arms competition with the West" was not helped but hindered by Stalin's peculiar set of economic policies. A lower rate of investment, with a much higher productivity of labour as the result of higher wages, would have enabled to get much better results than those of Stalin's. Trotsky's alternative economic proposals would have led to much more efficient "competition with Western armament and heavy industry" than Stalin's.

If that is so, Stalin's policies can no more be explained by "objective needs" of "competing with the West". They can only be explained by the specific social interests of the privileged Soviet bureaucracy. The difference between Trotsky's policy and Stalin's was not that Trotsky was in favour of "slower economic growth", but that he was in favour of a ruthless elimination of social inequalities and a putting of the working class in command of the industrialisation process. The bureaucracy, not wanting to lose its power and privileges, crushed the working class political proponents and introduced industrialisation, in a delayed and spasmodic fashion, in such a form as to tremendously increase the bureaucracy's privileges. By doing so, it also tremendously increased the waste of economic resources (in the first place the waste of labour

power, of productive enthusiasm of the workers, and of productivity of labour) and led to a much weaker "competitive" position compared to the West than Trotsky's would have led to. This is the real, and not the mystified, history of the Soviet socio-economic developments in the late '20s and '30s. And it leaves no stone of Harman's laboriously built-up mystifying construction: "industrialisation-through-state-capitalism-in-order-to-withstand-the-pressure-of-Western-heavy-industry."

Let us try to put the question into historical perspective. Capitalist industry was born "dripping blood and tears out of all its pores", as a result of a violent and barbaric process of primitive accumulation (of exchange values). Marx denounced the momentous crimes—but he never for one instant forgot to mention that they were historically unavoidable. No other class of late feudal society could have realised industrialisation but the bourgeoisie, and by no other means. And without industrialisation, no tremendous increase in human productivity of labour, no historical possibility of freeing man from the curse of idiotic and repetitive labour, no possibility for expanding human needs towards realisation of all human possibilities, no possibility for the withering away of alienating social division of labour.

In the epoch of imperialism, as a result of the common "drain" by imperialism and native ruling classes on the potential investment fund for industrialisation (the social surplus product) and the tremendous constraint of competition from imperialist mass production, no underdeveloped country can really repeat this process of industrialisation within the framework of the capitalist world market. This is a basic aspect of the "general crisis of capitalism", on a world scale, since World War I, the basic reason for nearly uninterrupted revolutionary convulsions in the "Third World" for more than forty years.

As a result of the socialist October revolution, Soviet Russia broke away from the capitalist world market, from the possibility of imperialist capital and imperialist commodities preventing a tremendous industrialisation process. This was realised on the basis of a planned economy, i.e. by freeing the country from the tyranny of the "law of value". For sure, this emancipation is only partial, not complete. This industrialisation cannot reach, inside one country, a higher productivity of labour than was realised by imperialism through international division of labour; it cannot, thereby, achieve the building of a socialist society. But the Russian *proletariat* can *start* such a construction. It can develop the productive forces and resist "world market pressures", without having to resort to barbaric means. The bureaucracy's crimes were neither unavoidable to industrialise the Soviet Union, nor historically necessary, nor progressive in any sense.

Fourth Mystification: Contemporary Capitalism

Harman tries to defend Kidron's preposterous notion that "arms economy" represents a leak which enables capitalist to avoid crises. But in order to extricate himself from Kidron's constant confusion between destruction of use values and destruction of exchange values[13], he has to push the inconsistency of that theory to its extreme. For he now

defines a leak as a *slowdown of economic growth.* Do we misrepresent him or exaggerate? Here is what he says himself:

> **"But if there are leaks whereby value is taken out of the total system, the opportunities for each individual capitalist obtaining value to transform into constant capital will be *less,* and therefore the constraints on each capitalist to expand his means of production will *lessen.* The immediate pressures to expand constant capital (*and therefore production*) *will diminish,* the overall rate of profit will fall less, and therefore there will exist the basis for a longer term steady expansion upon a lower average organic composition of capital."**[14] (Our stress).

If any sense can be read into this extraordinary nonsense, then it would run as follows: if capitalists accumulate less, the organic rate of capitalism will grow less rapidly, the rate of profit will decline slower, and accumulation can go on longer. This is an obvious truism—provided one does not forget at the end of the sentence what one said at the beginning, to wit: that *accumulation can go on longer because it is carried on at a lower rate.* But does this bear any resemblance to the economic history of post-war capitalism, as compared to that of the twenties or the thirties? Has economic growth been slower or quicker? Has capital accumulation been lower or higher? Has the organic composition grown quicker or slower? Has technical innovation been retarded or accelerated? To present the developments between 1950 and 1965 as being characterised by the fact that "the constraints on each capitalist to expand his means of production have lessened" is such a fantastic slap in the face of reality, that mystification here really hits the jackpot!

What Harman is as unable as Kidron to prove is that "arms production" is in any form a "leak". Arms, we repeat, are commodities produced for profit, exactly like television sets or machine tools. Even if one assumed that they are entirely paid for by surplus value, they would not constitute a "leak" but a redistribution of surplus value inside the capitalist class, the non-armament sector having part of its profits siphoned off—not outside the system, but to finance *capital accumulation in the armament sector.* And as this armament sector has a higher organic composition of capital than, say, textile production or even television production, one cannot understand how such a diversion would lead to a slowdown of the increase in the average organic composition of capital, or to a reversal of the decline of the average rate of profit.

In reality, of course, it is completely false to assume that armament production is paid for exclusively by surplus value; Rosa Luxembourg exposed that liberal-pacifist argument long ago[15]. Armament production is being "paid" for at least in part by a redistribution of the net product between wages and surplus-value (it is largely financed by direct taxes weighing on wages and indirect taxes weighing on consumer goods). It leads, in an indirect way, to an increase in the rate of surplus-value, and therefore to an increase in the rate of profit. It sets off temporarily the fall of the rate of profit neither through a decrease in the

organic composition of capital nor through a slowdown of economic expansion—but, on the contrary, through stepped-up capital accumulation and increased economic growth, accompanied by an increase in the rate of surplus value. In that way, and in that way only, does "armaments production" enable "profitable investment" of surplus-value, as we pointed out in *The Inconsistencies of State Capitalism*. But inasmuch as it steps up "capital accumulation", it increases the organic composition of capital, and thereby loses after a certain time on the right side what it gained on the left. Even under fascism, the rate of surplus-value cannot be constantly stepped up to compensate that process, as Hitler (and the German capitalists) found out to their cost. That's why armaments production *as a cure for the ills of capitalism* is only a short term solution. It has the tendency to lead ot war—or to lose its curing virtues.

Now, the past twenty years have been characterised by a much quicker rate of capital accumulation, of economic growth, of development of the productive forces in the imperialist countries, than the period 1919-1939. If arms production is not the main explanation for this, there must be another one. Harman cannot follow our argument that each of the long-term periods of rapid economic growth under capitalism (1849-1876; 1900-1918; 1940-45-1965) have been characterised by a new industrial revolution (a quick transformation of *basic* industrial technology), followed by long-term periods in which existing technology became generalised throughout the system. He confuses technical *inventions* with *innovation*, and presence of surplus capital potentially capable of innovation, with circumstances inducing *actual investment* of that surplus capital for these innovation purposes. A friendly bit of advice: please compare the rate of surplus-value (or the increases of productivity of labour), say, in 1928 in the USA, Germany, France, Japan, Italy, with those of, say, 1953 in these last countries (and 1950 or 1960 in the USA): perhaps this will explain to you part of the mystery.

Evidently, the long cycles linked with industrial revolutions have to be explained by the inner motive forces of capitalism, i.e. must be seen in terms of long cycles of "over-accumulation" and "under-accumulation". We shall have occasion to come back to this in detail elsewhere.

Fifth Mystification: Permanent Revolution

When dealing (briefly) with the political implications of the theory of state capitalism for the under-developed countries, Harman again is forced to mystify realities and theories, which are quite transparent:

> **"The theory of the permanent revolution according to Trotsky I know asserts quite unequivocally that the tasks of the bourgeois revolution in the under-developed countries can only be solved by the working class, led by a class-conscious revolutionary party. It is not "menshevism" to assert that as a matter of fact not only has no such party yet led the working class to the taking of power in Vietnam, or China or Cuba, but those that did take power executed (in Vietnam and China) or imprisoned (in Cuba) those trying to build such parties... Nor for that matter have the regimes in China,**

Vietnam or Cuba carried through all the tasks of the national bourgeois revolution. It is mere apologetics to pretend that they have solved the problem of industrial development."(16)

The mystification begins by replacing a set of social relations by an ideal political norm, and then goes on to dissolve concrete historical tasks into vague generalisations ("solved the problem of industrial development"). By doing so, Harman has to entangle himself in passing into a new contradiction. He seems to have forgotten that the historical function of "state capitalism" was to "defend itself against capitalism by imitating capitalism", in building up heavy industry. Now we are told that Chinese "state capitalism" is unable to "imitate" capitalist industrialisation. The industrialisation of China (a backward country of 700 million inhabitants!) has not yet been "solved", according to Harman's yardstick. But has it made a decisive step forward compared to the prewar situation? Did China, under Chiang Kai-Chek, have a huge industry for producing industrial consumer goods and industrial machinery, including some of the most modern ones? Could it have built up such an industry in competition with the capitalist world market? Harman doesn't even understand the question, let alone answer it.

But all this is beside the point. For Trotsky has a clear and precise summary of the theory of permanent revolution, which sweeps away all the cobwebs of Harman's mystifications:

"With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially in colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving democracy and national emancipation is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses.

"Not only the agrarian, but also the national question assigns to the peasantry—the overwhelming majority of the population in backward countries—an exceptional place in the democratic revolution. Without an alliance of the proletariat with the peasantry, the tasks of the democratic revolution cannot be solved, nor even seriously posed. But the alliance of these two classes can be realised in no other way than through an irreconcilable struggle against the influence of the national-liberal bourgeoisie.

"No matter what the first episodic stages of the revolution may be in the individual countries, the realisation of the revolutionary alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry is conceivable only under the political leadership of the proletarian vanguard, organised in the Communist Party. This in turn means that the victory of the democratic revolution is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat which bases itself upon the alliance with the peasantry and solves first of all the tasks of the democratic revolution.

"...A democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, as a regime that is distinguished from the dictatorship of the proletariat

by its class content, might be realised only in a case where an *independent* revolutionary party could be constituted, expressing the interests of the peasants and in general of petty-bourgeois democracy —a party capable of conquering power with this or that degree of aid from the proletariat, and of determining its revolutionary programme. As all modern history attests—especially the Russian experience of the last twenty-five years—an insurmountable obstacle on the road to the creation of a peasants' party is the petty-bourgeoisie's lack of economic and political independence and its deep internal differentiation. By reason of this the upper sections of the petty bourgeoisie (of the peasantry) go along with the big bourgeoisie in all decisive cases, especially in war and revolution: the intermediate section being thus compelled to choose between the two extreme poles. Between Kerenskyism and the Bolshevik power, *between the Kuomintang and the dictatorship of the proletariat, there is not and cannot be any intermediate stage, that is, no democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants.*[17] (Our stress).

Let us first stress the fact that Trotsky starts from social and historical problems, and not from political norms. The words "class conscious revolutionary party" do not appear once; and when he uses the formula "Communist Party" or "Bolshevik power", he means it evidently in a socio-historical sense, i.e. a party capable of crushing capitalist-feudal power, like the Bolsheviks did in Russia in October. What the exact relations of that party are with revolutionary Marxism and self-organisation of the working class is not automatically implied in that historical role—and not an absolute precondition to this role. We have had a Paris Commune which was not led by a "class conscious revolutionary party", even before the theory of state capitalism was born. And we know that in its history, the working class has been led again and again, in its great majority, by parties which were opportunist or centrist, in all shades possible and imaginable, not only in periods of relative quiescence, but even in periods of great revolutionary upheavals.[18]

Trotsky defines the two key historic tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the backward country as the conquest of national independence and the agrarian revolution (the uprooting of all semi-feudal remnants and imperialist encroachments which brake the development of the productive forces in the countryside). He never says, and we never said, that this leads automatically to a thorough industrialisation of a backward country, after the victory of a socialist revolution. He only says, and so did we, that this *opens the road* for for industrialisation which a combination of imperialist and internal reactionary class structure otherwise block quite efficiently.

Now let us make the test for the four countries involved in the controversy. Is China today a semi-colonial country? Does imperialism maintain indirect rule as it does in Brazilia, Lagos or New Delhi, not to mention smaller countries? Is Cuba still under the thumb of American imperialism, as it was during the Batista regime? Is American (or French or perhaps British?) imperialism still the real ruler in Hanoi, just as it obviously is Saigon? Were the spies of the "Pueblo" just captured by "agents of American imperialism" in Pyong Yang through an unfortu-

nate oversight?

Anybody who does not have a completely mystified view of the present world will hardly doubt as to how to answer these questions. It is obvious that these countries conquered complete and thorough independence from imperialism not only formal-political, but also economic independence—and this through violent revolutions, generally ending in bloody anti-imperialist wars.

Nor can there be the slightest doubt that a thorough-going agrarian revolution (as a matter of fact, a more thorough-going one than that of Russia after 1917!) took place in these countries, sweeping away any remnant of landlord-usurer-comprador-kulak bourgeois rule in the countryside (i.e. with the exception of more urbanised Cuba, for between 80 and 90% of the population of these countries).

As these are self-evident facts, Harman has to involve himself in another inconsistency when defining these countries as "state capitalist". For the inescapable conclusion this would lead him to would be to declare these "state capitalist" regimes as highly progressive! Evidently, if tomorrow a non-working class party were to be capable of sweeping away all ties with imperialist exploitation and all remnants of exploitation of poor peasants by landlords, usurers, merchants, kulaks, as well as eliminate all rural unemployment, in countries like India or Brazil, this would be a gigantic historical step forward, which all Marxists should hail as at least as progressive as the great French revolution (the theory of permanent revolution states that in the epoch of imperialism, this cannot any more be achieved but by a proletarian party; but Trotsky might, after all, have been wrong, think Cliff-Kidron-Harman & Co., at least partially wrong).

Now who led the revolutions which actually achieved these mighty social upheavals (even a "state capitalist" will have to admit that they were revolutions, and not friendly negotiations at tea parties)? Communist parties, and, in the case of Cuba, a revolutionary organisation called the "July 26 Movement" which was of non-communist origin. "These parties were workers' parties in nothing but their name," thunders Harman. Really? What about their social composition? Would Harman deny that an important part of the (relatively small) Indo-Chinese, and the (more important) North Korean and Chinese proletariat (not to speak about the Cuban plantation and sugar industry proletariat) gave political support, wide allegiance, and even participated to the best of its abilities in these parties? And what about their programme? Was that characterised only by "the bloc of four classes" (we shall come back to this in a minute)? Wasn't that bloc, or the "new democracy", only conceived as a transitional stage towards the dictatorship of the proletariat, which was spelt out in black and white as the historical goal of these parties (by Castro after the beginning of the revolution, it is true, but much earlier than the Cuban C.P. itself understood this)? Does Harman know any "peasant party" which has a programme in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which claims to fight for collective property of all means of production and even to set out to build a classless communist society? "Words, words, just words," Harman obstinate-

ly insists. "In essence, these are peasant parties, petty-bourgeois peasant parties."

But this is precisely where you make your break with the theory of the permanent revolution, dear "state capitalist" blunderers, we answer. For the *mainstay* of that theory is the *inability* of the peasantry to build a revolutionary party of its own. If the peasantry is able to solve the problem of agrarian revolution and national independence by itself, the very possibility of the dictatorship of the proletariat in a backward country disappears. Where the working class is a small minority of society, this possibility *only* exists in function of the *incapacity* of the peasantry to successfully centralise and lead its own struggles for solving basic bourgeois-democratic tasks. Trotsky is crystal-clear on this in the above-quoted conclusion from *Permanent Revolution*. The peasantry split into two parts: one, the richer, going with the bourgeoisie; the other, the poorer, going with the proletariat. This happened in China after 1945, in Vietnam after 1945, in North Korea after 1945, in Cuba after 1959, *exactly* like in Russia after March 1917 or in China after 1925. So either you defend the preposterous proposition that national independence and agrarian revolution were not realised in these countries—or you have to admit what seems to us self-evident: that Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Kim il Sung, Castro, were leaders of proletarian parties, certainly bureaucratised ones, of Stalinist origins (in the first three cases), certainly opportunist ones, certainly parties a far cry from revolutionary Marxism—but nevertheless working-class parties (in the same sense as the French and the Italian C.P. are bureaucratised opportunist working-class parties).

The question does not stop there. The Chinese, Vietnamese, North Korean, Cuban, revolutions didn't limit themselves to establishing complete independence from direct or indirect imperialist rule, and radical agrarian revolution. They also abolished all native capitalist property as well, eliminated the native bourgeoisie, and destroyed the bourgeois state (the Yugoslav revolution did of course the same[19]). Nobody in his right mind really believes that the Chinese bourgeoisie is ruling today in Peking. Ask any Chinese capitalist in Hong Kong, Taiwan or Honolulu: he'll tell you. He knows. He cannot afford to be mystified by "state capitalist" rhetoric. So here we have an even more mysterious situation for the poor adherents to the theory of "state capitalism". "Petty bourgeois leaders" (peasant parties) are seemingly not only able to eliminate imperialist rule and liberate the peasants from age-old landlord-moneylender-comprador exploitation; they can even destroy the "native" capitalist ruling class as well, together with its bourgeois army and its bourgeois state. And Harman has the cheek to pretend that this preposterous proposition is not in complete contradiction with the theory of permanent revolution!

"The Vietnamese merit support, because they are conducting a national liberation struggle": this is Harman's lame answer to our pointing out the inconsistency of supporting the NLF and seeing in it at the same time "the nucleus of a future state capitalist exploiting class". Let us leave aside the ridiculous comparison between the Vietnam war and the Kenyan or Cypriot struggle; we are eager to have

Harman point out to us the five hundred thousand British soldiers sent to Kenya or Cyprus[20]. But here again Harman in reality is forced to accept one typical Stalinist mystification, peddled by the C.P. "peace movements" all around the world: the mystification that "essentially" the South Vietnamese are fighting for the "independence" of their country against a "foreign aggression", and not at all against capitalism.

The reality is of course otherwise. In South Vietnam, a civil war started right after the Geneva agreement[21]. People rose because the fascist Diem regime clapped them into concentration camps by the tens of thousands, and eliminated the agrarian reforms realised in the territories liberated in the South by the Viet-Minh, before the Geneva truce. This civil war unfolded for years before there was any North Vietnamese intervention. Large-scale imperialist intervention only took place when this civil war was on the point of being successful. Its purpose was not to introduce "national oppression" into South Vietnam, but *to prevent the overthrow of capitalism there.* U.S. imperialism was afraid that such an overthrow would threaten capitalism in the whole of South-East Asia, and stimulate permanent revolution on an even wider scale. This, and only this, can explain the stupendous investment of arms, men and capital to stop the Vietnamese revolution—and not U.S. imperialism's "hatred" of national liberation struggles, which it could quite go along with (see Indonesia, Algeria, etc.) as long as *capitalism* wasn't threatened.

The question which Harman has to answer is the one relative to the class nature of the forces involved in that civil war. On the one side there were the landlords, the usurers, the fascist Diem bureaucrats, the compradors, the kulaks, the imperialists. Who was on the other side? Only the poorer peasantry? Is it then capable of leading a centralised revolutionary struggle all by itself, not only against a tottering collection of semi-feudal overlords, but even against the mightiest imperialist power on earth? Was Trotsky then so wrong in "underestimating the peasantry" 's capacity for *independent* political struggle? Or was there, after all, also the working class, and a working class party—a bureaucratised one of Stalinist origins, undoubtedly; but after all a *working class* one—leading those masses?

Harman feels it necessary to throw the pebble of the "bloc of the four classes" into the pond, too:

> **"It would be interesting to see Mandel justify his own claimed commitment to the theory of permanent revolution in the light of the avowed (!) policy of the Chinese before taking power and of the NLF today being the 'bloc of the four classes'."**[22]

Marx taught us to judge people not on what they say about themselves but by what they do (by their objective role in society). Harman the mystifier now turns this lesson upside-down. Never mind whether the Chinese C.P. has expropriated all private property of the means of production from the capitalist class; whether it has destroyed their state and their economy, left not one regiment from their army. That is unsubstantial. As that party has the "avowed policy" of the "bloc of

four classes", any upright state capitalist has to presume that Chiang Kai-Chek and his henchmen are still today in power in Peking. How stupid can one get?

A "policy" is not a set of words on paper, but a line one follows in action. The "bloc of the four classes" meant the subordination of the C.P. to the Kuomintang, the subordination of the workers to the bourgeois army (which hastened to disarm and kill the workers), the refusal to touch the property of the landlords, urban capitalists and rich peasants in the countryside, for fear of "upsetting" the (bourgeois) army.

There were certain formal similarities between Mao's line between 1937 and 1946, and the disastrous line pursued by the Chinese C.P. between 1925 and 1927, although even before 1946 there was a basic difference: instead of disarming his own forces, Mao maintained them independent from the bourgeois army, which tried again and again to crush them militarily, *and failed*. In the towns, the similarity was probably more than formal, although the Japanese imperialist occupation introduced a complicating (and obscuring) factor.

But after 1946 a definite change set in, essentially under the pressure of a huge uprising of poor peasants and rural semi-proletariat in North China. In face of that uprising—and of a renewed military offensive against him by the Chiang Kai-Chek forces, Mao now made a decisive turn towards coordinating and centralising a peasant revolution throughout the country, towards destroying the bourgeois army, and conquering power in the towns, destroying capitalist property in the wake of conquering the towns (with a certain delay, for sure, but, after all, even the Bolsheviks didn't nationalise industry immediately after taking power, and had intended to do it still later than it actually occurred. To put a sign of identity ("avowed policy of the bloc of the four classes") between a complete subordination of the C.P. to the Kuomintang, and the destruction of Kuomintang power by a huge popular revolution led by a bureaucratised working class party (a bureaucratically deformed socialist revolution, if you wish) is a feat of "theoretical" acrobatics Harman can be really proud of.

We pointed out that Kidron's conclusions about developments in he colonial and semi-colonial countries were straight Menshevism—flowing from the Menshevik theory that in Russia—"under the pressure of the world market"—only capitalism was possible. Harman, having swallowed the Menshevik starting point of "state capitalism", is now forced to say B, after having said A. *Not only has he adopted Menshevism, but he is adopting also more and more of its Stalinist by-products.* We have already seen how his interpretation of the Soviet industrialisation process is nothing but a repetition of the classical apologetic theories of Stalinism: "Without Stalin, no efficient armaments industry in the USSR." Now Harman adopts another Stalinist "theory": the theory of "petty-bourgeois" states, neither workers states nor bourgeois states, neither the dictatorship of the proletariat nor the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, neither fish nor fowl. This remarkable revision of Marxism has been elevated to the level of dogma by...the official programme of the CPSU under Krushchev. And how else but by this Stalinist formula

of "national democracy" can one summarise Harman's definition of China, Vietnam, Cuba, Yugoslavia, North Korea, as being states of "a petty bourgeoisie trying to transform itself into a capitalist class"[23]?

Because for us the Yugoslav, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean revolutions are distorted socialist revolutions (i.e. led by bureaucratically distorted working-class parties), we prefer not to call the parties which led these revolutions "Stalinist" parties. For us, Stalinism is essentially a conservative ideology of the ruling bureaucratic layer in the Soviet Union, historically committed to the *status quo* (the extension of its power and privileges into the Eastern European countries, at the end of World War II, on a world scale historically strengthened and not weakened the status quo, for it was being "paid for" by the attempt to stop the overthrow of capitalism in Western Europe and many other places, inclusive China). Stalinist parties are parties which are subordinating the interests of the working class in their own countries to the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy's diplomacy. They therefore have acted, historically, as props of the capitalist system in their countries.[24]

Of course, the Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Yugoslav, C.P.s are parties of Stalinist origin; many traits of their ideology, internal structure, attitude towards the masses, were inherited from Stalinism. But these traits, important as they are, and important as are their negative consequences for world revolution and for starting the process of building a socialist society in their countries—and against which traits we conduct an irreconcilable struggle—are not the decisive factor for determining their social nature. Decisive, on the contrary, is the fact that, when the overthrow of capitalism was put on the agenda, they *led* this overthrow, be it in a distorted and perverted form, instead of *preventing* it. In order to do so, they had to break with the rule of subordinating themselves to the Kremlin bureaucracy, they had to disobey Stalin's orders and instructions, and to throw overboard, at least in practice, some of the basic tenets of Stalinist "theory".

To say that the Chinese C.P. is the same kind of party as the Indonesian C.P., the Yugoslav as the Greek C.P., the Vietnamese as the French C.P.—to say, in other words, that there is no "basic" difference between destroying capitalism and upholding it!—is to throw overboard all objective criteria of judgment in favour of partial analogies[25]. To say that "Stalinism" has been capable of overthrowing capitalism in the most populated country on earth is decidedly giving too much honour to Stalin!

Because the Yugoslav, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cuban, revolutions were distorted socialist revolutions (the Cuban the least bureaucratised and distorted of them all, for it was led by revolutionary forces not originating from Stalinist ideology or organisations), they are part and parcel of the world revolutionary process started in October 1917—be it under unforeseen and specific forms. Their victory has meant heavy defeats for world capitalism and imperialism. It has strengthened and not weakened the international revolutionary vanguard, included that part of it consciously fighting for world revolution and for workers' states under workers' management through freely elected workers' councils (the same can certainly not be said about Stalin's victory in the

USSR). It has weakened and not strengthened Stalinism in the Soviet Union, and its stranglehold on the international working class movement. It has deepened both the crisis of capitalism and the crisis of the Soviet bureaucracy, and created more favourable conditions for an extension of the world revolutionary process to the industrialised countries in Western Europe. This logic—and therefore everything which is happening with world revolution in the last decade—is incomprehensible if one falls under the sway of the mystifications of "state capitalism". It is only made comprehensible by Trotsky's theory of Stalinism and of the Soviet bureaucracy.

August 10, 1970 *Ernest Mandel*

Footnotes

(1) Chris Harman: *The Inconsistencies of Ernest Mandel*, in *International Socialism*, December 1969-January 1970—an answer to Ernest Mandel: *The Inconsistencies of State Capitalism*, IMG pamphlet, 1969, itself an answer to Michael Kidron: *Maginot Marxism: Mandel's Economics*, in *International Socialism*, April-May 1969.

(2) One example will be sufficient for this type of debating point. Harman takes us to task because we are alleged to have identified "thirst for profit" with "capital accumulation" and "the final money form of capital". This is plain unadulterated nonsense, he proclaims (op. cit. p. 36). A moment's more careful reading would have shown him that we didn't identify any abstract "thirst for profit" with "capital accumulation" (and certainly not a Chinese usurer's one), but "the *capitalists'* thirst for profits". And that "thirst" is indeed determined by the economic compulsion to accumulate capital under conditions of private property (competition). Far from being "nonsense", unadulterated or not, this identification is one of the basic discoveries of Marx's economic theory.

(3) Chris Harman, op. cit. p. 36, 37.

(4) Chris Harman, op. cit. p. 37.

(5) *Das Kapital*, Engels Edition, 9th printing, Hamburg, Meissners Verlag, 1921, vol. I, pp. 39-40, 45-46.

(6) Chris Harman, op. cit. p. 38

(7) Ibidem.

(8) Inasmuch as only *generalised* commodity production is suppressed after the overthrow of capitalism, and that *partial* commodity production still survives, the economy is dominated by a struggle between the "law of value" ("spontaneous allocation of resources") and "the logic of planning" (i.e. conscious allocation of economic resources in the interests of those who administrate the economy). This struggle can only end by either a return to capitalism (in that case, "the law of value" takes over again), or by a definitive consolidation of planning (in that case commodity production starts to wither away in the field of consumer goods too). On the road to this second end-result, the

bureaucracy's administration of the economy and the state must be overthrown. It is very unlikely that this second process could be achieved without an international extension of the revolution (although what is involved here is something more "primitive" than the final end result: the complete disappearance of commodity production, of classes and of the state, i.e. the completed construction of a socialist society, unattainable in a single country).

(9) Ernest Mandel: *Marxist Economic Theory*, Merlin Press, 1969, vol. II, pp. 621-626.

(10) An amazing accusation! On page 2 of our pamphlet, we wrote that capitalism is the only form of class society in which all elements of production (land, labour power, labour instruments, etc.) become commodities. The transformation of labour power into a commodity—isn't that "a reference" to the wage labour/capital relationship? This is repeated again on page 3, where it says that capitalism is characterised by a class structure and a mode of production which imply that labour power has become a commodity, i.e. by "the existence of a proletarian class, forced to sell its labour power". Two lines further on we mention the class struggle between Capital and Labour as resulting inevitably from the laws of motion of capitalism. On p. 12 we explain at length what forces a capitalist corporation to exploit workers in order to accumulate capital. Yet Harman coolly writes: "Nowhere in the whole section of the pamphlet dealing with the question (presumably the question of the nature of capitalism and of commodity production) is there a single (!) mention of the working class or a single (!) reference to the wage labour/capital relationship" (p. 36)...

(11) Trotsky makes this distinction between the bureaucracy's "appropriation of the products of the labour of others" (*The Revolution Betrayed*, New Park Publications, p. 240, 1967), and "exploitation" in the scientific sense of the term (*In Defence of Marxism*, Pioneer Publishers, New York, 1942).

(12) Chris Harman, op. cit. p. 38-9.

(13) Harman accuses us of "falsifying" Kidron's position. But he fails to explain why a war would represent a "leak of capital". Slumps devaluate capital, we all agree (and I indicated that, on that point, Kidron was only repeating Marx). But what about wars? "Wars and slumps have destroyed immense quantities of output," wrote Kidron. Isn't that inferring that destruction of exchange values (by a slump) equals destruction of use values (by a war)? How is war supposed to "destroy immense quantities of output" except through physical destruction?

(14) Chris Harman, op. cit. p. 39.

(15) Rosa Luxemburg: *Die Akkumulation des Kapitals*, pp. 370 et fol., Vereinigung Internationaler Verlagsanstalten, Berlin 1923.

(16) Chris Harman, op. cit. p. 40.

(17) Leon Trotsky: *Permanent Revolution*, New Park Publications, 1962, pp. 152-154.

(18) To avoid misunderstandings, and to prevent the inevitable shouts

of "revisionism" by our dear friends of the Healyite persuasion, let us repeat for the nth time that Trotsky foresaw and predicted that "under exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure)", opportunist and bureaucratised parties like the C.P.s could break with capitalism and initiate a revolutionary process leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat. (See the chapter of the *Transitional Programme* entitled "Workers and Farmers Government"). Isn't that precisely the description of what happened in Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, etc.? The essential question is whether this is "highly exceptional" (as Trotsky predicted and we emphatically uphold) or whether this could somehow become a wider "rule", as opportunist split-offs from the Fourth International (to start with, Posadas, Pablo and the Ceylonese LSSP) are persuaded?

(19) Harman cannot resist making another dubious debating point: "Why didn't you recognise the Yugoslav socialist revolution when it happened, but only three years later?" We could start quoting to him some passages indicating that we had at least an inkling that something particular was going on in that country before 1948 (notwithstanding an evident lack of information). But look who's complaining: a member of a group which "discovered" the establishment of "state capitalism" in the USSR not three but more than twenty years after it had happened...

(20) In Algeria, French imperialism engaged on a large-scale colonial war, it is true. But this can be explained not only by the exceptional importance of French investment in the Algerian oil industry—uncompared to any U.S. imperialist investment in Vietnam—but also and especially by the special implications, for French internal politics, of the presence of a large French settlers' minority in that country, which made millions of petty-bourgeois rabidly attached to "l'Algerie francaise". Nothing of the kind exists in Vietnam with regard to American society.

(21) Harman's remark, that "in Vietnam, the Stalinist leadership has twice already shown itself incapable or unwilling to solve the most elementary of bourgeois national tasks—that of national unity—when opportunities (!) to do were at hand (in 1945 and in 1954)." This is an odious travesty of historical truth, for it completely mystifies the precise opponents of "national unity". It is not as a result of the Vietnamese C.P. "submitting" itself to some "bourgeois" leadership (presumably Bao-Dai? or Diem?) or the Chiang Kai-Chek type that national unity wasn't realised in 1945 or 1954, but due to direct foreign intervention of a ten-times-stronger military power (later backed by U.S. imperialism which was one hundred times stronger). Ho Chi Minh in fact proclaimed independence in the whole country, and tried to unify it, but was driven away from the cities by superior foreign military strength (and only thereby). Perhaps Harman missed out telling Giap how he could have taken the "opportunity" to beat the French army, navy and airforce in 1945, supported additionally by British and Chiang Kai-Chek forces. Presumably, Dien-Bien-Phu was as easy a battle to organise, for experts of the Harman vintage, as it would have been in 1954 to start open warfare against American imperialism, without granting a breathing

space to people who had been fighting for fourteen years. With the same irresponsibility, one could say that the Brest-Litovsk peace showed the Bolsheviks' "inability or unwillingness to solve the most elementary of bourgeois national tasks" in Russia. Harman should be ashamed of such kind of "arguments" used against revolutionists who have struggled longer against imperialism and capitalism, arms in hand, than any other group in the world since the international working class movement was founded.

(22) Harman, op. cit. p. 40.

(23) One class "trying to transform itself" (sic) into another class is certainly a daring "innovation" in the framework of historical materialism.

(24) "The chief accusation which the Fourth International advances against the traditional organisations of the proletariat is the fact that they do not wish to tear themselves away from the political semi-corpse of the bourgeoisie," writes Trotsky in the *Transitional Programme*.

(25) The Shachtmanite adherents to the theory of a "new bureaucratic class" tried at least to be more consistent; they saw in *each* Communist Party an "instinctive drive" to establish itself into a new "fascist-type like" ruling class. The cold war having given its verdict—and Shachtmanism having disappeared under its waves in a sea of ridicule and renegade behaviour—one sees how wrong that prediction was. But why are some C.P.s just "neo-reformists" (i.e. subservient to private capitalism) as the British C.P. presumably is the eyes of *International Socialism* (like the French, Italian, Greek, Spanish, Indonesian, Brazilian, C.P.s, and the list could be extended *ad libitum*), while just a few others are "trying to transform themselves into a new ruling class"? And if this distinction exists, what's the use of defining both categories of parties by the same label?

Contradictions of the Steel Industry

To understand the balance of forces currently prevailing in the British Steel Industry, it is first of all necessary to trace the origins of, on the one hand, the level of consciousness and militancy of the workers, and on the other hand, the development and contradictions within the growth and ownership of the steel industry.

It is not considered necessary here to trace back farther than the 1920s, just after the inception of the dominant union, BISAKTA, and a time of acute depression in the industry.

The industry at that time was still fragmented, although signs of the oncoming steel monopolies were emerging. The firms were family firms, some of which had paternal attitudes towards their employees, some of which were harsh and brutal. Here lie the origins of the enormous wage differentials in the steel industry. Another reason is the method of payment which prevailed at the time. This system of payment, the "Butty" system, involved the senior man in a team, roller or furnaceman, being given an amount of money which he distributed at will, giving his subordinates whatever he considered they were worth. Nepotism and family connections were also paramount in job distribution. However, with the increasing effect of the unionisation, the seniority system evolved out of the old nepotism. Hence, today, there exists in the steel industry a seniority system whereby the workers reach the senior jobs via promotion, and huge wage differentials. Wages in the top jobs could be as high as £70 or more per week. Consequently there is a low labour turnover with people aspiring to reach these lucrative jobs. A secondary feature of the above working system is that the furnacemen, etc. were generally the branch officials. This, combined with the nature of the job (very highly skilled in the sense of experience needed to perform the task), concentrated a great deal of power in their hands. In some cases during the productive operation, they were more powerful than lower management, and indeed had a great deal of autonomy in the process of production. A sort of workers' control without ownership (although the degree of control differed from firm to firm, relative to the particular operation. It can be seen from this that workplace relationships within the steel industry and the system of negotations are very different from broad sectors of the rest of industry: probably there may be similarities with the printing industry.

The autonomy of steel workers in the process of production was further enhanced after the war, especially during the 1950s, with the stabilisation of capitalism. During that particular decade there was a huge demand for steel, which was needed for post-war reconstruction of industry, armaments, and, in the mid '50s, the consumer boom. Given these expanding conditions and the importance of steel to the economy, concessions were made almost immediately at the faintest hint of union pressure. The payment by results system was more or less universal, wages were (and to a large extent still are) geared to the amount of steel produced. Given fixed bonus rates geared to expanding production, and given a high differential in these rates, then even greater differentials result. All these events combined to make the higher-paid steel workers complacent. Not only were the workers complacent, but their union also. At this juncture we need to look at the nature and structure of the union, as another primary factor in the development of forces in the steel industry.

The British Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association (founded 1917) is, and always has been, on the extreme right of the trade union movement. It is an autocratic union with very little trade union democracy. There appears to be a self-perpetuating bureaucracy, and any study of the rule book will soon explain why.

(a) Rule 4 allows the Executive Council great power over its members, with wording such as "at the expediency of the council", etc.

(b) There is no annual delegates conference as in most other unions (including the GMWU).

(c) Rule 19—Shop Dispute (Part 2): "It shall not be permissible for any member or members to strike his or their employment without the authority and sanction of the Executive Council."

(d) In addition to the above, area officials are "appointed" and have to sit examinations before they are appointed.

The E.C. members are "elected" from each area and represent "work sections". However, if one asks at random on the shop floor who the E.C. members are, the chances are hardly anyone will know. The importance of having an annual delegates conference can clearly be seen if one analyses the area set-up. One area does not know what another area is doing, and there is very little exchange of information. Such information would be extremely important in steel, given its wages structure.

Also the policy "divide and rule" is very helpful in the perpetuation of the bureaucracy. One of the consequences of the union structure is the extreme reluctance of branch officials to call in full-time officials. The union, then, has the power to, and indeed does, carry out national negotiation with almost complete disregard for the rank and file, and this situation is extremely important to understand when looking at the current situation. However, to fully understand the current relationships in steel, some comment on the development and ownership of the industry is needed.

The Development and Economic Importance of Steel to the U.K. Economy

The steel industry in the U.K., as in other Western countries and Japan within late capitalism, is vital to the perpetuation of the capitalist mode of production. Historically, as pointed out previously, its ownership has been private, with an oligopolistic nature. However, the industry has twice been nationalised since the Second World War[1]. The fact that in the U.K. it is nationalised makes its value to the capitalist economy no less important: indeed it is a manifestation of the stage of capitalist development within the U.K.

The steel industry was nationalised so as to facilitate horizontal integration, rationalisation, and the economies of large-scale production. The arguments for the nationalisation of steel as projected by Pryce[2] and other bourgeois economists were arguments for creating a cheap and efficient source of supply to the steel-using industries, mainly the private sector, e.g. vehicles, engineering, building, ship-building, and consumer durables (washing machines, refrigerators, etc.). Nowhere in the literature of the day was any political motivation projected. Steel nationalisation was introduced at a time when British capitalism was in deep economic crisis, and it is a measure of its internal contradictions that a so-called "socialist" measure has to be carried out in an attempt to rectify the problems of monopoly capitalism. It is interesting to note that the Tories seem to have no plans for de-nationalisation, despite their vociferous opposition to the state take-over in 1966/67 and their promises then.

Nationalisation and Its Impact on the Rank and File

As can be seen above, nationalisation was not political, but purely economic, in its motives. Apart from a few gimmicky experiments (e.g. "worker directors"), the workers are no better off. The worker director "experiment" is a sham and a crude publicity stunt. The "directors" are appointed by the British Steel Corporation (not elected by the shop floor). They have to relinquish all trade union posts, and are in no way accountable to the union or the shop floor. So much for worker directors: fortunately their "status" does not fool many people.

Works councils of management and union officials have been set up under the disguise of common ground (unitary) consultation. Backed up by weekly newspapers which are given free to every employee, the corporation is indeed attempting to create a corporate state, or the Marcusian "one dimensional man". Originally the works council machinery was designed to create an area of non-sanction bargaining; social services, welfare, etc., and this developed, predictably, into trying to extend this method across the whole area of industrial relations; e.g. T.U. business can now be discussed where it could not be before.

On the other hand, the economic developments within steel have been, or are, creating an embryonic conflict; the opposite of what the Corporation and the Union have been trying to achieve. The steel

industry is becoming increasingly capital intensive, which results in redundancy. From this rapidly increasing technological innovation and rationalisation has come a situation in which a great section of the rank and file have become hostile to nationalisation itself, and speak of the good old days of private enterprise and "the firm". Obviously this is a sad situation, and comrades in the steel industry will have a difficult task to explain during the coming struggles the real reasons behind the coming attack on their living standards.

Thus the development of consciousness, the policy of the steel trade unions and the development of the steel industry are all embodied and can clearly be seen in the latest attack on the steel workers, i.e. the Green Book productivity agreement.

The Green Book Productivity Deal

Origins of Agreement

1. The Corporation submitted to the Steel Committee (made up of union and management) proposals for the deal. Therefore the "deal" is an initiative by the employer.

2. The union appears to have made only one specific proposal: that job evaluation should be introduced immediately after method study—reiterate, the *union* proposed this.

3. The rank and file appear not to have been consulted. If they have not had access to information pertaining to the agreement, the nature of democracy within the union must be looked at.

Terms of Agreement

1. Typical productivity bargaining technique, i.e. controlling pay rises and fringe benefits (e.g. 5-day guarantee, holidays etc., first), in exchange for ending demarcation lines and shop steward power.

2. An increase of approximately 5% in wages was introduced. This was mainly on datal rates, which had previously been geared to the Index of Retail Prices. (In view of a clause which states that wages cannot be negotiated for at least three years, it needs little elaboration to suggest what will happen to the 5% increase vis-a-vis inflation over that period).

3. An additional one week's holiday was "conceded", making four weeks in all. However, payment is now 4 x 5 x 20 days as against the previous 3 x 7 x 21 days, = 1 day less pay! However, it must be noted that the new agreement = full holiday pay, i.e. equal to average shift earnings. This represents an aggregate advance but not nearly as much as one would expect in the light of an increased week's holiday. (Typical productivity deal con-trick).

4. Guarantee of 5-day week was given—subject to certain codes of conduct which will be discussed later. The guaranteed week is extremely important to steel workers. Its importance is due to the nature of the industry, i.e. business cycle causing fluctuations in a working week, which could be three or four days per week in one period or six days in another period. This obviously gives the workers a feeling of great

insecurity (as on the docks and in the car industry), especially in relation to planning future commitments.

In return for above, unions allow:

(a) Method Study.

(b) Time and Motion Study.

(c) Job Evaluation.

(d) Organisation and Method.

Flowing from these comes greater labour mobility and consequently more efficient use of manpower. It must be seen clearly from this that, as with other productivity agreements, the point at issue is one of *control* (I will assume the reader is conversant with the four previous points, i.e. job evaluation, etc., and will elaborate them to hammer home the point of *control*).

Other Interesting and Contradictory Features

Redeployment. The myth of the guaranteed week is clearly exposed by this section, e.g.:

(a) The Corporation are willing to pay travel cost to new employment in the event of being redeployed. So much for security!

(b) **Compensation:** in cases where a man is taken off a job and placed in another which is lower paid, a *gradual decrease in money over 60 weeks until new lower rate is paid.* So much for security!

And further still, **Redundancy.** This is a very interesting one, as we have just seen how the Corporation looks after our interests by giving us a guaranteed week. The Corporation are not only willing to pay under the terms of the Redundancy Payments Act 1965, but are willing to pay 25% more! So much for security!

Disagreement Procedure. This fits in beautifully with BISAKTA rule book.

(a) In an instance of disagreement, management proceed with their prerogative until such time as agreement can be reached.

(b) Local procedure to iron out disagreements up to 14 weeks—then placed in hands of external regulation.

(c) Where agreement has been reached over practice changes, but disagreement over payment, previous rates shall prevail until agreement is reached.

As can clearly be seen from a brief analysis of this agreement, it is specifically about *control*. The traditional role of the shop steward could be quite drastically negated if the steel workers do not react against the measurement of time and motion, etc. The autonomous working arrangements of steelworkers would be drastically altered—this will really be hitting against the "pride" of steelworkers. The agreement will be an effective framework around which the employer can introduce the proposals of the "Benson Report", 1965, which proposed that by 1975 the steel industry will be producing 35 million ingot tons with a labour force of 200,000, whereas currently it produces 28 million tons

with a labour force of 290,000. In 1965 at the time of the Benson Report, the industry produced 26 million tons from 315,000. The 25,000 sacked since 1965 have been casualties of rationalisation. Thus the Benson Report envisaged the labour force being cut by something in excess of one-third of 115,000 men! This is not being phased over a long period as in the coal industry, but over a very short term indeed. The Green Book is very well designed to cope with this. However, the "nasty" part of the agreement is being introduced in September: will the rank and file accept it?

Given the characteristics of the union and its bureaucratic nature, any action will be unofficial. Given the fragmentation of union membership (no delegate conference), it is vitally important to achieve some sort of national shop stewards or militants committee. Already in Wales and at Corly (Northants) there are signs of militancy. A national machinery of militants is vital, or the workers will be smashed.

R. S. Fennick

Footnotes

(1) Believe it or not, with the blessing of BISAKTA!

(2) *Why Steel:* pamphlet published by Department of Applied Economics, Cambridge.

Theories of Workers' Control

1. THE RECENT GROWTH OF THE WORKERS' CONTROL MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN

There has been a recent growth, or rather regrowth, in the workers' control movement in Britain. This can be documented in several ways.

(a) The Trend of Strikes. There has been a long-term increase in the number of strikes, mining apart. The figures are reported in *The Employers' Offensive* (Cliff, 1970, p. 197). With only one year's deviation (1963), the figures show a steady growth from 1956 to 1965, and then, as incomes policy and its concomitant, productivity dealing, get under way, the rise is sharper in 1966. The upward trend continues. The relevance of strikes to workers' control is outlined below.

(b) The Workers' Control Conferences. First *The Week* and the *Voice* newspapers, then the Centre for Socialist Education, now the Institute for Workers' Control (to some extent different names covering the same people) have organised a series of workers' control conferences from 1964 to 1969. From about 100 at the first meeting in Nottingham, the figure grew to some 1,200 at the 1969 conference at Sheffield. The main significance of these conferences has been the large number of shop stewards and militant workers who have attended, and the integration of political and industrial, theoretical and practical conceptions of workers' control which they have afforded. It appears to be precisely the lack of ability to control this interaction in large conferences that has led some of the leaders of the Institute to reject the holding of a conference in 1970, and this represents a real set-back to the movement.

(c) The Trend of Resolutions. Resolutions on Industrial Democracy and Participation have been appearing regularly at Union Conferences, the TUC and Scottish TUC, and at Labour Party Conferences. Several of the milder ones have been passed (e.g. Jones and Seabrook, 1969). Not just the Labour Party, but all three political parties have issued statements accepting some degree of workers' participation in management. As will be indicated below in the discussion of workers' participation, these proposals are not of advantage to the movement, but that they have appeared is significant.

(d) Other Events. The main event which may be said to be an indicator of the growth of interest in workers' control is the response of sections of the English Electric workers in the Liverpool area to the takeover of the company by GEC (Institute, 1969). An attempt to take

over production by the workers as a symbolic challenge to the likelihood of closures was defeated in each of the three factories concerned, but by a narrow majority in two of them. The incidents illustrate both the gap in consciousness between militants and other sections, and the trends of thought among more conscious workers. Recently a stoppage in the London Docks took place over, among other issues, the lack of implementation of the recommendations of the Labour Party Port Transport Study Group (Labour Party, 1966).

(e) **The New Left.** On the theoretical side, the emergence of a New Left movement in the post-1956 period, as a result of disaffection among Communist Party intellectuals over Hungary and the 20th Party Congress revelations by Krushchev, has provided a stimulus to the workers' control movement. Interest was shown in the Yugoslav experiments, and theoretical articles appeared (e.g. Harrison, 1957; Butt, 1961. Specific articles apart, the whole atmosphere of the *New Reasoner* and *New Left Review* was suffused with an orientation towards a Marxist conception of control.) As a political movement itself, the New Left had no chance of development. Its middle-class intellectuals, with years of misorientated political activity in the Communist Party behind them, were swept off their feet by the CND movement, and emerged as various brands of liberal-radicals. (This does not apply to the small group around the current *New Left Review*. This developed as a reaction to the former trend and took over the magazine at the beginning of 1962, since when it has become the most significant Marxist theoretical journal in Britain.) But the significance of these contributions to the development of a holistic concept of workers' control was great.

(f) **The Trotskyist Groupings.** The Trotskyist groupings derived from the pre-war Fourth International, which. like a very thin and sometimes frayed red thread having maintained a continuity with the Bolshevik past, also began to grow in the late '50s. They gave workers' control a prominent place in their political slogans. (This is less true of the SLL. Peter Fryer's *Battle for Socialism* (1959), for example, has hardly any discussion of the concept.) In some cases the place of workers' control has remained at the level of slogans (e.g. between 1960 and 1969 there has been only one theoretical discussion of the concept in *International Socialism*—Sedgewick, 1960). But the emergence of the Trotskyist groupings as the key growth points of the left in the later 1960s, and the quite widespread distribution of propaganda material, has meant that the concept has been linked to the revolutionary left. More importantly, the forerunner of the IMG, the group around *The Week* (1964—became *International* in 1968), did develop an orientation to workers' control as a political strategy for development, and it was from this that the workers' control conferences, referred to above, emerged. The modest success of this orientation led to political problems. On the one hand, an influx of workers attracted to the idea in industrial terms but without a generalised understanding of its revolutionary connotations, leads to pressure for the restriction of the concept rather narrowly to specific industrial forms. On the other, the growth of concern among the ruling class about the spread of control ideas is reflected in the

spread of ideas about participation in management. The confusion engendered by this latter concept is reflected in the positions of left trade leaders, like Scanlon and Jones. Since the latter have great prestige, and have been prepared (especially Scanlon) to nod towards the workers' control movement, there is pressure to limit this movement to forms not unacceptable to the left trade union leadership. It is because of over-accommodation to this pressure that the Institute for Workers' Control (founded 1968) has been left with very valuable theoretical expertise, but no organisation—only 26 people attended the AGM in 1970, and affiliation and membership fees have been maintained at a very high level. One may surmise that the reason behind this is to discourage a "takeover" by the revolutionary left, but it has also meant that no local movement of any significance could develop. For all their faults, only the revolutionary left groupings can develop a politically meaningful workers' control movement.

(g) **The Need for Integration.** The first four indices above indicate growth in interest from among the working class; the last two the development of the concept from the political left. It is only by the integration of these two strands that the concept can become meaningful to either; for the working class has the potential power to implement ideas of workers' control, without which political conceptions remain abstract; while the content will be taken out of workers' demands as they are manipulated by bourgeois forces, if they are not related to a whole revolutionary programme. By examining the idea of workers' control in more detail, the necessity of this integration, and the nature of some of the initially attractive dead ends become apparent. But it is also instructive to examine the lessons of British labour history in this respect.

2. BRIEF NOTES ON THE LESSONS OF THE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE IN BRITAIN

The development of a workers' control movement in Britain in the '60s had an important historical precedent in the first quarter of this century, especially in the period from about 1910 to the 1926 general strike, a great defeat for the working class which disintegrated a movement already on the decline. Material on the development of these events from a socialist viewpoint is available to the general reader (Pribicevic, 1959; Coates and Topham, 1968), but a real political analysis of the meaning of the events is not as far as I know available. There are, however, parallels which seem in a very general way to have relevance today.

(i) The very power of the movement derived from a *partial fusion of industrial militancy and revolutionary political conceptions.* By 1918 some forms of control demands had been forced upon the TUC and the Labour Party, and the Party constitution contained Clause 4, a result of the power of this movement. The three political currents of Industrial Unionism, Syndicalism and Guild Socialism interacted with workers' demands deriving from a relatively favourable bargaining situation for

labour, and created a powerful, anti-Social Democratic, potentially revolutionary force.

(ii) The movement represented a serious threat to Social Democracy, even though the latter had not yet then had the opportunity to discredit itself as a means of social transformation in Britain. The reaction of the more progressive sections of the ruling class was the attempted *emasculation of the movement by the acceptance of the notion of participation,* embodied in the Whitley councils. The confusion thus created, related to the power positions of the various participants, is seen in the development of guild socialism, which came to admit of degrees of joint control, encroaching control, and thus to reproduce Social Democratic gradualism within the workers' control movement. Some of those in power espoused participation to deflect the movement. Leaders of the labour movement who feared a real confrontation since it might threaten their own sources of limited power as negotiators, wanted to modify the revolutionary content to a more acceptable radicalism. The hold of revolutionary conceptions was strongest among those without official positions.

(iii) Yet there was strong pressure from the industrial base *to depoliticise the movement completely,* for reasons outlined in the discussion on workers' control below. This pressure distorted the revolutionary content of the movement. Conceptions that political organisation was not needed, that transformation of society by industrial action and organisation alone was possible, became dominant. Until the lessons of the Bolshevik Party's success in the Soviet Union began to sink home, which was not until 1919, when economic conditions culminating in the 1921 slump forced the movement on the defensive, the main organisation for social transformation was considered to be the industrial union, not a party. This concept was dominant in all three political strands of the movement.

Parallel pressures and responses are in evidence today. There are tentative efforts towards a political-industrial synthesis. Already sufficient power has been generated to enable resolutions to be passed at the TUC and Labour Party Conferences, albeit innocuous ones. We see the ruling class once more concerned to substitute participation for control, and trade union leaders concerned to derevolutionise the content. While there is no following for industrial unionism, we still find strong pressure from the shop floor to "keep politics out" and sections of the left believing in the spontaneous politicisation of workers. But the potential is greater. Instead of a slump (25% of engineering workers were unemployed in 1921), we have chronic crisis following a period of working-class gains. The potential for sophistication of revolutionaries is much greater, for there is a great store of international experience, both positive and negative. Social Democracy has achieved precisely nothing in the intervening 50 years in terms of the transfer of wealth and power. Each term in office contributes to its discredit.

3. A CONCEPTUAL-THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERMS INVOLVED

Many of the political distinctions which need to be brought out in underpinning a workers' control movement theoretically emerge through an examination of the concepts involved. Many writers (e.g. Blumberg, 1968) use the term "industrial democracy" as a general hold-all term, and "workers' control" is often used in this sense too. Within this general usage there are three concepts which need separation: Workers' Control, Workers' Participation, and Workers' Self-Management. The following discussion owes much to the work of Ken Coates and Tony Topham (see especially Coates and Topham, 1967).

(a) Workers' Control.

In many discussions, the term "workers' control" is used to describe the struggle undertaken by workers in a capitalist, or bureaucratically managed industry, for a degree of control over aspects of their working lives. In Britain that struggle centres on the shop steward movement. There have been tendencies to separate out strikes about conditions from strikes about pay, or to imply that the latter are really about the former (e.g. Cliff & Barker, 1966). The discussion of workers' control should be more clearly focussed than this, since a blurring of the key relationship in industry leads towards the mistake that workers' control is really about humanising conditions in industry, or removing alienation in the workplace, in fact a subordinate meaning.

(i) The Basis of Dehumanisation. In a capitalist society the basis of the relationship between man and man is the purchase and sale of labour power. For the capitalist, labour power is a commodity, to be bought and sold like other commodities, but essential to the production of all of them. But labour power is not a tangible thing. It is not separable in any way from the person who sells it. The labour power seller therefore appears to the purchaser not as a human being, but as a commodity. As managements say, "Labour is a cost item", or "We have to get the best out of our workers". In the central relationship which they have to enter into in order to exist, which the capitalist and his state require them to enter into in order that the system which benefits *them* continues to exist, the vast majority of the population are dehumanised. In challenging the price their labour power receives, in other words in asserting control over the price of their labour power, workers are making an assertion of their humanness—no other commodity can challenge its price—and *potentially* challenging the system which dehumanises them. In striking, workers are asserting the right to control their own labour power, and thus *potentially* striking at the basis of the system. This is why trends in strikes are significant indicators of potential prospects for the challenging of the dehumanising system as a whole.

It does not mean, of course, that Marxists go round urging workers to strike on any occasion and any pretext; that is a figment of the bourgeois conception which, based on the dehumanisation of the workers, cannot credit them with any human powers of decision and

independent action of their own, but demands that, as commodities, they are "used". (In post-capitalist societies of the Soviet type, the control of authority itself becomes more and more important, since resource allocation is not based on search for profit, but on control over decisions by a bureaucratic grouping.)

(ii) The Control of Conditions in the Plant. The purchase and sale of labour power takes place in specific sets of conditions in which the parties are related in complex ways. The relationship is never a simple economic one, although it may more or less approximate to it. For instance, the extent to which labour power is effectively utilised in production, which determines the real return for the price paid for it, is related to the actual mechanical efficiency of the actions performed by the worker; hence work study, by eliminating redundant action, can benefit the purchaster. Effective utilisation is also related to the physical condition of the worker's body or brain, where brains are needed. Hence the provision of optimum physical conditions, the maintenance of the worker-commodity in good health, can also benefit the purchaser. Effective utilisation is also related to the attitudes of the worker towards production. Hence human relations techniques, by manipulating the attitudes of the worker-commodity, can benefit the purchaser. (cf. Friedmann, 1955).

Workers strive to a greater or lesser degree to exert control over a range of things connected with the sale of their labour power. This struggle gives them a better return for its sale (for a given amount of production, a given price for labour power is a better bargain to the worker if he has safety devices, holidays, tea breaks, chances to smoke and talk etc., than if he has not). On the other hand, employers, those who are sophisticated, try by the introduction of cheap fringe benefits to get a disproportionate increase in production, and thus to reduce the real price of labour power.

One of the ways employers try to utilise labour power effectively is by supervision. In the authority system of the factory, workers' attempts to increase the price of their labour power by increasing fringe benefits come into conflict with management's attempts to cheapen it by the close control of behaviour. Sophisticated managements may try to lessen this problem by the integration of workers into the authority system. This is the meaning of workers' participation in management.

I have given very strong emphasis to the central relationship, the purchase and sale of labour power. This is not to say that all the variety of degrading and humiliating relationships that are found in our society between man and man (and man and woman) are directly and totally *determined* by this relationship, But because the capitalist system as a whole has historically developed around the purchase and sale of labour power, it has a central significance. In challenging that central relationship, the worker is potentially engaging in a revolutionary transformation of society.

(iii) The Present Situation. The relationship of the forces in this constant control struggle is obviously crucially affected by the forces outside the single factory context. A series of blows sent the British working class reeling the post World War I period—the 1921 slump; the defeat of the general strike; the prolonged 1929 slump. These blows weakened the capacity of workers for industrial-political action and must indirectly have helped to strengthen parliamentarist illusions. The advent of sustained periods of labour administration is gradually (very gradually) eroding these. The uneven prosperity of the '50s enabled the resurgence of a shop stewards' movement, at its strongest in prosperous areas, in modern developing industries. It is from the shop stewards' movement that more generalised control demands have come. In other relatively declining areas reactions have been much more defensive. Nevertheless, overall real living standards have risen consistently for a great majority. Only in the most recent period have they begun to be challenged, as increasing international pressure reveals the structural weaknesses of British capitalism. By the logic of the system, the workers are expected to provide the solution of the problems. They are attacked in two ways. **Incomes Policy** nationally coordinates attempts to keep the price of labour power down, and also, by legislation attempts to weaken the shop stewards' movement in favour of the more easily controllable trade union leadership. **Productivity Bargaining** attempts to weaken the shop stewards' movement by reducing the area they can control and increasing supervision (Cliff and Barker, 1966, and Cliff, 1970, are essential reading for documentation of all this.)

The first attack has been resisted to some extent. The second has been much more successful in the short term, but the workers' organisation is by no means destroyed, or even heavily damaged, and responses are emerging. There are two potentially beneficial aspects of this for a workers' control movement. Firstly, as productivity negotiations cover all aspects of industrial life, it becomes more easily possible to make clear the way all these aspects are linked to the central exploitative mechanism. Secondly, the company-wide scope of productivity deals, and the nation-wide scope of incomes policy and anti-working-class legislation, makes it easier to make links between the exploitative relationship as it appears to the worker in the plant, and the system as a whole.

(iv) Deviations towards Spontaneism. It has been a constantly recurring fallacy among revolutionary socialists to assume that the basic nature of the industrial situation, revolving around the struggle over the price of labour power, alone provides sufficient basis for the development of consciousness among the workers that the system itself is the cause of their problems. Lenin spent much time attacking such views in *What is to be Done* (Lenin, 1902, 1967, Ch. 2, 3, 4). The early British workers' control movement was dominated by such views, and today they are represented in the semi-anarchist groupings around *Solidarity*, who conceive of a revolutionary's job as simply to assist workers in struggle in every way. This also applies to a considerable, though decreasing, extent in the industrial theory and practice of the

International Socialists. In his introduction to the Cliff-Barker book, Reg Birch points out the fallacious assumption of the authors that the shop stewards movement will spontaneously develop under pressure of events into a national movement, at the same time taking on an increasingly political character. In *The Employers' Offensive,* Cliff has recognised the need for political organisation, but it remains separate from, and parallel to, the struggle in industry. Many comrades still seem to feel that the sale of revolutionary material outside factory gates will act as the catalyst for the spontaneous radicalisation of the workers.

This is a very important error, and one that must be combatted constantly. It reflects, among other things, reaction to pressures arising from workers themselves. An examination of features of the conditions under which workers work indicates powerful counter-pressures against spontaneous politicisation and generalisation.

The distorting effects deriving from capitalist relationships are not confined to the work place. The whole education and ideological system inhibits spontaneous generalisation by workers, tends to fragment, localise and compartmentalise their conception of the world. The actual work experience of the worker provides the point at which this ideological distortion is most susceptible to challenge, because in it is the experience that solidarity is the basis for any achievement, but even here, the actual experiences seem to relate to specific, particularised issues—a fight for higher wages, for better conditions, etc., and to specific particularised areas—a department, or a factory. The growth of the shop stewards' movement in the '50s both reflects and reinforces this. For many, national agreements have been irrelevant in terms of real wage levels over a long period. It has been possible to make real advances by militancy in *one* factory, easy to ignore the national, or local, situation, or even the situation in other factories of the same company. Owners make use of this fragmentation in productivity deals, by picking out the weakest sections first, in order to be able to increase pressure on the strongest. As mentioned above though, present conditions facilitate some generalisation, but the specificity of the actual work situation still counters it. When generalisation is made, both politically and geographically, this can take the form that industrial organisation alone can defeat the system, a distortion that can be encouraged by revolutionary socialists in their necessary discrediting of bourgeois forms of political action. Again, the lesson that the political structures of capitalist society are the organisations of its continuity and require direct attack does not arise spontaneously from the industrial experience, although at a very deep level a generalised feeling of malaise may exist—cf. the French events. Only a revolutionary political party, working within specific industries and transcending them, in which the generalising capacity of intellectuals is integrated with the practical experience of workers, can provide the basis for a workers' control movement which will be a real threat to the system. The present political groupings form the basis from which such a party might be created.

(b) Workers' Participation

In any situation where group X has one more representative than group

Y, group X will be able to carry out any decision (if voting is the basis for decision taking) that it wishes. What is the point, then, of excluding group Y totally from the decision process, especially if, by participating, group Y may come to feel that it "belongs", and that its interests are not opposed to those of group X? Such is the basis of the reasoning behind schemes for workers' participation, which always emerge as a concomitant to movements for workers' control. By spreading psychological confusion in the area of authority relationships, participation may benefit the purchaser in the conflict over the price of labour power which is central to the capitalist system.

Subordinate to this general and quite crucial basis for workers' participation lie a number of other reasons which may encourage it.

(i) Specialists in human relations in industry have argued that features of many work situations are frustrating to workers, who therefore resist them.

The worker may be dissatisfied because on an assembly line he may only perform some tiny task, and not feel that he participates in the creation of a total object, considered to be very satisfying to a craftsman. If the work process were reorganised, the worker might feel he was participating in a common effort, and thus offer less resistance. In order to achieve this, for example, assembly lines might be laid out in circular form, so that every worker could see the whole product taking shape before his eyes. Or the worker may be taken on conducted tours of the plant (Walker, 1954).

Alternatively, his resistance may stem from his total lack of integration into the authority structure, in which case schemes of joint consultation, the placing of a worker or two on the Board, might reduce the resistance. It is when people feel they "belong" that they produce most abundantly. (cf. Mayo, 1957; Herzberg, 1959).

(ii) In various degrees some people have come to see that workers really do have expertise in regard to production, and that if this expertise could be tapped, the price of labour power could be cheapened. The authoritarian managerial relationship is wasteful (Coates, 1965, p. 299f.). Most workers in fact know this very well. As a railway inspector in Central Scotland said, "...The workers are looking on, watching the fumbling of management—this level, that level and the higher level." (Riddell & Hobbs, 1966, gives several examples from discussions with railway workers). The suggestion box is the most primitive means of trying to tap this expertise; after it comes prizes for innovation, etc.; another method is the use of joint consultative committees and participation proper. But workers are usually resistant to passing over to management this expertise, which provides them with a valuable reserve.

(iii) The fact that in a bourgeois democracy, with an ideology of freedom, the major institutions are totally autocratic gives qualms to some. Thus we have conscience-stricken liberals with schemes for "co-ownership". Like bourgeois democracy itself, but in a more blatant way, such schemes have the effect of mystifying the actual nature of

the relationships that exist. In a similar category may be classed profit sharing and the distribution of a few shares to workers in a firm.

Manipulation for the benefit of the purchasers of labour power is the way workers' participation schemes may be summed up. This may apply in terms of the individual firm, or of the class state as a whole. The German Mitbestimmung scheme, by which a minority of workers' representatives sit on the boards of large companies, has had some effect in reducing trade union militancy (Strumthal, 1964), and the Tories have currently adopted a similar scheme as the carrot to the stick of their proposed penal legislation. The Labour leadership clearly has similar ideas about participation. Marsh, in discussing the nationalised steel industry in the House of Commons, put it very clearly.

"I do not believe we can carry out the major reforms necessary in this industry unless we can carry the men with us. We cannot carry them unless they are parties to some of the decisions and some of the unpopular decisions. They must place themselves in a position where there is no excuse for dodging the issue. For the long-term interests of their members they will have to carry the responsibility for some of the unpopular decisions." (*Times*, 25.1.67). In other words, the employers' state introduces a mechanism which will enable it to make the workers take the responsibility and bear the cost of the mess that the employers have made of the industry.

It would, of course, be a crude distortion to suggest that this idea of manipulation is the basis of the interest in workers' participation among numbers of left trade unionist leaders. They may hope that a gradual increase of participation may stimulate a gradual change of society towards socialism. Their positions subject them to constant cross-pressures from employers, government, and reactionary sections of their own movement, all of which makes it almost impossible for the holder of such a position to accept the revolutionary implications of a workers' control movement. An example may be given from the speeches given by Hugh Scanlon to the 1968 and 1969 Workers' Control Conferences. As Scanlon became more consolidated in office, so the 1969 speech weakens as compared to the 1968 one. (Scanlon, 1968, 1969). Such leaders as Scanlon and Jones have, however, genuinely instituted measures for the partial democratisation of their unions, and the possibility of communication with the large following that they have makes it very tempting to give a more sympathetic hearing to ideas of participation than would otherwise be the case. Such criticisms can be directed at the Institute for Workers' Control, although to use this to dismiss its work as valueless would be an even more serious error than to accept its policies uncritically. Trade union leaders may also feel, when they have been pressured into taking decisions contrary to the interests of their members, that association with a progressive organisation may help them to retain the support of their more progressive members.

In addition to this, there is the argument that, although workers' participation schemes are in themselves illusory, the experience of them may stimulate demands for more meaningful control. This clearly has more force, since it does not imply illusions about the potentialities of

participation itself; but there are many problems involved. Whatever the *intention* of the participants, the *effects* may be to spread illusions about the unity of interests of purchaser and seller of labour power, unless participation is combined with a very high level of education about its real aims, which is not usually the case. On the other hand, more militant workers may be so disgusted with the results that their attitudes will revert back to the position that the management-labour struggle is inevitable, i.e. that the system is immutable, and that a purely defensive organisation is the only protection, attitudes that the work of industrial specialists such as Clegg are designed to encourage. (Clegg, 1960). This is not to suggest that such schemes should never, on any occasion, be used. But they should be approached with the greatest of caution. In the student movement, even radical students have accepted positions as representatives on committees under conditions which deny them the right to report back to the student body. It is a short psychological step till one comes to believe that it is in the best interests of all that discussions on "difficult" matters really needn't be reported back—and so on. The very fact of constant interaction in an atmosphere dominated by one group tends to lead to the adoption of the dominant group's attitudes by the minority. The awful experience of radical Labour M.P.s in our bourgeois parliament is good evidence of this. (Miliband, 1961).

(c) Workers' Self-Management

When a workers' control movement grows to such an extent that, in conjunction with external conditions, a real challenge can be made to capitalist authority in the factory, then a situation of dual power in the society occurs, and the basis of commodity production may be eroded. Thus, for a time in May 1968, workers in a factory in Brest threw out the management, ceased making radio equipment for the *profit* of the owners, and began to make walkie-talkie equipment for *use* of the militants in combat with the forces of repression. (Mandel, 1968). When all this is combined with a powerful revolutionary party integrating action and capable of challenging capitalist state power, a revolution can occur, which can lead to the institutionalisation of workers' management in the factory. Workers' management is not the necessary result of, but is dependent on, a transformation of social structure. The dual power situation emerges everywhere at times of great social upheaval (Paris commune, Soviets in Russia, Bela Kun Hungary, Czechoslovakia 1968, etc., etc.), but workers' self-management has been institutionalised only in Yugoslavia (and to the most limited degree, in Algeria).

One of the most frequent, and oldest, distortions that arises from the concept of workers' self-management, is the proposition that it is possible for a small group to "opt out" of the larger society, and create an island of socialism within it. Robert Owen was an exponent of this view, and Engels already refuted it in *Socialism Utopian and Scientific* (Engels, 1880, 1951). This is not to say that firms with some form of workers' self-management may not continue to exist for a period in a hostile society, but to point out that the whole ideology of the society is against them, and that economically they exist on sufferance, since

they are small and under-capitalised in a world of industrial giants who, if they chose, could put them out of business by undercutting their prices. For instance, Scott Bader, a paternalistic enterprise with some strictly circumscribed elements of self-management, has to follow the chemical price ring of the big manufacturers, for if it were to step out of line it could stimulate a price war which would kill it.

These utopian deviations apart, the main arguments against workers' self-management from a bourgeois point of view are threefold. (To say that they are bourgeois denotes their origin. Naturally in a capitalist society, dominated by a legitimating ideology, many workers will be mystified and reproduce them.)

(i) **Workers are not capable of managing factories.** Such arguments represent another facet of the dehumanising central relationship in industry. It may be rephrased: commodities are not capable of managing factories. It is important to try to find out what are the specialised skills so difficult to acquire (techniques such as accountancy, etc. apart). The specialised skill of a manager has eluded everyone's definition; indeed, it appears to be instinctive, since by far the best way to become one is to be the son of one (cf. Nichols, 1969, ch. 18). We may say very simply, however, that since Yugoslav workers, who have a much lower educational and skill level than their British counterparts, have been running factories for 20 years, with quite considerable economic results, practice has disproved this argument. A variant of the argument is that workers are not interested in management. This is of course true at this given moment of time, and in these given conditions. But the creation of a society in which self-management is realisable implies the transformation of existing consciousness, which a workers' control movement helps to achieve in a very central way.

(ii) It is said that workers' management **restricts managerial authority.** This is quite true, and may seem unpleasant to a certain type of manager, a common type in the hierchical system capitalism represents, but since, apart from specialised techniques, management appears to consist in the exercise of authority, the elimination of those who have no "skills" other than this, and their replacement by workers' councils will represent neither social nor economic loss.

(iii) The kinds of council and committee systems which are involved in a workers' management system can be criticised on the grounds that **the decision-making process is slow and cumbersome.** The image is invoked of the stereotype industrial tycoon, cleanly and decisively regulating the lives of thousands from his office (or more frequently from Biarritz). Such an argument is also the mainstay of those who advocate fascism as a social form. But quite apart from the fact that decision-taking at almost all levels of industry does not really have this individualistic character, the advantages to be gained from the transformation of the conflict over the sale of labour power, in terms of the removal on the restrictions on production deriving from it, and the release of the skill and expertise of the workers, far outweighs any slight slowing down of the decision-making process.

While the above arguments may be considered as rationalisations of the status quo, the practice of workers' self-management as institutionalised in Yugoslavia has given rise to a set of problems, of which three are noted here. The third indicates a fundamental distortion which is constantly reproduced in practice elsewhere, and which the next section will outline at a more theoretical level.

a. **Managerial Superiority.** Even in the Yugoslav situation, where the factory director is appointed by the workers, can be dismissed by them, and has to submit any proposals to the workers' council for approval, there is a tendency for workers to be "out-talked", and to come towards adopting the view of the situation held by the director, which may not always be in accord with those of the workers. Such a problem is in itself a technical one, and can be resolved on the basis of, in the long term, higher levels of appropriate education, and mitigated in the short term by clear and simple presentation of issues with the use of visual aids. But in conditions where there are heavy pressures on directors to adopt policies counter to workers' interests, as in the current Yugoslav situation, this kind of problem may be very serious.

b. There is a tendency for **higher-skilled, more highly educated groups to dominate workers' self-management organs,** related to the fact that they have more facility in expressing their views in a situation. Again, long-term appropriate education can solve this problem, but in the short term it is clearly necessary to have special legislation to ensure appropriate representation. (The operation of the workers' management system in Yugoslavia is discussed in detail in Riddell, 1968).

c. By far the most serious problem, and one which is centrally important in the theory of workers' control movements, as well as the practice of Yugoslavian self-management schemes, derives from the **restriction of self-management to the enterprise level,** and the attempt to decentralise a large amount of decision-taking to that level, as a substitute for democratising more centralised decision-taking. Workers' councils in Yugoslavia have begun to compete among themselves, sometimes in a very bitter form (in one case workers in a bus company slashed the tyres of the buses of a competitor). Workers in profitable sectors can receive good wages, conditions and training, while those who, through no fault of their own, work in less profitable sectors, are disadvantaged in these respects. The decentralisation of control of investment decision means that workers will be pressured to invest in schemes of short-term profitability, as opposed to a planned consideration of social needs, while as in a capitalist country, investment will be generated in, and flow naturally to, economically developed areas, so that the relative difference between developed and underdeveloped regions actually increases. In terms of social consciousness, the results following from this are very predictable. An increase in individualistic attitudes; determination to do one's best in the system, and damn the others; concern for one's own firm as opposed to others; cynicism as to the workers' self-management ideology; loss of collective policy and the emergence of private charity as a means of trying to cope with unemployment and poverty; the re-emergence of narrow nationalist

ambitions; all these are the direct consequences of the way the Yugoslav self-management system has developed in the past decade. (For discussion of the specific reasons for this development, and the growing opposition to it among students especially, see *International Socialist Review*, 1967; *World Outlook*, 1968; *Black Dwarf*, 1968.) Basically, only two alternatives are presented in the ideology of the Yugoslav League of Communists; either the decentralised, market-based organisation, in which the enterprise is the apparent decision-taking centre, or the totally discredited bureaucratic planning system of the Soviet Union—which the Yugoslavs experienced between 1945 and 1950. But the proposition that if control is decentralised to firms and democratically controlled there, the development of the whole in a socialist direction is automatic, is a fundamental deviation from Marxism. The apparent amount of control that an individual has is meaningless unless it is analysed in relation to the *system* of which he forms a part *as a whole*. Analogously, under capitalism the worker is a free agent. He can choose not to work if he doesn't like it. (But what an illusory freedom!) In the same way, a system of workers' management which remains at the level of the firm is largely illusory, since:

i) most of the important decisions are really above the firm level;

ii) any individual decision at the firm level has implications for social development as a whole, and therefore should be integrated and controlled above the level of the firm;

iii) finally, decisions apparently unrelated to the firm, such as those about education, the social security system, etc., actually have crucial implications for it.

Both the equation, planning = bureaucracy, and its alternative, decentralisation = democracy, are fundamentally incorrect. A precondition of individual self-realisation is the creation of a total system in which the interests of groups and individuals are regulated in relation to each other by a democratic process. The substitution of decentralisation and the market in Yugoslavia represent an abdication of responsibility by the leadership of the League of Communists.

4. WORKERS' CONTROL IN INDUSTRY VS. WORKERS' CONTROL IN SOCIETY

The tendency towards the idea that the problem is solved by the creation of democracy at the base is a very natural one. People seem to be more easily able to operate in smaller face-to-face groups, a feeling made more plausible because the larger political system is manipulative in our societies. In another way, Marxism itself seems to support the confusion. One is tempted to limit one's attention to industry. It is within the specific industrial situation that the surplus value is extracted that provides the basis for the capitalist to continue to exist. Also, it is from the working class, formed by its experience of primary exploitation that the means of the replacement of capitalist society will come.

Nevertheless, Marxism is a holist critique of society. Its reference point is the organisation of society as a whole. Even Marx did not seem to be absolutely clear about this in the very early writings, for in the

Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, he closely juxtaposes two different conceptions of alienation, one deriving from factory organisation, the other from the organisation of the system as a whole. Compare:

"The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home. His labour is therefore not voluntary but coerced; it is forced labour..." (Marx, 1844, 1959, p. 72)

and

"It is true that labour produces for the rich wonderful things—but for the worker it produces privation. It produces palaces—but for the worker, hovels. It produces beauty, but for the worker, deformity... It produces intelligence, but for the worker idiocy, cretinism." (Marx, 1844, 1959, p. 71).

On the one hand the exploitation of labour within the factory produces certain attitudes in the worker towards work. On the other the consolidation of a generalised system of such exploitation produces a distortion of the whole of social reality in both material and ideational realms. The situation in the work place by which the worker is forced to sell his labour power alienates him; the generalisation of that situation into an on-going social system, which, for example, turns social resources from welfare into armaments and war, creates alienated men in a much wider sense. Marx's later works emphasise constantly the examination and logic of development of the system as a whole. To attempt to reduce social relationships back to the institution in which primary production takes place is a fundamental mistake.

Alienation must therefore be defined more broadly in Marxist terms as the process by which a system of productive relations produces pressures in its real operation, through time, towards the systematic social distortion of people. Two characteristic distortions, rather crucial in terms of the mobilisation of people for action, are the confusion of means and ends—so that, for instance, people do not see the possession of material objects as a means, but as an end in itself—amassing of property, advertising-induced accumulation of consumer goods; and the confusion of existence and essence—people come to see their present state as inevitable, and often to some degree just. The co-existence of palace and hovel, of wealth and privation, are not preserved by coercion alone.

A third distortion, characteristic of the capitalist system, deriving from the congruence of the capitalist firm, the capitalist education system and the capitalist family, and related to the others, is the reduction of generalisation among the exploited sections of the population. Thus, militant attitudes deriving from experience in an industrial situation tend to be restricted and diverted by lack of generalisation, both outside that situation (section 3 (a) (ii) above), and outside that idea (to take an example, how many workers are against bosses, want to see a new kind of society, but won't have anything to do with you if you call yourself a communist?) A very important instance of this fragmen-

tation of consciousness is the division between political and industrial action, a separation never made by the ruling class. This helps a lot in maintaining the system. (Miliband, 1961).

The revolutionary's job in industry is not synonymous with helping the worker in struggle. Unless that help is given in such a way as to begin the task of building a totalising consciousness, to remove the distortions in its way, the position will constantly revert to the status quo ante. In other words, the unmasking of the system as a whole, and the elimination of the defences of the system within the mind of the worker himself, are faces of the same coin. The restriction of a workers' control movement to the sphere of factory relationships will make the defeat of the movement, or its diversion, more certain, and it is here that the mistakes of those who assume that the industrial situation produces revolutionaries spontaneously (anarchists and Solidarity); of those whose political programme stands parallel, but is not integrated with their industrial activity (I.S.); of those who believe that a socialist man can be created by involvement at firm level (Yugoslavia); share a common root.

Marxists have always tried to use the method of the transitional demand—a demand that Is reasonable to the worker but which cannot be met within the framework of the system. Whether a demand is transitional or not does not demand on its own quality, but on the situation in which it is presented. In the vast majority of day-to-day situations in industry, it is not possible to develop meaningful transitional demands in this sense. But in a weaker sense, it is possible to develop demands which by assisting the development of a totalising consciousness, both erode the ideological defences of capitalism among workers themselves, and also lead them to consider as reasonable further demands which would otherwise have been rejected. Thus the way actual struggles are presented and interpreted is of great importance in building a workers' control movement. If they are presented in such a way as to encourage the building of links—socially in terms of the involvement of other groups of workers; geographically in terms of the linking up of different factory organisations in different regions; and ideologically in helping to expose the total distortion of society, they are also in an important sense transitional. The key to this is that many workers do feel that the struggle over labour power dehumanises them in rleation to management, and control demands seem immediately reasonable to them.

5. RELATING THEORY AND PRACTICE

Without a theoretical orientation appropriate to the aim of revolutionary transformation of capitalism, the practice will tend to become distorted, and the system will still survive the challenge. But the problem of translating that aim into day-to-day practice is a tactical one of great complexity. The isolated Marxist, attempting to intervene using only his own capabilities; the isolated student socialist society, containing many disparate and confused streams of thought, and with no broader links—both work under a crippling disadvantage. The Marxist

revolutionary grouping, linking social groupings, geographical regions, and providing a consistent national, and preferably internationally based critique of the system as a whole, corresponds organisationally, at however low a level, to the totalising consciousness necessary for a meaningful workers' control movement, providing a basis of support for the Marxist, without which he is likely to respond too readily to the pressures of the moment. In the same way, at a much higher level, as the conditions of revolutionary rupture in society appear, the revolutionary party is the essential instrument of social transformation.

But some basic, almost common-sense prescriptions can be suggested to the Marxist attempting to develop a workers' control movement in a local area. Every action involves a consideration of immediate and longer term consequences, an assessment, based on acts of judgement for which no set formula can be laid down. By acting according to a set of "Marxist principles" which have actually nothing to do with Marxism, one's effect may be precisely nil. Thus some Marxists loudly proclaim under all circumstances that they are "Communists" (even though they may not belong to the C.P.), as a matter of "principle" even in circumstances where the local population has been so conditioned by cold war propaganda or the Catholic church that they have a positive phobia about the word. But on the other hand, by working within the established machinery constantly, one may compromise oneself so totally that one actually holds back consciousness instead of developing it (a fate that has befallen many Communist Party trade union officials, and which relates to the total lack of an integrated industrial strategy in that Party), but it tempts all, at every level. What is at least required is a careful examination of the level of consciousness of the particular group to be related to, and the differentiation within the group. Secondly, it is necessary to make a relationship to the group in a tactical way, trying neither to stand on a pedestal of pseudo-principle, nor losing sight of one's aims. In making such a relationship, the Marxist must establish his seriousness, and that he has something to offer in relation to the immediate problems as defined by the work group. It has been known for students intervening in disputes to hand out leaflets in the name of non-existent "student-worker committees", without bothering to check the wording or the facts, and as such to enable the right wing to spread hostility towards "outside agitators"; or for students to march up to a picket line without so much as a by-your-leave, waving flags and banners and calling for "more militant action" to "stir it up".

A Marxist, on the other hand, recognising that workers do not strike irresponsibly, but because their real interests are involved, and that the decision to strike involves financial hardship and sacrifice in families, will approach such situations quite differently. He will be able to help meaningfully in the organisation of the strike as requested, after he makes good contact with strikers. Contact involves steady, disciplined picketing. He will work through the strike committee, and not outside it. He will be able to help in the production of leaflets to inform workers of the background of the dispute, and of developments. He will be able, by the use of such reference works as the *Stock Exchange Year*

Book, Who Owns Whom, The Directory of Directors, to provide information about company profits, control, and links with other companies, and to interpret it, perhaps by working with shop stewards to prepare a pamphlet. In assisting in all these ways and others he is always trying to develop the generalising potentialities of the situation, but without going too far beyond the existing level of consciousness, so that the ideas become meaningless, or hostilities are aroused. He will not necessarily even support the most militant demands, but must make a decision based on his analysis of the dynamics of the situation. The purpose of Marxist work in industry is not as the capitalist world would have it, disruption, but the revolutionary reconstitution of society as a whole. (Of course, he must always support workers in dispute with management, since this is not a question of the rightness or wrongness of a particular case, but of solidarity in class conflict.) He will, above all, try to develop the contacts he makes in a long-term way, preferably by some organisation of militants, so that the basis for development is laid, and so that the most politically conscious workers can become integrated into his Marxist revolutionary group. It is very important that material resulting from this long-term association is not pushed at workers from the outside, but is seen as their own—and really is their own. The establishment of a factory bulletin is worth 100 sellers of newspapers at the gates, and in many cases, the compromises involved in having that bulletin as an official branch bulletin may be worthwhile, as it is accepted by branch members. But that depends on the specific union, branch, and relations between branch and membership.

In working to a consciously thought-out, and discussed, programme like this, Marxists are not manipulating anyone, or disrupting anything. By relating Marxist theory, as Mandel (1970) characterises "the highest product of centuries of intellectual and scientific developments of mankind", to the actual life experience of workers, they are providing them with the means for both the understanding of and the eventual supersession of the system which oppresses them, and, by the political integration of this work with others doing the same thing within a disciplined but democratic revolutionary group, creating the conditions out of which the mass revolutionary party—essential for the overthrow of capitalism—can develop. Let us build a workers' control movement!
R. Davis

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"For" the Fourth International? No! The Fourth International

The publication of this little article is our tribute to the memory of Trotsky, who was murdered just over thirty years ago by an agent of Stalin.

Dear Comrade,

The proclaiming of the Fourth International seems "premature" to you. You consider that it is more "modest" and more accurate to retain the name, "Movement *for* the Fourth International". I cannot agree with this at all. This name seemed pedantic, unfitting and slightly ridiculous to me even two years ago when it was first adopted. The experience of the last two years has fully proved it a mistake. The best proof lies in the fact that *it has not been accepted at all.* No one calls us by this name. The bourgeois press, the Comintern, Social-Democrats, all speak in one voice simply of the Fourth International. No one sees the little word "for". Our own organisations with minor exceptions act likewise, calling themselves sections of the Fourth International. This is so, in any case, with the French, the Germans, the Russians, the Americans, the Mexicans, the Cubans and others. Only Sneevliet and Vereecken have fashioned their banner out of the little word "for". But this very fact best emphasises the mistake in the old name, a name which to the overwhelming majority proved absolutely impracticable.

You are completely in accord with me that the Fourth International is being built only by us, that no other grouping is capable of fulfilling or will undertake the fulfilling of this task. On the other hand, I least of all am inclined to close my eyes to the fact that our International is still young and weak. But this is no reason for renouncing our name. In civilised societies a person carries one and the same name in childhood, in adulthood, and in old age, and this name merges with his individuality.

To you the little word "for" seems an expression of political "modesty". To me it seems an expression of indecision and lack of self-confidence. A revolutionary party that is not sure of its own significance cannot gain the confidence of the masses. The circumstance that class enemies as well as wide circles of workers already refer to us as the Fourth International, shows that they have more confidence in this "firm" than some of the sceptics or semi-sceptics in our own ranks.

It seems to you that the name Fourth International will prevent sympathetic or semi-sympathetic organisations from approaching us. This is radically wrong. We can attract others to us only by correct and clear policy. And for this we must have an organisation and not a nebulous blot. Our national organisations call themselves *parties* or leagues. Here too, it could be said that the "proclaiming" of a Revolutionary Socialist Party in Belgium makes it more difficult for sympathetic or semi-sympathetic groupings to approach us. If the principle of "modesty" is to be observed, our Belgian party, for instance, should have been called "the movement for a Revolutionary Socialist Party". But I think that even Comrade Vereecken would not agree to such a ridiculous name! Why then in our international organisation should we apply principles different from those in our national organisations? It is unworthy of a Marxist to have two standards: one for national politics and the other—for international.

No doubt in Belgium, as in any other country, groups could arise sympathetic to us but who are not yet ready today to enter formally into our ranks. We must be ready to establish friendly relations with them, and if they wish, to include them within the framework of the Fourth International on the basis of *sympathetic* organisations, that is, with a consultative vote.

You point to the fact that we have not as yet made a theoretical analysis of the latest stage of imperialism, etc. But if this is an argument against "proclaiming" the Fourth International, it is no less an argument against the existence of national parties. Again two standards! But the Fourth International as a whole is undoubtedly much better equipped theoretically and to a much greater degree assured against vacillations than any of the national sections separately.

The relation between theory and practice bears not a one-sided but a two-sided, that is, dialectical character. We are sufficiently equipped theoretically for action; at any rate much better than any other organisation. Our action will push our theoretical work forward, will arouse and attract new theoreticians, etc. The Fourth International will never spring from our hands ready made like Minerva from the head of Jupiter. It will grow and develop in theory as well as in action.

Let me remind you that the Communist League was created by Marx-Engels before they wrote the *Communist Manifesto*. That the First International was created before the appearance of the first volume of *Capital*. The Second International—before the publication of all the volumes of *Capital*. The Third International existed during its best period without a finished programme, etc.

The historic process does not wait for "final", "finished", "exhausting" Marxian research. We had to take a position on the Spanish revolution without awaiting Marxist studies on Spain. The war will demand an answer from us irrespective of the fact as to whether or not our theoreticians have issued one, two or three volumes of research work. Just as war cannot be postponed until the discovery of the most perfected weapon, so the revolution and the Fourth International cannot be postponed until the appearance of the most perfected theoretic work. Theory is very important. But pedantic fetishism of theory is good for nothing.

The paradox lies in the fact that those who call themselves "for the Fourth International" in reality carry on an ever-sharpening struggle *against* the Fourth International. In the example of Sneevliet this is most clear. He is "for" the POUM and "for" the London Bureau and in order to retain his equilibrium he is, in addition, "for" the Fourth International. We have no need for such confusion. The policy of Sneevliet only compromises the Fourth International in Holland as well as internationally. In Spain Sneevliet's policy took the form of direct strike-breaking at the most critical moment. And all this is covered up by the little word "for"! Vereecken's policy is only 51% of Sneevliet's policy. The question stands not very much different with Maslov. All of them are "for". In reality they all carry on a struggle against the basic principles of the Fourth International, furtively looking to the right and to the left in search of such allies as can help them overthrow these principles. We cannot permit this at all. We must devote the greatest attention to all the vacillating and immature working class groupings that are developing in our direction. But we cannot make principled concessions to sectarian-centrist leaders who want to recognise neither our international organisation nor discipline.

"That means you want a monolithic international?" someone will say in holy fear. No, least of all that, I will reply calmly to this suspicion. The entire history of the Fourth International and of each of its sections shows a constant, uninterrupted and free struggle of points of view and tendencies. But as our experience testifies, this struggle retains a sane character only when its participants consider themselves members of one and the same national and international organisation which has its programme and its constitution. We can, on the other hand, carry on a comradely discussion with groups who stand outside of our organisation. But as the experience with Sneevliet and Vereecken indicates, the discussion inevitably assumes a poisoned character when some leaders stand with one foot in our organisation, the other—outside of it. To allow the development of such a regime would be suicidal.

Because of all these considerations I stand completely for calling ourselves as we are called by workers and by class enemies, that is, *the Fourth International!*

Coyoacan, D.F.
May 31, 1938

L. Trotsky

Book Reviews

Lukacs: *Lenin*, NLB 1970 (first published Vienna 1924). 30/-.

The full title of this work, *Lenin, A Study on the Unity of his Thought*, sums up what Lukacs was attempting to accomplish when he wrote this work. It does not aim to deal exhaustively with the theory and practice of Lenin. Rather, it is an attempt to "show the relationship between the two, written in the belief that it is precisely this relationship which is not clearly enough in evidence, even in the minds of many Communists". Following this approach, Lukacs introduces his key concept, the Actuality of the Revolution, in the first chapter of the book.

What this extremely useful concept, central to Lenin's world vision, implied was that "the actuality of the proletarian revolution is no longer only a world historical horizon arching above the self-liberating working class, but that revolution is already on the agenda". Here was the essential historical step forward from Marx to Lenin and the touchstone which differentiated Lenin from the opportunists and dogmatists, from the Kautskys and the Bernsteins. The revolution was not something appearing from the sky at a distant future date. Rather, it was an ongoing process, presenting a series of tasks to the class. The course of the revolution would depend on just how successful the class was in facing these objective requirements.

Lenin's theory centres on this belief in the revolution as a present reality, a belief founded on a profound social and economic analysis. His differences with the Mensheviks over the question of the organisation of the Party spring from a fundamental rejection on their part of this concept. Similarly, the differences as to the proletariat's role, be it vanguard class or agent to push the bourgeoisie to power.

Lukacs deals at length with the struggle to achieve the self-consciousness of its role on the part of the class. Particularly illuminating and apposite is Chapter 3, "The Vanguard Party of the Proletariat". He explains Lenin's concept of the Party not as an agent to make the revolution, which would be an absurdity, for the existence of the revolution is the raison d'etre of the Party. The Party must rather be the soul of the proletariat, it must always reflect the essential and not the ephemeral features of the class. The Party's task is not to replace the spontaneity of the class but (to paraphrase the *Communist Manifesto*) "to point out and bring to the fore the common interests of the entire proletariat independent of all nationality...(to) always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole ...(to be) that section which pushes forward all the others; on the other hand they (the Communists) have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement." This description of the role of the Communists gained fresh importance with the development of a labour aristocracy in the west, which increased the dangers of partial interests gaining ascendancy.

The Party had to prepare the revolution. It must attempt to prepare the proletariat for the "ideological tactical material and organisational tasks that necessarily arise in an acutely revolutionary situation".

Lukacs points to Lenin's genius as lying in his ability to transform theory into the point where it breaks into practice. His economic analysis, Lukacs considers, may not measure up to that of Luxemburg in sophistication. His superiority, however, lies in his ability to concretise his theoretically correct assessment, to realise the tasks of the proletariat from the general analysis. Lukacs details the collapse of the Second International as an inevitable consequence of its past development, just as Lenin's ability to maintain a principled line sprang from his theoretical grasp of the revolution as an actuality, and of the tasks of the proletariat to make civil war against their respective bourgeoisies.

Lukacs' work on Lenin is a book well worth reading, the only deterrent being the price at which the publishers, NLB, have chosen to issue it (30/- for 104 pages). Its description of the Leninist concept of the Party implicitly provides a critique of degenerated Communist Parties which masquerade as the heirs of the Marxist tradition. Some criticisms, however, nust be made of the work. Lukacs sees quite correctly that the actuality of the proletarian revolution means that the bourgeoisie cannot play a progressive role and that it must abandon the realisation of its former revolutionary demands to the proletariat, preferring instead to seek the safety of compromise with the old ruling powers. He approaches the Theory of Permanent Revolution, but what he does not do is to provide a real analysis of the development of Lenin's position on this question. This failing is again evidenced in the thinness of the section on the International, which he mentions as "The Bolshevik Party – on a world scale". Nowhere does he come to grips with the evolution of thought on the question of uneven and combined development, which would involve a mention of Trotsky as well as Lenin's role in the struggle for theoretical clarity. So that, while very far from being a Stalinist work, Lukacs' book nevertheless does implicity distort the picture in a similar manner, by highlighting Lenin's theoretical contribution in isolation. Although Lukacs explicitly does not lay claim to giving an exhaustive account of Lenin's theory and practice, these omissions are very significant ones, and do much to elucidate Lukacs' later development and the postscript to the book. In his postscript, which is far inferior to the remainder of the book, Lukacs cites as understandable the present interest in the oppositional theories of the '20s. However, he goes on to say that "there is no question that anyone else at that time could have provided an analysis or perspective which could have given a theoretical guideline to the problems of the later phases as well". In fact, although Lukacs believes that the Marxist critique of Stalin has now become available, he has not achieved a true negation of Stalinism and that failure lies in his inability to come to grips with the tasks presented by the international movement in the '20s and later, the roots of which can be seen in this book. Lukacs has in fact fallen foul of his own concept – for him, the revolution has ceased to be an actuality. However, all this is perhaps more interesting in the context of the development of Lukacs himself, and we should not let these failings distract us from the objective role of the book in the class struggle which is undoubtedly a positive one.

To conclude on a lighter note, in an otherwise uninspired postscript there is one quotation which makes it well worth reading. It is Gorky's record of Lenin's comments listening to Beethoven's Appassionata: "The Appassionata is the most beautiful thing I know; I could listen to it every day. What wonderful, almost

superhuman music! I always think with pride—perhaps it is naive of me—what marvellous things human beings can do." Then he screwed up his eyes, smiled and added regretfully, "But I can't listen to music too often. It works on my nerves so that I would rather talk foolishness and stroke the heads of people who live in this filthy hell and can still create such beauty. But now is not the time to stroke heads—you might get your hand bitten off. We must hit people mercilessly on the head, even when we are ideally against any violence between men. Oh! our work is hellishly difficult."

D. R. O'Connor Lysaght: *The Republic of Ireland.* Mercier Press, 21/-.

This book satisfies a long-felt need for most British socialists; it provides a historical background to the events in Ireland. Read together with Lysaght's other pamphlet, *The making of Northern Ireland and the basis of its undoing*, or Liam de Paor's *Divided Ulster* (Penguin, 5/-), it should allow most revolutionaries to begin to untangle the seemingly twisted thread of Irish politics.

The book consists primarily of a detailed and well-organised survey of Irish history. Within that framework the main emphasis is placed on the events of the twentieth century, with two sections where Lysaght attempts to analyse the complex expression of the Irish national struggle in culture and literature.

The most useful point of Lysaght's book is probably his analysis of the period after 1938; i.e. after the *de facto* collapse of De Valera's economic war with Britain. This period tends to be a blank to most British socialists, who often appear to be under the delusion that nothing of note occurred between the time of the collapse of the radical bourgeois attempt to solve the national question and the beginning of the present struggle in Northern Ireland. Lysaght on the other hand clearly shows that it was a period of great, if missed, opportunity. The failure of the left to capitalise on the 1943 electoral successes of Clann na Talmhan (1) and the Irish Labour Party is discussed in a very illuminating way. The main criticism one might make of this section of the book is that it would have been useful to have seen this failure related to the inability of revolutionaries to capitalise on the leftward shifts which occurred before the election of Fianna Fail.

Where we might have some more important disagreement with Lysaght is on his views on the bourgeois revolution in Ireland.

Lysaght holds that the settlement of 1921 marked the consummation of the bourgeois revolution. Thus he states that "Cumann na nGaedhael had fulfilled the Irish bourgeois revolution." (2) Assessment of this statement depends upon first defining the tasks of the bourgeois revolution. The most obvious criterion is the abolition of pre-capitalist property forms. In this sense, of course, the bourgeois revolution has been consummated in Ireland. However, this was largely accomplished even *before* 1922. (See for example Trotsky's views on the sources and motive forces of the Irish struggle). However, to see the mere abolition of the pre-capitalist property forms as the criterion is to confuse form with content. The *content* of the bourgeois revolution is the taking of state power by the bourgeoisie and the shaping of the country's social and economic structure in the interests of that class. This revolution is not consummated until this process has been achieved. To achieve such a consummation, the foreign bourgeoisie must be prevented from dominating the economy. This is necessary because such domination prevents the remoulding of the country's social structure in the interests of the native bourgeoisie, thereby placing con-

straints on this class forcing it into policies and measures not in accord with its class interest. This prevents the development of the social structure along "classic" capitalist lines. In this sense the bourgeois revolution in Ireland has not been consummated. More importantly, it *cannot* be consummated, for in an epoch of imperialism the bourgeoisie is no longer capable of solving the tasks of the bourgeois revolution. (This is clearly revealed in the failure of De Valera's policies of the 1930s). In turn this affects the consciousness of the peasantry.

In a country in which the bourgeois revolution has been accomplished, the peasantry is a reactionary class concerned with safeguarding its rights of private property. Therefore if it *were* the case that the bourgeois revolution had been cosummated, the peasantry would be an entirely reactionary class. However, the failure to consummate the bourgeois revolution and establish the basis for the development of an independent capitalism and the social structure that would result from this leaves the peasantry in a different situation. It is capable of potentially revolutionary upsurges and moods corresponding to the period before the bourgeois revolution and not after it. This is shown in, for example, the peasant agitation about the land annuity payments before 1932. This development was of great significance as the left wing of the IRA, in the person of Peadar O'Donnell, approached the Labour Party with proposals of a campaign against these payments. As the land annuity payments were the main economic oppression which led the peasants to support the policy of Fianna Fail, if there had been a revolutionary force in the working class capable fo taking up O'Donnell's approach, a working class/peasant bloc might have been been created which would have prevented Fianna Fail achieving the hegemony it had over the peasantry from 1932 onwards. Following from the great rural depopulation of the period since the Second World War, it may be that the role of the peasantry may have changed in line with its decreasing social weight. Certainly Lysaght holds this position, feeling that the peasantry can now only play a reactionary role. Thus he states that "...in a revolutionary situation they must be neutralised. That is all that can be expected from them immediately." It is, however, by no means certain that this estimate is correct. The long history of struggle against British imperialism is certainly likely to affect the consciousness of this class as the struggle in the North intensifies and this may open the door for more revolutionary politics to gain a foothold. The acid test here would probably be if Sinn Fein were to put into practice its formal decision to run candidates with the intention of their taking up their seats. The support they would gain would be an indicator of the consciousness and revolutionary potentiality of the small farmers.

On this question Lysaght also appears at times to have a rather mechanical conception of the relationship between social position and consciousness. He says for example that "Their best hope lies in their increasing proletarianisation: in the fact, revealed by the *Irish Times* Agricultural Correspondent (30-5-68) that increasing numbers of small farmers are taking part-time jobs. For the rest, in a revolutionary situation they must be neutralised." However, in general Lysaght is perfectly correct in attacking the romantic view that simply because it has a "peasantry", the case of Ireland is somehow assimilable to that of Vietnam, or Cuba, or China. On the contrary, as Lysaght points out, the precise peculiarity of Ireland is that although it is economically a neo-colony, in terms of social structure it is closer to an advanced capitalist state than it is to a classic imperialist-dominated state. (Although for reasons already gone into, it cannot assume the finished social structure of a "classical" capitalist state. The explosive social contradictions resulting from this combination have

only been avoided by dint of massive emigration.) With this social structure, these romantic analogies can only prove disastrous, as multi-class parties of the Stalinist type would have even worse consequences for the struggle in Ireland than they have had in China or Vietnam.

The tactics flowing from Trotsky's formula of "The dictatorship of the proletariat leading the small farmers" are the only ones with any hope of success in Ireland.

However, any disagreements of the type discussed above, although not unimportant, are secondary compared to the mass of empirical and theoretical work contained in this book. Any British revolutionary interested in the Irish struggle will find this book indispensable reading. (And any revolutionary not interested in the 900-year long struggle of the Irish for independence doesn't merit the name of "revolutionary"!!)

A. Jones

Footnotes

(1) Clann na Talmhan – a peasant-based "left" party which was significant in the 1940s. In 1943 it scored a notable electoral victory, gaining more seats than the Labour Party. After the 1943 election it and the Labour Party were a major force against the traditional bourgeois parties.

(2) P. 113.

Anthony Coughlan: *The Northern Crisis – Which Way Forward.*

It is now almost fifty years since Stalin invented the theory of Socialism in one country. It is almost twenty since the foreign "communist" parties "discovered" the Peaceful Road to Socialism. Stalinists and those influenced by them haven't learnt a thing in all that time, in fact they have got worse. If anyone wanted a confirmation of that simple truth, it is in this pamphlet.

The core of Coughlan's argument is the belief that it is possible to achieve "a democratic community – or at least as near to such as is possible in a divided Ireland – in which free and full political debate can occur, a community in which some people no longer benefit from discrimination against their neighbours, in which the great mass of Protestants can learn that Nationalists, Republicans and Socialists are not all votaries of the Great Beast of Babylon, and in which some of them can gradually be won to accepting the ideal of national unity". Or in other words "If pigs could fly..." This miracle is apparently to be achieved in order to make possible "free and peaceful argument among the people of Northern Ireland" and is to be achieved by a "broadly-based struggle for democracy and civil rights". One of the main weapons in this broadly-based struggle is the "Northern Ireland Covenant of Civil Rights" which the "...(Civil Rights) Association has launched for mass signature throughout the North". One of the main tasks of this campaign is to keep the "working class struggle for socialism" separate from the struggle of the "forces of democracy and progress". Having dealt with Mr. Coughlan's fantasy world we may now turn to reality.

The most important reality in N. Ireland is that the division of the working class along religious lines was systematically created and is systematically maintained by the Northern Irish bourgeoisie (1). Any analysis which does not start from this simple fact is doomed to pointlessness. The entire power of this class rests on this point and it knows it. In order to maintain this division of the working class, the bourgeoisie relies on its control of the press, of broadcasting, of education, etc. As long as it has this control, any talk of "free and full political debate" is just utopian dreaming. But to take control of these away from the bourgeoisie requires the ending of capitalism in Northern Ireland, and that,

even Mr. Coughlan has to admit, requires rather more than the efforts of the forces of "democracy and progress".

The second reality is that neither the Stormont nor the British Government is in the slightest bit interested in whether a Bill of Rights is passed for Northern Ireland or not. They would ignore any such Bill whenever and however it suited them just as ruling classes or castes do in S. Africa, USA or the USSR.

The third reality is that the problems which create the the crisis in Northern Ireland are not merely political but are fundamental social questions connected with housing, unemployment, wages, etc. These Coughlan deals with when he says that the south must "put its house in order by dropping plans to resist trade union rights, by developing the social services, by opposing the pressures of economic imperialism and creating full employment." We agree entirely with Coughlan that all these things are desirable and furthermore we think that people are prepared to struggle for them. But there is no point going around saying "wouldn't it be nice to have so and so", the question is how to get them, and the fact is that none of these things is attainable under capitalism. The plans to restrict trade union rights are not the product of the peculiarly reactionary nature of Jack Lynch's government, but to the fact that Irish capitalism is finding it increasingly hard to pay for the wage increases which a strong independent trade union movement can win. Furthermore, any *capitalist* Irish government would be forced to take the same measures, no matter how much it was based on the mythical "forces of progress and democracy". Exactly the same applies to the developing of the social services. As for "opposing the forces of economic imperialism", this is a complete utopia as long as capitalism exists in Ireland, for it is precisely the *capitalist* market which results in the economic, and therefore political, domination of Ireland by Britain. Therefore to break the links which bind Ireland to Britain, it is necessary to destroy this market and for this a working class revolution leading to the nationalisation of the economy and a state monopoly of foreign trade is necessary.

We could go on and on in the same fashion. Just to give the tone of the rest of the argument, we will therefore only include one more gem. This is Coughlan's statement that "In the conditions of Northern Ireland today it is clearly unrealistic to demand 'workers' control' from a Government which is reluctant to introduce One-Man-One-Vote". Well, we have news for Mr. Coughlan, and that is that it is not merely "unrealistic in Northern Ireland today" to demand workers control from the Unionists, but that it is "unrealistic" at any-time, at any-place and in any-manner to demand *workers'* control from a *capitalist* government. Unless Mr. Coughlan realises that, he has less political sense than even this pamphlet would indicate. As for the subject of workers' control, the beginnings of what workers' control of the state would look like was seen in "Free" Derry and "Free" Belfast, and this was not demanded from the government but *taken*, just as workers' control of production and of the state will be taken. The job of socialists is to spread the examples of Derry and Belfast and to convince the people of Ireland that if they are prepared to fight, they can get those things which they want. And the things which they want, housing, jobs, wages, social services, cannot be obtained by the forces of "'progress and democracy" but only by the struggle of the working class for socialism, which Coughlan wants us to forget about so that his precious businessmen and "progressive" priests do not collapse quivering with fear! The task of the moment is patiently explaining and showing to

people that the things which they want can only be achieved by the overthrowing of capitalism, not going around spreading confusion by urging people to sign pathetically useless petitions for Bills of Rights which would be meaningless even if achieved. The only effect of the type of politics that Coughlan advocates would be the demoralisation of people as soon as the futility of their efforts became apparent.

Footnotes

(1) Anyone who doubts that at this stage should read Rayner Lysaght's pamphlet, *The Making of Northern Ireland and the Basis of Its Undoing.* (Available from Red Books, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.)

(All books reviewed are obtainable through Red Books, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1. Tel. 01-837 9987. Enclose 12½% postage.)