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Letter to our readers

MARXIST SYMPOSIUM '77

The Marxist Symposium organised for the second week of September is the first time that the International Marxist Group has organised an event of this nature on such a scale. The interest it has aroused, as well as the number of people who have registered to attend it, signifies two features of contemporary left politics. First, as we have stressed before, the phenomenal increase of interest in Marxist ideas, and secondly, an indication that the far left is beginning to grasp the important of this development.

We should frankly acknowledge that the pioneers in this field have been the Communist University [CUL]. It was their success which acted as a spur to the organisation of both the 'Marxist Polytechnic' [sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party earlier this summer] and the Marxist Symposium. We should point out, however, that the decision of the CPGB leaders to disallow the distinguished Soviet scientist and dissident, Zhores Medvedev, from speaking at the CUL was a retrogressive step which affected the claim of the organisation to be 'independent'.

The Marxist Symposium was organised precisely to discuss and debate issues with individuals and organisations other than the International Marxist Group. We shall be publishing many of the talks and debates in future issues of this journal. Moreover, we are confident that we will learn from the limitations and shortcomings of this year's Symposium in order to ensure that Marxist Symposium '78 will be infinitely superior in every way.

We would also recommend to our readers the conference organised by the journal Critique for 21-23 October this year. This conference, designed to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, will include a debate between Hillel Ticktin and Ernest Mandel on the USSR as well as the first public appearance in this country of Fernando Claudin, the author of The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform and a former leader of the Spanish Communist Party. André Gunder Frank, the distinguished Latin American economist, will also be speaking. Registration [£2.50] and further details from: The Secretary, 31 Cleveden Road, Glasgow G12 0PH.

A HOT SUMMER FOR SOCIALIST CHALLENGE

The summer of 1977 was certainly a hot one for the British ruling class. It saw a big leap forward in the struggle against fascism with the Lewisham anti-fascist mobilisations; it saw modest successes for the revolutionary left on the electoral front in both local and by-elections, and most important of all it commemorated the first birthday of a strike in North London. This strike at Grunwick, whose outcome is not clear as we write, will go down in history as one of the most sustained industrial actions led by the most oppressed section of the British working class — Asian women.

These developments were reported fully by the new newspaper advertised in the last issue of International. The launching of Socialist Challenge last June seemed to be a calculated risk as far as the International Marxist Group was concerned. The accelaration of the class struggle has aided in the successful establishment of the new weekly. It has succeeded in establishing itself as a popular, political paper, gaining a much wider readership during the summer months than could have been expected. It has attracted writers of diverse talents such as Tom Nairn and David Edgar; its correspondence columns are the most lively on the left; and it has regularly offered free space to groups who do not possess a regular publication. Its reporting of the Grunwick strike won it an important new readership on

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the picket line itself. This autumn Socialist Challenge is planning a new addition: a regular four-page 'Review of Books' three times a year. If possible it will attempt to institute similar supplements on music and cinema/theatre/TV.

The project behind Socialist Challenge reflects the political approach of the International Marxist Group: to struggle for far left unity and attempt to build a unified revolutionary organisation; and at the same time to create broad-based and non-sectarian class-struggle tendencies within the labour movement itself. As such, two small far left organisations, Big Flame and the Workers League, are considering seriously their participation in the new paper. The IMG regards Socialist Challenge as a vital next step in the struggle to build a Marxist party in Britain. We therefore have no hesitation in recommending to our readers, particularly those outside Britain, that they consider a yearly subscription to the paper. Oversees rates are: £12.50 [airmail]; £9 [surface mail].

THE BREAK-UP OF BRITAIN?

An important new book has recently been published by New Left Books. It is Tom Nairn's The Break-Up of Britain, which has been widely reviewed in the bourgeois press of Scotland and England. Nairn's theses are extremely controversial and Trotskyists would have strong disagreements with some of them. Many of the questions raised by Nairn, however, are of some importance and need to be fully discussed by all socialists. In the next issue we will publish what will be the first of a series of review articles on Nairn by the Scottish Marxist Neil Williamson.

MARX, ENGELS AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Ken Tarbuck reminds us in this issue that we have now experienced a decade without Isaac Deutscher. We agree with most of the sentiments expressed in the Tarbuck tribute. Deutscher's three volumes on Trotsky and most of his other works are a very vital part of the armoury of revolutionary Marxism, and we would urge our newer readers to buy and read his books. In our next issue we will have the privilege of publishing an unpublished Deutscher text on 'Marx, Engels and the Russian Revolution' — a collection of their views together with his own commentary.

THE OTHER BOOKSHOP

For readers in London we have pleasure in introducing The Other Bookshop, which has opened on 328 Upper Street, Islington, London N1. It succeeds Red Books but its range of books, its decor and its facilities are much broader, as many visitors are discovering. For readers outside London, catalogues are available and can be obtained by enclosing 20p [postage costs] at the above address. The bookshop also has a limited range of books in French, Spanish and German, and hopes to stock all serious theoretical reviews in those languages.

FAR LEFT UNITY IN THE US

On page 26 [and on page 50 of our last issue] can be found an advertisement for publications of the Revolutionary Marxist Committee, a revolutionary group in the US adhering to the theory of state capitalism. These documents are of particular interest in light of the recent fusion between the RMC and the Socialist Workers Party, American supporters of the Fourth International; and have an undeniable relevance for the present discussion in Britain on the basis of far left unity.

NOW IS THE TIME TO SUBSCRIBE

With this issue the price of International goes up to 75p. Although sales of the journal are increasing steadily, they are not doing so fast enough to offset rising costs. So we ask all our readers to help us make a big effort to expand the circulation of International in the coming months. That can allow us to stabilise the price at its new level — which, we believe, is still very good value at only around 1p per 1,000 words.

One way of helping to ensure a regular income for the journal is to take out a subscription. Although the cover price has increased with this issue, we are holding down the subscription rate until at least the next issue in December. So take advantage of this bargain now. Readers overseas should note that our rates for them are particularly advantageous in comparison with those normally charged by journals based in Britain. Our name is no accident — we want to make this an international journal of Marxist theory. Help us to achieve this target with the minimum delay!

The State and the Transition to Socialism

NICOS POULANTZAS interviewed by Henri Weber*

Henri Weber: In a recent book[1] you argue that what is needed is a complete break with the essentialist conceptions of the state. In other words, with those which define it as a simple object-instrument, or as a subject with a will and a rationality of its own to whom the ruling classes obediently defer. Would you say that this essentialist conception was also held by Marx and Lenin?

Nicos Poulantzas: Basically we must examine what we mean by the Marxist theory of the state. Can we find in Marx or Engels a general theory of the state? In my opinion we can no more speak of a general theory of the state than we can of a general theory of the economy, because the concept, content, and terrain of the political and the economic change with the various modes of production. We can certainly find in Marx and Engels the general principles of a theory of the state. We can also find some guidelines concerning the capitalist state. But there is no fully worked out theory, not even of the capitalist state.

The problem is more complex when we come to Lenin. In Marx and Engels' works there are no signs of an instrumentalist conception of the state — I'm thinking now of their political texts on France, etc. — but this is less clear with Lenin. There can be little doubt that some of his analyses fall prey to the instrumentalist conception of the state, that is, as a monolithic bloc without divisions, with almost no internal contradictions, and which can only be attacked globally and frontally from without by establishing the counter-state which would be the dual power, centralised soviets, and so on.

Does this conception derive from the fact that Lenin was dealing with the Tsarist state (because even when Lenin speaks of the Western democracies he always has in mind the Tsarist state)? Or from the fact that Lenin wrote **State and Revolution** as a polemic against the social-democratic conceptions of the state-subject? Could it be that Lenin was obliged, as he says himself, to 'bend the stick too far in the opposite direction', and to say: no, the state is not an autonomous subject but an instrument, an exclusive tool for the ruling classes.

So I would put a question mark as far as Lenin is concerned, but it is clear all the same that an instrumentalist conception of the state can be found in his texts.

*This first appeared in *Critique communiste* No. 16 (June 1977).

MARXISTS AND THE THEORY OF THE STATE

H.W.: You put forward a different conception of the state to this essentialist one. You say that the 'state' is no more a thing than 'capital' is an object, that like capital it is above all a social relation. It is, to quote you, 'the material condensation of the relation of forces between social classes as it is specifically expressed within the state itself'. You argue that one of the advantages of your conception is that it helps to underline a strategically important fact: that the state is not a solid monolithic bloc which the masses will have to confront from without in a whole series of encounters, and which they will have to destroy *en bloc* through an insurrectional attack bringing about the collapse of the state. Rather, since the state is a 'material condensation of a relation of classes', it is riddled with class contradictions. It is an arena of internal contradictions, and this applies to all its apparatuses — not only those where the masses are present physically (school, army ...) but also where they are supposedly absent (police, judiciary, civil service). That is your conception, summarised somewhat schematically.

Now I want to ask you a number of questions. First, what is really new in this approach? In other words, I have the impression that Lenin did not consider the state an intrinsic reality, independent of the class struggle and dominating it, any more than did Marx (which brings us back to your first answer). Both of them definitely stress the fact that the nature of the state reflects the relation of forces between the classes (one need only mention the Marxist analysis of Bonapartism). Therefore the state, its institutions and personnel, its type of organisation and relationship to the masses, is directly determined by the class structure, the relations between the classes, and the sharpness of the class struggle. I think this is fundamental in determining how Marxists pose the problem of the state.

Furthermore, I don't believe that either Marx or Lenin put forward a theory of the monolithic state, without 'contradictions or divisions', of the kind that you are challenging. Lenin, for example, completely incorporates in his strategy the struggle inside the institutions, even the Tsarist

1. *La Crise de l'Etat* (Paris: PUF, 1976).

institutions. He argues that communists must be active in the Duma, the schools, the army ... In the famous pamphlet *What is to be Done?*, he denounces from the start the economist reduction of Marxism and explains that the revolutionary party has to send its militants into all institutions and all spheres of society. He sees these institutions not only as the stake but also as the terrain of the class struggle.

The difference between these conceptions and those which are 'fashionable' today — I am thinking essentially of the theorisations of the leaders of the Italian Communist Party on the contradictory character of the state system today — is that for Marx, Lenin, and revolutionary Marxists, social classes do not and cannot occupy equivalent positions in the state. The ruling classes control the strategic positions of the state. They hold the real power. The exploited classes occupy or can occupy minor positions as personnel in the various state apparatuses, or as elected representatives in parliament, but these are generally all positions with extremely limited powers. Thus the state which, to use your words, is 'the condensation of a relation of classes', 'riven by internal contradictions', 'a terrain of the class struggle', still remains the primary instrument of bourgeois domination. Therefore the key strategic question of any transition to socialism remains: how do we deal with this state, how do we destroy it?

In fact, Lenin's conception was not so much an instrumentalist one of a monolithic state as one based on the understanding that, whatever its contradictions (and they can be relatively great), the state remains an instrument of domination by one class over another. Lenin does not ignore the Swiss, American and British states. He was perfectly aware of Marx's writings on the possible peaceful passage to socialism in this type of state. I do not accept that his judgement was clouded by the Tsarist state so that he ignored all other reality.

The second question is this: hasn't your constant emphasis on the contradictory character of the modern state had the effect — this is obviously the case with currents like the Italian CP, CERES[2], etc. — of blurring its class character and obscuring the key problem of any strategy for the transition to socialism: the task of smashing the state as the instrument of bourgeois domination?

N.P.: To return first to the novelty of my conception: we always come up against the same problem. I think that in Marx and Engels, and also in Lenin, not to mention Gramsci, whose contribution is very important, there are certainly elements of what I am trying to develop. In Lenin I still maintain that more than an ambiguity remains, for Lenin was thinking not so much of an internal struggle within the state apparatus as of the presence of revolutionaries within it. That is something quite different.

The main axis of Lenin's political struggle was for the centralisation of the parallel powers outside the state, the building of an alternative state apparatus which would replace the bourgeois state at a given moment. Therefore Lenin, it is true, speaks of the presence of revolutionaries within the state, but rather in the sense of a presence that would help, when the time came, to replace this state with an alternative state. You don't seem to appreciate the weight of this intervention as such.

Anyway, what is certain is that within the Third International, I think, there was a tendency to view the state as an instrument that could be manipulated at will by the bourgeoisie. Even if they recognised that certain contradictions existed within it, the idea always persisted that no proper revolutionary struggle could be led in the heart of the state on the basis of these contradictions.

Now, on the other hand, we have the position of the Italian leaders, illustrated by Luciano Gruppi's latest article in *Dialectiques* No. 17 on the contradictory nature of the state. This is totally different from what I am saying. According to this theory of the contradictory nature of the state, which has also been taken up in the French CP, one section of the state corresponds to the development of the productive forces; as a result it embodies neutral, even positive functions of the state, because they correspond to the socialisation of the productive forces. In other words, there are two states: a 'good' state, which ultimately corresponds to the growth of popular forces within the state itself, and a 'bad' state. Today the 'bad' state dominates the 'good' state. The super-state of the monopolies, which is the bad side, must be destroyed; but the section of the state that corresponds to the socialisation of the productive forces and the popular upsurge must be preserved.

This is a complete false conception. I agree with you: the whole of the present state and all its apparatuses — social security, health, education, administration, etc. — correspond by their very structure to the power of the bourgeoisie. I do not believe that the masses can hold positions of autonomous power — even subordinate ones — within the capitalist state. They act as a means of resistance, elements of corrosion, accentuating the internal contradictions of the state.

This allows us to escape from the false dilemmas in which we are presently stuck: either viewing the state as a monolithic bloc (I am being schematic here), and thus considering the internal struggle as a totally secondary problem — with the main if not exclusive objective being the task of centralising popular power, the construction of the counter-state to replace the capitalist state; or else seeing the state as contradictory and therefore considering that the essential struggle has to be mounted within the state, within its institutions — thus falling into the classical social-democratic conception of a struggle contained within the state apparatuses.

I believe, on the contrary, that it is necessary to develop some coordination between them:

— on the one hand, a struggle within the state. Not simply in the sense of a struggle enclosed within the physical confines of the state, but a struggle situated all the same on the strategic terrain constituted by the state. A struggle, in other words, whose aim is not to substitute the workers state for the bourgeois state through a series of reforms designed to take over one bourgeois state apparatus after another and thus conquer power, but a struggle which is, if you like, a struggle of resistance, a struggle designed to sharpen the internal contradictions of the state, to carry out a deep-seated transformation of the state.

— on the other hand, a parallel struggle, a struggle outside the institutions and apparatuses, giving rise to a whole series of instruments, means of coordination, organs of popular power at the base, structures of direct democracy at the base. This form of struggle would not aim to centralise a dual power type of counter-state, but would have to be linked with the first struggle.

I think we have to go beyond the classical strategy of dual power without falling into the trap of the Italian CP's strategy, which is, in the last analysis, a strategy located solely within the physical confines of the state.

THE STATE AND DUAL POWER

H.W.: Let us just concentrate on this aspect of the question, and then perhaps we can come back to the state via a detour. I am convinced that we have to lead a struggle within the institutions, to play as much as we can on the internal contradictions of the state, and that, in the present context, every battle for the democratisation of the institutions and the state is a decisive battle. Also that such a struggle within the institutions must link up with a struggle outside to develop mechanisms of popular control and to extend direct democracy. But it seems to me that what is missing from your position, its blind spot, is the antagonism between these external popular committees (in the factories, the neigh-

2. CERES (Centre d'Etudes, de Recherches, et d'Education Socialistes — Centre for Socialist Studies, Research and Education) is the organised form taken by the left wing in the Socialist Party.

bourhoods, etc.) and the state apparatus which, whatever struggle you lead within it, won't undergo any change in its nature as a result. Therefore the moment of truth will necessarily arrive when you have a test of strength with the state apparatus. And this state apparatus, however democratised it is, however much it is weakened by the action of the workers movement within its institutions, will nevertheless remain, as we can see in Italy today, the essential instrument of the bourgeoisie's domination over the popular masses.

This test of strength seems unavoidable to me, and the proof of any strategy is the seriousness with which this moment of truth is taken into account. Those who say, a bit like you: there are struggles both inside and outside the institutions, and it is necessary to coordinate the two, and that's all; in reality, they don't take into account the test of strength, this decisive confrontation. This silence speaks for itself. It amounts to considering that the coordination of action outside and inside the institutions can, through a long, gradual process, finally alter the nature of the state and society without a test of strength.

You know, what worries me about your presentation is that you seem to be tilting at windmills, that is, against people who want to make the October Revolution all over again, when that is in no way the case with the far left today. We don't think that the state is a monolith which must be confronted and broken down exclusively from the outside. We are absolutely convinced of the need for a 'war of position', and we know that in the West there will be a whole period of preparation, of conquest of hegemony, etc. But the fundamental line of divide, where you have to take a stand, is that some people see this war of position as constituting in itself the transformation of capitalist society and the capitalist state into a socialist society and a workers state. Whereas, for us, this is only a starting point in establishing the preconditions for the test of strength which seems unavoidable to us whatever the circumstances. To ignore this test of strength is therefore to opt for one strategy over another.

N.P.: Well, now we are getting somewhere. I agree with you on the questions of the rupture, of the test of strength; but I still think that the repetition of a revolutionary crisis leading to a situation of dual power is extremely unlikely in the West. However, on the question of the rupture, this test of strength which you talk about could only take place between the state and the totally exterior force of the centralised organisation of popular power at the base. That's the problem. I agree on the necessity of a break. But, ultimately, it is not clear that there can only be a truly revolutionary test of strength if it takes place between the state, as such, and forces completely outside it (or identifying as such), that is, the movement, the organs of popular power, centralised at the base as an alternative power.

I can give you some very simple examples. For instance, let us look at what happened in Portugal. You say that nobody wants to repeat October, etc. But when I read what Bensaid has to say in his book on Portugal ...

H.W.: *La Révolution en marche*[3]...

N.P.: But it's exactly this conception that I am fighting. According to him, the crucial problem in Portugal was that the revolutionaries did not succeed in centralising all this experience of popular power at the base, etc., to establish dual power, an alternative centralised power which, as such, would have confronted the state. That would be the unavoidable confrontation, the rupture. I believe that there will be a rupture, but it's not clear to me that it will necessarily be between the state *en bloc* and what lies outside it, the structures of popular power at the base.

It can take place, for example, right inside the state apparatus: between one fraction of the armed forces which is entirely at the service of the bourgeoisie and another fraction of the regular army which, supported also by the popular power at the base, by the soldiers' unionisation struggles or soldiers committees, can break with its traditional role and pass over — a whole fraction of the state army — to the side of the people. That's the kind of thing that happened in Portugal: there was no confrontation between the popular militias on one side and the bourgeois army on the other. If it didn't work out in Portugal, it wasn't because the revolutionaries failed to set up a parallel popular militia which could have totally replaced the state apparatus at a given moment, but for a whole series of other reasons ...

To talk of coordinating the internal struggle with the external struggle does not mean at all that we necessarily avoid talking of the rupture. But it means recognising that the revolutionary break does not inevitably occur in the form of a centralisation of a counter-state confronting the state itself *en bloc*. It can pass through the state, and I think this is the only way it will happen at present. There will be a rupture, there will be a moment of decisive confrontion, but it will pass through the state. The organs of popular power at the base, the structures of direct democracy, will be the elements which bring about a differentiation inside the state apparatuses, a polarisation by the popular movement of a large fraction of these apparatuses. This fraction, in alliance with the movement, will confront the reactionary, counter-revolutionary sectors of the state apparatus backed up by the ruling classes.

Fundamentally, I think that at the moment we cannot repeat the October Revolution under any form. The basis of the October Revolution was not only the opposition pointed out by Gramsci between a war of movement and a war of position. I think that Gramsci, too, basically retains the schema and the model of the October Revolution ...

H.W.: Absolutely!

N.P.: What does Gramsci mean by the war of positions? The war of positions is to surround the strong castle of the state from outside with the structures of popular power. But in the end it's always the same story. It's a strong castle, right? So either you launch an assault on it — war of movement; or you besiege it — war of positions. In any case, there is no conception in Gramsci's work that a real revolutionary rupture, linked to an internal struggle, can occur at this or that point of the state apparatus. It doesn't exist in Gramsci. But I myself find it difficult to believe that a classical situation of dual power can occur again in Europe, precisely because of the development of the state, its power, its integration into social life, into all areas, etc. This development and power make it simultaneously very strong when confronted with a situation of dual power, and also very weak: for now the alternative power, if you like, can somehow also appear within the state; the ruptures can also take place from within the state, and that is its weakness.

H.W.: The difficulty is in knowing what ruptures we are talking about. What is their nature, their extent? However, we can be sure that breaches of this kind inside the state institutions involve positions that could have been conquered before or during the crisis, but are relatively secondary positions. The essence of the state apparatus, where the reality of power is really concentrated, will not pass to the side of the revolution. And if you think that a revolutionary mass movement can polarise key sectors of the state apparatus — can polarise, for instance, the majority of the officer caste — then in effect you hold that the state is potentially neutral. You are in effect blurring the conception of the class character of this apparatus, and of its leading personnel.

I still think that the best example to take is that of Italy. Here the development of the mass movement, in the factories and elsewhere, has created a democratic movement within the police, the judiciary, the civil service — in all the state apparatuses — but these movements affect only the periphery, the fringe of these apparatuses, and not their core.

I will therefore freely admit that one of the essential functions of a popular movement and a revolutionary

3. *Portugal: La Revolution en marche*, by Daniel Bensaid, Carlos Rossi and Charles-Andre Udry (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1975).

strategy is to dislocate the state apparatus and throw it into crisis, to paralyse it, to turn it as much as possible against bourgeois society. This is relatively easy in the schools, some government services, etc., whose class character is more mediated. It is much more difficult when you come to the apparatuses of direct coercion such as the police, the army, the judiciary, the higher echelons of the civil service, or even the mass media, the television and press — though it's possible, and we have it as an objective. But we must have no illusions on what we can achieve from this angle. There will be no vertical split from top to bottom into two halves. We will not establish dual power inside the state, capturing half the state power from top to bottom and winning everyone from half the ministers to half the postmasters to the side of the popular movement! We will make some inroads, but that won't do away with the continuing existence of the state apparatus, of the state as instrument of domination and general staff of the counter-revolution. Hence the need to deal with it once and for all.

If I remain convinced of the reality of the concept of dual power, clearly under different forms from those in Tsarist Russia, and obviously linked to the growing crisis of the state apparatus, it is because I am convinced that the core of the state apparatus will polarise to the right. We can see it in Italy, we saw it in Chile and Portugal, and we can see it everywhere the ruling class is threatened and where its instrument of domination in consequence throws off its liberal and democratic trappings to reveal the full nakedness of its role.

DIRECT DEMOCRACY AND REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

N.P.: You are right on many points, but I think that we are in any case faced with a historical gamble. The new strategy that must be adopted in the concrete situation in the West, where my analyses prompt me to say that there cannot be a situation of dual power, contains in effect the risk, the obvious risk — and everyone is aware of it — that the great majority of the repressive state apparatuses will polarise to the right, and therefore crush the popular movement.

Having said that, I think that we must first of all bear in mind that this is a long process. We have to understand the implications of that. We talked about *the* rupture. But it's not clear in fact that there will be *one* big rupture. On the other hand, it's also clear that you risk falling into gradualism if you talk about a series of ruptures. Nevertheless, if we're talking about a long process, we have to come to terms with the fact that it can only mean a series of ruptures, whether you call them successive or not. What matters for me is the idea of a 'long process'. What can you mean by 'long process' if you talk at the same time of *the* rupture?

H.W.: It means, for example, what we are seeing in Italy. Since 1962, and very sharply since 1968, a relatively long process has been unfolding. It already amounts to ten or fifteen years of a rising popular movement, of the erosion of bourgeois hegemony, it has resulted in the development of forms of direct democracy at the base, a growing crisis of the state apparatuses, and it is ushering in a sharper and sharper crisis, and indeed the test of strength ....

N.P.: Yes, but hold on. The process is relatively differentiated all the same, because we've seen also what is happening in Portugal. Then I would say that the most probable hypothesis on which to work in France is the Common Programme. In other words, that the left will move into power, or rather into government, accompanied by a simultaneous huge mobilisation of the popular masses. For either there will be no popular mobilisation, in which case we will have at best a new social-democratic experience; or else there will be a massive mobilisation of the popular classes, coinciding with a left government, which implies already a number of important changes at the top of the state apparatus: in other words, the left, occupying the summit of the state, will be led (willy nilly) to undertake a democratisation of the state, also from above. In Italy the PCI finds itself in the corridors of power and yet at the same time it lacks even the slightest means of mobilising the masses or altering the structure of the state apparatuses which a left government in France would have. There's your first problem.

Second problem. Let's take up the question of dual power and the rupture which must smash the state apparatus, because that's really the heart of the matter. Smashing the state apparatus meant something relatively simple for the Bolsheviks. It meant that the institutions of representative democracy, the so-called formal liberties, etc. are institutions which by their nature are totally under the sway of the bourgeoisie — not only the state, I say, but representative democracy. Smashing the state apparatus therefore meant overthrowing the whole institutional set-up and replacing it with something completely new, a new organisation of direct or so-called direct democracy, by means of soviets led by the vanguard party, etc.

This raises the following question. I think that nowadays the perspective of smashing the state remains valid as a perspective for the deep-seated transformation of the state structure. But, in order to be very clear on this point and not treat it lightly, we can no longer speak of smashing the state in the same way, insofar as we are all more or less convinced — and I know your latest views on this question — that a democratic socialism must maintain formal and political liberties: transformed, to be sure, but maintained all the same in the sense that Rosa Luxemburg demanded of Lenin. We musn't forget that. To be honest, Lenin couldn't have cared less about political and formal liberties. And Rosa Luxemburg, a revolutionary who can hardly be accused of social democratic leanings, took him up on it.

It is easy to say that you have to maintain political and formal liberties. But for me it's clear that this also implies — and here I'm going back to the discussion you had with Jacques Julliard in *Critique communiste* No. 8-9 — the maintenance, although profoundly altered, of certain forms of representative democracy.

What is meant by representative democracy as opposed to direct democracy? There are certain criteria. Direct democracy means a compulsory mandate, for instance, with instant recall of the delegates, etc. If you want to preserve political and formal liberties, I think that implies keeping certain institutions which embody them, and also a representative element: that is, centres of power, assemblies which are not directly modelled on the pattern of direct democracy. In other words, national assemblies elected directly by universal suffrage in a secret ballot, and which are not solely ruled by the principles of compulsory mandate and instant recall.

H.W.: What have you got against the compulsory mandate and instant recall?

N.P.: Historically, every experience of direct democracy at the base which has not been tied to the maintenance of representative democracy for a certain period has failed. To do away completely with the institutions of so-called representative democracy during a transitional phase, and to think that you will have direct democracy, in the absence of specific institutions of representative democracy, with political liberties as well (plurality of parties, among other things) — well, as far as I know, it's never worked. Direct democracy, by which I mean direct democracy in the soviet sense only, has always and everywhere been accompanied by the suppression of the plurality of parties, and then the suppression of political and formal liberties. Now, to say that that's merely Stalinism seems to me to be going a bit far.

H.W.: But to say that it is fundamentally tied to the form of direct democracy is to go even further. Because in reality there was an international and national context which meant that it was difficult to conceive of any kind of democratisation while the revolution remained isolated. To use the failure of the soviets in Russia in the 1920s to prove your argument is not convincing.

N.P.: Pardon me, it's not only Russia, it happened again in China .....

H.W.: With even more reason....

N.P.: And also in Cuba, not to mention Cambodia; you can't deny all that. I'm quite happy to blame Stalinism or the objective conditions, but it does begin to add up to something in such varied national and international conditions.

To go back to the Russian Revolution, we all know that for Lenin the abolition of other parties was linked to the civil war. That is how it happened concretely. Having said that, I wonder all the same if this abolition of other parties was not already there potentially in Lenin's conception or in certain of his texts. If one conceives that the truth of the proletariat — its political class consciousness — comes from outside the workers movement, from the theory produced by the intellectuals, then I wonder to what extent that, tied to a certain conception of direct democracy, does not lead directly to the abolition of all democracy in line with the well-known scenario. First of all you say, as Lenin started to say, democracy only for the proletarian parties, the parties of the left. But then, what is a proletarian party? You know what I mean, I don't have to spell it out: which is the real proletarian party? Which is the real proletarian fraction of the proletarian party? I know very well that you can't reduce Lenin's theory of organisation to *What Is To Be Done?*, but I believe all the same that a single party is potentially there in the conceptions of *What Is To Be Done?*, which still remains the framework of the Leninist theory ...

Then, even in Soviet Russia, I wonder if what Rosa Luxemburg said to Lenin ('Beware, isn't that going to lead to ...), if even the first comments of Trotsky, the pre-Bolshevik Trotsky, were not more relevant than the explanations of the later Trotsky, the super-Bolshevik Trotsky.

But finally, leaving aside the whole historical debate, I would ask whether today we can talk about political and formal liberties over a long period, the period of transition to socialism, without also having the institutions that can give life to and guarantee this plurality and these liberties? Do you really believe that these liberties will continue to be maintained, simply by their own dynamic, under a soviet democracy at the base (supposing such a system is possible, it's thought of as possible, but I think that dual power, anyway, is a situation that can't recur as such), if there are no institutions that can guarantee these liberties — and, in particular, institutions of representative democracy?

In the debate among Italian Marxists, you know that the discussion was launched by Bobbio.[4] Of course, one clearly can't agree with all Bobbio's social-democratic platitudes, but he did highlight one point. He said: 'If we want to maintain liberties, the plurality of expression, etc., then all I know is that throughout history these liberties have been coupled with a form of parliament.' Certainly he expressed it in a social-democratic form. But yet, I wonder if there isn't a core of truth in that, if the maintenance of formal political liberties doesn't require the maintenance of the institutional forms of power of representative democracy. Obviously they would be transformed; it's not a matter of keeping the bourgeois parliament as it is, etc.

Moreover, we have had some experience of direct democracy in France since 1968. It's a bit too easy to use that as an argument, but you saw how it worked then!

H.W.: You mean the university?

N.P.: Yes, I'm thinking mainly of the university, but not just there. Because when I talk about the need for formal and political liberties, it is not just the far left I have in mind, as some people have thought from my article in *Le Monde*; I am thinking also of the CGT and the Communist Party, to say nothing of the leadership of the Socialist Party.

So you would have forms of direct democracy at the base, neighbourhood committees and the like, totally controlled by the official left, without any institutional guarantee of formal liberties .... well, come on. Even the formal and political liberties of the far left can only be guaranteed by maintaining forms of representative democracy.

Finally, you know that I don't claim to have complete answers. There is a problem traditionally summarised in the expression 'smashing the state', but we're all aware that we have to maintain political liberties and pluralism, and hence also to a certain extent the institutions of representative democracy. I would not hesitate to say also that, precisely because we talk of maintaining rather than purely and simply abolishing the so-called formal liberties, we can no longer use the term 'smashing' to define the problem, but rather that of radically 'transforming' the state. Do you believe in pluralism?

H.W.: Of course. We believe in it and we practise it.

N.P.: But for your opponents as well?

H.W.: Certainly. Even for the bourgeois parties, it's there in writing.

N.P.: Aha, even for bourgeois parties. Now, not to be too naive, there are things one has to say, because we fear for ourselves as well ...

H.W.: Of course.

N.P.: It's all very well to say so, but I want to know what forms of institutional guarantee there would be — they are always secondary, of course, but they matter. In what kind of institutions would this pluralism and these liberties be inscribed, in what kind of material institutions would they be sustained and guaranteed? If we're talking only of forms of direct democracy at the base — in other words, structures still massively dominated by the traditional left parties — that hardly eases my misgivings. I can conceive of direct democracy at the base through general assemblies at Renault, or in Marseilles or Rheims ... but unless we are in a really revolutionary situation where everyone feels totally involved, constantly in the streets, etc., which doesn't happen every day, then I don't know if that is sufficient to guarantee that liberties will be maintained ....

I certainly wouldn't like to find myself, as I have so often in my past political life, in general assemblies of direct democracy which vote by a show of hands on command and where, after a while, you see X, Y or Z prevented from speaking ....

H.W.: No, but your picture of workers democracy is very one-sided. Democracy is hard to practise in general, and the more democratic it is, the harder it is to practise it. The easiest regime to follow is enlightened despotism, but then you can never be sure of the enlightenment of the despot ....

Still, on this question, I think first that this counterposition between representative, delegated democracy and democracy at the base is a fraud. There is no such thing as democracy at the base: there is always some delegation. There is a system which aims to resolve a fundamental problem, that of re-rooting polities in the real communities...

N.P.: Henri, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I think there's some confusion here which we won't get out of through any kind of trick. Take *Critique communiste* No. 8-9. On the one hand you have Mandel, who clearly puts forward the soviet system, revised and improved.[5] Then you have the question posed by Jacques Julliard[6]: will we have to have a national-type assembly, based on universal suffrage and periodic elections, without compulsory mandates? Yes, says Julliard .... while for Mandel there is no such necessity. Julliard poses the question and I tend to agree with him on the

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4. Nobert Bobbio is Professor of Political Sciences at the University of Turin and editor of the Italian Socialist Party's theoretical journal, *Mondoperaio*. In September 1975 he published a special issue of the journal on 'Socialism and Democracy' which sparked off a huge and continuing debate on this subject.

5. This interview, 'Revolutionary Strategy in Europe', has also been published in *New Left Review* No. 100.

6. Jacques Julliard is a former national executive member of the social-democratic trade union federation, the CFDT, and joint author with its general secretary, Edmond Maire, of a book entitled *The CFDT Today*.

necessity for a national assembly, in the form of a parliament — radically transformed, of course.

That wasn't Lenin's view, because Lenin was faced with the Constituent Assembly, if I may remind you! So, once the Constituent Assembly had been elected, well, it was dissolved and never functioned. The drawback was that the majority was held by the Socialist-Revolutionaries, with all the risks that that entailed. So for Lenin it was a simple matter.

COORDINATE THE SOVIETS WITH PARLIAMENT?

H.W.: On this question, I think first of all that this democracy can be codified perfectly easily. There is no reason why it should correspond to the kind of manipulatory sessions that have occurred in the student movement. Clearly so-called direct democracy can be something very grotesque and anti-democratic — a sort of 'assemblyist' democracy. But it can also be something highly codified.

What seems important to me, and it's not a trick, is to root political activity and political life in communities which are real communities and not nominal aggregates of the geographical constituency type. These real communities must be work-communities (in the broadest sense: factories, schools, barracks ... if any are left) and also neighbourhood communities, in other words, real area units. But that can be codified perfectly easily: the secret ballot can and must be included. The right of recall must exist too, but on a rational basis: you can have immediate recall of factory delegates at any time in the case of problems of work; and you can have annual or biennial recall, as in Italy — because there are already some experiences there — of delegates at a higher level, who are dealing with different kinds of problems which obviously cannot be followed on a day-to-day basis by the worker at the base. All this can be regulated at least as well as bourgeois-democratic procedure.

The problem is not to say whether we are for or against representative democracy: in modern societies, all democracy is representative. It's a question of knowing whether the form of representation means giving up power or the real delegation of it with the possibility of control. I would say that the forms of democracy which carry on bourgeois traditions are actually equivalent to giving up power.

What it boils down to then is handing over power to specialists for a long period and taking no further interest in between two elections. Therefore to struggle for democratisation is to try to struggle against this system, which rests on a structure. And the most effective way to struggle against this structure is precisely to root political activity in the real communities. This is what we have to develop. To involve people in political life, they have to feel that they have control over the decisions which affect them: to have control over these decisions, they must form a community, discuss together, be able to carry some weight, etc.

If it is the atomised individual who comes face to face with the political machinery — in other words, the individual as conceived by the bourgeoisie — then they withdraw into the sphere of private life; and every seven years they demonstrate their dissatisfaction or their satisfaction. That is the problem as we see it. That is why we want to change the political system in order to base democracy on real communities — at work or in an area — with duly codified forms of representation which prevent abuses, etc. We think that such a structural alteration would mark a qualitative progress towards political democracy, because it would give people a real chance to run their own affairs. But a precondition for this is that it must be one of a whole series of other measures, or else it will be deprived of all content. There must be a significant reduction of working hours, for instance. It is obviously very difficult for people to devote time to management, factory problems, and questions of the economy and society if they have to work more than thirty hours a week.

You say: parliament must change, etc. But it is necessary to explain in what sense it must change. What must be done away with is the system whereby an MP is elected for five years from a vast geographical constituency, thus establishing the conditions for the greatest possible autonomy of the MPs from their electors. In effect, that means another institutional system.

N.P.: When we talk about coordinating forms of representative democracy with forms of direct democracy, that obviously means that we don't want to continue with the existing system but advance beyond it, that we want to overcome the complete divide between a caste of professional politicians and the rest of the population.

This advance and coordination implies, at least for a long period, the existence of national assemblies as centres of power. For ultimately, if all the power emanates from work-communities and their representatives, then the risk of a corporatist degeneration is obvious. The extension of democracy, the proliferation of decision-taking bodies, poses in fact the problem of centralisation, of leadership. And then you have two alternatives. One is that the revolutionary party — or the coalition of left parties dominated by it — does the job. But we all agree that this party does not exist. The only party which could assume this role today is the Communist Party, and we all know what that would mean ...(to say nothing of the fact that to assign this role to the 'party' is manifestly to open the way to the single party, and even an 'ideal' party which becomes a single party can only end up as Stalinist). The other alternative is a parliament elected by secret, universal suffrage. That is the only alternative I can see. Without the party, the central council of soviets cannot play this role. It has not played it anywhere. If things worked out to some extent in Russia, in China etc., that's because 'the' communist party centralised things, and we know what the ultimate consequences were.

Furthermore, one day we will have to come to terms with the following fact: the complexity of the present economic tasks of the state, a complexity which will not diminish but increase under socialism.

What I'm afraid of is that behind your 'rooting of power in the work-communities' there lurks in reality the restoration of the power of the experts; in other words, that you would escape the dictatorship of the leadership of the single party only to fall captive to the discreet charm of technocratic despotism. Don't you think it's strange that all the technocrats of the Socialist Party swear by self-management! It means for them at most that there are a few discussions, after which the experts take charge of the economic tasks of the state!

And then you have the concrete situation in France today. What you and I are talking about is the ideal model of democracy. We have completely forgotten that we are faced with a concrete situation in France: that of the Common Programme and the likely victory of the Union of the Left.

Faced with that, we can of course conclude that nothing can be expected from the Common Programme, that the united left in power will be devoutly social-democratic to the point of pursuing a new authoritarianism which can only be thwarted by centralised counter-powers at the base, and therefore our only hope is that it takes up office as soon as possible so that the masses understand what reformism is and turn away from it.

My analysis is different: either there will be a tremendous mobilisation at the base, or there won't be one. In the latter case, that's it: we are destined to go through a new social-democratic experience. It'll be a bit like it was under Allende, though that experience had a much more shaky electoral foundation than the Common Programme will have. After all, Popular Unity won with only 30 per cent of the vote!

However, if there is a massive mobilisation, then things will start to happen. But then we will all find ourselves in a very specific situation. Everyone: both us and the left in power. I

don't say us against the left. For there will be two camps and we will be in the orbit of the left, whether we like it or not.

We will then be in a situation characterised by a crisis of the state, but not a revolutionary crisis. The left will be in power, with a programme much more radical than has ever been the case in Italy; committed to implementing it, which will really upset some of its components; already embarked on a process of democratisation of the state, faced with an enormous popular mobilisation giving rise to forms of direct democracy at the base ... but at the same time limiting itself to the project of the Common Programme.

So the real problem is to know how we can intervene in this process in order to deepen it. In this context, what does seem clearly impossible is the perspective of centralising a workers' counter-power, factory council by factory council, soldiers committee by soldiers committee. Furthermore, I must say that this would seem to me to be an extremely dangerous way to proceed. Such a course is the surest road to the total recapture of power by the bourgeoisie, which — as we mustn't forget — remains throughout this period an active (and how!) protagonist in this process.

So what else can we do? How can we force the left to proceed effectively with the democratisation of the state, to link up its institutional power with the new forms of direct democracy? That's the problem. And if one thing's certain, it's that we aren't going to resolve the problem with such hazy notions as the 'real work-communities', metaphysically endowed by their very nature with all the virtues that used to be attributed at one time to the 'Party'.

WHAT REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY FOR FRANCE?

H.W.: The situation which it seems to me would definitely lead to the failure of these mobilisations and their defeat is that which would result from the application of the present strategy of the Union of the Left: one where, as you say, the left takes office, and where the mass movement is strong enough to force it to implement the Common Programme. Because then it will attack the bourgeoisie's interests sufficiently to make it angry but not enough to put it out of action. And then we will be in the absolutely classical situation where the ruling class loses patience — both nationally and internationally — and where it still retains the key economic and political levers of control, and in particular the state apparatus; because although part of the state apparatus may break away in France, the bulk of it will on the contrary polarise to the right. The bourgeoisie will therefore have the reasons and the means to retaliate. The popular masses, on the other hand, will be relatively disarmed by decades of sermons on the peaceful road to socialism, the 'contradictory nature' of the bourgeois-democratic state, etc. We risk finding ourselves in the classical situation of being defeated without a fight.

That's our analysis. Like you, though, we say that if there is no mass movement — something which seems inconceivable to me in the medium term...

N.P.: And to me too...

H.W.: Right, then if there is one, I think that the problem will be posed in terms of organising around objectives — not of immediately destroying the bourgeois state, that would be senseless — but around economic, political and international objectives, what we call transitional objectives, and which are effectively written into the logic of the emergence of dual power...

N.P.: There! You see ...

H.W.: But hang on, let me tell you what I mean by that. It clearly means, at the economic level, struggling for the expropriation of big capital and establishing workers control of production at all levels, culminating in a workers plan to solve the economic crisis. This is the central axis, which aims not merely to defend the living standards and working conditions of the popular masses but also to oust the bourgeoisie from economic power, both in the factory and in the state, and to organise the working class to take control, to take power.

At the political level, we undoubtedly have to fight for the extension of democracy rather than shouting 'elections are for fools'. We have to fight for proportional representation, regional assemblies, a trade union for soldiers, etc., so as to expand political democracy as much as possible, because this is also the way in which the bourgeois state will be most weakened. At the international level (and I'm summarising here) we will have to counter the offensive of US imperialism and its allies by developing new relations with the Third World countries and, above all, by involving the popular masses of Southern Europe and beyond ... That's a necessary condition of success, and it is also possible because a new situation is developing in Europe.

This axis can develop the organisation of the masses at the base, in the factories and the neighbourhoods, supporting these objectives and fighting to realise them. And the logic of these objectives is centralisation.

The logic of workers control in the factory is workers control over the economic policy of the state. The workers who take control in a factory run up against the problems of the market, credit and business practice. And the logic of their action is coordination and centralisation at the level of the industry, the region, the nation. Thus you have the emergence of an alternative workers power against that of the bourgeois state. And the confrontation seems inevitable to me.

I have no doubt that this confrontation will draw support from the internal divisions of the bourgeois state. I even think that the more the mass movement is organised as a powerful pole of attraction outside the state, with its own alternative project, the deeper and more important these divisions will be. But that there will be a confrontation — between this mass movement, organising and centralising itself outside the state apparatus, backed up by its representatives and allies within this apparatus, and the bulk of the bourgeois state apparatus, organising and centralising the resistance of the ruling classes — seems to me inevitable. You can't finesse indefinitely in such a situation.

Otherwise you have to say, like Amendola and his friends in the Italian Communist Party, that the transition to socialism is not immediately on the cards. Amendola declares that the transition to socialism is not a relevant question today, for reasons of international policy and chiefly for reasons of national policy. He says: most Italians don't want socialism. We have to get that into our heads in order to understand what can be done. We have just had thirty years of unprecedented economic expansion; the Italian people are the freest in the world, they have achieved the greatest gains over the last ten years, and so on. At bottom, most people are attached to the system, and that is why they vote for the right-wing coalition led by the Christian Democrats. They complain, but they are not ultimately prepared to go further and make the sacrifices which would be required by a revolutionary conquest of power. Consequently all talk about the transition must end, we must stop playing little games which consist in pushing people a little further than they want to go, and struggle to democratise and improve Italian society.

Now that's a line which hangs together, it's coherent.

N.P.: Notice, however, that Ingrao doesn't say the same thing ....

H.W.: No, he doesn't. But the politics of the Italian CP are the politics of Amendola using the language of Ingrao. Berlinguer's job is to do the translation... Well, it's a coherent policy which considers that for a certain period we are in a historical stalemate. I don't agree, I am ready to argue against it, but I recognise that it is not contradictory within its own terms. What irritates me is, er...

N.P.: What irritates you is what I'm saying ....

H.W.: That's it! (Laughs) It's what CERES and the left of

the Italian CP say, because it is incoherent...

N.P.: No, I don't think so, and I'll give you a concrete example. I think the disaster of the Portuguese Revolution occurred precisely because there was a confrontation between the Group of Nine and Otelo de Carvalho, the spokesperson of the workers', neighbourhood and soldiers' commissions. If we are to suppose that there will be a state apparatus essentially mobilised on the right, and Carvalhist-type movements of the base lined up against it, then I say: forget about it, you've lost in advance. So you have to go back to Amendola's position. Amendola's position is certainly coherent, but it is reformist. Your position is very coherent, but totally unrealistic.

Because if you consider the essence of the state apparatus as it is in France, and then the forms of centralisation of popular power .... Well, it's obvious that it will be crushed before it's taken more than three jumps of a flea! You surely don't think that in the present situation they will let you centralise parallel powers to the state aiming to create a counter-power. Things would be settled before there were even the beginnings of a shadow of a suspicion of such an organisation.

So I make a contrary analysis. I think that in the present situation it is possible to undermine much more important fractions of the state apparatus; and I've given the example of Portugal. You can say that it is different. All right. But what interests me in this example is that, particularly in the army, there were much more important divisions than simply between the entire officer corps mobilised in the service of capital on one side and the soldiers committees mobilised alongside the workers movement on the other.

What happened in Portugal? If it was a disaster, that is because there was a break, a confrontation between the structures of popular power, the Carvalhist-type movements, and the Group of Nine. And Carvalho himself recognised that the form taken by the centralisation of these popular counter-powers was in many ways responsible for the disastrous rupture which took place between this movement and the group led by Melo Antunes.

RUPTURES IN THE STATE APPARATUS

H.W.: I really think that that was a very secondary reason for this rupture. The basic reason was that Melo Antunes and the 'military social democracy', as they were called there, were engaged in the process of stabilising Portuguese capitalism. He was even one of the spearheads of the operation, the principal military ally of Mario Soares and his international supporters.

The basic reason for the split in the Armed Forces Movement had nothing to do with the SUV movement ('Soldiers United Will Win'). The SUV appeared very late on in the day: after the Group of Nine, in fact, and in reality as a consequence of it. So there is a confusion of causes and effects in your example.

But that isn't the problem. I would like to see you develop your argument further. We don't seek difficulty for difficulty's sake, and the same applies to confrontation. If we were convinced that there could be a majority split in the French state apparatus in favour of the popular movement, then obviously we would be for playing that card for its full worth, even taking some risks in the course of it. But you know this state apparatus. By what miracle would it fall into the camp of the revolution? That's what I would like you to tell me concretely. What reasonable, even risky or daring, hypothesis can be made for a majority rupture in this state apparatus?

N.P.: I'll tell you. For example, let's look at the army, the police, the judiciary. Because I still base my perspective on the internal crisis of these apparatuses. Take the judiciary: a third of the magistrates are members of the magistrates' union ... that's very important. And there's a second element: the left in power, even in its own interests, will have to introduce important changes not only in the personnel but also in the structures of the state. After twenty years of Gaullism there is so much patronage, so much institutionalisation of the Gaullists or Independent Republicans in the state. Even on the simple basis of ensuring the dominance of its own political elite, the left government will be forced to make changes in the institutional forms as well as the people. In the judiciary, for instance, if they don't want to end up very quickly in an Allende-type situation, they will be forced — I repeat, even from the viewpoint of continuing the elite system — to break the power of the Council of Magistrates, to change the normal rotation of judges, etc.

And then that, linked to the mass movements at the base, will allow you to weigh up the possibilities of a split.

Take Admiral Sanguinetti. Just two years ago he was the head of the French Navy, and an important current of officers share his views. Read his statement in *Politique-Hebdo:* he's in favour of delegates from the ranks, a defence policy independent of the US, etc. ... In other words, we're talking about an army which is prepared to respect a certain legality, which would not be plotting against the regime from the start.

My hypothesis may be wrong, but I think yours is totally unrealistic ...

H.W.: Every revolutionary hypothesis seems unrealistic.

N.P.: More or less, and everything depends precisely on that nuance.

H.W.: There was nothing more unrealistic than the Bolshevik hypothesis in 1917, the Maoist hypothesis in 1949, the Castroist hypothesis in 1956! To be realistic is always to be on the side of maintaining the status quo ...

N.P.: Don't forget that being unrealistic has frequently led also to disasters and bloody defeats. But you can also make a more realistic hypothesis of the revolutionary possibilities, presented in a different way ...

To deal also with the problem of the police. After what has happened in the police in the last few years, we can justifiably suppose that a left government will have no alternative but to take significant measures to democratise the police ...

Then, given that you have the crisis of the state, of which there are indications; given that the left is obliged — again in its own elementary interests — to initiate changes; given that it can proceed to do that because of its powers under the Constitution and the strength it derives from the mass movements at the base; given all that, I think this is the only plausible solution.

It's all the more so because we cannot ignore the actual forces on the ground. In reality, your hypothesis is not based solely on an evaluation of the objective possibilities of a revolutionary crisis in France. *It is also based, implicitly, on the possibility of the extremely rapid and powerful development of a revolutionary party of the Leninist type, to the left of the French Communist Party. Your whole hypothesis is based on that.* It's there in black and white in Mandel's interview on revolutionary strategy in Europe.

But I don't think that this is at all likely. First, because of what I said before about the new reality of the state, the economy, the international context, etc. And then, because of the weight of the political forces of the traditional left, particularly in a country like France.

Your hypothesis implies, for instance, that the LCR[7] will grow from 7,000 militants to ten or twenty times that number in a few months! That's never happened anywhere! Not in Chile, not ...

H.W.: In Portugal, and still more in Spain, we've seen something not so far off it.

N.P.: You're joking! Compared with the Communist Party, especially in Spain, these forces are insignificant. But it's not just that. If you analyse the Communist Party as a simple social-democratic party, organisationally as well as politically, then you can certainly reckon on a rapid and massive

7. The LCR (Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire — Revolutionary Communist League) is the French section of the Fourth International.

recomposition of the workers movement, as you say. But the fact is that they are not social-democratic parties.

While there remains a mass Communist Party, a rapid and structured growth of the independent revolutionary left is out of the question. We saw that with the MIR in Chile.

So, if we stick with your hypothesis, perhaps it is coherent and realistic, but it's fifty or sixty years ahead of its time. We must not blind ourselves to the failure of the far left (from this point of view) over the last few years in Europe.

H.W.: You are right to underline that our perspective is based on the hypothesis of a profound recomposition of the workers movement. But it seems to me that you look too statically at the movement as it exists. It's a movement which has already evolved a great deal in the space of five or ten years from the point of view of its restructuring. I agree with you that the CPs are not social-democratic parties, but they have entered a phase of crises and flux, of internal differentiations, of which only the first signs are apparent today.

Of course, if you start from a static hypothesis, by saying: that is the relation of forces for a whole historical period, then obviously you can only be right. Because the reformists are largely hegemonic, and the revolutionaries — apart from their lack of preparedness, their disunity, etc. — do not have a sufficient implantation in any case. Then only a reformist perspective has any credibility. The only hope, in these conditions, would be to act to push the reformists as far left as possible, and eventually to straighten them out. This is the perspective adopted by CERES. But as I see it, this depends on a fixed conception of the workers movement, something which is largely belied by its recent evolution in Italy as well as France, not to mention Portugal and Spain.

Take the results of the far left in the French municipal elections in March 1977: they were a surprise, but a surprise which should make us think. What does it mean when the far left wins eight or ten per cent of the vote in the most working class areas of certain cities? It is a vote of no confidence in the policies of the main left parties. The relation of forces inside the workers movement isn't just a question of parties and organisations. You must also take into account the attitudes of tens of thousands of worker militants, politically unorganised, or organised in the CP or SP, who have developed a sound distrust of the existing leaderships through a series of experiences since 1968. In the event of a victory of the Union of the Left, and the worsening of the crisis of the system, these militants and many others might well refuse to take a 'pause', and seek a socialist solution instead.

If the far left manages to link up with these militants, to present them with a serious anti-capitalist alternative, then there could be a drastic change in the relation of forces with the reformists.

This is all the more true since, I repeat, the entry of the CP and the SP into government, the implementation of the Common Programme, will bring their internal contradictions to boiling point. There is in fact no chance of achieving the transition to socialism in France if a large number of CP and SP militants are not polarised to the left and don't opt at the crucial moment for a 'leap forward' rather than a 'retreat'.

But for them to do that, you must precisely have a credible anti-capitalist alternative to the left of the CP. Otherwise, critical as they are, they will follow their leadership. It is this alternative pole, based in the mass movement, equipped with a strategy and programme for a socialist solution, working to recompose the whole workers movement, that we are fighting to build.

In reality, we're probably getting to the bottom of our

disagreement. Perhaps it's not so much to do with the need to break up the bourgeois state apparatus — including from within, through the internal rupture of its apparatuses — as with the means of achieving it. Some people think that to reach this goal it is necessary to avoid doing anything which could cement the social cohesion of the state and polarise it to the right. For them it is moderation and 'responsibility' which is most likely to expose the internal contradictions. In reality, what they have in mind here is the top level of the state apparatus.

For us, on the contrary, it is the development of a vast anti-capitalist movement, its independent organisation and activity — outside the state apparatuses, though also within them — which creates the conditions for a rupture.

N.P.: For me, a significant movement of the far left, critical and autonomous, is essential to influence the very course of the experience of the Union of the Left. But not for the same reasons as you. Not because the far left could constitute a real alternative political and organisational pole, as you say; on the one hand, it's incapable of it, and on the other hand, because I no longer think that there is a real anti-capitalist alternative outside or alongside the road of the Common Programme. There is *currently no other way possible*. So the question is not of acting in such a way that the left abandons its reformist road and opts for the good and pure revolutionary road, a road for which the far left would act as a signpost. The question is to extend and deepen the road of the Common Programme and to prevent social-democratic stagnation, which is not necessarily written into it like original sin.

The far left can thus play a role not as a pole of attraction leading somewhere else but as a stimulus, a force opening up the perspectives of the Common Programme and raising its horizons. Then, because the far left is not limited to its organisational aspect (which ultimately is the least important), it can take up a series of new problems that the united and institutional left is quite incapable of dealing with. There is a final reason why the far left is absolutely essential: as an active reminder at all times of the need for direct democracy at the base — in short, as a safeguard, let us say, against any eventual temptation by the left government to seek an authoritarian solution. In other words, a role more of criticising than of outflanking.

May 1977

The Soviet Economy Today

TOWARDS CAPITALISM OR SOCIALISM?

ERNEST MANDEL

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Those who are acquainted with the history of the Trotskyist movement cannot but note with a certain amusement that the debates on the class nature of the Soviet Union which developed within the Trotskyist movement thirty or forty years ago are now resounding in the public arena. That which a short time ago was considered an esoteric debate is now the object of 'big power' politics. Maoists and Khrushchevist leaders hurl at one another the accusation of having 'restored capitalism', or even having established a 'reactionary bloody dictatorship'.

Amusement should not give way to surprise. The destiny of the USSR, from its beginnings, has been intimately tied to that of the world socialist revolution. The ebb of the world socialist revolution caused a historically unforeseen detour for Soviet society, a detour which the Trotskyist movement alone has grasped theoretically in all of its internal dialectic. Otherwise there have only been disillusioned discussions of the depth of the defeat of the revolution, or even on the more than problematical future of all socialist revolution. But the new leaps forward, the new rise of the international revolution create not only better material, social, and political possibilities for the regeneration of the USSR, they also nourish a renaissance of Marxism, which makes the question of the 'class nature of the USSR' once again the subject of impassioned debate.

Since there were no living Marxist tendencies other than Trotskyism during the years 1933-1953, the present-day discussion inevitably feeds off the products and by-products of the discussion among Trotskyists.

Two methodological questions

Soviet society (and *a fortiori* the societies of Eastern Europe more or less patterned after it) is not a definitive social formation having stable contours, occupying a precise historical place in the social evolution of humanity. It is neither a capitalist nor a socialist society but a society of transition from capitalism to socialism combining features of the socialist future with those of the capitalist past and surroundings. Without doubt, the essential achievement of Leon Trotsky's analysis of the nature of the USSR is that of having formulated the fundamental question in this way. For a long time the exclusive possession of the Trotskyist movement, the concept 'transitional society' is beginning little by little to break into the broader currents of the left vanguard.[1]

Two methodological questions merit clarification, however, before approaching Soviet society in this manner.

Marx insisted that it would have proved impossible to deduce the fundamental nature of the capitalist mode of production, or even of the nature of commodities themselves, or of productive labour before capitalism arrived at maturity.[2] Before the industrial revolution, in the era of manufacturing, commercial, and banking capital, it was impossible to formulate the laws of capitalist development, which explains notably why minds as profound as those of the Physiocrats could blithely declare that only *agricultural* labour was productive.

The same thing is true for the transitional society from capitalism to socialism. Attempting to deduce the general laws of evolution of this society from the Soviet example alone, not to mention the Chinese example — that is, from specific cases clearly lacking maturity resulting from a

1. For example, Paul M. Sweezy, Charles Bettelheim, some of the oppositionist Czechoslovak communists such as Karel Bartosek (see *Les Temps Modernes*, December 1969), etc.

2. Karl Marx, 'Introduction a la critique de l'economie politique', in *Contribution a la critique de l'economie politique* (Paris: Editions Sociales, pp. 149-175).

special combination of historical circumstances — is as impossible as attempting to deduce the laws of capitalist development from English society after 1649 or 1688.

Of course, Marxism as a method of social analysis (and therefore of social prediction) is infinitely superior to the empirical origins of bourgeois political economic theory. But no more than any other science can it detach itself completely from the conditioning of the social infrastructure on whose base it develops. We will not know, nor fully understand, the laws of development which govern the dynamic of the transitional society from capitalism to socialism (the society of the epoch of the dictatorship of the proletariat), and in particular the laws that direct the movement towards a fully developed socialist society, until such a society has at last made its appearance under conditions which are ripe for its development. This would be in a highly industrialised country where the proletariat is a large majority, manages the economy and the state itself, and is definitively secure from all external threats. From now till then we can try to develop a *foreknowledge* of these laws by successive approximation. We will not have a confirmed definitive view of them. This means that the final word on the theory of the USSR will not be said until the question has been resolved in practice. That is to say, when the question no longer exists. This conclusion would not have displeased the author of the Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach.

But, even if there does not exist in the USSR a system of production which has already fully revealed its own laws of historical development, incontestably there does exist a definite socio-economic formation which has its own internal logic and which follows a socio-economic dynamic that must be understood and explained. The difference between a particular socio-economic formation and a mode of production is that the former, being the product of a concrete historical process, combines the features characteristic of different modes of production and is not comprehensible except in the light of *combined and uneven* development. But without understanding which mode of production predominates within it one cannot correctly analyse a socio-economic formation, let alone predict its future dynamic.

The distinction between a socio-economic formation and a mode of production has escaped Bettelheim. In one of his numerous approaches to the problem of the nature of the USSR, he reproaches us for putting theory 'outside of history'. He does not understand that it is he who puts history outside of theory.[3] I have never maintained that Marxism was *only* capable of analysing 'capitalism in a pure and abstract form'. I have simply said that an analysis of capitalism as it really is, as it has concretely developed, cannot be made scientifically without taking the analysis of 'pure capitalism' as its *point of departure*. If not, it will fall into the trap of vulgar empiricism. But clearly one cannot confine the analysis to 'pure capitalism' without falling into abstract dogmatism which eliminates history — i.e. combined and uneven development.

A perfect illustration of this methodological error is offered by Bettelheim's theory according to which the survival of commodity production in the USSR and other bureaucratised workers states proves the inability of the state to appropriate 'all' goods for itself. Bettelheim does not even ask himself whether, in the course of socialist construction, the appropriation of 'all' goods by the state corresponds to the 'logic' or necessity of planning, to the needs of the relations of production born of the overthrow of capitalism, or to the needs of the 'associated producers'. He reasons from conditions specific to the USSR, China and Cuba — the conditions of *scarcity* and 'primitive socialist accumulation'. But *what about* a transitional society in France or the US? *What about* the progressive satisfaction of basic needs? *What about* the expansion of centralised accounting made possible thanks to *computers*? Isn't it more logical to assume that the richer society becomes, the less the state will need to 'appropriate' every nail, every apple, or even every transistor? Isn't the construction of socialism essentially the withering away of commodity production? Will this withering away not be characterised precisely by a *decreasing* necessity for centralised appropriation of all products of labour?

It is perfectly true that at the base of all problems of the transitional society lies, after all, the insufficient development of the forces of production.[4] This development is already in conflict — on a world scale — with the capitalist relations of production. It has not reached the heights of truly socialist relations of production — at least in countries where capitalism has been overturned. But to reduce this problem to one of 'appropriation' of products is to evince a singularly near-sighted view of the ensemble of socio-economic and political contradictions of a transitional society in a country like the USSR which was underdeveloped at the start. Above all it leaves aside that which must be the point of departure for all Marxist analyses of a definite socio-economic formation: the relations of production.

To what extent do market relations survive in the USSR?

The resurgence of discussions on the question of the USSR has given new life to a debate which was thought to have been resolved, i.e. the debate on the reasons for the survival of market relations in the USSR. Gilles Martinet accuses me of dogmatism because I claim that the means of production in the USSR essentially, that is as long as they do not circulate outside the state sector, are not commodities. His conclusion is sublimely naïve: 'The misfortune is that this production and this [commodity] circulation exist. *E pur si muove.*'[5] ('And yet it moves'. Words attributed to Galileo, who was forced to recant his support of the Copernican theory that the earth moves around the sun rather than forming the stationary central point of the universe as Church doctrine held — Eds.) As if commodity production were a natural phenomenon that one 'records' like an eclipse of the sun. As if it were not a question of one of the most complex social phenomena that only a thorough analysis of social relations — the relations of production — can clarify.

In the famous Section IV of Chapter I of *Capital* (Vol. I), devoted to the fetishism of the commodity, Marx defines in the most clear and succinct manner the roots of commodity production and the nature of the the commodity. Let two citations suffice:

'As a general rule, articles of utility [use-values] become commodities only because they are products of the labour of private individuals who carry on their work independently of each other. The sum total of the labour of all these private individuals forms the aggregate labour of society. Since the producers do not come into contact with each other until they exchange their products, the specific social character of each producer's labour does not show itself except in the act of exchange. In other words, the labour of the individual asserts itself as part of the labour of society, only by means of the relations which the act of exchange establishes directly between the products, and indirectly, through them, between producers.'

And, in contrast to this characteristic situation for a society dominated by private labour and private property, Marx

3. Charles Bettelheim, *La Transition vers l'Economie socialiste* (Paris: Editions Francois Maspero, 1968, p.157). We will return to a more detailed consideration of Bettelheim's ideological evolution, which took a new turn in his most recent work, *Calcul economique et formes de propriete*.

4. But only *in the last analysis*. There are a whole series of mediating factors between this 'ultimate cause' and the concrete historical process which can impose direction on the process. These include: the role of revolutionary leadership, the level of consciousness of the proletariat, its level of activity and self-organisation. It would be vulgar mechanistic thinking to see all these factors as automatic reflections, pure and simple, of the level of development of the productive forces at each stage in each country.

5. Gilles Martinet, *La conquete des pouvoirs* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1968, p.92).

describes a few pages later the situation characteristic of a society based on social ownership of the means of production:

'Let us now picture to ourselves, by way of change, a community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common [*gemeinschaftlich* — E.M.], in which the labour-power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labour-power of the community... The total product of our community is a social product. One portion serves as fresh means of production and remains social. But another portion is consumed by the members as means of subsistence. A distribution of this portion amongst them is consequently necessary. The mode of this distribution will vary with the productive organisation of the community, and the degree of historical development attained by the producers. We will assume, but merely for the sake of a parallel with the production of commodities, that the share of each individual producer in the means of subsistence is determined by their labour-time. Labour-time would, in that case, play a double part. Its apportionment in accordance with a definite social plan maintains the proper proportion between the different kinds of work to be done and the various wants of the community. On the other hand, it also serves as a measure of the portion of the common labour borne by each individual and of his share in the part of the total product destined for individual consumption. The social relations of the individual producers, with regard both to their labour and to its products, are in this case perfectly simple and intelligible, and that with regard not only to production but also to distribution.'[6]

Let us remember in passing that Marx foresaw an *evolution* of the mode of distribution under socialism. The famous mechanical conception according to which there would be a 'law of correspondence' between the level of development of the productive forces, mode of production, and mode of distribution everywhere and always in each socio-economic formation and even in a transitional society is perhaps a product of Stalinism, but certainly not attributable to Marx. We will return to this later.

What Marx specifies in these two passages is that commodity production does not arise from the lack of 'centrally appropriating everything', nor from the absence of 'exact accounting'. It arises only from the *individual character of labour*. When the labour of the producers is not immediately recognised as social labour, and is recognised as such only to the extent that the products of their labour are sold on the market (and in the proportion to which their 'individual value' is realised), then and only then is there commodity production.

It is sufficient to travel around the USSR or any of the 'people's democracies' to see whether the means of production are in fact the products of 'the labour of private individuals' related to one another only through the medium of the market. Obviously, this is not at all the case. One cannot go and buy a factory in a real estate office and pick up the keys, nor can one even buy machine tools in a store. *E pur si muove*. Capital goods which 'circulate within the state sector' are not the product of 'the labour of individuals', are not private property, do not change owners, they are not sold on the market and therefore are not commodities, regardless of statements of 'economists' from these countries who are charged with *defending certain social interests* rather than scientifically analysing reality.

In the *Grundrisse*,[7] moreover, Marx had already developed the same idea by opposing in advance the argument of (state) accounting. A strict book-keeping will be necessary at the heart of communal production. This accounting will be even more strict than it is today. But it must not be confused with the commodity nature of production, which means that the social character of labour is only recognised *post festum*, 'after the blow', after the sale of products, while in a society based on collective property, labour is recognised as social labour when it is performed.

What is the meaning of the formulation 'directly social character' or 'non-directly social character' of labour? Simply put: in a commodity-based economy the activity of enterprises *is determined by their success on the market*. If the commodities are not sold or are sold below their value (of average profit), return on investments cannot be realised, the constant capital cannot completely renew itself, part of the workforce will be laid off. The work they have performed 'has not been recognised by the society as social labour'. In a planned economy, factories which produce capital goods maintain their activity independently of their 'financial success'. Investments — at least the essential ones — are determined by the plan, not by the success of the 'company' on the market.

With regard to the question of the social nature of labour, a commodity-based economy and a planned economy are strictly opposed, one being a system of private property and the other a system of collective property. In the first case the law of value rules; that is, the social value or lack of value of the labour of individuals can be established only after the fact. In the second case it is the conscious allocation of material resources among diverse productive activities that rules. All labour performed under these conditions has an immediate social character *even if it is supplied on a level of productivity below the social average*.[8]

Let us now bring to bear the converse proof. What is the case with consumer goods, implements, and capital goods sold on the *kolkhozes* and craft cooperatives? In this case there is certainly buying and selling, since a change of ownership takes place. When a state store sells a suit to a worker, the garment, once collective property, becomes private property. The transaction is not just a book-keeping transfer. And behind the juridical character of the transaction, there still remains the socio-economic consumption fund discovered by Marx. In distinction to the distribution of capital goods among the state enterprises, *distribution of consumer goods among individuals is not regulated by the plan*. Thus, work performed in the enterprises producing consumer goods is not automatically social labour recognised as such. A portion of these products may prove unsaleable. *Their use-value cannot be realised if their exchange-value is not realised*.[9]

The Soviet worker cannot use a suit if it is too expensive, or seems to be too expensive. And, if the garment remains unsold, the labour expended for its production is pure loss. In contrast, nothing prevents the state from making use of the machinery even if its prime cost was extremely excessive. In the first case the use value is wasted. In the second it is realised. That is a difference which no mountain of more or less scholastic arguments can dispose of either in theory or in practice.

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6. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1 (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1912, pp. 83-84 and pp. 90-91).

7. Karl Marx, *Fondements de la critique de l'economie politique* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, pp. 110-111).

8. There is a justification for this phenomenon which is both economic and socio-political. From the socio-political point of view, since the means of production are collective property allocated to the production units by the collective whole, and since the productivity of labour depends far more on this capital endowment than on the individual or collective effort of a group of workers, it would be illogical and unjust to first allocate below-average tools of production to a group of workers and then penalise them for the consequences. From an economic point of view, from the moment that *inputs* and *outputs* are *aggregated*, the 'loss' occasioned by the use of tools of production that are below average in efficiency is clearly less than the loss that would result from not using them at all. This is true because all other more efficient productive resources are already being used.

9. Pierre Naville misses the point when he says: 'Private appropriation of products, like consumption, has lost all individual character [in the USSR].' (*Le Salaire Socialiste* [Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1970. p.70].) It is one thing to say that the *general quantum* of the producers' consumption is socially predetermined — it would be also in the socialist society described by Marx. It is quite another thing to claim that the *specific distribution* of the general quantum among a whole number of different goods and services ceases to be 'individual'. This is not the case in the USSR. It is precisely in the area of specific distribution that 'private appropriation of goods' manifests its individual character. No constraint forces the workers to spend their wages 'according to the plan'.

The conflict between the 'law of value' and the 'logic of the plan'

Ever since Evgenii Preobrazhensky published his *New Economics*, Marxists have generally admitted that the whole transitional period between socialism and capitalism will be marked by a conflict between two fundamentally different economic dynamics, that determined by the law of value, and that determined by the social relations of a planned economy. The first dynamic tends to distribute and redistribute economic resources in accordance with the dialectic of commodity production — i.e. liquidity of demand, the search for excess profits, and competition. The second tends to distribute and redistribute economic resources *independently* of the market in accordance with the priorities consciously established by those who plan the economy.

Between the two there is an infinity of possible combinations. In the economy of monopoly capitalism, planning techniques are utilised to 'correct' fluctuations in the market that would prove too catastrophic. In a planned economy the mechanisms of the market can and should be used for the more rapid realisation of the needs of the consumers, and for a better adaptation of resources to meet these needs. But all these combinations do not prevent conflict *between two socio-economic dynamics which are in the long run irreconcilable*. The field of decisive battle is clearly that of large-scale investment. The logic of the market economy leads investment in a direction *opposed* to the logic of planning. The economic movement itself embraces two different economic forms — cyclical fluctuations in the first case; uninterrupted development (although not always necessarily at the same rate) in the second.

We see here how specious is the argumentation that makes everything depend on 'complete appropriation'. If real collective ownership of the means of production exists, the planned character of strategic investments is assured. Knowing whether the 'state' appropriates 99, 95, or only 90 per cent of the means of production that are produced is important for assessing the solidity of the regime, the weight of the centrifugal forces in the economy, and crises on the horizon; but it does not modify the *planned* nature of large-scale investments by the market.

We can also see how specious is the distinction many authors seek to introduce between 'ownership as an economic category' and 'ownership as a juridical category'. Clearly there is a whole mass of sophisms in the equation 'nationalised ownership equals peoples' ownership'. These were completely exposed by Trotsky.[10] But what distinguishes 'nationalised ownership of the means of production' from private ownership in the *economic* and not just juridical sense of the term is the general orientation of investments. In the first case they are determined on a national level. In the second case they are decided on the company level. The rest proceeds from this.

Certain critics have accused me of 'reifying' planning by talking of the 'logic of the plan'.[11] Doesn't this term signify attributing human qualities to *things*, and obscuring the human relations which are behind the movements of things? On the contrary, the truth is that these critics do not understand that planning embodies definite relations between people, that is, *definite relations of production*.

There are too many critics who reduce the relations of production to simple relations between 'those who work and those who command their labour', in other words to *internal* relations within enterprises. This is *one* aspect of the relations of production in pre-capitalist society, as in capitalist society. It is equally characteristic of the post-capitalist society of transition between capitalism and socialism. But there is another aspect of the relations of production that escapes them. In all societies based on an advanced division of labour, where objectively there is socialisation of human labour, where no 'unity of consumption' can exist in isolation from other unities, there are but two ways in which the social nature of labour can manifest itself: *a posteriori* through the medium of the market or *a priori* through the medium of the plan. Far from being a 'thing', or a 'relationship between things', planning is, then, *a definite ensemble of the human relations of production which assures the directly social character of labour furnished by the producers*.

Sweezy has adopted an analogous position with respect to the historically irreconcilable conflict between the plan and the market. He has drawn the correct conclusion that the transitional society may move back toward capitalism as well as forward toward socialism. Trotsky had drawn exactly the same conclusion thirty-five years ago.[12] But Sweezy has improperly concluded that everything depends on 'willful' decisions *within the bureaucracy*. The 'technocratic' wing of the bureaucracy would be the vehicle of capitalist restoration, while the old authoritarian bureaucrats like Brezhnev and Kosygin would try to halt the process.[13] Such a conclusion completely eliminates the 'depoliticised' proletariat from the process, a trait that characterises Sweezy's ideas concerning the imperialist countries as well (see the conclusion of *Monopoly Capitalism*). This underestimates the *key role* which the relations of production play in every socio-economic formation, including that of the USSR.

The 'passage from imperative planning to indicative planning' — to take up Bettelheim's thesis as presented by Martinet — means precisely the disintegration of the relations of production which, as we have just seen, underlie planning. It means concretely the reintroduction of lay-offs in industry, the reappearance of massive unemployment, the reorientation of the economy toward priority development of those branches that respond best to 'liquid demand' (both internal and external) rather than to those that assure economic and social growth, optimal or desirable for the long term. It is at least premature and overly pessimistic to suppose that all these radical transformations would be possible in the USSR without bringing an abrupt halt to the 'depoliticisation' of the Soviet proletariat. What occurred in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and above all what has occurred in Yugoslavia since the 'economic reform', demonstrates in any case that my 'optimistic' hypothesis is well-founded: *It will be impossible to dissolve the planned relations of production born of the October Revolution in the USSR without first crushing the furious resistance of the Soviet proletariat*. The restoration of capitalism can no more come about 'gradually' than its abolition. It too would come about through a sudden, violent, and radical overturn of the relations of production.

To show how wrong those critics are who attempt to regard the nationalised ownership of the means of production as 'purely formal', I have attempted to demonstrate the logic of the economic 'reforms' now pending in the USSR in a polemic against the English supporters of the theory of 'state capitalism':

'Contrary to what superficial Maoist and semi-Maoist critiques in the West assumed... the reforms do not mean that capitalism is being reintroduced in the Soviet Union. They do not mean that profit becomes the motive force of economic growth, i.e. starts to direct investment "spontaneously" from branches where profit is lower towards branches where it is higher. No real competition in the capitalist sense of the word (i.e., competition for selling on an anarchic market) occurs. Means of production have not become commodities. Rather, what has occurred is the use of a pseudo-market to optimise resource utilisation quite along the lines which the later Oscar Lange postulated already in the Thirties.

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10. Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), Chapter 9, 'Social Relations in the Soviet Union.'

11. For example, Chris Harman, *International Socialism*, December 1969-January 1970, p. 38 (reprinted in *Readings in State Capitalism*, IMG, 2nd edn. 1977).

12. Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*.

13. *Monthly Review*, Vol. 20, No. 10, March 1969, pp. 15-17.

Promises and fulfilment

		1975		1980	
		Original plan	Fulfilment	Brezhnev's targets	Khrushchev's targets
Coal	m tons	695	701	800	1,190
Electric power	billion kWh	1,065	1,038	1,360	2,850
Oil	m tons	496	491	630	700
Gas	billion cubic metres	320	289	418	700
Steel	m tons	146	141	165	250
Cement	m tons	125	122	145	234
Grain	m tons	195*	180*	218*	302
Meat	m tons	14.3*	14.1*	15.3*	31
Milk	m tons	92.3*	87.5*	95*	175
Eggs	billion units	46.7*	57.7	59.5	113

**Annual average 1971–75. Actual production for 1975 was: grain, 140m tons; meat, 15.2m tons and milk, 90.8m tons.*

Sources: up to 1970 Soviet economic year books (Narodnoye Khozyaistov SSSR). 1975 original plan: Pravda, November 25, 1971. 1975 fulfilment: Pravda, February 1, 1976. 1980 new targets: draft directives; Pravda, December 14, 1975. 1980 old targets: Programme of the Communists, presented by Khrushchev to 22nd party congress on October 18, 1961.

'But do these reforms mean a smooth and rational use of the planned economy's resources, in order to achieve the maximum growth of output? By no means. They only substitute one set of contradictions for another. Income of the bureaucracy is now increasingly tied to the factory's "success' on the "market". But this "success" does not depend only, or even essentially, upon a rational utilisation of given resources available to the factory. It also, and above all, depends upon the technology of the factory (i.e., new investment taking place) and upon a given relationship between the "prices" the factory has to pay for what it "buys", the amount of labour it has to use and its wages bill on the one hand, and the "prices" the same factory receives for what it "sells" on the other hand. As long as these prices, the mass and form of investment, the amount of labour and wages, are determined by the plan, the bureaucrat will quickly feel cheated by the new arrangements. He will say: "You want us to perform 'optimally', but you fix things from the start, that such a performance is, in fact, impossible".

'So the economic reforms *must* unleash a constant tug-of-war of a new type between the plan and the bureaucrats administering the units of output. The old tug-of-war was essentially about allocations (the bureaucrats systematically overestimated the factories' needs of workers and material, while they under-evaluated the productive capacity of the same factories). The new tug-of-war will be about the power of decision. The factory managers will demand the right to hire and fire workers as they like. They will demand the right to "negotiate" wages (regionally, locally, or even by branch or unit) according to "market conditions". They will demand the right to retain the major part of the "profit" of "their" factory to be invested there. They will ask for a rising (and specific) share in total investment to be realised autonomously by themselves, inside "their" factory. They will above all demand that they should fix the prices of the products they "sell" as they see fit to do (i.e. as the "market" dictates). And the "planners" will of course stridently resent all these demands which run counter to the elementary principles and needs of central planning.

'Let us assume for a moment that the factory managers were to be successful in their demands, and gradually conquer these supplementary rights (this is the actual formula used today in the Soviet discussion: "Increasing rights for the factory managers"). What would be the outcome of that process? Surely, we would have to drop the inverted commas around the words "market", "buy" and "sell". Surely, each factory making its own investment, trying to establish its own prices, negotiating its own wages, would have become an independent firm, and the market would then "arbitrate" between these firms and give birth to prices which would no more be determined by plan, but would result from the inter-play of market forces. Surely, in that case, capital would flow from less to more profitable branches. It would no more be the plan but this flow of capital which would then determine the lines of the national economy. Surely, more and more firms would then find it profitable to export part of their goods instead of selling them on the inner market, and would establish direct

connections with foreign firms which would increasingly also sell on the Russian market, as well as export capital to that country. Surely, the growth of individual investment would inevitably lead to over-investment which in a market economy could only be corrected through periodic crises of overproduction and unemployment....

'In that case, of course, the Soviet economy would have become a capitalist economy, for everybody to see and acknowledge the fact, even the dogmatic and myopic Mandel. But would it be a "state capitalist" economy? The whole process started because the income of the factory manager being tied to the factory's "profit", the manager had received a strong economic incentive to determine this "profit" by his own decision (i.e., to establish control over most of the decisions on which that profit depends). But once he actually succeeds in doing this he has an even stronger incentive to remain tied to "his" factory for the rest of his life, and to transmit these "ties" to his children and family. Imagine how cheated he would feel if, after having succeeded in making a factory a "profitable" concern, he would then be transferred to another factory which makes a losss (with the loss of income which this would entail for him!). So the process could only end by the reintroduction of private property. And when, even before this ultimate outcome, the ties with foreign firms become stronger, villas bought on foreign coasts and mountains, bank-accounts established in foreign banks and used for some "profitable investment" (e.g. the purchase of foreign stocks and bonds) would become additional stepping stones in this process."[14]

In reflecting on this projection — *all* the points of departure of the conflicts described exist in present-day Soviet society, and are reflected in the economic literature of the USSR. The mystifying character of Bettelheim's thesis of the 'dual nature of factory ownership', and on the dual nature of appropriation, is verified once again. It veils the irreconcilable struggle between two economic dynamics, which, to be sure, reflect in the last analysis two diametrically opposed class interests. Just as capitalism and private ownership of the means of production are not reconcilable with an economy in which the strategic decisions governing economic development are independent of the decisions of companies and of the criteria of individual profitablity, in the same way socialist planning and collective ownership of the means of production are irreconcilable with an economy in which the central decisions governing development are determined by the market and the industrial profitability of enterprises.

Why is there a partial survival of market relations?

Some critics have accused me of 'surreptitiously' reintroducing market relations through the medium of 'a thing, i.e. scarcity' into the USSR after having peremptorily declared them in contradiction with the relations of production born of the October Revolution. Let us examine more closely why consumer goods have remained commodities in the USSR and the 'people's democracies'.

We have seen that, according to Marx, there will be a *modification* of the mode of distribution after the establishment of a new mode of production based on collective ownership of the means of production. In his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx distinguishes two successive modes of distribution: (a) distribution according to amount of work done, through the means of labour 'vouchers' in the phase termed socialism; (b) distribution according to need in the phase termed communism.

Moreover, Marx categorically states that distribution according to labour implies the *survival of bourgeois right* and corresponds to *bourgeois norms of distribution*.

Today we can affirm, on the basis of experience and the theoretical conclusions which follow from it, that before the phase termed 'socialism' there will be another preliminary phase termed 'the transitional period between capitalism and socialism', during which not only bourgeois norms of distribution will remain in force, but the distribution of the major part of consumer goods will take place through the medium of a universal equivalent (i.e. money).

The explanation has been given many times. Let us go through it once more. Let us suppose that the day following the overthrow of capitalism, money is completely suppressed, but relative scarcity of consumer goods remains. The producers are given allotments from the consumption fund in the form of 'labour vouchers'. Non-productive members of society (children, retired people, the sick, etc.) receive the same sort of vouchers. Now, *the circulation of these vouchers is inevitable*. If they are expressed in terms of tangible quantities of goods and services (like the coupons of a ration book) the difference in need for different units of consumption will bring about this circulation. Non-smokers will exchange their 'cigarette vouchers' for 'chocolate vouchers'. If they are expressed in common measures, the desire to differentiate certain items of consumption from others with respect to time will bring about the same circulation. (For example, the measures may be one-tenth of an hour, or one-hundredth of an hour of labour. At the present average productivity of labour this is effectively the kind of 'unit' that would have to be used and not the work-hour, because many consumer goods are presently produced in far less than an hour of work.)

Moreover, a voucher on which is printed 'one-tenth of an hour of labour' and which is freely exchangeable for a variety of different goods and services *is already a universal equivalent*.

Now it happens that the necessity of strict accounting of labour performed is imposed on this transitional society. But we are dealing with a society in which the growth of productivity is particularly rapid. One hour of labour today will produce only 90 per cent of what an hour of labour will produce next year, and it already produces 110 per cent of what an hour of labour produced last year. In one sector, productivity is more advanced than in another; in one enterprise it is on a higher level than in another.

In distinction to what occurs under capitalism (and in every market economy), under the regime of collective ownership of the means of production, workers will not be rewarded on the basis of the greater or lesser productivity of 'their' enterprise. But precisely for this same reason society has to *aggregate its labour expenditures in an extremely precise manner*, and compare in a manner no less precise the expenditures of units of production to the 'average' by national and international sectors. This aggregate accounting must be carried out with the aid of a common standard, for example a labour-hour at the average annual level of productivity between different sectors of industry. But it is clear that this 'labour-hour' is far from identical with the standard hour of labour (ten times one-tenth of an hour of labour) used for the assignment of vouchers to be drawn on the consumption fund. The former *includes* the differences in productivity, the latter *excludes* them. The former changes from year to year, the latter should remain relatively stable.

A third difficulty arises when it is a question of making long-term projections (of the plans for development). By calculating in 'labour-hours' from a base year, clearly we will end up after a certain number of years with new 'hours' which are twice as productive. But a *stable standard over time* is indispensable for long-term planning. The use of a stable currency as a standard of measure is consequently preferable from all points of view: for facilitaing calculations and economic accounting, for facilitating the comparison between the share of revenues going to consumers and the aggregate productive effort of society, for facilitating the standardisation of consumption by the producers over time, and if we wish, for making as clear as

14. Ernest Mandel, *The Inconsistencies of State Capitalism* (London: International Marxist Group, 1969, pp. 14-15 — reprinted in *Readings in State Capitalism*, IMG, 2nd edn. 1977).

possible all socio-economic relations.

The *monetary form* of distribution of consumer goods thus flows from the relative scarcity of these goods in the transitional period between capitalism and socialism. It has a *social content* to the extent that private ownership of consumer goods survives, with the concomitant at least partially non-social (unplanned) character of the labour that goes into their production. The form, as well as the content, begin to disappear in proportion as fundamental needs are satisfied, as distribution 'according to need' can be extended to a number of essential goods and services. It is a long process which will extend throughout the transitional period and will be prolonged even under socialism. In contrast, in the production of capital goods and in economic calculation and accounting, a monetary form is a technical simplification, which does *not* embody the same social content. As long as collective ownership and social planning of large-scale investment decisions are in effect, monetary forms will not imply market phenomena.

Thus it is a question of two different types of relations of production — even if they are closely entwined within the Soviet economy. The dynamic of this interaction can now be specified. The survival of bourgeois norms of distribution reacts upon the planned relations of production to the extent that they create — under a regime of scarcity! — a strong incentive for linking incomes not only to the input of labour but also to the relative productivity of labour, since this has been calculated and is therefore known. This linkage may be individual or collective. It can disintegrate or accentuate the solidarity of workers within an enterprise, a locality, or an industrial sector. It will always *accentuate the inequality among the associated producers, and will therefore be a subjective force for disunity among them.*

The *calculation* of the net cost of each product and each enterprise, indispensable for serious planning of growth in the transitional epoch, just the same creates a strong incentive for calulating the *individual profitability of enterprises*, which then becomes a force for objective dissociation of the plan (the relations of planned production described above).

These two processes correspond to intrinsic, objective contradictions in the transitional phase which no amount of subterfuge will overcome. Correct policies in a revolutionary direction, large-scale participation of the masses in political life and economic decision-making, a high level of consciousness of the proletariat, all *facilitate* a solution to these contradictions. A progressive bureaucratisation of the mechanisms of management, the appearance of a privileged bureaucratic stratum monopolising the management of the economy and the state, the elimination of the masses from all conscious participation in this leadership all aggravate the contradictions.

But the roots of these contradictions are objective and historical. They correspond to a level of development of the productive forces which does not yet allow the new relations of production to consolidate themselves spontaneously in a climate of expanding social wealth and creative enthusiasm of the producers. Marx is careful in the two texts which we have mentioned always to enumerate two conditions, one objective, the other subjective. The subjective condition flows only *in the last analysis* from the objective condition and can at the same time temporarily be in advance of the latter. The disappearance of market relations in the area of consumer goods corresponds to the possibility of seeing both precise calculation of labour expenditures and precise 'rewarding' of producers according to their individual input of labour *progressively die out at the same time*. The more the productive forces expand, the more 'distribution according to need' will extend itself to successive sectors of goods and services, the more 'private ownership' of a series of 'consumer goods' will die out in the face of abundance, the more 'increasing income' will cease to be the motivation for the economic activity of the individual — and the more the new relations of production will be definitively consolidated without any interference from 'market relations', 'monetary calculations', or 'tendencies toward private enrichment'.

The role of the Soviet bureaucracy

But let us not forget that the USSR is not a classic 'transitional society'. It is a *bureaucratically degenerated* society after having been bureaucratically deformed from the time of the civil war as Lenin specified in 1921. It is impossible to describe the socio-economic dynamic of this specific socio-economic formation without mentioning the particular role the bureaucracy has played for at least forty-five years.

Authors like Bettelheim and Sweezy, confronted with their own political past and with the disagreeable necessity of defining the role of Stalin and Stalinism in the process which creates the threat of capitalist restoration in the USSR, generally avoid this difficulty by not mentioning it. The Maoists enumerate 'proofs' of capitalist restoration which were *all* present in the USSR in Stalin's time to an equal or even greater degree than today without drawing the most minor theoretical conclusions from it.[15] Bettelheim extricates himself with a sudden manoeuvre: the process is 'political', it has nothing in common with a more or less extended takeover by commodity production. 'The new bourgeoisie' took power at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU.[16] If we ask *through what changes in the relations of production* did this restoration of capitalism, this counter-revolution, manifest itself, we are told that 'politics must be put in command'. Doubtlessly the 'transitional society' (which these authors used to call 'socialism'!) and 'capitalism' functioned *for decades* with the same economic mechanisms, with the same laws of development, and with the same fundamental contradictions, without our metaphysicians being in the least bit surprised by it...

The bureaucracy is not a new ruling class. It does not play a fundamental or indispensable historic role in the process of production. It does not have an historical mission to assure 'accelerated economic growth'. The proletariat could fulfill the same function perfectly well under certain often specified socio-political conditions. The supporters of the theory of 'state capitalism', as much as they hate the bureaucracy and never speak of it without foam on their lips, *actually assign an infinitely more important and progressive role to it* than Trotsky and the Fourth International would acknowledge. For us the bureaucracy is only the product of an accident of the historical process just as there were numerous accidents in the historical process characterising the epoch of transition between feudalism and capitalism (e.g. the exercise of political power in Great Britain by the *Whig nobility* after the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 and by the semi-feudal caste of *Prussian Junkers* during the era of the triumphant, imperialist German bourgeoisie between 1870 and 1914, to mention just two instances). For the theorisers of 'state capitalism', the bureaucracy becomes a necessary instrument of 'primitive accumulation' in Russia.

Because it is not a new class but simply a parasitic outgrowth of the proletariat, *the bureaucracy has no political, social, or economic means at its disposal to make the defence of its own special material interests coincide with the development of the mode of production from which it draws its privileges.* In capitalist society, competition based on private ownership assures such a concurrence: each capitalist attending to his own interests assures the development of the

15. 'Leninism or Social-Imperialism', *Peking Review*, No. 17, 24 April 1970.

16. *Monthly Review*, Vol. 20, No. 10, March 1969, pp. 5-7. This is clearly a 'convenient' way of brushing aside the fact that despite the 'Cultural Revolution', *all* the fundamental contradictions that characterised the Russia of Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev exist in present-day China. This is true not only because the low level of development of the productive forces do not permit the disappearance of market relations, but also because there is hardly any management of the economy by the 'associated producers'.

system with the maximum 'rationality' conceivable within the framework of the anarchy of the laws of the market. In a transitional society between capitalism and socialism, managed by the associated producers, the same concurrence comes about: the producers' interest in reducing their labour effort, and at the same time increasing their consumption, creates the mechanism through which planned growth can be realised; not automatically in optimum proportions, but just the same within limits that assure the continued development of social wealth.

There is nothing of this in the USSR nor in any society in which the bureaucracy has usurped the management of the economy and the state. The special interests of the bureaucracy are essentially the maintenance and extension of their own *privileges of consumption*. The monopoly of management is conceived only as an instrument for attaining this end. Nationalised property is only defended with this end in mind. To discover a fanaticism for 'production for production's sake' on the part of the Soviet bureaucrats, as comrades Kuron and Modzelewsky have done, is to misunderstand a fundamental trait of the conduct of the Soviet bureaucracy *from 1923 to today*: the bureaucracy has mounted an uninterrupted series of oppositions to the needs of economic planning, all of which tend to make growth fall below the level easily attainable under the concrete conditions of time and place, not to speak of optimal growth.

No social caste in history has ever administered the social surplus product in a disinterested fashion. If the Stalinist epoch is characterised by the elevation of the bureaucracy to a social caste, conquering monopoly control of the management of the state and the economy, then it follows that the *consumer interests of the bureaucracy act as the social motive force of economic growth*. And since the relations of production born of collective appropriation of the means of production (i.e., planning relations) demand an economic growth of a different sort, there is a constant conflict between the two. The many 'tensions', 'crises', and 'reforms' of the Soviet economy since the first Five-Year Plan (i.e., since the private sector was largely eliminated from the Soviet economy) can be attributed to this conflict of interest. The commodity 'form' taken by the fiscal accounting in enterprises and by the circulation of the means of production furthers this conflict through the effect of one of the interferences mentioned above.[17] This commodity form is opposed to its content just as, for example, the 'commodity form' and the fiscal accounting of the circulation of car bodies on the Ford assembly lines does not in fact transform this circulation into a circulation of commodities. When the 'value' of machinery is computed in roubles, the bureaucrats undergo a thousand temptations to profit from this 'value', that is, to steal from the state and to bring about 'primitive accumulation' at its expense. They often apply these diverted funds toward 'fulfilling the plan' (to the extent that their own incomes are functions of this 'fulfillment'). Here is where we find the kernel of truth in Bettelheim's thesis on the 'dual nature of the ownership of the means of production'.

To the extent that scarcity and a general desire for personal enrichment exist, *and in the absence of strict control exercised by the mass of workers over all managerial decisions, the bureaucratic managers can divert* a fraction of the capital-goods production from 'planned channels' and create for themselves 'parallel channels' (the black market or the 'grey market'). But this kernel of truth in Bettelheim's thesis serves only to refute the broader thesis even more neatly. It is clear that this diversion is not the *cause* but rather the *effect* of the survival of market phenomena. And it is no less clear that, if the capital goods which pass into 'parallel channels' are commodities, then those capital goods which do not do so have a different social nature, i.e. they are not commodities. Everything thus brings us back to the problem posed in the beginning: what decides the *essential* distribution of the means of production, the plan or the market? For the present-day USSR the answer is obvious.

Two mystifications

Pierre Naville, who has in the past accustomed us to expect more serious work from him (including Volume I of his *New Leviathan*), has attempted to elaborate his own conception of the nature of the USSR in an extremely turgid book, in which the best and the worst go hand in hand, and an enormous erudition is equalled only by contradictions which are no less impressive.

Volume II of *Salaire Socialiste* [*Socialist Wages*] corrects and very often contradicts the peremptory assertions of Volume I without the author attempting to resolve these contradictions.[18]

Holding a middle-of-the-road position between the Trotskyist and state capitalist theories, he calls the Soviet economy 'state socialist'. He holds that the Soviet economy is *part of a single world system ruled by the law of value and the accumulation of capital*. Thus he falls victim to two mystifications which the partisans of the state capitalist theory have repeated ad infinitum for nearly half a century, following Otto Bauer and the Mensheviks.

First let us consider the second aspect of the question. Naville claims to deduce the commodity character of all Soviet production from the wage character of labour. The whole problem is reduced to a syllogism: where there are wages there must be exploitation in this exchange, and hence 'capital' — the exploitation of animate labour by inanimate labour. In the USSR, wage labour is universal. Therefore there must be exploitation.[19] The only difference from capitalism which Naville allows is that the surplus value is appropriated collectively, not individually.

This syllogism is easy to break down. Naville himself mentions the fact (as did Trotsky before him and as I have done in *Marxist Economic Theory*) that workers belonging to a cooperative can sell products that belong to them — in this case their labour power — to the cooperative. Must this mean 'exploitation'? Not at all. If the difference between what this labour power produces and what the workers receive is the property of a democratic and egalitarian cooperative directed by all the producers, themselves included, it is not easy to see where the 'exploitation' fits in.

Wages as a monetary form of allocation from the consumption fund do not automatically mean 'exploitation' of labour power. To be sure, the USSR is not a democratically managed cooperative. The bureaucracy appropriates part of the social surplus product produced by the workers. But this in itself does not automatically transform this appropriation into *capitalist exploitation*, which is exploitation of a very specific type following specific laws of development.

'The pursuit of an increasing surplus value is due to the necessity, as unavoidable in state socialism as in capitalism, of overcoming the tendency of the rate of profit to fall due to a modification in the organic composition of capital to the advantage of fixed capital', writes Naville (p.132). What we

17. Naville argues oddly that one cannot deny that the means of production are commodities since all present-day Soviet economists speak of the universal validity of the law of value. (*Le Salaire Socialiste*, Vol. 1, p.25.) Using the same logic one could argue as well that we cannot claim that labour is exploited in the Western capitalist countries because all present-day Western economists support the marginalist theory which disputes the existence of this exploitation. Naville seems to forget that there is a dictatorship of the bureaucracy in the USSR that exercises the strictest censorship on all works that are allowed to be published. What do we know of the opinions of Soviet theoreticians who are not allowed to publish their writings?

18. Pierre Naville, *Le Salaire Socialiste*. (This two-volume study constitutes the second and third volumes of a larger work entitled *Le nouveau Leviathan*.)

19. This is not an exaggeration. Here is what Naville writes (*ibid.*, p.133): 'By definition [sic] where wages exist, whatever their form or level, there is surplus value (with respect to these wages), since wages presuppose an exchange and this exchange implies a fundamental inequality of the exchange between labour-power and product. Surplus value results from this inequality.'

have here is a mystifying tongue-in-cheek begging of the question. The unavoidable necessity of pursuing increasing surplus value results from the fact specified many times by Marx that capital is inconceivable except in the form of 'different capitals', that is, *as the result of competition*. The 'pursuit of increasing surplus value' is to be explained by competition and competition alone. The capitalist is not an 'accumulation fanatic' for no good reason. He becomes so under the lash of competition and that reason alone.

If you eliminate the *economic necessity* for capital accumulation (which has as its aim the overcoming of competitors by reducing the production costs, through the purchase of more technologically advanced fixed capital), you cannot see any reason why the capitalist would always be searching for an *increasing* surplus value. Nor can it be seen why the 'organic composition of capital' continually rises. A 'capitalism without competition' would be a stagnant capitalism.[20]

Now, in the USSR there is no competition since there is state ownership of the means of production. There is no 'necessity' to 'pursue an increasing surplus value'. Even the Soviet economists have developed schemas demonstrating (as I did before them) that continued growth at a high rate is perfectly possible while holding the percentage of consumer goods in total production steady or even increasing it. In the 1,000 pages of Naville's book there is not a single sentence which adduces proof to the contrary, that is, proof of the 'necessity' of pursuing 'increased surplus value' in the USSR.

But, say the supporters of the theory of state capitalism, there is indeed competition between the USSR and the Western capitalist countries. The necessity of increasing accumulation of *capital* and behaviour similar to that of a capitalist economy flows from this competition. Naville parallels this argument without entirely embracing it. Once again we are dealing with a gross mystification.

Every non-capitalist socio-economic formation has been forced to defend itself against the pressure of capitalist industry as well as capitalist armies. This was true for China and Japan from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries; it was true for the Russia of Lenin and Trotsky; it is true for that of Stalin and Brezhnev. But this necessity does not automatically produce the establishment or re-establishment of capitalism or of an 'exploitation' of wage workers equivalent to capitalism. Adaptation is not the only form of self-defence. In order to prove that Western capitalism *forces* the Soviet bureaucrats through competition to exploit their own workers, it would be necessary to show that *competition to sell commodities on the same market* is involved. For this is the sole process which introduces the 'iron necessity'. Clearly this is not the case in the USSR. This country trades hardly 1 per cent of its national product with the advanced capitalist countries, which have a higher average labour productivity than its own. To claim that it is in order to 'sell' this 1 per cent that the bureaucrats 'ferociously exploit' their workers, one must believe that it is the tail that wags the dog.

The existence of international capitalism imposes numerous constraints on a planned economy. It obstructs the flowering of a fully-developed socialist society. It makes the disappearance of market relations impossible. It imposes a rate of investment that introduces more rapid development than capitalism. All of this, which refutes the reactionary utopia of 'socialism in one country', is ABC for those who are familiar with Trotsky's teachings and accept the broad outlines of them. But from none of these consequences does it follow that the 'law of value' determines the economic evolution of the USSR. Even less does it follow that there is a single economic system which unites the entire world, as Naville claims on page 9 of his book. One does not distinguish oneself for scientific objectivity by citing Preobrazhensky and Trotsky as authorities without mentioning that both of them expressly denied this 'unification' and justly affirmed that even the possibility of generalised industrialisation in the USSR followed precisely from the fact that the USSR could exempt itself in part (not entirely, but in part) from the effects of the law of value and above all from its regulatory role.[21]

The laws of development of the Soviet economy

Let us summarise. Soviet society is a specific socio-economic formation which combines general features of a transitional society between capitalism and socialism with particular features that make it appear as an example of a transitional society stricken by immaturity: low starting point for the productive forces, capitalist encirclement imposing a thousand military and economic constraints, a weak specific gravity of the proletariat in the society from the time of its birth, the insufficient level of technical education and culture of this same proletariat, etc. The laws of development in this socio-economic formation include, then, in part, the laws of all 'transitional societies', combining them with the specific laws of development flowing from the phenomenon of bureaucratic degeneration and the phenomena of capitalist survivals.

Insofar as we can identify these laws today on the basis of the historical experience (which is far from having said its last word on the subject), we can extend as follows the analysis made by Trotsky in *The Revolution Betrayed* with respect to the Soviet economy:

1. The contradiction between the socialised and planned mode of production and the survival of bourgeois norms of distribution is the principal contradiction of the Soviet economy. It puts the whole transitional epoch under the sign of battle between the logic of planning and the 'law of value' as the principal regulator of the economy. The operation of the 'law of value' cannot be overcome by decree, but it can become atrophied by the growth of the productive forces, the consolidation of planning, the beginning of the disappearance of market relations, and the international extension of the revolution.

2. Under the bureaucratic management of the state and the economy this contradiction is combined with the contradiction between the logic of the plan (proportional and regular economic growth) and the private consumer interests (appropriation of material privileges) of the managerial bureaucracy as principal social motive force for the realisation of the plan.

3. These two contradictions are related to an essential contradiction in the field of production relations: between planning on the one hand, which as an affirmation of the directly social character of labour contains a fundamentally egalitarian dynamic, and the maintenance of conditions of hierarchical subordination within the labour process in the enterprises on the other, which contains a dynamic leading toward growing inequality.

4. This contradiction has a tendency to grow to the degree that the organisation of the economy on the basis of

20. One might respond: but doesn't the organic composition of capital increase because of the efforts of the capitalists to reduce wages by replacing 'animate labour' by 'inanimate labour'? We would reply that in the absence of competition, nothing *forces* the capitalists to reduce wages, especially in a period of economic *stagnation*, when wages will already be very low as a result of the massive unemployment inevitable under these conditions.

21. This is not the only twist that Naville practises on scientific objectivity. Thus on pages 124-25 he takes me to task because I demonstrated with an algebraic example that the maximum rate of accumulation never yields the highest increase in social product and is therefore never the optimal rate, contrary to Naville's view that in the USSR the attempt to achieve a 'maximum rate of accumulation' would be a 'law' of the regime (p.132). Instead of attempting to refute my argument — based on the effect of the level of consumption on the productivity of labour (on the 'efficiency' of investments) — Naville accuses me of 'obscuring' the fact that growth of productivity would mean a growth in productivity of *surplus-value*. Yet immediately following the passage cited by Naville, I devoted whole pages to *rejecting* the very view he attributes to me. I have indicated that a socialised and planned economy should see the growth of the productivity of labour first as an increase in the *total product*, then as an increase in use-values produced. (*Marxist Economic Theory* [New York, Monthly Review Press, 1969], Vol. II, pp. 828-31.) What role does surplus-value play in all this?

profitability of individual enterprises and the tying of incomes (of bureaucrats and even workers) to profitability undermines the directly social character of labour which flows from the planned relations. These measures contain the leaven for dissolution of planned relations through the reappearance of autonomy of decision-making in matters of price, investment, and orientation of production.

5. The growth of the Soviet economy assures the long-term survival of the non-capitalist mode of production only to the extent that it reduces the gap between the productivity of labour in the USSR and in the imperialist countries through a higher rate of growth. It cannot therefore free itself entirely from the constraints imposed by capitalist encirclement (not to mention the military constraints), but it can lessen their effect and keep the international capitalist market from imposing through the operation of the law of value an orientation on the economic development of the USSR which would make this development subordinate to the interests of the monopolists who dominate the world market.

6. Historically there can be but two diametrically opposed outcomes to this five-fold conflict: either a definitive consolidation of planned relations, which requires a beginning of the disappearance of market relations and material incentives, or else a breakthrough by the 'law of value' which will require the disappearance of planning as a regulatory force in economic growth and the restoration of private ownership — in the economic rather than the directly juridical sense of the term.

7. The first outcome requires a political revolution to eliminate the dictatorship of the bureaucracy and establish democratically centralised management, i.e., economic and state planning by the workers, the 'associated producers'. This outcome is furthered by the international extension of the revolution and by the growth of the productive forces already under way.

8. The second outcome will require a social counter-revolution of which a section of the bureaucracy may be the bearer. It could not triumph without crushing the resistance of the Soviet proletariat and could not link up with international capitalism except in an ebb-phase of the international revolution.

9. In the last analysis, this evolution will not be decided by the struggle between economic forces or mechanisms nor by the mechanical reflections of this or that level of development of the productive forces. It will be decided by a struggle of living social forces on a world scale. In this sense, and in the entire context cited above, the 'subjective factor' will in fact remain the decisive factor in deciding the destiny of the Soviet Union."

22. One of the most extraordinary reproaches directed against Trotsky and the Trotskyist movement is that of Jorge Semprun in his preface to *Crisis del Movimento comunista* by Fernando Claudin (Paris: Edicione Ruedo Iberico, 1970, pp.x-xi). According to Semprun, Trotsky's method is limited to 'a subjective and voluntaristic idealism'. The whole question is one of leadership. It would have been sufficient to replace Stalin and his group. Then the same parties in the same international would have brought about the triumph of the world revolution. Is this ignorance, ill-will, or a combination of both? It seems that Semprun has never heard of Trotsky's social explanation of the degeneration of the Soviet state and the International, namely the coming to power of a privileged social stratum in the USSR and the transformation of the Communist International into an instrument for defending its privileges. He has never heard of the call put out by Trotsky in 1933 for the creation of new parties and a new international. Coming from someone who 'discovered' the necessity of breaking with Stalinism some twenty-five or thirty years later, this 'polemic' is truly astonishing.

Imperialism And Raw Materials

DICK ROBERTS

As the global struggle of imperialism to control sources of raw materials — above all energy sources — steps up in tempo, it becomes increasingly a central question of world politics. Since 1973, the imperialist press has been flooded with anti-Arab and anti-Iranian propaganda, the ultimate aim of which is to fight any attempt by semi-colonial peoples to assert their right to control their own natural resources. At the same time the imperialists harp on the theme of the need for 'self-sufficiency' of the industrial nations.

Parallel with this process, Marxist analysis of the latest phase of the relations of the imperialist states and the struggle for raw materials have developed. One of the most influential of these is that advanced by Ernest Mandel in Late Capitalism* **and other works. The aim of the present article is to outline some differences with the positions advanced by Mandel on imperialism and raw materials, and at the same time to present some of the latest data on this question.**

I

In approaching the position advanced by Mandel in *Late Capitalism*, and the practical significance of the debate, a useful starting point is an earlier article of his entitled 'Imperialism and National Bourgeoisie in Latin America' that was republished in *International* in Spring 1976 and which originally appeared in 1971. In this article Mandel focused attention on a debate that was raging in left circles at the time, and is no less important today, on the character of the new military regimes on that continent that use populist demagogy to pretend to an 'independent' nationalist coloration. Do they express revolutionary nationalist currents?

Mandel's answer stressed that these regimes have not broken ties to world imperialism. Quite the opposite. 'The essential social function of the military reformist regimes is... not to *mobilise* the masses in order to modify the relationship of forces with imperialism', Mandel wrote. 'On the contrary, it is to *contain* the mass movement, in association with imperialism and with its support, offering its reforms and a vaguely anti-imperialist socialising phraseology ' (p. 26).

This valid observation was associated with a view that has proven to be mistaken: Mandel also sought to establish that the imperialists do not oppose nationalisations of raw materials carried out by the neo-colonial regimes because the imperialists themselves have shifted investments into manufacturing industries and are less concerned with monopolising raw materials. For Mandel, 'The constant fall in prices of primary products relative to manufactured products has provoked a relative fall in the rate of profit in numerous primary sectors. The normal reaction of capital confronted with such a fall is to switch investment' (p. 23). The new regimes constitute 'a new alliance, an association of "imperialist capital — national industrial capital" with an interest in weakening the oligarchic sectors — not only the big landowners and exporters, but even traditional mining capital' (p. 25).

Consequently, foreign imperialism, no longer tied to investment in primary materials, is less concerned about the increasing nationalisation of its interests in this sector. 'It is necessary', Mandel wrote, 'to look to this modification of imperialist interests for an explanation of the strange complacency that American imperialism has so far shown in relation to the nationalisations by General Velasco, by General Ovando, and even those being prepared by Salvador Allende.' Mandel sought evidence for this hypothesis in the 'Rockefeller report', a white paper on US relations with Latin America released in 1969 by the then governor of New York, Nelson Rockefeller. 'The most intelligent representatives of imperialism have fully understood the political and social implications of this modification of their own interests in Latin America', Mandel said (p. 25).

Nevertheless subsequent events have not borne out Mandel's view. Far from being indifferent to the nationalisations of 'their' sources of raw materials, the imperialists since 1973 have spared nothing in attempting to counteract semi-colonial control of raw materials. Washington was not complacent about events in Peru, Bolivia, or Chile, as Mandel thought. Only this spring the Carter administration admitted Washington's long-suspected complicity in Allende's overthrow. This was in addition to the attempt to strangle the Allende regime through economic boycott. Peruvian General Velasco was ousted in 1975 by generals standing close to Washington.

The real attitude of US imperialism towards Latin American investment has been indicated by *Business Week* magazine. 'There is good news coming out of Latin America for the hundreds of US and other foreign companies with a stake in this vast region', a special report in the 9 August

*London: New Left Books, 1975.

1976 issue stated.[1]

'Multinational executives who have been watching one Latin American country after another pull back from the radicalism of the early 1970s today consider the region to be one of the world's major investment opportunities', said *Business Week*. 'It is all there — protein, minerals, forests, water', William D. Rogers, US Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, told the magazine. 'For perhaps the first time in modern history', *Business Week* added, 'virtually all of Latin America seems to be moving simultaneously in the same direction — to the right.'

Militarism is indeed on the rise in Latin America, but its roots are primarily political, not in a decline of imperialist interest in primary materials. Neither the US bourgeoisie as a whole nor any significant wing of it looks with favour on expropriations of raw materials holdings.

Late Capitalism clarifies the frame within which Mandel viewed the shift away from raw materials investment. Such investment, he writes, led in the 1930s and 1940s to a 'fundamental upheaval in technology, organisation of labour and relations of production' in the semi-colonies. For the imperialists, however, 'This meant the disappearance... of one of the most important motives for the traditional concentration of raw material production in the underdeveloped countries. It was now less of a risk to use expensive machinery in the metropolitan centres than overseas, and the declining share of wage-costs in the total value of raw material commodities made it less attractive than before to utilise the cheap labour-power of the colonies instead of its dearer counterpart in the metropolitan countries. The production of raw materials was therefore shifted on a massive scale to the metropolitan lands (synthetic rubber, synthetic fibres), and in cases where for physical reasons this was not immediately possible (e.g. the oil industry), there was growing pressure for the preparation of this shift in the long term' (pp. 62-3).

Taking into account the sudden upsurge of raw materials prices that occurred after the 1972 edition of *Late Capitalism* had been written, Mandel wrote in the revised chapter on 'Neo-Colonialism and Exchange' that, 'since 1972, a new rise in primary commodity prices has occurred — determined in part by the short-term speculative and inflationary boom of 1972-73, but also partly reflecting real relative scarcities, caused by the slower rate of capital investment in the primary producing sectors than in the manufacturing sector during the previous long-term period. This new upswing in prices will not be entirely cancelled by the 1974-75 world recession; it will enable the semi-colonial bourgeoisie to ameliorate their position as junior partners of imperialism, not only politically but financially and economically. The increasing dependence of US imperialism on a whole series of raw material imports makes the largest imperialist power more vulnerable to such changes than in the past (when the USA was itself the main world exporter of primary products) and could induce major new military conflicts' (p. 371).

The last sentence is certainly a more correct estimate of the real relations between US imperialism and semi-colonial, raw materials producing countries than Mandel's 1971 belief that American imperialism would take a complacent attitude towards Allende. Imperialism is tied *both* to manufacturing and to raw materials production in the semi-colonial world. The latter ties are so vital a part of the world organism of imperialism that disruption of them threatens to ignite military intervention.

Mandel's analysis can be stated in bare outline as including the following phases:

1. A cyclical relative rise of raw materials prices takes place (as occurred, for example, in the period leading up to the Korean war).

2. Imperialism responds with a massive technological penetration of the temporarily more profitable sectors. At the same time it produces new resources (synthetics, substitutes) in order to lessen the dependence on semi-colonial sources.

3. But the *lower value* of the new products pulls down the prices of the raw materials still being produced with the old technology. Furthermore there is now an abundance of resources because new production techniques have been introduced; prices are driven down all the more.

4. In time falling prices can only encourage a further retreat of investment from semi-colonial raw materials. But this will inevitably once again produce shortages, sudden price leaps, and the cycle will begin anew.

If we add that further advances in the technological revolution aimed at lessening imperialist dependence on particular raw materials must take place on an ever-expanding scale — even a colossal scale, as it is evidently the case in any attempt to shift petroleum technology away from OPEC nations and towards the metropolitan centres — then we come to perhaps the most important message of *Late Capitalism*: leaving aside all other features, the only solution for the periodic crises of world capitalism is the higher profits that must form the basis of any technological revolution. No matter what else the authorities might say (or think!) the world crisis of imperialism is in fact a crisis of profit rates. The objective character of any imperialist policy aimed at resolving this crisis is intensified exploitation of the world's working masses. We will come back to this point.

First it is necessary to take into account certain economic, historical and political developments not covered in Mandel's presentation.

* * * * *

Everywhere in the semi-colonial world, nationalisations are underway. Brazil's state-owned Companhia Vale do Rio Doce accounts for more than 10 per cent of Brazil's exports. It is the largest exporter of iron ore in the world and is also engaged in shipping, reforestation, marketing, engineering consulting, geological prospecting and mining. The Chilean dictatorship is compensating the US copper firms Anaconda and Kennecott for the nationalisations of their huge copper mines, but these properties have not been put up for sale in international markets. So far the Chilean government itself promises to operate and modernise Chilean copper production.

Next to outright nationalisation there are scores of companies jointly owned by the state and foreign corporations. And at the same time there is increasing imperialist investment in corporations that remain wholly owned by the imperialists themselves. Dow Chemical Co. plans ultimately to complete a $700 million petrochemical complex in Bahia, Brazil, which would become the largest privately owned petrochemical installation in Latin America.

In absolute terms the value of semi-colonial investment in manufacturing and imperialist investment in this semi-colonial sector is rising in comparison to investment in raw materials, as Mandel emphasises. The Brookings Institute study *Setting National Priorities: The Next Ten Years* concluded that semi-colonial exports of manufactured and processed products are rising faster than exports of agricultural raw materials, ores and minerals. According to Brookings: 'From 1959 to 1973 the developing countries increased the volume of their exports of manufactured goods by almost 13 per cent a year .... Manufactured goods, as a proportion of total non-oil exports, grew from 18 per cent in 1959 to 41 per cent in 1973. Even so, these exports in the boom year of 1973 were less than 8 per cent of total world exports of manufactured goods' (p. 181).

The figures reflect the agonisingly slow, yet real, development of manufacturing throughout the colonial world. Here we must emphasise, as Mandel does, that there is a growing disparity between the nations of the semi-colonial world. It would be a gross error to lose sight of

1. 'Reversal of Policy: Latin American Opens the Door to Foreign Investment Again', pp. 34-50.

unevenness in the discussion of imperialist exploitation of the semi-colonies. Among the semi-colonial nations stand countries like Brazil, Korea and Mexico, which have achieved comparatively rapid rates of expansion and are by far the most favoured arenas for foreign aid and investment. The total US investment in Brazil and Mexico in 1975 constituted 47 per cent of all US investment in Latin America for that year.[2]

But three-fifths of the people in the semi-colonial world live in the four countries located in South Asia: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, where growth rates are small at best and industrial development is stagnant. Another one-fifth of the population live in Africa south of the Sahara, where industrialisation has barely begun. Total US investment in Brazil is twice as large as it is in all of Africa (except imperialist South Africa) and twelve times as much as in India.

At the same time, the deposits of raw materials are striated across these unevenly developing nations in an equally uneven pattern. It is undoubtedly as risky to make blanket statements about raw materials as it is to make them about semi-colonial development as a whole.

With this proviso it must be argued that in presenting the ebbs and flows of imperialist investment in semi-colonial raw materials, Mandel tends to minimise the import of the main historical factor in the shifting patterns of imperialist investment, namely the mighty upsurge of the colonial revolution touched off by World War II. As the former colonial subjects increasingly seized control of their own resources monopoly profits were reduced — although not to the degree the imperialists claim. Precisely because of the ultimate threat to their profits the imperialists have fought nationalisation at every step, whether by open counter-revolution, economic and financial boycott, tariff obstacles, CIA subversion, intervention in semi-colonial wars, a combination of these, or otherwise. The techniques depend upon the political forces at play.[3]

There are three interrelated ways in which Mandel's approach to the question of raw materials in *Late Capitalism* ends up by not taking due account of this critical historical factor.

1. He pays too little attention to imperialism's growing global needs for raw materials. The paragraph already cited is the main reference in *Late Capitalism* to the dependence of imperialism on raw materials imports. Even here an earlier footnote seems to cut across the point. 'In 1971', Mandel states, '80 per cent of the raw materials imported by the USA, but only [!] 60 per cent of those imported by Japan, 50 per cent of those imported by Britain and Italy, and 42 per cent of those imported by Western Germany and Belgium, derived from the semi-colonies' (p.370, footnote 65).

These figures are hardly negligible. But, just as important, it is not only the United States' dependence on raw materials that is *growing*.[4] In fact, one of the central considerations in the 1971 'New Economic Policy' of the Nixon administration, signalling that as the world economic crisis deepened, Washington would more and more take the offensive in international trade and finance, was concern about sources of raw materials.

In the white paper circulated to corporations explaining why the administration took these steps, Nixon's top economic adviser, Peter G. Peterson, declared: 'Our imports have been rising not only in response to our consumer appetites, but because our industry buys an increasing share of its raw materials abroad. Our imports of crude oil, iron ore, and copper are growing and we import most or all of our natural rubber, tin, nickel, and chrome. Long-range projections indicate that by the year 2000 we will import 30 to 50 per cent of our mineral requirements, including oil. In doing so we will be competing with other industrialised nations, such as Japan, which are even more dependent on imported raw materials than we are.'[5]

Interestingly, the NEP white paper paid special attention to the latter fact by returning to it in the appendix: 'Japan is already the world's largest importer of iron ore, coking coal, copper ores, and crude oil and ranks second only behind the United States in imports of bauxite. It is also the world's most dynamic growth market for raw materials and will likely continue so at least through the mid-1970s... The Japanese are undertaking steps to assure adequate future supplies. Long-term contracts with foreign mineral producers — including many US firms — are being concluded. Japan is expanding its fleet of super-sized ore carriers and tankers to keep shipping costs down. Tokyo's long-term economic plans indicate that greatly increased investment in raw materials will be one important use of their rapidly growing international reserves' (p. 72).

In reading this white paper one is reminded of the secret documents exchanged between Tokyo and Washington in the years and months leading to World War II. In those papers control of raw materials sources in Asia and the Pacific was also a central theme. But then Japanese imperialism could ultimately plan to go to war with US imperialism to settle the matter. Both could dream that in the impending war it would gain control of the vast riches of mainland China — and not only China.

Today a third inter-imperialist war is highly unlikely. The military balance of power favours the United States against any combination of its imperialist rivals. In addition there is the sobering thought that the main beneficiary of another inter-imperialist war would be the workers states. On top of this the ownership of raw materials is increasingly passing into the hands of the semi-colonies themselves.

Inter-imperialist competition for raw materials consequently takes place in a far more circumscribed context than four decades ago. ***But this does not mean that the need for raw materials is any the less.*** On the contrary, the drive of capital accumulation has not ebbed among rival imperialist firms no matter how difficult it becomes to obtain the raw materials, machinery, plants and labour that capital accumulation requires. In fact the shrinking sources of cheap raw materials, principally under the impact of the spread of colonial revolution, is one of the ingredients of the deepening crisis of world imperialism. In considering the propaganda about depleted sources of raw materials, it is always necessary to ask: Don't you mean depleted, or even *potentially* depleted, monopoly profits?

Mandel maintains that the development of synthetics constitutes one of the main ways in which raw materials production has shifted away from the semi-colonies to the industrial nations 'on a massive scale'. However, no such massive shift has taken place. To be sure, it is possible that Mandel's analysis holds true for certain synthetics. The development of synthetic fibres lessened the need for the wool, silk and cotton (although raw cotton is itself a source of the cellulose used in synthetic fibre production) produced in semi-colonial countries. Furthermore, the synthetics are themselves cheaper, thus driving down world textile prices. This development gives rise to an important further

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2. *Survey of Current Business*, August 1976, p.49.

3. 'Today, political factors — such as the rising colonial revolution — are increasingly combined with fundamental economic characteristics to give capitalism its particular outlines and behaviour', E. Germain (Mandel) wrote in August 1955 in 'The Marxist Theory of Imperialism and its Critics' (*Two Essays on Imperialism*, published by the Young Socialist Alliance in July 1966).

4. For Marxists there is, of course, a sharp distinction between the physical use-value needs of the industrial powers and the profit-oriented exchange-value needs, a disctinction that is always blurred in bourgeois treatments of the subject. When, for example, one reads that the United States' 'needs' for aluminium are such and such a percentage of world production, it must be asked if we are here talking about actual US consumption of aluminium, or the production of the US-headquartered aluminium trust that (together with its Canadian partner) markets the aluminium it monopolises all over the capitalist world. Import figures don't always reveal the story because many raw materials are imported into the industrialised powers in order to re-export the refined product.

5. *A Foreign Economic Perspective* by Peter G. Peterson, Assistant to the President for International Economic Affairs (distributed in mimeograph), p.11.

dynamic. With lower textile prices the manufacturers in the metropolitan centres must increasingly flee from the old unionised, higher-wage textile-producing regions. This promotes the massive flight of textile-producing capital from the northern United States to the South — and to South Korea, Taiwan and other Asian sources of cheap labour power.

Furthermore the technology of synthetic rubber and plastics was developed in World War II, supporting an important theme of *Late Capitalism*: the role of war-primed technological advance in paving the way for the post-war capitalist upward curve of expansion. In the case of rubber it was not natural rubber production in the colonies that had suddenly become unprofitable. It was that the war closed off access to natural rubber. Costly synthetics had to be developed.

In any event, all of the important synthetics developed up to this time (synthetic fibres were developed prior to World War II), that is, synthetic rubber and all of the plastics, *are constructed out of hydrocarbons. This process had a contradictory consequence. It helped elevate petroleum to its pivotal role in world economics and politics.* The discovery of this substitute weakened the prices and dependence of imperialism on certain commodities produced in the semi-colonies only by increasing its dependence on others.

2. In *Marxist Economic Theory* (1962), Mandel wrote that, 'The high profits of colonial companies are often the combined result of colonial super-profits and monopoly super-profits (monopoly rent, cartel rent, etc.). This is in particular true of the super-profits made by the oil companies in the Middle East and in Latin America.'[6] This thought needs to be carried through in the present examination of imperialism and raw materials. For as long as the imperialists could maintain vertical monopolies, owning raw materials from their sources to final production, and controlling international markets as well, they were able to extract a significant super-profit from rents that is diminished once the properties are nationalised.

The example of Middle East oil is instructive. For this oil was developed almost entirely in the period Mandel describes in *Late Capitalism*, a period of tremendous technological penetration of the extractive industries of semi-colonial lands. The technology of oil extraction is capital intensive and the wages of oil workers in the Middle East have always been considerably higher than the norm for such impoverished countries.

The main source of the super-profits of the 'Seven Sisters' in Middle East oil was both the absolute and differential ground rent the oil cartel appropriated by owning oil resources so near to the surface, so abundant and so near to crucial world markets. It is true that the development of Saudi Arabian oil resources was originally followed by a period of relatively low world oil prices. But these were artificially depressed prices and they did not mean that the oil trust itself was losing profits. The obstacle to further penetration of this sector by the other imperialist interests was not, then, lower profits *but the strong monopoly position of the cartel* buttressed by a whole series of secret agreements on the highest levels of world imperialism and respected by the ruling semi-colonial bourgeoisies.

Mandel writes in *Late Capitalism* that, 'since the semi-colonial raw materials sector has lost the position of relative monopoly on the world market which it once enjoyed in the age of "classical" imperialism, the prices of the raw materials exported by the semi-colonies and produced by manufacturers or early industrial techniques have tended to fall towards the production price of raw materials produced with the most modern technology in the metropolitan countries ... On the world market the metropolitan countries now operate as monopolist sellers of machines and equipment goods, while the semi-colonies have lost their position as monopolistic sellers of raw materials. There is thus a steady transfer of value from one zone to the other via the deterioration of the terms of trade for the semi-colonies ' (pp. 370-1).

In the 1972 edition of *Late Capitalism* this paragraph was followed by another one, helping to fill out the concept, that was subsequently omitted in the 1975 English edition. In the earlier edition, Mandel continued: 'One could add that this redistribution of globally produced surplus value at the same time implies a redistribution within the imperialist firms, since many raw materials sources are the property of foreign monopolies. This is certainly true; but just precisely to the extent that it is true, the monopolies begin to transfer their capital from the "pure" raw materials sphere to the manufacturing sphere; raw materials sources are nationalised, that is, the burden of unequal exchange is shifted to the semi-colonial *nations* and not to their ruling classes."

But in a whole series of critical raw materials, not only oil, the origin of the low prices was the *monopolistic manipulation of prices*. Where the imperialists owned the raw materials from the ground to the final markets, selling raw materials to themselves below value allowed them to reap extraordinary profits when they sold the finished goods at monopoly prices on world markets. The profits in aluminium do not *appear* on the level of bauxite mining but at the level of aluminium production, copper profits *appeared* in the sales of refined copper, just as petroleum profits *appeared* in the marketing of refined oil and chemical end products. This was accompanied by Mandel's transfer of capital 'from the "pure" raw materials sphere to the production sphere'; to a certain extent it permitted this transfer. The low prices of raw materials prevented other competitors from entering into the production of these raw materials, avoided considerable local taxes for the foreign imperialist firms, and undermined the ability of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie itself to exploit the same resources.

When such strong monopoly positions have been broken, prices have *risen* towards the more costly production prices of raw materials in the metropolitan centres. This, as we have already seen, is why the imperialists themselves favour

6. Volume Two (London, Merlin Press, 1968), p. 456.

7. *Der Spaetkapitalismus: Versuch einer marxistischen Erklaerung* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973), pp. 341-342, instead of the paragraph beginning 'However, since 1972 ...', p.371 of *Late Capitalism*.

higher petroleum prices no matter what their propaganda seems to say. The imperialists' answer to nationalisation is to develop alternative sources with which to club the semi-colonies into line on the economic battlefront if either tanks or the CIA haven't already done it on the military front.

It is true, as Mandel emphasises, that the imperialist monopoly on capital goods continues to be the source of unequal exchange that confronts semi-colonial nations as an imposing barrier to development along capitalist lines. But this takes place in the context of a weakened world imperialism in which there will be sharp fluctuations of raw materials prices and in which the demagogic appeal of the semi-colonial bourgeoisies towards cartel formation, as the solution to poverty of the over-exploited, will carry more weight, at least when prices are up.

3. In *Late Capitalism* the analysis of post-war imperialism is confined too much to economic categories separated from the momentous political forces of the time. Mandel's laudable intention is to show that the movement of the profit rate remains today, as in Marx's analysis, the central determinant of the capitalist economy. A sharp increase in profit rates stemming from increased rates of exploitation, coupled with technological advance, forms the basis for capitalist expansion. The inevitable decline of the profit rate stemming from the rising organic composition of capital leads to crisis. Mandel's reaffirmation of these central Marxian concepts against all the 'neo-Marxists', whether of American or European vintage, who have all but abandoned Marxian value theory is a needed corrective and welcome contribution. Its most important goal, as I have already indicated, should be to focus attention on the fundamental production problems confronting world imperialism, especially how to continue production on the expanded scale of the two post-war decades when this very expansion has undermined the profit rates it was based on.

But the presentation of this process in *Late Capitalism* should be broadened to include political developments. Lenin and Trotsky emphasised that at least since 1914 the production problems of monopoly capitalism must be viewed *in the context of the inter-imperialist struggle for world markets.*[8] In this context two main dynamics characterise the epoch of 'late capitalism': the weakening of world imperialism in face of a rising colonial revolution (plus the victory of socialist revolutions on a third of the globe); and the meteoric rise followed by the relative decline of US imperialism in relation to its other imperialist rivals since World War II.

The international political context of the oil question shows how this has worked out. For example, Franklin Roosevelt exerted immense pressure on Winston Churchill into giving up British claims on the then just discovered oil of Saudi Arabia — in return for assurances that the United States would not 'horn in' on British interests in Iran.

Consequently World War II left Britain in full control of Iranian oil as well as with access to the oil of Iraq, and Washington in control of the potentially most valuable prize of the war, the oil of Saudi Arabia. These monopoly positions were critical factors in the world balance of power in the post-war period.

They gave US industry access to cheap energy and at the same time permitted the oil trust (United States, Britain, Netherlands) to squeeze other European and Japanese consumers.

Since 1973 the United States has been able to increase its strength vis-à-vis Europe and Japan although the oil cartel lost ownership of Middle East oil. This is because on one hand the oil trust continues to monopolise 'downstream' oil facilities, so that it can pass on higher Middle East oil costs to its consumers, and on the other hand because it can now sell domestic oil at profitably higher prices. And it is seeking higher prices still.

Mandel writes in *Late Capitalism*, in a passage already partially quoted: 'It was now less of a risk to use expensive machinery in the metropolitan centres than overseas ... The production of raw materials was therefore shifted on a massive scale to the metropolitan lands ... and in cases where this was not immediately possible (e.g. the oil industry), there was growing pressure for the preparation of this shift in the long term. This is, of course, already beginning to bear fruit (the massive outlay on oil-drilling in Western Europe and the North Sea and the search for European natural gas) and is accompanied by the continual refinement of production techniques' (p.63).

A different explanation is more plausible. So long as the British and Dutch sectors of the oil cartel had easy access to cheap Middle East, Libyan and Nigerian oil there was no compulsion to develop the immensely more costly resources of the North Sea. Not a decline in the profitability of foreign oil, but the break-up of the oil monopoly under the pressure of rising anti-imperialist sentiment in the semi-colonies and in the context of sharply increased inter-imperialist rivalry, explains the drilling rigs in the North Sea.

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The campaign of the oil trusts to drive up world prices is itself eloquent testimony to the anarchic character of declining world capitalism from its own standpoint. For, as Marx stressed, rising raw materials prices directly drive down profit rates: 'A rise in the price of raw materials can curtail or arrest the entire process of reproduction if the price realised by the sale of the commodities should not suffice to replace all the elements of these commodities. Or, it may make it impossible to continue the process on the scale required by its technical basis, so that only a part of the machinery will remain in operation, or all the machinery will work for only a fraction of the usual time.'[9]

Precisely this contradiction lies at the heart of the imperialist struggle to monopolise raw materials sources. In the post-war heyday the raw materials sector could enjoy super-profits from its global resources even though prices were relatively low, consequently also permitting other sectors to thrive on this access to cheap raw materials. Today this contradiction breaks into the open when one sector is pitted against the other in the scramble for profits, when the President of the United States propagandises for a shrunken scale of production, and notwithstanding the fact that in most cases the firms in both sectors have identical owners!

II

If we now turn from the precise examination of Mandel's position to a closer examination of the relation of imperialism and the fight for raw materials, a starting point on the most crucial sectors may be taken as the move of the new Democratic administration in Washington to undertake a massive legislative effort to drive energy prices significantly higher in the United States. The 'experts' who advise Jimmy

8. Lenin's famous 'conditional' definition of imperialism singled out five distinguishing features: (1) the decisive role of monopolies; (2) the interpenetration of banking and industrial capital creating finance capital and financial oligarchies; (3) capital exports; (4) the formation of international capitalist monopolies; (5) the 'territorial division of the whole world among the greatest capitalist powers' (*Imperialism*, New York: International Publishers, 1939, p.89). The imperialist struggle to control raw materials exhibits all of these features: it is dominated by monopolies that have formed international cartels, dividing up the capitalist world among themselves (1, 4 and 5); capital exports frequently play a big role (3); and raw materials monopolies are central in the strongest sectors of finance capital (e.g. the US Rockefeller sector based on petroleum and international banking).

Lenin declared in *Imperialism* (1916): 'The principal feature of modern capitalism is the domination of monopolist combines of the big capitalists. These monopolies are most firmly established when *all* the sources of raw materials are controlled by the one group. And we have seen with what zeal the international capitalist combines exert every effort to make it impossible for their rivals to compete with them; for example, by buying up mineral lands, oil fields, etc. Colonial possession alone gives complete guarantee of success to the monopolies against all the risks of the struggle with competitors, including the risk that the latter will defend themselves by means of a law establishing a state monopoly' (p.82).

9. *Capital*, Volume III (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), p.106.

Carter view higher domestic energy prices as a weapon against OPEC. 'What happens in the United States will be the key to future shifts in OPEC's market power', a 1976 publication of the Brookings Institution states.[10] 'Without higher prices to restrain consumption and encourage domestic production and without additional tax incentives, tax penalties, and regulatory measures to supplement market forces, US imports will gradually rise ... Then prospects for coping with the market power of OPEC would be poor' (pp. 197-8).

The Brookings Institution is one of the 'think tanks' that have supplied Carter with some of his top officials, and this particular quote is from a study on US foreign economic perspectives co-edited by Charles L. Schultze, now the head of Carter's Council of Economic Advisers. Only three months after taking office, Carter launched precisely the kind of campaign to drive up energy prices these and other experts recommended.

Although the main focus of attention is on oil, the substantive issues under discussion — the fact that imperialism no longer directly monopolises sources of raw materials around the globe, the real or presumed shortages of these primary commodities that have periodically appeared in the last five years, and the conception increasingly popularised in the 'northern' industrial centres of 'going it alone' and making the sacrifices necessary to chart the new course — clearly have reference beyond petroleum.

The Brookings study divides primary commodities into three categories: oil, food, and other raw materials. 'Oil', state the authors, 'is in a class by itself ... In one year, oil exports as a percentage of total world exports rose from 5 per cent to 13 per cent' (p.193). Furthermore, oil accounted for 39.5 per cent of all exports of semi-colonial lands in 1973 as compared to 24.8 per cent in 1955 (p.181).

The paramount place of oil in the global trade of the semi-colonies corresponds to its increased centrality in the economies of the industrial countries. Barry Commoner, a leader of the American ecology movement, tells us that oil 'is the dominant source of energy for most of the world. In the United States, together with the closely related fuel, natural gas, it provides three-fourths of the national energy budget. Oil is the basis of the two industries — automotive and petrochemical — which, together with petroleum itself, make up nearly one-fifth of the total US economy.'[11] Commoner makes the telling observation that 'the intensive use of petroleum-based fertilisers and pesticides has nearly transformed the farm from an outpost of nature into a branch of the chemical industry'.

A further set of statistics underlines the fact that petroleum is not only the major export product of the semi-colonial world; it is the major industrial product in the imperialist world. This point is obscured by the Carter administration's energy propaganda. For the White House talks about the necessity of cutting crude oil imports (currently running at over 40 per cent of US petroleum consumption), and the administration also claims that it wants to drastically diminish oil and natural gas production in the United States. It is propaganda largely aimed at covering the central goal of the energy trust, to drive up energy prices. Oil production, *including the production of imported oil*, is the most lucrative and most powerful sector of imperialist monopoly.

Of the ten largest industrial companies in the capitalist world, eight produce petroleum. Of the top fifty industrial companies, eighteen produce petroleum. The sales of these eighteen corporations account for over 40 per cent of the sales of the group of fifty biggest capitalist industrial corporations (see Table 1).

TABLE 1

Ten Largest Industrial Companies in the Capitalist World

Rank	Company	Headquarters	Sales [thousand m. $]
1	Exxon	New York	$42.1
2	Royal Dutch / Shell	London / The Hague	$33.0
3	General Motors	Detroit	$31.5
4	Ford Motor	Dearborn, Mich.	$23.6
5	Texaco	New York	$23.2
6	Mobil Oil	New York	$18.9
7	British Petroleum	London	$18.3
8	Std. Oil of Calif.	San Francisco	$17.2
9	National Iranian Oil	Tehran	$16.8
10	Gulf Oil	Pittsburgh	$16.5

Source: **Fortune**, August 1975 (p.163). Figures are for 1974.

The Brookings Institution does not view energy self-sufficiency as a realistic prospect for the United States. 'It is well to recognise the implications of American energy independence for the rest of the world. If this country were able to withdraw from the world energy market gradually, that alone would tend to depress world oil prices. In due course energy costs in the United States would probably diverge quite widely from those in other industrial countries, becoming higher perhaps by a factor of 2' (pp. 199-200).

Exxon, Texaco, Mobil and Standard Oil of California remain owners of the notorious Aramco syndicate in Saudi Arabia. Even if Saudi Arabia now owns its own oil and takes a cut of the profits of Aramco, Aramco distributes this oil internationally and this global distribution of oil remains a source of vast monopoly profits that the oil trust has no intention of relinquishing. Thus we face the hypocritical stance of the oil trust, which unrelentingly blames 'the Arabs' for higher oil prices and moans about the need for diminishing imports and going it alone, while higher oil prices are the central objective of the oil trust and this trust has no desire to end OPEC imports.[12]

The second category of primary products in the Brookings classification is food. Here the decisive aspect is that world food exports are overwhelmingly dominated by imperialist countries. More than two-thirds of the calories consumed in the world come directly or indirectly from cereal grains — wheat, rice and coarse grains. Yet only the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Argentina and Thailand produce grain in excess of domestic consumption. The other countries must rely ultimately on importing food from these few nations, especially the United States, as the figures in the Brookings study reproduced in Table 2 make clear.

TABLE 2

Grain Imports & Exports

These figures show the net average annual trade surplus or deficits of cereal grains in millions of metric tons for the period 1973-76:

United States	+72
Canada, Australia-New Zealand, S. Africa	+26
Western Europe	-20
Japan	-19
Central & S. America, Africa, Middle East, Asia	-35
(South Asia)	(-9)
Workers states	-20
(USSR)	(-9)
(China)	(-4)

Source: Brookings, **op. cit.**, p. 184.

According to Brookings: 'The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation estimated in 1974 that the total cereal deficits of the developing countries

10. 'The United States in the World Economy', by Edward R. Fried and Philip H. Trezise in *Setting National Priorities: The Next Ten Years*, edited by Henry Owen and Charles L. Schultze (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1976).

11. *The Poverty of Power: Energy and the Economic Crisis* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), p.33.

12. This was explained in some detail in my article, 'Do Mideast Oil

would increase from 30 million tons in 1974 to 87 million tons in 1985 .... The projected 1985 grain deficit divides about equally between the nations with very low incomes — principally in South Asia and Africa south of the Sahara — and the better-off developing countries, most of which have prospects of being able to finance their imports on commercial terms. In the best of circumstances, the low-income countries will have difficulty earning enough foreign exchange to pay for their growing needs. And it is of course these countries that have the lowest levels of nutrition; if per capita caloric intake could be raised to more acceptable standards, their prospective requirements for imports would also increase' (p. 187).

But these experts have little to offer as a remedy. 'US policy toward the world food problem will have to take a more useful course', they say. 'This country can use its influence to promote increased cereal production in the developing countries; if it can once again pick up its fair share of development aid, that influence will be greater ... And it will have to take the lead in negotiating an international system of reserve stocks' (p. 192). These are nothing but pious wishes.

In *Late Capitalism*, Ernest Mandel emphasises the seriousness of the food problem for semi-colonial countries: 'The fate of the semi-colonies under the international imperialist system assumes its most tragic form in the growing under-nourishment of these nations. In the '30s they were still able to export 14 million tons of grain products annually. By the '60s they had to import 10 million tons .... and the volume of these imports risks becoming much larger during the second half of the '70s. This is due neither to demographic explosion nor lack of foresight, but to the socio-economic structures imposed by imperialism. Increasing areas of land are being converted to export crops, catering to the needs of the metropolitan countries and not those of the local populations ... Increasing dependence on imperialist food exports is monetised on the capitalist world market via higher prices, if necessary by artificially induced shortages. The famines of 1973-74 were directly related to decisions to *restrict* output by the major grain exporters in the late '60s and early '70s' (p. 375).

There is no doubt that in actual political fact the United States continues to wield the 'food weapon', as former agriculture secretary Earl Butz described it during the Nixon administration.

US imperialism's central concern in relation to the remaining raw materials, constituting Brookings' third category, is that the semi-colonial countries do not attempt to duplicate OPEC in any other commodity: 'When oil and food are set aside, commodity questions take on an entirely different dimension. Trade in all other primary commodities taken together is comparatively small, fits no clearly defined pattern, and makes fears that raw material cartels will spread and become a growing source of economic disruption unrealistic ... No item in this other group is overwhelmingly large. In 1973 combined exports of the seven largest — copper, cotton, iron ore, wool, rubber, tin and phosphate rock — accounted for about half of the total group. The other half was spread over twenty-five to thirty additional commodities for most of which world exports were under $500 million a year. Possibilities for substituting among these raw materials are considerable and shifts occur between primary and secondary sources according to price' (p. 201). (See Table 3.)

The Brookings authors also underline that industrial countries account for most exports of primary commodities other than oil. Only 30 per cent of the exports of non-fuel primary commodities originate in the semi-colonial countries.

'The developing countries, moreover, have much larger export interests in agricultural commodities than in non-fuel minerals. More than four-fifths of their non-oil primary commodity exports in 1973 consisted of food (principally oil seeds, coffee, sugar, cocoa and bananas) and agricultural raw materials (raw cotton, natural rubber, and hard fibres). Mineral ores (copper, bauxite, tin, and phosphate rock, for example), which are often cited as materials that lend themselves to cartelisation and market manipulation, account for a comparatively small proportion of the commodity trade of these countries ... When it is further recalled that the developing countries concerned usually have small financial reserves and are not drawn together by shared political aims, the outlook for more OPECs can be seen in proper perspective. Cartel experiments among the primary commodity exporters will be few and most of those attempted will be short-lived' (p. 202).

TABLE 3

Origin and Composition of World Exports, 1973
[In thousand million dollars]

Category	Semi-colonial countries	Industrial countries
Primary commodities		
Agricultural raw materials	9.2	17.4
Ores and minerals	5.1	7.1
Food	22.8	51.2
Fuels	43.0	13.7
Manufactured and processed products	27.9	296.0

These experts don't pass up a chance to complain about nationalisation of imperialist interests and to make threats about its supposed consequences: 'Hostility to foreign investment in natural resource industries, a phenomenon not wholly restricted to developing countries, is cause for concern. It will not necessarily halt development or expansion, for investment funds will still flow to areas that are or appear to be politically safe. But second-best investment choices mean higher real costs for commodities. And to the extent that resistance to foreign investors slows down the growth of commodity output, bottlenecks will appear earlier in the next boom' (p. 203).

The 'trilateralism' of these conceptions should be explained. It is the tendency of imperialism to view global social problems openly and admittedly in 'North-South' dimensions: the industrialised northern hemisphere *versus* the semi-colonial countries of the southern hemisphere. Long gone is the rhetoric of Kennedy's 'Alliance for Progress', 'aid and development' programmes and funds for the semi-colonies as a strategic priority. Now, even in their public utterances, the imperialists stress the theme that the major imperialist centres — Japan, the United States, West Europe — must seek their own 'trilateral' solutions, in the first place independently of what the semi-colonies may need.

The concern that semi-colonial countries may duplicate OPEC reveals that world imperialism has not lost its need for other resources besides petroleum.

Billions Threaten the World?', in *Capitalism in Crisis* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975). A more recent and unpublicised staff report by the US Senate's 'Subcommittee on Energy' of the Joint Economic Committee, released on 26 September 1975, estimated that, 'If United States oil prices are decontrolled and the President's tariff [on foreign oil] is removed but OPEC boosts world prices by $1.50 per barrel, the 1976 revenue windfall on domestic oil would be 85 per cent greater than that of 1974. Five-sixths of this windfall would be traceable to decontrol' (Washington: US Government Printing Office, No. 58-992 0, 1975, p.vii). The oil trust hopes that Jimmy Carter, a president elected on demagogic promises to labour, will be more successful in decontrolling oil prices in the United States than 'anti-labour' presidents Nixon and Ford, who proved to be incapable of taking this unpopular step. Oil price decontrol is the main target of Carter's energy campaign.

III

Now let us take an even closer look at the question of monopoly profits in the extractive industries — especially those corresponding to Brookings' third category. In 'Imperialism and National Bourgeoisie in Latin America', Mandel offered some statistics on foreign investments in Latin America in 1966 (see Table 4).

TABLE 4

Foreign Investment in Latin America, 1966
[In millions of dollars]

Manufacturing industry	$5,261
Oil industry (incl. distribution)	$4,876
Mining	$1,697
Miscellaneous (incl. plantations, banking, insurance, public service)	$3,828
Total	**$15,664**

His figures do demonstrate the process of semi-colonial economic development that we have already touched on: the growth of the manufacturing sector as a proportion of the total economy. Imperialism does not let such investment opportunities pass by, especially in a period of glutted world markets. But Mandel also believed that there had been 'a relative fall in the rate of profit in numerous private sectors. The normal reaction of capital confronted with such a fall is to switch investment'.

Although I have been unable to find the original OECD publication from which Mandel took his table, figures provided by the US *Survey of Current Business* for the same year (1966) are instructive, although they refer only to US investment, comprising roughly 73 per cent of the total shown in Mandel's table (see Table 5). These are figures for

TABLE 5

US Investment in Latin America, 1966
[In millions of dollars]

	Investment	Earnings	Rate
Manufacturing	$3,312	$337	10.2%
Mining and smelting	$1,481	$359	24.2%
Petroleum	$3,538	$511	14.4%
Other	$3,142	$238	7.5%
Total	$11,473		

Source: **Survey of Current Business**, September 1967, p. 45.

subsidiary corporations in which the parent US corporation owns 10 per cent or more of the subsidiary stock, usually close to 100 per cent. The earnings are the total profits of the subsidiary corporations, some of which are reinvested and the bulk of which are returned to the parent corporation in dividends and interest on the stocks and bonds that the parent corporations own. Such figures, completely at the disposal of the firms themselves, should not be given too much weight. Nevertheless they indicate that while the *mass* of investment in manufacturing is higher than in petroleum or mining, the *profit rate* in the extractive industries is higher than in manufacturing.

The *Survey of Current Business* for August 1976 (pp. 48 and 56) presented figures for US investment in Latin America in 1974, eight years later, showing big developments (see Table 6). Investment in manufacturing surged ahead and now finance, listed under 'Other', showed an investment position of $3,400 million with an 18.7 per cent return for the year. Of total US manufacturing investment in Latin America, $3,100 million, 41 per cent, poured into Brazil; another $2,400 million, 32 per cent, went to Mexico.

But petroleum and mining investments, at the same or

TABLE 6

US Investment in Latin America, 1974
[In millions of dollars]

	Investment	Earnings	Rate
Manufacturing	$7,541	$912	12.1%
Mining and smelting	$1,131	$321	28.4%
Petroleum	$3,564	$762	21.4%
Other	$7,255	$1,150	15.8%
Total	$19,491		

lower figures, reflected the nationalisations that swept the region. By 1974 Peru had become the major source of US mining investment in Latin America and these holdings remained important sources of monopoly profits, especially since the copper trust 'suffered' nationalisations elsewhere. The big US-dominated copper firms in Peru are Southern Peru Copper (52.2 per cent owned by Asarco Inc., 21.2 per cent owned by Cerro-Marmon Corp., 16.2 per cent owned by Phelps Dodge Corp. and 10.4 per cent owned by Newmont Mining Corp.) and the Compania del Madrigal, 57 per cent owned by Homestake Mining. In 1975 alone US firms poured some $300 million into Peruvian investments to accelerate its mining capacity.

Closer examination of two of Latin America's major minerals industries — copper and bauxite — helps to reveal the importance of imperialist monopoly in extracting super-profits from the ownership of primary commodities. These two minerals and four others (cobalt, chromium, manganese and tin) are frequently listed as the six critical minerals produced mainly in 'The South' but consumed mainly in 'The North'.[13]

Latin America produces copper in Peru and Chile and bauxite in Jamaica, Guyana, Surinam and Brazil. (It also produces tin in Bolivia, manganese in Brazil, and cobalt in Cuba.)

Table 7 shows the eleven largest producers of copper and

TABLE 7

Largest Copper / Bauxite Producers in Capitalist World

	Copper	Bauxite
1	United States (27.7%)	Australia (25.9%)
2	Canada (14.5%)	Jamaica (23.7%)
3	Chile (13.3%)	Surinam (11.8%)
4	Zambia (12.6%)	Guyana (6.1%)
5	Zaire (8.2%)	France (5.8%)
6	Philippines (3.9%)	Guinea (5.4%)
7	Peru (3.9%)	Greece (4.8%)
8	Australia (3.5%)	United States (4.1%)
9	South Africa (2.7%)	Dominican Republic (2.5%)
10	Japan (1.6%)	India (2.3%)
11	Mexico (1.4%)	Indonesia (2.2%)

Source: United Nations **Statistical Yearbook 1974** (New York: United Nations, 1975), pp. 184 and 186.

bauxite in the capitalist world in 1973. The total capitalist world production for 1973, on which the percentages are based, was 5,617.2 thousand metric tons of copper and 56,833 thousand metric tons of bauxite.

There are two noteworthy similarities in the lists which the experts stress when they inveigh against semi-colonial cartel formation: some of the largest producers are themselves

13. See, for example, *Fortune* magazine, November 1976: 'Third World "Commodity Power" Is a Costly Illusion'. This article, like the Brookings Institution study referred to earlier, warns that, 'The poor countries are deluded in their hope of forming successful mini-OPECs to force a redivision of the world's wealth' (p.147).

imperialist nations; production takes place in many countries, not only leading to inevitable surpluses but also leaving open the possibilities of pitting one country against another when the crunch comes.

Thus, in response to the Jamaican-led International Bauxite Association, which has imposed higher government taxes on bauxite, *Fortune* magazine points out: 'Since the world is literally choking with aluminium ores, there are obviously limits beyond which the IBA cannot go. Already, in fact, Brazil and Cameroon, which are not members of IBA, are planning very substantial development of their bauxite reserves. Australia, which is an IBA member but has elected not to raise its taxes, is also expanding its output' (p. 150).

Australia (bauxite, manganese), Canada (cobalt, copper) and South Africa (chromium, manganese) join the United States in the gambit of exploiting local resources to compete against the semi-colonies. But it is also evident from these lists that the imperialist nations do not produce sufficient raw reserves themselves either to supply their own physical needs or — from a purely supply standpoint — to command prices on world markets.

In 1973 the United States produced 2,085.1 thousand metric tons of refined copper, 31.4 per cent of the production in the capitalist world. But US consumption of refined copper was an even higher 2,400 thousand metric tons requiring imports above the substantial level of US production. US copper imports came mainly from Canada (37 per cent), Peru (24 per cent) and Chile (14 per cent). That same year the United States produced 4,109.2 thousand metric tons of primary aluminium (recovered by the electrolytic reduction of alumina from domestic and imported ores), 41.1 per cent of the production in the capitalist world. The United States imported bauxite from Jamaica (56 per cent), Surinam (23 per cent), Dominican Republic (8 per cent), Guyana (4.3 per cent) and Australia (3.2 per cent).[14]

These statistics vividly underline the parasitic character of imperialist monopoly. The United States produces 31.4 per cent of the copper and 41.1 per cent of the aluminium in the capitalist world. If we add on to US copper production the additional imported refined copper that is consumed, the total figure for US copper consumption comes to 36.2 per cent. But the question immediately before us is the *profitability* of this US exploitation of world resources and here we will deal not only with the production of firms located in the United States but with their overseas subsidiaries as well.

Both the aluminium and copper trusts face semi-colonial cartels. The Jamaican-led IBA has already been mentioned. Chile, Zambia, Zaire and Peru formed a copper exporting organisation in 1967 — CIPEC, which is the principal copper supplier to Western Europe and Japan.

But the US-Canadian aluminium trust is a considerably stronger vertical monopoly than the copper trust. Without their former holdings in Chile, the US copper firms wield much less clout than they did a decade ago. The five largest US copper firms (Kennecott, Asarco, Phelps Dodge, Newmont and Anaconda) produce in their global operations roughly 25 per cent of capitalist world copper while the three largest US aluminium firms (Alcoa, Reynolds, Kaiser) produce roughly 34 per cent of capitalist world aluminium. If the giant Canadian-based Alcan Aluminium is added, the big four of the US-Canadian aluminium trust produce about 50 per cent of capitalist world aluminium.[15]

Of the major copper producing nations shown on the list above, Chilean copper is complete nationalised. The copper of Zambia is produced by the British-South African mining firms, Roan Consolidated Mines and Nchanga Consolidated Mines, with the Zambian government holding a 51 per cent interest. Most of Zaire copper is government-owned although there is a joint Japanese and Zairean government consortium producing some copper, and there has been talk off and on about a new international consortium building a major copper refinery in Zaire. Philippine copper is largely owned by a variety of small Philippine corporations. The US copper trust, as has already been mentioned, owns two major firms in Peru which produce most of Peruvian copper, although the government is in the process of expanding its own nationalised copper operations. Asarco (formerly the American Smelting and Refining Company) also has major holdings in Mexico and Australia. Newmont is a major participant in the South African O'okeip Copper Company Limited and Palabora Mining Company Limited. These two firms account for roughly 80 per cent of the copper production in that country.

It is obvious that we are still dealing with international monopoly in the case of the US copper firms, whose holdings stretch from British Columbia to South Africa. Nevertheless, 30 per cent is not the 43 per cent that obtained so long as the famous Chuquicamata and El Salvador mines were held by Anaconda; and El Teniente, the largest copper mine in the world, was held by Kennecott. Not only have these Chilean holdings been 'lost' but the US firms face such powerful imperialist competitors abroad as Pechiney (France) and Rio Tinto Zinc (Britain).

The toll is apparent from the figures in the books. In 1969 Anaconda reported an income of $323 million on sales of $1,389 million, a profit rate of 23 per cent. For 1973 Anaconda's income was $93.7 million on sales of 1,343.1 million, a profit rate of 7 per cent. Kennecott, whose Chilean operations were smaller as a percentage of its world operations than Anaconda's, still suffered a profit drop from 15 per cent in 1969 to 11 per cent in 1973.

Keeping in mind that copper prices were higher in 1973 than in 1969, we see a similar phenomenon in this industry as in petroleum, although not on the same grand scale: prices will rise toward the more costly production prices in the metropolitan centres; the profit rates in the latter are lower than in the semi-colonies. Moreover, by contrast with petroleum, copper is a labour-intensive industry, so that the exploitation of semi-colonial labour clearly remains a source of potential monopoly profits side-by-side with rents.

The story is a bit different in aluminium. One can have little doubt that the Jamaican government will continue to push for *ownership* in the aluminium combine, where so far the government has mainly raised its taxes and is not a major 'co-participant' in production itself. But that has not happened yet. Of the major bauxite producing nations drawn on by the US-Canadian aluminium trust, only Guyana has nationalised its firms. The bauxite of the other major sources — Australia, Jamaica, Surinam and the United States, accounting for 65 per cent of the capitalist world's supplies — is parcelled up by the US-Canadian firms with Australia serving as a junior partner.

These different monopoly positions must be an important factor affecting commodity price swings. According to *The Economist* of 23 October 1976: 'Copper production fell by only 20 per cent from its peak in October 1974 to its trough in mid-1975, while prices dropped by nearly two-thirds (in dollar and sterling terms) from the April 1974 peak of £1,400 a tonne to under £500 a tonne in January 1975. By contrast the slump in demand left the aluminium producer — or list — price unchanged (although unpublished price discounts on contracts undoubtedly increased) while production fell 16½ per cent in the six months from the peak at the end of 1974' (p. 26).

In any event, the effect on prices is evident. *Value Line*, a Wall Street publication, has listed the annual rates of earnings increase per share in the past ten years (see Table 8). Two final notes concerning this table should be added: Asarco, with the highest profit average over a decade, is the

14. The figures in this paragraph come from the United Nations *Statistical Yearbook 1974* and the *Minerals Yearbook 1973* of the US Department of the Interior.

15. These necessarily rough estimates are based on the corporations' annual reports and on *The Value Line Investment Survey*, a widely used Wall Street directory.

TABLE 8

Average Annual Rate of Earnings Increase per Share in Last Decade

Aluminium		Copper	
1 Alcan	6.5%	Kennecott	4.5%
2 Alcoa	6.0%	Asarco	9.0%
3 Reynolds	6.5%	Phelps Dodge	5.0%
4 Kaiser	9.5%	Anaconda	-3.0%

Source: **The Value Line Investment Survey**, Part 3, Edition 8, 25 February 1977, for all the figures except Anaconda which was drawn from a 1976 copy of the same edition.

major holder of Southern Peru Copper as well as of significant Mexican interests. The figures for Anaconda are through 1976, because this firm has been bought up by Atlantic Richfield Petroleum — additional evidence, if any is necessary, of the increasing strength of the oil trust.

IV

If we now reconsider the position argued by Mandel, his partial misreading of Nelson Rockefeller's 1969 *Report on the Americas* is worth returning to for two reasons: in the first place to review Washington's actual policies over the last decade; in the second place to clear up misunderstandings that have arisen about the character of the American ruling class.

Watergate prompted a spate of writings about contests between Eastern 'Yankees' versus Southern and Western 'Cowboys', the latter supposedly being Nixon's backers. The Carter election sparked up interest in the 'North versus the South', a controversy that so far as the United States itself is concerned was settled in 1864. Further, eccentric figures like H.L. Hunt, Howard Hughes and John Paul Getty have always gotten a bigger play in the press than the less colourful sectors of American capital that control the press.

In reality the concentration of industrial and banking capital in a few Eastern sectors has never been greater in American history than today. Suffice it to point out that of the ten biggest capitalist industrial corporations in the world, the third largest, General Motors, is controlled by the Du Pont family of Delaware. The Du Ponts control a host of other major US monopolies including Phillips Petroleum and E.I. du Pont Chemical, which, with Britain's ICI (Imperial Chemical Industries), forms the most powerful chemical combine in the world. The fourth largest industrial firm is controlled by the Ford family of Detroit. The first, sixth and eighth largest capitalist firms — that is, Exxon, Mobil, and Standard Oil of California — are controlled by the Rockefellers, who also control one of the world's largest banks. Atlantic Richfield, mentioned earlier because of its takeover of Anaconda, is another one of the numerous enterprises in the Rockefeller sector. And the tenth largest firm on the list, Gulf Oil, is controlled by the Mellons of Pittsburgh, who also control, among dozens of other firms, Alcoa Aluminium.

There are no significant differences in global strategy among these powerful interests, all of whom base their power on worldwide US auto, petroleum, minerals, chemical and banking trusts.

A salient measure of the influence exerted by the Rockefeller sector, which is unquestionably the most powerful, comes from the leading personages making up Carter's administration. No less than fourteen of the top officials in the new Democratic administration have previously served in the 'Trilateral Commission', a think tank funded by David Rockefeller. This institution, as its name implies, was founded in 1973 in response to the deepening crises of world imperialism, precisely to search out United States-Japanese-European solutions. Despite much protest, it still has no representatives of any semi-colonial nations, who would only be token members in any event.

The graduates of the Trilateral Commission in Carter's administration include Carter himself; Vice President Walter Mondale; Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's top foreign policy adviser; Cyrus Vance, the secretary of state; Harold Brown, the secretary of defence; Michael Blumenthal, the secretary of the treasury; Paul Warnke, the chief negotiator in SALT; and Richard Gardner, who has been dispatched to Italy to serve as US ambassador in this politically sensitive arena of Europe.

The experts in such agencies as the Trilateral Commission and the Brookings Institution are the main formulators of imperialist policy. Where they have differences — generally on a small scale —these are hashed out in secret.

One should not be taken in by the demagogic liberalism that often pervades their public utterances. The most important content of the 1969 Rockefeller report was not its appeals to open trade and selective US investment in manufacturing but its heralding of the military establishments as the primary social groups the US would rely on to maintain the status quo. 'For many of these societies', Rockefeller proclaimed, '... the question is less one of democracy or lack of it than it is simply of orderly ways of getting things done.' The 'military leaders' are 'searching for ways to bring education and better standards of living to their people while avoiding anarchy or violent revolution'.[16]

Gone from Rockefeller's report was the rhetoric of the Alliance for Progress calling for land reform, tax reform and income redistribution. Even in its rhetoric the Rockefeller report marked a retreat from the 'American dream' perspective for Latin America that the Democratic administration of the early 1960s had held up in response to the Cuban revolution.

The urgings of the Rockefeller report for elimination of trade barriers between Latin America and the United States must be put in the context of intense resistance to such liberalisations from US firms that would be affected — for example, textile firms, which could not compete with textiles produced by super-exploited Latin American labour.

The 1976 Brookings Institution study, written seven years later, also appeals to trade liberalisation, but what is more significant, it documents the existing barriers. According to the Brookings study, average tariffs on imports of all raw materials into industrial countries in 1971 stood at 1.5 per cent; tariffs for semi-finished manufactured goods were 6.6 per cent; and for finished manufactured goods, 9.4 per cent. 'Tariffs', said Brookings, 'not only rise with the degree of processing, but their application also becomes wider. In 1971 duties were imposed on 22 per cent of imported raw materials, on 65 per cent of semi-manufactured goods, and on 84 per cent of finished goods' (p. 180).

Furthermore, there are much higher duties on such manufactured products as textiles, footwear, toys, plastic articles, and plywood. 'For these', says Brookings, 'duties average between 15 and 20 per cent. Their protective impact, moreover, is commonly greater than the nominal rates imply. This is because the materials or components that make up a manufactured product typically are not themselves subject to tariffs, which means that the tariff on the finished product is actually effective for the value added in manufacture rather than for the total cost of production.'

Fortune, in the article on commodity cartels already cited, adds that, 'On a finding of injury to American industry, a US President can reduce even the present level of imports from the poor countries. Indeed, the new system of US preferences could conceivably *discourage* American investment in labour-intensive manufacturing in the poor countries, since access to the US market is now a more

16. *The Rockefeller Report on the Americas*, by Nelson Rockefeller (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969).

chancy business than it used to be' (p. 147).

To summarise these conclusions, US imperialism has responded to the world economic crisis and the rise of colonial revolution by attempting to apply an even harsher policy toward the semi-colonies. In the international radicalisation of the late 1960s and early 1970s, especially under the impact of Vietnam, the imperialists were forced to stage tactical retreats including losing direct control over some primary commodities. Moreover this is an irreversible process. Despite setbacks, the movement towards total liberation of the semi-colonies from imperialism cannot ultimately be thwarted by an imperialism that is itself ever more deeply divided in the face of spreading political and economic turmoil within the metropolitan centres themselves.

But the strategic imperatives of imperialist monopoly, including the need to control sources of raw materials, have not changed. On the contrary the accumulation drive is itself reinforced by heightened competition which all the more intensifies this need. Far from aiding the semi-colonies to gain control over their own resources and to utilise these to help the process of manufacturing development, the response of the imperialists is captured in 'trilateralism': even in their most benevolent frame of mind, the imperialist power centres will form inter-imperialist trade and financial blocs — without consulting the semi-colonies.

When all of the rhetoric is taken out of the Rockefeller reports, the Brookings Institution studies, etc., we are left with the sludge of propaganda *against* raw materials cartel formation in the semi-colonies, in favour of *selective* investment in manufacturing in countries where the risk is considered minimal (hence the frequent collaboration of imperialism with the most reactionary military regimes abroad). Meanwhile protectionist measures, far from being lessened, are increased, so that one of the historically greatest obstacles to economic development in the semi-colonies — tariffs and import duties — become all the more severe.

One side of this process has been accentuated by what *Business Week* calls Latin America's 'moving simultaneously to the right', thereby improving investment prospects. But there is another side, as *Business Week* itself admits. Dow Chemical's sales in Latin America have increased from $47 million in 1967 to between $400 and $500 million this year: 'Nevertheless, the investment strategy is a traditional one: selling into local markets with imported products, trying an end-products manufacturing venture on a small scale to uncover opportunities that match its technological resources, and then moving into basic, large-scale production. This cycle is now complete in Brazil, where Dow is building one of its major world operations. The company is at mid-cycle in Argentine, Colombia, and Mexico, with smaller manufacturing facilities, and still in the initial stage in Peru, where the outlook is more uncertain' (p. 42).

The profit outlook is still the main consideration, and in countries which have massive poverty and unemployment, relatively low technological levels, stormy and not always predictable political outlooks, there is not going to be any rush of imperialist investments. From Paris, on 15 October 1976, *New York Times* reporter Clyde Farnsworth wrote: 'A wave of disenchantment over investments in the third world is spreading in the board rooms of multinational corporations and is already leading to a cutback in private capital flows. In recent months, there has been growing evidence of investments being diverted from developing to developed countries, where, as a Munich executive puts it, "Results are more predictable". The trend reflects political and financial risks in developing countries, poorer business conditions the world over and the shortage of capital.'

Even in the Middle East, interest has slackened. What a few years ago was expected to be an investment boom of fabulous proportions has now for some companies become a nightmare.

V

How helpful will semi-colonial production of primary commodities be in getting economic development off the ground? Events in the three and a half years that have elapsed since the 1973 oil embargo provide the groundwork for at least a preliminary estimate.

In that time the OPEC cartel has broken down twice. In 1975, when oil prices and profits dropped, OPEC members cut their prices at different rates in the hopes of cornering larger shares of the market. In the same year, Iran, which in 1973-74 was touted in the imperialist press as the future world superpower, entered international money markets as a borrower, having by this time dropped a number of its grandiose development schemes. The cartel broke down a second time in January 1977, when Iran attempted to push through a 15 per cent price hike in oil but was blocked mainly by Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile these nations have been simply unable to put to significant use the funds that have flowed in. First of all, rampant and uncontrollable inflation with all the graft that automatically accompanies it has been unleashed by the inflow of funds. This can sharply exacerbate the polarisation between the semi-colonial bourgeoisie and the proletariat and peasantry, but it does little to help the oppressed classes. There stubbornly remains the low level of technology, which simply cannot absorb the influx of goods that have been purchased. Ports and highways are clogged; commodities spoil before they are unloaded; prices gyrate while goods are in transport. The result already has been, on one hand, a major scaling down of development plans (and of the imperialist excitement over getting a share of these markets) and, on the other, a massive investment of OPEC funds in imperialist banks abroad as well as in the military hardware imperialism produces.

If OPEC is the 'best case', the situation with other commodities is all the more discouraging. A 30 June 1975 issue of *Business Week* attacked CIPEC, the copper exporting organisation formed by Chile, Zambia, Zaire and Peru. The author listed four reasons in addition to those we have already considered why this attempted cartel will run into difficulties:

1. 'Copper consumption rises sharply in periods of prosperity and dips sharply when business falters. This sensitivity to business cycles arises from copper's dependence for its markets on durable consumer goods, construction, and industrial capital investment.'

2. 'Once consumed, oil is not recyclable, with the exception of minor quantities of oil used in lubrication. Copper's uses, on the other hand, lend themselves to a high degree of recycling. Scrap currently accounts for roughly 40 per cent of total US supply.'

3. 'The production of copper is more labour-intensive than that of oil. Thus, copper exporting countries are not so free to restrict supplies by cutting back production because to do this to any significant extent could cause serious unemployment and social unrest.'

4. 'Equally important, the financial position of the governments of the copper-exporting countries is such that they must produce, export, and sell copper or face severe fiscal problems.'

The author of these 1975 lines was not aware that OPEC oil is also vulnerable to world price fluctuations and that these swings can weaken the financial positions of the oil-producing countries in the same manner, a fact that was clear later in the same year. More recently, the 10 May 1977 issue of the *Wall Street Journal* reports: 'Iran is in somewhat of a bind. It is so heavily dependent upon the revenues from crude oil exports that these can't be reduced sharply unless prices are increased dramatically. It is for this reason that Iran is the leading price hawk within OPEC, continually pushing for higher posted prices for crude.'

The important point here is that for all of the primary commodities, nationalisations do not free the given country

from the negative vicissitudes inherent in a 'one crop' economy, even if the 'crop' is not vegetable but mineral. Price fluctuations, depending on the world market, cannot be erased, and there is good reason to believe that these fluctuations will be sharper, and the troughs more devastating, as the world crisis of imperialism deepens. Moreover, it cannot be emphasised too often that the semi-colonial nations face the most powerful imperialist nations as direct competitors in every single one of the commodities they produce. The effect of price gyrations will be to improve the position of the imperialist nations against those of the semi-colonies in a given sector.

There is a more fundamental point which Mandel himself has argued more cogently than any other contemporary Marxist. This is the decisive role that the miserably low living standards of the mass of unemployed and low-wage workers plays in perpetuating semi-colonial economic underdevelopment, a situation that is itself the result of global imperialism.[17] A rather long excerpt from *Late Capitalism* summarises this aspect of the situation in the semi-colonial countries:

'... the beginnings of industrialisation and the ensuing increase in the average social productivity of labour allows the cost of reproducing labour-power to fall significantly, even if this fall in value is not always expressed in its money-price as a result, among other things, of continuing inflation. At the same time, however, this increase in the average social productivity of labour does not lead to a growth in the moral and historical cost of reproducing labour-power; in other words, new needs are not incorporated in wages, or only to a very limited extent.

'This phenomenon can in the first instance be attributed to the fact that the secular trend in the semi-colonies is for the industrial reserve army to increase because the slow beginnings of industrialisation cannot keep pace with the accelerating separation of poor peasants from the land. The gradual switch of foreign capital to the production of finished goods further reinforces this trend, for the latter are capital-intensive while the production of raw materials was relatively labour-intensive. Thus the share of wage-labour in the working population of Latin America remained constant at 14 per cent between 1925 and 1963, while the share of industrial production in the gross national product doubled from 11 per cent to 23 per cent.

'Secondly, an unfavourable relationship of forces on the labour market, due to a growing industrial reserve army, may make it impossible effectively to organise the mass of the industrial and mining proletariat in trade unions. As a result, the commodity of labour-power is in its turn not only sold at its declining value, but even *below* this value...

'The existence of a much lower price for labour-power in the dependent, semi-colonial countries than in the imperialist countries undoubtedly allows a higher world average rate of profit — which ultimately explains why foreign capital flows into these countries at all. But at the same time it acts as a limit on the further accumulation of capital, for the extension of the market is kept within extremely narrow confines by the low level of real wages and the modest needs of the workers in the Third World' (pp. 67-8).

A striking confirmation of this central tenet of Marxian analysis is a United Nations study of urban populations in Latin America reported on by *New York Times* correspondent Jonathan Kandell from Sao Paulo on 6 November 1976: 'From Mexico City to Bogotá, through Lima and Santiago and down to Buenos Aires, Latin America's rural poor are moving to the cities in one of history's great migrations. Already 19 Latin American cities have populations of over a million. By the end of the century, three — Mexico City, Sao Paulo and either Rio de Janeiro or Buenos Aires — will be among the 10 largest metropolises in the world. All will have over 15 million inhabitants, with Mexico City, according to United Nations projections, topping the list with more than 30 million.' The figures given for the year 2000 by the UN were: Buenos Aires, 14.1 million; Santiago, 6.7 million; Sao Paulo, 24.7 million; Rio de Janeiro, 17.6 million; Lima, 9.2 million; Caracas, 6.5 million; Mexico City, 31.7 million.

Kandell continued: 'With one of the highest birthrates in the world, Latin America almost tripled its population from 1930 to 1970. The urban centres, which accounted for fewer than 40 per cent of the area's inhabitants in 1950, accounted for 56 per cent in 1970. By 1990, two-thirds of all Latin Americans will be living in cities — the great majority in slums or other sub-standard housing.'

Semi-colonial manufacturing development and the funds obtained from selling primary commodities on the world market will be left far behind by the exponential growth of needs — and misery — of these urban masses. Where big injections of funds into the narrow strata of semi-colonial bourgeoisie do take place the result will be to sharpen class divisions. This does not stabilise the economic and political position of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie; it is destabilising. The tendency towards strong military regimes is all the more enhanced. OPEC surpluses are not pouring into the coffers of Boeing and General Dynamics in order to 'recycle petrodollars'! Their massive outlay on arms is itself the sharpest testimony to the utterly reactionary character of the regimes who are receiving the funds, the clearest proof that these regimes cannot and do not have any intentions of improving the lot of the masses.

* * *

Workers in the industrialised countries will have to take a closer look at these matters. For it is an increasingly shrill theme of the imperialists as the world economic crisis deepens, to 'sacrifice', 'tighten the belt', 'go it alone'. Their deceitful propaganda has only one aim, and that is to improve the profit positions of the imperialist monopolies. This must be clearly understood in order not to be taken in by their public relations campaigns.

The strategy of the oil trust is to drive up world prices in order to enhance the flow of profits. In this scheme there is no visible limit to the cost of oil that would be required for such a massive revolution of technology. But this scheme does not only originate in protecting monopoly profits that might be threatened by semi-colonial nationalisations. It also springs from the *needs of competing monopolies* that jostle against each other not only internationally but also within each imperialist centre. Texaco's biggest competitor isn't a nationalised firm in OPEC nor even Shell or British Petroleum. It is Exxon.

When the manager of a Ford plant, let us say, tells workers that they will have to accept a wage-freeze, speed-up and layoffs because of the 'Japanese threat' abroad, the workers would do well to look around to see if there isn't a Chevrolet plant, a Buick plant, or a Chrysler plant, for these are the most powerful corporate competitors for the same markets.

When the trilateralists invoke inter-imperialist cooperation as a remedy they suppress the fact that imperialist competition has landed us in the present global maldistribution of access to raw materials. They don't intend to put an end to that situation — and indeed, according to the laws of the imperialist stage of capitalism described by Lenin, they cannot.

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17. 'The low wages which follow from a vast industrial reserve army and enormous underemployment are ... a function of the damming-up of capital accumulation, and can only be explained by the operation of the international capitalist system' (*Late Capitalism*, p.353).

Revolutionary Strategy in the Twenties

J.T. MURPHY — R.P. DUTT

The fall of the first Labour Government in 1924 sparked off a lively debate in the pages of Communist International. In early 1925 two analyses of the situation were published. The authors were R.P. Dutt, a prominent Communist Party theoretician, and A. Martinov, a member of the Executive Committee of the Third International.*

Dutt remarked on the fact that, despite its defeat, the actual vote gained by the Labour Party had increased by one million. This, he argued, indicated that the election of a Tory administration would in no way impede the development of the mass struggle. The situation, he continued, foreshadowed the collapse of Labourism and the emergence of the Communist Party as the 'alternative leadership'.

Martinov's theses were, in contrast, far more cautious. Noting the increase in Labour Party membership, he emphasised the tremendous hold of reformist ideas and theories inside the British working class. These illusions still persisted despite the pathetic performance of the first Labour Government. Dutt's proposals would, in Martinov's words, 'at once get it out of touch with the masses, and instead of becoming a mass workers party it would become a sect'. The approach to leftward moving workers should be on the basis of : 'fighting campaigns based on very definite lines....campaigns capable of welding together in the process of the fight the left elements and alienating them from the camp of Macdonald and Co.'. This was the way to separate genuine militants from those who merely mouthed a leftist rhetoric.

At this point J.T. Murphy intervened to criticise both Dutt and Martinov. Dutt replied and a final contribution from Murphy ended the debate (which was a public one) in July 1925. Because of the length of the contributions we can only print relevant extracts from the whole debate, but for readers interested in delving deeper the numbers of Communist International in which the texts were published are 9, 12, and 13.

An important aspect of the debate is that it was held against the backdrop of the Fifth Congress of the Comintern. The President of this body was at that stage the ill-fated Zinoviev. After referring to the British party as objectively the most important section of the International, he made the following remark: 'We do not know exactly when the Communist mass Party of England will come, whether only through the Stewart-Macmanus [two leaders of the CPGB] door or through some other door.' This 'other door' was a reference to the left wing of the Labour Party and was a cause championed by Kuusinen, the Finnish Communist leader and a member of the International Secretariat. The 'Kuusinen theses', as they became known, were never adopted as official policy, but reflected the deep concern felt by the Comintern leaders at the weakness of the British section.

A by-product of the debate was the founding by the CP in March 1925 of the Sunday Worker, a paper aimed at the Labour left wing, the ILP, the Co-op and the Labour Colleges. The circulation of this paper reached 85,000 copies — three times larger than that of the official party organ, Workers Weekly. That this success had its impact is demonstrated in the contributions of J.T. Murphy.

The debate provides us with some interesting analogies. It is perhaps not so remarkable that many of the issues discussed by Dutt and Murphy are still widely debated by revolutionaries today. After all, the Labour Party (albeit in its period of decline) is still a massive obstacle to the development of revolutionary socialist consciousness within the mainstream of the organised workers movement. What is of interest, however, is the deep gulf which divides the concerns of Dutt, Murphy, et al from the central preoccupations of the CPGB today. Even a cursory glance at the new draft of the British Road to Socialism will demonstrate that the difference is a qualitative one.

M. H-J.

April 1977

*See end for glossary of names.

HOW A MASS COMMUNIST PARTY WILL COME IN BRITAIN

In the last issue of the **Communist International**, there were two important contributions by comrades R.P. Dutt and A. Martinov, dealing with the developments in the labour movement of Britain. Both articles are worthy of the closest possible study, especially by every member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. The conclusions of both writers cannot be ignored by our Party.

Each writer sets out to diagnose the situation after the fall of the Labour Government and to answer the questions, 'What must the workers do about it?' and 'What must the Communist Party do?' Whilst there is a general agreement as to the nature of the present situation, there is a profound difference between them on the last question. There is a complete divergence on the estimate of the future of the Labour Party and the question of the development of the left-wing within it and our attitude towards such a phenomenon. It is necessary, therefore, to carry this discussion a stage further....

It is difficult to avoid feeling that there is here not only a conflict of views in relation to the development of the left-wing of the Labour Party, but a totally inadequate analysis of the process of change in the Labour Party and how the mass Communist Party is to be formed. Comrade Dutt denounces MacDonald, speaks of the decomposition of the Labour Party, the growth of an unreliable left-wing, and simply says the alternative is — a mass Communist Party. Comrade Martinov says quite correctly that comrade Dutt has skipped a whole historical phase in the life of the Labour Party. He says quite correctly, too, that the Communist Party must help in the development of a left-wing in the Labour Party. But this our Party has been saying continuously. The problem yet to be faced is — how is this left-wing developing and by what means can the Communist Party become a mass party.

On Measuring Our Party Strength

Comrade Martinov makes a big error in attempting to estimate the strength and influence of our Party by using the general election figures as a criterion. To compare the Party vote with the Labour Party vote is almost valueless. Only two Party candidates, comrade Stewart and comrade Tom Mann, ran on the clear Communist Party ticket. The others — Geddes, Saklatvala, Vaughan, Paul, Wall, Dunstan — were Communists running under local Labour Party auspices, in opposition to the Labour Party Executive's dictum and the London Conference decisions. The value of the votes cast is limited to a comparison only with the previous election results in the same constituency, and the number of fresh constituencies wherein a Communist appeared as a Labour candidate and the constituencies lost....

Hence any consideration of the votes cast for Communist candidates must be viewed from a totally different angle to that indicated by comrade Martinov. The 55,000 vote is no measure of our influence if directly compared with the votes cast for Labour as a whole. They indicate only that in a number of centres our Party has so far won local positions from the right-wing of Labour to the extent of being able to come out as the spokesmen of the whole labour movement in these localities. But this by no means shows the progress made in developing our influence in all the other centres where our candidates did not appear before the electors....

The fact of the matter is that there has been no real mass leftward movement in the Labour Party which could be harnessed to challenge the present leadership of the Labour Party. Comrade Dutt sees the Labour Party from the newspapers as one reading from afar, and impatiently dismisses the Labour Party as finished and calls up the only hope — a mass Communist Party, forgetting entirely that the Labour Party is a mass movement of which **we are a part** in spite of the efforts to crush us as a party. Comrade Martinov criticises our Party and its work in the Labour Party as if it was not there, although he is quite correct in his anticipation of, and in his emphasis upon, the importance of the left-wing of the Labour Party.

The Process Of Differentiation

But comrade Dutt's error is greater and more dangerous for our Party. When he says 'For the workers to trust it (the Labour Party) now to look after them in the coming period of reaction and oppression would be the height of open and self-confessed folly', he places the workers in an entirely false position and approaches the problem from an entirely sectarian standpoint. He assumes that the workers are already conscious of the weaknesses of the Labour Party leadership, are conscious that it is leading them to disaster, or how could this trust be described as 'the height of open and self-confessed folly'? The same sectarianism colours entirely his appreciation of the process of differentiation that has started in the Labour Party. Throughout he speaks as if we were not in the midst of it, as if we were a detached body watching the process from some neighbouring vantage ground, ready to step into the arena when the decomposition of the Labour Party leadership has gone far enough to permit the groping masses to discover the Communist Party. He sees the leaders, their speeches and writings are in the papers, classifies them admirably, tells us to hammer first one, and then another, now the 'left leaders' more than any other, but misses the actions of the masses while the process of differentiation is going on. This is not a Marxist line of approach to the problems before our Party or the working class of this country....

The attempt to rid the Labour Party of the Communists has shaken it to its foundations, and given a tremendous impetus to the process of differentiation which everybody now sees before their eyes. Why the difference? Because we cannot speak of the decomposition of the Labour Party in the same way as we can speak of the decomposition of the Liberal Party at this stage. The Labour Party is not based upon a class that is losing power, but upon a class that is rising to power. To speak of the decomposition of the Labour Party is to speak of the decomposition of the trade unions which are its main support, and which are called upon by the very nature of the struggle which has given them birth to play an increasingly vigorous and militant role. The trade unions are certainly not decomposing. Nor let us be under any illusions concerning even the individual sections of the Labour Party. Those sections are increasing their strength week by week. Let us be quite clear, therefore, when we are talking and not confuse the leadership of the Labour Party with the masses of the Party. The masses may rid themselves of the MacDonald leadership, and those who carry the banner of Liberalism, but that does not mean the end of the Labour Party, but a stage in the differentiating process when the Labour Party is increasing in strength as the workers become more class conscious.

It is in the midst of this differentiating process that our Party, the Communist Party, grows from strength to strength. Comrade Martinov is wrong when he thinks our work has to be started. We have been in it all the time. Indeed, the very birth of our Party was an indication that the process of differentiation had already begun in the Labour Party. My complaint is not that the work has to be started, but that our Party has done so much work within the Labour Party on the lines which justify comrade Dutt's insistence upon the wiping out of the idea that we should aim at being merely a left-wing of the Labour Party, and a propagandist ginger group within the trade unions and the Labour Party. This is a weakness which must be eradicated, and one which the right-wing of the Labour Party is fast helping us to eradicate. Weakness as it may be, however, it has also been a source of strength and increased the difficulties of the Labour Party Executive in this expulsion policy. If our Party is to be criticised at all for its attitude to the left-wing elements in the Labour Party during the last twelve months, its most vulnerable point I think is the fact that we have devoted too much attention to the leaders who are designated 'left' and too little to develop the leftward moving workers in the Labour Party. We have appealed to this one and that one. Talked with the Clyde group in Parliament, etc., wrote encouragingly about them, and so on, but done nothing to bring together those rank and file forces of the Labour Party which have supported the issues we have raised, passed our resolutions, participated in our campaigns....

To begin to concentrate our attention upon them as suggested by comrade Dutt, and treat then as more dangerous and worse than MacDonald and Thomas, would by no means help us to defeat MacDonald and Co., or to win the masses into our Party. Much as we must keep our Party clear of their weaknesses, they are not the centre of our attack or even the principal object of our concern. They are not our leading enemies, but the indicator of where friendship for our Party lies. Our concern is for the winning of the masses whose sentiments and aspirations these people are attempting to voice, and upon whom they depend for whatever position they hold in the labour movement....

The Coming Of The Mass Communist Party

How?

By continuing our demand for affiliation to the Labour Party as an independent workers' party concentrating within itself the interests of the working class and directing the workers against the bourgeois Liberal politics of the ILP, Fabians, and middle class politicians who have taken advantage of the opening of the gates of the Labour Party to individual membership to retard the development of the workers along their own independent lines. By keeping abreast of the changes now clearly manifest before our eyes in the Labour Party, as a mass movement grows, which is inevitably destined to be driven closer and closer to our Party. Our Party saw the change coming in the trade union struggles and has played its proper role in developing the Minority Movement. The Labour Party now manifests similar symptoms. Whereas last year we could only look to Maxton, Kirkwood, Hicks, Purcell, etc., as individuals with left tendencies, now we know that large numbers of workers in the Labour Party locals express themselves in support of the sentiments they express, and also know that the confusion in the minds of the comrades I have named and their colleagues prevents them harnessing these forces into an effective challenge to the existing leadership of the Labour Party. Four questions present themselves to our Party: Shall we help these masses to effectively challenge the leadership which they resent? or, shall we vigorously attack the prominent leaders who are typical of the movement, drive them further from us in the hope of a direct appeal to the rank and file to join us proving successful? or, shall the Minority Movement attempt to harness these forces? or, shall we permit them to drift and be content to issue calls for campaigns, with local manifestation of support and prevent the national left-wing bloc taking shape in the Labour Party?

There appears to me only one course to take, and that is the first. If we vigorously attack the 'left-wing leaders' we attack the mass with a similar outlook and drive them away from the Party. This is the course which permits the right-wing of the Labour Party to use the left as a safety valve, expressing revolutionary words, but leaving the deeds to be governed by the right-wing. The third is impracticable at the present moment because it is too closely following trade union tradition to immediately switch into the task of rallying the local Labour Parties to a united political policy. To pursue the fourth policy is to diffuse influence without harnessing it for effective national action, without developing and bringing to the front the leadership necessary to challenge the MacDonalds and Thomases.

The first policy is the only policy we can pursue with any hope of success, with any hope of developing into a mass Communist Party. The fears of many Party comrades that such a policy is dangerous to us does not alter the fact that a mass Communist Party has to be created to conquer capitalism. If we cannot be bold enough to risk the dangers of winning the workers and the workers' leaders who are near to us, who are being attacked by the capitalists and the reactionaries as Communists, how shall we win the workers who are farther away from us than these? How can we explain this phenomenon in the labour movement other than as a historic process of the working class finding its way towards a clear working class policy of which the Communist Party is the embodiment? We should welcome this process as the guarantee of our Marxian conclusion that a mass Communist Party will be formed in Britain as in every other country where capitalism has to be conquered by the working class. The only way our Party of to-day can prove that it is the real beginning of a mass Communist Party is seen in the measure it understands this process and shows itself capable of handling it. The 'left' forces are coming nearer to us and our task is not only to win them still nearer, but to set before them the fact that they can never carry through the revolutionary tasks for which they profess sympathy until they have joined with us in the making of a party equal to all that revolution will demand of it — a party formed not simply for parliamentary and propaganda purposes, but a party with its foundations in the factories, its units the factory groups, its purpose to lead in strikes, demonstrations, elections and in every phase of the political struggle, culminating in the seizure of power and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is this latter kind of party we are striving for in the efforts we are making to transform our Party on to the factory group basis.

But the 'left' movement in the Labour Party does not understand this yet. It has only got to the stage when it feels itself in sympathy with much for what we stand. All the implications of this they do not yet appreciate. But there are many political questions upon which we can fight together whilst maintaining our own political valuation of them and frankly explaining to them where we think they are wrong. Upon these issues we can form a united front, not simply a platform front, but a national organised fighting front....

To suggest that such a movement provides an alternative to our Party and functions as a barrier between our Party and the workers is to mistake through impatience the nature of the movement and to forget the kind of party that must be created for revolution. This movement is a movement of masses not ready for the Communist Party, but getting ready through experiences which we must help it to understand as we travel with it. If it is suggested that out of it a new Communist Party will be formed on the sly, then there is something remarkable about such a movement, and something radically wrong with our Party. Such reasoning will not meet the situation....

The Labour Party to-day has by no means finished its course. The working class is only at the beginnings of its revolutionary experience and education. The Labour Party will grow in numbers and strength as the working class in increasing numbers awaken to political consciousness. In the process, especially as the conditions of the workers become more difficult, the question of the ways and means of struggle will come increasingly to the fore until the bourgeois politics which dominate it today are cleansed from its ranks. This fight is already on. The attack on the Communist Party is the attack of bourgeois politicians to prevent the crystallisation of working class politics (which are fundamentally revolutionary) in the labour movement. They will split the labour movement, disrupt it, use constitutions, smash constitutions to achieve their object. We, on the contrary, fight against splits in the workers' organisations, and become the one party fighting for united working class action against capitalism. It is through this process and by these means that the mass Communist Party grows from the foundations of the Labour organistions of this country.

J.T. Murphy

THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT, THE LEFT WING & THE COMMUNIST PARTY

'The British working class is becoming gradually revolutionised. Slowly, but surely, the ground is being prepared for the creation of a real mass Communist Party in England. Small though the British Communist Party is at present, it is assured of a great future. The disintegration of the Labour Party is now inevitable. The dissatisfaction with the Right leaders is bound to increase. The time is not far off when the British Communist Party will lead under its banner large masses in the camp of the British trade union movement. ..The next most important task of the Comintern is to create a mass Communist Party in Britain.' — Zinoviev: 'Seven Years' In *The Communist International*, No. 6, Nov. 1924.

The decisive change in the British working class movement since the fall of MacDonald has now developed over six months. A number of big events have taken place, and several controversies have arisen as to our line. In view of the Glasgow Congress [May 1925] of the Communist

Party, it is important to estimate the results achieved and the stage reached, bearing in mind the two dominating factors which (as indicated in the quotation given above from comrade Zinoviev) govern our tasks in the present period in Britain:

1. Disintegration of the Labour Party; i.e., separation of the working class forces from bourgeois ledership and the growth of a class struggle opposition.
2. Creation of a mass Communist Party....

The question has been put as one of 'for' or 'against' assisting and supporting the development of a Left-wing Opposition. But on this there is not, and never has been, any controversy. The Party line has been clear on this for the past two years and more. The real question only begins after this has been taken for granted. The fundamental question is how this process of development through the Left-wing Opposition is to lead to the mass Communist Party and, more particularly, what must be the role and action of the Communist Party within the Opposition in order that we may reach to the mass Communist Party....

To lay down 'Helping the Left-wing' as the whole statement of the Party's task in the present process is to reduce the Party to a simple element of the Left-wing and to omit entirely the distinctive task of the Party. But it is this distinctive task of the Party (which may even sometimes involve 'attacking prominent leaders' **at the same time** as supporting the Left-wing in general) which must be clearly laid down, and on which the whole process through the Left-wing to the mass Communist Party depends.

The Problem of the Labour Party — what is the Role and Future of the Labour Party in relation to the Development of the Mass Communist Party?

This question, which has not yet been plainly brought out, will be found to lie at the root of the whole problem.

Comrade Zinoviev, in the above quotation, speaks of the 'inevitable disintegration' of the Labour Party. In my own article I spoke of the 'decomposition of the Labour Party in its old form' (i.e., as an alliance between bourgeois leadership and trade union masses). Comrade Martinov speaks of our 'liquidating the Labour Party.'

On the other hand comrade Murphy emphatically insists that the Labour Party is not decomposing ('Can it be described as a process of decomposition of the Labour Party? Assuredly not. Rather it is a process of clarification.' 'The fierce discussions raging throughout the Labour Party are **not** the signs of decay but the manifestation of life and vitality') and on this basis declares that 'the mass Communist Party grows from the foundations of the Labour organisations of this country.'

What is the implication behind this apparent opposition? Partly it is simply confusion of expression. The 'disintegration', 'decompositions', 'liquidation', which comrade Murphy attacks, is of the Labour Party as a Liberal or Menshevik workers' party, i.e., of its present character, basis and leadership — a consummation which comrade Murphy desires as much as any. The 'vitality' which he so loudly proclaims is of the masses — which nobody denies. But partly there is a real difference of view implicit which goes to the root of our outlook on the development of the British working class movement, and which it is necessary to examine in more detail....

The essential character of this outlook is that the Labour Party is treated as a basic permanent factor of the British working class movement. The Labour Party is not treated simply as a stage, a battleground, an expression of the pre-revolutionary phase of the working class advance, which is bound to break up, as the workers advance to the revolution. The Labour Party is treated as actually advancing into the revolutionary period, becoming a revolutionary organ — 'increasing in strength as the workers become more class conscious.'

The effects of this outlook are tremendous and significant. It means that the Labour Party inevitably becomes the centre of our outlook and propaganda. The Communist Party inevitably passes to a subordinate place in our treatment, and becomes an adjunct of the Labour Party. The whole effect and drive of our propaganda becomes to build up the confidence of the masses around the Labour Party, with the hope and implication that the Communist Party may eventually becomes its leader. This fundamental subordination to the Labour Party becomes the essential character of the daily propaganda of the Party.

Can we accept this outlook? A consideration of objective conditions will show that we cannot....

We must, therefore, count on the future probable split and break up of the Labour Party as an objective factor. To miss it out of our calculations, to give simply an idyllic picture of an evolutionary continuous development of the Labour Party to revolution — the Labour Party 'increasing in strength as the workers become more class conscious' — is to give a false and misleading picture of the line of development, which gives a complete misunderstanding of our tasks and can become the cover of a complete opportunist identification with the Labour Party....

The revolutionisation of the Labour Party inevitably means its disappearance, or even, as comrade Martinov says, its 'liquidation.'....

The uncritical presentation of the Labour Party as the essential organ of the working class, as the future revolutionary organ once the existing leadership is ovethrown, leads to a fundamental continual approximation to the Labour Government and continual blurring of fundamental differences between the Communist Party and the Labour Party, and a continual underestimation of our revolutionary tasks. Most of this is simply weakness of expression and confusion of thought, which is natural in a young party and not yet politically serious. But there does exist a definite tendency towards identification with the Labour Party, based on this fundamental misconception of the future role of the Labour Party and the line of revolutionary development, which has to be treated seriously. To treat the necessary fight against this as 'sectarianism' is a misunderstanding . . . .

The British working class movement is undergoing a process of revolutionisation as a result of the fundamental change in British conditions.

But revolutionisation demands a revolutionary transformation of the whole movement.

The eventual form of the new movement is inevitably, by universal experience, the mass Communist Party working through the widest mass organisations of the trade unions and the factory committees....

The first stage of change is the development of a limited Opposition within the old movement....

The limited Opposition which develops within the shell of the old movement is of tremendous importance, because it represents the rise of new forces, the advance of the working class towards revolution, the elements of the future revolutionary mass movement.

But it cannot **of itself** move forward to its goal. It is still politically bound. Its first old leaders and spokesmen are still linked and tied in many ways to the old movement.

These bonds must be broken by **conscious action** on our part. They cannot simply be broken by the 'natural process of events', the 'development of the struggle', the 'necessities of action', etc. All experience proves this, not least the all-important experiences of the two previous 'unrest' periods of 1911-14 and 1917-20....

Thus the task of the Party in the present period, in relation to the problems raised by the new developments of the British working class movement and the rise of the Left-wing, is two-fold:

1. To stimulate and help forward every advance that is revealed within the existing working class movement towards class consciousness and class activity, to assist in developing, organising and strengthening the Left-wing forces and to unite with them in the battle against the Right-wing leaders, and to work for and take part in the formation of a united Opposition Bloc on the basis of the class struggle.
2. To conduct at the same time, and in the midst of this developing movement of class struggle, an unceasing ideological fight for our fundamental revolutionary conceptions and tasks, and a relentless warfare against every form of illusion and confusion that stands in the way of the advance of the working class.

To omit either aspect of this twofold task is to fail in our task. To state that our task is simply to 'support the Left-wing' or to 'form a United Front with the Left-wing' is an inadequate statement. The Left-wing is not for us an objective in itself, but a means. The objective is the revolutionisation of the working class.

R.P. Dutt

THE COMING OF THE MASS COMMUNIST PARTY IN BRITAIN — A Reply to R.P. Dutt

...The policy I have outlined is not a policy of 'merely helping the Left-wing.' It gives a very definite and specific line for the development of the Communist Party as an independent party, contrasting the Labour Party with the Communist Party both in regard to its political line and its structure. It states concretely that one must continue to demand affiliation to the Labour Party, tell the Left-wing of its weaknesses, and how we must work with them.

The United Front And The 'Left'

If comrade Dutt will refer again to my article and read on he will find that I state specifically a number of political issues upon which we can form a united front with the Left-wing as a means to the development of our Party — a programme of action which has been adopted by our Party. For example I wrote, 'there are many political questions upon which we can fight together whilst maintaining our own political valuation of them and frankly explaining to them where we think they are wrong. Upon these issues we can form a united front, not simply a platform front, but a national organised fighting front. For example, are there not many Labour Parties who will agree with us in fighting for a new Treaty with Soviet Russia, for the rights of trade unions and political organisation of the workers in the colonies and dependencies of the British Empire, for scrapping the Versailles Treaty and the Dawes Report, for international trade union unity, for the Parliamentary Labour Party to be subordinated to the Labour Party Executive, and not vice versa; for a Labour Government to be selected and controlled by the Labour Party, for Communist Party affiliation and equal rights of the Communists in the Labour Party and trade unions; for the nationalisation of banks, mines, railways, with workers' control; for State and municipal housebuilding schemes by direct labour, etc.'....

It is quite correct to describe, and no one quarrels with the description that the structure of the Labour Party is a 'primitive' form of political organisation, but to argue quite mechanically that becuase the Norwegian Party split or the German Social-Democrats split, or the Italian or French Socialist Parties split, therefore, the British Labour Party will split at exactly the same stage on exactly the same issue is wrong. It would also be wrong to say the British Labour Party will not split, and indeed nobody says it will not split. Certainly I do not say that such will not be its fate. But what I have said, and what I repeat, is that the Labour Party is passing through a process of differentiation, in which the political thinking is becoming clearer, and that through this process, which accompanies the widening and deepening of the class struggle, the mass Communist Party will come into being through our winning of more and more workers to the ranks of our existing Party, through a proper application of the united front tactics.

The ultimate fate of the Labour Party I did not discuss. It was not in question. But approaching the Labour Party historically and analysing the process of differentiation going on within it, I indicated the lines upon which our Party could reap the results of this process and develop into a mass Communist Party, not through basing its policy upon splits, but by striving to so revolutionise it that the workers cast off the right-wing leaders and elect left leaders and Communists and come under the hegemony of our Party. This is by no means subordinating our Party to the Labour Party, or making the Labour Party the basis of all our activity. But so long as the Labour Party remains a compositon of the trade unions and Labour organisations, we cannot escape the task of drawing them into the path of revolutionary struggle, as the means of defeating the reformist leaders. It is not our task to split the Labour Party, although a split may be forced upon the Labour Party by the reactionaries, but certainly not by us. The task of revolutionising the 'whole movement' means also the revolutionising of the Labour Party, which comprises a very big percentage of that movement. The Communist International and our Party as a section of the International have undertaken this task on the basis of uniting the workers in struggle. This policy does not leave out of account the possibility of a split, but gives us a firm, determined line should a split occur, and that is — once again pursue the united front policy as a means of winning the masses, and winning those who remain under the leadership of the right-wing....

There is no alternative to the mass Communist Party to lead the working class to Communism, but at what stage the Labour Party will vanish and leave the field entirely to the mass Communist Party is another proposition.

The Leftism Of Dutt

Comrade Dutt is troubled with a leftist outlook in this regard. He is obviously afraid of the Labour Party treading the revolutionary path. He is scared almost to death at the prospect of the Communist Party ever getting its representatives on to the Labour Party Executive. He holds his hands up in alarm and shouts: 'The Labour Party is treated as actually advancing into the revolutionary period, becoming a revolutionary organ — increasing in strength as the workers become more class conscious.' The effect of this outlook is tremendous and significant. Indeed it is terrifying. But not half so bad as a Communist leader developing the leftist kink. Listen again: 'The trade unions and the Labour Party are the shell within which develops the movement of the masses towards the new revolutionary struggle. But neither the trade unions nor the Labour Party is capable of conducting the revolutionary struggle.'

Have we not heard this before? Is it not an echo of the old SLP, the IWW, the leftists of the Comintern Congresses who were unable to realise that it is only as the masses enter the path of revolutionary conflict with their unions and their 'electoral machines' (Labour Parties) that they learn the inadequacy of these instruments to secure and complete their victory? It is due to the shattering of illusions in the minds of the masses through actual experience that the development of the mass Communist Party becomes possible. But these struggles are not struggles separate and apart from the trade unions and Labour Parties. These latter are not brick buildings, but living combinations of human beings. They are neither 'shells' nor dance rooms in which the masses whirl about, but actually the masses conducting activities under limitations created by themselves. When in the course of struggle these workers find those limitations or constitutions standing in the way, they bend or break these limitations. For example, the Labour Party constitution was not formed for strike action. But 1920 saw a joint Congress of the Labour Party and the trade unions set up Councils of Action to conduct strike action against war on Russia. Was this not a revolutionary action?....

We are thus face to face at this stage with not a mere split in the labour movement, but the whole labour movement being pushed over to the left. Contrast the resolutions on the Trades Union Congress agenda with those of the Labour Party Executive. Can anyone doubt, with the preponderating weight of the unions in the Labour Party, that the line of struggle upon which the trade unions are being forced, and which now finds expression in its sharper class war declarations, will not force themselves upon the Labour Party? The Labour Party as the political expression of the unions cannot help but feel this pressure; it must feel the effect, and is feeling the effect. So much is this the case that everyone who has eyes to see is witness to a terrific struggle in the Labour Party between the middle class incubus, the thorough reactionaries such as Thomas, and the working class forces, who are increasingly in sympathy with the CP. This struggle may split the Labour Party, and yet it may not. Contrary to a split, it may cast off a number of leaders and pitch them into the Liberal Party or the Tory Party, or out of political life entirely....

What do these developments say to us?

They tell us that whatever splits there may be lying ahead of the Labour Party, there is also the possibility and probability of the whole labour movement swinging leftward under the pressure of the deepening class antagonisms. I do not mean to suggest for a moment that Thomas and Co. will become revolutionary, but because they have no other social basis than the working class, they

will travel with the working class along the path of revolutionary struggle in order to betray the revolution even as Ebert and Co betrayed it in Germany. For, let us make no mistake about it, the trade unions and the Labour Party must enter the revolutionary struggle, whatever their defects, because they cannot escape it. This is neither underestimating the role of the Communist Party nor the factory committees....

What then should be our line of action? Should it be that of working for a split in the Labour Party, because Thomas, Clynes and MacDonald refrain from splitting away from the trade unions and thus become identified with strike action and the like, as in the recent miners' dispute? Not in the least, but by keeping abreast of the struggle, by leading it along its logical and inevitable path, bringing them face to face with the masses before the realities of the fight, we shall expose them to the workers until the workers drop them out of the Labour Party and the labour movement....

Pursuing this course, our Party can face the question of splits, or no splits, in the Labour Party quite unperturbed. We are for the revolutionising of the Labour Party and the trade unions, and against splits. Splits at this stage of revolutionary history are the answers of the reactionaries to the demands for the revolutionary struggle. Our slogan is — Workers, Unite for Battle! This is the basis of our strategy and tactics, and not the 'inevitability of splits'. The 'decomposition of the Labour Party' and the liquidation of the Labour Party of which comrades Zinoviev and Martinov speak are the sequel to the successful application of our policy along the lines I have indicated, and which our Party is pursuing.

The two-fold task of our Party enunciated in conclusion by comrade Dutt is simply a rehash of the policy I had already outlined and translated into concrete propositions. The skittles he sets up concerning the future of the Labour Party now prove to be skittles indeed, for the exercise of his leftist proclivities. His approach to the problems of our movement in his two articles is not the approach of a Marxist, but that of an intellectual, who has lost touch with realities.

J.T. Murphy

BIOGRAPHICAL GLOSSARY

R.P. DUTT (1896-1974): One of the few intellectuals to join the Communist Party on its foundation, Dutt came to prominence in 1922 as chairman of the committee which supervised the reorganisation of the party. A member of the CP's executive committee from 1922 to 1965, he played a leading role with Pollitt in smashing opposition to the ultra-left lunacy of the Third Period and subsequently followed every twist and turn of the Kremlin's line with slavish devotion.

A. MARTINOV (1885-1935): A right-wing Menshevik before 1917, and an opponent of the October Revolution, Martinov only joined the CP in 1923. Became known chiefly as Stalinist theoriser of the 'progressive' role of the bourgeoisie, especially in relation to the 'bloc of four classes' in China.

J.T. MURPHY (1888-1966): A wartime leader of the Shop Stewards Movement who joined the Communist Party at its foundation and served on its leadership until 1932, when he was expelled for alleged 'opportunism'. Author of **Preparing for Power**.

'CLYDE GROUP': This was the label given to a number of Independent Labour Party MPs elected from the Clydeside constituencies, led by James Maxton and considered to be the left of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

RAMSAY MACDONALD (1866-1938): Founder with Keir Hardie of the Independent Labour Party, and leader of the Labour Party from 1911 up to the War, whereupon he resigned on pacifist grounds. In 1922 he became Leader of the Opposition and then Prime Minister of the first Labour Government in 1924. In the crisis of 1931 he, and a minority right wing, broke with the Labour Party and joined a coalition with the Tories. After being ignored for many years he is now being rehabilitated by the Tory press — a fact not totally unrelated to the present political situation in Britain.

J.H. THOMAS (1874-1949): An accomplished trade union leader, and a Labour MP from 1910, he served as Colonial Secretary in the first Labour Government. Both in 1921 and 1926 he played a key role in undermining support for the miners, and was chosen by MacDonald as a Cabinet member in 1929, subsequently following his leader into the National Government. One of his sons became a Tory MP.

G. ZINOVIEV (1880-1936): At the time of these articles he was President of the Communist International. At first a staunch supporter of Stalin, Zinoviev later joined the Trotskyist opposition in 1926, whereupon he was removed from his post and then expelled from the Russian Communist Party in 1927. However he recanted in 1929 and was eventually re-admitted, but in 1936 he was 'purged' in the Moscow Trials and executed.

THE SLP: The Socialist Labour Party emerged from the Social Democratic Federation in 1904 as supporters of the theories of Daniel de Leon. They advocated the founding of new industrial unions, combined with the 'capturing' of the electoral machinery. The SLP was influential in the strikes during the First World War and in the Shop Stewards Movement. Many of its members joined the Communist Party when it was formed in 1920 — one such was J.T. Murphy.

THE IWW: An American revolutionary industrial union founded in 1905, which at its height had 200,000 members in 1917. Although invited to join the Communist International it refused on the grounds that it was 'political', whereas the IWW was 'industrial'.

Ten Years Without Deutscher

KEN TARBUCK

Isaac Deutscher died on 19 August 1967, yet his influence and achievement still illuminate modern Marxism. How should we remember him? Merely as the biographer of Stalin and Trotsky? No, for to remember Deutscher merely for his historico-biographies would deny us the pleasure and education which can be derived from his many other writings. Nor should we solely remember him as a writer, for in his early youth he was a political activist and leader who worked in illegal conditions in pre-war Poland, and in his later years he also became an active political educator. The pleasure that we can derive from his writings arises from the clarity, precision, richness and culture with which he used the English language. Moreover, even in his English prose there is at times a lyricism that hints at his success as a poet in his very early youth. Inevitably, comparisons can be made between Deutscher and Conrad — both were Polish by birth and both wrote their finest works in English. But Deutscher's achievement is the greater of the two since he not only gave (and gives) us pleasure, he informed and taught — a rare combination. Moreover, his achievement has to be set against the fact that he had to hew his way forward, not only against the Stalinist perversions of Marxism, but also against the bourgeois environment that grudgingly tolerated him.

Deutscher was born in Chrzanow, which is nearly twenty miles from Cracow. The year was 1907, ten years before the Bolshevik revolution, the study and interpretation of which was to become the major, but not only, focus of his mature writings. The place of his birth was near the point of congruence of three empires, Russia, Germany and Austro-Hungary. His parents were Jewish and his father ran a printing business, given the overall situation he had a relatively educated environment in which to grow up, although he and his family were subject to all the disabilities and pogroms that befell the Jews. In this respect there is an affinity between Deutscher and Rosa Luxemburg. Both of them came from a cultural background that was truly European, and both extended their influence far beyond their original homelands. Moreover, both Deutscher and Luxemburg had more than a touch of the heretic in their personality and works.

I, personally, first became aware of Deutscher with the publication of his biography of Stalin in 1949. It was a major event in many respects, it marked his emergence as a writer of international significance and was the first appraisal of Stalin's careeer (up to that point) which came from an avowed Marxist who did not worship in Stalin's church. (I say this in spite of Trotsky's earlier book on the same subject, since it is incomplete and its published form is marred by its fragmentary nature and the long and politically vulgar incursions of the translator.) This is not to say, of course, that one was uncritical of Deutscher's work on Stalin. It has always seemed to me that in his desire for objectivity Deutscher was often prepared to give Stalin the benefit of the doubt when it was not warranted. However, this did not detract from the overall value and importance of the work. We should appreciate the courage of Deutscher in publishing this work when he did. The times were hardly propitious for scholarly and objective works about Stalin and the Soviet Union. With the outbreak of the 'cold' war in 1946, initiated by Churchill's Fulton speech, there was released a flood of vulgar and shallow writings on Soviet life, lies being judiciously mixed with the undoubted truth about the horrors of Stalin's rule. Moreover, all aspects of — and adherents of — Marxism were subjected to renewed assault by professional Kremlinologists. The more debased forms of this flood have only abated within the last decade. In this respect Deutscher stood out in stark contrast to the intellectual warriors of the 'cold' war. With his *Stalin* he firmly nailed his Marxist colours to the mast. He not only manned the 'watchtower' — as he modestly put it — but he also helped to keep alight the torch of Marxist scholarship in a world that seemed to be all but totally dominated by imperialism and Stalinism.

However, it was with the publication of the first part of his Trotsky trilogy, *The Prophet Armed*, in 1954 that Deutscher could be seen in his full maturity. I will not go into the disputes on this or that point in his work, since such disputes could only be marginal to his overall achievement. Stalin was by now dead, but he had yet to be dethroned by his acolytes, and the myths created in earlier times still subsisted. But Deutscher's biography of Trotsky began clearing away the 'mountain of dead dogs' which had been heaped on his grave. For those of my generation this book was both a fulfilment and a promise. It fulfilled our needs at many levels, it presented an overall account of Trotsky's titanic contribution to Marxism and the Russian revolution (up to 1921) and gave a panoramic view of the times in which Trotsky lived and moved. Deutscher also gave promise that Trotsky's ideas and strugges were neither irrelevant nor in vain. The account given was like a window being suddenly opened on a world that had almost been forgotten. It was the world of classical Marxism, of a truly Euro-Marxism that existed before 1914. The heirs to this classical Marxism had been the Bolsheviks and for the most part they had perished at the hands of Stalin. Moreover, the Euro-Marxism of this era was not intellectually bounded by the geographical contours of Europe but rather drew its sources from and analysed these on a world scale. It was also fitting that this biography of Trotsky should have been published in the year that French imperialism was decisively defeated at Dien Bien Phu (in North Vietnam), since this event — coming five years after the victory of the Chinese revolution — was a striking confirmation, if in an unforeseen manner, of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

Furthermore, this book restored Trotsky's rightful place in the history of the Russian revolution. In years to come Stalinist falsifiers, in the capitalist world at least, would have to try to come to terms with Deutscher's account. On this point Deutscher said:

'My account of Trotsky's role in the Russian revolution will come as a surprise to some. For nearly thirty years the powerful propaganda machine of Stalinism worked furiously to expunge Trotsky's name from the annals of the revolution, or to leave it there only as the synonym for arch-traitor... Trotsky's life story is already like an Egyptian sepulchre which is known to have contained the body of a great man and the record, engraved with gold, of his deeds;

but tomb-robbers have plundered and left it so empty and desolate that no trace is found of the record it once contained. The work of the tomb-robbers has, in this present instance, been so persistent that it has strongly affected the views even of the independent Western historians and scholars.'[1]

Deutscher had originally intended to write a one or two volume biography of Trotsky; in the event, as he later explained, the complexity and scale of his subject's life forced him to extend the work to a trilogy. We can see the foundations being laid in the above passage, taken from the preface of the first volume. Nearly a quarter of a century later it may, in turn, now seem strange and come as a surprise that Deutscher had to make these points, so changed has the intellectual climate become. Yet his work can be seen as part of the process of change itself, since it initiated innumerable young militants into the true history of their inheritance.

The trilogy was completed in 1963, and the last volume — *The Prophet Outcast* — was probably the most controversial as far as the Trotskyist movement was concerned. Deutscher had actually participated in some of the events he described in the book. He had been expelled from the Polish Communist Party in 1932 for his opposition to the suicidal 'third period' policies of the Comintern, and for his attempts — like Trotsky — to sound the tocsin against the advance of the Nazi barbarians in Germany. For a period Deutscher was associated with the International Left Opposition, forerunner of the Fourth International. However, he and the other Polish oppositionists disagreed with the founding of the Fourth International in 1938 and thus they parted company. But this disagreement did not mean a retreat from Marxism as in many other cases. The disagreement stemmed basically from a different evaluation of the viability of such a new International in a period of working class defeats, since the previous Internationals had been founded in periods of rising working class activity.

It is a curious contradiction in Deutscher's make-up that he should have failed to understand the **necessity** for the Fourth International precisely **because** of the working class defeats of the period, since in many ways it had to try to do collectively what he had tried to do individually by his withdrawal into the 'watchtower'. The Fourth International could never be a mere repeat — even in a different form — of any of the other three Internationals. This is not to say, of course, that Trotsky and the other founders of the Fourth International started out with the intention of such a withdrawal, but this was to be its historic role for many years. Nor did Deutscher understand that without such an organisation his own work would have been largely shouting in the wind, since those young people who were stirred by his writings could not have turned their message into meaningful activity without the prior existence of a political organisation.

Given his own evolution it comes as no surprise that Deutscher was highly critical of the last period of Trotsky's life, seeing all his efforts doomed to failure. One wonders if Deutscher's view of Trotsky's last struggle — to found and build the Fourth International — was not coloured by a desire, unconscious no doubt, to justify his own retreat from active politics into the 'watchtower'. Such a justification was hardly necessary since the corpus of his writings are ample testimony to his prodigious efforts and his unswerving commitment to socialism. Nor was his retreat complete or long-lasting; his activities, speaking, teaching and encouraging young people in their attempts to cleave a way towards a scientific understanding of the world they lived in, were manifold. In his last years Deutscher was a powerful catalyst upon the American scene and the burgeoning anti-Vietnam war movement in particular. Nor should his work upon the International War Crimes Tribunal be overlooked, since participation in that body meant an unequivocal stand against imperialist barbarism.

The only time I heard Isaac Deutscher speak was revealing of the man and his power. It was in the winter of 1963/64, and he had been invited to speak at a student meeting in Oxford. This was, of course, before the big surge forward in student activity that occurred a few years later, so there were probably only 50 to 75 people present. (In later years he was to address audiences of thousands.) Deutscher stood up after the chairperson had introduced him and apologised for not coming as well prepared as he thought he should have. He told us he had been suffering, and still was, from a heavy cold. He asked our indulgence and read us the script of the introduction to the Trotsky anthology he had recently completed.[2] Despite the obvious handicap he was under, his voice, slightly hoarse, gradually swept up and along his audience as he gave an incisive survey of Trotsky the man and his ideas, and their relevance to the modern world. We all sat rapt as Deutscher took us in our collective mind's eye out of that small room, away from the pervading dampness of an English winter, into the world of Trotsky, the man of action, of ideas and of classical Marxism. When he stopped there was a slight pause, as though no-one wanted to break the spell that Deutscher's words had woven, and then enthusiastic applause which seemed to last a long time. He sat down and rather deprecatingly blew his nose. The lecture and the gesture seemed to sum up the man: immense intellectual power, the use of language that enchanted, and modesty.

There was a passage in the lecture that struck me forcibly as being a powerful, yet simple exposition of Trotsky's theory of, and vision of, permanent revolution:

'Trotsky's theory is in truth a profound and comprehensive conception in which all the overturns that the world has been undergoing (in this late capitalist era) are represented as interconnected and interdependent parts of a single revolutionary process. To put it in the broadest terms, the social upheaval of our century is seen by Trotsky as global in scope and character, even though it proceeds on various levels of civilisation and in the most diverse social structures, and even though its various phases are separated from one another in time and space.'[3]

I am not suggesting that the above contains the whole of Trotsky's theory, but I feel that it does contain the essence. It brings out the essentially visionary quality of Trotsky's theory, but indicates that the vision is based on the grasp of the real and material processes taking place in the world system.

Needless to say, the book to which Deutscher referred has had a place among my own books ever since I was able to buy it. I doubly value it for Deutscher's contribution and Trotsky's.

If I seem to have mentioned classical Marxism several times so far, it is because it is a recurring theme in Deutscher's writings. Given his own intellectual roots this is hardly surprising. He explained what he meant by classical Marxism as follows:

'I hope I have explained in what sense I am using these terms — classical Marxism and vulgar Marxism. I shall perhaps sum up my argument: classical Marxism offers deep historical insight into the working of capitalism, into the prospects of the dissolution of capitalism, and, broader still, into man's relation under this system with other men, with his own class and other classes, his relationship and attitude to the technology of his age. Vulgar Marxism does not need all that insight; it is fully satisfied with a small fraction of all that understanding, which it places in the severely limited orbit of practical needs, practical striving, and practical tasks. We have here a historic hypertrophy of practice and an atrophy of thought.'[4]

Here, again, Deutscher was able to convey in simple,

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1. Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed, Trotsky: 1879-1921*, London, Oxford University Press, 1954, pp. v-vi.
2. See *The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology*, New York, Dell Publishing Co. 1964.
3. *Ibid.* p. 19.
4. Deutscher, *Marxism in Our Time*, edited by Tamara Deutscher, Cape Ltd. London, 1972, pp. 19-20.

concise language both the essentials and panorama of classical Marxism and contrast it with the withered and dessicated **ideology** that is embodied in vulgar Marxism. As is clear from all his writings, neither the warp nor the weft on their own can make the cloth whole. In this way he imparted a surer, deeper and more subtle understanding to what he undertook to analyse and explain.

Some clue to Deutscher's concern to ensure some unity in the traditions of classical Marxism can be apprised from his essays 'The Non-Jewish Jew' and 'Who is a Jew?'[5]. There he touches upon the liquidation of the Yiddish-Jewish culture of Poland and Central Europe by the extermination programme of the Nazis. Perhaps he worried that Stalinism would have the same effect upon the Marxist tradition that he drew his resources and inspiration from — and was a part of, enlarging it and endowing it with his own works. Deutscher's own understanding of the historical processes would, of course, have provided him with an assurance on this point, since the material foundations upon which the Yiddish culture grew could not be recalled from the dead; while the material foundations of Marxism are re-created every day under capitalism. Nevertheless, it must have been as agonising for him, as for Trotsky, to witness the destruction of the Bolshevik old guard and of the foreign exiles in Moscow by Stalinism; and at the same time the equally destructive rampage of fascism throughout the rest of Europe. Deutscher was also to witness the obscene trials that took place in the so-called 'People's Democracies' in the late forties and early fifties of alleged 'Titoists'. He certainly had an understanding of the terrible dilemmas and traumas inflicted upon many others by this period. He says, for instance, of Orwell's *1984*: **'*1984* is in effect not so much a warning as a piercing shriek announcing the advent of the Black Millenium, the Millenium of damnation.'**[6] Perhaps in his dreams he also gave such a shriek. If he did, he did not listen to it in his writings.

Given the nature of the times, Deutscher and the tradition that he cherished were driven into the margins of history. However, he was fortunate enough to live to see those margins once more begin to widen. Deutscher's own margin was particularly narrow at certain times in his life. Whilst working upon the research for and writing his books he had to earn his living as a journalist. This seemed to be his loss, since such work took him away from his major preoccupations, but to some extent it was our gain, since even the most hurriedly written articles had his particular stamp on them. Had he not been forced by circumstances he probably would not have written as much of the analysis of current events that he did, but against these gains we have to set the unwritten biography of Lenin.

Despite the apparent ease with which he used the tools of Marxist analysis he only came to his understanding and skill through an essentially auto-didactic process, as he told us in 'Discovering Das Kapital'.[7] Like many others who tread this path his first approach was not fruitful, since he attempted to study *Capital* more as a duty than a necessity. And, like many others, he failed at his first attempt, but later, when it did become a political necessity because of his expulsion from the Polish CP, Marx's work began to fall into place.

'I felt the need to re-examine my own political thinking and the principles of communism and Marxism. I decided to take nothing for granted. Could Stalinist policies and practices be justified in terms of Marxism? Has Marx's analysis and critique of capitalism stood up to the events of our time? These were the questions which troubled me, I made up my mind to plough through the whole of *Das Kapital*, all three volumes of it, and also the many-volumed *Theorien uber den Mehrwert*, Marx's history of economic doctrines. I was determined to scrutinise this whole intellectual structure coolly and sceptically and keep my eyes open to its possible flaws and cracks.'[8]

It was with this questing need for solutions to burning problems that Deutscher came to grapple with Marx. In reality there is no other way to do this, Marxism cannot be understood as a mere academic study — it has to be situated within the class struggle. Without the class dimension and the quest for answers, the visions of Marx elude one and the 'boundless horizons' that Deutscher found are constricted by academic anæmia. Whilst it may be possible to appreciate the soaring architectonics of Marx's writings as a work of art, a full appreciation can only come about by using them as a tool to unlock past, present and future. This Deutscher did. Moreover, if we are to unlock the future we must engage the present in unremitting struggle; and it is a measure of Deutscher's commitment to the socialist future that the present continually called him away from his interrogation of the past.

'The study of *Das Kapital* did not merely confirm me in my Marxist conviction... It also revealed to me the full depth of the gulf that lay between classical Marxism and the cynical expediences, the dull scholasticism, and the inquisitorial methods of Stalinism. Ever since, it has seemed as incongruous to blame Marx for Stalin as it would be to blame the Bible and Aristotle for the dogmas of the mediæval church and the Inquisition. It was as a Marxist that I went on opposing Stalinism.'[9]

How apt that Deutscher should draw the parallel between the Inquisition and the methods of Stalinism. In so doing he illustrated the power of the tool that *Capital* becomes when its methodology is mastered. And, in addition, Deutscher also discovered another essential truth when at a later stage he went back to re-read parts of *Capital*:

'Only in the last few weeks have I begun reading it anew. I have so far gone through the first three chapters, those reputed to be exceptionally involved and abstruse... I still find myself fascinated by the old familiar pages; but what strikes me about them now, as it never did before, is their essential simplicity.'[10]

The truth of this simplicity is something each reader, or rather those that are questing, discover with the same surprise. The puzzle is why is Marx considered to be difficult? The difficulties that new readers encounter are well-known, they often quail when confronted with *Capital*. Yet the essential simplicity that Deutscher perceived is also evident. How do we explain these apparent contradictions? A part of the problem for English readers was offered by Deutscher when he maintains that Marx is not easily translatable. '... Marx's style and language cannot easily be anglicized, although existing translations are far more clumsy and stiff than they need have been.'[11] However, this cannot be the whole explanation for these problems. We must also seek them in the dominance of bourgeois ideology, with its reified forms of intellectual activity.

Deutscher was able to extract what he saw as the essence of Marxism from his study. He claimed that it was:

'... not in this or that aspect of his (Marx's) analysis of the trade cycle or even in his views on the impoverishment, relative or absolute, of the working class, important though these views were politically... for me the essence of his analysis lay in what he says about the central contradiction of our social system, the conflict between the socialised process of production and the unsocial character of the control which capitalist ownership exercises over the process. Inherent in this is the worker's estrangement from his own labour, from the products of his labour, and from the structure of society which his labour perpetuates.'[12]

5. See *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays*, edited with an introduction by Tamara Deutscher, London, OUP, 1968.
6. Deutscher, *Heretics and Renegades and Other Essays*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1955, in the essay '1984 — The Mysticism of Cruelty', p.49.
7. See *Marxism in Our Time*, pp. 255-263.
8. *Ibid*. pp. 257-258.
9. *Ibid*. p.260.
10. *Ibid*. p.263.
11. *Ibid*. p.263.
12. *Ibid*. p.260.

Here he gets to the heart of the matter, since he emphasises the totalising capacity of Marx's theory, its ability to combine numerous aspects and different levels into a comprehensible whole, including the contradictions within that whole. This stands in sharp contrast to bourgeois ideology which tries to atomise scientific thought, as the bourgeoisie continually tries to atomise the working class. Since no-one arrives on the scene as a fully-developed Marxist (not even Marx did) the difficulties of *Capital* resolve themselves into the problems of the struggle to subvert and cast off bourgeois ideology. Moreover, this subversion can only take place through practical as well as intellectual struggle. If, today, looking at Deutscher's life with the 'superior' wisdom of hindsight we feel that he did not always seem able to truly combine these two aspects, we should remember this 'superior' wisdom is due in part to his own efforts.

Despite his proven anti-Stalinism there was an undoubted ambiguity in Deutscher's attitude towards the Soviet bureaucracy. By this I do not mean that he in any way doubted its reactionary essence, rather that he seemed to suggest at times that this bureaucracy might be peacefully put aside. In 1953, shortly after Stalin's death, he wrote: **'The economic progress made during the Stalin era at last brought within reach of the people a measure of well-being which should make possible an orderly winding-up of Stalinism and a gradual democratic evolution.'**[13] This evolutionist-cum-reformist perspective of the restoration of Soviet democracy has been confounded by the course of events in the last twenty-four years. In fact it had been largely confounded in Deutscher's lifetime, yet he never wholly gave up his hopes for this type of solution. In his last book which was published before he died he still said: **'What seems possible in the near future is that society should be able to retrieve its civil liberties and establish political control over the state.'**[14].

What Deutscher did not face up to was **how** these civil liberties were to be retrieved; it was not as though they had been accidentally mislaid and were just waiting for someone to come along and pick them up, there was the no small matter of the whole repressive apparatus of the bureaucracy to be dealt with. Where he was correct was to understand that the growth, education and consolidation of the Soviet working class, along with an extension of revolution, provide the material base for the destruction of the bureaucracy. However, as we have seen, these are necessary conditions for political revolution but in and of themselves they are not sufficient. Here we can see the other issues which divided Deutscher from Trotsky. While Trotsky had firmly set his face against the possibility of such a peaceful evolution, Deutscher clung to this idea as though afraid of the effects of a new revolution. His problem was that despite some very perceptive insights he was unable either to accept or to reject Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet bureaucracy. There is an undoubted change in nuance between his formulation of 1953 and that of 1967, but this basic ambiguity remains.

Despite his brilliance and scholarship Deutscher was firmly barred from an academic post that would have given him the financial security and conditions that he needed, so he worked on — praised but shut out.[15] Perhaps the academics really understood that Deutscher was a dangerous man — he was a man of principles, Marxist ones to boot, a rare combination in the wintry days of the 'cold' war. It was a measure of Deutscher's magnanimity that when the academic world finally deigned to give him token recognition — he gave the George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures in Cambridge in 1967 — he did not spurn it.

The title of these Cambridge lectures, when published, was *The Unfinished Revolution* and it is also perhaps a comment upon Deutscher himself. He was working on a biography of Lenin when he died, and in this respect his own life's work was unfinished. All that we have of this work is the fragment that was published as *Lenin's Childhood*.[16] It can only give the faintest hint at what the completed work would have been like. Had he finished it there is no doubt that it would have equalled his Trotsky trilogy, and probably been the pinnacle of his endeavours. He was not an old man when he died — at least by today's standards — and still had a great deal to contribute to both history and politics. Revolutionists make sacrifices in many ways, some die in heroic circumstances, others suffer great physical pain and hardship, still others sacrifice careers and families. Deutscher, also, paid the penalty for his devotion to Marxism, partly by the lack of security in his career, and partly by the intolerable strains created by the constant struggle against the stream — very often in isolation — in a hostile environment. He saw many of his family disappear in the death camps of Hitler, and was to be an exile from 1939 to the year of his death; and in the end his heart gave out.

The ten years that have passed since his death have only served to emphasise the debt we owe to Deutscher for his long years in the 'watchtower'. They have underscored the unique place he had, and still does have, in modern Marxism. It will be a long time before we see his like again. Meanwhile let us not mourn him, let us celebrate him in our individual and collective efforts.

13. Deutscher, *Russia in Transition*, London, Cape Ltd., 1969, second edition with an introduction by Marcel Leibman, p.166.

14. Deutscher, *The Unfinished Revolution: Russia 1917-1967*, London, OUP, 1967, p.107.

15. See the reference to the offer and then withdrawal of the offer of a post at Sussex University in Daniel Singer's essay 'Armed with a Pen' in *Isaac Deutscher: The Man and his Work*, edited by David Horowitz, London, Macdonald, 1971. There is also a useful select bibliography of Deutscher's works in this volume.

16. Deutscher, *Lenin's Childhood*, Introduction by Tamara Deutscher, London, OUP, 1970.

Review Article

THE STALIN PHENOMENON

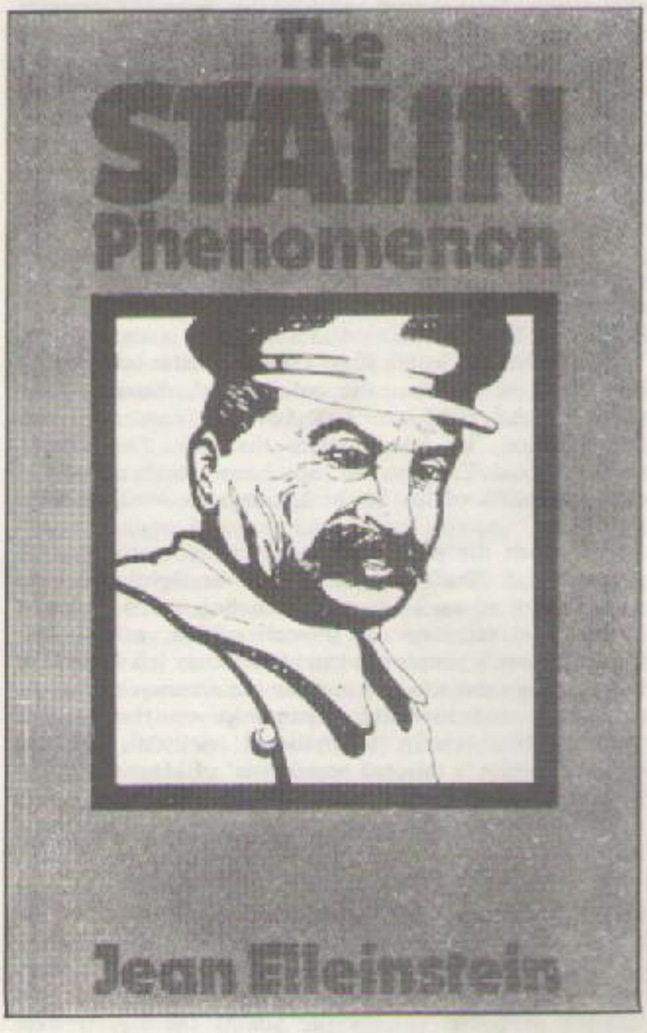
PIERRE FRANK examines the limits and significance of the French Communist Party's 'anti-Stalinism'

At last we can say, without being accused of anti-Sovietism, that in Moscow they imprison people because of their political opinions. At last we can say that *The Confession* is not an anti-communist film. At last we can protest against the foul blow dealt at Wolf Biermann by the government of the GDR. All this is possible today, now that Marchais has given the go-ahead. But why is it that what was yesterday still anti-communism and anti-Sovietism is no longer so today? From Marchais and the French Communist Party (PCF) leadership, today as yesterday, we get only peremptory statements, not explanations. Today as yesterday, we have to take their word for it.

If we want to know more about Stalinism, we have to turn to the man who is today the accredited historian of the PCF, Jean Elleinstein, assistant director of the C.E.R.M. (Centre for Marxist Studies and Research —an institution officially sponsored by the PCF), one of whose tasks is the training of PCF cadres on the question of the USSR. Moreover, he was recently the PCF candidate in the by-election in the 5th arrondissement of Paris, symbolising particularly the 'line of the 22nd Congress' of the Party. Armed with so many titles, he recently gave an account of *The Limits and Significance of the Khrushchev Report*. About a year ago he published a book entitled *The Stalin Phenomenon** which enables us to understand the limits and significance of the 'anti-Stalinism', if not of its author, at least of the PCF. For Elleinstein did not publish this book on such a delicate subject without having previously obtained the *imprimatur* of Place du Colonel Fabien (PCF headquarters).

This book contains many facts which make it very useful for convincing a Communist Party member who is incredulous with regard to the innumerable crimes of Stalin, the place occupied by Trotsky in the October Revolution and the creation of the Red Army, the lies emanating from Moscow concerning the situation in the Soviet Union, and so on. What an enormous difference from the literature of the past! Unquestionably it would produce a shock effect on anyone who has for years swallowed totally apologetic prose, and has been dazzled by brightly-lit scenarios devoid of the slightest shadow.

With this objective, it is necessary to make extensive use of



* Published in France in 1975 and in London (by Lawrence & Wishart) in 1976. All page references are to the English edition except in two instances where the passage cited has been omitted in translation (see Note 2).

this book, as was recommended by an article that appeared in the magazine *Quatrieme Internationale*[1]. We are going to deal with this book too, to show not what it can be useful for, but what in it must be rejected. Because, for anyone who did not wait for Elleinstein to come along to find out many of these things, his book is still not a truthful history of the Soviet Union and Stalinism. Just as a bottle which is half-full is also half-empty, a book dealing with history which contains even a few half-truths is still a book which lies. We shall not go through *The Stalin Phenomenon* page by page in order to pick out all the points which require clarification or correction (there would be too many), nor shall we discuss the distinction that Elleinstein makes between the terms 'Stalin phenomenon' and 'Stalinism'. We are not concerned with questions of semantics, but with his use of these terms in explaining what happened yesterday and what is happening today in the Soviet Union.

What he has retained of Stalinism

One point should be noted from the start: while Elleinstein recognises the role of Trotsky in the October Revolution, he is as dishonestly anti-Trotskyist now as in the past: 'We must realise that the Trotskyism of 1931 was not that of 1975, which is distinguished by anti-Sovietism and a dogmatic, backward looking strategy'(p.94) . He provides no proof for such statements, especially not the charge of anti-Sovietism. For him 'outdatedness' is simply our revolutionary strategy as opposed to the reformist road to socialism.

But anti-Trotskyism is not all that Elleinstein has retained of Stalinism. To that must be added the method of choosing the opponents who suit him, in the style of those 'weeks of Marxist thought' where the Stalinists are fond of discussing with all sorts of philosophical, historical and economic currents, while systematically ignoring those Marxists who do not align themselves politically on the current line of the PCF. He is just a little more skilful: he chooses what suits him in, for example, Trotsky or Deutscher, in order to shatter a Bettelheim. Nor does he hesitate to resort to amalgams to combat Trotskyism, talking, for example, about 'an Italian Trotskyite, Rizzi' (p.178), when it is common knowledge that the latter fought against Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union as a workers' state, and that Trotsky refuted at length Rizzi's theories, later taken up by Burnham, on 'bureaucratic collectivism'. Starting from an erroneous sentence of Rakovsky's concerning the Soviet Union, he falsely states that, 'In *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky did not seem sure' about the characterisation of the Soviet Union as a workers' state (p.178).

As regards the person of Stalin, he does his best to promote him: 'Stalin, on the eve of the Revolution, was charged with all sorts of tasks, including in the realm of international relations ...' (French edition, p.46).[2] This last suggestion is simply not true! Stalin only left Russia for two or three short stays abroad, *on the occasion of Russian congresses*, and to write a pamphlet on the national question. Not exactly 'international relations'. He also makes of Stalin 'a talented populariser' of Marxism (p.65). By contrast, he states that Trotsky 'was capable of greatness in troubled waters, in calm waters he was always mediocre' (p.54).

Elleinstein, rather like Alice in Wonderland, has some upside-down criteria of talent and mediocrity—and of the nature of historical periods, too. For our author, the period of the Revolution from 1917-23 is one of 'troubled waters', while that of Stalinism, when all the old Bolsheviks and millions of Soviet citizens (he admits the figure) were liquidated, is one of 'calm waters'.

A distorted history

At a stretch, let us concede Elleinstein the right to be mistaken about people and historical periods; he has the right not to like revolutionary storms and to prefer stagnant waters. But is it possible to distort the events which marked the rise of Stalinism more grossly than by writing: 'It is very significant that not one of the Party leaders — despite the disagreements they may have had in the 1923-27 period — questioned the political institutions set up in 1922' (p.53)?

This is manifestly untrue: on the one hand Trotsky, and on the other, 46 other Bolshevik leaders, demanded democratisation of the Party as early as 1923; this demand was reformulated in 1926 and 1927 by the Joint Opposition in a platform which also envisaged a substantial reduction in the state apparatus. Of this essential document Elleinstein has not a word to say. Nor does he tell the reader that, as far back as 1923 (in the case of Trotsky, as early as his 1922 report to the 12th Congress of the CPSU), the Opposition had been demanding industrialisation and planning. About this period he emphasises only the fact that Bukharin, unlike Stalin, wanted to proceed slowly with industrialisation of the country, and expresses his astonishment that Stalin should have launched into it at full speed. Short of referring to Trotsky, or even to Deutscher, whom he must consider too favourable to Trotsky, he could have based himself on Professor E.H. Carr (whose works he mentions only when they fit in with his theses) — a non-Marxist historian, but one who has both very conscientiously gathered an enormous amount of documentation and very skilfully utilised it to write the history of the Soviet Union. He would have seen: (a) that planning and industrialisation were accepted only after a five-year struggle by the Opposition against Stalin and Bukharin — the latter claiming to be building socialism even 'at a snail's pace' (15th Conference of the CPSU); (b) that both Stalin and Bukharin denied the kulak danger until the end of 1927; (c) that like the short-sighted bureaucrat he was, Stalin only began to make a turn about that time when be actually ran up against the obstacle, and then he embarked on a policy *apparently* close to that of the Opposition but with methods and rhythms which the latter had not at all advocated. Further on we will give still more examples of Elleinstein's manner of writing history.

It is true, on the other hand, that he correctly stresses the inadequate realisation of democracy, which did not take long to leave its mark on the progress of the Russian Revolution: '...insufficient democracy lies at the origin of the growth and triumph of the Stalin phenomenon' (p.101). He says, also very correctly, that the conditions of the Civil War, added to the historical backwardness of Tsarist Russia, acted strongly against democratic development in the country. But he insists on pushing the demonstration too far, thereby proceeding, whether intentionally or not, to an old argument of social democratic origin which has been taken up by all the enemies of Bolshevism.

It was Lenin's fault too!

Besides the objective conditions, Elleinstein argues, a certain responsibility for this absence of democracy, and hence for the 'Stalin phenomenon', devolves upon Lenin: 'The Russian and Soviet...experiment did not proceed via political democracy...Even Lenin, whose approach to this problem was, however, based on a sound theoretical understanding, always underestimated its importance because he started from his own experience in Russia and only assimilated democratic experiences from the outside... [He] can only visualise them through the distorted and distorting prism of his

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1. See the criticism of this book by J.F. Godchau in *Quatrieme Internationale* No. 22, Autumn 1975.

2. The Lawrence & Wishart translator must have been aware of the enormity of Elleinstein's assertion here, since this last phrase, 'including in the realm of international relations', is omitted from the English edition — without any indication to the reader that this alteration has been made. Perhaps Elleinstein would now like to make clear whether or not he approves the intentions of his English translator.

own experience...' (p.122). 'In 1918, and even in 1923, Lenin could not possibly know that, whilst *socialism* was a period of transition from capitalism to communism, it would last for decades and decades and that the state would take on an even greater role' (p.123).

What monstrous errors there are in these few lines. Thus Lenin, who wanted every cook to be able to fill governmental functions, *always* (that is what Elleinstein writes) underestimated the importance of democracy because he wore Russian spectacles which deformed his own experience! Not like those good French democrats, in the style of Marchais, who have good eyesight and distinguish things clearly in the limpid atmosphere of democracy and bourgeois parliamentarianism. Poor Rosa Luxemburg too, who, while polemicising at length against Lenin, on, among other questions, workers' democracy, ridiculed those who considered 'the farmyard of bourgeois democracy as the agency called upon to realise the most formidable social transformation in history'.

The second quotation from Elleinstein contains a whole Stalinist revision of Marxism. Neither Marx nor Lenin (in *The State and Revolution*) said that 'socialism was a period of transition from capitalism to communism in which the state would play a more and more substantial role'. They talked about two stages of communist society — a lower one which they qualified as socialist, and another, higher, which they called communist society proper. They differentiated these two stages by the fact that: (a) in the lower stage, the principle of distribution is: 'for equal work, an equal quantity of products', which still implies 'the narrow horizon of bourgeois right'; whereas the higher stage will be characterised by the maxim: 'from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs'; (b) in the higher stage of communism, in fact in the realm of abundance, the state will totally disappear, while in the lower stage, *as early as the taking of power by the proletariat, the state will only begin to disappear:*

'The current, widespread, mass, if one may say so, conception of the "withering away" of the state undoubtedly means toning down, if not repudiating, revolution. Such an "interpretation", however, is the crudest distortion of Marxism... Engels speaks here of the proletarian revolution "abolishing" the *bourgeois* state, while the words about the state withering away refer to the remnants of the *proletarian* state *after* the socialist revolution. According to Engels the bourgeois state does not "wither away" but is *"abolished"* by the proletariat in the course of the revolution. What withers away after this revolution is the proletarian state or semi-state... This "withering away"...is referred to by Engels quite clearly and definitely as belonging to the period *after* "the state has taken possession of the means of production in the name of the whole of society", that is, *after* the socialist revolution ... The supersession of the bourgeois state by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution. The abolition of the proletarian state, i.e. of the state in general, is impossible except through the process of "withering away"."[3]

The theory of Marx and Engels on the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the period immediately following the taking of power, started, it is true, from the notion that revolution would come about in a developed capitalist society. The problem was complicated by the fact that neither Russia nor the other countries where capitalism has been abolished were developed capitalist countries (excepting Czechoslovakia and East Germany, where the overthrow was accomplished essentially by outside military intervention). Because of this, these societies, where it was necessary first of all to carry out the task of 'primitive accumulation' that the preceding regime had not fulfilled, are today still societies in transition to socialism (the lower stage of communism), rather than socialist societies proper.

Most important of all, neither Marx nor Lenin envisaged that, after the taking of power, social inequalities would be accentuated and the state would play a more and more substantial role — as was the case under Stalin, who tried to justify his policies theoretically. It was he who maintained as early as 1935 that 'socialism' had been *achieved* in the Soviet Union, and that it was going to proceed to the next phase, that of communism. It was also he who invented the 'theory' that the further one advances in building socialism, the more the class struggle sharpens, leading not to the 'withering away' of the state, but to its strengthening as a repressive apparatus, through, among other things, the Moscow Trials. On this plane, Elleinstein has retained virtually all of Stalinist 'theory', but he does not want the repression: it's illogical on his part. We may be mistaken, but we do not think we came across a single reference in his book to the withering away of the state.

To afford the luxury of a revolution . . .

According to Elleinstein, the circumstances which led Lenin to underestimate democracy and to regard its violation as a norm of the socialist revolution also produced the strategic error of the Comintern for the advanced capitalist countries. In fact ... 'What appeared to be the norm in 1919 was to be revealed as exceptional over the following years, and as a result the overall strategy (originally) adopted by the Communist International proved not to correspond to the facts of the real situation in the capitalist countries. On the other hand, it was to correspond much more closely with the situation in the colonial countries, where the national liberation movement was capable of pushing people towards the socialist revolution along paths which were historically different from those of the Russian Revolution, but resembled it in as much as democratic processes played a small part' (p.124).

The strategic schema, that is, speaking clearly, the revolutionary road, is supposedly the exception; but has the other solution, the parliamentary road of gradual development of bourgeois democracy, which is meant to be not the exception but the rule, ever given victory to socialism? That is a question that Ellenstein does not ask himself. Should the revolutionary road have been followed in France and Italy after the Second World War? Let us listen to our strategist of socialism: 'These two countries had been liberated by the Anglo-Saxons, and even if their peoples had so wished, which was not the case, they could not afford the luxury of a revolution which the Americans and British would have drowned in blood without the USSR being able to intervene...'(p.141).

'The luxury of a revolution' — to allow yourself that, you have to be Vietnamese, faced by half-a-million GIs, after having fought Japanese and French troops. Good Europeans, whose ancestors won them some rather fragile democratic rights which do not please the Ku Klux Klan and Nazis of all stripes, cannot reach socialism via the revolution. Instead, they will have luxury coaches to take them there.

What, too, can one say about the 'slight importance of democratic processes' for the countries which were colonised before overthrowing capitalism? They can put up with a cut-price socialism. It's not exactly a racist statement, but it stinks all the same.

Thermidor

We come now to another example where Elleinstein, speaking as a historian, tries to pass off Stalinism as the strengthening of the socialist revolution, which Trotsky supposedly didn't understand: 'Trotsky had not grasped the fact that Thermidor was the prolongation of the bourgeois revolution with other forms, other methods, and even with other men. Bonaparte consolidated the bourgeois revolution just as Stalin was carrying on the socialist revolution' (p.87).

The notion of Thermidor was employed in the Soviet

3. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, Peking 1970, pp. 19-20.

Union in a way that was often confused during the years of the rise of Stalinism. In February 1935, Trotsky admitted this and wrote a self-critical pamphlet to give his *definitive* opinion on the question. We can read there the following:

'Thermidor in 1794 produced a shift of power from certain groups in the Convention to other groups, from one section of the victorious "people" to other strata. Was Thermidor counter-revolutionary? The answer to this question depends upon how wide a significance we attach, in a given case, to the concept of "counter-revolution". The social overturn of 1789 to 1793 was bourgeois in character. In essence it reduced itself to the replacement of fixed feudal property by "free" bourgeois property. The counter-revolution "corresponding" to this revolution would have had to attain the re-establishment of feudal property. But Thermidor did not even make an attempt in this direction. Robespierre sought his support among the artisans, the Directory among the middle bourgeoisie. Bonaparte allied himself with the banks. All these shifts — which had, of course, not only a political, but also a social significance — occurred, however, on the basis of the new bourgeois society and state. *Thermidor was reaction in operation on the social foundation of the revolution* ... The present-day Kremlin Bonapartism we juxtapose, of course, to the Bonapartism of bourgeois rise and not decay ... From the standpoint that interests us, the difference in the social basis of the two Bonapartisms, of Jacobin and of Soviet origin, is much more important. In the former case, the question involved was the consolidation of the bourgeois revolution through the liquidation of its principles and political institutions. In the latter case, the question involved is the consolidation of the worker-peasant revolution through the smashing of its international programme, its leading party, its soviets...Napoleon waged a struggle not only against the feudal world but also against the "rabble" and the democratic circles of the petty and middle bourgeoisie...Stalin guards the conquests of the October Revolution not only against the feudal-bourgeois counter-revolution but also against the claims of the toilers, their impatience and their dissastisfaction; he crushes the left wing that expresses the ordered historical and progressive tendencies of the unprivileged working masses; he creates a new aristocracy by means of an extreme differentiation in wages, privileges, ranks, etc."[4]

We can see that Trotsky really had not 'grasped' the significance of the bourgeois Thermidor and that of the Stalinist Thermidor! He would have needed the illumination of an Elleinstein to do that. 'Under other forms, with other methods, indeed with other men', the latter tells us. Then how? Stalin 'continued' the socialist revolution by eliminating every atom of democracy in the Soviet Union and by executing the overwhelming majority of the leaders of and participants in the October Revolution. Everyone consolidates the revolution in their own way.

The nature of the 'Stalin phenomenon'

But what then is at the bottom of this 'Stalin phenomenon', according to our historian? He has a sentence which deserves to be passed on to posterity: 'It was a phenomenon restricted in terms of time and place and not a historical necessity universally true of socialism, whether past, present or future' (p. 60).

A phenomenon 'limited in time and place'? In this earthly world of ours, what is there, apart from the Holy Ghost, phantoms, ectoplasms and suchlike, which is not 'limited in time and place'. Socialism and communism will be too. Certainly, Stalinism was not an inevitable, fatal, necessity, even in the Soviet Union — the Trotskyists said so a long time ago and that is precisely why Trotsky and the Opposition fought against Stalinism from the moment that it took its first steps. What then is the social nature of this phenomenon 'limited in time and place'? Elleinstein calls into question the party and state bureaucracy, but he does so in terms that have to be closely studied:

— 'The number of civil servants increased to a significant and unproductive extent. Often Party full-time workers and functionaries in the state machine enjoyed material, political and intellectual advantages which gave them certain privileges compared to other people. However, since it is contrary to the facts, one may hardly talk of a new class of "privileged" bureaucrats, as did some Trotskyites in the thirties and later' (p.83).

— 'It may be conceded that a — minimal — part of the product of labour which was not shared out among wage-earners (in the form of wages) and which the state took was monopolised to a disproportional extent by the state and Party functionaries. Indeed, this is a consequence of the phenomenon of bureaucracy, but the difference between this and talk of surplus-value and a bureaucratic class is huge. These benefits...enable some people to live better than the other Soviet citizens....but for all that, this does not constitute the creation of a bureaucratic class. Social injustice does exist under socialism, that is true, but how utopian it was to have thought it could not' (pp. 179-180).

— 'It's true that the Stalin phenomenon was bureaucratic, but that means that the role played by offices was more important than that of the masses and that administrative decisions outweighed economic stimuli. This meant that the economy could be mismanaged, the towns badly administered, and the kolkhozes badly run, because decisions were taken by civil servants who were incompetent, irresponsible, or who either did not face up to their responsibilities, or who were corrupt...This evil is not specifically socialist...It is observed in all the capitalist countries' (p.180).

In the first place, what is 'contrary to the truth' is to attribute to Trotsky and the Trotskyists, including those of today, the opinion that the Soviet bureaucracy is a *class*. How many disputes and how many splits has the Fourth International known on this question of whether the bureaucracy is a new class or a privileged social category of the workers' state! The Army and the Church constitute not classes, but social categories. But that does not prevent them, in certain circumstances, from running a society based, for example, on capitalist property relations. In the Soviet Union, property relations are of a socialist character; nevertheless it is not the proletariat but the bureaucracy which, since Stalin, has despotically run this society.

In the second place, Elleinstein deliberately minimises the advantages and privileges enjoyed by the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. He says, moreover, that you have to be a utopian to think that social injustices could not exist under socialism. That is true, but it is not the point. Under Stalin, the regime did not struggle, as it should have done, against social injustices in the construction of socialism; *it increased them*. Its whole policy went in that direction, *at the expense of the workers*. Here again Elleinstein revises Marx and Lenin, forgetting that they enthusiastically approved of the decision of the Paris Commune to pay its elected representatives and functionaries a salary not exceeding that of a skilled worker, as a means of struggle against bureaucracy. The young Soviet regime, despite itself, was not able to do as much. Because of scarcity and the defection of cadres of the state and the economy, it was able, in the first few years, to respect this norm only in the case of members of the Communist Party. Even this rule was revoked when Stalin became master of the Party.

In the last analysis, Elleinstein sees in the bureaucracy not a privileged social category, but only bad methods, incompetent and irresponsible people — just like in a capitalist society. But, under a capitalist regime as well as in the Soviet Union, there is no shortage of competent, responsible, uncorrupted bureaucrats. You cannot explain a social regime or political structures by means of individual blemishes. Elleinstein differs totally from the Trotskyist

4. Trotsky, *Writings 1934-5*, pp. 168 and 181.

conception of the regime in the Soviet Union as one based on a privileged bureaucracy, which, to maintain itself and extend its privileges, struck ruthlessly and executed those who took up the defence of working class demands. Unable to find a stable social position corresponding to the new relations of production, this bureaucracy found itself forced to try to set up a supreme arbiter in the person of an individual around whom it celebrated a cult.

Socialism in one country

Elleinstein takes up the defence of the 'theory' of 'socialism in one country': 'The opposition, in 1923 or in 1925-26, was greatly at fault not to grasp the necessity of this slogan, which the rural masses could understand because it implied the renunciation of offensive revolutionary war and adventurism' (p.57)...'Socialism in one country was the only possible path just after the defeat of the revolution in Europe' (p.187).

He invokes, not the sophisms that Bukharin came up with to justify 'socialism in one country', but more prosaic themes. Basically, for him, to be a partisan of the international revolution is to be an adventurer who advocates an offensive revolutionary war — which is a dishonest distortion of the opinions of the Opposition. For him, it was necessary to manufacture an ideology for the peasants and more generally for the exhausted masses — an ideology which clearly suited bureaucrats who felt that the revolution had lasted long enough and that it was time to rescue the privileges and other advantages necessary for a better life.

Elleinstein recognises that Hitler's coming to power 'was a field in which Stalin bore a heavy responsibility' (p.91). But he fails to see that the Stalinist policy of the so-called 'Third Period', which furthered Hitler's victory by opposing the workers' united front against Nazism, was one of the most harmful fruits of the 'theory' of 'socialism in one country'. Stalin considered that in order to build this socialism in peace within the frontiers of the Soviet Union, the coming to power of Nazism (which, it seemed to him, would create an unstable regime) was preferable to the existence of a government including the Social Democratic adjunct of world imperialism.

On this subject, let us add that Elleinstein presents Bukharin as having recognised, in contrast to Stalin, the danger that Nazism represented for the Soviet Union. In support of this argument he invokes a few lines of a speech made at the 17th Congress of the CPSU in 1934 (*thus after the coming to power of Hitler*) — lines which are, moreover, drowned in a eulogy of Stalin, and which advance no alternative policy to his. On the other hand, Elleinstein devotes not a line, not one word of his book to the very numerous and remarkable texts of Trotsky between 1929 and 1933, warning against the danger of Hitlerism and advocating a United Front of the Communist and Social Democratic parties to combat it[5]. Texts which earned him the most infamous Stalinist calumnies, paving the way for the future 'Moscow Trials'.[6]

Still in the realm of Stalin's foreign policy, let us mention, to finish with, another lie — there is no other word for it — from our historian of the 'Stalin phenomenon'. After the coming to power of Hitler, it was necessary, according to him, to turn to another policy: 'The only strategy likely to bar the way to Nazism and the other kinds of Fascism: "Democracy or Fascism" '(p.92). The policy which resulted from this was the Popular Front. But, he adds: 'The 7th Congress of the Comintern in 1935 confirmed this approach [the Popular Front]. Unfortunately the Stalin phenomenon hindered the application of this new policy and largely prevented it being given the required theoretical dimension' (p.204).

This is quite untrue: the policy of the Popular Front, particularly in France and Spain, was never hindered by Stalin. We have found no reference in Elleinstein's book to the Spanish Revolution, where the Popular Front strategy of 'democracy or fascism' was applied, with the results that we know. Those who argued at the time, in a more or less developed fashion, that to defeat fascism it was necessary not to rely on bourgeois democracy, since fascism fed on precisely the inability of bourgeois democracy to shore up the capitalist system; those who said that fascism could only be defeated by carrying through a socialist revolution, were accused then of being 'Hitlero-Trotskyists'. The Moscow Trials, the first one of which practically coincided with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, were in fact so many dagger blows dealt by Stalin against the Spanish Revolution, just as much as against the Soviet Union itself.

Survivals of Stalinism . . . in the psychiatric hospitals

Before we turn to investigate Stalinism nearer home, we may ask what has become of the Soviet Union today? Here is what Elleinstein says: 'The manifestations of "new Stalinism" which are to be found there [in the Soviet Union] are survivals from the past, manifestations which recur as a result of habits, established administrative structures and of mental attitudes which, as is well known, are hard to change' (p.217).

The publications banned by the censorship, the deportations to the camps, the expulsions from the country, the internment of oppositionists in psychiatric hospitals, the military intervention in Czechoslovakia to impose a new Central Committee on the Communist Party, etc ... all these are only survivals from the past, due, like the whole of the 'Stalin phenomenon', to the habits of Russians who have never known democracy. Besides, it's so difficult to change people's mentality...I could be listening to my grocer: in these words of Elleinstein his petty-bourgeois mentality is revealed in all its nakedness.

Is the aim of the workers movement not to change society, and thus habits, attitudes of mind, morals? If the leaders of the Soviet Union are particularly inert in this field, what should the working masses of that country do? What programme does Elleinstein propose to them? On that point you will find nothing in his book. We presume that this is done in the name of non-interference in the affairs of a fraternal party, that hypocritical formula which has permitted the Western Communist Parties to sing the praises of the Soviet Union on every subject, no matter how irrelevant, but to say nothing about the crimes that have been committed: at the very most today, several decades later, they can manage to say rather unconvincingly that they no longer approve of certain actions of the Kremlin leaders; no more than that.

It's the fault of the Comintern and others!

Let us leave the internal and external policies of Stalin on the govermental level, because there is more to the 'Stalin phenomenon' than that. In spite of the 'theory' of socialism in one country, Stalinism did not remain confined within the borders of the Soviet Union and did not refrain from interference in fraternal parties; on the contrary, it affected every Communist Party in the world. What Elleinstein writes

5. See *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (London: Penguin, 1975).

6. In his book, Elleinstein also makes, with regard to Nazism, an incursion into another realm than that of Stalinism. He writes: 'The great democratic capitalist states of the West had not grasped the novel character of Nazism and the threat to civilisation that it represented...' (p.120).

Ignorant wretches that we are, we thought that there existed capitalist imperialist democracies, concerned with surplus value, and not 'democratic capitalist states', interested in civilisation. It's probably 'Trotskyist dogmatism' to say that Churchill, Roosevelt and de Gaulle made war to defend the positions of their own imperialisms against the claims of German imperialism.

on this subject is, let us say, at least as inexact as what he writes on the Soviet Union. Why did the Communist Parties faithfully follow Stalin in all his lies and crimes? For Elleinstein, it was quite simply the fault of the Comintern: 'The foreign Communist Parties claimed that they were lies and bourgeois propaganda .... information mainly filtered through via Soviet turncoats who had fled to the West (Krivitsky, Orlov, Krawchenko), via Trotsky and Trotskyites, and via university study centres in the imperialist countries...The Communist Parties and their leaders had all been trained by the Comintern. The Communist International had made the unconditional defence of the Soviet Union one of the pillars of its policy...' (p.152).

It was also a little the fault of Stalin's victims: 'How could people have any doubts about the plot when they heard Zinoviev or Kamenev declare that they were agents of the Gestapo and had plotted the assassination of members of the Politburo...' (p.109).

Add the 'cold war' and you will understand how 'so many people of good will, especially abroad' could have been taken in for so long by Stalin (pp. 86-7). It is true that a very large number of workers believed all the lies, believed all the Stalinist infamies. But what can one say of those 'well-meaning' leaders of the Communist Parties who, even well after the Comintern had been dissolved, did not know, did not know a thing! As we check these pages, the Political Bureau of the PCF has just said that it kept silent about the Khrushchev Report because its delegation to the 20th Congress of the CPSU was asked to say nothing. Today, it is their turn to confess, to make 'confessions' that no-one and no terror has extracted from them; they knew, but they said nothing, and that did not start in 1956. Certainly all the members of the Central Committee 'did not know' in quite the same way. Perhaps some particularly unintelligent ones even understood nothing of what was going on. But the real leaders, the ones on the Political Bureau, knew; they knew very well what was happening in the Soviet Union and they *approved* — these fine people, who claim to be highly qualified, indeed the only qualified, leaders of the workers movement, were nevertheless incapable of seeing that in the Soviet Union the Kremlin was committing crimes against socialism. They knew — we would like to give a proof which has probably escaped the person who provided it. During the recent discussion which followed the showing of the film *The Confession* on French television, Arthur London, the author of the book[7], was asked by a viewer why he had not proclaimed his innocence before the tribunal which judged him, why he had not repudiated the statements which had been forced out of him under torture. His reply was, in essence: Such an action would have been of no use. I remembered that when Krestinsky — the former Soviet Ambassador to Berlin and former secretary of the Bolshevik Party — had tried to retract his statements, they had cut off the microphone and taken him out of the court; and at the following session he confessed to everything they had made him say. This happened at the third 'Moscow Trial' in 1938, where Krestinsky was a defendant along with Bukharin and others. Thus London had noticed this incident and still remembered it twenty years later, thereby showing that in his heart of hearts he knew the essence of what had happened in Moscow during those years of the apogee of Stalinism. Like other Communist leaders, he probably did not understand the motives behind Stalin's policies — his book illustrates that he has grasped the mechanism of the regime but not what Stalinism is; but it was a situation in the face of which he considered himself powerless and which he thought he would be able to get through with the hope that nothing would happen to him personally.

They knew and they used the same methods

Not only did top leaders like Thorez know, but they applied similar methods, and policies identical to those of Stalin, minus state power. Elleinstein tries to tone down as much as possible the PCF's policies and methods, to the point of changing their basic features: 'Even the Western Communist Parties practised it [the Stalin cult] in a modified form' (p.199)... 'There was undoubtedly a certain sliding in the attitude of the PCF towards Stalin, whose cult it had been induced to celebrate on several occasion ... On the theoretical level it had not been spared from Stalinist dogmatism, but it would be contrary to the truth to derive from that an argument against the policies followed by the PCF, which in fact had a profoundly democratic practice' (French edition, p.245).

It is all rather like the case of the unfortunate virgin who gave birth to a child, but only such a little one... Elleinstein's formulas are so convoluted that the reader may imagine the PCF to have practised only the cult of Stalin and not that of Thorez. Only he has forgotten the bulletins and campaigns of recruitment to 'the party of Maurice Thorez', the domestic servants, the villas and other little gifts for the 'first Stalinist of France'.

Rouge has already recalled the methods employed against Marty and Tillon, described by the latter in a book quite appropriately entitled *A Moscow Trial in Paris*. Tillon made 'confessions' after having been forced to write text after text until he produced one that suited the leadership. He thus with difficulty secured for himself a paltry pardon. Later, when in May '68 he plucked up courage again, defended the 'Marcellin-Leftists'[8] and denounced the treatment to which he had been subjected, he was expelled. As for Marty, who consistently refused to yield to this treatment, to real moral torture, he was witch-hunted out of the party as a 'policeman'; today, they will tell you, *mezzo-voce*, that he was a bad character. Policeman or bad character, such a minor distinction! The 'cases' of Marty and Tillon had nothing to do with the 'defence of the USSR'. All the same, it is Elleinstein who tells us that the PCF always respected democracy...

Let us take another example. In his book Elleinstein writes: 'In biology, Lysenko became the high priest of an anti-scientific "church" which criticised Mendel's theses, which were considered to be idealistic' (p.149).

Lysenko 'criticised' Mendel's theses. What a euphemism! A 'criticism' which consisted of driving from the laboratories, and even having imprisoned, a whole top layer of Soviet scientists! But is the PCF white as the driven snow on this question? In default of knowing what happened in the Soviet Union, the 'historian' Elleinstein ought at least to know the history of his own party. When Lysenko's star appeared in the Moscow firmament, there was, among the members of the Central Committee of the PCF, a scholar, biologist and Sorbonne professor, who had furthermore belonged to the general staff of the Francs-Tireurs during the Resistance: his name was Marcel Prenant. He stood up against Lysenko's theses, saying that they were not scientifically grounded. Another member of the Central Committee, Aragon, whose qualifications in the realm of biology are still unknown to the world, published a special number of the magazine *Europe* in support of Lysenko's theses. It was Prenant who was excluded from the Central Committee, the first step towards his departure from the Party. But Aragon is still there, and no-one has yet heard the slightest 'self-criticism' from him or from the party on the Lysenko question.

We could easily write page after page on various subjects, with plenty of quotations in support, to illustrate to what degree the PCF followed Stalin — this party which, even among other Communist Parties, was considered for a long

7. For an English translation, see Arthur London, *On Trial*, London 1970.

8. This was the slanderous amalgam employed by the PCF leadership to characterise the far left in 1968. Marcellin was then the Gaullist Minister of the Interior.

time (at the least, until two or three years ago) as the Kremlin's favourite son, just as France was the favourite son of the Catholic Church. We will limit ourselves to a single example of substance.

'Laissez-les Vivre'

Because there are better and worse examples, it is very much a matter of taste. In his 'construction' and 'consolidation' of socialism, Stalin made the Soviet Union take a big step back in the spheres of women, the family and children, abandoning the bold attempts of the young revolutionary régime and, among other things, banning abortion in a most scandalous fashion. Trotsky, in *The Revolution Betrayed*, expressed his indignation in vigorous terms. 'The philosophy of a priest endowed also with the power of a gendarme', to condemn the remarks of the Stalinist jurist Soltz, who explained that since there were no unemployed in socialist society, a woman had no right to reject 'the joys of motherhood'.[9] And what did the leaders of the PCF do on these questions, under the impetus of Maurice Thorez and Jeannette Vermeersch? They unhesitatingly followed in Stalin's footsteps, condemning abortion and contraceptive methods in terms which — minus the reference to socialism — would have done credit to the publicists of *Laissez-les Vivre* (the French equivalent of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child).

In the '50s, Jeannette Vermeersch denounced abortion and contraception in the following terms: 'Working class women do not seek right of access to the vices of the bourgeoisie'. Francois Billoux, in an article in *France Nouvelle* entitled 'The Right to Motherhood', expressed himself thus: 'We explain to mothers and prospective mothers that the solution to their difficulties does not lie in the clandestine abortion of today, any more than in legal abortion tomorrow, nor in the use of methods of contraception.' Maurice Thorez carried the question onto a 'theoretical' plane: 'The party cannot adopt an anarchistic theory at the moment when it is making big steps forward as the guide of the nation, bearing the hope of our people.'

At the 14th Congress of the PCF (Le Havre, 1956) he had persuaded the party to adopt theses in which we can read: '...the ruling classes prefer to propagate the inhuman doctrines of neo-Malthusianism, *degrading for the individual, brutal for the country*. Neo-Malthusianism, an ultra-reactionary concept, brought back into fashion by the ideologues of American imperialism, is a weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie, to divert the workers from the struggle for immediate demands, for bread, for socialism.'

Neo-Malthusian concepts are one thing, abortion and contraception something else entirely. One can defend the latter without in the slightest sharing neo-Malthusian ideas. In any case, doctors and journalists who were members of the PCF had enormous difficulties with the leadership at this period. There were even expulsions from the Party over the question. Today, the PCF is taking up new positions so as not to be left behind the majority of the public opinion. But we have never heard of any 'self-criticism' whatsoever by the Party. So where were the democratic policies of the PCF? Moreover, despite changes in these fields, the PCF is still today only at the level of the dullest petty-bourgeois morality.

Thorez . . . anti-Stalinist

In his zeal to embellish his party and its leaders, Elleinstein pushes things a bit far. Mentioning Thorez's statement to *The Times* of 19 November 1946, in which he envisaged the march towards socialism taking other roads than the one followed by the Russian Communists, Elleinstein writes: 'This statement...nevertheless marked a crucial date in the rejection of Stalinist theory by the General Secretary of one of the most powerful Communist Parties in the capitalist world' (p.205).

Thorez, champion of the struggle on the theoretical level against Stalinism — now we've seen and heard everything. This statement did not reject Stalinism either theoretically or politically; it simply stated for the first time, after many years of practice, that the policy followed by the PCF was not a revolutionary policy like that of the Russians in 1917, but a reformist policy. As was the case with Social Democracy, this theorisation came several years later, as a confirmation of day-to-day practice.

It seems to us that we have illustrated sufficiently the political limits of the PCF's 'anti-Stalinism', without forgetting that Elleinstein is still the one who so far has advanced the furthest in this domain. All the same, we are going to deal with a typical aspect of the 'changes' of the PCF leaders before passing on to an examination of the political significance of their new statements on the subject of Stalin.

No moral crisis

Reading Elleinstein's book, and following the often gross explanations and distortions of someone who has read a lot, probably even more than he would really like to let on, one is tempted to think that he is playing the fool in order to hide opinions that he doesn't want to express, or doesn't yet want to express publicly, so as to help the PCF. On the other hand, he has been subjected to criticism by certain elements in the PCF itself. Both Elleinstein and his critics, however, are acting under the aegis of the leadership, for reasons which are not precisely known. At the top of the PCF, disagreements probably exist — which are evidently not explicable in terms of a search for scientific truth — concerning what can and must be said on the subject of the Soviet Union. If Elleinstein is at the moment committing himself heavily and the Party only a little, the leadership must be uncertain of the consequences that these revelations could have for the Party.

In any case, and irrespective of his own future, Elleinstein is trying at present to serve the PCF well, with all that it retains of methods inherited from Stalinism. Just like PCF leader Kanapa, who, when asked in the television debate on *The Confession* mentioned earlier if he had ever written a somewhat outrageous Stalinist sentence, replied: probably, I couldn't be certain and I'm not ashamed of it, so Elleinstein states: 'In 1975 it is easier to arrive at a calm evaluation of these matters...Unlike some people, I do not feel that I ruined my youth and sacrificed it for an empty ideal' (p.152).

By remarks like these, the Kanapas and Elleinsteins of the PCF show that no moral crisis has touched them. They carried on for years like counterfeiters, buying and selling Stalinism as socialist gold, and now they come along and say, in substance: we did it and we don't feel any remorse, we were right to do it. In the PCF, moral crises were all very well for a few Central Committee members after they had read the Khrushchev Report. Of course, we do not share Robrieux's eulogies of Servin, Casanova, Pronteau, etc...or think that they could have succeeded in transforming their party. But it is clear that they really did seek some changes in the behaviour of the PCF, for which Thorez, with the support of the Kanapas of various kinds, broke or expelled them. Moral crises are also fine for those 'fellow-travellers', those intellectuals and artists, devoid of any pretensions to political leadership, who only wanted, by giving of their talents and themselves, to support the struggle of the workers for the emancipation of humanity. Grievously duped by the Stalinists, these people, whose crisis is very movingly depicted in Simone Signoret's book *La nostalgie n'est plus ce qu'elle était* ('Nostalgia is no longer what it used to be'), and who had nothing to reproach themselves with personally — these people suffered a great deal. But the men

9. Pathfinder edition, p.150.

who were really guilty, because they knew that they were lying, today say without shame: we lied, but we were right to lie, because it was for the Party.

This 'Party' becomes transformed into an entity standing above those who constitute it and above society. Such an attitude reveals that, despite certain shifts in the day-to-day politics of the PCF, its methods remain fundamentally those of Stalinism, even if they are more hypocritical. The recent declaration of the Political Bureau of the PCF on the 'Khrushchev Report', stating that the French delegation to the 20th Congress was aware of this report but had not spoken about it at the request of the Russians, is of an unheard-of impudence. By this statement they confess that they were under the orders of the Kremlin, keeping quiet about the crimes that had been committed in the Soviet Union, because it had been asked of them. Who is going to believe them when they say they did not know? Had they not kept quiet before at the Russians' request? And who can believe them when they say: we won't do it again?

The 'aggiornamento' of the PCF

This enables us to grasp in its deepest sense the present 'anti-Stalinism' of the PCF. Just as Pope John XXIII embarked on the Second Vatican Council to check the crisis of the Catholic Church by an '*aggiornamento*', just as Khrushchev tried to do the same for the Soviet Union at the 20th Congress, so it is also an *aggiornamento*, not a regeneration, that the PCF is undertaking at present. With a fairly noteworthy difference in Khrushchev's favour, in comparison to Marchais and his Kanapas and Elleinsteins. Because, far from denouncing the unreserved participation of Thorez in all the misdeeds and political crimes of Stalin, they try either to reduce it or to conceal it by silence. In this respect, they are much closer to a Brezhnev than to a Khrushchev.

The argument of the PCF leadership, according to which the Party has recognised its error and should no longer have it held against it, is simply laughable. (Let us note in passing the invocation of 'the Party' in general — which spreads the burden of the leadership among the entire membership which had no direct responsibility.) Can the leadership of a party reject, not one or other of its particular political positions, but the whole of its politics and methods in the course of several decades, as one might throw away a pair of worn-out socks? Even more, can it do this while reproaching the Socialist Party for its past? It cannot at the same time accuse the PS of retaining the heritage of Blum and refuse for itself the heritage of Stalin. Neither of the two mass workers' parties will ever shake off all the betrayals of the cause of socialism that they have perpetrated. Up to now, their history is the history of these betrayals and these crimes.

Without claiming to have exhausted the subject of the present 'anti-Stalinism' of the PCF, we must still examine why this *aggiornamento* is taking place now. Many people have noted that the PCF leadership, for so long the most obstinate of Communist Party leaderships in aligning itself with Moscow, is today one of those who are seeking to mark their divergences on some points with surprising rapidity. As far as it is possible, Marchais today appears even more sharp towards Moscow than Berlinguer. What has made him take the bit between his teeth? The 'qualities' of Marchais — his vulgarity, his inability to appreciate nuances, a brutality that he controls with difficulty — certainly count for something as to the form, but they do not explain the core of the matter. He does not have a Political Bureau at his beck and call in the style of Thorez; decisions on the question of 'Stalinism' are probably among those which are most discussed on that body. It is above all reasons specific to the political situation in France that explain the present attitude of the PCF leadership. It has only been behaving like this for two to three years. Why?

A nail in its shoe

When the Common Programme of the Union of the Left was signed, the PCF shouted victory; was this not the outcome of fifteen years of efforts to obtain such an agreement with the Socialist Party? Only a greater expansion of the Party seemed possible as a result. The PCF had managed for the third time, following the Popular Front of 1935 and the Tripartism of the immediate post-war period, to ally itself with the PS. Each of the preceding operations had resulted in a strengthening or consolidation of the PCF, while the PS had receded, especially within the working class. The PCF had become the 'first workers' party' of France, and even went so far as to claim to be the only workers' party. The Union of the Left, or so the Party leadership thought, was going to have the same effect.

But the result they had been counting on did not materialise. Shortly after the signing of the Common Programme, the opposite happened. From the by-elections of September 1974 onwards, the PS demonstrated that it was regaining strength and winning votes, while the PCF stagnated, and in fact receded a little. These tendencies have been reinforced since then, and the PS has become, on the electoral plane, 'the first party of France'. Certainly, the PCF is still hegemonic in the factories. But for a party which has not been revolutionary for a long time now, which looks forward to accession to government by electoral and parliamentary means, and even sees this perspective as realisable in the near future, it is a misfortune to lose votes and be left standing by its political ally. For such things affect the number and distribution of ministerial portfolios. The PCF has no alternative policy to that of the Union of the Left. Both the PCF and the PS are stuck with it; and whichever took the initiative of a break would be faced with disaster.

What could the PCF do under such circumstances? As will be remembered, the leadership's first reaction was to attack the PS vigorously and directly on a whole number of questions; but that gave no results at all. The leadership claimed in the course of its polemics that it did not have to take lessons in democracy from anyone. It was then that it realised its lack of credibility on this question and began to feel its ties with Moscow like a nail in the shoe causing considerable pain every time it took a step. Starting from that moment it has formulated, somewhat noisily, its differences with Moscow, and Elleinstein has been able to write books 'on the line of the 22nd Congress of the PCF'. For indeed, this line consists of proclaiming *urbi et orbi* its criticism of Stalinism in the name of the most vulgar bourgeois democracy. To check stagnation and electoral decline, slight though they may be — such is the political objective of the PCF leadership. But what it wants to achieve is one thing; the consequences of its line towards Moscow will be quite another.

Who benefits from the PCF's 'anti-Stalinism'?

For many a long year the PCF has managed to keep several irons in the fire, and it is still doing so. Communist to one person, it was and is democratic to a second, internationalist to a third, revolutionary to a fourth, reformist to a fifth, etc...But that cannot last for ever. As events unfold, irksome setbacks are inevitable. In the field of patriotism, de Gaulle appeared much more credible in the eyes of many voters who had previously supported the PCF — as is well known, the party lost nearly a million votes in 1958. Today the pendulum is swinging to the left, and, whether we like it or not, Mitterrand appears, despite his unhappy political past, to be more credible than Marchais on the issues of democracy and parliamentarism. Furthermore, the 'anti-Stalinist' campaign of the PCF, far from serving to

strengthen it, will above all help the Socialist Party.

When Elleinstein writes that Lenin was mistaken on the question of democracy, that after 1923 the revolutionary perspectives of the PCF became incorrect, that the Comintern should have been dissolved as early as 1935, he is providing, in the shape of ideological arguments, grist for the mill of those who want to 'reverse the verdict of Tours'[10] — he is fostering a tendency within the PCF to rejoin the PS one of these days. It is very likely that, in the leadership of the PCF, there are those who see the danger in this 'line of the 22nd Congress', and who are trying to tone down or efface altogether some of Elleinstein's arguments — which explains some of the criticisms which have been addressed to him from within the party.

In any case, in the framework of the reformist politics of the Union of the Left — and the PCF cannot get out of it — it is above all the PS which will reap the profit, especially among the broad masses. These masses will certainly not be moved by Elleinstein's arguments, of which they are unaware, but by much more striking themes. They now find themselves in the presence of two reformist parties, whose political lines on the main problems are close if not identical and whose differences, in any case, do not really justify the existence of two distinct parties. Both of these parties have quite murky pasts, but the PS's seems to them to be less so than the PCF's, which includes both the sinister name of Stalin and the ill deeds of his successors. Besides, in electoral terms, it is the Socialist Party which has the greater chance of taking votes from the bourgeois parties and thus benefits from the 'vote usefully' approach: Mitterrand, President of the Republic, perhaps; Marchais, definitely not.

But 'anti-Stalinism' will not help only the Socialist Party: the PCF has also been losing ground on its left ever since 1968, and things are only beginning. History, that old lady with such a capricious gait, so unexpected, so hesitant, who too often limps along, goes up blind alleys or sinks into quicksand, finally makes at certain moments lightning revolutionary strides that carry her forward. We can predict with certainty, in the light of June 1936 and the great crisis of May '68, that when she takes such strides again, even if the PCF wanted to manoeuvre by means of some 'revolutionary' proposals — which would not be an easy thing for it to do — it will not be able to profit from them. Just as was the case with de Gaulle and patriotism, or Mitterrand and democracy, its manoeuvres will have the opposite effect. It will be those whom the Party and Elleinstein qualify today as dogmatic and outdated, having formerly treated them as 'Hitlero-Trotskyists', who will find the ear of the working masses.

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10. The congress of the French Socialist Party at Tours in December 1920 voted by a two-to-one majority to adopt the name 'Communist' and affiliate to the Comintern. A small right-wing minority split off, retaining the name of the Socialist Party.

review

Lukacs — Political Writings 1921-29 (Tactics and Ethics), New Left Books, £3.

The appearance in a paperback edition of this important volume of Lukacs' early writings is a welcome event. It is of course well known that in its first years the Communist International had a major debate around the question of 'ultra-leftism', and that several of the chief leaders of this latter trend wrote important and controversial books on Marxist philosophy — notably Lukacs (*History and Class Consciousness*), Karl Korsch (*Marxism and Philosophy*), and, somewhat later, Pannekoek (*Lenin as Philosopher*). However, while the writings on this subject of Lenin, Trotsky and the majority of the Russian leadership have long been available in English — most notably, of course, Lenin's *Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder* — the political writings of the opponents of the Bolsheviks in this discussion are only now becoming available. In addition to the Lukacs volume reviewed here, important recent translations include material in *International Communism in the Era of Lenin: A Documentary History* edited by Gruber, a presentation of Bordiga's positions in Gwyn Williams's *Proletarian Order: Antonio Gramsci, Factory Councils and the Origins of Italian Communism*, and a number of Bordiga articles in *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Political Writings 1910-20* edited by Quintin Hoare.

The appearance of this new material does not alter the estimate as to the political outcome of the debate on ultra-leftism. On the contrary, it increases respect for the arguments produced by the Comintern. But, as always, the ability to make an examination of both sides of the polemic gives a much more rounded and clearer conception of the issues involved. Not merely does this increase the political lessons which may be drawn, but in this case it also reveals that the discussions involved issues which remain strikingly relevant today.

It is on this aspect of the Lukacs volume that we want to concentrate here. This is not because there is not much else which is valuable in the collection — on the contrary, some of the philosophical writings, including the famous review of Bukharin's *Historical Materialism* and the essay *Moses Hess and the Problem of Idealist Dialectics*, are amongst the most important Lukacs ever wrote. However, the real fascination of the book is that it gives an insight into a very different political debate, and a very different Lukacs, than that which is generally familiar.

The first conception that may rapidly be dispensed with through a reading of Lukacs' essays of the 1920s, and of the other material available on the early debate in the Comintern, is any idea that the Bolsheviks' opponents on this issue were some sort of ideological primitives simply marching around the streets screaming 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat Now'. It is true that a few of the groups and theorists of Comintern ultra-leftism were marked by really primitive conceptions — the German Communist Workers Party (KAPD) in its opposition to trade unions, or the ideas of Sylvia Pankhurst, for example. But in general the outlook of the European opposition to Lenin was theoretically sophisticated and not at all patently stupid in its argumentation. Certainly Lukacs is profoundly thought provoking and penetrating in this volume, even in his most erroneous positions. Far from defending boycotts of parliament and elections from the point of view of abstract principle, as is frequently assumed in accounts of this period, the ultra-lefts invoked virtually every argument *except* abstract principle.

Herman Gorter, a Dutch ultraleftist, explicitly declared for example that the tactics of the Bolsheviks in standing in parliamentary elections in Russia had been entirely correct: 'Your tactics were brilliant for Russia, and the Russians were victorious because of them.'(1) Gorter's argument against standing in elections was posed at the level of differences in concrete class relations between Russia and Western Europe — an interesting ultra-left twist to a distinction which is today invoked by the West European CPs to justify reformism. Gorter wrote: 'When you say you did thus and such in Russia...it does not mean very much and therefore neither is nor has to be correct. For Western European class relations in the revolutionary struggle are entirely different from those in Russia.'(2)

Differing from Gorter, but again not raising abstention from elections and parliament to a principle, was the position of the Austrian Communist Party. They in fact went so far as to declare that in general participation in parliament was entirely correct in Western Europe — including in Germany. The argument of these ultra-lefts was based on the concrete situation then existing in the country — on the fact that in Austria the struggle had gone beyond the stage of mass working class demonstrations and strikes and had arrived at a situation of workers councils. They wrote: 'Parliament is important to Communists only as a platform for propaganda. We in Austria have the Council of Workers' Deputies as a platform for propaganda. We therefore refuse to take part in elections to the bourgeois parliament. In Germany there is no Council of Workers' Deputies that could be taken in earnest.'(3)

What could be more apparently Marxist than that? When the class struggle has passed to the formation of workers councils, surely the time has come to boycott the parliamentary fraud and pass directly to the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat?(4) Given that the Workers Council which was formed following the fall of the Hapsburg Empire lasted right through to 1922 (admittedly in a diminishing form), this did not appear at all a preposterous position on the face of it.(5) Indeed, it could be argued that it was correct on the basis of certain formal analogies with the positions of the Bolsheviks on the boycott in 1905 and Lenin's call for the boycott of the pre-Parliament in 1917.

Lukacs himself, at that time a theoretical leader of Hungarian ultra-leftism, also avoided any argument 'on principle' against participation in parliament. On the contrary, he declared that in certain circumstances, namely that of defensive struggles, parliamentary participation was an extremely important tactic: 'if it [the Communist Party] is forced onto the defensive, by all means let the proletariat use the form of parliament for agitational and propagandistic purposes; let it exploit the possibilities afforded members of parliament by bourgeois "freedom" as substitute for forms of expression otherwise denied it; let it make use of the parliamentary struggles with the bourgeoisie in order to gather its own forces, in preparation for the really basic struggle against the bourgeoisie. Clearly, such a phase may well last for a considerable period of time.'(6)

All Lukacs asserted was that, 'parliamentary activity can never be anything more than a preparation for the real struggle, can never be the actual struggle itself'.(7) He too stated that a decisive criterion in calling for a boycott was whether or not alternative forms of workers democracy were already emerging: 'Theoretically and tactically, then, we have defined the respective roles of workers council and parliament: *where a workers council* (on however modest a scale) *is possible, parliamentarianism is redundant*.'(8)

All these positions of Lukacs again sound apparently Marxist and Leninist — to utilise participation in parliament as a subsidiary tactic to prepare the decisive (and therefore necessarily extra-parliamentary) clashes with the bougeoisie. After all, didn't Lenin correctly write even in *Left Wing Communism* that, 'action by the masses, a big strike, for instance, is more important than parliamentary activity at *all* times...'(9) And, far from being by-passed, such arguments have an extremely familiar ring in the positions taken by ultra-left organisations in Portugal, for example.

It is not possible in a short review to deal with the political arguments which were raised against the writings of the ultra-lefts. These are best followed through reading the relevant works of Lenin and Trotsky in reply to Lukacs, Korsch, Pannekoek, Gorter *et al.* Lenin's own summary on Lukacs' position was: 'Its Marxism is purely verbal; its distinction between "defensive" and "offensive" tactics is artificial; it gives no concrete analysis of precise and definite historical situations; it takes no account of what is most essential (the need to take over, and learn to take over, all fields of work and all institutions in which the bourgeoisie exercises its influence over the masses, etc.).'(10)

Against the Austrians and Lukacs on workers councils and

1. Gorter: 'Open Letter to Comrade Lenin' in *International Communism in the Era of Lenin*, (ed) Gruber, p.222.
2. *Ibid.*, p.216.
3. Cited in Lenin: 'Letter to Austrian Communists', in *Collected Works*, Vol.31, p.243.
4. Such a concept will of course be well known to those, such as the PRP and the Socialist Workers Party, who advocated the slogan in Portugal of 'Dissolve the Constituent Assembly' in summer 1975.
5. On the situation in Austria at the time, see Braunthal: *History of the International 1914-43*, pp.202f, and Rosdolsky: 'La situation revolutionnaire en Autriche en 1918 et la politique des socialux-democrates', in *Critique Communiste*, no.8/9.
6. Lukacs: *Tactics and Ethics*, p.56.
7. *Ibid.*, p.58.
8. *Ibid.*, p.63.
9. Lenin: *Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, in *Collected Works*, Vol.31, p.60.
10. Lenin: 'Kommunismus', in *Collected Works*, Vol.31, p.165.

parliamentary boycotts, Lenin pointed out that the relevant issue was not whether such bodies *existed* but whether they were strong enough to *overthrow* the bourgeois system: 'As long as we lack the strength to disband the bourgeois parliament, we must work against it from within and without. As long as any considerable number of working people (not only proletarians, but also semi-proletarians and small peasants) still trust in the bourgeois-democratic instruments employed by the bourgeoisie for deceiving the workers, we must explain this deception *from the very platform* which the backward sections of the workers, and particularly of the non-proletarian labouring masses, consider most important, most authoritative.'(11)

All in all, the ultra-lefts received one of the most thorough political drubbings which anyone has ever taken — while simultaneously, incidentally, Lenin fought a major struggle against elements such as Paul Levi to try to keep the 'infantile-leftists' (such as the KPD) within the Communist International.

If, however, the errors of Lukacs and others on the political plane were dealt with relatively early, the controversy has nevertheless continued as to the exact relation between their positions in the debate in the Comintern and their views on philosophy. It is hardly likely to be coincidental that writers with such distinct political positions as Lukacs, Pannekoek and Korsch should also have had extremely similar concepts on the field of philosophy. At the same time, however, there is no systematic study of the precise connections between the two. Lukacs himself initially stressed as the source of his errors a failure to situate his work in any systematic economic theory and analysis. Finally he reached the conclusion that the correct line of approach to theoretical questions lay via ontology.(12) Other recent studies have seen his challenge to Marxist materialism as the chief link between Lukacs' philosophical and political positions of that period.(13) Gareth Stedman Jones, in a striking analysis, has stressed Lukacs' concept of a working class ideologically dominated through commodity fetishism, and his inability to analyse the complexity of modes of production and of the capitalist State, as the decisive elements.(14).

All these conclusions, particularly that of Stedman Jones, undoubtedly provide elements of an explanation of the *theoretical* roots of Lukacs' positions on the Comintern debates. However, this present collection of his writings suggests a very clear *political* deviation whereby Lukacs arrived at his wrong positions — although it is undoubtedly an error connected to his early 1920s theoretical concept of class consciousness. *Despite the incessant talk of 'the totality' which runs throughout these essays, in reality Lukacs never attempts to derive a political line from the inter-relation of all elements of capitalist society but takes it solely and exclusively from the state of the proletariat itself.*

This concept, which in fact runs throughout the collection of writings, is stated most clearly of all in the essay on the question of 'Opportunism and Putschism'. Here Lukacs states: 'Because of their mechanical notion of the class struggle, opportunists and putschists alike are bound to have a static concept of the class, seeing it as a once-and-for-all, unalterably given fact, and not as something dynamic which emerges, grows and brings itself to life in the course of the struggle. However, it is only when the constitution of the proletariat as a class is regarded as the goal and the tendency of the revolution that we can discover a firm basis for the constantly changing tactics of communist activity. *The economic, scientific reality of the class is of course the starting point for tactical considerations.* But the other reality, the living reality of the class effected by the proletariat — this is possible only as a goal of revolutionary action. Every genuine revolutionary act diminishes the tension, the gulf between economic being and active consciousness of the proletariat. *Once this consciousness has reached, penetrated and illuminated being, it is immediately possessed of the power to overcome all obstacles and to complete the process of revolution.'* (15).

Even leaving aside the evident errors of the 'philosophy of action' contained here, the entire way in which the question of the basis of tactics is formulated is, in terms of class relations, totally different from that displayed by Lenin. For Lukacs the political tactics are derived from the situation of the *proletariat* —'The economic, scientific reality of the class is of course the starting point for tactical considerations.' For Lenin, on the contrary, tactics can only be derived from the relation of *all* the forces and classes of capitalist society — 'the Communist Party...must act on *scientific* principles. Science...demands that account must be taken of *all* the forces, groups, parties, classes and masses operating in a given country'.(16)

For Lukacs it is simply the achievement of consciousness by the proletariat which suffices for the revolution: 'Once this consciousness has reached, penetrated and illuminated being, it is immediately possessed of the power to overcome all obstacles and to complete the process of revolution.' For Lenin, on the contrary, achievement of consciousness by the working class is not at all, in itself, a sufficient condition for revolution: 'The fundamental law of revolution, which has been confirmed by all revolutions and especially by all three Russian revolutions in the twentieth century, is as follows: for a revolution to take place it is not enough for the exploited and oppressed masses to realise the impossibility of living in the old way and demand changes; *for a revolution to take place it is essential that the exploiters should not be able to live and rule in the old way.*'(17)

Indisputably, of course, the positions Lukacs took on materialism, economics, and the 'power' of commodity fetishism led to the particular deviation outlined above. In particular, the extremely under-developed concept which exists in Lukacs' work of any specifically political structures plays a crucial role.(18) It is only at this specifically *political* level that the relation of *all* classes could have been analysed.(19) However, no matter what its theoretical origin, in these 1920s essays the *operative* element which comes over in Lukacs' political positions is the continual attempt to derive a line from the situation of the working class alone. In this concept also, of course, the early Lukacs' positions again clearly link up with contemporary ultra-left concepts.(20)

Finally, it is worth noting that, in the period following the debates in the Comintern, Lukacs pulled back from ultra-leftism and moved sharply towards more correct conceptions. In 1924, in his book on Lenin, Lukacs was already able to make a clear self-criticism: that *'the slogan of left wing radicalism was the rejection in principle of any compromise.* Lenin's polemic shows...that this rejection contains *an evasion of decisive struggles*, behind which lies a

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11. Lenin: 'Letter to Austrian Communists', *op.cit.*, p.243. Lenin, of course, also stressed that in some circumstances, such as that of the Constituent Assembly in Russia, it might even aid in the dispersing of bourgeois parliamentary bodies to have the elections to them — while of course in other conditions, such as 1905 and the pre-Parliament of 1917, Lenin advocated a boycott (as did Trotsky, for example, in relation to the 1931 elections in Spain).

12. Lukacs states: 'Once I had gained a definite and fundamental insight into what was wrong with my whole approach in *History and Class Consciousness* this search became a plan to investigate the philosophical connections between economics and dialectics. My first attempt to put this plan into practice came early in the Thirties, in Moscow and Berlin, with the first draft of my book on the young Hegel (which was not completed until Autumn 1937). Only now, thirty years later, am I attempting to discover a real solution to this whole problem in the ontology of social existence.' (1967 Preface to the English edition of *History and Class Consciousness*, p.xxxv.)

13. See Novack: 'Georg Lukacs as a Marxist Philosopher', in *International Socialist Review*, January 1972, and Novack: 'In Defence of Materialism', in *International Socialist Review*, July-August 1972. This latter issue also contains 'A Criticism of George Novack's Stand on Lukacs' by Etienne Abrahamovici.

14. Gareth Stedman Jones: 'The Marxism of the Early Lukacs: An Evaluation' in *New Left Review* 70.

15. Lukacs: *Tactics and Ethics*, p.79 (our emphasis).

16. Lenin: *Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, *op. cit.*, p.61.

17. *Ibid.*, p.84 (our emphasis).

18. Stedman Jones correctly puts it when he states: 'Lukacs' conception of class power is so totally confined to an etherealised ideology that it not merely passes over the whole array of cultural apparatuses whereby the bourgeoisie *exercises* its ideological dominance in capitalist social formations, but it also largely neglects the political apparatus of capital *par excellence*: the State. There is very little in the main essays of *History and Class Consciousness* on the bourgeois State .... there is no real mention of that State apparatus which Marx and Lenin taught had to be *broken physically* by the working class ... (*op. cit.*, pp51-52).

Perry Anderson has made the same point in terms of a more general theoretical framework in 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci' in *New Left Review* 100, p.46.

19. 'Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers *only from without*, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of *all* classes and strata to the state and to the government, the spheres of interrelations between *all* classes.' (Lenin: *What Is to be Done*, in *Collected Works*, Vol.5, p.422.)

20. Again Portugal provides the classic contemporary case of these errors. During the summer of 1975 a whole section of the ultra-left attempted to develop its line simply from the relation of forces amongst the proletariat of Lisbon. This method, which totally left out of account the situation of the peasants in the north of the country and the state of the bourgeois forces themselves, inevitably led to disastrous ultra-left conceptions of the relation of forces — *Socialist Worker* of 6 December 1975, for example.

defeatist attitude towards the revolution. For the genuinely revolutionary situation...expresses itself in the fact that there are no areas of the class struggle in which revolutionary (or counter-revolutionary) possibilities are not present.'(21)

Unfortunately, however, Lukacs collided with Stalin in this process. As he recalled in 1967: 'In the debate in the Russian Party I agreed with Stalin about the necessity for socialism in one country, and this shows very clearly the start of a new epoch in my thought.'(27)

The outcome of this 'new epoch in his thought' is clearly revealed in Lukacs' final article in the present collection — the so-called 'Blum Theses'. These theses, which constitute Lukacs' last major political writings, are a clear expression of a theory advocating a Popular Front. Lukacs was to support and give gloss to this political line in his philosophic and aesthetic works throughout the Stalin era. The sole originality of the Theses is that they were produced not in the mid 1930s but in 1928 — at the start of the ultra-left ravings of the Comintern's Third Period. Lukacs paid the price for having anticipated the turn of Dimitrov and Stalin by six years by making a public 'self-criticism' and withdrawing from explicitly political writing.

Even this capitulation of Lukacs however has its interesting political lessons. The difference between the types of qualities needed to be a theoretician and those needed to be a *political* leader are well summed up in the reasons Lukacs gives to explain his capitulation:

'When I heard from a reliable source that Bela Kun was planning to expel me from the Party as a "Liquidator", I gave up the struggle, as I was well aware of Kun's prestige in the International, and I published a "self-criticism". I was indeed firmly convinced that I was in the right but I also knew — for example, from the fate that had befallen Karl Korsch — that to be expelled from the Party meant that it would no longer be possible to participate actively in the struggle against Fascism. I wrote my self-criticism as an "entry ticket" to such activity.'(23)

Not merely did this reveal a total lack of the human qualities that are needed to make a political leader — try telling a Left Oppositionist of the 1930s, dying in a labour camp, murdered by the GPU, or even merely struggling to produce a newspaper, that such a prospect of merely being expelled from the party was too much to ask anyone to bear — but it was political bankruptcy. The idea that the political line of an organisation is fundamentally wrong but that this can be compensated for by personally valuable work is, in the strictest scientific sense, a typical concept of petty-bourgeois individualist intellectualism. As to what Lukacs really bought an 'entry ticket' to, this was well summed up in one of the obituaries following his death in 1971: 'Lukacs recanted...because a refusal — *an act of resistance* — would have resulted in his expulsion from the Comintern. If this were to happen...he could not join the "anti-fascist struggle". What concrete insight! What brilliance! We are well acquainted with the Comintern's brilliant record in the "anti-fascist" struggle. The string of its victories echoes with the hollow laughs of gravestones in the history of the proletariat — Germany, Spain, France.'(24)

No matter what his personal intentions, Lukacs became in reality a political appendage of Stalinism — and all the more dangerous because of his brilliance. Even leaving aside the purges and Popular Fronts, someone who could write that 'the real dilemma of our age is not the opposition between capitalism and socialism, but the opposition between peace and war'(25), can in no serious political sense be said to represent anything remotely resembling the interests of the working class. It is true that at the very end of his life Lukacs did once again begin to take a certain position to the left of Stalinism on issues such as the student revolt, but this cannot be said to mark a radical break.(26)

Undoubtedly throughout the forty years following his capitulation of 1928-29 Lukacs produced Marxist writing of truly outstanding quality. Works such as *The Young Hegel*, *Goethe and His Age*, and various of the aesthetic essays are, no matter what specific criticism may be made, amongst the finest writings produced since the 'classic period' of Marxism was closed by Stalinism. Lukacs provides an outstanding example of the fact that in Marxism there is no simple one-to-one relation between theoretical brilliance and political position in defence of the interests of the working class.(27) However, in Marxism it is the *political position* and not the *individual theoretical brilliance* that is the most decisive criterion. On that level, Lukacs was a failure. The person who is revealed in the essays of the 1920s to have been a powerful and original political thinker even when profoundly wrong was irrevocably destroyed by Stalinism.

To read this present volume is not merely to enter into debates which still have contemporary relevance but is to come face to face with one of the major problems and political 'might have beens' in the history of Marxism. To discover that a person who served the Stalinist bureaucracy for forty years could be a Marxist writer and theoretician of stunning brilliance is a salutary lesson to all philistine and reductionist revolutionaries. To realise that a near genius could still adopt a political position completely opposed to the interests of the working class should provide food for thought for those intellectuals who think that the degree of personal intelligence is the surest guide to the class line. Either way the experience, and the quality of Lukacs' ideas, is well worth £3.

ALAN JONES

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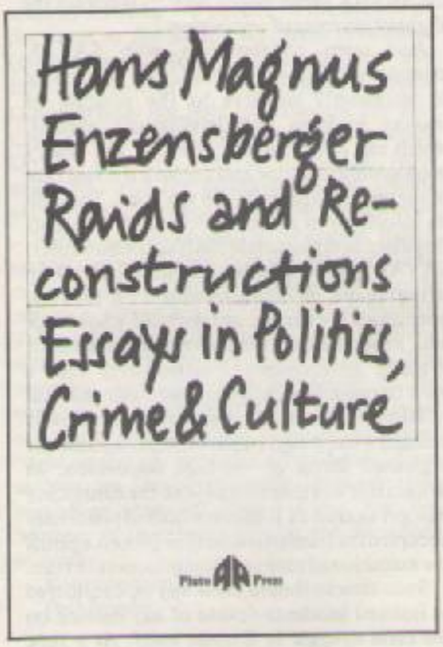
believed that insurrection had only been 'some weeks' away prior to 25 November. (For a critique of these conceptions, see A. Jones: 'Winning the Masses', in *Red Weekly*, 6 January 1976.)

21. Lukacs: *Lenin*, p.82.
22. Lukacs: 1967 Preface to the English edition of *History and Class Consciousness*, p.xviii.
23. *Ibid.*, p.xxx.
24. Rosemont *et al*, *In Memory of Georg Lukacs*.
25. Lukacs: *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, p.92. At least in the case of Lukacs — and the above quotation of 1955 is merely the expression of his essential political development for 20 years previously — it is not possible to accept the assessment of Perry Anderson on 'Western Marxism' that: 'Despite everything, its [Western Marxism's] major thinkers remained immune to reformism' (Anderson: *Considerations on Western Marxism*, p.93).
26. Michael Löwy: 'Lukacs and Stalinism', in *New Left Review* 91, attempts to make out a case for a final political regeneration of Lukacs. However, the absolutely meagre evidence which is all that even this heroic effort can bring shows how thankless the task is. Apart from various criticisms of US imperialism, which were standard even in the most 'peace-oriented' period, the most that Löwy can dig out of real criticism of the Stalinist system (as opposed to the Stalin individual) is that Lukacs apparently said in a conversation with one of his ex-students that the invasion of Czechoslovakia was 'the greatest disaster for the communist movement since the social-democrats approved the Kaiser's war credits in 1914' (cited in *ibid.*, p.38).

Doubtless it is interesting to know that Lukacs opposed the invasion — as certainly he was disgusted at the time by much of Stalinism. However, on the basis of this and a few other phrases, Löwy comes out with the following amazing statement: 'On 4 June 1971 death cut short, at its outset, this astonishing "return to first principles"; after half a century of "reconciliation" and "lost illusions", Lukacs had, in the last three years of his life, begun to rediscover the intense hopes, the red flame of the People's Commissar of 1919' (*ibid.*, p.41). In his admiration for Lukacs' theoretical gifts, Löwy has unfortunately lost all sense of political proportion. Even completely non-Marxist and humanist dissidents in Eastern Europe at least visibly demonstrated and acted on the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Trotskyists denounced as scoundrels all those who did not. Does Lukacs, on the basis of a private conversation of dissociation, become 'the red flame of the People's Commissar'? If so, we must assume that the cellist Rostropovitch, who greeted the invasion by at least giving a performance of Dvorak's music, must be the Trotsky of our time. The reality is that Lukacs, whose fame would have protected him and would have made world wide impact if he had spoken out, remained publicly silent on this 'greatest disaster to the communist movement since 1914'. Just as, throughout the preceding 50 years, Lukacs moaned and groaned a bit but did precisely nothing. If Löwy wants to try to suggest anything different he has in reality abandoned all serious political standards. To take an obvious analogy, Lenin might well have admired Plekhanov's philosophy greatly, but he would never have dreamed of covering up for his rotten politics.
27. In that sense and respect the present author must make a certain self-criticism for the obituary written at the time of Lukacs' death ('Georg Lukacs — Fate of the Unattached Intellectual' in *Red Mole*, 15 June 1971). This article committed the opposite error to that of Löwy above. In the name of a (perfectly justified) attack on Lukacs' political record, it attempted to deny virtually any *theoretical* merit to the work produced following his capitulation to Stalinism. Such a reduction of Marxist theory to politics is not merely wrong but positively harmful in that through denying any merit to that which evidently possesses real value it only diverts attention onto false debates. The real point which has to be made is the distinction and relative autonomy between politics and theory and, within that, the primacy of the political criterion.

review



Raids and Reconstructions: Essays in Politics, Crime and Culture, by Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Pluto, £3.30)

Hans Magnus Enzensberger is probably Germany's foremost Marxist cultural critic and poet, and Pluto are to be congratulated for bringing out this volume of his best essays. It is a mixed if fascinating bag, united solely by the writer's ever-present wit, style and perception. Admittedly some essays are less impressive — the two on crime/treason I found repetitive and seemingly banal, going little beyond an analysis of crime/treason as permanently shifting concepts, dependent on changing class interests. But it is true that I spent least time on these two contributions — Enzensberger's cryptic, very dense style often reveals oceans of ideas on subsequent study.

Other essays are *tours de force* of historical description and analysis, which read like fiction but aren't (though Enzensberger himself points out elsewhere that the modern electronic media have already abolished the distinction between fiction and non-fiction!). The vivid portrait of Rafael Trujillo, the despotic gangster who ruled the Dominican Republic for over thirty years, for example, brutally brings home the depths to which American imperialism will sink, and the type of character it is prepared to rely on in the name of 'freedom'.

His portrait of the 'Dreamers of the Absolute' — the 19th century anarchists and individual, conspiratorial terrorists who preceded Social Democracy in Russia — is affectionate and detailed, generous about their courage, critical of their tactical futility and impotence. But as the necessary precursors to mass, organised politics in the Soviet Union, they are very firmly placed in their historical context.

So too are Fidel Castro and the Cuban Communist Party in 'Portrait of a Party'. This is essential reading for anyone wishing to understand the political processes at work in Cuba. Here Enzensberger traces the undeniable pragmatism and opportunism of the 'new' post-revolutionary Cuban vanguard party to its roots, nailing the reasons for its degeneration and virtual inactivity. The analysis is often achieved with great wit and style. Commenting on the evident lack of any theoretical tradition in the Castroite movement, he has this to say: 'Fidel gave his brother a few books by Marx and Lenin. "We read three chapters of *Das Capital*", Raul repeated laughing. "Then we tossed it aside. I'm sure Fidel hasn't looked at it since." This has a certain charm; there probably is no Communist politician who has read beyond the third chapter; but there certainly isn't one beside Fidel who takes pride in it.'

In 'Tourists of the Revolution', Enzensberger has a valedictory message for those revolutionaries foolish enough to think that 'radical tourism' to workers states will in any way help them understand the general politics of such states: 'In Havana I kept meeting Communists in the hotels for foreigners who had no idea that the energy and water supply in the working quarters had broken down during the afternoon, that bread was rationed, and that the population had to stand two hours in line for a slice of pizza; meanwhile the tourists in their hotel rooms were arguing about Lukacs.'

But undoubtedly the most important contributions in this book, and those worth most study, are the two contributions on the mass media, the later of which has been previously published in *New Left Review*. These break substantial new ground in an area where the revolutionary left has been notoriously weak.

Both these studies of the media are seminal, suggestive and incomplete. Both need updating in the light of the experiences of Portugal and recently Italy. But in my work in the media I have consistently returned to the later essay, 'Constituents of a Theory of the Media' — each re-reading repays the effort, such a goldmine of ideas does it present.

In the earlier essay, 'The Industrialisation of the Mind', Enzensberger identifies a specifically new element in the age of late capitalism — the 'mind industry', whose job is not essentially to sell commodities, but 'to "sell" the existing order, to perpetuate the prevailing pattern of man's domination by man.' This qualitative shift he designates by the concept 'immaterial exploitation.' His theses can be seen as a direct, technologically determined corollary of Gramsci's concept of 'ideological hegemony', in a specific form (despite the problems to which this prior concept has given rise in the light of Perry Anderson's recent brilliant analysis of the shifting meanings of the term in Gramsci's work). For Enzensberger in this 1962 essay, it is the job of 'immaterial exploitation' via the media to 'eliminate possible futures'.

But even here the process is not without contradictions — contradictions which he expands on significantly in his later work: 'In order to exploit people's intellectual, moral, and political faculties, you have got to develop them first. This is the basic dilemma...faced by today's media.' And he is already flaying the intellectual's (and the left's) unwillingness to tangle with the new, electronic media: 'To opt out of the mind industry, to refuse any dealings with it, may well turn out to be a reactionary course...Retreat from the media will not even save the intellectual's precious soul from corruption.'

The later essay is so replete with ideas that a summary would be impossible (and undesirable — only a reading will suffice). And there are weaknesses: Enzensberger, in what could be termed an extensive, superstructural excursion into the formation of contemporary capitalist ideology, does at times underplay evidently economic forces. For example, there is indeed an unwillingness and suspicion on the part of the left to take up and exploit the new electronic media — 'a fixation on the *Iskra* model' of political communication. But economic factors, the high cost of such resources, is a not insignificant factor aiding such a process (admittedly the costs of video, etc. had dipped sharply in the late '60s, prior to the essay being written, but have risen substantially in the recent, critical period).

This tendency is also revealed in his analysis of the restriction, via hire through the Xerox monopoly, of photocopiers. He ascribes a rather conspiratorial, *political* motive to this (which such restriction undoubtedly has in the degenerated workers states), whereas very vulgar economic interests — the ability to keep up rental prices and maintain a monopoly — is a much more convincing explanation. (That Xerox monopoly has since been substantially broken, incidentally.)

There are direct contradictions too, both in relation to his 1962 essay and some of his earlier statements in the same essay. At many points in both he expressly indicates the privatised, ideological purposes for which the bourgeoisie wishes to maintain its monopoly hold on the media. Yet in dismissing Marshall McLuhan's 'provocative idiocy' — 'The Medium is the Message' — he has this to say: 'Its [the bourgeoisie's] intention to hold onto the control of the means of production at any price, while being incapable of making the socially necessary use of them, is here expressed with complete frankness in the superstructure. It wants the media *as such* and *to no purpose*' (author's emphasis). A very curious and inexplicable statement, thrust into his general thesis.

Nevertheless this is still one of the most important political works of the last ten years, the implications of which the left has still not grasped in any way. The central tenet can be expressed simply: the forms and potentialities of the new electronic media (unlike previous forms such as the book/theatre) are implicitly democratic and collective. Privatisation and restrictive state control of such media cuts directly across such potentialities. It is within this rupture — such a giant contradiction — that the left must intervene and drive in their wedge. The breakdown of the state monopoly of broadcasting in Italy in the last 18 months, and the possibilities that this has opened up for the left, demonstrate clearly how prophetic and relevant Enzensberger's thesis has now become.

CARL GARDNER

review

Iran: Shah's Empire of Repression, published by the Committee Against Repression in Iran (30p).

This is a brief introductory account of economic and political developments in Iran. The pamphlet provides a useful account of the nature of the Shah's regime by examining its historical formation, its social base, its role

within the imperialist system and in particular its British connection. It concludes by outlining a programme of action to fight this regime in Britain.

The fact is that an active and organised defence campaign, similar in scope and aim to the campaigns against the fascist or racist regimes of Spain, Chile, or South Africa, does not exist in the case of the Shah's regime. This is notwithstanding the fact that the Shah's rule, if at all comparable, is even more barbaric and bloody than any of these regimes. It is sufficient to remark that Iran has the highest rate of execution of political prisoners in the world, that all the basic democratic rights such as the right to strike, freedom of speech and association, etc., are denied to the Iranian masses, and that the use of 'advanced' methods of torture has become the only thing the Shah can boast of.

Despite this impressive record in various domains of repression, there has been little reaction in Britain against the rule of terror in Iran. One reason, no doubt, is the illusion created by the Shah's big propaganda machine, and perpetuated by the flow of vast oil revenues into the pockets of the Shah, that Iran is after all in the process of becoming an industrial giant, bringing wealth to the hitherto poor people of the country. Another no less important reason is the cordial relationship which the Labour Government has shamelessly maintained with the Iranian regime.

These factors partially mask the true character of the Iranian regime in the eyes of the politically less conscious, but they surely cannot account for the inadequate attention paid to it by the left, including the far left. Indeed, the objective need for a campaign agaist repression in Iran is generally viewed by the left purely as a task for the Iranian opposition in exile. Such a short-sighted attitude is particularly unsound when one considers the overall aspects of such a campaign in relation to the class struggle in Europe itself.

The huge arms orders received each year from Iran by Britain and other imperialist powers symbolise one aspect of the interrelationship. Needless to say, the production of these arms, later to be used against the liberation forces of Dhofar or Baluchistan, provides a unique and safe source of capitalist profit for the shaky British economy by stimulating idle capital in heavy industry (although it is highly inflationary as regards its benefits for working people as a whole). In fact, the stability and survival of Western capitalism is nowadays conditioned by these regular arms orders. On top of all this, the Shah, who is no longer merely a lackey of the imperialists but also their active supporter on a global scale, has helped the Labour Government with large loans in order to prevent the downfall of the bankrupt British economy.

The immediate and long-term interests of the British working class clearly call for an immediate break-up of all British-Iranian links. But how does the Labour Government, on behalf of the British ruling class, express its solidarity with the Iranian regime in return for all the services that the Shah so faithfully provides?

The Shah's regime, brought to power by the CIA-engineered coup of 1953, has never enjoyed any popular support amongst the Iranian masses. In fact, the regime has been able to maintain its reactionary rule only through the most vicious forms of coercion. The Iranian economy, totally dependent on Western technology, has no infrastructural foundations and is easily prone to crises. The last few years have seen the failure of the so-called 'White Revolution' — which has turned Iran from a net exporter of foodstuffs into a leading importer — together with increasing problems such as food shortages, rampant inflation, and corruption in high official and business circles. In response, the regime has had to step up its repression by suspending the two pro-regime parties, declaring a one-party system, and banning 95 per cent of the semi-official press in Iran.

As the crisis of the regime deepens (particularly with the drop in the export of oil) and as the struggle of the oppressed masses of Iran broadens, the regime will have to resort to more and more repression as the only remedy. It is here that the Western powers come into the picture. In order to keep the regime in power, they supply it with arms and the most advanced means of repression. Through their experts in the field of espionage and repression they teach the SAVAK secret police how to suppress the slightest murmur of opposition.

And open collaboration with SAVAK extends beyond the borders of Iran. The regime is particularly sensitive to the struggle of Iranian students and intellectuals abroad, which can neutralise the effect of the Shah's propaganda machine and unmask the real face of the regime to the public in the West. Through its informers in student circles and its agents disguised as diplomats in the Iranian embassies, SAVAK spies on all those abroad in opposition to the regime, including Labour MPs. SAVAK operations are carried out with the knowledge and, in some cases, the active collaboration of Western governments. Furthermore, with a view to consolidating their trade and political relations with Iran, these governments directly unleash a campaign of harassment against the organised forces of the Iran opposition. In Britain this was manifested with the conspiracy charges against 21 Iranians who had peacefully occupied the Iranian embassy in protest against the execution of nine political prisoners in Iran.

Such attacks should in no way be considered as isolated incidents devoid of any bearing on the class struggle in Europe itself. At a time when capitalism has entered its deepest crisis since the Second World War, the bourgeoisie can no longer tolerate the democratic rights of the working people, and are using their arsenal of repressive laws and instruments against 'extremist' minorities, preparing the ground for massive repression against the workers movement as a whole. In this respect the Iranian opposition has been a most suitable target for intimidation and harassment. The recent attacks by the French and German police on the Iranian student organisations testify to this fact. Thus one can see how the problems of the Iranian opposition are so tightly interlinked with the economic crisis and the threats to democratic rights of the working class in the West.

The Committee Against Repression in Iran (CARI) has been set up with the aim of organising long-term campaigns in Britain for the defence of Iranian political prisoners, for the establishment of basic democratic rights in Iran, and against the activities of SAVAK in Britain. It will also demand that the Labour Government reconsider its political and trade links with Iran. So far, the CISNU, the IMG and SWP, the Gulf Committee, and many student unions and committed individuals all over Britain have affiliated to CARI and are active in pursuit of its aims. For further information, write to: CARI, Box 4, 182 Upper Street, London N1.

Correspondence

Dear Comrade,

Let me be the first of numerous connoisseurs of sectarianism to remind the author of the notes to the LCR's Congress resolution (*International*, Vol. 3, No. 4) that the French Trotskyist organisation Lutte Ouvriere *does not* hold that Eastern Europe, Cuba and China are state capitalist countries. On the contrary, they hold that all these countries, with the exception of the USSR, are under the *dictatorship of the bourgeoisie*.

This bizarre conclusion is, of course, based on their quaint notion that the establishment of soviet-type institutions is the only way in which a workers state can be established. Thus only the USSR qualifies as a workers' state — the rest remain part of the world capitalist economy. In all fairness to the comrades of Lutte Ouvriere, we should point out that they in fact hold that the theory of 'state capitalism' is a revisionist theory. Thus at least we can congratulate them on their very firm grasp of formal logic, but not however in their sensitivity to the intrusions of reality.

Yours fraternally,
Phil Hearse

Dear Comrades,

We were surprised when we read in Robin Blackburn's article, 'What is the Democratic Road to Socialism?' (*International*, Vol. 3, No. 4), that 'in the Transitional Programme an important place was given to the struggle against the oppression of women', for we had not remembered it as paying any special attention to this question. We looked through our copies and found that our memories had not deceived us. On p. 110 of the Pathfinder 1974 edition it states: 'The decay of capitalism... deals its heaviest blows to the woman as wage earner and as housewife. The sections of the Fourth International should seek bases of support among the most exploited layers of the working class, consequently among the women workers. Here they will find inexhaustible stores of devotion, selflessness, and readiness to sacrifice.'

And that — apart from a couple of references to housewives and two mentions of women workers — is all.

All right, perhaps, as far as it goes; but it does not go very far. Certainly not far enough to allow one to talk of the Transitional Programme having given women's oppression an important place in its pages.

Robin Blackburn refers his readers to other works besides the Transitional Programme. What do we find if we turn to these other writings of Trotsky which touch on the question of women's oppression?

Though Trotsky's articles and speeches on women and the family fill only the slimmest of volumes, they show him to have been of all the leading Bolsheviks the most sensitive (excepting Alexandra Kollontai) to the complex of economic, social and psychological factors that prevented women from taking an equal part in life. He was aware that only the industrial development of Soviet Russia would make possible the transformation of daily life, and that the liberation of women would not be an automatic by-product of economic progress but the result of positive measures taken by the government to provide canteens, creches and other social facilities. In addition to changes 'from above', changes 'from below' were recognised by Trotsky as essential. The country might remain too poor to afford a radical transformation of the social fabric, but there was nothing to stop families clubbing together, he argued, and organising communal kitchens and other services. Such a grass roots movement could only be successful, he saw, if it actively involved women.

In believing that the liberation of women required on the one hand the introduction of women into the labour force and on the other hand the socialisation of housework, and that the elimination of women's oppression could be effected by women themselves organising and acting, Trotsky shared the views of other leading Bolsheviks. The stress he laid on change 'from below' and on the obstacle to change that old family forms and habits of social intercourse constituted was more uniquely his own. But though the various ideas that Trotsky put forward add up to a fairly impressive overview of the problems of women's liberation, two points need to be made in evaluating his contribution to the understanding of women's oppression.

First, his theory lacks an important dimension — Trotsky failed to consider the question of control over reproduction. He wrote in *Za Zdorovyi Byt* in December 1925 (see *Women and the Family*, Pathfinder 1970) that 'Motherhood is the question of all questions — the hub of all problems' (p.33); but he did not explore in any detail the nature of the conflict between woman's maternal role and the goal of her liberation — a conflict that was particularly sharp in the Soviet Russia of the Twenties. When Trotsky made a speech to the Third All-Union Conference on Protection of Mothers and Children in 1925 he did not raise the question of the regulation and control of fertility and the relation of this to the fight for liberation.

In ignoring this problem Trotsky was not alone. There appears to have been a consensus of opinion among socialists at this time that if abortion was a woman's democratic right, it was so because of the imperfect world of capitalism, which was incapable of providing suitable conditions for the rearing of children. Lenin, writing to Inessa Armand in 1915, had listed 'freedom from childbirth' alongside 'freedom from earnestness in love' and 'freedom to commit adultery' as the sort of things that would be understood by the demand for free love and which made this a bourgeois rather than a proletarian demand. The decree legalising abortion that had been passed by the Bolshevik government in 1920 characterised abortion as an evil and saw it as only temporarily necessary: 'The Workers and Peasants Government is conscious of this serious evil to the community. It combats this evil by propaganda against abortions among working women. By working for socialism and by introducing the protection of maternity and infancy on an extensive scale, it feels assured of achieving the gradual disappearance of this evil.'

In the 'whole' chapter on 'Family, Youth and Culture' in *The Revolution Betrayed* to which Robin Blackburn refers in passing and without criticism we find Trotsky expressing very similar views. Abortion, he writes, is one of a woman's most important civil, political and cultural rights — 'in conditions of want and family distress' (p. 149, Pathfinder 1970 edition). 'Socialism', he continues, 'was to remove the cause which impels woman to abortion' (p. 151).

The second point that has to be made is that, though Trotsky's ideas can be arranged into an impressive whole, he himself did not attempt this essential task, and that — partly as a consequence — he failed to translate his ideas into policies. His insights were not developed systematically and they remained at a very general level. Trotsky writes, for example, of the need for women to organise, but he makes no reference to the already existing organisational structure — the *zhenotdely* (the party apparatus responsible for work amongst women) — to suggest how its effectiveness and influence might be increased. Similarly, though he talks of the need for industrial development as a pre-requisite of liberation, he does not make this observation specific by indicating the types of economic strategy that would make possible the smoothest progress towards this end.

Unspecific and uncoordinated remarks are a poor basis for action, and Trotsky, in the Twenties, did not attempt to develop any programme around the issues of women's oppression. He drew no political conclusions about the need to take into account this oppression when advancing social and economic policies. Apart from the few articles that appeared in *Pravda* in 1923, his ideas on the problems of women and the family were put forward when he was addressing conferences of working women and social workers, and there is little evidence that these thoughts affected his general political outlook. There is no evidence that in his day-to-day administrative activity Trotsky raised the need to consider the establishment of creches, etc as a priority, or that he defended the *zhenotdely* in their fight to retain influence in the government decision-making apparatus.

In 1925 and 1926 there was much debate in the Soviet Union on the draft of a marriage code, and the participation of Trotsky and the Left Opposition in these discussions illustrates their approach to the 'woman question'. In view of the fact that the government, during NEP, was unable to give women independence by providing jobs and communal facilities, the law, it was proposed, should be changed to give women more protection. According to the terms of the 1918 marriage law, women whose marriages were registered could receive, in cases of hardship, alimony from their ex-husbands; but women whose marriages were unregistered had no such right. The new marriage code included a clause recognising *de facto* marriage. A strong lobby opposed this change, arguing that morality would be undermined and that women would lure men into relationships and then demand financial assistance.

These ideas were attacked by Trotsky, Preobrazhensky and others associated with the Left Opposition, who spoke out in favour of the recognition of *de facto* marriage, on the grounds that in a period of economic underdevelopment women needed all the protection they could get. But they did not suggest any practical measures that could have changed women's position even despite the unfavourable economic situation. The need for a grass-roots campaign to transform daily life along the lines that Trotsky had suggested in 1923 was not raised, and no mention was made of the importance of challenging sex roles and persuading men to take their share of the housework. Speaking in their personal capacity, members of the Left Opposition declared that industrialisa-

tion was essential in order to make women equal, but their remarks on this point were very general — they did not say that *their* economic policies, the policies of the Left Opposition, were alone capable of assisting women in their struggle.

The Left Opposition, as a body, took no stand on the issues raised by the 1925-26 debate; neither then nor at any time subsequently — as far as we know — did the Opposition quote the debate as an example of the connection between the fight to end the oppression of women and the political struggles of the 1920s. The Left Opposition did not discuss the proposals put forward by Alexandra Kollontai that a beginning be made to replace alimony by social provision (i.e. that women be assisted by the community as a whole and not by individual men), and it did not take the opportunity to criticise the bureaucratic apparatus that could not conceive the importance of allocating funds to such projects. The Left Opposition did not identify the struggle for women's liberation as part of the battle it was fighting; it did not give the struggle for women's rights a place in its platform.

Defeat did not persuade Trotsky and his followers to look more closely at the problems of women's liberation. When, in 1930, the *zhenotdely* were closed by Stalin and the theoretical journal *Kommunistka* (Communist Woman) suddenly ceased publication, the *Bulleten' Oppositsii* — the emigré organ of the Left Opposition — made no comment. Looking back in *The Revolution Betrayed* on the achievements of the early years, Trotksy seems to have considered that the revolution had done its duty by women and that material factors — 'society proved too poor and little cultured' (p. 145) — were solely responsible for the lack of progress in the liberation of women.

Again, Trotsky and the Left Opposition were not alone in failing to develop their understanding of women's oppression and to integrate their understanding in their general policies. The Bolshevik Party and the Comintern did not succeed in this task either. The point we are trying to make is that Trotsky and the Left Opposition, both in the theory they embraced and the action they advocated, reflected the limitations of the time.

The Transitional Programme reflects all these limitations. In fact, since the Programme gives a general survey of the political situation and is not oriented towards an examination of women's oppression, and since it is concerned with formulating concrete policy proposals, it shows Trotsky at his least sensitive to the problems of the liberation of women. On the whole the Programme ignores these problems completely. In *The Revolution Betrayed* women and the family did get a mention, but in the Transitional Programme there is not a word on the plight of women in the Soviet Union. In the four pages on 'The USSR and the problems of the transitional epoch', the attack of the Stalinist regime on women's rights is passed over in silence. When housewives and women workers are mentioned it is only in passing.

If the Transitional Programme had been informed by a serious attempt to 'Turn to the Woman Worker' (p. 110), then it would not have referred to committees on prices (p.87) without having in some detail stressed the importance of involving working women and housewives in struggle. Similarly, the statement that 'The agricultural workers, the ruined and semi-ruined farmers, the oppressed of the cities, the women workers, housewives, proletarianised layers of the intelligentsia — all of these will seek unity and leadership' (p. 96) could have been followed by some indication of the organisational forms through which women workers and housewives might have achieved unity with the proletarian struggle. In the absence of any such discussion and of any demands designed to take up the issues of women's oppression, Robin Blackburn's championship of the Transitional Programme is clearly misplaced.

His remarks are, in our opinion, unfortunate to say the least. The international communist movement is only now beginning to rid itself of the straitjacket of Stalinist teaching, which insisted that Marxism had said the last word on everything from linguistics to the sowing of spring wheat. Trotskyists, who have consistently criticised the claims of Stalinism, ought to be the first to approach critically their own traditions. If we examine the history of the Fourth International since Trotsky we find that until the rise of the independent women's movement in the Sixties the attempts of the Bolshevik Party and the Third International to develop the struggle against women's oppression were disregarded. Far from developing further the old level of understanding, the Fourth International fell below it. Apart from an excellent statement by Cannon in 'Speeches to the Party', we know of no theoretical or practical work by the FI before the emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement. There certainly must have been some, but it definitely cannot be said to have played anything more than the most marginal part in Trotskyist politics for this stretch of almost forty years.

There were brave women in the social democratic and communist parties who sought to come to an understanding of the exploitation and oppression of their sex and who did their best to push back the limits within which their parties were prepared to work. This is a history we need to recover and of which we can be justifiably proud. But we need to maintain a critical relationship with our history. Many positions taken by socialists both individually and as parties are indefensible and we should not feel that we have to defend them.

Unless we cease to defend them, mistakes of the past will be repeated. In the past many women who were attracted to radical ideas because of their awareness of their oppression as women rejected the socialist movement as only recognising the class divisions in society and as advocating a class struggle which ignored the specific oppression as women.

If Marxists continue to pass over uncritically the failures of yesterday they cannot hope to be taken seriously by the women's movement.

While Marxists consider a couple of lines of generalities to be 'an important place' for women's oppression, their credibility as defenders of women's rights will continue to be questioned.

ALIX HOLT
MARTIN DURHAM

Dear Comrade,

I suppose I should be appreciative of Patrick Camiller's admission that 'it was clearly wrong' of him to have 'suggested' in his polemic against my writings on Trotsky and the Popular Front that I was 'in any literal sense' (!) a 'forger', 'intellectual prostitute' and a 'shady character'. The more so, perhaps, because Scotland Yard's fraud squad might otherwise have begun turning its attention my way if such lurid allegations had been allowed to stand, reinforced by the charge in a similar vein in the Trotskyist Workers Revolutionary Party's new theoretical organ that 'Johnstone's work bears the same relationship to history as counterfeit banknotes to the paintings of Rembrandt'.

However, with regard to his assertion that I am a 'scurrilous intellectual swindler', after accepting with some hesitation that 'scurrilous' was probably 'too strong', the crusading Camiller returns unabashed and uncontrite to the attack to fix me as an intellectual swindler with a 'general method of distorting Trotsky's position'. He seeks to establish this by alleging that I twisted statements by Trotsky at the beginning of the war in my letter of protest by 'ripping quotes out of context' and 'distorting the sense of the quoted idea itself'.

Not wishing to take up too much of your space in that letter with what could be read in my **Trotsky and World Revolution**, I did not reproduce in full the quotations from Trotsky that I gave there to illustrate my point about their expressing 'revisionist forebodings' reflecting impatience. I had quoted there the passage where Trotsky wrote: 'It is absolutely self-evident that if the international proletariat, as a result of the experience of our entire epoch and the current new war, proves incapable of becoming the master of society, this would signify the foundering of all hope for a socialist revolution, for it is impossible to expect any more favourable conditions for it' (**In Defence of Marxism**, p. 15). I defy any reader after studying the full article, 'The USSR in War', in which the statements quoted occur, to deny that the views I attributed to Trotsky accurately convey the meaning.

Trotsky referred unambiguously in the passage quoted above to the international working class taking power ('becoming the master of society'). Patrick Camiller cannot legitimately explain this away by referring to other statements by Trotsky or to 'the colossal post-war **rise** of the proletariat' which was allegedly 'held back from revolutionary consummation by the cynical calculations of imperialist and Stalinist politicians at the tables of Yalta'. This familiar conspiracy theory of history just doesn't meet the bill. As I showed in my article, Trotsky had made it clear just after Munich that he saw the Fourth International overcoming all those forces whose main and permanent function he believed to be, internationally, to hold back revolution. Hence he wrote: 'Each new day of war will work in our favour... In the very first months of the war, therefore, a stormy reaction against the fumes of chauvinism will set in among the working masses. The first victims of this reaction, along with fascism, will be the parties of the Second and Third Internationals. Their collapse will be the indispensable condition for an avowed revolutionary movement, which will find for its crystallisation no axis other than the Fourth International. Its tempered cadres will lead the toilers to the great offensive' (Trotsky, **Writings 1938-39**, 1st ed., p.20).

Since, as Trotsky claimed in May 1940, 'the Fourth International in numbers and especially in preparation possesses infinite advantages over its predecessors at the beginning of the last war' (Trotsky, **Writings 1939-40**, 1st ed., p. 45), it is difficult to understand why, if

Trotsky's analyses were right, it was so pathetically powerless against 'the cynical calculations of imperialist and Stalinist politicians' which can hardly have come as a surprise to its 'tempered cadres'. But, alas, Patrick Camiller displays not the slightest interest in making a balanced estimate of Trotsky's positions; his concern is to put up a blanket defence of them. Hence, neither in his letter nor in the whole of his article against me is he prepared to conceded that Trotsky was mistaken on any single point. He even goes so far as to sidestep and obfuscate the obvious meaning of passages like those which I have quoted as much to avoid having to make such admissions to himself, one fancies, as to others!

Patrick Camiller asserts that my interpretation of these passages betrays 'a lack of the most elementary standards of historical research'. I challenge him either to withdraw this slanderous statement or to have the courage and honesty to make the same charge against Trotsky's great and extremely sympathetic biographer, Isaac Deutscher, who can hardly be associated with 'the Stalinist tradition'. For Deutscher, in a full discussion of Trotsky's 'USSR in War' in **The Prophet Outcast**, shows that in the passages that I quoted Trotsky 'declared that the final test for the working class, for socialism, and for Marxism was imminent: it was coming with the Second World War. If the war were not to lead to proletarian revolution in the West, then the place of decaying capitalism would indeed be taken not by socialism, but by a new bureaucratic and totalitarian system of exploitation.' After referring further to Trotsky's statement in the article that, if the working class in the West were to seize power but then prove incapable of holding it, it would be necessary to recognise the socialist programme as a Utopia, Deutscher comments: 'Even for the sake of argument he never yet contemplated the possibility of an utter failure of socialism so closely; he insisted that the final "test" was a matter of the next few years; and he defined the terms of the test with painful precision' (pp.467-8).

I shall not argue the toss with Patrick Camiller about his inaccurate characterisation of Ralph Fox's portrayal of Trotsky in his **Lenin**, where his valuable qualities are recognised to an extent that is in marked contrast to the later period; nor the difference between saying that Trotsky had 'all the features of... "the petty bourgeois in a hurry"', and suggesting that he displayed the 'petty bourgeois' characteristic of impatience in certain specified statements; nor his curious defence of proletarian as against petty bourgeois impatience.

I would, however, insist that the dogmatism and closed minds of Patrick Camiller and others like him not only prevent them from making any critical assessment of the history of Trotskyism, which indeed the whole Trotskyist movement has shied off from. It also produces the conditioned reflex that sees any fundamental criticism of Trotsky by others in the labour movement as historical distortion and intellectual swindling. Patrick Camiller reacts like the devotee of a Christian sect confronted with an embarrassing page in the Bible, who reconstrues and rationalises its meaning to fit in with established doctrine and denounces rationalist critics as instruments of the devil. (Not, of course, 'in a literal sense' — it may be conceded that personally they are not disreputable or degenerate at all — but objectively and essentially in performing a function which is profoundly provocative to faithful god-fearing folk.) Such an attitude is not only theoretically sterile, but injects an extremely unpleasant element into any controversy and is hence incompatible with your magazine's declared desire to promote real debate and 'avoid vulgar polemic and slanders'. Chuck it, Patrick!

MONTY JOHNSTONE

It would appear that this debate is tending to become far too personalised. In the last issue we accepted our responsibility for this and withdrew the remarks which Monty Johnstone found offensive. We were of the view that the use of these epithets detracted from the real issue involved in the debate, which was essentially around Trotsky's views on the popular fronts of the Thirties. Trotsky's views on the Second World War before the attack on the Soviet Union [which transformed the character of the war] are certainly open to question and we intend to discuss them in future issues. However, they were not the subject of the Camiller-Johnstone debate and the bulk of Monty Johnstone's letter is therefore besides the point.

Monty Johnstone refers to the 'dogmatic and closed minds of Patrick Camiller and others like him...' That is a bit rich. What has enraged Camiller as well as the entire Editorial Board is not that one or another particular criticism of Trotsky is necessarily incorrect, but the general framework within which such criticisms are couched. For it would be naive of us as well as Monty Johnstone's supporters to imagine that all he is engaged in is 'historical research'. What is involved is a project to provide a sophisticated, modern gloss to the old Stalinist critique of Trotsky's ideas. This entails a different approach to that of Basmanov, Ponomarev and Co. in Moscow, but the object is not so different. We could ask why Johnstone applies one set of standards to Trotsky [employing a polemical zeal which can be viewed as an ahistorical and hack-like nit-picking] and a different yardstick when dealing with Marx, Engels, Lenin — not to mention epigones such as Dimitrov, Thaelmann and Duclos. Surely Marx and Lenin were not always correct. Their work is not without its flaws. Monty Johnstone, however, is not interested in that because of his overall project: 'doing a job on Trotsky'.

Why does he concentrate on Trotsky? The answer is obvious. It is the heritage of Trotsky which poses the only serious global theoretical challenge to the entire corpus of political concepts which are utilised internationally with differing emphasis by the Stalinist family. It is Trotsky's ideas which answer both Moscow and the reformist exponents of 'Eurocommunism'. It is Trotsky's thought which can deal with the Gulagistes — the renegades who have abandoned Marxism and expound a 'new philosophy'. The reason why Solzhenitsyn has convinced them is precisely because for years they were educated in the school of Stalinism [either by the PCF in the Thirties or by Althusser in the Sixties].

Instead of his unbalanced polemic against Trotskyism, Johnstone should pay tribute to the author of The Revolution Betrayed, **for it is the strengths of that tradition which CP militants need to study in this period if the class struggle is to move forward.**

This particular correspondence is now closed. We look forward to receiving Monty Johnstone's reply to the substantive arguments contained in Patrick Camiller's text.

TARIQ ALI

BOWIE — Another View

It was encouraging to read Carl Gardner's 'In Defence Of David Bowie' in the Summer issue of *International* but distressing to watch him attempt to evaluate contemporary rock music — with its complex social and economic relationship to modern society — using an unwieldy critique obviously taken from another discipline. It was no surprise, therefore, to find out that his main reason for wanting to defend Bowie, his *Low* album, and particularly the track on it called 'Warszawa', was because 'This is cerebral music, challenging the audience into intellectual involvement and interaction with it, not passive, emotionally over-loaded acceptance'. In other words, the track wasn't rock and was therefore acceptable.

He raises a number of issues in his article which I feel need answering — not least the one above — and he also operates under a number of misconceptions which I assume come from his lack of knowledge of the recording industry, of what happens in a recording studio, and — essential for a Marxist critique — the history of rock itself, generally recognised as beginning with the release of 'Sh-boom' by The Chords in March 1954.

Since Gardner posits what he thinks is the 'correct' direction that rock should go in order to eliminate reactionary ideology, which he thinks has become structurally embedded in it, his piece needs answering in detail.

He says: 'A central problem in rock is the imposition of a "hierarchy" of importance between instruments/voices ... whereby the patriarchal (sexist) form of contemporary capitalism has embedded itself into the conventions and relations between various instruments and musical components.' It is from this standpoint that he praises Bowie's *Low* and thinks that Bowie and Eno have attempted 'firstly, a progressive restructuring of these central relations within music, displacing (yet still using) the human voice. And secondly, a fracturing of the orthodox audio-hierarchy which maintains it'.

I would like to consider these views, first musically and then more generally.

There is an implicit suggestion that Bowie and Eno have done something new — which is certainly not true. Terry Riley did the same thing ten years ago (in fact 'Warszawa' sounds very like some of Riley's work) and more recently Philip Glass and Eno himself have released albums which fit this description. I could cite many dozens of pieces by everyone from Jimi Hendrix and Frank

Zappa through to the German synthesiser bands, Kraftwerk, Tangerine Dream, Can, Ash Ra Tempel, etc., all of which 're-structure these central elements'. The only new thing is that Bowie, a Rock 'n' Roll artist, has done it. Why this should merit specific comment I'm not sure. It's not, after all, as if this new music will reach a mass audience. As soon as RCA Records heard the tapes of *Low* they reduced the pressing order from 120,000 to 80,000 initial run. They knew the kids wouldn't buy it.

But this line of answer will not do, the fact is that *Rock 'n' Roll itself was* the answer to the structural problems Gardner mentions. Prior to 1954, popular music did indeed suffer all the maladies he mentions and much 'pop' music still does. Rock itself was a progressive and revolutionary new musical form which transformed the recording industry, the music publishing industry, and the whole face of popular culture, particularly in the United States. State control of the airwaves has always blocked its influence here. Rock 'n' Roll brought together black and white audiences for the first time, both at concerts and as consumers, and, most important of all, it was the music of young people. For the first time it was written by, performed by and recorded by young people and, of course, it was also bought by them.

It met with immense resistance both in the industry and from conservative sectors of society — many radio stations banned it and films featuring it were banned by watch committees.

Rock 'n' Roll, as the creative product of a certain age group, took as its themes the social situation of that age group: problems of adolescent love, of school, of getting a job and of just being young. It evolved with it the instrumental line-up best suited to its needs: vocal (to sing the lyrics), guitar (to play the melody line), bass (to keep time), and drums (to introduce dynamics to the piece). Of these the drums were originally the least important and in fact Elvis Presley's earliest records have bass and guitar only (drums were bulky to carry round).

Gardner's suggestion that this relationship of instrumentation can be changed, and the notion that such a change would be 'progressive', is a curious one. Though the importance of these instruments in the line-up varies enormously from group to group in accordance with the abilities of the players, too much of a structural change would be impossible if the resulting music is to remain rock. Bring out the bass and you move closer to Reggae, bring out the drum beat and submerge the vocal and you move towards Disco .... That's not to say that Rock is bound to this instrumentation — it can be augmented by keyboards and other instruments — but guitar, bass and drums remains the classic rock line-up, partly because they are (a) inexpensive and (b) easy to play — at least initially.

This bring me to another objection to Gardner's piece: the album, or at least the tracks he discusses, does not use conventional rock instruments: Eno cannot play any instruments, he uses a synthesiser which is played one note at a time (the synthesiser has only been on the market since 1970 and even now the only polyphonic synthesisers — those that chords can be played on — are in the prototype stage). The album does include conventional tracks but the ones which Gardner finds particularly progressive are mostly synthetic. The track 'Warszawa' in fact took Eno two days to record, over-dubbing track after track on a synthesiser while Bowie was away in Paris. At a later time Bowie rushed in and dubbed the vocal tracks over it in half an hour. So much for the album which is 'obviously a collective and collaborative project with others'. If Bowie hadn't liked the backing tracks, which Eno made entirely on his own, Eno intended to buy them from Bowie and use them on his own album.

However, since the point was made, it is worth noting that the creative end of the Rock 'n' Roll industry is already much more 'socialised' than most people think in terms of the working relationships between the group, any session musicians employed, the producer, the engineer, the tape operator and other studio personnel. The creation of the album is something that they all do as a project, with clearly distinguished work roles but usually in a very relaxed, collaborative way. As relaxed as you can be in a situation which is costing over £1 a minute.

Over the past decade there has been a big swing away from recording studios owned and operated by the recording companies — with all the attendant paperwork and union restrictions — in favour of the independent studios which have total flexibility of operation. This has recently extended to a number of studios opening in the country-side, in Wales, the Cotswolds, Oxfordshire, Sussex, where groups can go and live in. They are usually converted farms or manor houses and the musicians, the studio staff and the cooks, groundsmen and staff all live communally in that curious creative tension that goes into the making of a record (it's worth noting that almost all albums are recorded at night). In fact, Bowie's *Low* album was recorded at one such studio, the Chateau Herouville, a converted abbey near Paris, but there is no evidence that *Low* was any more of a collaborative effort than most other rock albums.

This is getting some distance from the point, which, as I see it, is this. Rock 'n' Roll wields an enormous influence on young people, in the US its influence probably surpasses even that of TV. It is the model from which they take many of their attitudes and opinions. There is no point in wishing that it was different in form than it is, only one in twenty records ever makes it — it is ultimately impossible to hype a record, the public only buys what there is a social need for. This is not the place to discuss the needs that present day popular music, in the widest sense, fills, but it is time for an appeal to come to terms with reality.

It's no good pussyfooting round the edges of rock, listening to and commenting upon the so-called progressive rock groups: Yes, Genesis, or Bowie's *Low* album. Rock is *not* intellectual, it is *not* cerebral. It is street level music made up of what Gardner calls 'simplistic compulsive rhythms' which adolescent youth relate to because these rhythms correspond most closely to the sexual body rhythms that the authoritarian society has suppressed and the individual has repressed. Rock 'n' Roll is progressive because it is an affirmation of life for young people in a world of authority. Gardner is trying to take *even this* away from them.

Right now the most progressive music being played in Britain is punk rock, the music of unemployed school leavers, most of whom still live with their parents in high rise council flats. It is the music of alienation, boredom and frustration.

In America, where it is more often blacks and Puerto Ricans who are in the social situation expressed by British punks, the white kids are buying by the million the heavy metal records of such groups as Kiss, Aerosmith, Ted Nugent and Boston, none of which can offer more than a temporary respite from the alienation felt by their audiences.

The line between progressive rock and mind-numbing rock is a hard one to draw but it is a line which has to be drawn within rock, not somewhere outside in a world of cerebral experimental music appreciated only by intellectuals.

MILES

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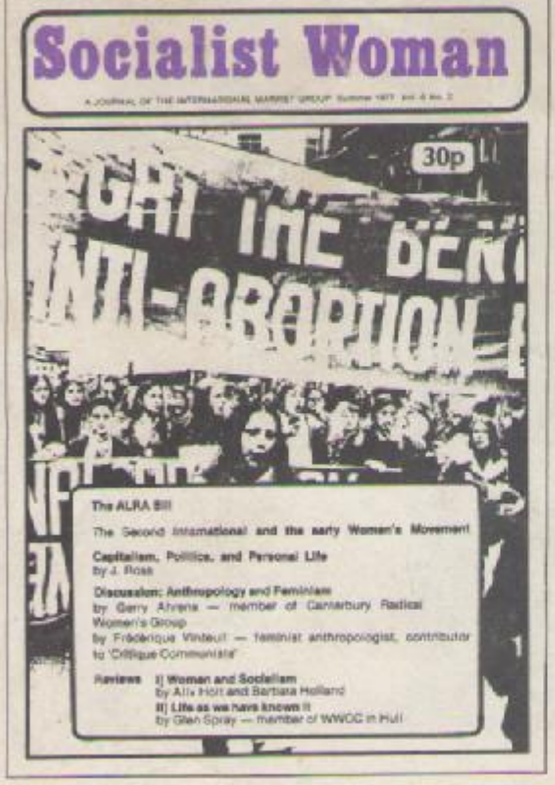

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