

NO CONDESCENDING SAVIORS

A Study of the Experience of Revolution
in the Twentieth Century

by Noel Ignatin

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THE INTERNATIONALE
by Eugene Pottier

Arise, ye prisoners of starvation!
Arise, ye wretched of the earth, For
justice thunders condemnation,
A better world's in birth. No more
tradition's chains shall bind us,
Arise, ye slaves, no more in thrall!
The earth shall rise on new foundations,
We have been naught, we shall be all.

Chorus:

'Tis the final conflict,
Let each stand in his place,
The international working class
Shall be the human race.

We want no condescending saviors,
To rule us from a judgement hall; We
workers ask not for their favors;
Let us consult for all. To make the
thief disgorge his booty,
To free the spirit from its cell,
We must ourselves decide our duty,
We must decide and do it well.

— Translated by Charles H. Kerr

INTRODUCTION

Only a few years ago, the People's Republic of China enjoyed overwhelming prestige among U.S. leftists. China's proximity to Vietnam, both in geography and experience, its exclusion from the United Nations and isolation from the cynical farce of big-power politics, the resounding calls of its leaders for world revolution and their insistence on armed struggle as the principle means of achieving it, the bold and inspiring Cultural Revolution — all of these combined to give China and its Communist Party the image of militant champion of the oppressed and dedicated enemy of imperialism.

In contrast, the persistent stressing by the Soviet leaders of the need for "peaceful coexistence," even to the point of attempting to restrain wars of national liberation which they saw as threats to the fragile relations they had worked out with the U.S. (this was expressed most clearly in the ignominious pressure to negotiate which they directed at the Vietnamese) gave the Soviet Union an image of conservatism. Its leaders seemed far more concerned with preserving their country's status as a major world power than with advancing the cause of the two thirds of the earth's population still under the heel of capitalist domination.

All of the above has changed. China's venture into diplomatic exchanges

with the U.S., initiated while bombs were raining on Vietnam, followed by the unseemly haste with which it recognized the military junta in Chile while denying recognition to the revolutionary regime in Portugal, its abstaining at the U.N. when the question of Puerto Rican independence was brought to a vote — all these, and other similar gestures which were appreciatively noted in Washington, have gravely tarnished China's revolutionary image and diminished its influence among U.S. leftists.

At the same time, the Soviet Union and its allies began to take stands in world affairs which were generally welcomed by leftists. More than any other single event, the action of Cuba — a Soviet ally — in Angola produced a change in attitudes toward the Soviet Union among U.S. leftists. Many people who had once dismissed the Soviet Union as hopelessly conservative swung over to viewing it positively as a supporter of revolutionary movements.

This paper is an attempt to explain the bewildering turns in policy on the part of the Soviet Union and China. It is also an attempt to uncover the internal causes behind such turns, since as is well known, a country's foreign policy is an extension of its domestic one. Briefly stated, the writer's thesis is that, owing to a combination of objective difficulties and mistaken policy decisions, the Soviet Union never attained socialism, and that subsequently its course not merely slowed down but reversed direction; that instead of socialism there developed a kind of state capitalism in which a class of bureaucrats, in control of the state apparatus and the nationalized wealth of the country, lives by exploiting the labor of the mass of propertyless proletarians; that China and the other newly liberated countries, notwithstanding great successes, have not yet overcome the conditions that were crucial in halting the advance of the Soviet Union in its early days; and that the proletariat of east and west shares a common goal — to free itself from the domination of hostile class forces which are stifling its initiative, autonomy and self-development.

The point must be emphasized that, for the Sojourner Truth Organization, the examination of developments in the Soviet Union, China and elsewhere is not intended to call into question the conception that our main task is the destruction of U.S. imperialism. Unlike some others, in particular the October League, whose discovery of the reactionary character of the Soviet state has led them to oppose it even where that opposition coincides with U.S. government policy, we remain firmly committed to the traditional stance of communists in an imperialist country — for American workers, the enemy is at home!

The purpose of this examination is the lessons it can teach us about the making of revolution in this country, lessons concerning the relations between the vanguard party and the class whose interests it proposes to represent, relations between the proletariat and the state which is supposed to embody its dictatorship, and relations between the working class and other strata of the population with which it may find itself aligned.

For the overall conception and many of the specific interpretations advanced in this paper, the writer has drawn heavily on the theory of state capitalism, first put forward by a group within the now-defunct Workers Party and most clearly and fully expressed in the pamphlet, "State Capital-

ism and World Revolution," by C. L. R. James, originally published in 1950. What is written in this paper, however, is solely the responsibility of this writer, and should not be laid at the door of James or any of the other early proponents of the theory of state capitalism. Nor should it be taken to be an official statement by the Sojourner Truth Organization, which has undertaken to publish it without necessarily subscribing to everything stated within, because it believes the paper raises important questions which are, or ought to be, of major concern to the U.S. left.

I. CAPITALISM AND SOCIALISM

The most dramatic accomplishment of the Bolshevik Revolution was the violent expropriation of the exploiters and the establishment of a state based on nationalized property. Because of this it came to be generally accepted that capitalism depended on private ownership of the means of production, and that wherever such ownership was abolished, socialism prevailed.

This is the view held by nearly all sections of the left; even most Trotskyists*, bitter critics of the Soviet regime, agree that property relations there are socialist.

This was not how Marx, Engels, or Lenin understood the nature of capitalism and socialism.

In his chapter entitled "The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation" in Volume I of CAPITAL, Marx, in discussing the tendency toward centralization of capital, wrote:

This limit would not be reached in any particular society until the entire social capital would be united, either in hands of one single capitalist, or in those of one single corporation.

In SOCIALISM, UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC Engels vividly described the course of capitalist development:

The fact that the socialized organization of production within the factory has developed so far that it has become incompatible with the anarchy of production in society, which exists side by side with it and dominates it, is brought home to the capitalists themselves ..."

Engels speaks of the periodic crises of overproduction, in which the capitalists are unable to set in motion the existing means of production, and goes on to say:

On the one hand, therefore, the capitalistic mode of production stands convicted of its own incapacity to further direct these productive forces. On the other, these productive forces themselves, with increasing energy, press forward to the removal of the existing contradiction, to the abolition of their quality as capital, to the practical recognition of their character as social productive forces. (Emphasis original)

*The International Socialists, with their theory of "bureaucratic collectivism," are the outstanding exception.

This rebellion of the productive forces, as they grow more and more powerful, against their quality as capital, this stronger and stronger command that their social character shall be recognized, forces the capitalist class to treat them more and more as social productive forces, so far as this is possible under capitalist conditions.

He speaks of the tendency to form joint-stock companies and, later, trusts, and how this introduces "production upon a definite plan." But even trusts are inadequate. He continues:

In any case, with trusts or without, the official representative of capitalist society — the state — will ultimately have to undertake the direction of production. This necessity of conversion into state property is felt first in the great institutions for intercourse and communication — the post-office, the telegraphs, the railways.

If the crises demonstrate the incapacity of the bourgeoisie for managing any longer modern productive forces, the transformation of the great establishments for production and distribution into joint-stock companies, trusts and state property, show how unnecessary the bourgeoisie are for that purpose. All the social functions of the capitalists are now performed by salaried employeesAt first the capitalistic mode of production forces out the workers. Now it forces out the capitalists...

But the transformation, either into joint-stock companies and trusts, or into state ownership, does not do away with the capitalistic nature of the productive forces The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine, the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital. The more it proceeds to the taking over of productive forces, the more does it actually become the national capitalists, the more citizens does it exploit. The workers remain wage workers — proletarians.

At the end of the work, Engels recapitulates the stages of development:

Partial recognition of the social character of the productive forces forced upon the capitalists themselves. Taking over of the great institutions for production and communication, first by joint-stock companies, later on by trusts, then by the state. The bourgeoisie demonstrated to be a superfluous class. All its social functions are now performed by salaried employees.

Proletarian Revolution — Solution of the contradictions. The proletariat seizes the public power, and by means of this transforms the socialized means of production, slipping from the hands of the bourgeoisie, into public property.

Please re-read the above passage; better yet, go back to the original and read it in its entirety, including the parts omitted here.

"Socialized means of production ..." Note that. Socialized, not by the proletarian revolution, but by capitalism. "Slipping from the hands of the bourgeoisie ..." — not after the proletarian revolution, but before it.

To emphasize his point, and to ridicule the notion that nationalization of industry equals socialism, Engels includes a long footnote reviewing various examples of nationalization in France, Germany and Belgium, which concludes with the remark that if the above examples are to be considered socialism, then surely the proposal to have the state take over the brothels, made in Germany during the reign of Frederick William III, must be regarded as a socialistic measure.

Engels' point is clear; yet hundreds of thousands of Marxists (including this writer) studied it for decades and simply refused to believe that it could mean what the words say.*

Lenin showed that he had read Engels and, what is more, had understood him. Shortly after his return to Russia in the spring of 1917, he made a report to the All-Russian Conference of the Party, in which he referred to the above-cited passage from SOCIALISM, UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC. In his reply to the discussion, Lenin quoted from the Resolution on the Current Situation, under discussion at the Conference:

The concentration and internationalization of capital are making gigantic strides; monopoly capitalism is developing into state monopoly capitalism. In a number of countries regulation of production and distribution by society is being introduced by force of circumstances.

He goes on to comment:

It is noteworthy that twenty-seven years ago Engels pointed out that to describe capitalism as something that 'is distinguished by its planless-ness' and to overlook the role played by the trusts was unsatisfactory. Engels remarked that 'when we come to the trusts, then planlessness disappears', though there is capitalism. This remark is all the more pertinent today, when we have a military state, when we have state monopoly capitalism. Planning does not make the worker less of a slave, but it enables the capitalist to make his profits 'according to plan'. Capitalism is now evolving directly into its higher, regulated, form. (Vol. 24, pp. 305-6. The Resolution is on page 309.)

Throughout 1917 Lenin hammered away continuously at this idea. In "The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It," he wrote:

And what is the state? It is an organization of the ruling class — in Germany, for instance, of the Junkers and capitalists. And therefore

*Some critics, not making the mistake of misreading the above, minimize its importance. For example, Antonio Carlo, the Italian Marxist, in a footnote to an article of his published in issue number 20 of Telos, argues that, "if the young Marx seems to indulge on the hypothesis of a system with only one capitalist (the State), this altogether disappears in his maturity ..." It would be difficult to imagine a more "mature" Marx than the Marx of volume I of CAPITAL, whence comes the quote about the limit of centralization of capital. Also, SOCIALISM, UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC was published in 1878, while Marx was very much alive and "mature."

what the German Plekhanovs (Scheidemann, Lensch, and others) call 'war-time socialism' is in fact war-time state-monopoly capitalism or, to put it more simply and clearly, war-time penal servitude for the workers and war-time protection for capitalist profits. (Vol. 25, p. 357)

Very well. It should be clear that the view which equates nationalization of industry with socialism, commonly held among left-wingers, was not the view of Marx, Engels or Lenin. And what of socialism? What did they have to say about how the socialist society would look?

In Section 9 of the chapter in volume I of CAPITAL entitled "Machinery and Modern Industry," Marx writes:

Modern industry, indeed, compels society, under penalty of death, to replace the detail-worker of today, crippled by life-long repetition of one and the same trivial operation, and thus reduced to a mere fragment of a man, by the fully-developed individual fit for a variety of labors, ready to face any change of production, and to whom the different social functions he performs are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers.

That is the socialist society. More specific than that he would not get; he was not giving "kitchen recipes" for the future. But when the Paris Commune broke out, he studied it carefully, and after that, whenever anyone asked him what the dictatorship of the proletariat would look like, he said — study the Paris Commune — that was the dictatorship of the proletariat!

Now the Paris Commune nationalized nothing; its most important economic reform in the life of the workers was the abolition of night work for bakers! Nevertheless it did much to give Marx, and later Lenin, a view of the new society toward which the proletariat was striving.

And what did they think this new society would look like? From their writings on the Paris Commune we can get some idea. It would abolish the distinction between town and country, and between manual and intellectual labor; it would abolish the bourgeois family and emancipate women; it would show a tendency toward equalization of income; it would introduce universal literacy, universal arming of the workers, and universal participation in administering the state, which would be "no longer a state in the proper sense of the word."

Please note that the above program involves considerably more than nationalization of industry and land, although that may be a part of it; it is more than free medical care, retirement pensions and vacation benefits, although these, too, are part of it. The socialist society involves the complete transformation of social relations, relations among people, so that at last the worker becomes master of the process of production. That is why Lenin wrote that:

In every socialist revolution, however — and consequently in the socialist revolution in Russia which we began on October 25, 1917 — the principal task of the proletariat and of the poor peasants which it leads, is the positive or constructive work of setting up an extremely intricate and delicate system of new organizational relationships extending to the

planned production and distribution of the goods required for the existence of tens of millions of people. (Vol. 27, pp. 241)

How Lenin hoped, in the concrete conditions of Russia at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, to erect the "extremely intricate and subtle system of new organizational relationships," we shall see in a later section. Before we get to that, we must take up a recent, curious use of the theory of state capitalism.

II. STATE CAPITALISM IN THE SOVIET UNION

Since the beginning of the Sino-Soviet dispute over fifteen years ago, the Chinese Communist Party has moved from describing the Soviet leaders as "revisionist" and "capitulationist," to charging them with "seeking the all-round restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union," to the present characterization of the Soviet Union as "imperialist" and "fascist."

Those U.S. groups which subscribe to "Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Tse-Tung Thought" follow the lead of China on this matter, as on others. The "anti-revisionists" have produced two fairly ambitious studies of Soviet society. They are: RED PAPERS 7, "How Capitalism Has Been Restored in the Soviet Union and What This Means for the World Struggle," published by the Revolutionary Union (today the Revolutionary Communist Party), and RESTORATION OF CAPITALISM IN THE USSR by Martin Nicolaus, which originally ran as a series in the Guardian and has been published in book form by the October League's Liberator Press. Both are recommended, in spite of their faulty premises and conclusions, for the valuable information they contain.

How do these works explain what they call the "restoration of capitalism" in the Soviet Union? The RCP pamphlet states:

With the rise to power of Khrushchev, the bourgeoisie managed to seize control of the Communist Party, the political vanguard of the working class, and from this position turn the state into an instrument of bourgeois dictatorship and begin the restoration of capitalism. This was the crucial turning point in the restoration process. (Emphasis in original, p. 53)

Nicolaus says essentially the same thing:

As far as the elementary relations of property in Soviet society are concerned, the seizure of state power by Khrushchev's forces already constituted, in and of itself, the expropriation of the Soviet proletariat and the end of the socialist period of Soviet history. The major means of production remained the property of the state, but the state itself was no longer the 'property' of the working class. The bourgeois forces, in the very act of capturing state power, usurped the ownership title to the means of production, (page 79)

Of course, neither one claims it was so simple as that. They both devote considerable space to reviewing the history of the Soviet Union prior to

Khrushchev, to show how various theoretical and practical errors weakened the socialist forces and prepared the conditions for capitalist restoration. And both trace the history of the Soviet Union since Khrushchev's rise to show how what they call the "new bourgeoisie" used its positions at the pinnacles of power to transform, step by step, the overall character of the Soviet Union.

All their analysis and research is aimed at proving one basic point: that prior to Khrushchev the working class held power and was pursuing a generally correct course, albeit with shortcomings, even "serious" shortcomings. And then in 1956-57, when the Khrushchev "coup" occurred, power slipped from the hands of the workers into the hands of the bourgeoisie, and the full-scale restoration of capitalism began.

Reader, let us stop for a moment and call upon our reserves of common sense.

Everyone familiar with U.S. life knows that if the bourgeoisie tried to eliminate the health and pension plans, paid vacations, unemployment insurance and other achievements of the mass struggle, the workers would respond with a wave of strikes and social disorders that would rock the country to its foundations. Indeed, within the last few years, as living conditions have declined due to the economic crisis, there has developed a rise in working class militancy, as nationwide strikes have broken out in mining, transportation, auto, electrical manufacturing, public services, and elsewhere.

And this militancy has developed in response to what is, after all, a fairly limited assault on some of the reform gains won during a period of extended economic growth.

Furthermore it has developed, in many cases, in spite of and against a trade union movement dominated by reactionary class-collaborationist leadership, unwilling and unable to wage an effective struggle.

(We have deliberately left out the uprisings of Black people in over a hundred cities in 1967 and '68, which broke out without any national coordinated organization, because the argument could be made that they were in response more to national than to class oppression.)

American workers have shown that they will use whatever means are at hand to resist what they perceive as an attack on their interests.

If this is true of the U.S., how is it possible that the Soviet workers, veterans of three revolutions and two wars, creators of the factory councils and the Soviets, experienced for forty years in exercising power in a modern state, could allow power to slip from their hands without putting up at least equal resistance?

The OL and RCP do cite various examples of strikes and demonstrations on the part of Soviet workers in recent years. In the first place, the examples they cite aren't well documented. In the second place, even if they are all authentic, they are on a tiny scale, especially when one considers the monstrous scale of the assault launched against them, according to the "anti-revisionists."

Where are the general strikes, like in France in 1968? Where are the factory occupations, like in Italy in 1969? Where are the seizures of the radio stations and newspapers, like in Portugal in 1974? Where are the uprisings in the military forces, like in the U.S. during the Vietnam War?

In a modern industrial society like the Soviet Union such things cannot be concealed no matter how tightly controlled the means of propaganda. The reason the "anti-revisionists" cannot cite them is because they haven't occurred.

It will not do to argue that, because capitalist restoration was carried out under the banner of Communism, the workers were unable to recognize the nature and gravity of the threat. That would make the Soviet workers the least class conscious ruling class in history — after forty years of socialism! A class which cannot recognize a fundamental threat to its interests, which cannot even tell when it has been ousted from power, such a class could not have held power for four years, let alone forty!

Nor will it do to argue that, owing to the repression utilized by the new bourgeoisie, the workers did not have in their hands the means to defend themselves. Those means of defense were supposed to have been built up during the previous forty years, when the working class was exercising power in the state, was master of the society.

If the Soviet workers, in 1957, were unable to put up effective resistance to the seizure of power by a new clique of bloodsuckers, that must mean that those workers, prior to 1957, were the most oppressed and downtrodden class of proletarians the world has ever seen, possibly excepting the German workers under the Hitler regime!*

The position of the OL and the RCP on the "restoration of capitalism" in the USSR is an insult to the working class and to human intelligence.

There are only two opinions on this matter that meet minimum standards of reasonableness: either socialism exists in the Soviet Union, in spite of any backward steps that may have been taken by the revisionists; or socialism was never attained there, and the Khrushchev-Brezhnev policies represent, in the most fundamental sense, not a reversal but a continuation of previous policies.

We shall proceed to an examination of Soviet development following the Revolution, to see which of the two positions best fits the facts.

III. LENIN'S PLAN FOR RUSSIA

Throughout 1917, Lenin stressed the importance of state capitalism. In "The Impending Catastrophe," he writes that "state-monopoly capitalism is a complete material preparation for socialism, the threshold of socialism, a rung on the ladder of history between which and the rung called socialism there are no intermediate rungs." (Vol. 25, p. 359)

All that is necessary to achieve the transition, he writes, is the consistent application of revolutionary democratic measures. He writes:

Now try to substitute for the Junker-capitalist state, for the land-

*Since the above was written, at least one apparently authentic case of resistance has been reported, a mutiny on a Soviet ship in international waters near Sweden. While it is gratifying to learn that Soviet citizens are rising in revolt against their masters, if the thesis of the OL and RCP on the "Khrushchev coup" were correct, one would expect similar uprisings to have occurred two decades earlier, and with a clearly defined political content.

owner-capitalist state, a revolutionary-democratic state, i.e., a state which in a revolutionary way abolishes all privileges and does not fear to introduce the fullest democracy in a revolutionary way. You will find that, given a really revolutionary-democratic state, state-monopoly capitalism inevitably and unavoidably implies a step, and more than one step, towards socialism! (Vol. 25, pp. 357-8)

He gives a specific example of what he means:

What is universal labor conscription?

It is a step forward on the basis of modern monopoly capitalism, a step towards the regulation of economic life as a whole, in accordance with a certain general plan . . .

In Germany it is the Junkers (landowners) and capitalists who are introducing universal labor conscription, and therefore it inevitably becomes war-time penal servitude for the workers.

But take the same institution and think over its significance in a revolutionary-democratic state. Universal labor conscription, introduced, regulated and directed by the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, will still not be socialism, but it will no longer be capitalism. It will be a tremendous step towards socialism, a step from which, if complete democracy is preserved, there can no longer be any retreat back to capitalism, without unparalleled violence being committed against the masses. (Vol. 25, pp. 359-60)

There are those who think that, to Lenin, democracy was merely one among a number of alternate paths to socialism. Those who think that should ponder the above, together with a number of other articles and pamphlets he wrote during the same period, culminating in his master-work, STATE AND REVOLUTION. These writings make it clear that, to Lenin, democracy was not an adjunct, more or less desirable, to the socialist society, but the very essence of it!

In 1917 the Bolsheviks took power in a relatively bloodless insurrection. By signing the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with Germany they were able to extricate Russia from the World War. There began a peaceful interlude. It is during this interlude that Lenin again takes up the matter of state capitalism. In " 'Left-Wing' Childishness and the Petty-Bourgeois Mentality," he describes the Russian economy as a mixture of five elements: (1) patriarchal farming; (2) small commodity production (including the majority of peasants who sell their grain); (3) private capitalism; (4) state capitalism; (5) socialism. He goes on to say that, "It is not state capitalism that is at war with socialism, but the petty bourgeoisie plus private capitalism fighting together against both state capitalism and socialism." (Vol. 27, p. 336)

At present, petty bourgeois capitalism prevails in Russia, and it is on and the same road that leads from it to both, large-scale state capitalism and to socialism, through one and the same intermediary station called 'national accounting and control of production and distribution.' Those who fail to understand this are committing an unpardonable mistake in economics. (Vol. 27, pp. 340-1)

And to underline the fact that his appreciation for the role of state capitalism pre-dated the Bolshevik seizure of power, he quoted from his earlier work, "The Impending Catastrophe."

It must be noted that Lenin, at the time the above was written (spring 1918), expected the socialist revolution to spread quickly to one or more of the advanced countries, in particular Germany. This expectation certainly influenced how he regarded state capitalism, as a stage through which Russia would pass relatively quickly, assisted by other, more advanced, socialist countries.

However, things did not develop as Lenin anticipated. Not only was the revolution delayed in Europe, but Russia itself, after an all-too-brief respite, was embroiled in civil war, with the domestic armies of reaction aided by foreign interventionary forces.

This was the period of "War Communism" — emergency rationing and egalitarianism, and forcible seizures from the peasants of grain and other products necessary to feed and equip the Red Army and the workers in the cities.

In February of 1921, after nearly seven years of almost uninterrupted imperialist war and civil war, the Red Army captured Tiflis; the last of the White Armies had been defeated and driven from Russian soil. What was the situation in the country?

In the countryside, the peasants had responded to the government policy of forcible requisitioning by decreasing the area of land under cultivation, so that by the end of 1920 the amount of sown acreage in European Russia was only three fifths of what it had been in 1913.* By 1921 total output had fallen to less than half, and the quantity of livestock to about two thirds of pre-war figures.

Waves of peasant risings swept rural Russia, as hundreds of thousands of demobilized soldiers returned to find extreme deprivation in their native villages. In February 1921 alone, the Cheka reported 118 separate peasant risings in various parts of the country. In March there occurred the mutiny in the naval base at Kronstadt, which revealed how extremely shaky Bolshevik rule was.

The situation in the cities was, if anything, even worse than in the countryside. By the end of 1920 total industrial output had shrunk to about a fifth of 1913 levels. The total production of coal at the end of 1920 was only a quarter, and of oil only a third, of pre-war levels. The production of copper and cast iron had virtually ceased. Lacking these vital materials, many factories went on part-time. The manufacture of footwear was reduced to a tenth of normal, and only one in twenty textile spindles remained in operation.

The war and the blockade had brought the railroad system to virtual collapse, which held back the delivery of food to the cities. At the beginning of 1921, the workers of Petrograd's metal smelting shops received a daily ration of 800 grams of black bread, while lesser categories received as little as one-quarter of that. Even this meager allotment was doled out on an irregular basis.

The food crisis in the cities was complicated by the disintegration of the

*The statistics in this chapter are drawn from "Kronstadt 1921" by Paul Avrich (New York, 1970). Avrich's figures are from Soviet sources, each cited.

regular market during the Civil War. By the end of 1920 illicit trade had largely supplanted the official channels of distribution. At the same time, inflation mounted to dizzying heights, the price of bread increasing ten-fold in 1920 alone. By the end of 1920 the real wages of factory workers in Petrograd had fallen to 8.6 per cent of their pre-war levels, according to official estimates.

One result of the collapse was that workers began to join the droves who were abandoning the cities to go into the countryside in search of something to eat. Between October 1917 and August 1920 (when a new census was taken), the population of Petrograd fell by almost two thirds, from almost 2.5 million to about three quarters of a million. During the same period Moscow lost nearly half its inhabitants.

In August of 1920 the 300,000 factory hands in Petrograd three years earlier had been reduced to one third that many, and the overall decrease throughout Russia exceeded fifty per cent. Those who were left derived a considerable portion of their income by directly bartering the products of their labor (and sometimes the tools of it as well) on the open market, on weekend trips to the countryside.

Lenin himself declared that the "industrial proletariat . . . has become declassed, i.e., dislodged from its class groove, and has ceased to exist as a proletariat. The proletariat is the class which is engaged in the production of material values in large-scale capitalist industry. Since large-scale capitalist industry has been destroyed, since the factories are at a standstill, the proletariat has disappeared. It has sometimes figured in statistics, but it has not been held together economically." (Vol. 33, pp. 65-6)*

Think about that for a moment. After four years of revolution, the class in whose interest the revolution was made "has disappeared." Such was the situation after seven years of war and blockade — an auspicious beginning for socialist construction! What did Lenin propose to do about it?

"Whenever I wrote about the New Economic Policy," said Lenin in 1923,** "I always quoted the article on state-capitalism which I wrote in 1928." He was referring to the article, "'Left-Wing' Childishness and Petty-Bourgeois Mentality" quoted here earlier. In his article, "The Tax in Kind," written in 1921 on the introduction of the New Economic Policy, he quoted ten pages of his earlier pamphlet.*** For Lenin, state capitalism was not simply a passing fancy, but a concept central to his plan for developing socialism.****

And what was the New Economic Policy? It was a policy of concessions to native and foreign capital, to encourage the development of large-scale industry in Russia, on which depended the development of socialist society.

*This was not a chance remark. He had said essentially the same thing six months earlier, at the 10th Party Congress. (Vol. 32, p. 199)

**Volume 33, p. 472

***Volume 32, p. 329

****Rather than further loading the text with quotations to prove this point, I include here a list of some of the places where Lenin refers to state capitalism in Russia and the attendant problems: Vol. 33, pp. 418-432; Vol. 35, pp. 491-3; Vol. 36, pp. 596-7; Vol. 42, pp. 374-6, 426, 435-440; Vol. 45, p. 444.

It was an alliance between the Soviet state and large-scale capitalism, against the petty capitalism which then prevailed. Lenin was willing to make concessions to big capitalism, he was willing to invite back to Russia the French and German exploiters who had been expelled, was willing to sign agreements with them to undertake certain profit-making ventures, on condition that these ventures contribute to the erection of a large-scale industrial base, and to "the restoration of the proletarian class."

Lenin was willing to do this because he was confident that the working class, in possession of the state power, would be able to restrict and control the development of capitalism.

The New Economic Policy was introduced in the early spring of 1921 and one year later, on March 27, 1922, in his Political Report of the Central Committee to the Eleventh Party Congress, Lenin sounded the first alarm.

He says that the state capitalism which had been discussed in all economic literature is of a different type than that which exists in Russia. In Russia state capitalism exists under a proletarian state, and "not a single book" has been written about this phenomenon, which is "absolutely unprecedented in history."

He says, "That is why we must overcome the difficulty entirely by ourselves."

What is it that is needed, he asks. "We have sufficient, quite sufficient political power; we also have economic resources at our command, but the vanguard . . . lacks sufficient ability for it . . . All that is needed here is ability . . ."

"Well, we have lived through a year," he says, "the state is in our hands; but has it operated the New Economic Policy in the way we wanted during the past year? No. But we refuse to admit that it did not operate in the way we wanted. How did it operate? The machine refused to obey the hand that guided it." (Vol. 33, p. 278-9)

The problem, he says, is one of leadership: "But if we take Moscow, with its 4,700 Communists in responsible positions, and if we take that huge bureaucratic machine, that gigantic heap, we must ask: Who is directing whom? I doubt very much whether it can truthfully be said that the Communists are directing that heap. To tell the truth, they are not directing, they are being directed." (Vol. 33, p. 288)

Seven months later, he raises his voice again, this time in a speech at the plenum of the Moscow Soviet:

We still have the old machinery, and our task now is to remould it along new lines. We cannot do so at once, but we must see to it that the Communists we have are properly placed. What we need is that they, the Communists, should control the machinery they are assigned to, and not as so often happens with us, that the machinery should control them. (Vol. 33, p. 442)*

*An earlier edition of Lenin's works, published in 1937, uses a much stronger phrase. In place of the above, the last sentence reads: "These Communists must become the masters of the apparatus which has been placed in their charge, and not, as is often the case now, the slaves of this apparatus."

The reader will observe that he is still talking in terms of leadership, but now there is a new problem, "the old machinery," which must be reorganized "along new lines," though this cannot be done "all at once."

The above was written on November 20, 1922. Lenin had but a few months working life left to him. A mere six weeks later, on January 4, 1923, he published the first of his sharp attacks on the state apparatus in the Soviet Union, that remarkable series of attacks which occupied the last months of his life and which not even the most dedicated enemy of the Soviet Union could have surpassed in ferocity. In "On Co-Operation," he says that "our machinery of state . . . is utterly useless," that "we took [it] over in its entirety from the preceding epoch; during the past five years of struggle we did not, and could not, drastically reorganize it." (Vol. 33, p. 474)

It is difficult to imagine a more damning criticism of the Soviet regime. Then two weeks later, he writes:

With the exception of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, our state apparatus is to a considerable extent a survival of the past and has undergone hardly any serious change. It has only been slightly touched up on the surface, but in all other respects it is a most typical relic of our old state machine. (Vol. 33, p. 481)

On March 2, 1923, he writes again:

The most harmful thing would be to rely on the assumption that we know at least something, or that we have any considerable number of elements necessary for the building of a really new state apparatus, one really worthy to be called socialist, Soviet, etc.

No, we are ridiculously deficient of such an apparatus, and even of the elements of it. . . ." (Vol. 33, p. 488)

To show how seriously he regarded the matter, he proposed, for the consideration of the twelfth Party Congress, to merge the central control commission of the party and the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, which was a non-party body set up by the soviets! It was the last article he wrote before the stroke which permanently incapacitated him.

No soviets worthy of the name, the state apparatus largely a survival of tsarism, etc. — Lenin was here calling into doubt the most basic, and hitherto unquestioned, achievement of the October Revolution: the smashing of the old state apparatus and the building of a new one. And it should be noted that Lenin was not given over to light and irresponsible talk.

Thus, in Lenin's eyes, there was a situation where the country was flat on its back and paralyzed, where the proletariat had virtually ceased to exist as a class, where they were forced to turn to foreign capital to build up the economic base for socialism, where they were able to do this because the proletariat wielded power through a new state apparatus — and where this new state apparatus was in fact non-existent!

What did he propose to do about it? He listed two tasks which, according to him, "constitute the epoch: the first is to reorganize our machinery of state ... Our second task is educational work among the peasants." (Vol. 33, p. 474)

That is all. Just two tasks. Were they carried out? We leave that to the reader to decide, limiting ourselves to a few questions:

What were soviets and did their role expand or contract after 1923?

What was the role of the trade unions after Lenin's death?

To what extent was the slogan, "universal arming of the working class" carried out in Russia?

How determinedly did the Soviet leaders, after Lenin's death, pursue the goal of involving everyone in the work of administering the state?

Was the collectivization of agriculture in 1929, and the way it was carried out, what Lenin had in mind when he referred to "educational work among the peasants"?

IV. THE TRANSFORMATION OF RUSSIA

In "State Capitalism and World Revolution," C. L. R. James recounts the stages in the development of labor relations in Russia. He does it so well that, rather than attempting to paraphrase what he says, we prefer to quote him at some length:

In the transition period between 1924 and 1928 when the First Five Year Plan is initiated, the production conferences undergo a bureaucratization, and with it the form of labour. There begins the alienation of mass activity to conform to specified quantities of abstract labour demanded by the plan 'to catch up with capitalism'. The results are:

(a) In 1929 ('The year of decision and transformation') there crystallizes in direct opposition to management by the masses 'from below' the conference of the planners, the engineers, economists, administrators; in a word, the specialists.

(b) Stalin's famous talk of 1931 'put an end to depersonalization'. His 'six conditions' of labour contrasted the masses to the 'personalized' individual who would outdo the norms of the average. Competition is not on the basis of creativity and Subbotniks,* but on the basis of the outstanding individual (read: bureaucrat) who will devise norms and have others surpass them.

(c) 1935 sees Stakhanovism and the definitive formation of an aristocracy of labour. Stakhanovism is the pure model of the manner in which foremen, overseers and leadermen are chosen in the factories the world over. These individuals, exceptional to their class, voluntarily devote an intensity of their labour to capital for a brief period, thus setting the norm, which they personify, to dominate the labour of the mass for an indefinite period.

With the Stakhanovites, the bureaucratic administrators acquire a social base, and alongside, there grows the instability and crisis in the economy. It is the counter-revolution of state-capital.

(d) Beginning with 1939 the mode of labour changes again. In his report on the Third Five Year Plan, Molotov stressed the fact that it

*Subbotniks were the workers who on their own initiative volunteered to work five hours overtime on Saturdays without pay in order to help the economy of the workers' state. From the word, Subbota, meaning Saturday.

was insufficient to be concerned merely with the mass of goods produced. The crucial point for 'outstripping capitalism' was not the mass but the rate at which that mass was produced. It was necessary that per capita production be increased, that is to say, that each worker's productivity be so increased that fewer workers would be needed to obtain an ever greater mass of goods. Intensity of labour becomes the norm.

During the war that norm turned out to be the most vicious of all forms of exploitation. The Stalinists sanctified it by the name of 'socialist emulation'. 'Socialist emulation' meant, firstly, that the pay incentive that was the due of a Stakhanovite was no longer the reward of the workers as individuals, once they as a mass produced according to the new raised norm. In other words, the take-home pay was the same despite the speed up on a plant-wide basis. Secondly, and above all, competition was no longer limited to individual workers competing on a piecework basis, nor even to groups of workers on a plant-wide basis, but was extended to cover factory against factory.

Labour Reserves are established to assure the perpetuation of skills and a sufficient labour supply. Youth are trained from the start to labour as ordered. The climax comes in 1943 with the 'discovery' of the conveyor belt system. This is the year also of the Stalinist admission that the law of value functions in Russia.

We thus have:

1918: The Declaration of the Rights of Toilers — every cook an administrator.

1928: Abstract mass labour — 'lots' of it 'to catch up with capitalism'.

1931: Differentiation within labour — 'personalized' individual; the pieceworker the hero.

1935: Stakhanovism, individual competition to surpass the norm.

1936-37: Stalinist Constitution: Stakhanovites and the intelligentsia singled out: as those 'whom we respect'.

1939-41: Systematization of piecework; factory competing against factory.

1943: 'The year of the conversion to the conveyor belt system.'

Whereas in 1936 we had the singling out of a ruling class, a 'simple' division between mental and physical work, we now have the stratification of mental and physical labour. Leontiev's POLITICAL ECONOMY IN THE SOVIET UNION lays stress not merely on the intelligentsia against the mass, but on specific skills and differentials, lower, higher, middle, in-between and highest.

If we take production since the Plan, not in the detail we have just given, but only the major changes, we can say that 1937 closes one period. It is the period of 'catching up with and outdistancing capitalism' which means mass production and relatively simple planning. But competition on a world scale and the approaching Second World War is the severest type of capitalist competition for world mastery. This opens up the new period of per capita production as against mere 'catching up'. Planning must now include productivity of labour. Such planning knows and can know only machines and intensity of exploitation. Furthermore, it includes what the Russians call rentabl'nost, that is to say profitability. The era of the state helping the factory whose production is especially

needed is over. The factory itself must prove its worthiness by showing a profit and a profit big enough to pay for 'ever-expanded' production. And that can be done only by ever-expanded production of abstract labour in mass and in rate.

James concludes his analysis of the mode of labor in Russia as follows: "The rulers of Russia perform the same functions as are performed by Ford, General Motors, the coal operators and their huge bureaucratic staffs. Capital is not Henry Ford; he can die and leave his whole empire to an institution; the plant, the scientific apparatus, the method, the personnel organization and supervision, the social system which sets these up in opposition to the direct producer will remain."

James is right. As soon as one's head is cleared of the notion that state property equals socialism, one can see that Russia managed to attain, through a violent upheaval, that stage in social development toward which the U.S. has been moving for several decades, the stage predicted by Engels nearly a century ago, wherein the state becomes "the ideal personification of the total national capital" and "the workers remain wage workers — proletarians."

Stalin's great historic contribution was to lead the way in the transformation of Russia from a backward, feudal country into a modern industrial state. He did it by relying on barbarous methods, and at the cost of stamping out, with a thoroughness never before seen, the strivings of the working class to put forward its independent interests as a class.

Stalin proved that it was possible, by enticing and dragging people off the farms, standing them in front of a machine and enforcing production quotas by a system of punishment and reward, to develop modern industry in a backward country. But such methods will not suffice to operate the industry so developed.

The problem his successors have faced, and which has plagued them continuously for two decades, is — how to get the workers to operate the high-speed precision lathes, electronic controls and the rest of the equipment typical of modern industry, while still maintaining those workers in a subordinate position. It is this problem, and nothing else but this, which is responsible for the agricultural shortages, shoddy goods and insufficient replacement parts for which the Soviet Union is notorious.

The problem of productivity in modern industry is the problem of the worker. It can be solved in only one way — by making the worker the master of the production process. The rulers of the Soviet Union will no more be able to resolve the crisis in production than will their U.S. counterparts, with their "work psychology" studies, "job enrichment" schemes, and all the rest.

In Russia, as in the United States, the workers will take power in the process of production — or the society will perish, in the words of C. L. R. James, "blown up by the antagonisms that can no longer be hidden."

V. THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Did it have to turn out that way? Was there no path to modernization other than the one actually followed?

It is not possible to answer with any certainty. It is true that the Russian

proletariat was extremely small, fragmented and exhausted, and that any attempt to institute the kind of changes Lenin advocated would have entailed the risk of total collapse, leading to the dismemberment of Russia and a protracted dark age. That is a consideration, although it is not the only one. Any political choice must be made with the fullest possible awareness of the risks involved.

It is the opinion of this writer, arrived at with the aid of hindsight, that the net effect on the world revolutionary movement would have been better had the Soviet leaders taken steps to broaden the base of participation in state affairs.

Instead, they chose another course, to rely increasingly on the Party to perform the administrative tasks of the new state. As time went on, the administrative function of the Party came to occupy the most important place in its work, to the neglect, and finally to the denial, of all other tasks.

Such a development did not take place without its accompanying theoretical justification. The theory of the party as the repository of all knowledge, whose task was to mobilize the population to carry out its directives, is historically associated with the name of Stalin, although it was not the product of his thought alone.

As must inevitably result from the application of the theory of the party as "general staff," there developed a corps of administrators who, like bureaucrats everywhere, believe that they understand the needs of the people better than the people themselves, and who are convinced that if the "masses" do not follow them, it is because the "masses" are backward. This view was satirized by Bertolt Brecht in a poem called "The Solution," which he wrote following the 1953 uprising in East Berlin against the Soviet-imposed regime:

After the rising of the 17th June
The Secretary of the Writers' Union
Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee
In which you could read that the People
Had lost the Government's confidence
Which it could only regain
By redoubled efforts.
Would it in that case
Not be simpler if the Government
Dissolved the People
And elected another?

How much of the subsequent degeneration of the Soviet Union is rooted in Lenin's theory of the party? In the opinion of this writer, the answer is — none, even though those who led the way in the process of degeneration claimed to base their actions on his teachings.

Lenin's view of the nature and function of the party contained two aspects. One was the well-known conception, put forward in *WHAT IS TO BE DONE*, of the party of professional revolutionaries, individuals lifted out from the life of the ordinary citizens and "specially trained" in politics, organization, agitation and technical skills. The other aspect, not so well known, is his conception of the party as a group of people united around a common project — to develop within the proletariat the capacity

to rule, to bring the class alive, in a historical sense.

It is this latter aspect of Lenin's thought which has been neglected, partly because it suited the interests of those who came after him to have it neglected. The fact that it was present, however, can be seen in a number of ideas he advanced at various times: his insistence, during the 1905-7 upsurge, that the party boldly recruit active workers without much training,* exactly the opposite of what he advocated a few years earlier in quiet times; his insistence on free and open debate within the party on all questions of program, and his further insistence — this point has been deliberately suppressed by all those who prefer caricatures of Lenin to the real thing — that this debate be carried on, as much as possible, in full view of the workers outside of the party**; his writing of a major theoretical work on the dictatorship of the proletariat, STATE AND REVOLUTION, which does not even mention the vanguard party; his insistence, in 1921, when he reluctantly agreed to the banning of factions within the party, that he regarded it only as a temporary provision during a period of extreme emergency.***

The proof that Lenin's conception of the party was at significant variance from Stalin's was the fact that the latter, in order to carry out his program, found it necessary to physically eliminate literally the majority of prominent party members from Lenin's time and to rewrite the history of the Bolshevik Party to erase from it Lenin's ideal of the open, critical organization.****

How much of a leap is it from a well-intentioned body of administrators to a clique of parasites which lives by exploiting those whom they formerly served? The labor union bureaucracy of every modern country is composed primarily of individuals who began their careers as more-or-less conscientious people desiring to represent the workers. When conditions are right, it is quite possible for representatives of the workers to be transformed into the most relentless opponents of workers' power.

VI. WHAT KIND OF A SOCIETY?

Virtually all observers report the existence in the Soviet Union of a stratum of people which enjoys considerable material privileges in relation to the population in general, and which wields a disproportionate amount of authority in the making of policy. The question at issue is: can this stratum be properly said to constitute a class in the sense in which Marxists use the term?

Several arguments have been advanced on the negative side. The most important of these are (1) that membership in the privileged stratum is not

*Volume 10, pp. 29-39

**See Volume 10, pp. 442-3

***See Volume 33, pp. 241-4, 257-60

****For example, the publication in millions of copies of WHAT IS TO BE DONE, and its elevation to the status of a "classic," even though Lenin specifically warned against interpreting it too literally, stating that it had been written in the heat of a debate, and that it was one-sided. (See Vol. 8, pp. 477-9; Vol. 13, pp. 100-108.)

hereditary, or is so only to a minor degree; and (2) that members of the privileged stratum cannot be shown to have any individual proprietary relation to the means of production.

Both of these arguments are countered by the writings of Marx and Engels themselves, who on various occasions used the term "class" to refer to social formations that do not meet the above criteria. Engels spoke of "the emergence of a special class of administrative government officials that have the main power in their hands and that stand in opposition to all other classes."* In examining conditions in Germany in 1847 he observed: "The present situation in Germany is nothing but a compromise between the nobility and the petty bourgeoisie; it results in putting the administration in the hands of a third class: the bureaucracy."

Perhaps the most telling historic parallel to the modern Soviet ruling group is the Church in medieval times. "The fact that the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages formed its hierarchy out of the best brains in the land, regardless of their estate, birth, or fortune," wrote Marx, "was one of the main means of strengthening priestly rule and holding down the laity. The more a ruling class is able to co-opt the best minds of a ruled class, the more stable and dangerous becomes its rule."

As Gandy points out, "Marx was aware that a ruling class could collectively own the means of production: that is how the Church hierarchy ruled. And he observed that this priestly ruling class recruited many of its members from the working class (just as the Soviet bureaucracy does today)."

Even if it is granted that, because of their material privileges, monopoly of power and distinct interests, the Soviet bureaucracy constitutes a ruling class, the question still remains: what kind of a ruling class?

In order for capitalism to exist, two conditions are ordinarily considered necessary: first, the working population must be effectively separated from the means of production and compelled to sell its labor power in order to survive. There is little doubt that this condition exists in the Soviet Union, perhaps more thoroughly even than in the United States.

Second, there must exist some force which compels the exploiters to accumulate capital, to revolutionize the process of production and to increase the organic composition of capital. Ordinarily under capitalism, this force is provided by the competition among individual capitalists and blocs of capital. Each entrepreneur is compelled, "on pain of death," to continually introduce the most modern and efficient methods of production, replacing workers by ever-more-costly machinery in order to be able to produce at a rate at least equal to that of the others. It is this competition among different capitals which is responsible for the discarding of perfectly adequate equipment simply because it is not the most advanced existing, for the tendency for the rate of profit to decline (since profits are made only from workers, not from machines), and for the recurring crises of overproduction typical of capitalism.

In the Soviet Union today, there are no competing blocs of capital. As

*For this quotation and the two following, I am indebted to an article by Ross Gandy in the March 1976 issue of "Monthly Review." Gandy cites volume and page numbers from the MARX-ENGELS WERKE (Berlin: Dietz Verlag).

one commentator* points out, industry within the Soviet Union is organized as if it were a single factory, "USSR, Inc.," albeit less efficiently. That is, there is a division of labor, there is provision for the flow of raw materials from one "department" to another, there is a hierarchy of production and supervision — but there is no compelling force, inside the Soviet Union itself, forcing the bureaucracy to accumulate capital.

Where is the force compelling the Soviet bureaucrats to accumulate capital, and thus rendering the Soviet Union subject to the laws of capitalism? The British International Socialists, who hold the view that the Soviet Union is state capitalist, answer as follows:

The bureaucracy's monopoly of foreign trade enabled it to seal off Russia from price competition. But strategic and military competition completely dominated the process of capital formation in Russia from the moment accumulation became the bureaucracy's central concern in 1928. (Peter Binns, "The Theory of State Capitalism," INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM No. 74.)

Binns, who bases his argument in large part on Cliff's book (previously referred to), goes on to cite figures showing that the Soviet Union has, over the years, spent an increasing proportion of its total production on armaments, and that this relentless drive to accumulate arms, vital to the bureaucracy preserving its power in the face of threats and competition from western imperialism, has created an internal dynamic of capital accumulation basically identical to that which exists in the West.

Elsewhere, Binns and another writer from the British IS** quote Stalin himself to show the innate drive to accumulate which motivates the Soviet bureaucracy. "No, comrades," says Stalin in 1931. ". . . The tempo must not be reduced! On the contrary, we must increase it as much as is within our powers and possibilities . . . To slacken the tempo would mean falling behind; and those who fall behind are beaten." (J. Stalin, WORKS, Volume 13, page 40.)

"Why can and should and necessarily will socialism conquer the capitalist system of economy?" the writers quote Stalin as asking in 1935. "Because it can give a higher productivity of labor."

Binns and Hallas remark, "There may be room for argument about the mechanisms whereby the Russian bureaucracy is locked in competition with its bourgeois (and bureaucratic) rivals. Only those who live in cloud-cuckoo land can doubt the fact that it is constrained, driven, to maximize accumulation."

At this point I would like to set aside the third-person form that I have used up to now and enter into a more personal conversation with the reader.

I do not doubt the accuracy of the figures that show the Soviet Union devoting an increasing portion of its total production to arms accumulation, with the result being the reproduction there of many features typical of

*Cliff, STATE CAPITALISM IN RUSSIA, London, 1974. Cliff is a member of the British International Socialists.

**Peter Binns and Duncan Hallas, "The Soviet Union — State Capitalist or Socialist," INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM No. 91.

western capitalist societies. Nor do I doubt that the Soviet leaders themselves feel a drive to accumulate. I do not doubt that living labor in the Soviet Union is subject to the same kind of domination by dead labor (accumulated capital) that it is in the U.S.

What I do not see is the existence of any objective, intrinsic, overpowering compulsion to accumulate, with roots in the nature of Soviet society comparable to those which exist in the West.

In what sense is the Soviet bureaucracy compelled to engage in strategic arms competition with the western imperialist powers? In his 1931 remarks cited above, Stalin went on to say, "We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it or we shall go under." (Volume 13, page 41) Stalin showed remarkable foresight; it was ten years, almost to the day, from the above remarks to the Nazi invasion of June 22, 1941. There is little doubt that, but for the military and industrial might of the Soviet Union, the forces of German imperialism would have conquered the country, ushering in a period of something other than Communist Party rule. In the same sense, U.S. imperialism in the post-war period has been a very real threat to the power of the Soviet bureaucracy. Arms accumulation has certainly been required to stave off that threat.

But the point is — how much arms accumulation? From purely military considerations, the Soviet Union is now, and has been for some time, in possession of far more arms than what is necessary to prevent U.S. invasion and conquest. After all, it is hardly necessary to possess the capability to destroy the U.S. seventy times over; once will do.

Cliff states, "The privileges of the Russian bureaucracy, as those of the bourgeoisie, are conditioned by the unceasing advance of accumulation." (Cliff, op. cit., p. 239)

But he merely asserts this; he does not prove it; nor do any of the other IS writers who accept his view.

In my opinion, Cliff's assertion is true, but in a somewhat different sense than he means it. It is true mainly in the political sense: that is, the prestige and authority of the Soviet bureaucracy depend on transforming the Soviet Union into a modern, prosperous state through accumulation of an increasing quantity of use values, which requires heavy investments in the means of production with the promise of larger amounts of the means of consumption some time in the future. The Soviet bureaucracy has declared that "socialism" is superior to capitalism because it can provide more cars, televisions, household appliances and a general "higher standard of living." On this basis the Soviet bureaucracy will be judged by its own subjects, and by others in the world, at least in part. To the extent to which they have pinned their hopes for success on the ability to achieve this "prosperity," to that extent the Soviet bureaucrats are "compelled" to accumulate. But that is not a compulsion in the traditional sense in which Marx used the term, or in the sense in which Cliff uses it.

For a number of years, western observers have speculated on divisions within the Soviet ruling elite. The "battle" has supposedly been between the "moderates," who wished to "surpass" the West in "standard of living," and the "hard-liners," who preferred to rely on the traditional military means to achieve the "spread of communism."

In spite of the stupidity of the various western observers, they have latched onto something real. There are two alternative paths, each with its own set of demands, and the contradictions between the two courses are also real. At one time or another, the advocates of one or the other position wield greater influence, and Soviet policy shifts accordingly.

The repeated calls of the Soviet government for disarmament, against U.S. objections, are at least partly motivated by the desire to free productive capacity for use in the manufacture of consumer goods. But even if those calls are pure demagoguery, or even if the policy changes to one of total reliance on accumulating an ever-growing pile of the means of production of the means of destruction, the point is that such questions still lie within the realm of conscious decision rather than immutable law.

No one has yet demonstrated, to my satisfaction, the existence of any basic, internal features in Soviet society which would prevent its rulers, if they so desired, from ending the arms accumulation and improving the living standards of the Soviet people.

Until someone can offer some explanation of Soviet behavior that roots accumulation of capital in objective law, irrespective of the wishes of men, I shall have to continue to live in "cloud-cuckoo land."

I wrote earlier that two conditions, one of which is the drive to accumulate, are "ordinarily considered necessary" for capitalism to exist. In the past, however, certain societies lacking in one of these conditions have nevertheless been regarded by Marxists as capitalist, although not "ordinary" capitalist.

Specifically, what comes to mind is the pre-Civil War American South, which Marx repeatedly referred to as capitalist.* In certain important respects, that society offers useful insights into the Soviet Union today. Just as in the case of the Soviets today, the drive to accumulate was not economic in the sense that Marx had traditionally considered it, but political: in the case of the South, the need to maintain parity with the North in political influence and, more generally, the need to provide some opportunity for advancement to the poor whites, whose discontent threatened the slaveholders' rule. Both of these considerations led the slaveholders to a policy of expansion, and led ultimately to a Civil War, certainly an indication that policy motivations do not necessarily have to be weak ones.

In spite of its deviation from the general laws of capitalism, Marx considered the slave South to be capitalist, partly because of its role in the world system of capitalism. In my opinion, the same consideration should govern our characterization of the Soviet Union; while it does not exhibit all the features traditionally associated with capitalism, it should still be regarded as a type of state capitalism, partly because of the epoch in world history in which it makes its appearance.

The main point is not whether one chooses to apply the term "capitalism" to Soviet society. The point is to be aware of both the similarities and the differences between the Soviet Union and the western capitalist states, in order to be able to properly analyze both.

One additional point should be made: up to now, the absence of any fundamental drive to accumulate has been predicated on the isolation of

*See Ken Lawrence, "Karl Marx on American Slavery," available from STO.

the Soviet Union from the world market owing to the state monopoly on foreign trade. As this isolation breaks down, which it shows signs of doing (the construction of a new Fiat plant, the manufacture and sale of Pepsi-cola), it is to be expected that Soviet society will begin to display more of the blessings of western capitalism — inflation, unemployment, the economic cycle, etc. Indeed, these have already made their appearance in Eastern Europe, where the process of breaking down the trade walls is more advanced than in the Soviet Union itself.

VII. "SOCIAL-IMPERIALISM"?

Soviet exploitation of foreign countries takes place in at least three ways: First of these is direct looting; thus, at the end of World War II, the Red Army, in the name of "reparations," carried whole industrial plants back to the Soviet Union from Germany, Hungary, elsewhere in Eastern Europe, and from Mongolia.

The second means is direct ownership of industry in foreign countries: the best-known example of this is Soviet ownership, in partnership with Indian interests, of the Indian steel industry, which can hardly be said to have improved the conditions of the Indian proletarians. This type of relationship is also common throughout Eastern Europe, where the local governments have been forced to grant part ownership of important industries to the Soviet government.

The third means is unequal trade agreements, whereby the recipients of Soviet "aid" are forced to sell their products to the Soviet government at below world market prices, and buy in return inferior Soviet goods at above world market prices. This last has been a particular grievance among some of the African countries.

All of the above means of exploitation have been documented adequately* so that there is no need to go into detail here. Taken singly or together they represent behavior which is typical of western imperialism. But do they indicate that the Soviet Union has literally reached that stage of social development which Lenin characterized as Imperialism, which is what the proponents of the "social imperialism" thesis charge?

The weakness in the argument is the same as in the one put forward by Cliff and the other IS advocates of the state capitalism thesis: namely, where is the compelling drive for the Soviet rulers to export capital, extract super-profits, etc.? It is not enough that they do these things; in order to meet Lenin's definition of imperialism it is required that they be compelled to do them, in spite of themselves. And no one has yet demonstrated the existence of any objective, inherent force capable of compelling them to

*Chris Harmon, BUREAUCRACY AND REVOLUTION IN EASTERN EUROPE, London, 1974; "Social Imperialism," Peking Review reprints, Berkeley, 1974; "Red Papers No. 7," Chicago, 1974. These are just a few of the most current and available sources documenting the above. Needless to say, the Maoist writings fail to mention the first of the three mechanisms cited in the text.

imperialistic behavior.*

The differences between the Soviet Union and the western capitalist powers become especially important in analyzing world politics, for it is an undeniable fact that Soviet policy is to a major extent aimed at weakening the system of private property capitalism, and that in the course of doing this the Soviet leaders find themselves often allied with the progressive forces in those countries suffering under western imperialist rule.

It is not unheard of for an imperialist power to give aid to forces struggling against one of its rivals, and genuine revolutionaries are always quick to take advantage of such possibilities. The anti-colonialist movements in a number of Asian and African countries were able to make good use of certain kinds of Japanese assistance in their struggle against British and French imperialism in the period of the second World War.

However, the kind of aid some of the nationalist leaders were able to get from Japanese (or German) imperialism was on a totally different scale from what is taking place today, where the Soviet Union, after a period of eclipse, has become the main armorer of the national liberation movements against western imperialism.

In the first place, the occasional and sporadic assistance which the Japanese imperialists extended to certain anti-colonialists was never accompanied by any serious attempt to put forward any ideological alternative to imperialism, whereas the Soviet leaders distribute, along with the hardware, the teachings of Marx and Lenin (selectively, it is true) and present themselves as the continuators of the tradition of the Paris Commune and the October Revolution.

Secondly, because of the above, direct use of military force constitutes a minor part of Soviet tactics. This means that the Soviet leaders rely, to a larger extent than any previous world power, on the good will of indigenous people, in most cases representing the oppressed and struggling masses. This plays an important role in determining Soviet conduct. For example, for years the Soviet Union has been supplying Egypt with weapons and various kinds of aid, and many observers regarded that country as a Soviet satellite. Yet recently, when the Egyptian government requested the complete withdrawal of Soviet bases and military personnel, they were pulled out within seventy-two hours — surely unusual behavior for an imperialist superpower.

Such considerations mean that, for the oppressed peoples struggling for liberation, the differences between the Soviet Union and the Western

*Some Marxist scholars have begun to question the adequacy of Lenin's definition of imperialism for the present period, on the grounds that what is taking place is not the export of surplus capital and the growth of parasitism in the imperialist country, but the annexation of additional capital to make up for a shortage in the imperialist country. If this is demonstrated to be so, then of course it diminishes the distinction between the Soviet Union and the Western imperialisms. See in particular Antonio Carlo, "Towards a Redefinition of Imperialism," *TELOS*, number 20, Summer 1974. Also, in *STATE CAPITALISM AND WORLD REVOLUTION*, C. L. R. James suggests that world capitalism has entered a new stage, in which the export of capital is no longer the principle feature.

powers are more important than the similarities. Never before have the colonial and dependent peoples enjoyed the support — even vacillating and conditional — from a major power that they receive today from the Soviet Union. This is a tremendous aid to the movements for national freedom. From the standpoint of the colonial peoples, if any criticism is to be leveled at the Soviet Union, it is more likely to be that it is too hesitant in coming to the aid of others rather than that it is too active in imposing its will on them.

For those who live under the heel of the Soviet Union, or face the threat of its might, the situation is different. Thus, for instance, the Poles, or the Hungarians, or the Rumanians would be quite justified in reminding all the anti-imperialists in the world who regard the Soviet Union favorably that they, too, have histories of revolutionary struggle and aspirations for national freedom, and that the Soviet Union is, to them, an occupying colonial power.

Even in Eastern Europe, where the Soviet rulers have, in the last three decades, directly intervened militarily four times — Poland and Germany, 1953, Hungary 1956 and Czechoslovakia 1968 — to suppress popular rebellions, the principal motivation has been broadly political more than immediately economic. It must not be forgotten that in each of these cases the Soviet rulers justified their actions by citing the need to defend the "socialist camp." The fact that the Soviet Union comes forward not as just another imperialist power with certain sectarian interests, but as the bastion of world revolution, means that, in a certain sense, it is more dangerous to the peoples of the world than the old imperialisms. But it also means that it cannot be equated with them.

Every social class tries to reshape the world according to its own vision. The global vision of the Soviet rulers is a world in which all wealth belongs to the state, and in which the elite of the Communist Party functions as the active, conscious ruling group over the masses of docile proletarians toiling happily away at achieving a "higher standard of living." It is the world of proletcult and Newspeak, a world based on such a total crushing of the human personality that when a writer projects in a work of fiction the image of the society as it would look were it to be fully realized, our minds recoil in horror. This is the vision that motivates the Soviet rulers, and it is precisely the fact that they are motivated by such a vision, and not by the need to engage in small-scale land grabbing, that makes them and what they represent the most dangerous, repeat, the most dangerous enemy that the working class movement has even known.

The system which prevails in the U.S.S.R., if it is to be fought, must be understood. And it can only be understood through a framework which places as much stress on the differences as on the similarities between the Soviet Union and the western imperialist powers. The "social imperialism" thesis fails to do this, and that is why it is a hindrance rather than an aid.

VIII. CHINA

Between 1925 and 1927 the Chinese proletariat made its first attempt to independently intervene on the political scene. Its efforts were suppressed in a wave of white terror which is estimated to have cost five million lives.

Mao Tse-tung and some of the other Communist leaders responded to the repression in the cities by withdrawing, with the armed forces under their command, into the rural areas. From their base in the countryside they were able to rally the peasants around them. Following the epic of the Long March, perhaps the greatest military feat in human history, they placed themselves at the head of the national liberation movement against Japanese imperialism, overthrew the Chiang Kai-shek regime and, on October 1, 1949, formally proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

One quarter of humanity had been torn out of the grip of imperialism. The Chinese proletariat played virtually no role in these earth-shaking events.

Over the next decade and a half the new regime in China carried out changes which, considering the scale of the operation, surpassed even the experience of Russia.

And what did this transformation give rise to?

By 1965, a situation had developed in which important areas of public life were under the domination of a conservative-minded bureaucracy, similar to that which had arisen in Russia. The chairman of the government, the general secretary of the party, the mayor of the capital city, the editorial staff of the most important daily newspaper, a number of officers in the People's Liberation Army and many provincial governors were found to be "persons in positions of authority who have taken the capitalist road."

Mao and those close to him in the party leadership responded by launching what came to be known as "The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," which they characterized as a revolution of a new type, a revolution under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Cultural Revolution was a tremendous mass movement directed against old methods of thought and work which had either not been eliminated or had sunk fresh roots. It depended to a considerable extent on popular initiative. In the course of the movement, millions of people were drawn into active political life, numerous conservative officials were dragged out and exposed and great changes were made in the way things were done. An editorial published in "People's Daily" and "Red Flag" on New Year's Day, 1967, declared, "The emergence of the great proletarian cultural revolution in China in 1966 is the greatest event in this sixth decade* of the twentieth century."

They were perhaps not wrong. But was it a revolution? A revolution, as is well known, is an act (of violence, according to Mao) in which one class overthrows another. It involves the smashing of the old state apparatus and the building of a new one.

In the Cultural Revolution, which class was overthrown, and which class did the overthrowing? And to what extent was the state apparatus smashed, and to what extent was it merely reformed?

There are questions of estimate here for which "Mao Tse-tung Thought" provides no adequate explanation. Let us see if we can answer some of them by applying what has been said so far about the relation between the party regime and state capitalism.

When Mao Tse-tung and his army of peasants commanded by revolutionary intellectuals arrived in Peking in 1949, it became the basis of the

*This is copied correctly from the official Chinese translation.

new state apparatus which was created. The state reproduced the relations within the army, namely, that the revolutionary intellectuals occupied the pinnacles of power and important positions of responsibility.

After fifteen years a relatively high degree of stability had been achieved; the Party had managed to withstand various difficulties and its control was assured. At that time, perhaps spurred by the experience of the Soviet Union, Mao began to turn his attention to some of the same questions which concerned Lenin in the last year of his life. In reviewing the situation in China, he noted the growth of a stratum of administrators, increasingly isolated from the people and increasingly conservative in its outlook. In order to counteract its influence, he launched a mass movement, based largely outside of the party, directed against the conservative stratum. It was something unprecedented in the history of the "socialist countries" and the Communist Parties.

Well and good. The attempt to open up the administration of public affairs to popular pressure is an admirable goal, but it does not, of itself, constitute a revolution. There still remain a number of nagging questions about the nature of the changes brought about by the Cultural Revolution.

The practice of assigning all leading cadres to spend a certain portion of each year doing manual labor obviously tends to make them more responsive to the needs of the populace, but what is the significance of having the managers work, so long as the workers do not manage?

It is a welcome reform to have the army live and work among the population, but is that the same as arming the people?

It is refreshing to hear the Chinese leaders refer to the need for a critical spirit within the Party, but how do they square that with their high regard (at least in their public statements) for Stalin,* or the way they handled the Lin Piao affair?**

The evidence indicates that, while parts of the Chinese leadership seem to be more concerned than others to prevent the solid entrenchment of a conservative ruling group, and that the struggle between the opposing groups is a real one, no significant faction in the official leadership of the

*It is known that Mao's and the other Chinese leaders' private opinions of Stalin are not the same as their public position. (See, for instance, "Radical America," Volume 10, Number 3.) Why do the Chinese leaders, who have more acquaintance than most with the ill effects of Stalin's leadership, continue to praise him publicly, limiting their criticism to the mildest sort? The answer can only be that he symbolizes something they need in order to carry out their own policies. To break decisively with Stalin and what he represents would call into question their own rule. The question of Stalin is not a minor detail.

**It will be recalled that Lin Piao, after having been written into the Constitution of the People's Republic of China as Mao's "close comrade in arms" and presumed successor (what were the provisions for amending that Constitution, if it proved necessary?), was shot down while attempting to flee to the Soviet Union. Various scrolls were found in the trunk of his car, revealing that he had been plotting a coup against Mao. So goes the official story. Such a tale can hardly be taken seriously; it is on a level with the "pumpkin papers" of Whitaker Chambers.

country is willing to place total reliance on the free, self-conscious, self-mobilizing proletariat. An analogy which may be useful is that with the new and old leadership in the United Mine Workers Union in this country: the new Miller regime is obviously more interested than the old Boyle gang in opening up the union to the influence of the membership, and in establishing means whereby active rank-and-file workers can take part in union affairs; but when it comes to suppressing wildcat strikes in the coal fields, the two factions are united like one man.

There are signs that the proletariat did, during the Cultural Revolution, attempt to make itself felt as a force independent of both the "moderates" and the "extremists." In Shanghai, the city with the largest working class population and richest tradition of struggle, organizations of workers rose up with as many as a half million members, whose aim was to carry the Cultural Revolution through to the end and impose their own direct rule on Chinese society. These organizations were used by the cultural revolution group in the Chinese leadership to break the hold of the Liu Shai-chi faction, and were then suppressed in their turn.*

As this is being written, word has just arrived that four prominent figures—including the well-known Chiang Ching and Yao Wen-yuan, who wrote, with Mao's encouragement, the original attack on the rightists that launched the Cultural Revolution — have been declared members of an "anti-party group" and removed from all positions of responsibility. The U.S. press has accurately observed that, after a number of twists and turns, the right is again ascendant in China. It should not be forgotten that these four "leftists," back in 1967 in the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, took part in crushing what they termed the "ultra-left," and thus prepared the way for their own eventual defeat. Such episodes are not unknown in previous revolutions.**

In THE PEASANT WAR IN GERMANY, Engels wrote:

The worst thing that can befall the leader of an extreme party is to be compelled to take over a government in an epoch when the movement is not yet ripe for the domination of the class which he represents, and for the realization of the measures which that domination implies Thus he necessarily finds himself in an unsolvable dilemma. What he can do contradicts all his previous actions, principles and immediate

*The story is told in detail in SHANGHAI JOURNAL by Neale Hunter, an Australian fluent in Chinese, who lived and taught in Shanghai from 1965 to 1967, and who is generally sympathetic to China and the Cultural Revolution. There is evidence that similar organizations arose elsewhere in China during the turbulent days of the Cultural Revolution and met a similar fate. See Appendix.

**It is instructive to note the contrast between the manner in which the rightists, represented by Liu, Teng and others, were defeated, after thorough public discussion and repudiation of their ideas, and the way the so-called "ultra-leftists," from Lin Piao to Chiang Ching, were labeled "plotters" and ousted. It appears that the Chinese leadership is not willing to permit open discussion of the ideas raised by groupings to the left of what is deemed acceptable.

interests of his party, and what he ought to do cannot be done
Whoever is put into this awkward position is irrevocably doomed.

It may be that K'ang Sheng, Chen Po-ta, Chiang Ching and the other leftists who took part in the suppression of the "ultra-left" and have now been defeated themselves believed that the Chinese proletariat was simply not large and mature enough to exercise power; in that case, Engels' remarks express perfectly the dilemma they felt themselves in. Perhaps they believed themselves to be following the only course open to them under the circumstances, namely that of attempting to maintain a fluid situation pending the day when the proletariat attains sufficient strength to rule directly. Such considerations cannot be easily dismissed, especially by us who live in a country where the working class constitutes a majority of the population, and where illiteracy, child marriage and ancestor worship did not prevail up to a few years ago. But this can only be speculation. To the best of our knowledge, no Chinese leader — not the most leftist, not Mao Tse-tung himself — has ever discussed openly the questions raised by Engels.

It should be clear from what has been written that this writer sees a great difference between the Soviet Union and China, and between the policies of their respective Communist Parties. The fact that a major section of the Chinese leadership, at least up 'til now, has seen the need to encourage an atmosphere of continuous turbulence, has had a significant positive influence on the world revolutionary movement, and will have an even greater one in the future. The point, for friends of China, is not to line up behind Liu, or Lin, or Chou, or Teng, or Hua, or whoever is in power when this is read; the point is to ponder seriously the implications of what Mao himself wrote in 1957, in "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People":

The class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the class struggle between the different political forces, and the class struggle in the ideological field between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie will continue to be long and tortuous and at times will even become very acute. The proletariat seeks to transform the world according to its own world outlook, and so does the bourgeoisie. In this respect, the question of which will win out, socialism or capitalism, is still not really settled.

Chinese foreign policy, which has caused so much distress among those around the world who once looked to China for leadership in the anti-imperialist struggle, is a reflection of the relation of class forces within the country. It is paradoxical that China's stance on foreign affairs, prior to the Cultural Revolution, was more revolutionary and internationalist than subsequent to it, and that the impact of the Cultural Revolution on foreign affairs has been to push China toward a policy of "building bridges" with the U.S. The reason for this is that the ending of the Cultural Revolution (and, in part, its launching) marked the emergence, in China, of a stratum of rulers able to exist independently of the Soviet Union and who are no longer willing to subordinate the national interests of China to the needs of the Soviet bureaucracy.

When the Chinese leaders refer to Brezhnev et al. as the "new Hitlers,"

they are not just talking loosely. They are expressing the idea that the Soviet Union, while perhaps not yet the biggest exploiter and oppressor in the world, is the most ambitious and, to China, the most dangerous. For that reason the Chinese policy of opposing "both superpowers" means, in practice, devoting most of its efforts toward forging something like a worldwide collective security against Soviet expansionism. For some time, opposition to the Soviet Union has been the central aspect of Chinese foreign policy, overshadowing all other considerations. That is why the Chinese government, in Angola, failed to identify itself with the most anti-imperialist forces, because these forces were not anti-Soviet, why Chinese representatives at the United Nations have abstained when the question of Puerto Rican independence has come up, because the leadership of the largest pro-independence party is not anti-Soviet, have withheld recognition from the new government of Portugal while rushing to extend it, before the blood has dried, to the fascist junta in Chile, and a host of similar actions.

To find a parallel to China's present foreign policy, it is necessary to go back to the 1930's and Stalin's policy regarding Nazi Germany. After the rise of Hitler, the Soviet leaders came to the conclusion that German imperialism, while not the largest imperialism, represented, because of its voracious appetite, the most significant threat to Soviet security. They therefore set about building a series of international alliances to protect themselves from the threat. In this they were not wrong.

However, in order to establish these alliances, in the first place with Britain and France, the Soviet Union was required to give up something in return. That "something" was its support to the anti-colonialist movements in the British and French dependencies. One after the other, liberation movements in Algeria, Indo-China and elsewhere found that the Communists, once the most militant champions of the anti-imperialist struggle, had become, under Soviet instructions, more concerned with the danger of "war and fascism" emanating from Nazi Germany and its allies. It was this act by the Communist International, under Soviet hegemony, of demobilizing the struggles against the "western democracies" (and pulling the teeth of the class struggles in the metropolitan countries as well) that brought about the loss of leadership in the independence movements to various right-wing nationalists in every one of the British, French and Dutch dependencies. Only in those countries directly invaded by Japan did the Communists remain anti-imperialist and thus able to spearhead the movement for national liberation.

Stalin's policy didn't work. It did not succeed in staving off an attack by Germany, and it did manage to weaken some of the support the Soviet Union might have otherwise enjoyed.* Such must always be the outcome of any policy which gives greater weight to tactical alliances (one or another group of rival imperialists) than to strategic ones (the toiling masses of the world).

*Moorish soldiers formed part of Franco's "Blue Division" that fought together with Hitler on the eastern front. Three years earlier, the Spanish Republic, in which the CP was a coalition partner, had refused to declare Moroccan independence, out of a wish to avoid offending France, with which the Soviet Union had a treaty of "mutual aid."

Stalin's policy coincided with the rise of a new bourgeoisie in the Soviet Union. The conservatism and lack of faith in the mass movements which characterized Soviet foreign policy were a reflection of the needs of a privileged class in the Soviet Union, which had elevated contempt for the masses to the level of official policy.

We believe that the same factors are at work in China. Governments do not "make mistakes." Policies, especially those which are relatively consistent on a world scale, represent the interests of distinct classes. And it seems clear that the policy of the Chinese government, of relying for its security on some kind of an "understanding" with U.S. imperialism rather than on the revolutionary people of the world, represents not those forces that wished to carry the Cultural Revolution through to the end, but those who halted it part-way.

When, in the early days following the October Revolution, it appeared as if the Bolshevik government might not be able to survive the combined counter-revolutionary onslaught and might have to go underground, Lenin stressed that the revolution had already been a success, in that it had set an example for the oppressed of the world, and that this example was indelible. That was the meaning of proletarian internationalism. There has been nothing like it since. When in the future a new government is born that takes the slogan "Workers and Oppressed Peoples of the World, Unite!" out of the textbooks and makes it the guiding principle of policy, then workers and all the wretched of the earth will turn their heads toward that government and say ... there is the dictatorship of the proletariat!

IX. THE SMALLER THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES

Since the end of the second World War, the people of Cuba, Vietnam, Angola, and a number of small countries in the Third World have carried out successful military struggles against western imperialism. Following these struggles, which have astonished and inspired the whole world, these countries have embarked on the arduous task of lifting themselves out of the backwardness imposed on them by colonialism and foreign domination.

In assessing the course of the revolution in these countries, one cannot repeat too often Lenin's words, applied to Russia, that state capitalism represents a great advance over the system that prevailed there previously. To recall Lenin's words does not in the slightest degree detract from the profoundly progressive impact which the revolutions of national liberation have had on the world revolutionary movement. Still, the question must be asked: in the smaller countries which have broken away from western imperialism, does the working class, "disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself," play the dominant role in organizing a new society in its own image?

The evidence indicates that, in every one of the newly liberated countries, the answer is — no, the working class does not play such a role. How then to characterize the regimes which exist there?

This writer believes that they must be regarded as transitional regimes. Transitional to what? It is not yet possible to say. In all of the newly liberated countries, there are signs of a developing bureaucracy based on state-owned enterprises, such as exists in Russia, along with signs of a genuine

concern on the part of the leadership to develop the "extremely intricate and subtle system of new organizational relationships" which are the hallmark of a socialist society.

The leading group in every one of the new countries, without exception, is composed of the schoolteachers, lawyers, doctors, government functionaries and other revolutionary intellectuals who headed the mass movements that drove out the imperialists. This is true whether the leading group is drawn from the ranks of the traditional Communist Party, as in north Korea, or from the new movements of liberation, as in Angola. At the same time, the fact that the new regimes in the liberated countries, especially Vietnam, came to power after a protracted struggle involving a great mobilization of the initiatives of millions of people, has charted a course of development for them which represents a major departure from the course followed by the Soviet Union after the death of Lenin. That is why one can observe so many contradictions in the theory and practice of the smaller countries which have recently won their liberation.

Let us look at the case of Cuba, the country most familiar to Americans and the one perhaps most beset with contradictions. The achievements of the Cuban Revolution are familiar to U.S. leftists and do not require listing here. Cuba's posture of support for various oppressed peoples struggling against U.S. imperialism is also well known and widely admired in this country.

But the point is — not a single one of Cuba's accomplishments since the overthrow of Batista in 1959, nor all of them taken together, necessarily imply that the proletariat is exercising power there. Nor can the "exposure" of various policies of the Cuban government — such as its continued dependence on one crop or its support for Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, which the Maoists are fond of citing — be used to disprove the existence of socialism there.

The only positive way to determine which class is wielding power in a country is to examine the decision-making process there, especially as it affects the relations of production.

In this context, two items assume great significance: the role of dark-skinned Cubans in the wielding of authority, and the measures taken to regulate the labor process.

A rough draft of this paper, circulated privately, made reference to "the near-total absence of dark-skinned Cubans — the bulk of the working class — from authoritative positions." The criticism was soon forthcoming that, while it is admitted that dark Cubans do not play a role in government and the Party proportionate to their numbers, the Party is taking steps to draw more of them into leading positions, to develop them politically and promote them to positions of greater responsibility and authority.

That argument is entirely beside the point. The outstanding feature of Cuban life is that Afro-Cubans historically formed the heart of the laboring population, in the sugar fields, in the mills, on the docks and in the other areas of activity on which the Cuban economy was based, and continue to do so today.

The cause of this phenomenon can be found in the historic development of Cuba as a sugar island, a history which it shares with the other West Indian nations. In an essay entitled "From Toussaint L'Ouverture to Fidel

Castro" which he published in 1963 as an appendix to his 1938 book, THE BLACK JACOBINS, C. L. R. James describes the process as follows:

The history of the West Indies is governed by two factors, the sugar plantation and Negro slavery. That the majority of the population in Cuba was never slave does not affect the underlying social identity. Wherever the sugar plantation and slavery existed, they imposed a pattern. It is an original pattern, not European, not African . . . When three centuries ago the slaves came to the West Indies, they entered directly into the large-scale agriculture of the sugar plantation, which was a modern system. It further required that the slaves live together in a social relation far closer than any proletariat of the time . . . The Negroes, therefore, from the very start lived a life that was in essence a modern life . . . The sugar plantation dominated the lives of the islands to such a degree that the white skin alone saved those who were not plantation owners or bureaucrats from the humiliations and hopelessness of the life of the slave. That was and is the pattern of West Indian life.*

James remarks later on in the same essay that, "Cuba is the most West Indian island in the West Indies."**

The point is that, for Cuba, the scarcity of blacks in leading positions cannot be ascribed to a "cultural lag" to be overcome through education, etc., as was the case with some of the nationalities in Russia, who were at a genuinely primitive level of culture. The Afro-Cubans were, prior to the Revolution, the most proletarianized sector of the population, the sector most familiar with the technology and organizational principles of modern industry, the sector most "disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself." To the degree to which they are denied predominance in Cuban society — to that degree is the proletariat kept out of power.

The fact that the leading force in Cuba at present is something other than the free, conscious and self-mobilizing proletariat is reflected in the perpetual crisis of productivity with which the revolutionary government has been plagued. The problem can be revealed with a few figures: total agricultural output from 1961 (when "socialist" planning commenced) to 1969 declined 23%. Per capita food production in 1969 was 28% lower than it was ten years earlier. Total agricultural production per person also

*C. L. R. James, THE BLACK JACOBINS, p. 392 (Vintage edition). For a more extensive (and hostile) treatment of the revolutionary government from much the same historical view as James, see the articles by Carlos Moore published in SOULBOOK in (I think) 1973.

**Ibid., p. 411. My own view of West Indian history derives not from James but from a different source: my association with the Provisional Organizing Committee to Reconstitute a Marxist-Leninist Communist Party in the United States (POC), whose high proportion of Third World members led it on occasion to attain original and useful insights into certain questions.

declined 28% during the same period.*

Fidel Castro has claimed that Cuba did not have "work habits" because of the lack of a developed industry, that Cubans hold cultural values from the Spanish colonial period which are antithetical to manual labor.**

In 1962, the government introduced "socialist emulation," in the words of Che Guevara, a "weapon by which production is increased and the consciousness of the masses improved."*** This was a system by which workers were urged to compete with each other and with other work centers in order to produce more, while material rewards were mixed with public recognition. After two years, one government official admitted that, "Very few workers truly participate in the emulation campaign . . . To the emulation assemblies go only 20 percent of the workers . . . Sometimes it is reported that 92 percent of the workers are taking part in emulation, but the truth is quite the opposite. Fraternal competition has not taken root in the masses."****

By mid-1962 absenteeism reached alarming proportions, as the old repressive measures no longer functioned, and as purchasing power outstripped the supply of goods. Coercive measures were introduced, including a scheme of graduated punishments, ranging from salary reductions to job transfers.***** The results were not adequate, and in 1964 the government introduced a system of norms and quotas, on which salaries were to depend.

On August 29, 1966 Castro discussed the causes behind the decline of productivity. He attributed it to the fact that the means by which capitalism guaranteed a work force — the whip of hunger — no longer existed and had not yet been replaced by a new force, revolutionary consciousness. On May 7, 1968 "Granma," the official organ of the Communist Party, observed that labor discipline "had failed to emerge spontaneously" and called for the application of "moral and social sanctions."

In 1968 the policy of militarization of labor was introduced in the agricultural sector. Military personnel were placed at every important administrative and managerial position throughout the island. A large percentage of the labor force was organized as military units.*****

A year later it was clear that the efforts to raise productivity were disappointing. Thus the government decreed, on August 29, 1969, Law Number 225, which made it mandatory for all workers to have a work card in which their productivity, background, political views and employment

*United Nations, FAO, "Monthly Bulletin of Agricultural Economics and Statistics," July-August, 1970, pp. 14-17. This citation and those in the remainder of this section are taken from an article by Maxine and Nelson Valdes entitled "Cuban Workers and the Revolution," published in NEW POLITICS, Vol. VIII, No. 4.

**November 4, 1969, speech. "Ediciones COR" (Havana), No. 16, 1969. One wonders which Cubans the Prime Minister is talking about.

***"Obra Revolucionaria" (Havana), No. 5, 1963.

****"Hoy" (Havana), October 18, 1964.

*****"Granma" (Havana), October 30, 1969, admitted that since 1961 one could earn sufficient money to buy rationed goods by working only fifteen or twenty days per month.

*****"Granma" (Havana), November 16, 1969.

history are recorded. The card is necessary to obtain a job or receive a salary. Moreover, changing jobs without the permission of a regional office of the Labor Ministry is not allowed.*

Management was required to keep exhaustive administrative files on the life and job history of each worker. A worker's ability to receive social security or a salary raise depend on what is in the work record.**

On July 26, 1970 Castro discussed Cuba's economic problems. On September 20, "Granma" revealed that absences on a daily basis reached as high as 20% of the work force. A series of drastic measures designed to strengthen labor discipline were presented to the workers.***

These measures, now in effect, restore the system of quotas without material incentives, update the record of the worker's performance, and define in detail the proletariat's responsibilities. Temporary absentees will not be permitted to buy durable goods, their homes will not be repaired, new or better housing will be denied, and their vacations will be suspended. They can be excluded from social benefits such as the use of beaches, free education and hospitalization. They will not be able to eat at the inexpensive workers' dining rooms.****

On the same day the above measures were announced, a campaign was begun to overcome the tension between the workers and administrators. Fidel Castro declared, "We are going to trust our workers and hold trade union elections in all locals . . . They will be absolutely free, and the workers will choose the candidates. The workers will elect their leaders . . . If the worker has really been elected by a majority of all his comrades, he will have authority. He will not be a nobody who has been placed there by decree. He will have the moral authority of his election, and when the Revolution establishes a line, he will go all out to defend and fight for that line."

Imagine! After more than a decade of Revolution, the Cuban workers achieve what U.S. auto and steel workers have (more or less) had for a generation — the right to elect their own leaders. However, note the last phrase in Castro's remarks: the function of these leaders will be to carry out the line, not to develop it.

The Valdes article carries the story up to 1970. Since that time there is no indication that things have gotten any better. Rene Dumont, in a 1972 appendix to his book *IS CUBA SOCIALIST?*, notes that the situation is still pretty much as he and the Valdeses reported earlier. He states explicitly that, "In point of fact it is the petty bourgeois who seem to hold essential practical power in Cuba" (p. 153)

*Radio Habana Cuba, September 23,1969.

**"Granma" (Havana), October 17,1969.

***According to the Minister of Labor, the preamble to the law against absenteeism and "loafers" was written in 1968, but was not decreed then because certain prerequisites had to be fulfilled in order for it to be effective. The prerequisites were: total eradication of the private sector, except small farms, making it impossible for anyone to hide whether he worked or not; the compiling of personal records on every worker; the completion of a census to provide exact information on labor power by regions, zones and streets. "Granma" (Havana), September 20,1970.

****Radio Rebelde (Havana), September 10,1970.

As the Valdeses remark in the conclusion to their article which I have drawn upon so heavily, "The revolutionary substitutes for capitalism's reliance on selfishness cannot be coercive decrees or militarization, but the concrete practice of decentralization and socialist democracy. To continue to adhere to the concept of the trade union as a 'transmission belt' to implement party directives in the economic sphere is an obstacle to meaningful democratization. Socialist democracy, to be real, requires that revolutionary initiative and power be found in the hands of the people and not be the monopoly of a group . . . The state should be the instrument of the masses and not the other way around."

In winding up this section I must make it clear that I have placed so much stress on the negative aspects of Cuba because the audience for which I am writing generally tends to romanticize everything that comes out of that country and the other small Asian and African countries which have broken out of the grip of imperialism.

Cuba, as much as any country on earth, illustrates the complexities of political struggle in today's world. Those who regard Cuba as a model for the United States, and who think that Fidel Castro and the other Cuban leaders can do no wrong, are mistaken. Those who think that the Cuban leaders have fallen entirely under the thumb of Moscow are also mistaken. The leaders of the new Cuba, like the leaders of the new regimes in Indo-China, Angola and elsewhere, are great revolutionaries, who have carried out the sharpest and most progressive struggles against imperialism anywhere in the world.

In many respects their situation is parallel to that which prevailed in the U.S. South during Reconstruction after the Civil War: a great popular upsurge, whose potential was unlimited, in which various social forces were contending for hegemony. In the case of the newly freed nations of today, as in the case of Black Reconstruction, their ability to go forward to socialism depends partly on forces outside of their control, namely, on developments within those countries which are already highly industrialized. This does not detract in the slightest from one's appreciation of the role that the smaller Third World countries have played and are playing in bringing the entire proletariat to its feet.

X. THE COMMUNIST PARTIES IN THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

All of the cases looked at up to this point have been ones where the working class was extremely small in relation to the rest of the population, and where the reactionary regime held on to power through a system of total repression. In such cases it is natural that conditions of underground existence should give rise to military conceptions of unity and discipline which, while making the party into the most effective instrument for overturning the old regime, also tend to make it suspicious of any independent initiatives from outside its own ranks, including the working class seeking to realize itself directly.

What of the situation in western Europe, North America and Japan, where the working class is large and experienced, and where for at least a generation trade union and parliamentary forms have existed to mediate the class struggle? How do the Communist Parties function in these countries?

At the beginning of the 1960's, when Khrushchev was at the head of the Soviet government, the Communist Parties in a number of western countries, with his encouragement, began to evolve theories of peaceful transition to socialism, democracy without class content, and other ideas of classical social democracy. At that time the Chinese Communist Party opposed these new tendencies in a series of polemics which effectively restated the traditional principles of Marxism-Leninism, and won it a great deal of support from many Parties in the Third World and some in the developed countries. In some countries, significant groups of "Marxist-Leninists" split away from the existing Parties and began the process of building new "anti-revisionist" ones, often with Chinese encouragement and support.

Well, Khrushchev was removed from authority and in the more than a decade since, several important developments have unfolded within the Communist movement:

(1) The Soviet CP dropped the line of peaceful transition and so forth, and those Parties that hung on to it, such as the Italian and Scandinavian Parties, did so in defiance of Moscow.

(2) Some Parties, including some most closely aligned with the Soviet CP, proved in deeds, not words, that they were quite willing to discard bourgeois democracy and become serious contenders for power, under certain circumstances. The outstanding example of this is Portugal.

(3) Owing partly to the inability of the "anti-revisionist" forces to explain the above developments, they have been unable in even a single industrialized country to come together in one hegemonic organization, and moreover, have spawned a multitude of different groups, some with politics virtually indistinguishable from the official CP's, others so sectarian that they are led to oppose every progressive movement in their own countries, with the result that the very concept of the "anti-revisionist left" is now totally without validity, except in a historical sense.

Just as in an earlier period the dramatic expropriation of private capital by the Soviet government gave rise to the view that equated socialism with expropriation, so now the drift of the Communist Parties toward reformism leads to the tendency to dismiss them as "class collaborationist" and "revisionist."

Nothing reveals the dangerous consequences of the confusion regarding the Communist Parties more clearly than the events in Portugal. In that country, following the April 25, 1974 overthrow of the fascist regime by a group of young officers in the Armed Forces Movement, there arose several different forces contending for power:

First were the forces grouped around the new-born Socialist Party, headed by Mario Soares; these were the elements who hoped to see Portugal evolve as a traditional, western European bourgeois democratic state, based on private property in the means of production. This was the sector supported by the U.S. and the principal forces of European capitalism.

Second was the revolutionary proletariat seeking to establish its direct power in society and expressing its will, in a not-yet-clearly-distinct manner, through the Workers' Commissions, Workers' Councils and a group in the armed forces, Soldiers United for Victory. No single party was hegemonic within the proletariat. The Party of the Revolutionary Proletariat most

completely identified itself with the independent revolutionary aspirations of the workers.

Third was the Communist Party, dominant in the trade unions, and the largest party among the workers. The Community Party represented neither of the above-mentioned forces, nor did it represent a vacillating, compromising element between them. It had its own independent policy, which it pursued throughout the stormy events of the next two years and is pursuing today. And what was that policy? Simply put, it was a policy aimed at the creation of a new Portugal, without private ownership of the means of production and with the Party as the administrator of the new state and manager of the state-owned property: in other words, a regime similar to that which exists in any of the eastern European states today.

In order to accomplish its strategic aim, the CP must achieve two things: first, it must expropriate the property and crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie; second, it must restrict the scope of the mass working class movement and bring it under the control of the Party. And it must accomplish these tasks under the special conditions prevailing in Portugal: namely, that while the bourgeoisie had been dealt a severe blow with the fall of fascism, it was stronger than the working class; and also that the Party itself was a mass party and therefore necessarily responsive to various currents within the working class.

It was the need to balance various conflicting tasks and pressures that was responsible for the seemingly contradictory turns in policy. But tactics have always been subordinate to the overall goal.

When the fascists were first overthrown and CP leader Cunhal returned to Portugal to assume a post in the provisional government, various analysts around the world dismissed him as a "revisionist" committed to the parliamentary road to socialism. But when he came out with statements minimizing the importance of elections and calling on the army to continue to exercise power, and then when the CP twice took to the barricades to bar fascist attempts to overthrow the new regime, these same analysts were left with no explanation.

Several of the Maoist groups characterized the CP as "social-fascist," meaning socialist in words, fascist in deeds. But what kind of fascist is it that takes the lead in demanding full, unconditional independence for one's own colonies, as the CP did in regard to Portugal's African territories or fights for land reform, as it is doing in Portugal itself?

Both theories — the "revisionist" and the "social-fascist" — failed to explain the behavior of the Portuguese CP during the post-revolutionary crisis.

On the other hand, the CP was not a consistently revolutionary party. It had seized power in the trade union movement by simply moving into the offices and had used its authority to oppose strikes aimed at higher wages, on the grounds that they would jeopardize the country's economic position. And it opposed the formation of the Workers' Commissions and Workers' Councils, which were non-party mass organizations of direct democracy, as it likewise opposed the formation of any groups within the armed forces that ran counter to the Armed Forces Movement of the rebel officers. And even while opposing one or another conservative measure of the different provisional governments, it always maintained a presence in

the government.

These various maneuvers of the Party can be explained in only one way: the Party was, and remains, a vigorous opponent of the existing capitalist regime and a serious contender for power; but the regime it strives to establish is not the "free association" spoken of by Marx. In its efforts to attain its goal, it must utilize its influence in the government and in the mass movement to crush the traditional bourgeoisie, must use exactly the same influence to prevent the working class movement from getting out of hand, and must accomplish these two contradictory tasks without losing its base of popular support.

But then don't these various considerations determining CP policy offer tremendous possibilities of support to the working class movement which exists outside of CP control? Of course they do, and the revolutionary movement in Portugal has taken advantage of that fact. Thus, for instance, when the CP took to the barricades against the fascists, the revolutionary left joined it; when the CP defended itself from the attacks of the fascists and the church, the left joined in the defense; when the CP opposed the right-ward drift of the sixth provisional government, the left was on the same side.

On the other hand, when the CP opposed strikes or opposed the Workers' Commissions (and later tried to take them over), the left fought against it. The policy of the left toward the CP in Portugal is what is meant by the working class maintaining an independent stance in the political struggle.

By contrast, those groups which claim to be followers of Mao Tse-tung Thought were blinded by their unreasonable hatred for the CP, so that they joined together with the CIA-backed Socialist Party against the CP in the unions, and joined in with the fascist mobs that were burning down Party headquarters in the northern cities, on the grounds of "opposing social-fascism."

The Maoist groups are unable to analyze the role of the CP and unable to arrive at a proper stance in relation to it, because they, like the CP itself, are motivated by the theory which sees the rule of the vanguard party as equivalent to proletarian power. They differ from the Communist Party only in the particular foreign country to which they look as a model.

Italy is another country where the CP is reaching for power and where the state capitalist theory offers the only reasonable explanation for its behavior.

The Italian Communist leaders trace their tradition back in a direct line through the anti-fascist resistance, the Civil War in Spain, the post-World War I uprisings and the founding of the Party. They are the most cynical and astute group of leaders in the western communist movement, including those in the Soviet Union, whom they undoubtedly consider "backward" and "lacking in culture."

If the Italian Communists have temporarily adopted a reformist course, it is not because they have renounced their fundamental aim of taking power in Italian society, but because they feel that such a course is best suited to their cause at the present time.

The Soviet leaders, for their own reasons, do not approve of the new line of the Italian CP and exert efforts to reverse it. Paradoxically, it is the improved position of the Soviet Union in the world that makes it possible for the Italian and other western CP's to stray from Moscow's strict control,

by eliminating the need for the formerly weak, isolated, hounded communists to huddle together for mutual support.

For the time being, the Italian Communists are trying to gain entrance to the government by offering themselves as the only force able to bring about labor peace, that is, to halt the wave of strikes that threatens the very foundations of the Italian state.

If the CP comes into the government, there is no doubt that it will have exactly the opposite effect from that intended by the bourgeoisie; namely, it will encourage the workers to be bolder in their demands.

If that happens, the pressure will be on the CP either to risk its base of support among the workers by suppressing the strikes or give up its position in government.

There is a third alternative, of course — the Portuguese one. That is, to attempt to take power into the hands of the Party while preventing the struggle of the working class from going too far. It should be noted, however, that Italy in the 1970's is not eastern Europe after World War II, where the Red Army was present to both suppress private capital and enforce labor discipline.

All the conceivable paths offer great difficulties to the Italian CP, while holding out tremendous possibilities to the working class.

The Communist Parties in the advanced countries are not alien presences imposed on the working class from outside. Even if the Stalin regime had never existed in Russia, something very similar to them would have developed. Nor are they more radical versions of the old, class-collaborationist social democracy. The Communist Parties are products of that stage of social evolution in which the working class is not yet sufficiently mature to fulfill its historic role. They represent that element of the population which is bitterly hostile to the existing regime and is at the same time able to conceive of no alternative to it other than the substitution of a more efficient and benevolent group of rulers for the exploiting class that presently holds power. The fact that the Communist Parties are attempting to achieve their aim in a place and time where the working class no longer has need of their services produces terrible strains on these parties, which must eventually blow them apart.

XI. THE WAY OUT

"Men make their own history," wrote Marx, in the famous and often-cited passage from *THE EIGHTEENTH BRUMAIRE OF LOUIS BONAPARTE*, "but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like an incubus on the brain of the living."

The workers' movements in Europe and the United States proved strong enough to prevent the crushing of the young Soviet Republic but not strong enough to overthrow capitalism in their own countries. The confinement of the revolution to backward Russia gave rise to a certain conception of the relation of the Party to the class, a conception based on the demonstrated inability of the Russian working class to establish its direct rule. Thus, in place of the dictatorship by the proletariat, there arose the theory of the

dictatorship for the proletariat, which became transformed into a dictatorship over the proletariat.

The communist parties of the various countries, strongly influenced by the Russian model, are products of that stage in development in which the working class is not yet capable of establishing its own class rule. These parties have been, on one hand, more or less effective instruments for waging the class struggle and, on the other hand, terrible weapons for the suppression of all strivings of the proletariat to express itself as a class independent of their control.

The working class in the developed countries no longer has need of these revolutionary mandarins. To take the most well-known of recent examples, in May of 1968 the French working class, acting under the guidance of no leading party, showed that it is "disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production," and is capable of standing at the head of the nation — so much so that President de Gaulle went on a secret inspection tour of French military units in Germany, unable to rely any longer on those stationed in France itself, who had been exposed to the revolutionary virus.

If the general strike and factory occupation of 1968 did not lead to the conquest of power by the proletariat, it was not because the workers were insufficiently organized, or did not possess adequate weapons, or lacked means of communication, or any of the other reasons that revolutionary attempts have failed in the past. It was because the workers themselves lacked an appreciation of their own capacity to rule.

Workers do very revolutionary things, but they think of them in old ways. The French workers, who demonstrated their ability to carry out a nation-wide movement, create forms of direct democracy and regulate their relations with non-proletarian social strata — the essential tasks of any government — were unable to see that in their own actions lay the foundations of a new society. There were signs of the beginnings of such an understanding on the part of the workers, but they were stamped out by the official trade union and Communist Party leadership, which sought to interpret the events as simply a massive demonstration of the need for reform.

So long as the only models of social action articulated to the workers are either continued subordination to the bourgeoisie — the line of social democracy — or reliance on the all-knowing vanguard party to lead them to socialism in its own good time, they will be unable to arrive at the new consciousness of themselves as a potential ruling class, and thus all their movements will inevitably be contained within the framework of capitalism.

It is the view of the Sojourner Truth Organization that a Marxist-Leninist Party is absolutely crucial to the process of developing among the workers the sense of themselves as part of a potential ruling class. While this is not the place for a lengthy discussion of the party question,* it can be stated that the process has two aspects: criticizing bourgeois consciousness as it manifests itself within the working class, and linking together in a culture of struggle those elements in the working class movement which foreshadow the socialist society. To reduce these tasks, which in our opinion constitute the essence of the party's vanguard role, to the goal of gathering all the

*See the STO pamphlet, "Towards A Revolutionary Party."

diverse threads of the movement into the hands of the party — which is the line implicit in the "general staff" theory — can only reinforce the sense of powerlessness that workers feel.

Having offended virtually every other sector of the left, it is necessary to say a word about the Trotskyists. On this question of the role of the party in relation to the mass movement, official Trotskyism does not differ in the slightest with the position of the official Communist Parties. They may differ with them on certain questions of policy for the party, but when it comes to their attitude toward the independent expressions of working class power, Trotskyism is only a sub-category of Stalinism. This has been true ever since Trotsky first hatched his plan to militarize the Soviet trade unions; it is evident today in the countless hours spent by his followers in meetings, conferences, discussion bulletins, contact commissions and other efforts to reconstruct one or another wing of the International, the one and only International — all taking place in total isolation from the actual movement of the proletariat and in total ignorance of the fact that the working class no longer has the slightest need for them.

Marx and Engels predicted that the proletariat would first come to power in one of the developed countries, and that it would sweep the rest of the world along in its train. They may turn out to have been right after all. For while it is obvious that the chain of traditional capitalism breaks first at its weakest link, the overthrow of the old bourgeoisie is not the same as the conquest of power by the working class. It is even possible that the specific country to which Marx and Engels first looked, Germany, may be the one that blazes the trail; for that is the country where the working class has the most extensive experience both with traditional bourgeois rule and with the new state capitalism of the commissars. That is just private speculation.

In any case, as Marx wrote in the Preface to THE CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY, "mankind always takes up only such problems as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, we will always find that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions necessary for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation." History, through the means of state capitalism, both in the west and the east, has at last brought into existence a social formation able to take all power into the hands of the producers and establish "in place of the old bourgeois society . . . an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." ("Communist Manifesto")

That "association" of which Marx speaks is socialism, the only kind of socialism that will ever exist. To understand that the emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves, to take that statement literally and make it the starting point for all policy, is the first demand placed on any individual or grouping of individuals that wishes to contribute to the emergence of the socialist society.

ERRATUM: Page 24, line 14. "Mongolia" should read
"Manchuria".

On October 15, 1973, the young Hungarian poet Miklos Haraszti stood arraigned before a People's Court in Budapest, charged with "grave incitement." He had "written a book liable to provoke hatred of the State." The charge carried a possible eight-year jail sentence. The basis of the charge: "Piece Rates," a brief monograph in which Haraszti describes what it is like to work in a major Hungarian factory. The extracts which follow are from this book, now published in the West.*

This was by no means Haraszti's first brush with the authorities. In 1966 he was suspended from the university for organizing a student Vietnam solidarity committee which collected money for the liberation forces and demonstrated outside the U.S. embassy. The following year he was given "house surveillance" for editing and translating a collection of revolutionary poems from around the world. In 1969 he was jailed for writing a satire on bureaucratic attacks on the left, and won his release only after a hunger strike in prison.

Haraszti's trial for "Piece Rates" was suspended, due in part to the wide support he received from other Hungarian intellectuals. Three months later, in January, 1974, it was suddenly reconvened. A verdict of guilty was announced, and the poet was given a suspended sentence and fined. Haraszti has been persecuted and labeled with various epithets (utopian-anarchist, Guevarist, Maoist, ultra-leftist, etc.) but he is not, today, in jail.

In the following excerpts, which are taken from *New Left Review*, no. 91, Haraszti reports on conditions at the Red Star Tractor factory at Csepel. In the Hungarian People's Republic tractors are virtual symbols of socialist development, uniting hammer and sickle. Csepel is the largest single concentration of engineering and metal works in Hungary. Founded by Baron Manfred Weiss in 1884 on a Danube island in the south of Budapest, it became a complex of steel works, heavy and light engineering factories that made it the Krupps of Hungary between the wars, employing then, as now, tens of thousands. It was a vital center during the Soviet Republic of 1919.

*Stucklohn, Rotbuch Verlag, Berlin, 1975

The piece-work system aroused my interest. Although I had read about it, its contradictory nature left me perplexed. I couldn't even see it as a compromise solution. In one newspaper, for instance, a Hungarian expert in 'management science' claimed that payment by results was the most perfect form of socialist remuneration, since it embodied the principle: 'from each according to his abilities, to each according to his work'. In the same paper, however, though not in the same issue, an old Communist who now holds a prominent position recalled in glowing terms a comrade who, before the War, had organized workers' demonstrations against the Bedeaux system, the 'scientific' method of payment by results of those days. I looked up statistics and learned that the majority of industrial workers are on piece-work. I also found out—though this is common knowledge—that only workers are allowed to enjoy this chemically pure form of socialist wage-labour; their superiors have to be content with more backward forms. But what really interested me was a topic which no one had so far discussed in front of the esteemed public—myself included: what is it actually like to be on piece-work?

'I can see they've shown you what you're supposed to do. But how to earn money, that's something they've not taught you.' M. speaks almost without emphasis, so that his words sound all the more weighty. He is fifty-four, has been working fourteen years on a milling-machine, and takes good care to see that he puts 2500 forints a month in his pocket. 'You have to know the tricks of the trade', he says. 'Right? That's what it's all about.' I nod, and M. sums it up like this: 'If it was up to them, they'd pay you so little you'd even have to go and beg for a glass of water. They don't give a damn about you.'

What does one have to do? For my section of 100 to 120 men, working at boring, turning and milling, there are three rows of machines in the immense shop. The adjacent row of machines belongs to the next section. There are four sections in the shop altogether.

Our section includes eight operators manning eight milling-machines in two shifts: each man handles two machines.

By and large, the new and old machines are fairly similar. The oldest ones are twenty to twenty-five years old and on their sides one can see traces of two markings: on one side the emblem *Manfred Weiss Csepel*, and on the other *Rajkosi Werke Csepel*—the latter has been partly scratched out and now one can only see *Werke Csepel*.

The machines are designed for the full effort of a single man. 'What are you so surprised about? You'll work two machines and that's that. We talked ourselves hoarse when they brought in the two-machine system', said M. early on. 'I'm the only one left who used to work one machine. The others have gone. The new men started on two machines right away. And those who left are working two machines in their new jobs too—if they're still doing milling, that is.'

Someone who stood by my machine and watched me at work might well think I understood the 'tricks of the trade', as I go from one to the other, adjust, lift, tighten screws, throw switches and so on. But I'm at a dead end: cold sweat and a trembling stomach come as I hold myself together under the pressure of work and my own situation. This feeling first appeared when I had already mastered the machines, and it hasn't left me since.

M. and the others know this condition; they call it 'the nerves'. They see at a glance how I'm feeling. I suspect that the foreman, who is always hectically rushing around outside his office, has noticed it too. As he hurries past he calls out encouragingly: 'Now, colleague, we're going to finish these fifty con-rod heads yet, aren't we?', but I realize this is just a hint that the lines on his face would crease up in an expression

of icy annoyance and rejection if I were to bother him about, say, my pay or anything else that had to do with myself rather than with my machines. Even if it was to do with the machines, I'd have to broach it carefully. It takes a long time before I work out how to lay the bait so that he'll nibble.

I stand on a couple of platforms between the two machines, which are placed opposite each other on their concrete bases—the horizontal milling machine a step higher than the vertical one. This means that I spend the whole day climbing up and down as I move between the two machines, as I change the job or go to the other side of a machine to replace a tool or re-set something. The truth of the two-machine system first dawns on me during an attack of 'nerves'. In my training month, the problem was simply learning how to operate each machine. But they are not in fact at all similar. Both mill, but they deal with completely dissimilar jobs. For example, one machine may be dealing simultaneously with ten jobs the size of a match-box, while there is something weighing thirty kilos on the other. The operations are different too. One lasts half a minute, the other maybe three, and setting up the job also takes different lengths of time. The horizontal milling machine hums and growls quietly, while the vertical one spits out glowing shavings at immense speed and with a hellish din. Both must be disengaged at the right time. Without a second's hesitation I must shove the right lever into the right position. The controls on the two machines are different as well. The movements involved in continuous operation demand a different rhythm for each machine; if I cannot get into a regular swing then the work almost stops. 'It's as if a director had to run a factory and a brothel at the same time', said the work mate who had taught me how to use them. 'Only this is a bit more dangerous and not so well paid', he added quickly.

On both machines the job has to be securely screwed to the work table. The horizontal machine has a horizontal shaft above the table, and the milling discs are fixed onto this. On the vertical machine the shaft is perpendicular to the table, and there is a milling head on it instead of a disc—a large, heavy steel cone with cutters at the bottom. The table can be moved in three directions. When everything is set up, the job is pushed forward, by hand or by the machine, under the disc or the head, which turns at precisely set speeds. The result of the operation is a groove in the case of the horizontal machine; in the case of the vertical one a smooth surface. Of course, the two machines can do different jobs. I can do smooth milling on the side of a piece of metal with the horizontal machine if I take out the long shaft and put a bit in its place, and I can mount a disc on the vertical shaft and so mill grooves from the side. Saw-blades and other tools can be mounted on both machines—the dirty, oily monsters are really quite adaptable. The turners simply call them 'mincing machines'. A milling machine is in fact in the -most literal sense of the word a machine for chopping up metal. It tears, breaks or hacks the material to pieces and spits out hot steel chips—quite unlike the shining spirals from the lathes.

And despite everything it could actually be pleasurable to work with these machines, thinking along with them inventively, almost like a sport (naturally not on both at the same time, but on this one today and the other tomorrow). It's not even that the runs are too big; an operation seldom has to be done more than fifty times—a hundred at the most. I have never yet had to do only one kind of operation throughout a working day.

But, like the rest of the section, I'm on piece-work. And that changes everything: it inverts labour. All possibilities are turned on their head. Nothing depends on me. All that I'm depended upon to do is to continue, endlessly, the inversion of possibilities. The limit is my capacity to shoulder this burden—the nerves'.

Conditions of Pay

During my month's training I'm paid by the hour. 'A month is a long time. They don't give you so long for training elsewhere', says the works manager when I am taken on. 'In a month you'll have learned everything nicely, and so it'll be no good saying: "I don't have enough experience yet." I'm giving you seven forints an hour as a trainee. Of course you don't have to wait till the end of the month. You can come to me sooner than that if you want to go onto piece rates.'

These are the usual conditions in my section. I discovered that in the first few days, when a lot of people came up to me and, after talking round things a bit—or even coming straight to the point—asked what arrangement I had come to with the boss. They listened to what I said and left without making any special comment.

The lathe operator next to me asked: 'Did he tell you how long the probation period lasts? How long you've got before you have to give notice in order to leave?' 'No, he didn't.' 'It's a week, you see. I expect they'll leave you in peace that long.' 'So do I.' 'Well, there you have it', he said, sounding as if he'd said check-mate.

Naturally, we agreed at the start about the eventual hourly rate. The boss only came to the actual figure itself after a long introduction. 'Here the hourly rate is only a formality. You see we are on piece-work here—everyone earns as much as he produces. We have to name a figure, of course, but it doesn't mean anything. You can ask anyone; even the best workers don't get more than ten forints. Of course you get the advance in the middle of the month on the basis of hourly rates—it works out at a hundred hours—but at the end of the month you can take the money home by the cart-load. It's up to you. Let's say eight forints. We can always put it up later.'

We won't be putting it up very much I thought, if the hourly rate even for the workers who've been here longest is so low. And why is it put up if it doesn't mean anything? I asked for eight and a half forints and mentioned that I had got that amount in my last job. He pulled a sour face, went over the whole thing again from the beginning, checked out my work-book and finally gave me the eight and a half. 'Are you always so stubborn?', he asked. 'I tell you, it's an absolute formality.'

When the others asked how the negotiations had gone, they all supported the stand I'd taken. 'He thinks you're an idiot if you take the eight forints, and then you're for it. The boss takes everything he can get from idiots', a young fitter assured me; he had just been conscripted, and was letting himself go in every direction. 'They need that extra fifty filler—it's their bread and butter', said my instructor, and reckoned it up on his fingers. 'First of all you have the average wage or whatever they call it. They work that out on the basis of the hourly rate, that's for sure, and just what bonus they get for making that saving no one knows. Apart from that, the advance isn't the only thing based on the hourly rate—there's holiday pay as well, and sickness benefit. And on that hourly rate you can't afford to be ill.'

This low nominal hourly rate has other 'advantages' too. 'With a rate like that you'll think twice before you leave the works. Let's say you get an hourly rate of nine forints. You bash away and actually get it up to eleven. But then you'd like to move to another job where you could get twelve or thirteen forints. They might give you a rise in your new job from eleven to thirteen, but not from nine to thirteen. You can't take the job even if they believe that you really used to get eleven. You can get the same sort of job as you have here, but not a better one.'

All that is a long way off for me. First of all I have to learn to work the machines.

The operator who is given the job of instructing me is delighted with this month. He not only gets the hourly rate, but also the piece-rate for whatever we produce together. As the foreman sees it, our joint production will be less than what my instructor could produce alone. He bases this on the assumption that the instructor will do nothing but look after me. But the instructor has quite other ideas. He doesn't let me work the two machines together, although I shall have to do this later. He quickly sets up one machine—I can scarcely follow how he does it—and then leaves me to see to the batch. Meanwhile he's operating the other machine, and doesn't spare me a word until I've finished. The method is a kind of blackmail. If I play along, he'll explain the odd thing to me now and then.

When the training month is over, the boss sees me in his office. 'So now you're beginning? Right. You're a trained worker. According to the regulations, for the next three months I can raise your earnings to the level of your hourly rate, if by any chance you don't reach it. Don't worry, though, we hope it won't be necessary. From what I've seen, you've settled down well.'

Working It Out

How does one earn one's money? It's harder to calculate than to learn the job itself. Although such calculation is just as much a part of earning the money as toiling with one's body. I receive money for my work, but on top of that I also have to go through the calculations on which my wages are based. Otherwise I could easily fall prey to self-deception. There is no way of telling whether my work was successful or not from the gleaming heap of finished jobs, the leaden fatigue, parched mouth and stomach tremors. I must learn to measure myself by the standards of the factory. I must add up the value of hours, days and months from what minutes are worth, and I can't afford to be generous. Every minute of my day is so calculated that I will feel the effects if I do less. The method is simple. They have converted my minutes into jobs done, and my output into piece-rates.

'Job Assignment' says the time-sheet that accompanies each batch. There is one of these sheets for each piece of work. Once the controller has checked them off, the carbons belong to me. The workers simply call the assignments 'money'. This is how my instructor explained things to me: 'If you get a job to do, the first thing you look at is the money—or you go and get it if the people from the office haven't brought it down.' Then he brushes aside with a wave of his hand the jumble of mysterious letters and figures on the paper: 'You don't need to worry about all that. For you, these here are the holy words, and he taps the box in the top corner of the paper. 'That's the piece-rate. That's all we look at. Take it as being in filler for a single job; turn it into forints for every hundred. Just forget about the rest', he repeated his warning.

At one time; all the headings must have intrigued him—work category, job time. But like the others, he speaks from experience when he maintains that the idea that piece-rates might depend on such considerations is all pretence. 'Ask them yourself! They go on at you until your head is swimming. Everything's ok on paper; there's no point in opening your mouth about it. But if that lot up there want to cut back the pennies on the piece-rate, then they check out the timings and give out the word: "down so and so much per cent". Then the rate-fixers divide, multiply and rub out and in the end the piece-rate is lower, but it's all ok on paper—you can *study* if for as long as you like. I'm telling you, just pay attention to the piece-rate.'

I study the paper-money and try to anticipate the result. When a pile of 'money' has collected, I take it home with me. I have no time for that at work. Lack of time even pursues me at home. I have to spend long hours doing nothing, just passively recovering, otherwise it's difficult even to count, and my hands tremble.

First of all, I prove to myself that the calculations show my colleagues are right. The columns headed 'preparation time' and 'preparation time payment' are blank. So in the time allocated for each job (and the payment for it) the preparation and setting of the machine are not taken into account, although I take part in the work even if the machine-setter helps me. In any case, so long as we are getting ready, my machine isn't working, which is something the rate-fixer must know. He also seems to be aware of something the operator next to me drew my attention to—when I carry out operations which are paid, I must also do things for which no formal payment is made. This kind of unpaid work is not the privilege of the millers alone. Every worker on piece-work has the same pleasure.

But perhaps this loss is taken into account when the time for the job is worked out? After all, what is the job time? How is it determined? Why do the other workers systematically ignore it, even though according to the job sheet, it is what the piece-work payment is based on? The time-sheet gives no answer to these questions. I try for days to find one, as I work at my machines. ...

Looting

Piece-workers do not analyse and calculate; they know the answer from experience. They simply *know* that the job time is a pure formality, that all that matters is the rate for the job and nothing else. They are only

concerned with one sum: how high is the piece-rate? How much must I produce on this job to earn my money today? 'The norm plays the role of an unavoidable fiction in the- people's economic system of incentives', the sociologists would write. 'The norm is a piece of humbug', says the guy next to me.

I can no longer deal with the time norm and other mysterious headings any differently from my colleagues. They would think anyone was out of his mind if he told his family on pay-day that he hadn't earned much money but had observed the technical regulations and fulfilled the norm. And the norm cannot even be fulfilled. There is only one way out of this vicious circle; every young worker knows it even before he stands at his machine for the first time, and so does the rate-fixer when he gets his first assignment.

SAFETY REGULATIONS FOR MILLING MACHINES

1. During work, work clothes are always to be worn and kept well fastened. Women are obliged to wear a head scarf, men with long hair a cap.
2. The wearing of rings, wrist watches and chains during work is strictly forbidden.
3. Before work commences, a check must be made that the machine is operating properly and that the safety devices are in working order. If there is any damage, it is forbidden to start work.
4. Individual jobs are to be carried out exclusively in accordance with the instructions laid down in the technical manual. (Prescribed speed, cutting depth and feed must all be observed.)
; Make sure that both the job and the tool you are using are fixed and secured according to the instructions.
6. While the machine is running, it is forbidden to touch cutting tools or jobs or to check measurements or clean the machine.
7. If shavings are formed, protective goggles or a plastic face guard must be worn.
8. In the event of defective functioning, the machine must be switched off at once. The fault must be immediately reported to the foreman.
9. Shavings may only be removed with the proper instruments. Cleaning the machine with compressed air is forbidden.
10. No one working on a machine may carry out any repairs to it (either electrical or mechanical).
11. See that your tools and apparatus are stored safely. Be clean and tidy!
12. All accidents at work are to be reported to the foreman at once.

The Factory Management.

These instructions are fastened to the side of every milling machine. When I came to the works and passed a sort of test, I was asked whether I had read them. I had to say how many points there were, and was asked well-meaning, helpful questions. First the official responsible for work safety and then I myself signed the foreman's papers, which were placed in my personal file. If anything happens now which could be attributed to infringement of one of these points, then the foreman will show me my signature and at once the case is clear: / *knew but did not act accordingly*.

The fate of the twelve points of our safety regulations is the same as for all such twelve points. Perhaps with the exception of the first two, as no time is lost by observing them. Without the words 'obliged' and 'forbidden', even young workers would perhaps obey these rules of common sense, although every workplace has its unruly, long-haired black sheep. But the other points are our enemies, and a burden to the bosses, whose bragging about work safety increases in proportion to their distance from the machines.

The fourth point is the most important. Under the piece-work system, as in every form of payment by results, it is bound to be broken, and this will always be tolerated. A worker on piece-rates does not easily earn the money that he works for. The first requirement is to work without observing the prescribed rules.

Since my colleagues have been working here they have ceased to pay any attention to the quality and usefulness of what they produce. They find it quite natural that the most simple common-sense rules have to be forced on them by special regulations, and even at the cost of their own health they find it just as natural to disregard such prohibitions.

Hut who bangs his head against a wall unless he is forced to? What kind of monstrous force is capable of extinguishing from workers—who create everything—the instinct for good work? You can, like the newspapers, believe that a worker's life is basically meaningful. But then it is no use taking offence at the indifference with which even a prosperous worker turns the page without a further thought when an article claims that something or other in his life means as much as living well. You have to alleviate the cancer but not cut it out—even the best-intentioned say that or something similar when they talk about the need to improve the pay of *wage-earners* and to transform their relationship to their own work, instead of talking about the absurdity of wage-labour in general—and absurdity whose hostility to man cannot be alleviated.

Cheating the Norm

When we let a machine run faster than is technically prescribed, or vary something that is assumed to be constant when our wages are calculated, this is not regarded officially as an inexplicable case of self-destruction, that calls the whole set-up into question, but as *cheating-the-norm*. This is a curious kind of cheating. That it is not good for the cheater is obvious. It is cheating because someone manifestly is being duped; presumably the employer. Extra productivity does not result exclusively from the predictable strain on nerves and muscles, the machines also are hard at it.

If the wages paid for 100 per cent performance were reckoned in such a way that we could be satisfied with them, then it really would be a clear case of cheating. We would produce no more than the 100 per cent and less effort would go into the work which would be of lower quality. But this is out of the question. What would spur us on to raise production if the 100 per cent could be fulfilled and the wage for the job was sufficient? So we are dealing with a case of cheating in which the job is machined more quickly than the regulations say is possible. For us this only makes sense because we can complete more jobs this way than are officially reckoned to make up 100 per cent, which is precisely the idea. So it is by no means the case that we work less. On the contrary, we produce more, with more effort, to get an acceptable wage, and that is only possible by cheating. Who is actually being cheated here? We produce more; management can be happy after all. As for the machine, it keeps its pace. Only the norm is cheated, the wage system.

The workers call cheating the norm, *looting*. Millions of piece-rate workers use this word naturally, without the least sign of a sense of guilt. No doubt the god of the piece-workers daily chalks up hundreds of thousands of sighs for the chance of more 'loot'. This meaning of the word is not to be found in dictionaries of the Hungarian language. Entries under 'cheating the norm' do not describe how workers actually operate, but something almost unknown—false calculations and bribery. The factory management is well aware of looting. It is ultimately not just the workers who practise and live off it, but the whole management as well. If they 'fix my wage for 100 per cent productivity at 8 forints per hour, then they oblige me in practice to loot. There is no way in which it would be possible to 'fulfil the plan' if this compulsion were not built in beforehand. They simply fix the time for the job so that it forces me on to loot.

Although there is no boss who would not expect looting from piece-workers, nonetheless cautious, muted and impersonal reprimands are often delivered, in a humorous way. Mostly when the looting noticeably affects quality, and too many jobs are below the rejection line or close to it. Of course no one in a leading position actually encourages you to loot. 'You can take the money home in cart-loads', says the works manager, 'it's up to you'; he forgets to add that the pay for a measured hour is derisory and that I should not take the prescribed speeds at their face value.

M. gives me my first lesson in looting when he says he cannot bear to see how my machines crawl along. 'You won't give them any sleepless nights. If you don't work out how to earn the money for yourself, they won't stick the missing hundred notes in your pocket. What do you do when the setter has finished on your machine?', he asks severely. I am just about to show him that I know my way round the machine. But he dismisses this with a gesture and says: 'You re-set it. And if you start a job without the machine-setter, then leave the operating instructions

as operating instructions. The machine-setter works by them, that's what he's paid for. But you've got a head of your own, haven't you? Well, then, you step up the cutting speed and feed the job through faster—but take care you don't blow yourself up.'

Things don't go so easily. The increased speed brings on a fit of nerves. From the first minute of toil, just thinking about the work gives me the nerves. My eyes stare at the rain of sparks; my whole body leans against the lever; sometimes I can't bear the tension any longer, and pull the lever in before I should. The machine trembles and shrieks; the undue static and dynamic stresses on the material generate an ominous knocking and shaking. The resonances amplify one another, and set off cramp-like convulsions in me—fear and sense of guilt. My torpid concentration collapses.

Frequently, when I am concentrating on one machine the operation on the second machine, with its different tempo, comes to an end. The milling disc comes up against harder material and breaks with an unearthly bang. The broken milling tooth whizzes past my head like a bullet. I switch off both machines; my inner tremors come to the surface and move down into my hands. When this happens to experienced workers, they set about sweeping up the shavings in order to suppress their instinct to run away. The unmistakable sound and the sudden quiet that follows makes the others look up from their own noisy machines. Their looks don't condemn, and their comments help me over a difficult moment. My neighbour slowly and inconspicuously strolls over, looks at the smashed disc and says: 'We've got more in the store. They're meant to be used up.'

In spite of their frequency, such incidents are looked upon as occasions. News of them spreads as quickly as word of a brave deed among soldiers at the front. During the morning break after I smashed this disc, a driller who works at the other end of the section comes up to me and says with a grin: 'I have heard the iron cry'. It turns out that this line of verse is the usual expression in such cases. He doesn't know its origin.¹

Tracking Down Loot

Looting has its own excitement and its own rituals. Younger workers and friends spur each other on with terse shouts. The strained faces, the eyes which are always half-closed for fear of splinters, smile for a second. 'Go it, Pista, like you would the wife at home.' 'Give it one.' But even so you cannot shed the feeling of nerves. This state must be sharply distinguished from personal, constitutional or real irritability. It is chiefly caused—apart from the greater danger of accidents—by the fact that not all types of work or all situations make looting possible. You have to track the loot down, get your hands on it, reckon it out, position yourself to conquer it. You have to struggle for it, each day fighting small but in the long run mortally important battles, against one another and against everyone.

All the capabilities, enthusiasm and knowledge needed for good work are put at the service of looting, and so stood on their heads (it is not a question of doing good work, but the opposite). If you want to discover what the possibilities are and take advantage of them, then you must do everything you can to learn all the jobs that can be done on your machine. You must compare the piece-rates for the new jobs with the technical instructions laid down for them and then you must find out how to get more than the prescribed number of jobs onto the table, how to complete the operation at higher speeds, and how, when there are a number of operations, to find a milling-head, which can do them all in one.

Everything has to be done individually and secretly, for the foreman, the quality controller, the rate-fixer and the engineer have the job of seeing that the rules are observed. What is required for their complicity is that you don't put them in a situation where they have to spot that looting is going on. The word 'loot' is not used in polite company. The distinction between 'good work' and 'bad work', however, means nothing more than whether looting is possible or not. Good and bad

¹ The line is from Attila Jozsef's poem *Consciousness*.

work is certainly something you can talk about, particularly with the foreman. (To him the constant rise in productivity brings direct benefits—rising bonuses, growing prestige. The accidents and the damage to the machines he puts down under other headings. He is not concerned with our irritation or exhaustion.)

M., for example, reconnoitres before work begins and during morning break. He stops in front of my machines and looks at the 'money*' for new jobs. Now he's no longer helpful. He watches sharply how I am working, and only has a good word left over for me if he is convinced that my work is not 'better' than his, or if he himself has been supplied with 'good' work. After doing his rounds, he goes to the foreman and complains that for days he has had nothing but 'bad' work. 'You know how it is', the foreman replies ceremoniously, 'bad work brings good'. By which he means that other jobs have to be done as well as the kind of work that brings loot—jobs that 'don't bring much money'. 'Good' work is a gift, a bonus. This ritual is seldom aimed at obtaining direct preference, rather it makes sure that the foreman is aware of what is going on. There are too many Eskimos and too few seals; the foreman squeezes those who forget to present themselves regularly. He also knows that for piece-workers 'good work' is not a bonus but the only possibility of getting their money. A day when there is not at least one such batch, is a day lost.

When Work is 'Bad'

"The nerves' occur most violently when the work is 'bad'—when there is no possibility of reducing the actual time for the job down below the official time. Then the more sensitive are unapproachable, and explode at a single word. The state of the machines, or mistakes in organization, which they usually don't notice if they have 'good' work, suddenly become exasperating. The foreman keeps well away from them. M. swears incessantly, tears at his machine, pounds the lever when it's hard to engage, and is ready to hit out.

K. seems to be a peaceful man with a cool temperament. Once for three long days he hid to work on the same interminable batch of 'droppings'—fiddly work which you can't hurry over, short runs, and therefore low-paid work with no margin. He had expected that after this he would get some 'good' work from the foreman. Instead he got an equally bad batch, which took a long time to set up. When he began to work on it, the quality controller started complaining and made him re-set his machine two or three times. The moment the foreman came past, K, with a twist of the wrist, loosened the special hundredweight milling head lifted it up and let it crash onto the cement floor, teeth first. That wasn't enough for him; he turned the head over and began to knock out the cutting teeth with a six-pound hammer so that knife-sharp splinters rained all round. 'You can't work with such god-damned shit. Anyone who thinks he can should come over here.' Usually, when he has 'good' work, he doesn't have any complaint with this milling head. The expensive tool was ruined. The foreman had it carried away—it took two men—but it didn't occur to him to reproach K. or make him pay for the damage.

'Nerves' caused by the pressure of looting are most easily soothed by loot itself. To get it I have to use all my inventiveness, knowledge, imagination and courage, and this brings a certain feeling of success—when it comes off. That is why piece-workers often feel as if it is they who have tricked the wage system, as if they have got the better of someone. Naturally, looting doesn't make work any easier—in fact the physical and mental exertion is multiplied. What we gain in time we use to run up more paid jobs. If we were to pause out of sheer joy at our success, we would at once lose the advantage. Despite this we talk about it to each other with conspiratorial interest, as if it were a stunning blow in the unending daily battle.

M. is noticeably proud of his reputation. Even the turners speak with respect of the way he loots, though milling is traditionally a dirty trade in their eyes. He really does have some fantastic tricks. One of his favourites is simply to lay large and difficult jobs on the table, without fixing them down. He then pushes the job against the stop bolts with the weight of his body; the table moves, the cutters scream. Even watching him gives you cold shivers down your spine. An unexpected lump in the material, a flaw in the casting, and the irresistible revolution of the head will tear the job out of his hands. But if he doesn't do it like that he loses the two minutes he can gain out often.

I discover a slow change in myself; my interest in materials, in methods of work, in ways of economizing one's strength, in innovation, is first coloured and then totally submerged by *the* question: how to earn money. My thoughts and my movements are encompassed by an unspoken but all-powerful taboo—I must not look at any job from the point of view of how it might be done more accurately, more easily, more safely or with more enjoyment.

One day it struck me that I had almost begun to hate the nice, innocent and chatty dispatcher when, before my eyes, she split a batch of 150 jobs, which I would otherwise have got in one lot, into two batches of 75. She carried out this everyday operation so that the fitters could get the finished jobs from us millers in a steady flow. Two months earlier, I would have been pleased to have to do only 75 jobs of this kind, since it is a particularly nerve-racking batch: each job has to be forced into the machine with a hammer; after each operation the cheeks have to be properly cleaned of shavings or else the next job will not be precise. But since then I had found out I could increase my speed to almost three times that in the operating instructions, and the quality controllers had still accepted it. So now I was furious because I was aware that the other half of the batch possibly might not come my way. Even if it did, I should have to set my machine again, and when it's re-set, the quality controller might not be satisfied with only one inspection, and so on. The work has not got less nerve-racking, only now it is 'good' work and I am bound to like it.

When Work is 'Good'

When I have work of this kind (and it is always more difficult, because work which allows looting is work that can be speeded up) I can't help wishing it will go on for ever, no matter how boring it is. I can't help wishing that my minor cuts will not be dressed. I can't help hoping that the worker who is due to take over from me is sick, so that I can take his place and work overtime; that no, one will speak to me; that nothing will come into my mind which might distract my attention; that I won't feel hungry or thirsty; and that it is the same tomorrow. It is not that my basic ideas have changed (perhaps they haven't only because I've not always been here and don't need to continue for ever?), but I am somehow split. In the showers I recall with a sense of guilt the sheer rage with which I began the same movements minute after minute. I feel a sense of guilt because this rage only feeds off the tension of looting and from nothing else.

Naturally I have to do 'bad' work as well, with as little loss of time as possible; these jobs are the basis for obtaining work which can be looted—loot from which, somehow or other, I get my wage. If I have work which doesn't allow me to loot, these feelings turn into bitter self-hatred, because my brain cannot accept that even in this case I must push myself. I would readily succumb to any distraction, since I have only to look at my paper-money to see that, at best, I am working for 13 filler a minute.

Ultimately, the only thing that helps is if I turn into a machine myself. The best workers excel at this. Their eyes are veiled whatever the work, as if they wore impenetrable masks on their faces, yet they never miss a thing. Their movements don't seem to require any effort. They follow the unflinching trajectories of magnetically controlled, emotionless bodies. They average the fastest possible pace over the day as a whole, as they do not rush at things when they are still fresh and do not slow down when they are tired. Truly, just like machines. They only give way to nerves when the ratio of 'good' work goes haywire; otherwise their attitude reflects the reality, which is that 'good' and 'bad', 'paid' and 'unpaid' work run together to make a working day. The profit which is generated and the wages that come their way are both equally indifferent to such distinctions.

In the case of new or unusual types of work—or for learners—whether a type of work is 'good' or 'bad' is worked out only in retrospect, when the sums are done; even with a great deal of experience you cannot tell for certain beforehand how 'good' or 'bad' the work is going to be. There is only one thing you must hang on to—ignore the technical instructions I. Then you can be sure not to miss any 'good' work. Even experience doesn't make it possible to predict your earnings with certainty, at best it allows you to make an uncertain estimate.

This insecurity is the main driving force with payment by results—whether this takes the form of piece-work or measured-day work—it forces us on each minute. That is why it is held up as the system with the greatest incentives.

Compared to Time Work

The obvious compulsion and dependence which characterize payment by the hour are thus converted into what appears to be a positive independence. People who work on a conveyor belt, on semi-automatic or fully automatic machines, on machines which run at a constant pace and which they do not control, or which have a performance that is fixed in advance, receive a time wage which is also fixed in advance, generally by the hour. They can push their pay up only by lengthening their working hours, through overtime. Their rate for the hour is usually determined—in normal circumstances—by someone saying: 'You get so much and so much.' The boss who has fixed their rate can raise it from time to time, but once again entirely as he sees fit.

So anyone who is on time wages knows what is expected of him and what he can expect. The character of wage-labour stares him in the face without any analysis of political economy. His eight hours have been bought from him. The machine, which cannot be deceived, takes care of his pace of work. He has as little influence on the purchase-price of his working day as he has over how and when, in whose interests and by whom its values will be consumed. There is no danger that he will get lost in details, consider one part of his work as 'paid' and the rest as 'unpaid', feel that one kind of work is 'good' and another 'bad'. He cannot envisage that, in one way or another, by skill or by individual effort, he might turn the system to his advantage.

If he considers any detail, such as the size of his wage, to be unjust, then, as he broods over the possibilities of changing things, he must either find the whole system to be unjust, or he must accept it and wait for change to come from the bitter fickleness of a fate which says: 'that's the way it is'. The coercion, the dependence, the pre-ordained nature of the work make even the highest wage clear to him at least, independently of how he relates to it. If there is a chance, then he spares himself work. If he should work quicker, or ignore the technical instructions, he doesn't do this to produce more, like a piece-worker; on the contrary, he would rather work more slowly in case he produces more than is required. In short, time wages are a straightforward matter, not a 'form of wage incentives'.

Those paid by the hour know that they can't ask for or expect anything to come to them. The piece-worker also knows about what he can't expect. But he is bound to believe that he can do one thing: make money, and that this is the one right he has gained. He starts each day at zero, and on the day's horizon shimmers *the fata morgana* of limitless possibilities, because each forint is won by a struggle in which something appears to depend upon himself. Something that is within his power, which plays a part alongside all the external elements over which he has no influence—the material, the regulations, the rates, the controls—an elemental determination: his will. He himself moves his machines.

Provided the conditions are right, compulsion takes over, time runs away and the day is dismembered into a totally foreign life. Every minute pulled out of the worker is disguised by his own constantly renewed effort of will, which he squeezes from himself. Now this belief, that he has in all circumstances the possibility of extracting more money than was fixed for him to get, is cleverly maintained. So he no longer notices that his effort of will is simply part of a calculation in which, whether he breaks through the set limits or stays within them, it all means one and the same thing. His efforts of will bring only new profits and in turn new demands upon himself.

Insecurity is the great magician of piece-work. It puts excitement into the lifeless details that workers on hourly rates accept with indifference when they take on a job: the speed of the belt, the technology, the pay. If the man on hourly rates feels cheated, then he feels it in every way. The piece-worker, however, could not work at all if he were to begin the day with the resigned, passive sense of being cheated, if he did

not feel that chance was vital to him at all times. Of course he knows he is being cheated, but his active participation in the deceit itself makes it impossible for him to incorporate this deception into his view of work or, as does the man on hourly rates, to identify it with his overall conditions of life.

Instead, he has a sharp eye open for cases of petty discrimination, injustice, or manipulation, and fights them in the belief that one such victory can be set against other defeats. He tends to judge everything in terms of his pay, and when he has just had a good month he feels that he is not the dupe, but rather the victor.

Translated by Stuart Hood from the German

In a speech made on January 24, 1968, K'ang Sheng, Minister of Public Security of the People's Republic of China, attacked an organization he called "Sheng-wu-lien," which is a shortened form of "Hunan Provincial Proletarian Revolutionary Great Alliance Committee," made up of more than twenty organizations. In his speech, K'ang labeled the group as "Trotskyist," and accused it of slandering Chairman Mao.* Two days later, Premier Chou En-lai, Chen Po-ta, Chiang Ching and K'ang spoke at a mass rally in Changsha, capital of Hunan, denouncing Sheng-wu-lien as a counter-revolutionary Trotskyist organization. On the same day, the newspaper *Hunan Jih-pao* published an editorial "Thoroughly Smash Sheng-wu-lien, a Counter-Revolutionary Big Hotch-Potch."

The document which follows is extracted from a statement from Sheng-wu-lien. It is taken from the Survey of China Mainland Press, Hong Kong, 4190. There is little doubt of the document's authenticity. Victor Nee, a sympathetic and knowledgeable observer of People's China, refers to the Sheng-wu-lien "anarchist collective" in his article "Revolution and Bureaucracy" published in "China's Uninterrupted Revolution," New York, 1973. Klaus Mehnert publishes it, together with other Sheng-wu-lien documents, in his "Peking Und Die Neue Linke," published in Stuttgart, 1969.

•Survey of China Mainland Press, Hong Kong, 4136

Whither China?

The development of new productive forces in China today has brought in conflict the class that represents the new productive forces and the decaying class that represents the production relations which impede the progress of history. It will inevitably lead to a great social revolution, and a new society will inevitably be born amid the fierce flames.

... People believe that China will pass peacefully into the society depicted in the May 7 directive.³ But what happens in reality? 'Peaceful transition' is only another name for 'peaceful evolution.' It can only cause China to drift farther and farther away from the 'commune' depicted in the May 7 directive and nearer and nearer to the existing society of the Soviet Union ... The rule of the new bureaucratic bourgeoisie must, be overthrown by force in order to solve the problem of political power. Empty shouting about realization of the May 7 directive 'without any reference to power seizure and utter smashing of the old state machinery will of course be an 'Utopian' dream.

Lenin once made this famous statement: 'All revolutions — provided they are real revolutions - are in the final analysis changes of classes. Therefore the best means of increasing the awareness of the masses and exposing the deception of the masses with revolutionary vows is the analysis of the class changes that have taken place or are taking place in these revolutions.' Let us analyse the class changes that resulted from the January revolution in accordance with this teaching, so as to expose the deception of the masses with revolutionary vows...

Facts as revealed by the masses and their wrath told people initially that this class of 'Red' capitalists had completely become a decaying class that hindered the progress of history, and that the relations between them and the people in general had changed from relations between the leaders and the led to those between the rulers and the ruled, the exploiters and the exploited, from the relations of revolutionaries of equal standing to those between the oppressors and the oppressed. The special privileges and high salaries of the class of 'Red' capitalists was built on the basis of the oppression and exploitation of the broad masses of the people. In order to realize the 'People's Commune of China, it was necessary to overthrow this class . . . In the struggle to seize power in these units, the Marxist principle of smashing the old state machinery must be observed. Here there is no place for reformism, combining two into one, or peaceful transition. The old state machinery must be smashed utterly. 'The old system of exploitation, revisionist system and bureaucratic organs must be utterly smashed.' The programme of the first great proletarian political revolution was put forward in editorials in an embryonic, not very concrete state in the final stages of the storm of the January revolution.⁴ The decaying class that should be overthrown, the old state machinery that should be smashed, and even social problems, on which people formerly had not dared to express a dissident view, were put forward. This great development was an inevitable result of the courage and pioneering spirit demonstrated by the proletariat in the storm of the January revolution.

Problems of system, policy and guideline touched upon in the January revolution were mainly those connected with the capitalist labour employment system of contract workers and casual workers as well as the revisionist movement of going to hilly and rural areas.

Why did Comrade Mao Tse-tung, who energetically advocated the 'commune,' suddenly oppose the establishment of 'Shanghai People's Commune' in January? That is something which the revolutionary people find it hard to understand. Chairman Mao, who foresaw the 'commune' as a political structure which must be realised in the first cultural revolution, suddenly put forward 'Revolutionary committees are fine!'

Revolution must progress along a zigzagging way. It must go through a prolonged course of 'struggle-failure-struggle again-failure again-struggle again till final victory.'

Why can't communes be established immediately?

This is the first time the revolutionary people tried to overthrow a powerful enemy. How shallow their knowledge of this revolution was! They not only failed to realize voluntarily the necessity of thoroughly smashing the old state machinery and overhaul some of the social systems, but did not see clearly that the enemy formed a class, and the revolutionary ranks were dominated by ideas of 'revolution to dismiss officials' and 'revolution to drag them out.' The development of the wisdom of the masses had not yet attained the degree at which it would be possible to reform society. As a result, the fruit of revolution was in the final analysis taken by the capitalist class. (**The Communist Manifesto**).

Any revolution must necessarily involve the army. Since a Red capitalist class is already formed in China, the army of course cannot detach itself from this reality. Yet the January storm has not touched in any way the vital problem of all revolutions - the problem of the army. Thus it may be seen that the revolution lacked depth and remained at a low stage of development. The degree of maturity of the political thought of the revolutionary people, too, was in conformity with this low level revolution - it too remained at a very immature stage ...

The putting forward of three-in-one combination⁵ amounts to reinstatement of the bureaucrats already toppled in the January revolution. Inevitably it will be the form of political power to be usurped by the bourgeoisie, at which the Army and local

bureaucrats are to play a leading role ...

The force and intensity of the January revolution caused the bureaucrats to carry out a hurried usurpation of power. ... The 'Red' capitalist class gained almost overwhelming ascendancy in February and March. The assets (means of production and power) were seized from the revolutionary people and returned to the bureaucrats. In February Lung Snu-chin, Liu Tzu-yun, Chang Po-sen, Hua Kuo-feng and bureaucrats in all the country and their agents at the Centre wielded unlimited power. It was their heyday, while the power of the revolutionary people dropped to zero. Moreover, large numbers of them were thrown into prison under the control of the bourgeois state machine — **Kung-chien-fa**.⁶ Intoxicated by his victory of February-March, Chou En-lai — at present the general representative of China's Red capitalist class — hurriedly tried to set up revolutionary committees in all parts of the country. If this bourgeois plan had been fulfilled, the proletariat would have retreated to its grave. Therefore, without waiting for the establishment of all the revolutionary committees, the Central Cultural Revolution Group issued the order to hit back. After that the great August local revolutionary war in the country began to ferment.

In the struggle to hit back at the February adverse current, the important sign of the revolution's entry into a higher stage was that the problem of the Army really began to make itself felt. The revolutionary people had very childish ideas about the Army during the January revolution, believing that as soon as the local capitalist-roaders were overthrown, the armed forces would unite with the revolutionary people to suppress the capitalist-roaders in accordance with Chairman Mao's order of union from the upper to the lower levels. The sanguinary facts of the February adverse current told the people that the Upper-to-lower order alone could not bring about an implementation of Chairman Mao's intentions in the armed forces because unanimity of the interests of the capitalist-roaders in the Army and those of the local capitalist-roaders would prevent the Army from carrying out Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. It was necessary to carry out cultural revolution from the lower level upward in the Army and to rely on the people's revolution - the locomotive of progress of history — in order to change the state of opposition between the military and the civilian population brought about by the control of the Army by the bureaucrats ...

Due to historical limitations of the time, many of the writings about the Army are very immature and have great shortcomings. But since these writings are new things, they will be proved by history to be significant things.

How well Engels spoke when he commented on Utopian socialism: 'Let the pedlars of the circle of authors solemnly find fault with the imaginations which at present can only make people laugh. Let them gratify themselves with the thought that their strict way of thinking is superior to such mad ideas. What makes us glad is the gifted ideological buds and gifted ideas that show themselves everywhere by breaking through the outer shell of imagination. These things the mediocre people cannot see.'

There are two essential points in the writings about the Army:

(1) It is now seen that the Army now is different from the people's army before the liberation. Before the liberation the army and the people fought together to overthrow imperialism, bureaucratic capitalism, and feudalism. The relation between the Army and the people was like that between fish and water. After the liberation, as the target of revolution has changed from imperialism, bureaucratic capitalism and feudalism to capitalist-roaders, and these capitalist-roaders are power-holders in the army, some of the armed forces in the revolution have not only changed their blood-and-flesh relations with the people that obtained before the liberation, but have even become tools for suppressing revolution. Therefore, if the first great proletarian cultural revolution is to succeed, a radical change in the army will be necessary. The 'ultra-left faction' has found the basis for its

thinking in a quotation from Chairman Mao. In the same year after Chairman Mao issued the order for the armed forces to live in their barracks, (they are) separated from the masses.

(2) It is now seen that a revolutionary war in the country is necessary if the revolutionary people today want to overcome the armed Red capitalist class ...

Let us look at the content of this new danger. On the one hand, owing to the nakedness of the 'February suppression of rebellion', even the 'Red' capitalist class keenly sensed the inevitability of its own defeat. After May, China's 'Red' capitalists changed their tactics. In many places there appeared a trend of cadres 'making appearances'. One after another Red capitalists like Sung Jen-ch'ung of the Northeast and Chang Po-sen of Hunan — bloodsucking vampires who used to ride on the back of the people — suddenly displayed 'fervor' for the slaves' revolutionary struggles. Individually they declared support for the revolutionary masses in their bombardment of the military region or district commands. As at that time the revolutionary people had not yet tried to overthrow the capitalist-roaders as a class, and as the proletariat and the broad masses of revolutionary people were still under the influence of the doctrine of 'revolution through dragging out people' and 'revolution through dismissal of officials,' people believed that the purpose of the cultural revolution was the purging of individual capitalist-roaders and that it was proper to use some of the revolutionary leading cadres (who were also bureaucrats) for hitting other bureaucrats. As a result, this tactic of all big and small Chang Po-sens easily deceived the people/This determined the objective inevitability of usurpation of the fruit of victory of the August storm by the bourgeoisie ...

... the wise supreme commander Comrade Mao Tse-tung once more made a big retreat after September, in disregard of demands by impatient revolutionaries for victory. A political situation of bourgeois usurpation of power came about with the establishment of revolutionary committees or preparatory groups for revolutionary committees.

The extent of this retreat was unprecedented. The unlimited relaxation of the cadre policy after September was in fact an extensive concession to the capitalist-roaders, who were allowed to mount the stage again. An outstanding example was the treatment accorded to Ch'en Tsai-tao. The Chairman went so far as to say that Ch'en studied very well and could come back to work again.

... The revolutionary forces in Hunan which bombarded Chou En-lai were not annihilated. Instead, they have formed Shen-wu-lien and have made progress in certain respects. To seize the fruit of victory won by the proletariat in August and turn the mass dictatorship again into bureaucratic rule, the bourgeois in the revolutionary committees must first disarm the working class. The guns in the hands of workers have boundlessly increased the power of the working class. The fact is a mortal threat to the bourgeoisie, who is afraid of it. Out of spontaneous hatred for the bureaucrats who tried to snatch the fruit of victory, the revolutionary people shouted a resounding revolutionary slogan: 'Surrender of arms amounts to suicide!' They formed a spontaneous, nationwide mass 'arms concealment movement' for the armed overthrow of the new bureaucratic bourgeoisie.

The arms grabbing movement of August was great. It was not only unprecedented in capitalist countries. Moreover, it accomplished the fact of turning the whole nation into soldiers for the first time in socialist countries. Before the cultural revolution the bureaucrats dared not really hand over arms to the people. The militia is only a facade behind which the bureaucrats control the armed strength of the people. It is certainly not an armed force of the working class, but a docile tool in the hands of the bureaucrats. In the arms-seizing movement, the masses, instead of receiving arms like favours from above, for the first

tune seized arms from the hands of the bureaucrats by relying on the brute force of the revolutionary people themselves. For the first time the workers had their 'own' arms. Chairman Mao's rousing call, 'Arm the Left!' was an intensive concentration of the courage of the working class. But the September 5 order completely nullified the call to 'arm the Left.' The working class was disarmed. The bureaucrats again came back to power ...

The July 1st editorial of 1967 raised the question of Party building. During the violent class struggle in July and August, a very small number of 'ultra-Leftists' put forward the demand that the 'ultra-Left should have its own political party... To make revolution it is necessary to have a revolutionary party.'

Since the past few months, the class struggle has entered a higher stage. What sort of a stage is it? In this stage the revolutionary people have already accumulated the rich experience of 'redistribution of assets and power' twice (the January revolution and August revolution). This experience is the programme for the first cultural revolution produced by the January revolution, for a great revolution in China in which one class should overthrow another. It is 'to overthrow the newborn bourgeoisie and establish the "People's Commune of China" - a new society free from bureaucrats like the Paris Commune'...

The reverses and higher-stage struggle after September also tell the revolutionary people why neither the January revolution nor the August revolution ended in thorough victory, why, after such prolonged struggle, the fruit of victory of revolution was taken away by bourgeois bureaucrats, why the old order was restored everywhere, why the bourgeoisie was able to recapture the assets and power which they had lost in August, and why the courage and pioneering spirit displayed by the proletariat in the January revolution and the August storm was almost completely extinguished and submerged. The appearance of a large-scale adverse current tells people that all illusions about bourgeois bureaucrats and distrust in the people's own strength must be thoroughly abandoned, and that the revolution of one class overthrowing another must be prosecuted.

However, the revolutionary committee is a product of the 'revolution of dismissal of officials.' In Hunan, Chang P'ing-hua and Liu Tzu-yun were dismissed from office, but did not remove the acute antagonism between the new bourgeoisie and the masses of the people. Instead, the acute antagonism between the preparatory group for revolutionary committee and the people as represented by Shen-wu-lien is present in the new situation. A new bourgeois reactionary line and a new adverse current of capitalist restoration have again appeared, but a thoroughly stable 'distribution of assets and power' has not been realized. The revolution by dismissal of officials is only bourgeois reformism, which changes in a zigzagging way the new bureaucratic bourgeois rule before the cultural revolution into another kind of bourgeois rule of bourgeois bureaucrats and representatives from several supporting mass organizations. The revolutionary committee is a product of bourgeois reformism.

Problems cannot be solved by merely dismissing several officials from office. Bourgeois reformism proves futile. The result of reformism — the revolutionary committee — again brings about a new bourgeois dictatorship, which arouses even more violent opposition from the people ...

The people should be made to understand this truth and should make the resolution to act, instead of our making the resolution for them. 'He is not a thorough materialist who ignores the role of the teacher by negative example,' because the Various incidents and changes in the struggle against capital cannot but make people realize — and more in defeat than in victory — that the panaceas so dear to them are completely useless. The defeats also enable them to understand more profoundly the true conditions for the liberation of the working class.' (Engels). Revolutions often take various reformist, unthorough roads. It is only when all panaceas are proved useless that the revolutionary

people would resolve to follow the most painful and most destructive, but also the most thorough and revolutionary road. The struggle in the transition period of revolutionary committees will inevitably disillusion the masses about the panacea of bourgeois reformism which they love so much. Chairman Mao says: 'Buddhist idols are set up by the peasants. When the time comes the peasants will throw away these idols with their own hands. There is no need for others to do it too soon.' In the not far distant future the revolutionary people will surely smash to pieces with their own iron hands the newborn red political power which they have secured with their own blood and lives...

As a result of the practice of struggle having gained rich experience and entered a higher stage, the maturity of the political thinking of the revolutionary people of China has also entered a higher stage. A new trend of thought (called 'ultra-Left trend of thought' by the enemy), including 'overthrow of the new bureaucratic bourgeoisie,' 'abolition of bureaucratic organs,' 'through smashing of the state machine,' etc. wanders among the revolutionary people like a 'spectre' in the eyes of the enemy. The weapon of political thinking with which the revolutionary masses are to win utter victory in the proletarian socialist great revolution has begun to appear in a new form in the 'ultra-Left faction.' The thought of Mao Tse-tung, which is carrying out a new social revolution in China, will gradually wake up the masses from all contradictions of the past. The revolutionary people are beginning to understand gradually in practice why revolution is necessary, who are to be liquidated in the revolution, and how revolution is to be carried out. Revolutionary struggle begins to change from the stage of spontaneity to that of consciousness, from necessity to freedom ...

The 9th National Congress of the Party about to be convened is not expected to be able to thoroughly settle the question of where the Chinese Communist Party is going. The political party that is produced in accordance with the provisions promulgated by the Centre for rehabilitation, regulation and rebuilding of the Party (if such a party can be formed) will necessarily be a party of bourgeois reformism that serves the bourgeois usurpers in the revolutionary committees. The convention of the 9th Congress will only be a reflection of the transition period of local 'revolutionary committees' in the Centre. That decides that the 9th Congress will not be able to thoroughly settle the question of where China is going, (the core of which is where the Chinese communist Party is going to and where the Chinese PLA is going to).

When a truly stable victory gradually becomes possible, the following several questions will take a prominent position.

(1) The unevenness of the revolution will assume a prominent position. The possibility of winning true, thorough victory in one or several provinces first, overthrowing the product of bourgeois reformism — the rule of revolutionary committees, and re-establishing a political power of the Paris Commune type — becomes a crucial question as to whether the revolution can develop in depth at high speed. Unlike the preceding stage of blind, spontaneous development, here unevenness of the revolution no longer plays an immaterial role.

(2) To really overthrow the rule of the new aristocracy and thoroughly smash the old state machinery, it will be necessary to go into the question of assessment of the past 17 years. This is also a major problem of teaching the people fundamentally why it is necessary to carry out the great cultural revolution and what the ultimate object of the revolution is.

(3) To really make the revolution victorious, it will be necessary to settle the 'question of primary importance in revolution' - 'who are our enemies, and who are our friends?' — and to make a new class analysis of China's society, where 'a new situation has arisen as a result of great class changes,' so as to re-organise the class ranks, rally our friends and hit at our enemies ...

... The real revolution, the revolution to negate the past 17

years, has basically not yet begun, and that we should now enter the stage of tackling the fundamental questions of China's revolution ...

The 24th directive amounts to a declaration that Hunan is the vanguard area of revolutionary struggle of the whole country. Thus the genesis and development of Hunan's **Sheng-wu-lien** is an outstanding representative of the growth in strength of the proletariat since September. **Sheng-wu-lien** was in fact born of the experience of the (people-run) civil offense and armed defence command headquarters — a form of mass dictatorship of the January revolution. It is a power organ of mass dictatorship of a higher order than those of January and August. It may be compared to the soviet of the February revolution in USSR when power was usurped by the bourgeoisie, while the preparatory group for the provincial revolutionary committee (**Shen-ko-ch'ou**) is comparable to the bourgeois Provisional Government of that time. The opposition between **Sheng-wu-lien** and **Sheng-ko-ch'ou** is the new situation in which 'power organs of two systems co-exist' but in practice power is in the hands of **Sheng-ko-ch'ou** - the bourgeois provisional government.

Sheng-wu-lien is a newborn sprout comparable to the Soviets. It is the embryonic form of a more mature 'commune' than that of January and August. No matter how the bourgeoisie alternately employ suppression and the reformist tactic of encouraging the activities of a third force, **Sheng-wu-lien** as a true newborn Red political power will surely grow and gather strength continuously amid big gales and storms...

As has been said in the preceding paragraphs, the basic social contradictions that gave rise to the great proletarian cultural revolution are contradictions between the rule of the new bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the mass of the people. The development and intensification of these contradictions decides that society needs a more thorough change — overthrow of the rule of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, thorough smashing of the old state machinery, realization of social revolution, realization of a redistribution of assets and power, and establishment of a new society - 'People's Commune of China'...

At present, are these basic contradictions of Chinese society resolved? Is the object of the first great cultural revolution fulfilled?

As has been said above, the form of political power is superficially changed. The old provincial Party committee and old military district command have become 'the revolutionary committee' or 'preparatory group for revolutionary committee.' However, old bureaucrats continue to play the leading role in the 'new political power.' The contradiction between the old provincial Party committee and old military district command on the one side and the people on the other, and the contradiction between the capitalist-roaders of the 47th Army and the people, remain basically unresolved. The contradiction between the new bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the mass of people is also basically unresolved, but assumes the new form of contradiction between **Sheng-wu-lien** and the 'new political power.' The overthrow of the new bureaucratic bourgeoisie, changes in the armed forces, establishment of communes and such basic social changes, which the first great cultural revolution must fulfil, are not fulfilled. Of course, such 'redistribution of assets and power' were temporarily and in a limited way realized during the January revolution and the August storm. But the fruit of victory of both the January revolution and the August storm has been basically usurped by the bourgeoisie. Social reforms were aborted, social changes were not consolidated and thoroughly realized, and the 'end' of the first great cultural revolution has not been reached. As the masses have said, 'Everything remains the same after so much ado ... The new trend of thought (the ultra-Left trend of thought) is not yet quite mature and is still very weak, but its overcoming of the apparently powerful traditional ideas and the rotten, mummified doctrine of second revolution will be an inevitable tendency of historical development.

The bourgeoisie always represent the form of political power of their rule as the most perfect, flawless thing in the world that serves the whole people. The new bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the brutes of the Right-Wing of the petty bourgeoisie who depend on them are doing exactly that. They ignore the provisional character of the 'revolutionary committee' and nauseatingly praise it. Marxist-Leninists must ruthlessly expose the suppression of the revolutionary people by the revolutionary committee, energetically declare that the People's Commune of China is the society that we proletariat and revolutionary people must bring about in this cultural revolution, and energetically make known the inevitable tendency of the revolutionary committee to collapse ...

We really believe, that ninety per cent of the senior cadres should stand aside, that at most they can only be objects to be educated and united. This is because they have already constituted a decaying class with its own particular 'interests.' Their relation with the people has changed from the relation between the leaders and the led in the past to that between exploiters and the exploited, the oppressors and the oppressed. Most of them consciously or unconsciously yearn for the capitalist road, and protect and develop capitalist things. The rule of their class has completely blocked the development of history ... However they (the bureaucrats) hit back at and carry out counter-reckoning against the revolutionary people with increasing madness, pushing themselves nearer and nearer the guillotine. All this proves that no decaying class in history would voluntarily make an exit from the stage of history.

In the new society of the Paris Commune type this class will be overthrown. This was demonstrated by ironbound facts of the great changes of the January revolution and the August storm so unexpected by mediocre people. The class (of bureaucrats) will be replaced by cadres with true proletarian authority naturally produced by the revolutionary people in the struggle to overthrow this decaying class. These cadres are members of the commune. They have no special privileges. Economically they get the same treatment as the masses in general. They may be dismissed or changed at any time in accordance with the demands of the masses. These new, authoritative cadres have not yet made their appearance. But these cadres will be spontaneously produced following the increasing maturity of the political thinking of the revolutionary people. This is an inevitable result of the political and ideological maturity of the proletariat...

If dictatorship by the revolutionary committee is regarded as the ultimate object of the first great cultural revolution, then China will inevitably go the way of Soviet Union and the people may again return to the fascist bloody rule of the capitalists. The revolutionary committee's road of bourgeois reformism is impracticable...

The commune of the 'Ultra-Left faction' will not conceal its viewpoints and intentions. We publicly declare that our object of establishing the 'People's Commune of China' can be attained only by overthrowing the bourgeois dictatorship and revisionist system of the revolutionary committee with brute force. Let the new bureaucratic bourgeoisie tremble before the true socialist revolution that shakes the world! What the proletariat can lose in this revolution is only their chains, what they gain will be the whole world! The China of tomorrow will be the world of the 'Commune.'

3 May 7, 1967, Directive of Mao Tse-tung, called for self-rectification campaign in the Army.

4 January 1968 mass workers' upheavals — strikes, violent demonstrations, etc. — the first time the industrial working class entered the arena of struggle in China since the 1925-7 Revolution. It started in Shanghai and spread to many other cities. It frightened Mao and his entourage, and led to a counter-movement against 'anarchism', and 'spontaneity' in February.

5 To counter the demand for a Chinese 'Commune' raised in the January 1958 days, Mao himself called for the formation of a 'one-in-three alliance': that of the Army, the Party cadres and the 'revolutionary rebels' with the Army holding the dominant role.