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*permanent arms economy ■ luxemburg on
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editorial

WE PUBLISH PERMANENT REVOLUTION, a Trotskyist discussion and theoretical quarterly, to help the working class in Britain prepare for its biggest battles in 50 years. The Labour movement, constructed over two centuries by the dedicated activity of millions of proletarian fighters, will in the coming period either be tamed, broken and completely subordinated as never before in its history, to the interests of British capitalism and its state. Or, in the course of fighting back, it will reorganise and reconstruct itself, completely - ideologically, politically and organisationally. It must turn self-defense against the Tory onslaught into an offensive against capitalism, or be forced to accept the consequences of the fact that this is a capitalist system, ruled by the capitalists in the interests of the capitalists. Only the programme of revolutionary communism, built up out of the experience of the whole international working class, can show the working class how to win finally and completely. The construction within the working class of a combat organisation armed with this programme and with a Marxist understanding of capitalist society - that is the burning need of the moment.

The Working Class

In 1905 Lenin wrote: "The working class is instinctively, spontaneously social democratic (i.e. in modern usage "communist" ed.). The revolution has justified the work done by us social democrats, it has justified our hope and faith in the truly revolutionary spirit of the proletariat... The heroic proletariat has proved by deeds its readiness to fight, and its ability to fight consistently and in a body for clearly understood aims, to fight in a purely social-democratic spirit." (Collected Works vol. 10, p. 32)

In Britain over the past year the struggle never reached the proportions of the 1905 revolution in Russia. But it reached tremendous heights, unknown in Britain this half-century. If the ruling class has despite this eased the NIRC into place as the new legal framework for "industrial relations", it is because the right-wing trade union leaders capitulated, and the "left" refused to actually fight back, to hit out at the government.

The militants of the working class have had a better, surer instinct. Time after time in the last year they have mobilised in their sections or have begun to move in very broad masses in response to the fundamental character of the conflict over the issue of trade union freedom, eager for a frontal assault on the government of Heath. The underlying tendency of every major struggle since the miners' strike at least has been for the mass strikes and mass solidarity actions to escalate into a general strike, an across the class mobilisation - and one with an open-ended perspective. In July the spontaneous drive was clearly in that direction.

Had the one day general strike called by the TUC (in order to keep the initiative in its own hands) actually occurred, had the government not released the five jailed dockers, then the strike would probably have been a British May 10th. It would then, like the events of May 1968 in France, have in fact shown its own real strength to the working class. And beyond doubt a mass industrial mobilisation would have succeeded in smashing the act.

Now as the first issue of PERMANENT REVOLUTION is printed the imposition of Phase Two of the wage freeze means that in the period ahead convulsive clashes and sudden upsurges will continue - and probably reach new heights. But the antics of the trade union and Labour leaders will also continue. The outcome so far - with the NIRC now almost established as the norm - would have been unthinkable had there been a genuine clash between the real forces on either side of the class line over the past year. It was those ruling class agents "on the workers' side" who ensured this outcome, splitting up the strength of the working class, deflecting its blows against the government, as in July. The activities of these people, and not any other strength the ruling class has, frustrated the workers.

Its 'Leadership'

The role of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy, their perfidious connection with the capitalist state, their disloyalty to the working class - these, in the year 1973, cause no surprise. They are the habitual betrayers of workers' struggles; treason against the working class is their trade to which generations of bureaucrats have served a long apprenticeship. And even a Scanlon cannot escape from bureaucratic inertia, from limited trade union horizons, and simple ingrained fear of action.

Nor are we surprised at the incapacity of the Communist Party to build a revolutionary party and a communist rank-and-file movement in the trade unions: a parallel leadership of the working class, armed with the revolutionary communist politics which answer the needs of the working class in this period. It is after all forty years now since Trotskyists - after a ten-year struggle to reform the world communist movement - reached the unavoidable conclusion that the communist parties were dead for the purposes of revolution. The need to construct a revolutionary communist organisation not only against the Labour and trade union bureaucracies but also against the "official" Communist Party has long been understood. Many attempts to build it have been made in Britain and internationally over the last forty years.

For us the operative question is why in Britain today, after decades of Trotskyist activity, and thirty-five years after the founding of the Fourth International, is there no revolutionary communist (Trotskyist) organisation rooted within the working class movement capable of giving adequate scientific, programmatic and practical expression to the combativity of the working class? Why are the forces of revolutionary Marxism in Britain in political and organisational disarray, impotent to affect the struggle, divided into a plethora of groups, and largely irrelevant to the working class? This is a question which concerns not only the still small forces of the "Trotskyist" movement. Without the creation of an adequate organisation within the working

class and based on the Trotskyist programme, the working class will, ultimately, face defeat.

The "Marxists"

"The role of the subjective factor in a period of organic development can remain quite a subordinate one. Then diverse proverbs of gradualism arise, as: 'slow but sure', and, 'one must not kick against the pricks', and so forth, which epitomise all the tactical wisdom of an organic epoch that abhorred 'leaping over stages'. But as soon as the objective prerequisites have matured, the key to the whole historical process passes into the hands of the subjective factor, that is, the importance of the party and the revolutionary leadership." (Trotsky: Third International After Lenin).

Our problem in Britain to-day is illustrated in the contrast between our situation and that described in 1905 by Lenin, who argued at that time for large-scale recruitment of workers into the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (Bolshevik fraction). He could then truly assert that the Russian Marxists already had an organisation, a party tradition, a worked out programme and tactics, a mature, experienced and stable cadre. But there has been no comparable achievement in Britain. No sizeable party or group worthy of the name "Trotskyist" exists...not to speak of existing within the working class movement. One absolute precondition for altering this situation is to recognise that this is the situation, and therefore the inescapable starting point.

Marxism was always weak in Britain from the 1890's onwards. Compensating by a habitual sectarianism for that weakness and primitiveness and for the wide-spread indifference towards it of a proletariat partly reconciled, then, to capitalism, it only increased its weakness and isolation. The CP was never large, never fully escaped the sectarian tradition and from the end of the 1920's onwards was basically a negative factor in the British labour movement. Trotskyism in Britain was the child of this sickly parent, combining these defects with the problems of Trotskyism as an international ideological current. After a brief and transitory "flowering", the movement collapsed into the Labour Party and scattered into a variety of tendencies. In the 'fifties and after, as the effect of the capitalist boom was felt in the metropolitan countries, the labour movement stagnated and moved rightwards - with all the Trotskyist groups inside the belly of the Labour Party whale. Despite sporadic activity of a peculiar sort by the SLL, Trotskyism was very weak and anyway marginal to the working class. The infusion of blood into the movement in 1968 and after could only be the beginning of the process of political clarification for the fragments of the movement, a process of reworking the political and organisational problems which have beset the Trotskyist movement since at least the 'forties. The great and inspiring working class upsurges have burst upon us while this process is still in its beginning, and the revolutionary groups are nowhere near adequate to the political tasks thrown up by the tremendous combativity of the working class.

Of the British Trotskyist groups bigger than Workers' Fight, the RSL is far-gone in an osmosis into the Labour Party, content to "demand" that the Labour Party carry out...socialist policies! The IMG (official British section of the USFI) is best described as a quasi-Bordigist sect cut off from the working class. On almost every single issue of major importance to the working class of the last tumultuous year it has been inadequate or wrong: on how to fight the NIRC; how to fight racialism; on what the working class's attitude towards the bosses! great debate (?) on the common market should be... In the July crisis over the jailing of the dockers it served up the entire Transitional Programme as a pot-pourri of maximalist propaganda. Fundamentally it had nothing to say to workers thronging the streets on the specific events that had mobilised them. All it had were general truisms about smashing capitalism and building soviets. The tragedy of this organisation and the many fine militants within it attracted by the banner of the Fourth International has been that just as the labour upsurge started the IMG was disorientated by the sectarian, abstentionist positions taken by its last conference.

If previously the SLL had appeared ultra-left because of its ultimatism and attempts to substitute itself for the masses of the working class, its organically right-wing character was now revealed in the light of the actual appearance of that mass movement. Had a full general strike developed last July the SLL's proposal that its goal should be a general election would have lined that organisation up plainly and unambiguously with the reactionaries.

IS, the biggest and most serious self-proclaimed revolutionary group is not Trotskyist in either its ideas or its structure. It is building itself as a tendency which tacks somewhat to the left of the left social democracy. It claims some connection with the ideas of Marxism - but rarely allows that alleged connection to determine its politics. It does not recruit its militants on a hard, clearly Marxist political basis. It habitually buckles under reactionary pressure, particularly when this finds sharp expression within the working class itself; on the common market question its leadership changed its "line" with the unconcern of an advertising agency technician; on Ireland it oscillates with the wind of public opinion, now defending the Republican fighters, now distancing itself from them in a manner which appears scandalous to even whole layers of its own membership.

That this loose centrist tendency which will surely crumple under the blows of decisive class actions is nevertheless the most serious of the bigger groups is a measure of the problem facing the British working class in constructing a revolutionary leadership. In addition there are smaller, scattered groups of revolutionaries, including some "Maoist" and anarcho-spontaneist groups, not all of whose members can by any means be dismissed as 'non-revolutionaries'.

The long post war boom and relative stagnation of the labour movement is not the only (or even the decisive) cause of the crisis and lack of preparedness of the revolutionary left. There has also been

a political crisis which has beset the Fourth International movement since the War, scattering groups at every turn and leading in Britain to a long chain of organisational/political abortions.

The Crisis of Trotskyism

"Reactionary epochs like ours not only disintegrate and weaken the working class and its vanguard but also lower the general ideological level of the movement and throw political thinking back to stages long since passed through. In these conditions the task of the vanguard is above all not to let itself be carried along by the backward flow: it must swim against the current." (Trotsky: Stalinism and Bolshevism).

These words, written in 1937, sum up the great historical role and merit of pre-war Trotskyism. It defended the theoretical conquests of Bolshevism and the early Comintern. And it added to this heritage analyses of Stalinism and fascism, and drafted a Transitional Programme - based fundamentally on the positions of the first four Congresses of the Comintern. Through the 1920s and '30s it was armed with a programme and basic analyses adequate to the period and to the real drives of the working class. But, isolated and ghettoised by pseudo-revolutionary stalinism, it was impotent to affect events - either, for instance, to stave off the working class defeat it saw looming in Germany, or to ensure the victory possible in a situation like Spain 1936-7.

With the beginning of the Yugoslav Revolution in 1943, and up to the FIS 3rd World Congress in 1951, Trotskyism entered a crisis. This was provoked not by the defeat of the movement, (this, in itself, could not be a major criterion: in Germany both the movement's correctness and its defeat had been total) but by the growth of forces outside it which, as in Yugoslavia and China, and later Cuba and Vietnam, carried through a major part of its Programme.

The task now was to analyse the new events like the Stalinisation of East Europe and the Chinese revolution and to integrate the conclusions into a theory which, understanding the laws of motion of the real world, could function as a guide to revolutionary action in that world, including the Stalinist states.

This was never adequately done. Analyses - we think correct analyses - were made leading to the designation of East Europe and China etc. as deformed workers states. (They rejected the various attempts to explain these developments in terms of "New Class" societies - bureaucratic collectivist or state capitalist - on the grounds that they were a) internally incoherent and unsatisfactory and b) implicitly revisions of some of the fundamental bases of Marxist theory.) These analyses were codified at the Third World Congress in 1951, and form the basis of all modern Trotskyism. But, as Trotsky explains in the following passage, codification, fundamental though it be, is not enough to answer the concrete questions posed in the building of a real revolutionary workers movement.

"The importance of a Programme does not lie so much in the manner in which it formulates

general theoretical conceptions (in the last analysis, this boils down to a question of 'codification', i.e. a concise exposition of the truths and generalisations which have been firmly and decisively acquired); it is to a much greater degree a question of drawing up the balance of the world economic and political experience of the last period, particularly of the revolutionary struggles" (Third International After Lenin).

It is the persistent failure (often for 'objective' reasons outside the control of the Trotskyists) to answer competently the problems beyond the 'codifications' of 1951 and after, problems of analysis, tactics and orientation, that has created the existing chaos in the world Trotskyist movement. It is the mistakes in economic analysis, linked with misapplied tactics such as long term deep entry with (de facto) no public Trotskyist presence, and the various tactical zig-zags, that have combined with the very real objective difficulties and pressures on the Trotskyists to produce the present situation.

Two very broadly distinct tendencies, represented in Britain by the SLL and the IMG, have emerged from the movement that issued from the 'Refounding' Congress of 1951.

The first, formally accepting the 1951 conclusions, displays utter dogmatism towards the world around it, and acts as though the historical clock stopped in 1938. They refuse to attempt to draw conclusions from the immense events of the last third of a century, instead reiterating basic truths. Implicitly and logically this is a tendency to liquidate "Trotskyism" from being a doctrine resting on a scientific grasp of the real world into a form of crude utopian socialism based on belief, panaceas and timeless dogmas. On the question of 'Third World' struggles their policies and record would shame even the pre-1914 Second International.

The second tendency, now the USFI, while reiterating many of "the truths" about the need for revolutionary parties etc., has been concerned above all not to be 'unreceptive' or to be cut off from new living developments: it has a remarkable record of chameleonism towards other movements - social democratic, Maoist, etc. This receptiveness has in a sense allowed it to keep its roots in the soil of the real problems. But it behaves as a tendency which has suffered an inner collapse of doctrine. It doesn't know, and never has known, how to relate the doctrine! (the basic Programme of Trotskyism) to the world it operates in: just as its inversion doesn't know how to relate the world to its version of 'the doctrine!'. The current public division within the USFI between the minority around the SWP and the majority (exemplified by the Ligue Communiste) on their assessment of the Vietnam situation is, at root, a programmatic disagreement, related to the whole post war problem of the assessment of Stalinism.

The crowning expression of ideological confusion is to be found in the concept of "Pabloism", given very wide currency in Britain by the SLL. This name, separate and apart from any man whose pseudonym

It was and is, is given by the SLL and its co-thinkers to most of a very wide range of post-war shortfallings, allegedly a tendency to "capitulate" to Stalinism/social democracy/Nationalism/the petit bourgeoisie etc etc. and "to liquidate". In fact "Pabloism" is a myth created by one section of the "Trotskyist" movement after 1951 to "explain" all the errors, inadequacies and faults common to the whole movement by ascribing them to a section of it which it defined factionally, organisationally and arbitrarily. Yet with one exception (the attitude to guerilla warfare) not a single one of the alleged traits of "Pabloism" is absent from one or other of the anti-Pabloites - usually in a more crass form, crassness being their speciality!

The "Anti-Pabloites", who have filled the air of the British left with the sulphur of their indignation against the "betrayers and liquidators" of Trotskyism do not clarify or explain any of its actual problems. They merely cover them in a sticky irrational mess of lies, half-truths, myths and distortions that blot out the light from any rational understanding. (The extreme example of "Pabloite capitulation" to Stalinism is that "the Pabloites" are alleged to have supported the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956 - which is unquestionably and blatantly a lie.) They are the Ian Paisleys of the "Trotskyist" movement - ignorant bible-thumpers who try to substitute quotations (not to mention misquotations) for analysis and self-righteousness for genuinely revolutionary practice.

That Trotskyists, committed to build an organisation within the working class on the Programme of the Fourth International, feel it necessary to say this is a measure of both the caricature that has passed for 'Trotskyism' in Britain, and the work of regeneration that must be undertaken.

Tasks of Permanent Revolution

That the present USFI is the mainstream of post war Trotskyism is demonstrated negatively by the IC (SLL, OCI) alternatives. As such WORKERS' FIGHT has given the USFI "critical support" - support indicating a general ideological orientation in contradistinction to the ICs (where the WF group had its roots) and the new class tendencies. Any development of Trotskyist politics and theory will take place on the basis of what that mainstream tendency has achieved - in dialogue, discussion, and even in negation: it is the only tendency that, armed with the ideas of the Comintern and the 1938 FI, has tried to understand the events of the last 25 years. The others have not even succeeded in keeping the real world under review this last quarter century.

But that tendency is itself in a state of crisis. The IMG (to go back no further) proves its incapacity to build an adequate organisation in Britain to fight within the working class for the programme of communist internationalism. To accept, in the name of an adherence to 'the FI', the discipline of that Tendency, with all its implications for the work we are able to do in the working class move-

ment here, would be to sacrifice the real communist internationalist work we can do on the altar of an organisational fetish. And, after all, the fact that there is such a contradiction between affiliation with the best FI tendency, and work in the British working class - that is not unconnected with the general political inadequacies that have beset the movement since the 1940s.

Our decision made in 1969 to give critical support to the USFI reflected our basic agreement with the codifications for which it was primarily responsible. Our conviction that it would be a dereliction of our duty to the working class struggle to accept its discipline and fuse with what is now the IMG - that defines the inadequacy of codification per se, as a guide.

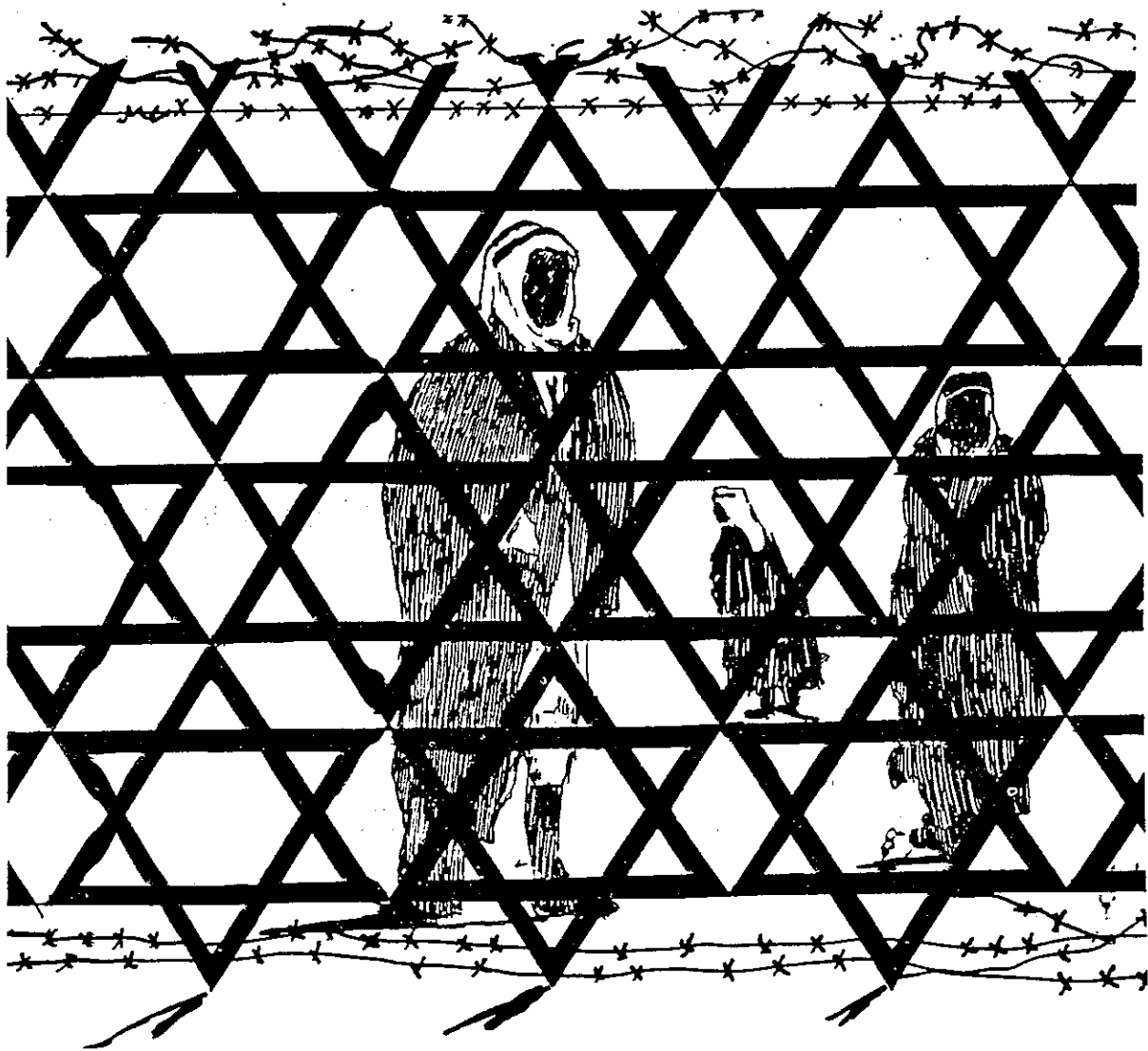
After over a year's discussion, a special Workers' Fight Conference on January 27th/28th unanimously decided to reiterate the political substance of the previous declaration of critical support for the USFI; but to eliminate the organisational ambiguities by adopting instead, as a definition of our stance, the call for a fight to regenerate the FI. (see '41 Theses' as advertised on p. 79.)

We will build a communist internationalist organisation where we have forces. Notwithstanding the problems and the crises of the Trotskyist movement, the political and ideological basis for our work in building such an organisation exists in the fundamental programme of that movement. There exists no other Programme for the conquest of power by the international working class and the creation of workers' states on the model of the Paris Commune and the early Soviet state. We will develop our roots in the working class movement, fighting to unite the internationalist communist Programme with the developing struggles of the working class. We will unite with other political tendencies in any common action that is in the working class interest. And we will seek dialogue where there are differences.

We will 'think' - that is, we will study the problems and history of the movement and republish basic texts and translations from the masters of Marxism. We will polemicise. We will clarify our understanding of the real meaning of Trotskyism in relation to the problems arising from the developing working class struggles. Permanent Revolution is our weapon here, and will necessarily be linked closely with the tasks of building a group. "Theory" in a revolutionary workers' organisation is neither the possession of mandarins nor preparatory material for the latest discussion in a discussion club. Trotsky compared it to a tool room of the party.

In tackling the complementary and interlinked tasks of building a revolutionary communist organisation and of attempting to resolve theoretical problems of the movement we hope to contribute to that regeneration of the Fourth International which has yet to be accomplished; and to contribute to the resolution of the problems of the British working class in the present period which we outlined in the first part of this editorial.

ON THE HISTORY OF TROTSKYISM IN PALESTINE



(The following interview was conducted in Haifa during August by John Bunze, who spoke to "Misha", one of the leaders of the "Israeli Socialist Organisation - Matzpen (Marxist)", a group of anti-Zionist revolutionists, both Jewish and Arab. The text appeared in the September 15th issue of Imprekkor. The translation from the German is by Intercontinental Press.)

The ISO is commonly identified as Matzpen (the Hebrew word for compass), which is the name of its newspaper. Founded in 1962, Matzpen was the only active anti-Zionist organisation in Israel, uniting all those radicals considering themselves hostile to Zionism. In the course of time, several small groups split away from the ISO. Last February, after a process of political clarification, another split occurred. The present group has the perspective of building a Leninist party both in Israel and throughout the Arab East.)

Q. For how long has there been a Trotskyist group in Palestine?

A. Our Trotskyist group arose in the late 1930s and came out of three components.

First, during the 1930s there was a large immigration to Palestine from Germany. The exiles closely reflected the entire German political spectrum. Among them were a few comrades from the Brandler opposition in the Communist party, the majority of whom soon developed toward Trotskyist positions (1937-1938). They were, of course, politically relatively isolated from the general population, and these new comrades were active only on an individual basis in economic struggles. Naturally, the group tried to make alliances, but this was made difficult by their limited experience and lack of familiarity with their new circumstances.

The second component was a group of young people forming the so-called Chugim Marxistim (Marxist Circles), which was the youth group of one of the two wings of the "Left Poale Zion". At the time, this left wing was affiliated to the London Bureau.

The youth group developed under its own impetus toward Trotskyist conceptions, at first without overcoming completely its Zionist leanings. That happened very rapidly when the second world war broke out. About that time we (the German group) learned of the existence of this group, which in the meantime had left the "Marxist Circles" and had brought out a few issues of the newspaper "Kol Hamaamad" (Voice of the Class).

In the course of time various other elements, mostly from Hashomer Hatzair, the youth group of the left-Zionist kibbutz movement, came together with these two other tendencies.

All these elements united to form the Brit Kommunistim Mahapchanim (Revolutionary Communist Alliance), which at the beginning devoted itself both to theoretical and political work. (Independent of us, a group of German immigrants developed the notion that Trotskyists should not be active in Palestine; they restricted themselves purely to theoretical work.)

Q. What were your most important political positions?

A. From the very beginning we rejected Zionism in every respect. Zionism, we said, not only would be incapable of solving the problems of world Jewry, but would also create a new Jewish problem in the Arab East.

The Jewish problem under modern capitalism derives from the combination of the crisis-ridden development of capitalism itself and the fact that, because of the failure of the international revolution to spread after 1917 and because of the rise of Stalinism, the revolutionary socialist perspective on the Jewish question was never put into practice.

The rankest effect of these factors was the fascist seizure of power in Germany, which eventually resulted in the physical annihilation of the greater part of European Jewry. The Jewish question was - and is - a symptom of the impasse in which contemporary capitalism finds itself and can be answered only by the socialist revolution. We rejected the formation of a Jewish state, because such a state could only be part of this decaying system and could only exacerbate the Jewish problem.

From its inception the Zionist colonization was by nature inevitably linked to the interests of imperialism, against which the native population of Palestine was moving. The Zionist colonization could succeed only if it functioned in close harmony with the interests of, and thereby received the aid of, one or another great power. This is demonstrated by the whole history of Zionism.

In Palestine, Zionism built up a second socio-economic structure, one from which the Arab population was excluded as strictly as possible.

The Zionists kept Arab workers out of the Jewish economic sector and barred Arab goods from Jewish markets, thus creating their own purely Jewish-capitalist sector as a forerunner of a Zionist state. Through this process the Jewish workers were isolated from the Arab population, and the Arab economic sector was deprived of any possibility of development. The Zionist so-called trade union, the Histadrut, was instrumental in both aspects of the process.

Q. How did you, as revolutionary internationalists, respond to all this?

A. At the outset we saw that the only way to overcome the socio-economic backwardness of the region was through a general anti-imperialist struggle for a United Socialist Arab East. (This analysis still holds for our current position on the Palestinian resistance movement.)

We saw - and see - as our task propagandising and organising toward this end among both Jewish and Arab masses in order to construct a united revolutionary socialist party in the region, which the Stalinists, whose policies always dovetailed with Kremlin diplomacy, were unable to do. In addition, the perspective of a united socialist Arab East was the only one in which we saw the possibility of integrating the Jewish workers into the anti-imperialist and socialist struggle in the region.

Q. Retrospectively, how would you evaluate the significance of your group?

A. During the second world war, our political and organisational situation was extremely difficult. We fought (and illegally) against three enemies - Zionists, British imperialists, and Stalinists. At the time, the latter were perfectly willing to turn us over to the British police.

Essentially, we concentrated on working out our

programmatically and propagandising for them with Kol Hamaamad. We also put out material in Arabic, German and English. We had contacts with some Trotskyists in the British army, and they helped us establish contact with Trotskyist groups in Cairo and Alexandria. Our international ties were mainly with the Revolutionary Communist party, then the British section of the Fourth International, and in part with the Socialist Workers party of the United States. We made contact with the Fourth International's European International Secretariat only after the war.

We frequently intervened with leaflets into workers' struggles in the British military installations, in the railway system, in the oil refineries, etc., concentrating on those areas in which both Jewish and Arab workers were exploited by imperialist capital.

After the war, we decided to continue working in these areas. But our intention, with which our international contacts agreed, could scarcely be realised. After the foundation of the Zionist state, very few Arab workers were tolerated in the Zionist enterprises.

Q. What was your position on the founding of the Israeli state?

A. Even before the second world war, during the great political strikes and struggles of the Arab people, the British raised the idea of dividing the country into Jewish and Arab states. With the crush of wartime hostilities, this plan was pushed into the background. But at the end of the war, the future of the British mandate over Palestine was posed in a sharper form than ever before, for the following reasons:

First, British imperialism had been greatly weakened by the war. Secondly, US imperialism was beginning to take over in the British colonial areas. Third, the Arab national revolutionary movement was beginning to take hold throughout the Arab East. And fourth, Zionism used the desperate situation of the Jewish survivors in Europe to foster its own aims in Palestine.

Naturally, our most intense activity was directed against the November 29th 1947, decision of the United Nations General Assembly - a decision made with both US and Soviet support - that Palestine be divided into two states, one Arab, one Jewish. The consequence of this division was that about 80% of the Arab population was driven off its land and the Jewish state became a de facto outpost of US imperialism, without whose economic and political support Israel could not exist. It is important to mention here that the founding of the Zionist state was also supported, both politically and militarily, by the Soviet Union.

During this period, we essentially limited ourselves to propaganda against the expulsion, oppression and expropriation of the Palestinians by the Zionist state and the conversion of the latter into an instrument in the service of US imperialism's struggle against the developing Arab national revolutionary movement.

For starters we advanced - and still do - the following programme: the right of return and compensation for all Palestinian refugees, political integration of the Israeli working class into the region, and, as I mentioned before, realisation of both objectives through the struggle for a united socialist Arab East.

Q. What developments led to the formation of Matzpen?

A. After the war, and especially after the founding of the Zionist state, a good number of comrades left the country and others withdrew from political activity. Only a handful remained and, after 1951, were able to carry on some activity. During the 1950s I was, as a Trotskyist, completely isolated and was able to link up with only a few sympathising comrades in the Arab CP and a few Jewish comrades.

During this period I worked in the shop committee of one of the country's biggest factories. There, some

members of the CP, a few Mapam members and I worked together in a "left cell".

In 1951 there was a big seamen's strike. I was the liaison between our factory committee and the sailors' strike committee and helped build a mass solidarity meeting. This strike was particularly significant in establishing the character of the Histadrut. The sailors' strike was not purely economic, but raised the possibility of allowing for the creation of trade union formations independent of the Histadrut, which can in no way be considered a trade union. The state apparatus - the police, army and so on - was mobilised in a life-and-death campaign to protect the Histadrut leadership from the workers, that is, to prevent the formation of a real trade union.

Apart from activity in the shop committee, we carried out Trotskyist propaganda in the left cell among a few CP members. But for ideological, as well as objective and subjective reasons, this work could not be brought to organisational-political expression.

In the late 1950s a significant section of the young intelligentsia began to develop a critical attitude toward Zionism and its state, mainly under the impact of the development of the Arab revolution in Iraq, came in contact with groups like Avneri's Peula Hashemiti (Semitic Action) and Moked's Hasmol Hashedash (New Left).

Nevertheless, it was only with the formation of the group that published the newspaper Matzpen that the revival of revolutionary socialist organisation took place. Matzpen was significant not only for its rejection of Zionism, but also as a part of the worldwide breakup of the Stalinist monolith.

The group arose during the period of the Sino-Soviet polemics. A few young Communist party members in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem advanced the demand that the Chinese documents, instead of just the Soviet ones, should be published. They saw this as a demand for democratisation of the CP. Four members of the CP, even before they were expelled (1962), worked with sympathisers outside the party to publish Matzpen. At the end of 1962, the Arab comrades, this group, and came together and the ISO was founded.

Q. How would you evaluate the development of Matzpen up to the recent split?

A. As I mentioned, the opposition of the comrades in the Communist party was based originally on the CP's lack of democracy. But their political conceptions were very heterogeneous and unclear. They took no clear stand on the Sino-Soviet conflict. One of the comrades expelled from the CP considered Pietro Nenni's party a model.

The participation of both of us in the new organisation occasioned definite conflicts and crisis in the young group. Nevertheless, the discussion that ensued led to a clearer understanding of Zionism and the Arab revolution; that is, they partially accepted our position.

But in their general political conceptions - and above all in international and organisational questions - they rejected Trotskyism, although a few of them only partially.

Their perspective was to unite all the "non-Zionist" and even all the "almost-non-Zionist" elements. This made the organisation still more heterogeneous than it was originally. They grabbed onto all sorts of elements, from anarchists to "left" non-socialists. This led to a quantitative strengthening of the organisation, but at the same time to a lowering of its qualitative level.

In spite of all its serious weaknesses, the great positive value of the Matzpen group lay in the fact that it began to organise a general Jewish-Arab anti-imperialist struggle independent of the Stalinists, that it demonstrated to the Palestinian movement the possibility of mobilising revolutionary socialist forces in Israel,

that within the international leftist movement it popularised the idea of revolutionary anti-Zionist Arab/Israeli cooperation, and that it laid the basis for a new development of Trotskyism in Israel.

Q. What differences led the Lambertists and Maoists to split from the ISO?

A. After the June 1967 war and the consequent Israeli occupation of the Arab territories, the chauvinist and expansionist character of the Zionist regime became even cruder, and this was reflected by the division in Matzpen.

The position of the Lambertists in the ISO corresponded to the general positions taken by this sect. They denied the specific character of the Zionist state, viewing it as a "normal" bourgeois state fundamentally not different from the Arab states. Consequently, they refused to consider the peculiar position of the Israeli working class.

The Maoist position is harder to define, since it was less clear and more fluid than the Lambertist stand. On the one hand they viewed the Palestinian resistance movement as the sole embodiment of all revolutionary practice in the region, and on the other hand, they recommended that our work be confined exclusively to the Israeli working class. But that was not their final position; they constantly alter it as the need arises.

Q. What is Matzpen's situation after the splits?

A. The departure of these two groups had at least one positive result. Revolutionary Marxists on one side and a conglomeration of anarchists and spontaneists on the other now stand clearly counterposed.

Before the split, the lack of a united political organisational perspective made progress in our general work impossible. Through faction work, we revolutionary Marxists had begun to train cadres. To facilitate this we based ourselves on the principles of democratic centralism in order to hold back all sorts of organisational and political individualism. In practice, this meant that activity in all areas devolved on our faction.

In keeping with the revolutionary socialist perspective, we defended the old Trotskyist position of building a united revolutionary Marxist party in the region in order to bring about the united socialist Arab East. We also adopted other established Trotskyist positions.

In this, and on many other questions as well, insurmountable contradictions developed.

Even before the split, we tried to set the general work of the organisation on the basis of a programme. This programme consisted merely of the elementary fundamentals of revolutionary Marxism. But the anarchists and spontaneists strenuously resisted every programmatic position, even if they only opposed it on the vaguest general level.

While our organisation was trying to overcome the initial problems of cadre-building, they tried to conduct a hidden wrecking operation through slander.

Q. What is the main axis of your activity today?

A. In the first period of the ISO-Matzpen (Marxist) we still had to deal with some spontaneist weaknesses. Now our main activity is centred among the youth, who are only slightly corrupted by Zionism and are beginning to stir against Zionism's most murderous and repressive manifestations. We concentrate mostly on revolutionary Marxist building activities aimed at training cadres who will be capable, when conditions are ripe, of carrying out work in the working class in order to integrate the anti-imperialist and socialist struggle in the region.

We publish our Matzpen regularly. A little while

ago we began putting out some theoretical writings, partly in Arabic.

In the near future we intend to start publishing a regular theoretical journal and an Arabic-language newspaper. (Up to now, such newspapers have been banned by government censorship.)

We intervene in all the essential political struggles as the vanguard of the movement as, for example, in the current fight of the refugees from the Arab villages of Biram and Ikrit (*) to return to their homes. We are constantly strengthening our ties with the Fourth International, which gives us organisational, theoretical, political and material aid. This strong bond is necessary if we are to realise our main strategic task on a proletarian internationalist basis - the building of a revolutionary party in the region.

(* The people of these two villages in Northern Palestine, Arabs belonging to a Christian sect, had left them for a brief period during the fighting of 1948. Consequently they came under the various Acts which the Israeli parliament enacted in the late 1940s and early 1950s, enabling the Israeli state to expropriate them.

The villagers (who were actually sympathetic to the Zionist state and hostile to Arab nationalism) repeatedly petitioned the Government to be allowed to return. For many years they were told that the land was in a military zone and could not be occupied by any civilians.

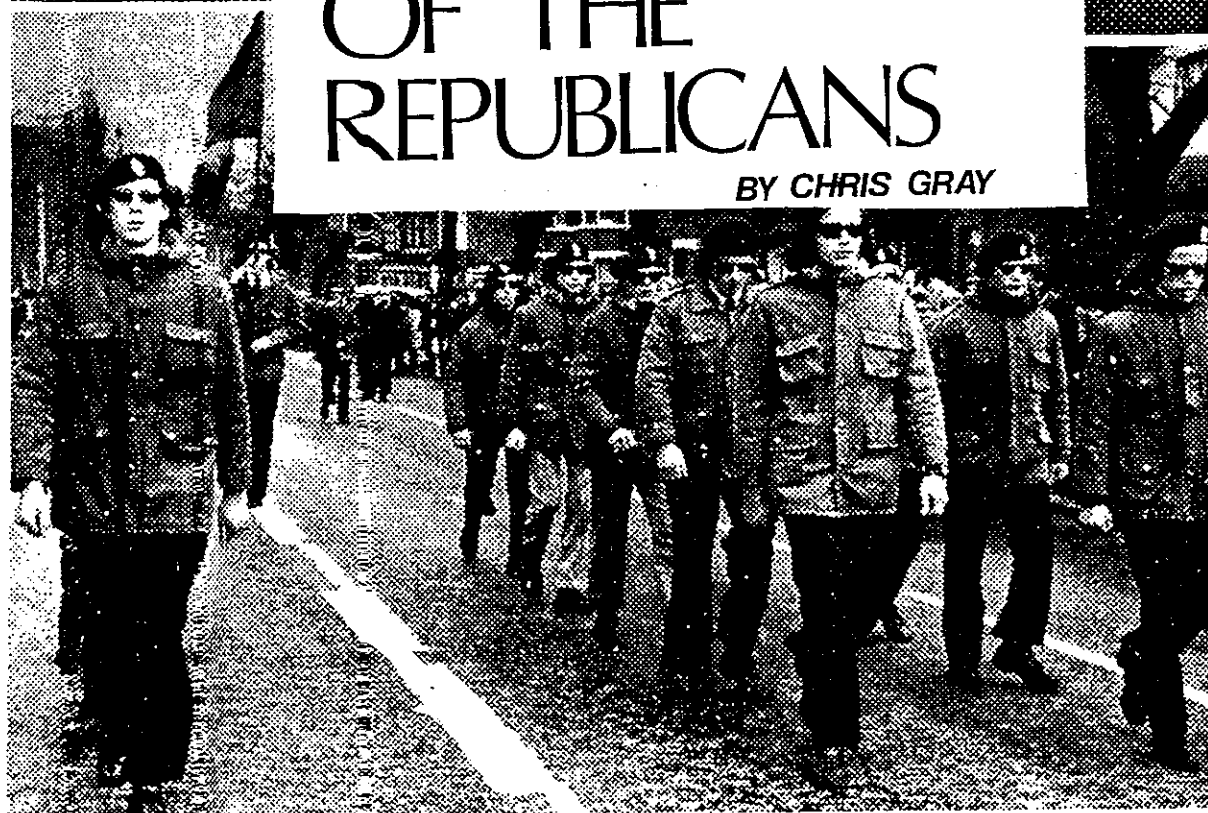
After 1967 the land was reclassified and ceased to be a special security zone. Once again the villagers petitioned the Government. Not long ago they were told that they could move back. Advance parties arrived to start rebuilding the Churches. But then the decision was reversed: the Government now considered that even the resettling of these friendly villages constituted a threat to its racist strategy and would create a dangerous precedent for the millions of others whose homes and property were now comfortably settled by refugees from Western European suburbia and the U.S.A.

Despite fairly widespread agitation in Israel on behalf of the villagers the latest decision still stands, and a brief scuffle around the village churches ended in the arrest of a dozen or so people. Ed.)



PROGRAMMES
OF THE
REPUBLICANS

BY CHRIS GRAY



This article will examine the political programme of the two sections of the Republican movement, both of which claim to be socialist and to be fighting for the establishment of a Workers' Republic. It will deal mainly with the two policy statements "Eire Nua" ("New Ireland"), published by the Provisional wing of Sinn Fein, 1971, and the "Manifesto of the Irish Workers and Small Farmers' Republic" issued by the Officials in the same year.

A programme for a Workers' Republic must be judged on its usefulness in

(a) gaining support among the republican working class

(b) eroding - as far as is possible - the support among workers currently enjoyed by Orange Unionism in the Six Counties.

(c) creating a movement which will unite the working class, numerous intermediate strata eg. small farmers and other petty bourgeois - on the basis of workers' power being in their own best interests.

(d) abolishing capitalism in Ireland and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Clearly the programme is not the only element in the situation which can make or mar success: there are numerous others ranging from the changing condition of the world capitalist economy to the political skill of the organisation's leaders at any given moment. Equally clearly an evaluation of "Eire Nua" or the "Manifesto" must assume an analysis of Ireland's place within the system of world capitalism and the peculiar conditions which arise as a result of imperialist domination. Also the historical experience of the socialist movement from at least the Paris Commune onwards is ignored only at peril: no struggle for socialism can be successful without taking the lessons of this international experience into account, and Ireland, as the historical record makes clear, is not sealed off from the effects of workers' struggles elsewhere.

1) RELATIONS WITH BRITISH IMPERIALISM AND THE EEC.

The key to an assessment of the programmes is the relationship with imperialism which is envisaged. Irish workers require a plan for real, not merely nominal independence from foreign oppression.

They will not find it in "Eire Nua". The Provisionals summarize their policy as follows:

"Power blocs such as NATO and the EEC on the one hand and COMECON and the Warsaw Pact on the other will be avoided. Trade will be expanded with the smaller and neutral nations of Europe and with the countries of the third world in Asia and Africa.... Trade links will be maintained with all countries and groups of states such as the Common Market, with which a trade agreement should be negotiated. The aim will be to have as much free trade as possible, bearing in mind that certain industries will need protection for a period..... Efforts to push us into the Common Market will be rigorously resisted and a demand will be made for the revoking of the Free Trade Area Agreement with England." (1) They talk of "Ireland assuming for the first time its rightful place as the leader of the ex-colonial nations in the struggle against imperialism" (2) Trade links with

Britain will be rationalized by the development of marketing organizations as subsidiaries of Irish producers, suitably co-ordinated by an efficient State trading organization. Links would be developed with all possible outlets to the British market, especially with the British consumers' co-operative movement." (3) As for EEC, "Sinn Fein would do as Sweden, Switzerland, Finland, Austria, Iceland, Yugoslavia and many other European countries have done; seek Associate Membership or a trade agreement with the EEC while diversifying trade as much as possible." (4)

One does not have to be a wizard in economics to see the limitations of these ideas: the amount of Irish manufactured goods saleable in the Third World is surely going to be kept down by competition not only from the capitalist west but also from Eastern Europe. Then there is the problem of dependence on the British Market which trade diversification is designed to solve: over two-thirds of exports from the 26 Counties are sold across the water, while 90% of Six Counties exports find their way to the UK either for sale or re-export (5) - an enormous imbalance to have to correct. Furthermore attempts to alter the pattern of trade will inevitably generate resistance from those sections of the bourgeoisie involved as in the "Economic War" of the 30s. This means that the problem cannot be handled from the Irish end merely by the development of "a foreign trade section" which will "assume the role of agent for any firm wishing to develop non-British trade links, fulfilling a role at present inadequately fulfilled by Coras Trachtála." (6) What is required is a state monopoly of foreign trade not "as much free trade as possible" - and that only as a start, as the problems facing Yugoslavia in relation to EEC show: a political orientation of a different kind is also required (see below). The authors of "Eire Nua" blithely assume that Ireland can repeat with impunity the experience of such warring economies as those of Switzerland and Iceland (population 200,000) in maintaining a *modus vivendi* with imperialism. This assumption ignores not only the needs of big capital in Ireland, which are for full integration into EEC, but also the different geographical distances of the economies listed from the central EEC economic triangle Brussels-Ruhr-Lorraine. Investments in EEC will tend more and more to gravitate towards this triangle, ie. the effect will be that of growth at the centre and stagnation on the fringes. (Compare the privileged position of Slovenia and Croatia in Yugoslavia vis-a-vis the Republics of Macedonia and Montenegro). The creation of a 32 County Republic will not of itself alter the trend. Nor will it prove possible to revise the 1965 Trade Agreement at the drop of a hat; indeed the attitude of Britain's capitalist rulers is likely to be as uncompromising as that of the Eurocrats faced with an Irish request for "external association" with EEC. (7)

Turning to the Official wing of Sinn Fein, we read that socialism can only be achieved in Ireland "when the country is freed from imperialism, particularly British imperialism; when the nation is unified, a single Irish state rules over the whole country, and foreign economic penetration of the Irish economy, North and South, ceases." (8)

This is quite correct, but in practice a 32 County socialist republic would experience severe economic pressure from imperialism, pressure which the framers of Official republican policy appear to underestimate. Way back in 1967 the Wolfe Tone society published a paper on EEC in which it declared that "an ordinary commercial agreement with the Common Market would enable Ireland to maintain her freedom to diversify her trade outlets with countries other than Britain or the EEC." While something of this sort will no doubt prove necessary in the short term, it does not follow that the terms of any such agreement would be ideal as far as Ireland is concerned: an independent Irish Workers' Republic playing the role of a socialist offshore island could only exist by permission of Common Market capitalism, which would grant the right to existence only at a price. The Workers' Republic would be forced to spread the revolution: does the Official Sinn Fein have any strategy for so doing?

It is arguable that the recent increase of mining operations in the Twenly Six Counties, and in particular the new lead and zinc mine at Neavan, have increased the prospects for Irish economic independence. This depends, of course, on the nationalization of the mines. This is not explicitly envisaged "Eire Nua". It is possible that the provisionals would put forward a policy which fell short of nationalization in this sphere. Clearly, the Official Sinn Fein envisages nationalization without compensation along the lines of the recent report of the Resources Study Group. Such a policy is indispensable for the success of the Irish socialist revolution.

2) AGRICULTURE

"Eire Nua" informs us that for the whole 32 counties "about 60% of the agricultural holdings are of 30 acres (12 hectares) or less" (p. 22) This fact alone gives agricultural policy an important place in any Republican programme, but equally if not more important is the agricultural contribution to Irish exports (10) Under current conditions ranchers and medium-sized farmers do markedly better than small farmers and the summary of what is taking place is one of the best pieces of writing in "Eire Nua." As the authors observe "The trend is for small holdings to be amalgamated and their owners to emigrate, so that the middle group is increasing at the expense of the small group. The large group is stable" (11) Back in 1966 an article in "An Solas" (IWG quarterly magazine) discussed the problem and gave some pointers to a solution, explaining that "The small farmer needs cheap credit, agricultural machines - which could only be provided by government machine shops in each rural district - fertiliser and modern technical instruction at prices he can afford; favourable conditions of transport and conscientious organisation of the market for his produce. But the banks, trusts and merchants rob him from every side, aggravating the fluctuations of the market. Farm produce can double in price before it reaches the city. Only the farmers themselves, with the help of the workers can stop this robbery, by taking direct control of the transport, credit and mercantile operations affecting agriculture, and running them democratically through committees of workers, bank employees and small farmers." (12) The article advocated voluntary collectivization. The groups 1967 programme also came out for the nationalization of large estates and "capitalist agricultural undertakings."

What do we find in "Eire Nua"? Voluntary co-operation, state subsidies, guaranteed prices, a ceiling on the amount of land owned by one person, compulsory purchase of land of absentee landlords, formation of marketing co-operatives, credit facilities at nominal interests etc. (13) This looks like a somewhat similar

response, but the underlying "state socialist" approach is very marked in "Eire Nua" in comparison with the Trotskyist emphasis on direct working-class and small farmer initiative; readers may judge which is preferable.

Curiously, the "Manifesto of the Irish Workers and Small Farmers' Republic" has remarkably little to say about agriculture; a few remarks on co-operation exhaust the subject in its pages. The emphasis is on voluntary co-operation here at least the ghost of J.V. Stalin has finally been laid to rest, it would seem! - with the further qualification that "only certain elements of the productive process - such as purchasing, marketing and the provision, for example, of repair and maintenance services - would come under co-operative ownership on the establishment of a socialist society in Ireland, as these are the developments which would be of most immediate benefit to the small farmers of the country." (p. 7) More than this will be required, however, in the way of specific policies if the small farmer is to be weaned from dependence on capitalism in Ireland: the small farmer needs to be convinced that the workers are capable of acting independently of big capital, to the extent of being able to seize power, before he will throw in his lot with them. The crucial task is the elaboration of a programme which will not only satisfy the needs of the small farmer on paper, but will also be able to mobilize the working class in the desired direction.

3) INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY, NATIONALISATION AND WORKERS' CONTROL

If the foregoing is correct it follows that a mere extension of formal political independence will not solve by itself the economic problems facing a victorious workers' revolution in Ireland. As Marx said, men make history but they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves. It is not just a question of whether the IRA is socialist, but of what kind of policies are advocated in the name of socialism, and of the underlying political strategy. Hence a brief examination of the various forms of social ownership proposed by the two programmes is necessary here.

"Eire Nua" calls for "the setting up of a Democratic Socialist Republic based on the proclamation of 1916" and the creation of a social system in which "exploitation of man by man will not feature and which will be truly democratic right down through society." Admirable sentiments. The programme also declares that "Finance, insurance and all key industries must be brought under State control. The principal agent of major development in industry, agriculture and fisheries must be the State." (One is reminded here of ... the Tribune wing of the British Labour Party, a resemblance surely not fully congenial to either the Provos or the Tributes!) "The State," declares "Eire Nua", "will have complete control over the import and export of money." (Well, no socialist government could survive without that, and its importance in the Irish context certainly justifies "Eire Nua's" extensive treatment of the question of finance).

Which, however, are Ireland's key industries and how will they be brought under state control? Turn to page 18 of the programme and we find:

"The Sinn Fein Government's programme for industry will have as its central principle that control over the further growth of the economy shall be in the hands of the people.

It will, therefore, be necessary for the Government to obtain a controlling interest in the commanding heights firms of key industries. The policy of management of these firms will then be to improve the performance of the economy as a whole rather than to maximise the profit of the individual firm, as at present. Likewise, the policy will not be to stamp out compet-

itors, but to enable a rational structure within each industry to be obtained, taking into account local and national needs." (15)

Here the Provisionals show, as the saying is, their "cloven hoof". The approach they adopt is associated in Ireland not with Nye Bevan but with Eamon De Valera. Dev's policy of developing Irish capitalism involved state support in a number of key industries whose products affected other sectors - the typical capitalist approach to nationalization (16) Industries covered included transport (CIE, Aer Lingus), steel (Irish Steel Holdings Ltd.), shipping (Irish Shipping Ltd.) peat (Bord na Mona) and sugar (Comhlucht Siuicre Eireann Teo).

It is worth noting that "Eire Nua" refrains from presenting a "shopping list" of industries due for nationalization (17) "Rationalisation" is a much more accurate term for the changes they envisage. No doubt many of the proposals are technically sound, but from the point of view of the worker emphasis on "efficiency" in an economy that remains capitalist can only mean more redundancies, speed-ups, dole queues etc. (And much the same applies to the economy of a small isolated workers' state).

Aware of possible leftwing criticism, the authors of "Eire Nua" propose that

"Apart from the key sectors mentioned above the main instrument of economic development will be co-operative enterprises in production distribution and exchange. These will be based on the Comhar na gComharsan (good neighbour) philosophy which is founded on the right of worker-ownership and is native Irish as well as being co-operative or distributist in character. Each individual worker will own an economic unit of the means of production in the form of farm, workshop, business or share in a factory or other co-operative." (18)

So co-operation will be encouraged. But why not in "key sectors"? The authors' inconsistency here shows up this paragraph for what it is - gilt on the gingerbread. Co-operation is, no doubt, all very well for small enterprises catering for local needs, but what we really want is state-controlled capitalism if we are to survive on the world market: such is the reasoning. This "co-operative" ideal is a marvellous example of petty bourgeois individualism. Common ownership, you see, doesn't mean that we all own and control property in common: it means that you and I and Paudeen and Pegeen all own a little bit of our local co-op., and we each get our own share of the takings. This form of ownership is very limited, because quite clearly you can't take a piece of the enterprise home with you. All the "share" amounts to is an additional bonus. Decision-making in co-operatives is nowhere discussed either (19) The authors proudly claim that their proposals would lead to "real industrial democracy", I beg leave to retain my doubts on that score: the authors of "Eire Nua" have managed to produce a conception of socialism which is individualist to the core.

Not surprisingly the proposals of the Official Sinn Fein in this field differ widely from the above. An Official Republic "would involve the taking into public, municipal or co-operative ownership of the principal industries, factories and mines, together with the big shops and supermarkets, banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions, and the encouragement of co-operative enterprise among farmers, smallholders, small manufacturers and shopkeepers." (20) Connolly's name, conspicuously absent from "Eire Nua" is invoked to justify this assault on big capital. The authors declare that "whatever the form of economic activity, the body which would determine policy would be the general meeting of those people concerned" (italics in the original). Workers, managers, suppliers and consumers representatives, municipal and state officials will, in medium and large

scale enterprises, collectively decided on policy, elect a Management Committee and so on. "The basic business decisions to pay bonus or to plough back profits, whether to expand by seeking more capital from the state or not - would be made by them - management, who would be responsible to the regular general meeting ..." (21) This they judge, would be sufficient to remove any conflict of interest between workers and management. But it is unlikely: no mention being made of wage or salary differentials, the right of recall of elected officials (managerial or state) or of the advantages in information and "expertise" enjoyed by the latter, Irish workers will be faced with a speedy growth of a bureaucratic caste which will arrogate to itself decision-making powers. It is all very well to invoke and quote Connolly, to speak of opening the books, to proclaim "People's Participation", but the result will be the opposite of what is intended unless there be a return to the basic principles of Lenin's "State and Revolution" (which will await implementation in Russia and Eastern Europe), to wit:

1. Free elections with the right of recall of all officials
2. No official to receive a higher wage than a skilled worker.
3. No standing army or police force, but the armed people
4. Gradual introduction of the principle of rotation of administrative tasks, so that all take a turn.

A programme for an Irish Workers' Republic must take this as its starting-point in the field of revolutionary government, and show how such a system would work. (22) It is because the authors of the Manifesto ignore the lessons of the Russian, East European and Chinese experience that we may conclude that these countries are being implicitly held up as the images of Ireland's future under official Sinn Fein rule. Such a degenerated, bureaucratically deformed Workers' Republic is not the goal to be striven for.

4) POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

"Eire Nua" is silent on this and its proposals are consistent with, on the one hand a typical western parliamentary democracy, and, on the other, a one-party dictatorship - or even a military dictatorship. (23)

The Manifesto's authors rightly criticize the "playing of parliamentary ins and outs" (24) but do not explicitly rule out the survival of parliament as an institution in the Workers' Republic. In line with this omission there is also complete absence of any reference to Workers' councils as political institutions. The authors allow more than one political party provided, of course, that their own politics are the dominant force in the new state. This can be seen from the following passage:

"It is not possible to foresee at this stage what will be the exact form of the political party structure in the Irish Socialist Republic. This will be largely determined by the political evolution of the nation during the phase of national independence revolution, and the successful anti-imperialist struggle which is the prerequisite of any attempt to establish a socialist form of society in this country.

There will, however, be need for at least three main political groupings, based on the main social elements within the nation. There will be a Labour Group, uniting the interests of workers by hand and brain; there will be a Co-operative Group, uniting the interests of small property-owners, farmers, retailers and owner-managers of enterprises; and there will be an activist political movement which will provide the guidance and political leadership necessary to hold the other elements together and which will chart the guidelines for the establishment of a socialist society in the country. This latter group will draw its member-

ship from the most politically conscious and socially committed elements of the people united by a theoretical understanding of the social process along the lines pioneered by Connolly, and will be the continuation of those Irish people who are at present committed to the achievement of national independence for the country and the establishment of a Workers' and Farmers' Republic" (25) No prize for the name of the party of the last named.

It is true that the Manifesto's authors do not rule out other groupings than their own in an endeavour to seek political alliances (26) In the context, however, of their refusal to espouse the idea of workers' councils similar to the Soviets of 1917, and in view of the Manifesto's vague language on these points it is reasonable to suspect them of all kinds of subterfuge to ensure that their own conceptions dominate both among the workers and among the republican masses in general. In opposition to this Trotskyists take their stand on a multi-party system operating in and through the workers' councils as the only means whereby socialism can be built in Ireland. Political formations not accepting the Workers' Republic ideal would certainly receive stern treatment, but when it comes to the expressions of opinion in a workers' state there is a need for very clear institutional means to promote a multiplicity of choices, combined with full information on which individuals can make up their minds. The ideal that the correct line is all the time the exclusive property on one tendency is one which must be vigorously fought.

5) CULTURE AND THE IRISH LANGUAGE

The authors of Eire Nua declare that "the Irish language and Irish culture will have an important part in the national effort and their strengthening will have special attention" (27) and they propose a number of measures be taken for the revival of these, including the gradual adoption of Irish by "all government, semi-government and state-sponsored bodies", a vast educational programme, a special Gaeltacht board with elected representatives from all Gaeltacht areas to control all Gaeltacht institutions, the reorganization of radio and T.V., the creation of a national film industry, etc. etc. Many of these ideas are good ones and deserve whole-hearted support. Socialists who refuse this on the grounds that there are too many languages in the world already, that it is the destiny of small nations' languages to disappear, and so on, are guilty of cultural chauvinism; the Irish language is indissolubly linked with the distinctive historical contribution of the Irish people to human civilization in general and to allow it to die would be to acquiesce in the completion of one of the greatest crimes ever perpetrated on an unfortunate nation by British imperialism and its reactionary allies). However, from the point of view of the unification of the Irish working class, which includes, of course, the Six Counties proletariat, one of Eire Nua's proposals might cause difficulty, namely the goal of Irish as a compulsory subject in all schools (28) (They also want it as "the first language in all schools" p.42) Here the pace of implementation is crucial. The authors recognize that "the rate of progress will be slower in the Six Counties than in the rest of the country." Would it not be more politic, however, to state specifically that in all areas the subject should be optional in schools, and so avoid the imposition of the language by outmoded teaching methods, which has already served to alienate large numbers of schoolchildren in the 26 counties?

That this is an important political question is shown by yet another consideration. I get the impression from reading "Eire Nua" that its authors have a somewhat static conception of Irish culture (29) It is well to bear in mind what Lenin wrote on the subject of national culture:

"The slogan of national culture is bourgeois ... deception. Our slogan is the international culture of democracy and of the world working-class movement ..."

Every national culture contains elements, even if not developed, of democratic and socialist culture, for in every nation there are toiling and exploited masses, whose living conditions inevitably give rise to the ideology of democracy and socialism. But every nation also has a bourgeois culture (and most national also have a Black-Hundred (30) and clerical culture, too) that takes the form, not merely of 'elements' but of the dominant culture. Therefore, the general 'national culture' is the culture of the landed proprietors, the clergy and the bourgeoisie ...

In presenting the slogan 'international culture of democracy and of the world working-class movement' we take from each national culture only its democratic and socialist elements, we take them solely and unconditionally as a counterbalance to bourgeois culture, to the bourgeois nationalism of each nation." (31)

The above approach avoids the error of "Irish for Irish sake" in cultural matters. It means the support of writers like Behan and O'Casey in preference to the more esoteric Yeats or the more obscurantist element in Joyce; it means the promotion of peasant rather than "bardic" poetry, folk music rather than the archaic and elitist "Geol na nUasal" (music of the gentry). Above all it means the opening of Irish culture to international influences which operate on the side of progress rather than reaction (clerical or otherwise). By these means the democratic elements of Irish Protestant tradition can be developed; thus it will be possible to draw the Protestant workers into the main stream of the national life in a way that will not suppress their personality, and Tone's goal of the replacement of the denominations of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter by the "common name of Irishman" will be finally achieved.

6) EDUCATION AND THE CHURCH

This brings us naturally to policy on education and on religion.

The stranglehold operated by the religious authorities on education in both halves of partitioned Ireland is well known, and it is of prime importance to break this and to institute a system of comprehensive state education which will enable children from different backgrounds to enjoy common schooling from the beginning. Such a system would not, of course, set out to deprive children of all knowledge of religion altogether. It would only ensure that the reactionary viewpoints of the Catholic Hierarchy and the Orange Order would not reign supreme in the classroom no matter what subject was being taught (This follows, of course, from what we said about culture). Such an approach is absolutely essential if the Irish Workers' Republic is to survive. (32)

The authors of "Eire Nua" have an entirely different approach:

"Sinn Fein educational policy will aim to ensure the development and equipment of all the moral, intellectual and physical powers of our children so that they will become God fearing and responsible citizens of a free independent nation. The rights of the family as the primary and natural educator of the child (including the humanist family?) and the spiritual interests of the various religious denominations shall be acknowledged within the framework of an educational system whose philosophy shall be to unify the people into one nation with one national consciousness." It speaks for itself, doesn't it?

Curiously, the Manifesto of the Irish Workers' and Small Farmers' Republic does not mention education at all, except where it declares that "Social cultural and educational functions will primarily be

administered at local level, as these areas of activity are most suited for extensive public participation by citizens." (p.11) This is fine, so far as it goes, but there is no avoiding the main issue in all this "clerical culture". It so happens that because of Ireland's unique historical development the main ideological support of the bourgeoisie North and South comes from the Churches. This unpleasant fact debars the Churches from control of education in a Workers' Republic: it cannot be otherwise. (So far as I know the Pope has not endorsed the Fourth International's Transitional Programme, nor is there any likelihood of his doing so).

Socialists in Ireland will also be aware of the typical Orange worker's arguments against unification with the South. Both programmes conspicuously ignore them. In this connection an interesting correspondence is in progress at the time of writing in "An Phoblacht": the March issue carries an open letter from "Bill, an orangeman on the Shankhill" which puts some very pertinent questions to the Provisionals and, by implication, to all Republican socialists. Bill asks whether Orange parades would be banned under Provo rule, and points out that "Eire Nua" makes no mention of any right to contraception or divorce (or for that matter, Article 44 of the Free State Constitution). "Can you be a little more specific?" he asks. It is up to us all to oblige him. (34) In any case a Workers' Republic which did not give social services equal to those currently available in Britain and which prohibited divorce and birth control for those who might want them would not be worth having.

In my view, neither programme meets the criteria laid down at the beginning of this article.

What both these programmes lack is any conception of the role of transitional demands in mobilising mass support against imperialism. Both programmes aim at the maximum without trying to bridge the gap between what their authors regard as necessary and what the mass of the Irish people subjectively want. As a result both run the risk of eventual isolation as the struggle ebbs. But even supposing the initial victory was won there would still be severe limitations on the ability of either grouping to satisfy the needs of the Irish working class. It is up to Irish socialists to evolve a strategy to meet those needs, and up to British socialists to help them.

JULY 1972

NOTES

1. Eire Nua p. 4
2. EN p. 7
3. EN p. 54
4. *ibid*
5. John Palmer IS 51, p.16; Paul Gerardt, *ibid.*, p. 22
6. EN p.10
7. Sweden has so far resisted attempts by the EEC bosses to bring her into line, but the advantage the Swedish bosses possess is that they are virtual top dogs within the scandinavian market - a position in the British isles market held not by the Green Tories but by another breed of Tories across the water.
8. Manifesto p. 2 (*Italics in the original*)
9. The EEC capitalists would doubtless be faced with a furious guerilla struggle should they decide to crush the new workers' revolution by force of arms, but that is a different story.

10. An indication of the importance of agriculture in 26 foreign trade is the value of live animals and food exported in 1967 £153.3 million out of £275.7 million total exports - which shows the exposed state of the Irish economy in the world market. See C. Hultman "Ireland in World Commerce" Mercier Press 1969, pp. 19-21.

11. EN p. 22 Entry into EEC will of course accelerate the small farmers demise and benefit the ranchers.

12. An Solas 15-16 1966, p.8 Cf Transitional Programme pp. 25-6

13. EN pp. 24-25

14. Eire Nua does, however, touch on a possible export policy, viz "to export only certain specialist products commanding high prices, such as processed food of all kinds and dead meat" (p. 25) This is not a subject which socialists can afford to ignore, as I have tried to indicate. Its proper treatment belongs in a separate article on the economic problems of an Irish workers' state.

15. EN pp. 18-19

16. Even here Dev was anticipated by the original Free State government to some degree. See Garret Fitzgerald "State-Sponsored Bodies", Inst. of Public Administration, Dublin, 1963, ch. 3 Fitzgerald lists some 55 institutions, of which 34 are classed as trading enterprises.

17. Only one industry is specifically earmarked for this treatment - distilling.

18. EN p. 4

19. Despite some useful proposals on co-operative building (p. 21) it is clear that for the authors co-ops are a minor matter. It is worth noting that whereas on p. 4 the authors claim that private enterprise will have no place in key industries, on p. 19 they declare that "the policy will not be to stamp out" competition. (Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth!)

20. Manifesto p. 5

21. *Ibid.*, pp 8-9

22. The programme of the Trotskyist Irish Workers' Group for example published in 1967, talks of "a regime of Workers' Councils, organised in a pyramid with immediate recall at each level as a guarantee of representativeness" (Workers' Republic, Winter 1967/8 p. 5) and speaks of a "semi-state" of the working class. Stalinism, whether Maoist, Khrushchevite or Titoist, deliberately departs from this conception. Some socialist schools of thought would go even further in attempting to counter the inevitable tendency to bureaucratism which arises in the aftermath of proletarian revolution, but space prevents a full discussion of this fascinating problem here. (See Appendix)

23. While military dictatorship is not entirely foreign to Republican tradition, the Provisionals can hardly be accused of wishing to institute one.

24. Manifesto p. 13

25. *Ibid.* Italics in the original

26. *Ibid* p. 14

27. EN p. 4

28. See section entitled An Ghaeilge

29. See EN p. 39 where the authors discuss the language's role in endowing the Irish nation with "a distinctive mind of its own. This distinctive nationality enshrines all the spiritual and intellectual possessions and characteristics which we have and which distinguish us from other peoples" This is of course true for the Irish nation as for any other, but there is a danger of conservatism inherent in an attachment to see all such "spiritual and intellectual possessions and characteristics" for their own sake.

30. i. e. reactionary landlord

31. Lenin, "Questions of National Policy and Proletarian Internationalism" pp. 28-29. Italics in original.

32. Any Republican who thinks differently should ask himself why Cardinal Conway and his associates saw fit to apply a break to the national struggle being waged in the North immediately after the recent "in-

initiative" irrespective of whether the people desired it, and launch a political attack on the Provisional IRA; why the Catholic Hierarchy was, throughout Irish history, never failed in its support of the most reactionary elements in Ireland, whether native or imperialist; why the Hierarchy opposed 1798, 1867, 1916, 1919-21, and so on. This is not to deny that individual priests have occasionally chosen the opposite course, even that in some cases priests holding political views similar to those of the late Camillo Torres may exist; however, it is necessary for socialists to make clear that the only priests they

are prepared to work with are those who fight "for the Cross and the Revolution", as in Cuba. (That appears to rule out Dr Paisley anyway).
33. On the question of Orange parades, surely it is in all our interests as workers that these lose their present character as provocative assertions of Ulster Unionist ascendancy and become transformed into assertions of something more democratic; if such a change is possible - which I rather doubt - and if Orangemen can be trusted to accept a Workers' Republican Constitution, then by all means let them march.

THE WORKERS REPUBLIC

The only road to the re-organisation of society is the conquest of state power by the working class. The proletariat must take power, turn it against the class enemy, and use it as a lever to expropriate the exploiting classes and imperialism, establish the Workers' Republic and begin the economic and social transformation - the building of socialism. The workers' conquest of power will not mean achieving majorities in bourgeois parliaments and installing socialist ministers to drive the existing state machinery. Workers' power necessitates the breaking up of the political power of the bourgeoisie by the mass action of the armed working class, and the breaking up of the existing state apparatus which sanctifies and defends the exploiting class. The existing state with its bourgeois-type army, led by bourgeois officers; its civil and political police - and in the North the sectarian special constables; its judges, prison wardens and governors; its priests of the various persuasions and other ideologists; its civil service, functionaries and officials; its sham parliamentary "democracy": - this will all be dismantled. Workers' power means the disarming of the bourgeoisie and their officer castes and other reactionary armed groups - and the self-arming of the proletariat organised as a Citizen Red Army. It means the abolition of the bourgeois laws - with their typically bourgeois bias in favour of property against life - and law courts; and it means their replacement by workers' law and proletarian courts. It means the secularisation of all state and social life: the elimination of all religious instruction in schools, the removal from religious institutions of all state patronage and subsidy, the making of religion into a private matter in relation to society, thus finally eliminating in practice, by guaranteeing both freedom of worship and full freedom of atheistic propaganda, the sectarian rivalries which have helped imperialism and the Irish bourgeoisie to split the working class.

In short it means the elaboration of working class organs of administration of a new type, and with this the complete, transparent democratisation of all social life, best expressed in the replacement of bourgeois

APPENDIX

parliamentarianism by a regime of Workers' Councils, organised in a pyramid with immediate recall at each level as a guarantee of representativeness. All states before the October Revolution were organs of a ruling minority to suppress and manipulate the vast exploited majority, and therefore functioned through a permanent bureaucracy attuned to the needs of the ruling class. The Workers' Republic is the rule of the majority, organised through the workers' councils, without standing army or permanent bureaucracy, needing repression only initially against the formerly exploiting minority. Therefore the character of this semi-state of the working class is radically different. Whereas bourgeois democracy is based on a state of exploitation of the vast majority, and is only an empty, legalist formula masking a bourgeois dictatorship, the Workers' Republic means real democracy, the reality of the controlling will of the proletariat: it is democracy by and for the working people against the exploiters.

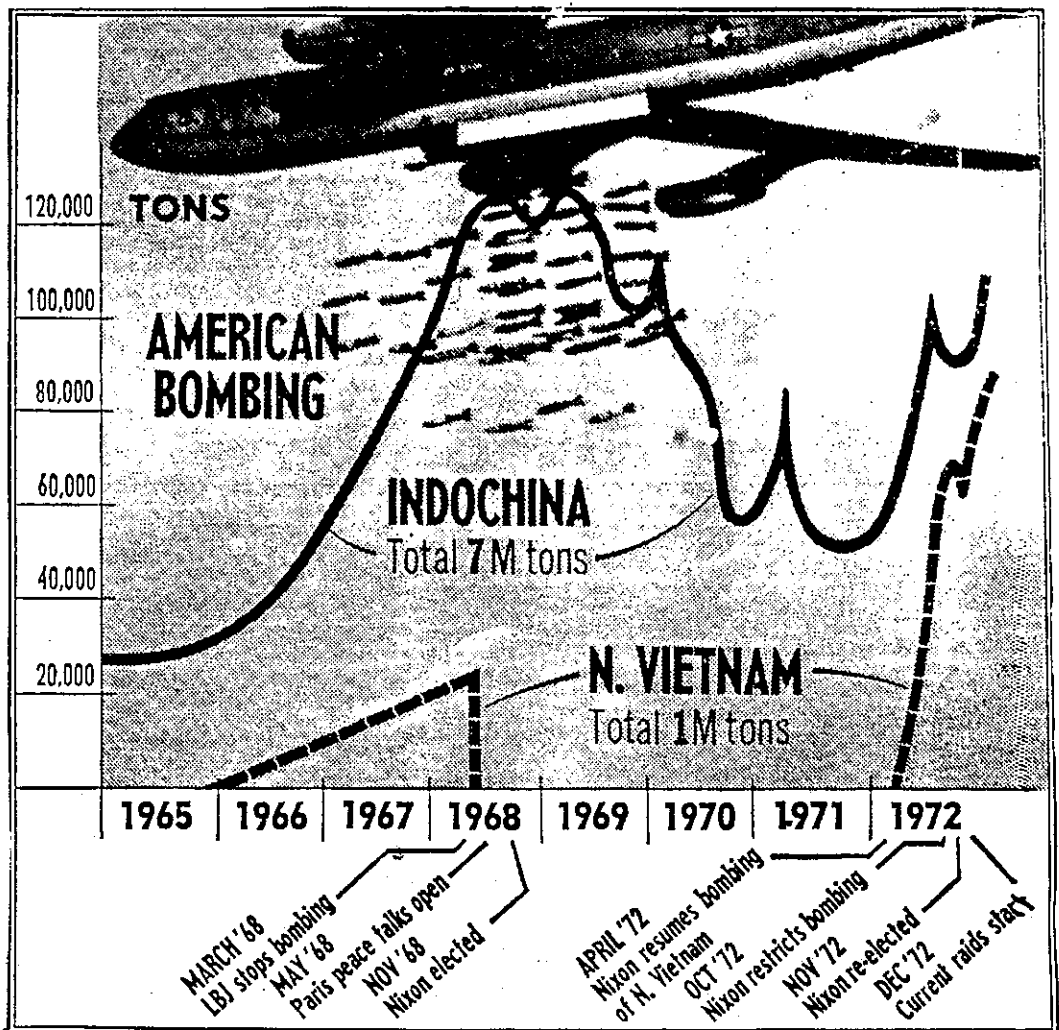
In the Workers' Republic the means of life will be social property. The factories, mines, land and means of transport and communication will be the common property of the working people, controlled democratically. All imperialist economic holdings will be expropriated. Large-scale industry will be nationalised, as will the banks and insurance companies. (Nationalisation being understood as the transference of ownership to the Workers' state under the direct socialist management of the working class. The existing state-capitalist enterprises will also be transformed into social property by the workers' state.) Large estates and capitalist agricultural undertakings will be nationalised. There will be state monopoly of the wholesale trade, nationalisation for the use of the people of the large houses in town and country. Small property, urban and rural, will not be expropriated, and non-exploiters will not be coerced. Only when the small farmers can see the advantages of amalgamations and large-scale agriculture and themselves desire this will there be any question of reorganisation here. Until that time, planning by the workers' state will at least free the small farmer from the disastrous effects of the present anarchic capitalist system.

On a local level workers' management will be the rule; on a national level, economic functions will be centralised in the hands of the democratically controlled Workers' state: the central and local will interact and mutually adjust to the other. For the first time a national economy planned in the interests of the self-controlling working masses will be possible.

FROM: "TOWARDS AN IRISH OCTOBER",
I.W.G., 1967.

THE PERMANENT ARMS ECONOMY

by **PHIL SEMP**



In the immediate post-war period, the majority of the world's Trotskyists, not only expected general world slump to follow but interpreted the world as it was in slump terms. The expectations were fully reasonable and fully in accordance with Marxist method. On the basis of the post World War I experience (that is of the inability of capitalism to develop) and the decline of the productive forces in the '30's bearing out as they did the Marxist conception of the decisive decline of capitalism in its Imperialist stage, the crisis perspective for all Marxists was inescapable.

Marxism is neither a blueprint, applicable for all times and places, nor a means of divining in some materialist crystal ball future concatenations and their resulting laws of motion. Marxism must be checked off, upheld and renewed out of the evolving process in society and in the struggles of the proletariat. On the other hand, it is not a method which junks the old, casually or flight-mindedly and begins all over again with each new situation - as does the "method" of pragmatism. Deviations from the norm must be tested to see whether they assert the theory from a negative point of view. (*1) It is this that the Revolutionary Marxist forces did when approaching the immediate post-war period. With the benefit of hindsight, it's easy to scoff and say how wrong the Trotskyists were. But had they innovated in the given situation without experiencing the economic developments which set in after the post 1944-47 revolutionary wave had been defeated, and BEFORE the defeat had occurred they would have been either mystics or revisionists - certainly not Marxists.

As the post-war boom wore on, the various fragments of the revolutionary movement adjusted to it in different ways. As we know, certain sections continued to uphold unremittingly "the slump round the corner" perspective, others liquidated, and others offered distinct explanations. It is one of the supposed strong points of I.S. theory that it had had an explanation of the post-war boom since the early or middle fifties (I won't haggle over the date).

Since the continuance of the boom for years ahead was a part of the theory - and the boom did continue - it is taken for granted that the theory was correct. That is one possible interpretation of validity. However, it is also possible that the theory can be accommodated into a wider framework, in which case it will only provide a partial explanation, albeit an incorrect one when taken as the main determinant. This I feel is the correct status of the theory of the Permanent Arms Economy. And it is this that I want to deal with.

How and why the theory arose, and the use to which it has been put is not the central concern of this critique. Suffice to make the following remarks.

In the given context of the fifties and sixties the permanent arms economy theory fitted in very nicely with the general passivity of I.S. and its abandonment of the theoretical conquests of the revolutionary movement on Russia and on the question of the Revolutionary Leninist party. (*2) If capitalism was generally stable for

the foreseeable future due to a new mechanism, this fitted the inescapable implications of the theory of state capitalism i.e. of capitalism as an expanding world system, and made the anti-Leninist conceptions of the party almost reasonable. Different adherents of the theory within I.S. drew slightly different conclusions. However, the overall notion was that capitalism would remain stable and continue to expand for the foreseeable future. (*3) This was so with Kidron, the "inventor" of the theory in its present forms. As late as the 1967 version of his book "Western Capitalism Since the War" in which the theory is elucidated in most detail, Kidron concluded by saying that the elements of instability were merely "spots on the horizon." In keeping with the fashion for expurgated versions, in the latest Penguin edition, responding empirically to May 1968, the heightened class struggle of the last couple of years, and the palpable evidence for a definite slowing up of the world capitalist economy, Kidron states in conclusion that Western capitalism is once again creating conditions for the convergence of working class protest and revolutionary politics that could change the world. (*4)

THEORETICAL ROOTS

Sweezy's theory:-

One of the first developments of the "permanent war economy" thesis was that of Sweezy in his book "The Theory of Capitalist Development" (first English Edition). Implicit in this was a theory of capitalist crisis, popularly known as the "under consumptionist" theory. (*5) This states, in its various forms, that the basic cause of capitalist crisis of over production is the relatively low purchasing power of the masses, compared with the production capacity of industry.

To back this contention, Sweezy cites one quotation from Marx, taken from Vol III of Capital (page 484 in the Moscow 1966 Edition, in which the wording has been slightly modified from that of Sweezy's reference - but the sense remains the same).

"The last cause of all real crises always remains the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses as compared to the tendency of capitalist production to develop the productive forces, in such a way, that only the absolute power of consumption of the entire society would be their limit."

This statement is so obvious, as Marx himself noted on many occasions. Marx devoted Capital precisely to demonstrating how this state of affairs comes about; how it is immanent in the contradictions of the capitalist production process; how production and consumption in capitalism are antagonistic sides of a process whose unity necessarily erupts in crisis from time to time because of the very driving forces of capitalist production. In fact, the quotation in question is abstracted one sidedly from Marx's whole approach to the question. Not only that, but even if the previous sentence is quoted, it puts a

little life into the proposition.

".... as matters stand, the replacement of the capital invested in production depends largely upon the consuming power of the non-producing classes; while the consuming power of the workers is limited partly by the laws of wages, partly by the fact that they are used only as long as they can be profitably employed by the capitalist class." (my emphasis P. S.)

These points were elucidated by Marx in the central part on 'capitalist crisis' in Part III of Vol. III (The Law of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall). The previous sentence AND the one quoted by Sweezy are very shorthand, incidental remarks in the section on "Money Capital and Real Capital."

That this is so can be seen from the following quotation which summarises Marx's discussion in his chapter "The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation" on the effects of increasing demand for labour and therefore, general wage rises, in a boom period.

"If the quantity of unpaid labour supplied by the working class.... increases so rapidly that its conversion into capital requires an extra-ordinary addition of paid labour, then wages rise, and, all other circumstances remaining equal, the unpaid labour diminishes in proportion. But as soon as this diminution touches the point at which the surplus labour that nourishes capital is no longer supplied in normal quantity, a reaction sets in; a smaller part of revenue is capitalised, accumulation lags, and the movement of rise in wages receives a check. The rise of wages therefore is confined within limits that not only leave intact the foundations of the capitalist system, but also secure its reproduction on a progressive scale." (my emphasis P. S.) (*6)

And - "It is sheer tautology to say that crises are caused by the scarcity of effective consumption, or of effective consumers. The capitalist system does not know any other modes of consumption than effective ones.... That commodities are unsaleable means only that no effective purchasers have been found for them, i.e. consumers (since commodities are bought in the final analysis after productive or individual consumption). But if one were to attempt to give this tautology the semblance of a profounder justification by saying that the working class receives too small a portion of its own product and the evil would be remedied as soon as it receives a larger share of it and its wages increase in consequence, one could only remark that crises are always prepared by precisely a period in which wages rise generally and the working class actually gets a larger

share of that part of the annual product which is intended for consumption..... It appears, then, that capitalist production comprises conditions independent of good or bad will (emphasis P. S.), conditions which permit the working class to enjoy that relative prosperity only momentarily, and at that always only as the harbinger of a coming crisis." (*7)

So far, then, without analysing the mechanisms of crisis, Marx points out (i) there is a limit, imposed by the very needs of capital accumulation, on the rise in wage levels (i.e. the consumption power of the masses) and (ii) eventually, (over what time scale depends on countertendencies at work) a greater share by the workers of total social production must lead to crisis.

The underconsumptionist view, in one-sidedly abstracting production from consumption, inevitably mystifies the central dynamics of the total process. It lends itself to notions that there are absolute proportions between workers' purchasing power and the social product for stability. In doing this, of course, it leads to distributivist notions, and, inevitably, to reformism. It is no accident that the social democratic leaderships should be most concerned with problems of "income distribution"; that

almost without exception they subscribe to ideological variants of the greatest under-consumptionist of them all - John Maynard Keynes.

But from a theoretical point of view (a) How can capitalist stability exist at all, given the fact that the whole history of capitalism has seen a progressive lessening in the proportion of living labour in the total social production? (b) If stability is acknowledged, then what is it in the very dynamics of capitalist production that gives rise to the instability and crises resulting in, on the one hand a mass of products that can't be bought, on the other a mass of workers who cannot buy them? The under-consumptionist thesis is unable to do anything but state the obvious, the end result, the "last cause", as Marx himself called it precisely for that reason, without in any way contributing to an understanding of the dynamics that necessarily give rise to it.

The Marxist Theory of Crisis

The possibility of capitalist crisis is located in the dual nature of capitalism's fundamental unit, the commodity, as both a use-value and an exchange value. Insofar as primitive modes of production relied for exchange on barter there could not be any crises of production due to the glutting of the "market" as production was predominantly for immediate consumption. Exchange was subordinate to this and was, to a great degree, optional. Not so for the commodity, which only exists as having use-value and exchange value in conditions where it must be exchanged against other goods having the same characteristics i.e. it has to be sold of necessity, using the universal medium of exchange-money. Thus "The general nature of the metamorphosis of commodities - which includes the separation of purchase and sale just as it does their unity.... contains the possibility of a general glut." (*8)

Using Marx's terminology C=Commodity, M=Money, the chain of production and sale of one commodity and purchase of another can be represented by C-M-C. However, the conditions of sale and purchase are not identical logically or in space and time. Thus the transaction above is best represented by C-M..... M-C. Thus capitalism has inherent in it both the unity and disjunction of production and consumption.

".... the unity of these two phases, which does exist and which forcibly asserts itself during the crisis, must be seen as opposed to the separation and antagonism of these two phases, separation and antagonism which exist just as much, and moreover are typical of bourgeois production." (*9)

This contradiction between sale and purchase, between production and consumption, between production and the circulation of money as a means of payment, Marx calls the simplest forms of crisis and to an extent, the simplest content of crisis. But this does not, as yet explain how and why this crisis erupts.

".... the content is not yet substantiated. Simple circulation of money and even the circulation of money as a means of payment - and both came into being long before capitalist production, while there are no crises - are possible and actually take place without crisis. These forms alone, therefore, do not explain why their crucial aspect becomes prominent and why the potential contradiction contained in them becomes a real contradiction." (*10)

So, what is the basis of capitalist production? Capitalism exists where commodity production becomes generalised; therefore a certain amount of "primitive accumulation" of capital must be a prior condition for this mode of production. How this takes

place is not the question here. (*11) However, what is important is that to develop the social productive power of labour on a capitalist basis presupposes methods for the increased production of surplus-value, which in its turn is the basic element of accumulation.

The question is, what is the motor of this process? The basic answer to this is - competition between capitalists. Capitalists face one another as independent commodity producers competing with each other.

In order to survive as a capitalist, it is necessary for the individual capitalist to sell on the general market in opposition to other capitalists; and precisely because of the unevenness of capitalist development, the differential possibility to compete in the first place, this struggle takes on a particularly intense form. To sell more (or often even to sell) on the market the capitalist is compelled to attempt to cheapen his commodities. He can only do this (with exceptions of fraudulence etc - which cancel out between capitalists, often with violent disruptions which themselves are stimulated by more fundamental forces at work, (as indicated later) by decreasing the amount of necessary labour time required to produce the commodities in question. This can only be performed by increasing the productivity of labour, which means, on the whole, introducing more effective instruments of production. These techniques become general in response to the lowering of the price by the particular capitalist and group of capitalists. Thus, overall the value of these new means of production embody more socially necessary labour time than the previous means of production (or augment these means of production). Furthermore, the increase in the value of the means of production is proportionately greater than the increase in the value of the labour power that they can set in motion (as a general rule there are exceptions to this, but the whole history of the development of capitalist production is as stated.)

Since machinery and raw materials only reproduce their value in being consumed in the production process, they are called by Marx constant capital (c). As labour power produces value in the process of being actualised this is known as variable capital (v).

Most of the surplus value, (which is the difference between the value after the application of living labour and the initial value of constant and variable capital) is used to acquire more constant and variable capital. So, capital produces capital on an ever increasing scale as a necessity. The reciprocal influences of the capitalist process of production, (the inherent competition between capitals) on the accumulation of capital bring about that change in the technical composition of capital by which the variable constituent becomes always smaller as compared with the constant. (*12) The development of the capitalist mode of production results in an ever increasing organic composition of capital (c/v) and together, with the growth of capital, as more variable capital is set to work a greater mass of surplus value (s) produced by this.

Now since labour is the source of all value, (since only variable capital produces value), even though the mass of surplus value increases, its rate in relation to the total capital employed declines - that is the Rate of Profit $\frac{s}{v+c}$ unless there is a corresponding increase in the rate of exploitation of labour, in the proportion of the paid to the unpaid parts of labour (s/v) - but this can only continue for a greater or lesser period, not indefinitely) Thus, the inherent logic of the capitalist process of production, with competition as the spur, manifests itself in a growing mass of profit and a falling rate of profit. This is law for capitalism.

"As the process of production and accumulat-

ion advances, therefore, the mass of available and appropriated surplus-labour, and hence the absolute mass of profit appropriated by the social capital, must grow. Hence, the same laws produce for the social capital a growing absolute mass of profit, and a falling rate of profit." (*13)

CAPITALIST CRISIS

Marx called the law of the falling rate of profit, together with the other "laws" of capitalist production, tendency laws. (*14)

Hence the absolute mass of profit appropriated by the social capital must grow Hence, the same laws produce for the social capital a growing absolute mass of profit, and a falling rate of profit.

(a) The capitalist who works with improved, but as yet not generally adopted methods of production, is able to sell below the market price, as previously indicated. However, he sells above his individual price of production. Thus his rate of profit rises until competition levels it out; the new methods of production become general and the overall rate of profit falls. During this equalisation process the expansion of the invested capital takes place and the mass of profit tends to rise.

As the rate of profit falls this hastens the concentration of capital and its centralisation, as minor capitalists and certain new independent capitals are unable to function at the new rate of profit. With their given capital, or even with an accumulation of capital they are unable to produce the goods with the socially necessary amount of labour time.

The fall in the rate of profit is not compensated by the increased mass of profit. Thus, these capitalists go bankrupt or sell off their capital at prices below their value.

This development is immanent in the capitalist process of production. BUT IT HAS CERTAIN CONSEQUENCES WHICH GIVE RISE TO CAPITALIST CRISIS.

"At a certain high point this increasing concentration in its turn causes a new fall in the rate of profit. The mass of small dispersed capitals is thereby driven along the adventurous road of speculation, credit, stock swindles and crises." (*15) They have to attempt to extract more surplus value out of their existing workforce by intensifying its exploitation. For a diminished workforce this has CERTAIN

THE LEFT and THE CRISIS

a WORKERS' FIGHT pamphlet

TOGETHER WITH TWO REPRINTS FROM WORKERS' FIGHT Nos 6 and 7:

*" A GENERAL STRIKE CAN SMASH THE ACT"

*" DARE TO FIGHT"

The Left and the Crisis is an examination and critique of the political line of a number of prominent Left groups during the week last July when 5 dockers were jailed by the Industrial Relations Court. The pamphlet is available from 98 Gifford Street, N.1.

limitations. Their capital becomes depreciated, they cannot meet their obligations (even with extension of credit which has its limits): the conditions of production, presupposing certain value relations are disturbed accordingly.

The process of circulation and reproduction of capital is disrupted, men are laid off, capital - means of labour, and necessities of life are "over-produced" - while at the same time there is a relative overpopulation (relative to their possibilities to be employed under the given conditions of production). Too little capital is the cause of too much capital.

This overproduction in one sphere can lead to what Marx called a "relative overproduction" in others. If this effects enough leading products, then the crisis becomes a generalised crisis of overproduction. The forcible disjunction between production and consumption. It is thus inherent in the capitalist process of production.

Embodied in the crisis are also the preconditions for the recovery and boom. During the crisis capital values are destroyed, as prices tumble. However, use values are not necessarily, in fact rarely, destroyed. If the bankrupt capitalist has to sell off his business "what one loses the other gains." Values used as capital are prevented from acting again as capital in the hands of the same person A large part of the NOMINAL capital of the society, i.e. of the exchange value of the existing capital is once for all destroyed, although this very destruction, since it does not affect the use value, may very much expedite the new reproduction." (*16)

The organic composition (the ratio of constant to total capital) of capital falls, but the social productivity is dependent on the use values of the capital and this considerably rises. Hence, increased surplus labour, an increase in the rate of profit and renewed accumulation on an extended basis takes place, thus setting off the old process, with an increase once more in the organic composition of capital and a falling rate of profit.

(b) Under certain circumstances there can arise a general overproduction of capital. Of course, capital consists of commodities, (i.e. it's wrong to talk about over production of capital as distinct from commodities), but general over-production can arise having its source in an over production of commodities not intended for individual consumption, but for productive consumption (the boundary line between the two is shifting and tenuous, but nevertheless, obvious distinctions can and must be made at any given time.) This is the case when the increased capital produces only as much, or even less, surplus value than it did before the increase. In such cases there would be a drastic fall in the general rate of profit, but the source of this is not necessarily to be found in the development of the productive forces, but in a rise in the money value of the variable capital (increased wages) and the corresponding reduction in the proportion of surplus labour to necessary labour time. Clearly, this can be offset by extending the absolute working time of workers, and not correspondingly increasing wages, or by increasing the relative surplus working time i.e. the greater intensity of exploitation. However, when the limits of these are reached and wages continue to rise the above effect sets in. There is a tendency for this to happen precisely as a consequence of boom, where workers are able to push up wage levels - unless counter tendencies offset this decline in surplus labour.

Hence, the progress of capitalist production sets inherent limits on the level of consumption of the masses at any particular time, in order that crisis does not erupt in the way described. But, whatever the level of consumption of the masses, crisis will

eventually erupt anyway. The crisis is not to be offset by increasing the consumption power of the masses within capitalist society.

In the event of general over production of capital, the partial destruction of capital, (exchange and use value wise) takes place. The loss of each capitalist would depend on competitive struggle, those with special advantages, previously captured positions, being the least hit. Thus, the depreciation of capital values and similar effects as in (a). The tendency here would be, in the crisis situation, especially as men are laid off and relative over-population sets in, to lower wages in order to accumulate more surplus value. Hence, the over production - under consumption nexus necessarily erupts, conditioning each other. In this case (b) we witness the phenomenon of the falling rate of profit and a falling mass of profit. (c) Overproduction of capital can also rise due to disproportions in production as between branches of production. This disproportionality is built into capitalist production. The cohesion imposes itself as a blind law, often as a result precisely of crisis, which bring about a temporary adjustment of the branches of production one to the other.

"All equalisations are ACCIDENTAL and although the proportion of capital employed in individual spheres is equalised by a continuous process, the continuity of this process itself equally presupposes the constant disproportion which it has continuously, often violently to even out." (*17)

These disproportionalities can be especially marked between those sectors producing means of production (dept I in Marx's terminology) and those producing means of consumption (Dept II). These tend to erupt for the following reasons -

(i) Given the greater organic composition of capital in Dept I, the productivity of labour here tends to be much greater. As such the mass of products turned out in Dept I can be very easily outstrip their use-value in Dept II. Thus, overproduction of means of production, even with an increased demand for the mass and value of machinery.

(ii) Since the production of means of production is logically and temporally prior to production of means of consumption, (because these must already be available on the market), the production of means of production is governed not by the immediate demand, by the immediate level of production or reproduction, but by the rate of expansion to this demand.

To illustrate let us take as an example a manufacturer of machinery. We will assume that he produces 100 machines a year (at constant value) and that the life cycle of a machine is five years.

In the first year he'll produce 100 machines which will be ordered by Capitalist(s). 1. Next year, in order to sell, the capitalist class will have to be expanding their production at the same rate. Thus the machine manufacturer will have to sell 100 machines again (to capitalists 2) in order only to operate at the same level of production. The same in the following year until the sixth year. Hence, so far there has to be a constant increase in the rate of accumulation of the values of that machine in order that the manufacturer can stay in business even at the same level of production. Of course, producing in the dark, in the sixth year, the capitalist will produce one more machine to take into account the expected expansion in demand, plus one other to replace the machine worn out by the capitalists (1). This process can be represented in the following way:-

5 YEAR CYCLE

Year	Supply	Demand	
1	100	100	ordered by capitalist(s) 1
2	100	100	" " " 2
3	100	100	" " " 3
4	100	100	" " " 4
5	100	100	" " " 5
6	100	100	" " " (replacement) 1
	100	100	" " " (replacement) 6
7	100	100	" " " (replacement) 2
	100	100	" " " (replacement) 7
11	100	100	" " " (replacement) 1
	100	100	" " " (replacement) 6
	100	100	" " " (replacement) 11

Obviously Caps (1) (2) (3) etc are not necessarily all different. The same capitalists can and must expand business from year to year.

Regardless of whether the values of the machines alter (ie the example above needs to be translated into value terms), the accumulation by the capitalists using the machinery will have to increase steadily in order that the particular machine-supplying capitalist can maintain production at a steady rate, without himself even accumulating. If he is to accumulate, then the increase in accumulation by the machine-users must be even greater.

From the above example, it can be seen that if the capitalists who use the machinery in question expand their demand for the machines, but at a slower rate than in the preceding year, then this can have a disastrous effect on the machine-supplying capitalists. For example, if in year 3 the demand for new machinery is only 50, instead of 100, this can mean a 50 per cent drop in the production of machines (on the flow of production) with men being laid off, capital lying idle. Or, even assuming the machines worn out are replaced in year 7, an increase in demand of 50 instead of 100 would mean a relative overproduction of machines by $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. If this sort of development takes place on a large scale, then overproduction will grip several spheres of production. When crises of overproduction take place, the largest fall in production is always in those sectors producing means of production. (*18)

Crisis of overproduction stemming from the falling rate of profit can become magnified precisely by the fall off in the demand for new capital. Proportionate production becomes disproportionate production with the progress of the cycle.

(d) A relative overproduction of capital can also arise with an increase in the machines put on the market which outstrip the level of production of raw materials (even if this rises) ie. the social use value of the machinery is thereby diminished. The price of raw materials will rise, the value relations will become disturbed, with the attendant disruption to production. The same phenomenon can arise through scarcity of raw materials from one year to the next.

(e) With the progress of the boom, the expansion of production on a broader basis, with much increased productivity of labour, the volume of goods will tend to increase not just in proportion to the extra capital employed. The same exchange value will be spread

over many more use-values and will have to be realised in order to maintain production at the given rate. In this situation, even if each individual commodity contains the necessary labour time to produce it, if it contains more than the socially necessary labour time (ie. more than that which can be absorbed in demand at that time) then there is overproduction of particular commodities.

But, precisely because the capitalist must continue to expand to capture as much of the market as possible and to accumulate to survive, he must appropriate the greatest possible amount of surplus labour and attempt to realise this on the market with an increasing number of commodities.

The level of production, under capitalism, is therefore adapted to the scale of production instead of vice versa.

"When considering the production process we saw that the whole aim of capitalist production is appropriation of the greatest possible amount of surplus labour, in other words the realisation of the greatest possible amount of immediate labour-time with the given capital It is thus in the nature of capitalist production, to produce without regard to the limits of the market." (*19)

Crisis of overproduction of individual commodities (means of production and means of consumption) can and must erupt from time to time.

Cliff's Theory

As far as one can tell, the L.S. Group (or the Socialist Review Group, as it was called) has held the permanent arms economy thesis since the early fifties. It is well known that L.S.'s early collaborators in the USA, the Schactmanites developed this theory prior to Cliff & Co. (*20)

In the absence of documentation to the contrary, it is not unreasonable to assume that L.S.'s theorising was not new, but borrowed from their collaborators, and others such as Sweezy who had developed the theory a decade before the SR Group. The initial bias of all these theories was strongly under consumptionist.

The early S.R. theory on permanent war economy can be found in an article by Cliff written in 1957. (*21) This located the basic cause of capitalist crisis of overproduction in the relatively low purchasing power of the masses.

"The basic cause of capitalist crises of overproduction is relatively low purchasing power of the masses compared with the production capacity of industry." (*22)

We are then treated to exactly the same quotation as we received from Sweezy to back up this claim. (*23) Cliff elaborates -

"Now the armament economy has very great influence on the level of popular purchasing power, the level of real capital accumulation, and the amount of goods seeking a market.

"Let us assume that there are a million people seeking employment in a certain country. Further, that ten per cent of them are employed by the Government in producing arms - some 100,000 people. Their purchasing power would bring about the employment of more people elsewhere. The numerical relation between the size of the first group and the second is called by the great bourgeois economist Keynes, the Multiplier. For brevity this term can usefully be borrowed. If the Multiplier is 2, the employment of 100,000 workers by the state will increase general employment by 200,000. If the multiplier is 3 the increase will be 300,000 and so on.

"Hence there is no doubt that the effect of an arms budget of 10 per cent of the national income can be quite out of proportion to its size is increasing the purchasing power of the masses." (*24)

Cliff then goes on to say that arms production does not necessarily lower profits (mass or rate); capital is working more fully than otherwise, there is much

less capital working at a loss, its turnover is greater. "Thus, for instance, in the years 1937-42 total wages in United States industry rose by 70 per cent, profits by 40%." (*25).

But, why arms as the "public works" which have the stabilising effect? There are, according to Cliff, six basic reasons.

1. They do not compete with private interests which produce in the same field, thus avoiding increasing the danger of overproduction in the particular field in question. In the field of, say, barrack building the state stands alone.
2. They employ industries most affected by slumps - capital goods industries, heavy industries.
3. "That they do not add much - in preference should subtract from- the productive capacity of capitalism and should, as far as possible, slow down the growth of social capital." (*26)
4. "That they do not add much, if at all, to the output of mass consumer goods and thus are not dependant on higher wages for an increasing market." (*27)
5. While not adding to national productive capital, the capitalist class should consider them important for the defence of its wealth and even be a weapon for enlarging its prospective markets.
6. So that relatively one major capitalist country shall not suffer from less resources for capital accumulation its competitors, all major countries, should engage in "Public Works" to an extent corresponding to their level of national output and wealth.

Cliff then finished by highlighting 3 basic contradictions -

- a. The burden of armaments may in certain circumstances grow faster than the net output. This would be likely to lead to great social upheavals and "even a socialist revolution."
- b. They eat up a large portion of the national surplus value seeking investment and thus weaken the forces leading to overproduction. But, they may lead to a big advance in general technique and with it increasing pressure towards a slump. Therefore, in such circumstances there would likely to be an increasing proportion of national income on arms. This may lead to strong opposition from workers and lower middle class people and "perhaps mild opposition even among sectors of the capitalist class who would not benefit directly from the armament drive." (*28)
- c. Competition on the world market may become so fierce, that in order to obtain the necessary capital for accumulation, there would be a competitive struggle to cut arms expenditure and hence, arms would become less and less a cure for overproduction and thus, less of a stabiliser. Cliff (1957) held out the prospects for such developments in the not too distant future.

Cliff's use of the multiplier thesis to attempt to illustrate the increase in the purchasing power of the masses (even if there was such an increase, how would this present the forces for crisis?) is somewhat strange. As we saw in the section on crises, the fall off in production in one sector quickly leads to a fall off in others as demand falls, giving rise to a multiplier effect in reverse.

Similarly, at the beginning of a recovery, the taking up of capacity, the renewed use of capital and labour power lying idle, sets into operation the demand for more constant and variable capital, which in its turn stimulates demand for more means of production and means of consumption. Thus the multiplier operates. This operates with armaments, as it does with the effects of the renewed production of frams, transistor radios or anything you like. However, to what

extent does arms production "create" purchasing power beyond that of wages and revenue gained in such production?

Insofar as the state guarantees outlets for the realisation of surplus value which would not otherwise be realised by purchasing the products of heavy industry and guaranteeing super profits to certain sections of monopoly capital, (for example the years leading up to the first world war for the "great powers", German-rearmament post 1933, American rearmament 1940), this was the main stimulant to the recovery of industry as the existing productive power was put back into operation. So that, in a certain sense, this did increase the purchasing power of the masses, and certain sections of the capitalist class, but only insofar as it helped to re-establish purchasing power lost in the slump and stagnation. Insofar as it took resources which, had there been profitable outlets, would have been accumulated this "created" extra wages, revenue etc. Insofar as the recovery laid the basis for renewed accumulation on an extended scale, again extra wages, surplus value etc were generated.

But purchasing power has only been "created" to the extent that arms production has had an anti-cyclical effect, both in stimulating economic recovery, and in the post-war period. However arms production could only be a pre-condition for expansion of the economy, provided forces were at work (which indirectly arms may have aided) in the productive sectors of the economy, forces which off-set the effects of declining rate of profit. Armaments production does not enter into the reproduction process. It is a deduction from the total surplus value created in the productive sectors, ie. those sectors which reproduce and expand values. Thus, precisely because of this, arms production, in the absence of such off-setting forces to the declining rate of profit can be a barrier to economic recovery). (*29)

As soon as full employment of means of production and labour has been achieved, there can be no fresh expansion of arms production (and military expenditure generally) without transfer of resources from other sectors of the economy to the militarised sectors. Of course, as stated previously, expanded reproduction can still take place in the productive sectors, but this has to cover the increase in arms production as well as that for reproduction on an extended scale.

To come on to Cliff's six reasons why arms should be the "public works" which have stabilising effect and his three contradictions:-

Numbers 2, 4 and 5 are true as hitherto stated, insofar as arms are a replacement market. They can guarantee outlets for capital which would not otherwise be realised, and high profits for certain sectors of the capitalist class, provided that there is an independent dynamic in the productive sectors to sustain the growth, off setting the tendencies to crisis. In such circumstances arms act as a stabiliser. As will be elaborated in Part II, since World War II there have been booms and slumps prior to the present stagnation; arms production has had a role in preventing the slumps sliding into deep depressions.

No. 6 does not take place, as Cliff himself admits in his footnote on p40 of his article. The capitalists and their states do not have slide rules to apportion the arms burden equally between them. In fact this has been one of the problems of British capitalism. The main question is, given the way in which military alliances and burdens have come into being, what are the circumstances which allow these to be borne disproportionately at a particular period in world capitalist development. And why does this start to turn into its opposite in another period... for example the pressures from the U.S. at present to share the burden more evenly; the pressures to reduce arms spending overall.

Contradiction (a) is certainly possible. One consideration in the pull out from Vietnam, apart from the massive military defeat suffered by the U.S. is the prohibitive cost of the Vietnam war, which, in the initial period gave an impetus to a sliding economy, but which turned into its opposite as the war continued.

Contradiction (b) held out the prospect of overproduction of commodities due to big improvement in technique, giving rise to much increased productivity of labour. It was said that the way to overcome this would be to increase the arms budget as a proportion of the "national income". But there are a number of difficulties with that. In so far as arms production is related to the growth of output, it is related to expectations in this growth. Therefore the overproduction of commodities (means of production and means of consumption) would take place before the arms production could adjust to this.

(II) Once this had happened many of the commodities would be unuseable for the arms sector. Hence there would not be a mechanical transfer of surplus value from the productive to the non-productive sectors. There would be disruptions, cut back in production and recession before any re-adjustment could take place.

(III) The high level of arms production (and increased production of arms if this were feasible) would prevent a slide into a deep depression, but, if arms production can be stepped up, unless this resulted in contracted reproduction, lowering of wages, living and working conditions, then why should there be the sort of resistance envisaged by Cliff on the part of workers and petty bourgeois elements?

(IV) What effect would increased production of armaments relative to the total social product, have on the falling rate of profit and mass of profit available to the capitalist class? This relates to the most important aspect of Cliff's theory, reasons No. 1 and 3.

Number 1 can only be partially true. If the capital tied up in armaments were to be invested in, say shoes, then there would be a greater danger of overproduction of shoes. However, as far as the organic composition of capital goes, and thus the rate of profit at a given level of exploitation, it matters not whether the capital is in private or state hands. It's a question of the overall organic composition of capital. In this case, crises of overproduction, resulting from shoes, falls in the rate of profit would not be averted merely by the state investing rather than private capitalists. It would here be a question, once more, of forces offsetting the tendency of the falling rate of profit. This links in with No. 3. If the rate of growth of the social capital is slowed down, then unless arms can possess some mystical quality of squandering value, yet at the same time preventing the rate of profit from falling, then arms production can only have a contingent not a necessary part in the productive mechanism which offsets the tendency of the falling rate of profit. In other words, unless there is something in armaments production, which in some way places it outside the reproduction process and offsets the tendency of the falling rate of profit, (in which case we would have to throw overboard the labour theory of value), arms production can't have the overwhelming role in maintaining capitalist stability and growth in the post war period that has been claimed for it by I.S. and its collaborators.

In his article, Cliff points to the increasing rate of profit with the arms-production-led recovery of 1937-42. However, his stress is on the superior utilisation of capital in the recovery period, a development that has followed every climb out of slump and speeded recovery on its way. From that point of view it is not arms as such which increases the profits, but

the recovery which increased arms production stimulated. However, it would be possible to move from this

to positing a necessary role for arms production as such in relation to the rate of profit.

Not surprisingly, the underconsumptionist basis of the permanent arms economy theory has been junked or pushed into the background. The supposed effects of armaments on the now acknowledged central motive force of capitalist crisis, the falling rate of profit, have been elaborated, i.e. the supposed necessary effects of arms in offsetting the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, now forms the theoretical basis for the most recent and generally accepted, through I.S., version of the permanent arms economy thesis, that of Kidron.

KIDRON'S THEORY

The first part of this analysis is given over to a brief elaboration of the central problem for capitalism as Kidron sees Marxists to have portrayed it. This turns round the question of the declining rate of profit. In this section I look merely at Kidron's central thesis on the role of arms production as offsetting, "perhaps permanently," in Kidron's words, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Since arms are classed, by Kidron, as being in the same category as luxury goods, I look at Marx's analysis of luxury goods production and its algebraic representation as to how it relates to the average rate of profit. I then look at modifications of this by Von Bortkiewicz, on which Kidron relies for his analysis.

According to Kidron, "Marxists have in the past seen capitalism as having a permanent tendency towards a crisis of overproduction and consequent slump due to the effects of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall." On the other hand, since post-war capitalism has not had a slump for 25 years, there must be something wrong with the old theory of capitalist crisis. This being the case, Kidron locates the fault in the upholding of the tendency for the rate of profit to fall.

Translating some of the terms in 'Western Capitalism' (which are no doubt inserted to be meaningful to a public versed in bourgeois economics) into corresponding marxist categories, the following is a brief exposition of Kidron's main points in refuting the old crisis theory.

1. The economy was taken as a "closed" system. In this, all "output" flows back into the system as productive consumption. There are no leakages from this system. Total output is allocated between "Investment" (constant capital reproduced in the final "output") and "necessary consumption" (means of subsistence of the laborers - haven't Marxists, certainly Marx, taken the consumption of the capitalists into account? And of course costs of production which do not enter into the creation of value, but are necessary deduction from surplus value.)

2. In this "closed" system, there is an increasing organic composition of capital (organic composition of capital = c/v i.e. constant capital forming an increasing proportion of the whole. Thus without a corresponding increase in surplus value offsetting the effect of the increase in total capital and the increasing proportion of constant and variable capital, the rate of profit $p = s/(c+v)$ must fall. Since this just does not happen on the whole, the rate of profit will fall.

For Kidron, condition No 1 is pivotal, "If dropped, and the ratio of the returns of capital and labour becomes indeterminate, the second falls and the 'law' with it." (*30)

Before going on to Kidron's main assailing of the concept of the "closed system", it might be instructive from the point of view of economic method, to see some of the features that Kidron regards as departing from "closed system" i.e. as constituting "leaks" from it,

In order to understand his conception of the "closed system" itself.

This is done in IS No 36 (*31) Briefly, the said leaks are export of capital, wars, slumps and luxury good production, especially armaments (*32) It is the latter that mainly concerns us. However, if we look briefly at the others listed we see a non-Marxist conception of the "economic system".

Export of capital and its effects are hardly dealt with in 'Western Capitalism'. This is perhaps not surprising in view of the denial of the existence of imperialism as conceived by Leninists as being the stage of monopoly capitalism operating today. However, in the article mentioned above, capital exports are said to have "leaked" from the closed system, "diverting" and "freezing" large quantities of capital from it.

The point is, that this can be explained by capital exports flowing to branches of production and areas of the world where a low organic composition of capital, and/or a higher rate of surplus value prevailed (and hence a higher rate of profit). They have not been a leak from the "closed system" - unless the "closed system" is regarded as a single country, which is nonsense since capitalism is an international system and the export of capital has been an essential part of its dynamic. That this is so is not only acknowledged since Lenin, but Marx never treated capitalism as a "closed system" in the sense mentioned above. eg. Footnote 1 p. 581 Capital Vol I :-

"In order to examine the object of our investigation in its integrity, free from all disturbing subsidiary circumstances, we must treat the whole world as one nation, and assume that capitalist production is everywhere established and has possessed itself of every branch of industry." Regardless of the truth of this statement in 1867, the underlying methodological assumptions are the direct opposite of those of the "closed system" analysis.

Wars, insofar as they destroyed fixed and constant capital (they don't always), lower the organic composition of capital thus preventing a fall in the rate of profit (even reversing the trend). But so what? Insofar as wars are an inevitable consequence of capitalism, they certainly can't be considered as being outside the "closed system", any more than can slumps.

Slumps likewise destroy capital as value through depreciation of stocks of goods (plant and buildings go to ruin) and of fixed capital. This leads to a decline in the organic composition of capital and thus to a temporary reversal of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall which sets off the cycle over again. This is no "leak" from a "closed system", but is built into the economic system of necessity.

So, the concept of the "closed system" is a faulty or (dare we say it) a "leaky" one. However, the main concern is with the effect of arms production on the organic composition of capital and the overall rate of profit.

If it were the case that arms production was somehow "outside" the "system" and draws capital off, it would still need to be demonstrated how the organic composition of capital in the "system" did not rise so as to bring about a falling rate of profit, overproduction etc etc

So what is this "leak"? What is its economic effect?

With respect to arms production as a "leak", the said phenomenon is supposed to be operative in virtue of arms coming under the category of luxury goods. Being part of what has been called Department III (non-productive capital, personal consumption of capitalists, gold production etc., Dept. I being necessary means of production, Dept. II necessary means of subsistence for the workers). the organic composition of capital in producing such goods is supposed to play no part in determining the general rate of profit. Now it so happens that Marx included luxury goods as a

definite category, in his analysis. Therefore it seems appropriate that we should start with a look at Marx's analysis of luxuries.

Marx and Luxury Good Production

The richness of Marx's method, whether he is considering economic, philosophical, historical, or any other aspect of human existence, consists in his relating the parts to the whole. Marx always shows how the whole conditions the parts and the parts condition the whole; how the motion of the parts determines the whole and are determined by it. So it is in considering the dynamics of capitalist production as embodied in 'Capital'. Marx looks at capitalist production as a whole, and on the basis of establishing the scientific concept of commodity, value, surplus value, exploitation, the nature of capital (and its constituent parts) explains profit and rate of profit in these terms.

The rate of profit is given by $p = \frac{s}{c} \times 100 = \frac{s}{v+c} \times 100$

The contradictions embodied in this formula are developed by Marx in considering the production and reproduction of commodities. Capitalist production is broken down into its constituent parts namely - production of means of production and production of means of consumption. Here the two departments of production are called by Marx, respectively, Dept I and Dept II.

To show how exchange can take place within and between these Depts, Marx firstly makes a number of abstractions, later rounding out the picture.

(a) he takes reproduction on a simple scale i.e. all that is produced in any one year is consumed; production in one year is identical with that of the preceding year.

(b) products are exchanged at their values. There is no change in the values of the component parts of productive capital.

(c) The organic composition of capital (c/v) and the rate of exploitation (s/v) is the same in both departments so that the rate of profit in each department is equal to the overall rate of profit.

These assumptions do not and cannot apply to any actually existent capitalism. However, as total price must equal total value "the fact that prices diverge from values cannot . . . exert any influence on the movements of social capital. On the whole (my emphasis P.S.) there is the same exchange of the same quantities of products.

"Although the individual capitalists are involved in value relations no longer proportional to their respective advances and to the quantities of surplus value produced singly by everyone of them. As for revolutions in value, they do not alter anything in the relations between the value components of the total annual products, provided they are universally and

evenly distributed. To the extent however, that they are partially and unevenly distributed, they represent disturbances which in the FIRST (Marx's emphasis) place, can be regarded as DIVERGENCIES from unchanged value relations, but in the SECOND place, once there is proof of the law according to

which one portion of the value of the annual product replaces constant, and another portion variable capital, a revolution either in the value of the constant or that of the variable capital would not alter anything in this law. It would change merely the relative magnitudes of the portions of value which function in the one or the other capacity, because other values would have taken the place of the original ones." (*33)

As for the assumption of simple reproduction, Marx posits it only as part of the picture, which is nevertheless fruitful to look at because "as far as accumulation does take place, simple reproduction

is always a part of it, and can therefore be studied by itself, and is an actual factor of accumulation". (*34) But only a factor. This must be stressed, as it's the source of one of Kidron's gross errors. This we'll return to later.

Marx takes the total annual product consumed as constant capital (consumed raw material going into the finished product and wear and tear of the final capital) plus the portion of product devoted to variable capital, (v), plus the excess over this, the surplus value (s). So annual product = c + v + s.

To take Marx's example (Cap Vol II pp 40) Total annual commodity product = 9000
 Of this, capital = 7500
 Surplus value = 1500
 "Rate of profit" on flow $p^1 = \frac{1500}{7500} = \frac{1}{5}$ or 20%

Dept I - Production of Means of Production

Capital 4000c + 1000v = 5000
 Commodity product 4000c + 1000v + 1000s = 6000
 existing in means of production

Dept II - Production of Articles of Consumption:

Capital 2000c + 500v = 2500
 Commodity-Product 2000c + 500s + 500v = 3000
 existing in articles of consumption

$$\text{Thus } p^1 = \frac{1500}{7500} = \frac{s_i + s_{ii}}{c_i + c_{ii} + v_i + v_{ii}} = 20\%$$

$$\text{and } p^1 = \frac{s_i}{c_i + v_i} = \frac{1000}{5000} = 20\%$$

$$\text{and } p^1 = \frac{s_{ii}}{c_{ii} + v_{ii}} = \frac{500}{2500} = 20\%$$

(Subscript refers to the particular dept. under consideration.)

So far so good. There is no inconsistency between the whole and the parts. The return on consumed capital (p^1) is the same in each department and throughout. (*see Appendix 2)

Marx then analyses Dept II, articles of consumption are broken down into their 2 general components - necessities (IIa) and luxuries (IIb).

Those articles which the working class consume and which form part of the consumption of the capitalist class are necessities. Those which only the capitalists consume are luxuries. Clearly, both these categories of consumption are relative, depending very much on the relationship of class forces at any one time, the state of the economic cycle and historically developed patterns of consumption. All of these affect variously the rate of exploitation, the proportion of consumption articles to be only consumed by the capitalists and even, to an extent, whether certain articles at different periods, become necessities from being luxuries, or luxuries from being necessities. This being the case, Marx's only purpose in analysing Dept II was in order to clarify the mechanism of commodity exchange to show how (a) the proletariat can consume neither goods in Dept I nor those in Dept IIb; (b) all Dept IIb must be exchanged for part of the surplus value. As such, luxury goods production in the sense Marx meant it, can only be a fraction of the total surplus value.

These points are illustrated in the exchange relationships within and between Depts. The scheme Marx adopts is such that luxury goods form 2/5 of total capitalist class consumption. Thus we obtain the

following breakdown, using Marx's initial figures.

- I 4000c + 1000v + 1000s = 6000
- IIa 1600c + 400v + 400s = 2400 *
- IIb 400c + 100v + 100s = 600 (see appendix)

The point about this whole scheme is that there is no disparity between the whole and the parts. Nor can there be. Since the totals of the individual departments and the proportions within them are the same as those of the whole, it is obvious that the rate of profit is the same throughout and, since Marx posited the whole economic system and showed how luxuries are a part of this whole, luxury goods, for Marx, can be neither "outside" the system, nor a "leak" from it, nor a "drain" from it.

So (i) luxury goods (and the rate of profit on these) are part of the total social product, their distinguishing feature being only that the capitalist class alone consumes such goods. Furthermore, the boundary line between luxuries and necessities is relative and shifting.

(ii) In producing items for its own consumption the laws of capitalist production are as applicable as ever. Value and surplus value are screwed from the working class so that the capitalists can even make a profit when they're producing solely for their own use!

And (iii) Since luxury production must be exchanged against surplus value produced in Depts I and IIa, the total value of luxury good dept IIb must always be less than this surplus value.

So far we have been considering an idealized version of simple reproduction in which the organic composition of capital and the rate of exploitation is the same in all departments.

To make our scheme of simple reproduction that much more realistic it is necessary to postulate different organic compositions of capital within the different departments, the overall organic composition of capital and "rate of profit" being determined by the totals for the constituent departments.

This can be done in the following manner using 3 departments. I make this departure because the Kidron theorising on Permanent Arms Economy utilises this approach, adopted from Von Bortkiewicz (*35) Dept I is all raw materials, machinery, buildings etc. consumed in production. This is equivalent to the value of the constant capital consumed and re-appearing in the finished product. Dept II is all workers' consumption goods, and therefore equivalent to the total value of the variable capital (wages). Dept III is all capitalists' consumption, and therefore equivalent, in simple reproduction, where all values produced are consumed, to the total surplus value produced. Also, Dept III is here called "luxury goods" by Von Bortkiewicz, Sweezy and Kidron. Note the slightly changed use of the term "luxury", as compared with Marx's usage. The workers don't consume these particular goods in either case, yet part of Dept III would, being common types of good for worker and capitalist alike be placed by Marx in Dept IIa (necessities). So much for that. Let us accept Von Bortkiewicz's categories in order to tackle Kidron's analysis.

- I $c_1 + v_1 + s_1 = c_1 + c_2 + c_3$ (total constant capital)
- II $c_2 + v_2 + s_2 = v_1 + v_2 + v_3$ (total wages (variable cap))
- III $c_3 + v_3 + s_3 = s_1 + s_2 + s_3$ (total surplus value)

eg. Value Scheme (*36)

Dept	C	V	S
I	250c ₁	75v ₁	75s ₁ = 400
II	50c ₂	75v ₂	75s ₂ = 200
III	100c ₃	50v ₃	50s ₃ = 200
	400 I	200 II	200 III

This scheme, as before, is for the flow of goods not

the stock. Thus: $p = (s_1 + s_2 + s_3) / (c_1 + c_2 + c_3 + v_1 + v_2 + v_3)$

Now, as can be seen above, there is a different return on the capital flow in each department, as each has a different organic composition of capital, yet the same rate of exploitation (This need not necessarily be so but a differential rate of exploitation would not alter the argument if $s/(c+v)$ is different in each dept.)

Hence, if there is to be an equal "rate of profit" (p) in all departments, equal to that of the general rate then inevitably one department must subsidise the others so that a distribution of profit takes place in proportion to the overall (constant and variable) capital consumed.

Marx's solution to this problem was merely to manipulate the prices so that those of constant and variable capital remained unaltered in relation to value, while the total price of each department was made up by adding or subtracting that extra amount in accordance with their capital consumed.

So the price scheme would look like this:-

	C	V	Profit	Price	Dev'n from val
Dept. 1	250	75	108 1/3	433 1/3	+33 1/3
Dept. 2	50	75	41 2/3	166 2/3	-33 1/3
Dept. 3	100	50	50	200	0
	400	200	200	800	0

As can be seen, total price = total value. However the exchange relationships do not balance, the equilibrium of simple reproduction is disrupted. The value of the constant capital produced is 400. It is priced at 433 1/3. However, the total price of the constant capital used up is in Depts 1, 2, 3 is only 400. Also, the value of wage goods (Dept 2) = 200, the price is only 166 2/3 yet the price of labour power in Depts 1, 2, 3 is 200.

Kidron after Sweezy, adopts von Bortkiewicz's solution to the price transformation. Assume that the price of a unit of constant capital is x times its value, the price of a unit of wage goods is y times its value, and the price of a unit of "luxury" goods is z times its value. If we call the new monetary rate of profit on the flow of capital r then we obtain the following:-

Value Relations

I $c_1 + v_1 + s_1 = c_1 + c_2 + c_3$

II $c_2 + v_2 + s_2 = v_1 + v_2 + v_3$

III $c_3 + v_3 + s_3 = s_1 + s_2 + s_3$

Price Relations

I $c_1x + v_1y + r(c_1x + v_1y) = (c_1 + c_2 + c_3)x$

II $c_2x + v_2y + r(c_2x + v_2y) = (v_1 + v_2 + v_3)y$

III $c_3x + v_3y + r(c_3x + v_3y) = (s_1 + s_2 + s_3)z$

These can be rewritten thus:-

I $(1 + r)(c_1x + v_1y) = (c_1 + c_2 + c_3)x$

II $(1 + r)(c_2x + v_2y) = (v_1 + v_2 + v_3)y$

III $(1 + r)(c_3x + v_3y) = (s_1 + s_2 + s_3)z$

There are 3 equations and 4 unknowns. A fourth one could be constructed, given total value = total price viz.

$(c_1 + c_2 + c_3)x + (v_1 + v_2 + v_3)y + (s_1 + s_2 + s_3)z =$

$(c_1 + c_2 + c_3) + (v_1 + v_2 + v_3) + (s_1 + s_2 + s_3)$

What Bortkiewicz did instead though, was to link the

labour time necessary to produce one unit of the money (say 1/35th ounce) commodity to the necessary labour time to produce the other commodities. Hence, the value scheme can be put in money terms. Then one unit of gold becomes the unit of value. Also, Bortkiewicz made the simplification that the units of "Luxury" goods were so chosen that they all exchange against the unit of gold on a one-to-one basis. So that, in going from the value to price scheme, the unit of gold would be equal to one in both schemes, and therefore so would that of luxury goods. This way, $z = 1$ and we have three unknowns; the equations are soluble. This is obviously a dodge. However if z is known, then again we only have three unknowns. But anyway z does not have to be known to derive this new monetary rate of profit (r).

If we let $1 + r = m$, then the three price equations look like this:

I. $m(c_1x + v_1y) = (c_1 + c_2 + c_3)x$

II. $m(c_2x + v_2y) = (v_1 + v_2 + v_3)y$

III. $m(c_3x + v_3y) = (s_1 + s_2 + s_3)z$

Divide Equation I by c_1 , Equation II by c_2 , Equation III by c_3 . Thus -

I. $m(x + v_1/c_1 \cdot y) = \frac{c_1 + c_2 + c_3}{c_1}x = \frac{c_1 + v_1 + s_1}{c_1}x$

II. $m(x + v_2/c_2 \cdot y) = \frac{v_1 + v_2 + v_3}{c_2}y = \frac{c_2 + v_2 + s_2}{c_2}y$

III. $m(x + v_3/c_3 \cdot y) = \frac{s_1 + s_2 + s_3}{c_3}z = \frac{c_2 + v_3 + s_3}{c_3}z$

putting $f_1 = v_1/c_1$ and $g_1 = \frac{v_1 + c_1 + s_1}{c_1}$ etc.

Our equations can be rewritten

I. $m(x + f_1y) = g_1x$ (1)

II. $m(x + f_2y) = g_2y$ (2)

III. $m(x + f_3y) = g_3z$ (3)

Subtract (2) from (1) - $m(f_1y - f_2y) = g_2x - g_2y$

$\therefore x = y/g_1 \cdot (mf_1 - mf_2 + g_2)$ (4)

Substitute (4) in (2) -

$my/g_1 \cdot (mf_1 - mf_2 + g_2) + mf_2y = g_2y$.. (5)

Divide (5) throughout by y and we get an equation for m on the basis of our price equations for Depts. I & II, viz. -

$m^2(f_2 - f_1) + m(g_2 + f_2g_1) - g_1g_2 = 0$

This gives two values for m :

$m = \frac{g_2 + f_2g_1 \pm \sqrt{(g_2 - f_2g_1)^2 + 4g_1g_2f_1}}{2(f_2 - f_1)}$

Since the value

$m = \frac{g_2 + f_2g_1 - \sqrt{(g_2 - f_2g_1)^2 + 4g_1g_2f_1}}{2(f_2 - f_1)}$ is the only one

to make sense in the context, this must be the solution.

Since $m = 1 + r$;
then $r = m - 1$;

$$r = \frac{f_2 g_1 + g_2 \sqrt{(g_2 - f_2 g_1)^2 + 4 f_1 g_3 g_2} - 1}{2(f_2 - f_1)}$$

Also from (2) & (3); $y = \frac{g_3}{g_2 + (f_3 - f_2)m}$

$$x = \frac{f_1 y m}{g_1 - m}$$

In the example quoted, $x = 9/8$, $y = 3/4$, $m = 4/3$;
 $\therefore r = 1/3$

Thus the price calculation is as follows:

Dept.	Constant Capital	Variable Capital	PROFIT	PRICE
I	281 1/2	56 1/2	450	112 1/2
II	56 1/2	56 1/2	150	37 1/2
III	112 1/2	37 1/2	200	50
	450	150		200

As will be seen, if the price relations of constant capital, variable capital and profit in Depts. I, II, and III respectively are:

$$C_1 V_1 P_1; C_2 V_2 P_2; C_3 V_3 P_3$$

we see that:

$$C_1 + V_1 + P_1 = C_1 + C_2 + C_3$$

$$C_2 + V_2 + P_2 = V_1 + V_2 + V_3$$

$$C_3 + V_3 + P_3 = P_1 + P_2 + P_3$$

Thus simple reproduction is maintained. And, as can be seen from above, the formula for the rate of profit in monetary terms in this case, (it happens to be equal to that in value terms overall, but this is not necessarily the case) does not contain f_3 , i.e. v_3/c_3 , the organic composition of capital on the flow in dept III (not the real organic composition), or g_3 (the ratio of constant capital to total output in department III).

Sweezy, and Kidron after him, then make the biggest mathematical, logical, value, howler of the lot. Because neither f_3, g_3 appear in the formula for the monetary rate of profit on the flow (r), Sweezy maintains that "the organic composition of capital in Dept. III (luxury goods) plays no direct role in determining the rate of profit." And, "To demonstrate that there is no necessary connection between variation in the average organic composition of the total social capital and variations in the average rate of profit, one need only assume that the organic composition of capital in Dept. III rises while everything else remains unchanged. The average organic composition of capital must rise, but the rate of profit remains unaffected." And Kidron: "Since arms are a 'luxury' in the sense that they are not used either as instruments of production or as means of subsistence, in the production of commodities, their production has no effect on profit rates"

What has happened here is that a correct mathematical conclusion has been wrongly abstracted from the context in which the mathematical relations obtained. As we saw, m can be deduced from the variables in Dept I and Dept II. Mathematically Dept III could contain any relations without affecting Depts I & II; i.e. Dept III could be completely independent from Depts I & II in relation to m . But it would only follow that the organic composition of capital in Dept

III was of no consequence in determining the overall rate of profit if Dept III production was a completely independent entity, bearing no necessary (production, mathematical, value) relationship to the other Depts. The point is that production in Depts I, II and III is part of the total social production, all being interrelated and determining each other.

It seems very strange that one starts with the proposition that there must be an equal rate of profit in all departments, which is equal to the average rate of profit (the rate of profit on the total social capital), and one cannot accept Marx's transformations from value to price because they destroy the equilibrium, yet arrive at conclusion which would entail just that. The conclusion that the organic composition of capital in Dept III is irrelevant would only apply if production in Dept III was truly independent i.e. was not in any way dependent on Depts I & II and vice versa. Then Dept III production would be "outside" the economic system and the organic composition of capital and even the peculiar rate of profit in Dept III would be irrelevant; there would be no need to postulate equilibrium between Departments of production.

The value and exchange relationships and the realisation problem have been lost sight of; if the conclusion adopted by Bortkiewicz, Sweezy, and Kidron were accepted, the labour theory of value would be thrown out of the window.

Let us look at the reproduction schemes again.

Value Relation

Dept.	Constant Capital	Variable Capital	Surplus Value
I	c_1	v_1	s_1
II	c_2	v_2	s_2
III	c_3	v_3	s_3

$$c_1 + v_1 + s_1 = c_1 + c_2 + c_3 \dots (A)$$

$$c_2 + v_2 + s_2 = v_1 + v_2 + v_3 \dots (B)$$

$$c_3 + v_3 + s_3 = s_1 + s_2 + s_3 \dots (C)$$

$$\text{From (A) } c_3 = v_1 + s_1 - c_2$$

$$\text{From (B) } v_3 = c_2 + s_2 - v_1$$

It follows from this that if c_3 or v_3 or both is altered then if the value relations are to be correct v_1, s_1, c_2, s_2 at least must be altered. (Thus f_1, f_2 , and g_1 & g_2 will be altered and therefore so will r)

But these alterations would be subject to definite laws. Since we are relating the mathematics to a simple reproduction process, the organic composition of capital will change in either or both departments I and II, and since labour is the source of all value, not only would the absolute amount of surplus value be altered but also (value-wise on the flow) the rate of profit in each Dept, and therefore the whole, ' r ', which is expressed in terms of c_1, v_1, c_2, v_2 , would thus be altered as they are altered.

e.g. let us assume:

I	250 (c_1)	+	75 (v_1)	+	75 (s_1)
II	50 (c_2)	+	75 (v_2)	+	75 (s_2)
III	100 (c_3)	+	50 (v_3)	+	50 (s_3)

If the organic composition of capital in III is changed so that the total capital remains the same, i.e. $c_3 = 125, v_3 = 25$, unless the rate of exploitation

doubles the surplus value will go down.

(Even if the rate of exploitation were doubled and the rate of profit in Dept. III remained unaltered, the reproduction scheme would not balance.)

Thus Dept. III will now read:

$125c_3 + 25v_3 + 25s_3$ so that:

I	$250(c_1)$	+	$75(v_1)$	+	$75(s_1)$
II	$50(c_2)$	+	$75(v_2)$	+	$75(s_2)$
III	$125(c_3)$	+	$25(v_3)$	+	$25(s_3)$

Not only would the total surplus value diminish, but the rate of profit (on the flow) would do so also, as the total capital remains the same. However, as will be noticed, the value scheme does not balance. The value of capital goods (Dept. I) is 400, the value of constant capital used ($c_1 + c_2 + c_3$) is 425; the wages goods produced are valued at 200, the value of the variable capital (total wages) is only 175. In Dept. I, either v_1 or s_1 or both will have to be changed to add another 25 to the value. Similarly this will, in its turn, alter s_2 and v_2 .

It is feasible, mathematically, that the organic composition in Dept. III can be altered, the total capital in III being the same, the surplus value in III remaining unaltered. * Thus the total social production would still be divided into 200 surplus value, 600 capital and the "rate of profit" on the flow would still be 1/3rd. However, the reproduction scheme would not balance yet again. Thus the value would not be realised and therefore the rate of profit in fact could not be 1/3rd. To illustrate this the scheme would look like this:-

I	$250(c_1)$	$75(v_1)$	$75(s_1)$	400
II	$50(c_2)$	$75(v_2)$	$75(s_2)$	200
III	$125(c_3)$	$25(v_3)$	$50(s_3)$	200
	<u>425</u>	<u>175</u>	<u>200</u>	

The total value of capital goods produced = 400
The total value of capital goods used ($c_1 + c_2 + c_3$) = 425

Similarly $c_2 + v_2 + s_2$ (wages goods) = 200

Total value of wages ($v_1 + v_2 + v_3$) = 175

(* Of course assuming that more constant capital is forthcoming (from where in simple reproduction?) for Dept. III, it is feasible to increase this, variable capital remaining unchanged, the organic composition of capital in Depts. I & II remain unchanged. Here a correspondingly equal amount of surplus value would have to be forthcoming in Dept. I to maintain the reproduction scheme. In this case the organic composition of capital would rise, but so would the rate of profit, due to an increase in the rate of exploitation offsetting that. But how would that arise?

If the organic composition in Dept. III were somehow to be increased, c_3 and v_3 increasing, it is impossible to balance the scheme, keeping the organic composition of capital the same in the other two Depts.)

It would be mathematically possible to restore this equilibrium maintaining the organic compositions of capital of I & II and the total social capital. Thus:

I	200	75	100	<u>425*</u>
II	50	75	50	<u>175**</u>
III	<u>125*</u>	<u>25**</u>	<u>50***</u>	<u>200***</u>
	<u>425*</u>	<u>175**</u>	<u>200***</u>	

How could these mathematical possibilities become actualities? At the same time as the rate of exploitation in Dept. III doubles (how?), the rate of exploitation

would magically have to increase from 100% to 133 1/3rd% in Dept. I, while it would have to decrease from 100% to 66 2/3rds. % in Dept. II. All this with a redistribution of the total social capital! Truly absurd!

But, since the value relations have tended to be lost sight of and the rate of profit expressed in monetary terms, since

$$r = \frac{g_2 + f_2 g_1 - \sqrt{(g_2 - f_2 g_1)^2 + 4g_1 g_2 f_1}}{2(f_2 - f_1)} - 1$$

even in the fairy tale world of rates of exploitation rising and falling with mathematical imperatives, the monetary rate of profit on the flow would be altered, as g_1 and g_2 are altered (from 400/250 to 425/250 and from 200/250 to 175/250 respectively, since the expression for 'r' contains g_1 and g_2 . In this particular case 'r' is not very much altered, but as a generality it would be.)

The point is that mathematical precision cannot be guaranteed given the available techniques of production and the rate of exploitation. The proportions of the factors of production are not governed by the imperatives of mathematical relationships!

Similarly, with the price transformations. If the price of the constant capital in Dept. I is C_1 , of the variable capital in I is V_1 , and of the profit in I is P_1 , etc., then the price scheme would be expressed as:

I. $C_1 + V_1 + P_1$

II. $C_2 + V_2 + P_2$

III. $C_3 + V_3 + P_3$

and $C_1 + V_1 + P_1 = C_1 + C_2 + C_3$

$C_2 + V_2 + P_2 = V_1 + V_2 + V_3$

$C_3 + V_3 + P_3 = P_1 + P_2 + P_3$

Again, alterations in C_3 and V_3 would require alterations in C_2, P_2, V_1 and P_1 . In any case the price relations are directly determined by the value relations;

$C_1 = c_1x, C_2 = c_2x, C_3 = c_3x$

$V_1 = v_1y, V_2 = v_2y, V_3 = v_3y$

$P_1 = r(c_1x + v_1y), P_2 = r(c_2x + v_2y),$

$P_3 = r(c_3x + v_3y).$

i) It is quite clear that the organic composition of capital in Dept. III cannot be increased, everything else remaining unchanged.

ii) The surplus value, profit, rate of profit will alter with alterations in Dept. III, as with alterations in either (or both) of the other Depts.

iii) The overall organic composition of capital will change with a change in one or more Departments unless there is a corresponding change in the other Depts., so that the total capital in the three Depts., and the organic composition of capital, is obtained by adding the capital in the constituent Depts and thus the total surplus value and the rate of profit is that on the total production.

As a corollary to this, 'r' can be deduced from the variables in Depts. I & II, using the total production scheme and the inter-relation between Depts. I, II & III

because Dept. III is directly expressible (and must be) in terms of Dept. I and II variables and 'r'. This showed in the Quadratic equation for 'm', but that calculation was not necessary to prove this point.

PRICE SCHEME

$$I \quad C_1 + V_1 + P_1$$

$$II \quad C_2 + V_2 + P_2$$

$$III \quad C_3 + V_3 + P_3$$

$$C_3 + V_3 + P_3 = P_1 + P_2 + P_3$$

$$\therefore C_3 + V_3 = P_1 + P_2, \text{ since } P_3 = r(C_3 + V_3)$$

Then the price scheme can be rewritten:

$$I \quad C_1 + V_1 + P_1$$

$$II \quad C_2 + V_2 + P_2$$

$$III \quad P_1 + P_2 + r(P_1 + P_2)$$

Taking the total social production, rate of profit

$$r' = \frac{\text{Total Profit}}{\text{Total capital consumed}}$$

$$r = \frac{P_1 + P_2 + r(P_1 + P_2)}{C_1 + V_1 + P_1 + C_2 + V_2 + P_2}$$

Rearranging -

$$r(C_1 + V_1 + P_1 + C_2 + V_2 + P_2)$$

$$= P_1 + P_2 + r(P_1 + P_2)$$

$$\therefore r = \frac{P_1 + P_2}{C_1 + V_1 + C_2 + V_2}$$

This is obvious. $r = P_1/(C_1 + V_1) = P_2/(C_2 + V_2)$

$$= P_3/(C_3 + V_3) = (P_1 + P_3)/(C_1 + V_1 + C_3 + V_3)$$

$$= (P_2 + P_3)/(C_2 + V_2 + C_3 + V_3)$$

$$= \frac{P_1 + P_2 + P_3}{C_1 + V_1 + C_2 + V_2 + C_3 + V_3}$$

because the monetary rate of profit is the same for each Dept. and the overall production.

Kidron's theory allows for a change in the organic composition of capital in Dept. III without this affecting the general rate of profit. This is wrong. What about production in Depts. I and II? As well as being guilty of abstracting the mathematics from their context as that of representing value relations in simple reproduction, Kidron's theory (not Bortkiewicz's or Sweezy's) implies that the organic composition of capital in Depts. I & II remain unaltered; i.e. do not increase. Apart from the fact that it cannot work mathematically, this is indeed a very strange capitalism, in fact a non-existent capitalism.

In addition to the basic error of Sweezy and Kidron, as outlined above, there are a number of further problems which tend to invalidate the conclusions drawn from the Bortkiewicz transformations.

(i) The transformations relate to the flow of capital. The real rate of profit relates to the total capital employed in production, regardless of whether it is used up or not. (See section on luxury goods.) As such, the Bortkiewicz transformations will be wrong. *(*1 shall call the rate of profit calculated on the flow the "rate of profit" - p^1 .)

(ii) The rate of profit 'r' is expressed in price terms not in value terms. Although all Depts. may have

the same "rate of profit" = r, the real rate of profit (p) will differ in each Department.

Thus:

	Value			Price		Profit
	c	v	s	c	v	
I	250	75	75	281½	56½	112½
II	50	75	75	56½	56½	37½
III	100	50	50	112½	37½	50

Now, since $z = 1$, the value of the profit will equal that of the price. However, the value of capital consumed will not. In Dept. I, price of capital consumed = $281½ + 56½ = 337½$. "Rate of profit" (price terms) = $112½/337½ = 1/3rd$.

However, the 281½ is only worth 250, in value terms, and the 56½ is worth 75 in value terms. Thus, the value of the capital employed = 325 (as in the value scheme).

Therefore, 112½ profit (price) is worth 112½ (value), the "rate of profit" in value terms $p^1 = 112½/325$, i.e. more than 1/3rd.

Similarly, "rate of profit" in Dept. II = $r = 1/3rd$, p^1 (value) = $37½/125$, i.e. less than 1/3rd,

and "rate of profit" (price) in Dept. III = $r = 1/3rd$, p^1 (value) = $50/150 = 1/3rd$.

So, only in Dept. III do the "rates of profit" tally.

It so happens that $r =$ the overall "rate of profit" (value) in the case in question. However, if the organic composition of capital in the gold industry differs from that of the average social capital, then gold will be either under or over priced.

Thus;
(a) if all other commodities are expressed in terms of the labour time necessary to produce a unit (1/35th. oz.) of gold then the total price will differ from the total value, although whatever the price it will only be able to buy the given number of values. Really the total price cannot differ from the total value expressed in socially necessary labour time, for the production process not to be disrupted.

(b) In this case 'r' will not equal the "rate of profit" (value), as well as the "rate of profit" (value) being different in each Dept. and not tallying with 'r'.

e.g. Value calculation

Dept.	Constant Capital	Variable Capital	Surplus Value	Value
I	225	90	60	375
II	100	120	80	300
III	50	90	60	200
Total:	375	300	200	875

Price Calculation

	c	v	Profit	Price
I	288	96	96	480
II	128	128	64	320
III	64	96	40	200
Total:	480	320	200	1000

$$p^1 = 200/675, \quad r = 200/800$$

Marxists have always been concerned with value relations. It is these that in the long run determine the

fundamental dynamics of production. However, as the rate of profit falls in value terms it must also do so in price terms, though not in direct proportion.

(iii) A far more fundamental criticism of the Bortkiewicz transformations is that they are static. They are based on simple reproduction. But this does not conform to any existing capitalism, and it cannot (except as a constituent part of the expansion process) since it lacks the necessary dynamic inherent in capitalist production, i.e. the dynamic leading to capital accumulation - production on an extended scale, in which the organic composition of capital tends to increase. This being the case, even if the Bortkiewicz Sweezy-Kidron theorising on the rate of profit being unaffected by the organic composition of capital in Dept. III were correct - what about that in Depts. I & II? Is the "marxist" Kidron going to maintain that this has not altered (ie has not increased) in the post-war boom period? Surely not! All evidence points to the contrary.

Thus the theory would be in tatters, the offsetting of the tendency to the falling rate of profit would have to be found in other factors (if it is to be found) apart from the false postulate about Dept. III production.

(iv) The tendency to the equalised rate of profit was always, at best an approximation. Certain capitalists have always been able to enjoy a rate of profit above the average (see section on capitalist crisis), certain are forced to accept a rate of profit below the average. Thus, apart from the fact that each capitalist does not carry a slide rule to make sure that he doesn't exceed or fall below the general rate of profit, the overall price of his product being determined by circumstances beyond his control, there is also no single rate of profit on account of the fact that under monopoly capitalism the monopoly sectors enjoy considerably higher rates of profit than the non-monopoly sectors. Thus the general rate of profit will not be able to be expressed in terms of Dept I & II variably. The Bortkiewicz conclusion, rightly or wrongly interpreted, will not apply either to simple or extended reproduction.

ARMS AS LUXURIES

It has been maintained by Kidron that since arms do not enter into the production and reproduction of means of production, or means of consumption for the masses, then they must be classed as "luxuries" - Dept. III. However, even if we accept Kidron's conception of arms as "luxuries" there are differences in terms of effects on the total social product, surplus value and rate of profit of items within Dept. III. There are certain goods that are consumed by the capitalists and, as such, are part of their profit i.e. function as revenue. On the other hand there are other goods which also do not form means of production, nor means of consumption for the masses, but which also do not form means of consumption for the capitalists. In other words, they are really deductions from the social product. Deduction incurred from the surplus value, necessary for the realisation of the product in its existing form.

"Whatever may be the social form of the product supply, its preservation requires outlays for buildings, vessels etc, which are facilities for storing the product; also for means of production and labour, more or less of which must be expended according to the nature of the product, in order to combat injurious influences... These outlays always constitute a part of the social labour, in either materialised or living form - hence in the capitalist form outlays of capital - which do not enter into the formation of the product itself and thus are deductions from the product... They are the costs of preserving the social product... (*39)

Among such costs, in terms of their economic

effect are eg. buildings for storage, advertising etc. The fact that a capitalist has to build a storage hut to preserve his product, adds not one bit to the value of the product. Similarly, advertising is merely one of the costs incurred in order to sell the particular product. It adds nothing to the value and so, must be deducted from the surplus product or surplus value of the capitalist class. In monopoly production employers are very often able to pass on these costs. However, if monopoly goods are over priced, those from the non-monopoly sectors must be under priced. Total values and total prices must be equivalent if the value is to be realised. Hence such costs are deductions from the total surplus product, regardless of whether or not the individual capitalist pays for them, i.e. the employers, managers, workers engaged in such activities must be paid for out of the surplus product of the other, productive sectors (which, for the capitalists concerned would include consumer goods in Dept. III)

"The capital spent to meet these costs (including the labour done under its control) belongs among the "faux frais" of capitalist production. They must be replaced from the surplus-product and constitute, as far as the entire capitalist class is concerned, a deduction from the surplus-value or surplus-product." (*40).

The same criteria would apply if a certain percentage of the total social product were destroyed or not realised. This is in fact, the situation with arms production. While representing a portion of the social product, it does not contribute to its production and reproduction. From that point of view, arms are indeed a "drain" or a "leak". But they are a drain that must be paid for. Value cannot be squandered without any effect. As such, arms production, without contingent forces accompanying it to counteract its effect will depress the rate of profit. This can be seen if we consider the year's production.

If we were to represent the value relations (after the price operations have been carried out) in the following way, subdividing Dept. III into III a (capitalists consumption) and III b (non-productive costs and production not realised, the "faux frais", as Marx called them eg. advertising much state expenditure arms etc), which must be a deduction from the total production in Depts. I, II, IIIa, we would get the following scheme:-

VALUE RELATIONS

DEPT

I.	$c_1 + v_1 + p_1$	} Productive sectors
II.	$c_2 + v_2 + p_2$	
IIIa.	$c_{3a} + v_{3a} + p_{3a}$	
IIIb.	$c_{3b} + v_{3b} + p_{3b}$	} Non-productive sector

Total surplus value = $p_1 + p_2 + p_{3a}$

Non-productive costs = $c_{3b} + v_{3b} + p_{3b}$

*. Realised surplus value = $p_1 + p_2 + p_{3a} - (c_{3b} + v_{3b})$

Thus, rate of profit = $\frac{\text{Realised surplus value}}{\text{Total capital outlay}}$

$$= \frac{p_1 + p_2 + p_{3a} - (c_{3b} + v_{3b})}{c_1 + v_1 + c_2 + v_2 + c_{3a} + v_{3a}}$$

$$= \frac{p_1 + p_2 + p_{3a}}{c_1 + v_1 + c_2 + v_2 + c_{3a} + v_{3a}}$$

$$= \frac{c_{3b} + v_{3b}}{c_1 + v_1 + c_2 + v_2 + c_{3a} + v_{3a}}$$

Hence, the effective rate of profit = $\frac{\text{total surplus value}}{\text{total capital outlay}}$

$$= \frac{\text{"capital" outlay in non-productive sector}}{\text{total capital outlay}}$$

$c_{3b} + v_{3b}$ do not function as capital in that they do not produce realisable value i.e. are merely necessary outlays, deductions from the total surplus product.

So, if s is the total surplus value, c is total capital, n is the outlay in non-productive "capital" (machinery raw materials, buildings, wages, goods etc) p is the rate of profit,

$$p = \frac{s}{c} - \frac{n}{c}$$

It is only when this relationship is grasped, that one can possibly make sense of the recent "anti-Keynsian" measures aimed at reducing state expenditure and arms production as a proportion of the national budgets.

APPENDIX 1

Note: c in this case is the constant capital consumed in production. This is not the same as the value of constant capital employed in production. A portion of the fixed capital eg machines, buildings etc., continues to exist and function the same as before, though depreciated to the extent of annual wear and tear. The rate of profit is calculated on the total capital employed.

Thus, the rate of profit, $\frac{s}{c_1 + c + v}$ where

c_1 is the fixed capital not consumed (assuming no stockpiling - which wouldn't take place in simple reproduction).

Now, since a general rate of profit is assumed, and since prices are taken to be equal to values (for simplicity) one unit of capital produces the same amount of surplus value, on average, as well as one unit of variable capital doing so, in both departments of production. Furthermore, the proportion of capital employed but unused in each department is proportional to the amount of constant capital consumed.

Hence, if the Departments of production are represented in the following manner -

$$\text{Dept. I} - c_1 + v_1 + s_1$$

$$\text{Dept. II} - c_{II} + v_{II} + s_{II}$$

$$\text{Then, } C = c_1 + c_{II}, V = v_1 + v_{II}, S = s_1 + s_{II}$$

And if c_1 is fixed capital not consumed in toto, c_1 is capital not consumed in Dept. I, c_{II} is fixed capital not consumed in Dept. II, where $C = c_1 + c_{II}$, c_1 is proportional to c_1 , c_{II} is proportional to c_{II} .

The upshot of all this is the following:-

$$p = \frac{s}{c_1 + c + v} = \frac{s_1}{c_1 + c_1 + v_1} = \frac{s_{II}}{c_{II} + c_{II} + v_{II}}$$

For example following Marx's numerical analysis (Capital Vol. II p401)

Dept. I

$$\text{Capital used } 4000c + 1000v = 5000$$

$$\text{Commodity product } 4000c + 1000v \div 1000s = 6000$$

Dept. II

$$\text{Capital used } 2000c + 500v = 2500$$

$$\text{Commodity product } 2000c + 500v + 500s = 3000$$

Let us assume a constant capital unused of 12000 (in the form of fixed capital). We would then obtain the following for the total capital employed, with the fixed capital in use, but not consumed, in brackets: -

Dept. I

$$\text{Capital } (8000) + 4000c + 1000v$$

Dept. II

$$\text{Capital } (4000) + 2000c + 500v$$

$$\text{Thus } p = \frac{1500}{18000 + 1500} = 1/13$$

$$\text{and } p = \frac{1000}{12000 + 1000} = 1/13$$

$$\text{and } p = \frac{500}{6000 + 500} = 1/13$$

Of course, it is possible that one department may have more or less capital than that stated. But, if Marx's assumptions of value and price identity are followed and if the amounts of constant capital consumed are proportional to the variable capital, the rate of exploitation being the same in both departments, the unconsumed amounts of fixed capital must also be proportional to the amounts of used-up constant (and variable) capital.

Hence, for simple reproduction, if p^1 is the proportion of surplus value to consumed total capital, the "rate of profit" on the flow $p = kp^1$, where k is a constant. In other words, the actual rate of profit for each department of production is the same as the overall rate of profit and can be found by multiplying

$$\frac{s_1}{c_1 + v_1} \text{ or } \frac{s_{II}}{c_{II} + v_{II}} \text{ or } \frac{s_1 + s_{II}}{c_1 + c_{II} + v_1 + v_{II}} = p^1 \text{ by a constant amount (k).}$$

What this means in Marx's example, is that any generalisation about the return on consumed capital (p^1) will apply with equal validity to the actual rate of profit.

APPENDIX 2

Under simple reproduction, everything produced is

consumed in exactly replacing the amounts of constant capital used up and in articles of consumption for the workers or the capitalists. In the scheme in question,

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Dept. I} \quad 4000c + 1000v + 1000s = 6000 \\ \text{Dept. II} \quad 2000c + 500v + 500s = 3000. \end{array}$$

In Dept. II, 500v (workers' wages), and 500s (surplus value of capitalists) must be spent on articles of consumption, i.e. must come out of the product of 3000 in Dept. II. Thus the wages and surplus-value of Dept. II are exchanged within this department for products of it.

Similarly the 1000v + 1000s in Dept. I must be exchanged for articles of consumption i.e. for products of Dept. II. Hence they must be exchanged for the remainder of this product, which is equivalent to $c_2 = 2000c$.

$$1000v + 1000s \stackrel{*}{=} 2000c \quad (* \text{ means exchanged for})$$

The remaining 4000c in I consists of means of production which are only used in Dept. I and so is disposed of by mutual exchange between the capitalists of Dept. I.

The further breaking down of Dept. II into iia and iib, assuming that 2/5 of the surplus value is spent on luxuries, 3/5 on necessities, would make the reproduction scheme look like this: -

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Dept. I} \quad 4000c + 1000v + 1000s = 6000 \\ \text{Dept. Iia} \quad 1600c + 400v + 400s = 2400 \\ \text{Dept. Iib} \quad 400c + 100v + 100s = 600 \end{array}$$

This gives the following exchange relations: -

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Dept. I} \quad 1000s \stackrel{=}{=} 600c \text{ (Iia)} + 400c \text{ (Iib)} \\ \\ 1000v \stackrel{=}{=} 1000c \text{ (Iia)} \\ \\ 4000c \stackrel{=}{=} 4000c \text{ (I)} \end{array}$$

Exchange within and between Iia and Iib :-

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Iia} \quad 1600c \stackrel{=}{=} 600 \text{ (I)} + 1000v \text{ (I)} \\ \\ 400v \stackrel{=}{=} 400v \text{ (Iia)} \\ \\ 400s \stackrel{=}{=} 100v \text{ (Iib)} + 240s \text{ (Iia)} + 60s \text{ (Iib)} \\ \\ \text{Iib} \quad 400c \stackrel{=}{=} 400s \text{ (I)} \\ \\ 100v \stackrel{=}{=} 100s \text{ (Iia)} \\ \\ 100s \stackrel{=}{=} 60s \text{ (Iia)} + 40s \text{ (Iib)}. \end{array}$$

NOTES

1. It is also possible that the developments in question (massive arms production) are contingent on the real motivating forces of capitalist boom. It may be that they have the same status as the mythical jar of water in the following joke - *A man seen walking down the street with a jar of water balanced on his head was asked why he did this. He replied that it was to prevent the plague. When told that plague didn't exist in England his reply was "Well, there you are".

2. see Mandel: "Inconsistencies of State Capitalism" pp. 18 - 21.

3. see Cliff: A Socialist Review (1965), pp. 34-40.

4. M. Kidron: Western Capitalism since the War Penguin 1970 p. 174.
 5. Sweezy: Theory of Capitalist Development, 1942.
 6. Capital Vol I p. 620 (1961 Moscow Edition)
 7. Capital Vol. II p. 414 (1967 Moscow Edition).
 8. Theories of Surplus Value part 2 p. 504 (1969 Lawrence & Wishart)
 9. Ibid p. 505
 10. Ibid p. 512
 11. See Marx: Precapitalist Economic Formations (Ed. Hobsbawm) especially section on feudalism, and Dobb: Studies in the Development of Capitalism.
 12. Capital Vol. I p. 624
 13. Capital Vol. III pp. 218-219
 14. Marx called part 3 of Capital Vol. III "The Law of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall".
- Such laws express the fundamental direction of development of the capitalist production process but they can be totally or partially offset by other forces at certain junctures. However, whatever these countertendencies, in the long run the central tendencies - "laws" - will re-assert themselves.
- The fact that a piece of paper may be carried upwards and not fall, does not invalidate the law of gravity, but has to be explained by offsetting forces to that of gravity, i.e. winds and their effects. In the long run, however, the paper will fall. In the same way, although the rate of profit may rise for a whole period, or not fall to any great extent, this has to be explained by the countertendencies at work. Marx laid out in general terms such counteracting influences to the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. I shall deal with these, their modern applications, and other factors in a later article, showing how arms production has fitted into the post-war scene and the implications of this at the present juncture. Meanwhile I shall lay out the central tendencies of capitalist production, in particular the development and effects of the falling rate of profit as the harbinger of economic crisis. Here "overproduction" and "underconsumption" are inseparable aspects of the same inherent process of production, neither of which can be solved on a capitalist foundation.
15. Capital Vol. III pp. 250-251.
 16. Theories of Surplus Value part 2, p. 496
 17. Ibid p. 492
 18. cf. the present cut-back in machine tools affecting even the biggest manufacturers such as Alfred Herbert.
 19. Theories of Surplus Value part 2 pp 521-522
 20. In particular T.W. Vance.
 21. Cliff: Perspectives of the Permanent War Economy, (A Socialist Review 1965 pp. 34-40)
 22. Ibid p. 37
 23. See earlier comments in Sweezy's Theory
 24. Cliff Ibid pp 37-38
 25. Ibid p. 38
 26. Ibid p. 39
 27. Ibid p. 39
 28. Ibid p. 40
 29. See last part of the section on Kidron's theory. This point will also be taken up in a later article.
 30. Kidron Ibid.
 31. Kidron: Maginot Marxism, I.S. journal no. 36
 32. Ibid p. 33
 33. Capital Vol. II pp. 397-398
 34. Ibid p. 399
 35. Bortkiewicz's paper 'Zur Berichtigung der grundlegenden theoretischen Konstruktion von Marx im dritten Band des Kapital' discussed in Sweezy Ibid pp 109-128.
 36. Taken from Sweezy Ibid p. 111
 37. Ibid p. 124-125.
 38. Kidron: Western Capitalism op. cit. p. 30
 39. Capital Vol. II p. 148
 40. Ibid p. 152.

ROSA LUXEMBURG

THE BELGIAN GENERAL STRIKE OF 1902



first english translation by andrew hornung

introduction

The five short articles by Rosa Luxemburg which follow comprise about half her writing on Belgium and the General Strike of 1902. In our next edition we shall publish not only her continuation of the discussion of the defeat of the General Strike, Vanderveelde's reply and her answer to him, but also some shorter reports of the period which appeared in 'Die Neue Zeit'.

In this way we hope to come to grips with a stage in the development of the theory of the general strike, seen in relation to the concrete events surrounding and making for this development.

Cut off to a large extent from the debates, discussions, and events which led to certain codifications and conceptions within the Marxist movement (e.g. general strike, workers' government, etc), the revolutionary movement today rarely avoids the pitfalls of dogmatism. Instead of starting out from an analysis of the situation at hand in all its richness, its movement, above all, its specificity, the starting point very often is a codification divorced from all the experience of which it was a summary. Into the limits of this summary, with all its necessary one-sidedness and aridity, the concrete is collapsed.

When five dockers were jailed last July, the operative conceptions held by most revolutionaries amounted to nothing more than the paralysing prejudices derived from a one-sided and mythologised version of the one national experience of a full-scale general strike, 1926. Thus the many organisations who bear, as if out of a sense of self-sarcasm, the title of "International" this or "International" that, peered through the rimmed spectacles of the single national experience, and arrived at conclusions of extreme conservatism.

The mantle of orthodoxy draped over these prejudices has been spun out of one tiny article by Trotsky (The ILP and the Fourth International: In the Middle of the Road - 1935), and this was inevitably mis-read and mis-placed.

The aim, therefore, in publishing these articles is to restore to the revolutionary movement a concept, a weapon, of great value. And further to do this in such a way as to be able to present it in terms of the experiences which contributed to its development. To a limited extent we attempted, in the pages of Workers' Fight, to do this prior to the jailing of the dockers, and to apply the understanding creatively to the problems at hand. Our publication, "The Left and the July Crisis", gives a brief outline of this by contrasting the positions of other left organisations.

A Question of Tactics

A few years ago, at the time of a particularly heated debate on the question of alliances with bourgeois parties, those who defended political alliances tended to adduce the example of the Belgian Labour Party (1) in support of their position. Their alliance with the Liberals in the years of struggle for universal suffrage was supposed to serve to demonstrate the occasional necessity and the political irreproachability of alliances between the Social Democracy and bourgeois democracy.

Even then the proof was false. Because anyone who knew about the constant vacillations and repeated betrayals by the Belgian Liberals of their proletarian brothers-in-struggle would approach the idea of the bourgeois democracy's support of the working class, precisely because of the Belgian experience, with the utmost pessimism. The resolutions adopted at this latest Congress of the Belgian Socialist Party (2) are very instructive on this point.

It is common knowledge that the Belgian working class at present stands at the cross-roads which will determine the outcome of its tremendously tenacious fifteen year long struggle for universal suffrage (3). It is now preparing to storm the fortress of clericalism and abolish plural voting (4). The lily-livered liberal bourgeoisie prepares to take the full force of the workers' determined actions, and, at the same time, gets ready to act itself by offering the Social Democracy its hand in a joint campaign.

This time, however, the alliance is concluded like a simple piece of horse-trading. As their part of the bargain, the Liberals give up the plural voting system but agree to universal equal suffrage (one man, one vote). As its part of the bargain the Social Democracy gives up the demand for women's suffrage and agrees not to use any revolutionary methods in the struggle for the franchise. It also accepts as part of the package proportional representation as the electoral system to be enshrined constitutionally. (5) The Brussels Federation of the Socialist Party accepted the Liberals' conditions in the main, leaving it to the Easter Congress of the Belgian Social Democracy to approve the finishing touches of the deal.

This makes it clear - and there can be no arguing this away - that this alliance (or rather compromise!) with the Liberals has meant the Social Democrats reneging on one of the points in its programme. Naturally the Belgian comrades assure us that the demand for women's suffrage has only been dropped "for the time being" and will immediately be raised again after the victory of universal male suffrage. Firstly this is a new notion for the international Social Democracy: the programme seems to be a kind of menu whose individual dishes can

only be consumed in a certain order. While admitting that situations do from time to time arise which determine that the workers' parties of different countries put the main agitational weight on different demands, it is nevertheless the totality of our demands that is always the basis of our political struggle. The gulf between the occasional lessening of emphasis on some point in the programme and its express (albeit temporary) deletion in favour of some other point in the programme is the same great gulf as lies between the principled struggle of the Social Democracy and the political manipulations of the bourgeois parties.

And let us be quite clear on this: in Belgium it is a question of deleting the demand for women's suffrage. Of course the resolution adopted at the Brussels Congress avoids all detail stating that "the forthcoming revision of the constitution should be limited to that of universal male suffrage." The least we can expect now is that the Church in order to throw in a bone of contention for the Liberals and Social Democrats to fight over, will raise the question of women's suffrage in the course of events. The Brussels resolution calls on the representatives of the Labour Party "to frustrate this manoeuvre and maintain the alliance with the supporters of universal suffrage" in such an event. In simple language this means: vote against women's suffrage!

This playing fast and loose with principles is certainly harmful, though it would never occur to us to demand of a Socialist Party that it forego certain immediate, tangible gains for the sake of the abstract full programme. Precisely in this case, as usual, what are exchanged for principles are not real, tangible gains, but merely illusions. Here as elsewhere it is pure fantasy to maintain that firm adherence to our basic positions prevents us from reaching the earthly paradise.

Consider! It is considered that if the Belgian Social Democracy sticks to its demand for women's suffrage there will be a break with the Liberals and the whole campaign will be endangered. The Labour Party shows, however, how little in the last resort it cares about the alliance and its conditions by accepting the Liberals' third point with a silent shrug of the shoulders. The Belgian Labour Party knew very well that it could not do without revolutionary methods of struggle and have its hands tied. Indeed in this it allowed itself to be guided by the perfectly correct belief that the real power in the struggle, the sure guarantee of victory, lay not in the support of knock-kneed Liberal mayors and senators, but in the masses' determination to fight. Not in parliament but in the streets.

It would in fact have been most odd if the Belgian Labour Party of all parties had entertained

the slightest doubt on this score. After all it has won all their victories to date - like the plural voting system - by means of that unforgettable mass strike and those threatening street demonstrations by the working class. And just as before the first bold steps of the proletariat will hit the Liberal bourgeoisie in Belgium like a thunder clap. And in the face of the advancing Social Democracy these "allies" will scurry off down the mouse-hole of parliamentary treachery with proven speed, leaving the conquest of universal suffrage to the fists of the working class. For the Belgian Labour Party this fair prospect is an open secret.

If after all the Party sweeps the third condition of its pact with the Liberals quietly under the carpet and openly prepares for whatever the struggle might bring, then it will be showing absolutely unambiguously that it accepts the support of the "Liberals" for just what it is: the kind of accidental and temporary assistance that might well be accepted for a certain stretch of a common path, for which however one would not move an inch from the road already decided on.

What this does prove though is that logically even the supposedly "tangible advantage" for which the principle of women's suffrage was sacrificed is complete twaddle. Once again we see here - as elsewhere including Germany - that every time ridiculous compromises at the cost of principles are made the "tangible gains" are quite beside the point. The point really is that of getting rid of the programme's demands. For our "practical politicians" these are in themselves just so much baggage to be dragged around and religiously referred to so long as they have no practical significance.

Not only has women's suffrage been a constantly and generally recognised part of the programme of the Belgian Social Democracy but the workers' deputies also voted unanimously for it in parliament in 1895. Of course, until now there has been no possibility of its realisation either in Belgium or elsewhere in Europe. Today for the first time it threatens to become a real possibility, and now, all of a sudden, it appears that there is no longer one single opinion in the ranks of the Labour Party on the matter. In fact we can go further, according to Dewinnes' (6) speech at the Brussels Congress "the party as a whole opposes women's suffrage!"

But the most astonishing spectacle was the explanation of the Belgian Social Democracy's position of opposing female suffrage. It is an argument no different from the one Russian Czarism (and before that the German monarchy

with its divine right of kings) uses to justify political crimes. "The people are not yet mature enough to vote," they say. As if the people had some school of political maturity other than the exercise of political rights! As if the mature working class had not also once had a period of learning - and still needs to learn - to use the ballot box as a weapon in its own class interest.

In fact any clear thinking person should realise that the involvement of working class women in political life whether in the short or long term is bound to lead to a powerful upsurge in the workers' movement. This perspective not only means a vast new field of agitational work for the Social Democracy. But the emancipation of women is bound to blow a strong fresh wind through the political and intellectual life of the class. It will dispel the foul air of today's barbaric family life, which leaves its unmistakable mark on our party members - workers and leaders alike.

Admittedly in the short term the granting of female suffrage could have quite disastrous political consequences. It could strengthen the domination of the Church. Also the whole organisational and agitational practice of the Labour Party would have to be rethought. In short, the political equality of women means a bold and important political experiment.

What is worth noting here is that all those who are full of great admiration for the "experiments" a la Millerand (7) and are never done with praising the audacity of these measures are silent now. They utter not one word of reproach against our Belgian comrades for recoiling in fear in the face of this experiment of women's suffrage. Indeed it was none other than the Belgian leader Anseele (8) himself who rushed to be the first to congratulate "comrade Millerand on his "courageous" ministerial experiment. And this same Anseele is to-day the most determined opponent of every attempt to win votes for women in his own country. Here we have yet another proof of the type of "courage" our "practical politicians" recommend to us. It is nothing but the courage to experiment opportunistically at the expense of Social Democratic principles. When however it is a question of a bold application of our programmatic demands, then these same "practical leaders" show not the slightest enthusiasm to stand out for their courage. On the contrary, they look about everywhere for pretexts so that some particular point of the programme can "just for the time being" and "with considerable regret" be ditched.

Tactical Sommersaults

The Belgian Parliament will it appears begin its consideration of the franchise reforms next week. The government itself suggested this date yesterday, and Huysmans, the leader of the left-Liberals, has endorsed the Prime Minister's suggestion.

Judging by externals the Belgian movement for reform of the franchise seems to have stood everything on its head. It has meant the party which politically is the most reactionary, the Catholic Party, putting forward the demand for that most revolutionary of all constitutional reforms, the introduction of universal women's suffrage. While on the other hand the programmatically revolutionary party, the Labour Party, has refused to weigh in on the side of giving women the vote... for tactical reasons. And, just to complete the confusion, the socialist Republicans look to the monarchy for intervention. The socialist "People" quite openly tries to get King Leopold to line up with its supporters and against the government on the question of electoral law and expresses the hope - naturally after making certain reservations in keeping with the programme of republicanism - "that in contrast to the pig-headedness of the clerical government, the King for his part might speak the words of peace, wisdom and justice." "We are and we remain republicans, but it is certain that conciliatory words by the king will do more for the preservation of the monarchy than all the pious acts of our false patriots. We rate the importance of the reforms we are demanding for the people too highly to be worried about forms - even if it is the form of the government that is in question. There are conservative, reactionary and indeed imperialist republics that have been, and perhaps still are, nothing but financial or confessional tyrannies. Why in this period of development, of transition and readjustment is it impermissible to come to terms with a constitutional monarchy which has loyally pledged itself to honest as well as far-reaching democratic policies, and which in no way would try to halt the forward march of progress."

There is no doubt something in our Belgian comrades' reference to a period of transition and development. In particular there is the historical experience of parties quite often changing their roles in times of political upheaval. Conservative party leaders put through revolutionary programmes in order to remain capable of carrying on in power, while the oppositional parties set their faces like flint against this disguising of political principles. Arnold Ruge (9) long ago pointed out that in the great power struggle between the Whigs and the Tories in England, the Tories could only stay in power by adopting the programme of the Whigs.

Later Bismarck in Germany and Disraeli in England put forward similar policies almost at the same time. Bismarck resorted to universal equal suffrage with the express purpose of playing off the mass of the German people, whom he considered fundamentally conservative, against the plutocratic elements of the bourgeoisie. And in England Disraeli made the extension of the franchise acceptable to his fellow Tories by claiming "he intended to dig down until he found another conservative layer."

The Belgian Clericals think they have come across an even deeper layer of conservatism in the population... women! And the Socialists oppose this extension of the franchise because they see it as a trick. This is as short-sighted as the Catholics' support of it.

The conservative revolutionaries have in the final analysis bought a pig in a poke. Bismarck would never grant universal suffrage if he were alive to-day. And who are the sworn enemies of the franchise but the most zealous guardians of his policies, the conservatives and the reactionary panic mongers?

The involvement of the monarchy as a political force standing "above parties" is also a move which is not only highly questionable in principle but also very dubious from a tactical point of view.

In Russia the crown may be said to represent a political force with a centre of gravity within itself. The abolition of serfdom was in its day essentially an act of despotism. But the "King of the Belgians" whose strictly constitutional powers are extremely modest and whose political power is, if anything, even less... he of all people is no political leader. Any of his actions would, for all their formal democracy, always be tainted with caesarism. All that such sommersaults can succeed in doing is unintentionally making King "Cleopold" "popular" for a short time.

Our Belgian comrades' appeal to the crown in the struggle for electoral rights is on a par with their giving up the fight for women's voting rights.

The latest news from the scene of the Belgium's constitutional struggle is as follows: Brussels, 3th April.

This evening after a meeting addressed by the Socialist deputy Vandervelde (10) a battle broke out between 1,500 socialists and the police. Two policemen and one socialist were wounded. A group of demonstrators marched to Prince Albert's residence. The police blocked off the streets and advanced with swords drawn. Three demonstrators were wounded.

Leipziger Volkszeitung No. 80 9th April 1902

The Third Act

I

On 14th January 1886 Jacques Kats (11) died in Brussels at the age of 82. The same dear Kats it was whom Karl Gruen (12) on a study-tour in Belgium way back in the 'forties got to know and admire as the founder of the workers' movement in Brussels. This most original perhaps of the international socialist pioneers, the founder of the first working men's clubs, the first writer of folk songs with a democratic message, founder of the first popular theatre in Flanders - this man dies deserted and forgotten by the younger generation, and, according to Caesar de Paepe, deeply dejected at the collapse of the workers' movement in Belgium.

No doubt about it, the Belgian working class in the middle 'eighties was really in the doldrums. All the fruits of Kats' twenty years of struggle through the 'forties and 'fifties had disappeared. Likewise all trace of that renewed upsurge under the International's influence in the 'sixties and early 'seventies. After the collapse of Marx's (13) organisation in England and its Belgian offshoot, Belgium became reknowned as the "Capitalists' Paradise". It was the object of the envy and desire of the exploiters of all of Europe.

That was indeed the golden age for the professional consumers of surplus value of every shape and size. The post-1831 period (14) saw the whole of political life governed by the sweetly hypnotic swing of the parliamentary pendulum from the Clericals to the Liberals and back again. Belgium knew nothing then of that base materialism that in later days was to break on to the scene announcing its claims with such a flourish. Only the loftier idealistic concerns disturbed the calm of the respectable citizen as he scanned his daily paper reading about the battles of his representatives. When the Clericals were in power all you heard was the Liberals jabbering about the violation of the freedom of conscience in the confession schools. And when it was the Liberals turn in power the country reverberated to cries of pious alarm at the threats to the people's religious and moral fibre.

For the rest - all that concerns mortal flesh that is - the two parties performed in harmony and continuity. This Alfred Defuisseaux characterised in his celebrated "Catechisme du Peuple" (People's Catechism) as follows (15):

"What is the first cry of a Catholic minister when he gets into power ?

"His first cry is, 'The coffers are empty! The Liberals have taken the lot!'

"What is the first cry of a Liberal minister when he gets into power ?

"His first cry is, 'The coffers are empty! The Catholics have taken the lot!'

All that can definitely be agreed upon is that it was "taken". The budget of this small state, supposedly free of militarism, grew from 1850 to 1870 and from then until 1882 in great leaps: 118 million francs, then 216 million, then 422 million! And the sole fruits of the ever increasing privations of the country were... the conquest of the Congo and the increasingly unscrupulous manipulation of the National Bank.

The destitution of the working class, especially in the mining areas was terrible. Working days of between fourteen and sixteen hours were not exceptional. Wages were at an all-time low and were usually paid out in kind. This served simply to complete the enslavement of the working class and vigorously to propagate above all.. spiritualism.

Brandy and prayers! These were the sole source of consolation to the Belgian working class during the "paradise" of the 'seventies and 'eighties. Ignorance and illiteracy were the faithful handmaidens of liquor and Popery, as even the Liberals did not get round to introducing compulsory education their 1878-1884 period of office.

In blessed Belgium there was - and in the main still is - no trace of anything resembling social reforms or factory acts. The first ludicrously miserly reform limiting the working hours of women and children did not see the light of day until 1889 - and then not without the most violent disputes in parliament. The deputies of this parliament of property (16) - 42 francs and 32 centimes a year direct tax and not a penny less! - did not so much as dream of caring about the misery of the proletariat. Fair play, they did after all have their hands full attacking one another on questions concerning education and the Church!

Suddenly the "peace" was shattered! And it was just as Marx had predicted would happen all over. A return to industrial crisis that stirred up the spirits in that place of desolation. 1886 also saw one of the worst storms that Belgian capitalism had ever had to weather. One after another the factories were closed down. In the mines they were working a four day week. Wages were cut almost everywhere and unemployment grew to desperate proportions.

"A frightful misery sweeps the Borinage" wrote a bourgeois newspaper in January. "Coal is mined only three or four days a week and in

numerous pits [it is forbidden] to earn more than 2.50 francs a day." The official Journal "Journal de Bruxelles" reported in March on the condition of the mine workers. "The destitution is beyond all imagination," it said, "it is terrible. The father, the only breadwinner in a family of eight, earns at most 12-13 francs a week. And that is the situation over all."

The employers' attempt to cut these wages by a further 20-25% drove the desperation beyond control and constituted the immediate cause of outbreaks of rioting throughout the country.

The strikes that then broke out, the riots and the demonstrations, were all completely spontaneous and unplanned. This was only the first elemental explosion releasing the pent-up antagonisms of decades now that the mass of wage slaves had been driven to extremes. Machines were smashed, factories destroyed and the palatial villas of the capitalist magnates were burned to the ground. Belgium at the beginning of 1886 looked like the weaving areas of Silesia in 1844.

But in Belgium the explosion did not just peter out with no result, because there was already a force in the land capable of harnessing the hurricane of popular rage and giving it direction.

Old Kats, that ever vigilant fighter died in deepest pessimism on 14th February 1886. Exactly one month later the workers of the Borinage sent the workers of Flanders a manifesto which had been written by the socialists Anseele and Defuisseaux. In this they boldly summoned their brothers to do battle alongside them for universal suffrage.

It bears witness to the fantastic political maturity of the Belgian Labour Party which had only been founded a few months earlier, on 5th April 1885, by de Paep, Volders and Anseele. It recognised right from the start that its battle cry should be that of universal suffrage. The complaints that the working class could make against the bourgeoisie were legion. Everywhere capital unleashed its unbridled tyranny over the working class, destroying their material and spiritual life. The lessons of fifty-five years were quite enough to show that there was no hope of any change so long as parliament only served to balance between the surplusee and the city-suit. The whole miserable edifice had to be dynamited from below. Unlike every other constitutional state in Europe, the shattering of the political monopoly of the bourgeoisie, the winning of universal suffrage, became here the burning issue for the Labour Party. It became the central axis of socialist struggle, the banner under which the workers' party skillfully gathered and directed the forces of the masses from February 1885 up until the present.

1886 saw the first act in this struggle. Naturally the bourgeoisie sought to exploit this first unruly outbreak by the working class. The sad hero of the Mexican expedition, General van der Smissen (17) proclaimed a real reign of terror. Rifles and sabres did their work with eager en-

ergy. The bourgeois courts meted out their usual barbarities on the victims of this battle. The "ring-leaders" of the outbreak were given sentences of life, 20 years, and 12 years penal servitude.

But one thing was here to stay... the Belgian workers' movement. Raised in turbulence her banner bore the two historic initials "SU" (Suffrage universel = universal suffrage). Like the flaming writing on the wall these letters dazzled the eyes of that parliament of money-men.

II

Since that memorable spring of 1886 the question of universal suffrage has become not only the focal point of the Belgian workers' movement, but it entirely dominates the political stage to-day. For sixteen years there has been a tremendous crisis shaking the country like a creeping fever breaking out now in powerful eruptions and now in periods of deep depression.

The first upsurge was followed by a longish pause. The ruling Clerical party tried to use this to make some cowardly and feeble attempts to appear friendly to the working class. They set up a commission of representatives of the various sections of the bourgeoisie, the intellectuals like Lavelle, de Molinari, senators, lawyers, engineers etc. to study the social question. In Liège there is a congress of catholic social reformers (18) attended by Belgian and foreign priests of various importance. And what was the outcome of all these initiatives? A measly law stabilising workers' wages (in 1887) and the law already mentioned limiting the working day for women and children (in 1889).

The discussions in parliament around these reforms finally served to confirm the working class in its belief that the only possible way to counter the concerted barbarism of the junkers and capitalists united in their class arrogance was to destroy the property-parliament.

After five years gathering strength there came the second act. This time, though, it was no longer a case of unorganised groups of desperate people giving vent to their hatred in unbridled and uncontrolled excess. The proletariat had used the period since the first explosion to absorb quite different lessons from those of the bourgeoisie. The determined presentation of universal suffrage as the battle cry of proletarian revolt in 1886 led quite quickly to a clarification and concentration of the ferment of the masses' dissatisfaction. As late as 1886 there were some remnants of the anarchist tendency (which had once paralysed the International in Belgium to the best of its ability) around Ruttens, Billen and Wagener. Playing out its sad role in the general chaos it thundered against universal suffrage and called instead for dynamite. But the very first engagement in the political battle in 1886 was enough for the Belgian working class radically and decisively to transcend the anarchist confusion that for decades had drawn its life-blood from the pitiable desolation and spiritual despondency of the masses.

In the second principal engagement in the battle the young Labour Party stepped in as the leader of the movement right from the outset. And this time the second attack on the parliament of property early on in 1891 came as no surprise but as a direct result of the party's initiative. Now we saw in place of the unorganised revolt a cleverly prepared and directed mass strike. And whereas the first demonstration for universal suffrage called by the Labour Party on 15th August 1886 in Brussels drew the support of 30,000 workers, this time, in May 1891, 125,000 rushed to the banner.

This time there was no van der Smissen to save the day. The non-violent strike and the peaceful but impressive demonstrations gave no excuse for any reign of terror. The methods that had been effected five years before against the despondent, unstable and confused masses were out of place against these workers with their political development, maturity and self-confidence. Clericalism had to back down. The revision of the constitution took place in August.

That was the hard-won victory, or, rather, the first step to victory. The working class withdrew from the field of battle, but with their weapons still at the ready. They realised they might still have to look parliament straight in the eye and, perhaps, help it come to a decision. And in the event that is exactly what proved necessary. For two years the proletariat patiently watched the Clerical-Liberal parliament perform its farcical version of constitutional revision. Finally in April 1893 when it looked as if the charade would never end, there was another mass strike. This time 250,000 workers took part and on 18th April the capitalist Chamber of Deputies gave way. Universal suffrage with plural voting became constitutional in Belgium.

The Brussels paper "People" in a classic example of sublime wit born out of the headiness of victory commented on that memorable all-night session that decided on the first reform of the franchise by means of a satirical dialogue between President Beernaert and his own nose. His nose took him to task for the torture it had had to suffer during that epoch-making session and absolutely mercilessly made him remember the most humiliating details of that glorious scene. All that was really missing was a latter-day Frans Hals or van Dyck to paint the faces of the descendants of those worthy Flemish mayors and patricians with stiff white ruffs and their lively, self-important faces - these descendants as they sat in the gloom of that parliament surrounded by crowds muttering threats. These descendants dispersed in wailing groups, bathed in sweat, faces distorted, groaning through their chattering teeth, their bodies wracked in pain should have been painted as their shivering fingers signed the act that meant relinquishing their unmitigated class dominance.

The first test came in October 1894. The Social Democrats won 334,000 votes in the general election, bringing it 28 seats. With that

the second act was over for the time being. Still the slogan had not changed. It was still universal and equal suffrage. Even in relinquishing its monopoly of power the bourgeoisie had saved itself from utter defeat by means of a loophole... plural voting. With this system there were double and treble voting rights for heads of families and those with academic qualifications. The magnates of capital who gave working class breadwinners with seven children only 13 francs a week suddenly decided that heads of families were politically superior. At the same time the experts in mass misinformation suddenly remembered the spiritual prerogatives of learning. In this way the newly created right was instantly transformed into something that still ensured bourgeois privilege and disenfranchisement of the working class. Once again the domination of clericalism was saved by a hair's breadth.

And thus inexorably it had to come to this - to-day's third act, the final act in the mighty drama. The mass strike (19) began yesterday. We will soon see the momentous climax, the fruit of sixteen years of struggle and self-sacrifice, crowned with inevitable victory.

The seven years since the last attack in the Nineties had seen even more profound changes in the political situation in Belgium than that period of recovery between the first and second acts. The most important of these was the collapse of the Liberal Party.

As is so characteristic of bourgeois democracy, the process of the decomposition of Belgian Liberalism began during its last period in power, from 1878-1884. At that time it split into a dominant doctrinaire tendency (rather like our National Liberals) and the progressive or radical minority (something rather like our Richterite freethinkers (20)). As soon as the elections of 1884 had brought the Liberals their deserved set-back, their radical wing raised the slogan of... universal suffrage. Consequently there then began a series of alliances and blocks between the progressives and the Labour Party. And with this a series of betrayals of the latter by the former. At the very first demonstration for working class suffrage on 15th August 1886 the workers' brave comrades-in-arms backed out at the last moment. Ever since their actions have only underlined their devotion to the manoeuvre of supporting the movement so long as it is just a matter of initial skirmishes and disowning it the moment the decisive struggle arrives.

The Belgian bourgeoisie has found itself on the horns of a desperate dilemma now that the proletariat is politically aware. In order to appear an alternative to its ruling rival, the Clerical Party, it must gain the support of the working class. But the Liberals saw right from the off, when the struggle was still being waged on the basis of unequal general suffrage, where a "united front" victory over the clerical major-

ity might lead. The October 1894 election results astounded everybody. The party that until then had had 59 seats in parliament had simply... disappeared! Not a single "doctrinaire" got into parliament, and only some 15 Radicals kept their seats.

From that point on we witnessed an increasingly strong swing of the Liberals towards the Clericals for whose resolutions they voted, and increasingly bold oscillations between the proletariat and the national-bourgeois camp by the little group of Progressives.

On the other hand, because the Clericals felt their lofty political superiority threatened, they approached the Liberals. That eighty year old frog-and-mouse battle was forgotten. The congealing of all the bourgeois elements into one single "reactionary mass" became a fact. In 1899 the Clericals tried to rescue their majority and at the same time save that dying species, the Liberals, by pushing through a new change in the plural voting system... the proportional representation system. From that time on all the votes in a constituency went not to the party with the most votes, but were distributed between the majority and minority parties. In spite of this the Labour Party still held 33 seats in 1896 and 1898 while the Clerical majority went down to

85 seats. But now the Clericals had on their side the 21 seats of the "doctrinaire" Liberals whom they had rescued so that they could serve them in the Chamber. And with old-fashioned loyalty these now stuck to their former enemies in every reactionary villainy.

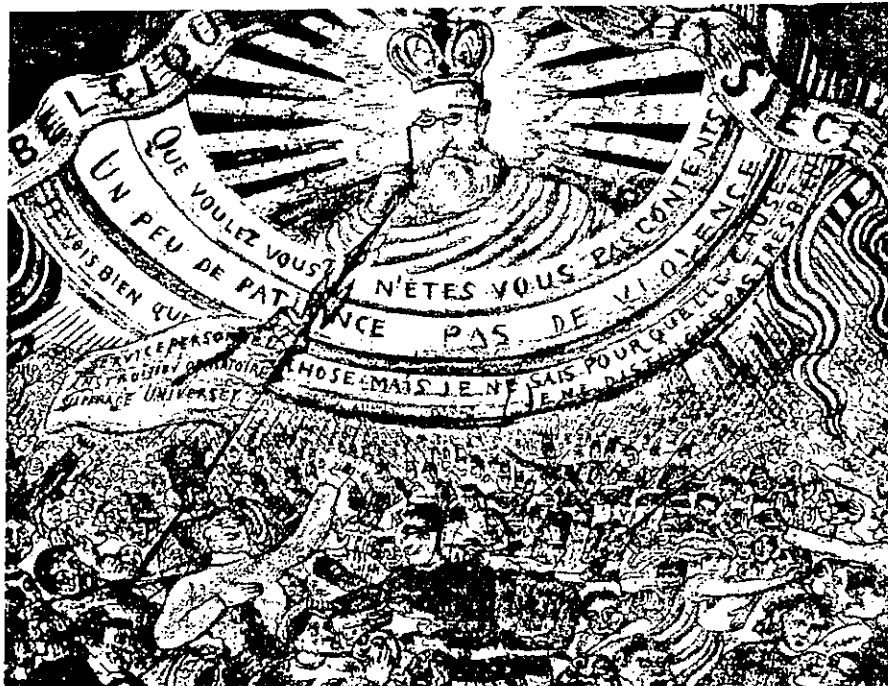
Thus the result to date of the great struggle for suffrage in Belgium is the most classical and clear-cut picture of social division that exists in any country in Europe. In addition, this present final struggle for universal, equal suffrage without any distortion whatsoever promises more important results than any of the comparable struggles in other countries. Victory could easily make the Labour Party with the support of the left-Liberals the ruling party in the parliament. It would be formally ruling, but not on account of the shrewdness of some individual prime minister, but on account of the historically determined political situation. The struggle for suffrage that lies immediately before us now is the cross-roads where the political future of the Belgian working class movement will be decided for a whole period to come.

To-day this movement stands at the ready - the most revolutionary force of a decaying capitalism. For what to-morrow may bring... all eyes turn to Philippi (21).

I Leipziger Volkszeitung No 84, 14th April 1902
II Leipziger Volkszeitung No 85, 15th April 1902

King "Cleopold"

(a play on the name of the King, Leopold II, and Cleo, the muse of history) peers down on the struggles for Universal Suffrage and state education saying 'What do you want? Aren't you happy? A little patience. No violence...'



James Ensor, 'Belgium in the 19th Century'

At Sea

The parliamentary phase of the struggle in Brussels is over. The revision of the constitution has been rejected! What now? This is the question on the lips of every class conscious worker the world over. On the lips of everyone whose blood runs faster with each hour that the news from Belgium is telegraphed to the papers.

We wrote in our last issue (22) that the hour of decision would strike on the afternoon of Friday 18th April 1902. This was the day on which parliament was to vote on the motion to revise the constitution. The situation was charged with tremendous tension, each minute promising some new turn of events. This was reflected in the behaviour of the Socialist deputies. They fought so desperately against the rejection of the revision the Clericals had wanted to push through last Thursday, and threatened that such dire consequences would follow any guillotine of the discussion of the bill, that everybody was sure the rejection of the motion would be followed by a really drastic decision by the Social Democrats to end the parliamentary phase of the struggle and open up a new phase.

And now? What conclusions did the Socialist leaders draw from Saturday's rejection of the constitutional revision? What decision have they taken to advance the struggle now? None at all! They waited for the outcome of the debate with such vehement threats and such heated cries. And all this was followed by silence! Nothing happened; no new turn in the struggle; not a step forwards! The masses of strikers wait outside; their hopes have always focussed on the continuous wrangling going on inside the Chamber; their attention was rivetted to the outcome of the parliamentary process. And now that that process has culminated in this long-expected conclusion, the same indecision and the same vagueness continues. But worse! Now the leaders are openly trying to get out of calling a general strike which apparently they neither expected nor wanted. All they want to do is get the 300,000 who are waiting for a decision to go home.

According to a report in the "Berlin Tageblatt" of 19th April, Vandervelde read out the following declaration of the Liberal allies at the huge meeting that took place in the House of the People after the parliamentary debate in question. "We Liberals salute the calm and disciplined behaviour of the strikers, but would call on them to go back to work so as not to suffer needlessly. The next elections will see the victory of the opposition." The Socialist Democratic leader praised this declaration in such a way that leads one to conclude it will be no time at all until the leadership of the Labour Party will themselves be demanding the very same thing from the workers. We hardly need

to tell our readers that after the parliamentary defeat a calling off of the general strike is tantamount to stifling the whole movement, to reducing the vast momentum it had built up - the noisy overture with which it started - "to a shy growl". If the leadership of the Labour Party goes ahead and urges the strikers to go back to work, then, for the present at least, the battle is lost. And indeed humiliatingly lost - before the decisive confrontation, without fighting the real battle. For all we have seen so far is nothing more than preliminaries, the preparations and training manoeuvres, the initial troop deployments and preparation of weapons. It never came to the point of using these forces; the sword had to be sheathed before it was used; the pent-up head of steam had to be blown off before it could be discharged properly.

It would be ridiculous to try to gauge the exact balance of forces in Belgium from Berlin or from Leipzig. Or to judge from there whether the time was right for street fighting. It is possible that if the people took on the troops now in an open confrontation they would be defeated. The last thing we would want to do is, say, to complain that the Belgian leaders did not call the workers to arms as soon as the parliamentary, constitutional process was exhausted.

But they should at least have given some leadership, they should have had some sort of clear and consistent strategy. And their actions show the exact opposite. All that can be observed here is a series of moves and counter-moves, a chaotic groping, an indecisive shilly-shallying.

If all the Belgian leaders wanted to do is restrict themselves to a purely parliamentary struggle then they should not have spent so much time and energy threatening "the most extreme means", revolutions, blood baths and killing. And they should not have brought the masses on to the streets.

If on the other hand they wanted to work through the masses, basing themselves on extra-parliamentary action, then their convulsive efforts are incomprehensible. For first they dragged out the parliamentary phase interminably, and, then, as soon as that was over, they rushed to stifle the action of the masses.

If in all seriousness they expect a Liberal-Socialist majority at some coming election or other - under the present system of plural votes at that! - as the quoted declaration of the Liberals would have it, then it is incomprehensible why they stayed silent in parliament and refrained from any statement of opinion when, as much as a week ago, the Liberals demanded the dissolution of parliament and new elections. And it is even harder to understand why they stirred up this tumult, this great movement with all its many sac-

rifices, seeing that there was in any case just a couple of years to wait until the elections came round again and the Clerical majority could be smashed.

If, however, the Belgian leaders (like ourselves) consider that a victory over the Clerical Party under the present voting system is out; in other words, if they consider the nice promise the Liberals gave to be just so much absurd chatter - indeed just a way of getting the roused up working class to give up the general strike - then it is incomprehensible why they are going along with these absurd illusions of the Liberals and in so doing disarming the workers by taking from them their only real weapon, independent mass action.

If from the outset the whole struggle was to be restricted to a constitutional framework, then we cannot see why there was ever any talk of a general strike. After all the lack of impact on the Clerical majority of this tactic the moment the threatening spectre of a possible revolution was

removed could never have been in doubt.

If, however, the decision was that it was necessary to exhaust all constitutional means before resorting to others, it is a riddle why the general strike should have been called off precisely at the point when its ineffectuality when confined to the limits of legality had become apparent.

It is vital to pose all these questions and to analyse moreover the internal logic of the developments in Belgium because - and how we wish it were otherwise! - it appears to us that this movement is now on the brink of its total collapse.

To subject the strategy of our Belgian comrades to a serious critical analysis seems to us of the utmost importance, given the tremendous significance of this affair for the international proletariat. And certainly more appropriate than cheering thoughtlessly or uttering noises of great approval at this event because we think that everything we and other socialists do is absolutely marvellous, wonderful and inspiring.

Leipziger Volkszeitung No. 90 21st April 1902



The Cause of the Defeat

We all know that we have been defeated in Belgium. It is useless and pointless to cover it up. We Social Democrats are in the habit of claiming that there is no such thing as a defeat for us. And in a certain sense that is true. For there is no force in the world that can defeat the militant, class conscious proletariat. If the cause of Social Democracy does after all suffer a temporary set-back at the hands of an enemy with superior forces, then the very next moment sees it rise more mightily than ever before. And what the cheering bourgeois world believes in its frenzied triumphalism to be our defeat straight away proves itself to be our victory. This was the case with the butchering of the Commune and again with the anti-Socialist laws.

But if we do not submit to the superiority of the enemy, but rather say before the decisive battle and indeed without it ever coming to a trial of strength that we are beaten... then we are defeated in every possible meaning of the word. And that unfortunately is what we have just witnessed in the case of Belgium.

"We are beaten!" Vandervelde declared to the throng of workers gathered in the House of the People on the evening of Friday 18th April, when the constitutional revision had been rejected by the parliament.

"Not yet!" came a cry from the crowd.

"But what can be done?" asked the leader of the Belgian Socialists.

"Take to the streets for victory!" came the answer from the throng.

"It's either too early or too late" answered Vandervelde. "We Socialists must remember the words of the Bible: Thou shalt not kill!" "But" the leader went on "the struggle will continue - only more resolutely and on a grander scale than ever before. The struggle will, if we continue it, be decisively effective... Now it is up to the King... We wait with our arms at the ready."

Thus immediately after the parliamentary defeat the slogan of the Socialist leader was for a continuation of the general strike. On Friday it was still the unanimous decision of the leadership of the Labour Party. On Saturday the Brussels paper "Peuple", the central organ of the Belgian Social Democracy was still writing:

"If the Belgian workers are firm in their resolve that come what may they will not accept the defeat so long as there is breath in their bodies and blood in their veins, then we say to them, Do not lay down your arms! Come death, the threat of poverty or whatever else, keep up

this sacred strike for universal suffrage! Keep it up so that at the very least the liberal bourgeoisie and all the official representatives of trade and industry can force the government to go to the country on the question of universal suffrage!

"Suffering, death and privation - these are the agonies we are prepared to suffer with you, for the magnificent blaze of solidarity shown by many classes in many countries takes all the sting out of these terrors!

"Comrades, do not yield! Continue the general strike and let your voices ring out with the demand for the dissolution of parliament!

"Dissolving parliament is, of course, not solving the problem! But it does mean that on 25th May the whole country will be able to decide on the revision of the constitution (23). And we are absolutely convinced that this would mean the ultimate victory of the cause of universal suffrage!

"Will we Belgian workers who were filled with admiration for the Boers fail to be their equals in courage and nobility of character?"

"The continuation of the general strike is the only thing that will save the cause of universal suffrage. That is the way we will hit back, the way we will win the rights of the people in the end no matter what forces march against us!

"Long live the general strike!

"Long live universal suffrage!

"Dissolve the Parliament!"

That was what was said. That was the watchword of the Brussels party organ as late as Saturday. And on Sunday morning the party leadership decides... to call the strike off, and tell the 350,000 workers who were standing by with arms at the ready to... go home!

A crasser contradiction could hardly be imagined! On the one hand we have the words of Vandervelde in the House of the People and the rousing article in "Peuple" and on the other the resolution of the party leadership immediately afterwards. A more sudden switch from one day to another is quite without parallel in the history of the modern workers' movement.

Well, what happened? What new turn in the situation brought about this abrupt change of line and made the party leaders suddenly sound the retreat? Was it that the ranks of the strikers began to show signs of weakness and demoralisation? Or was it that the strike funds had

almost run out and that extreme privation forced them to yield?

Not in the least! And the King, who was begged time and again to dissolve parliament, is as silent as ever he was. The strikers, on the other hand, showed both on Saturday and on Sunday their enthusiasm, their heroic determination and a really fiery readiness to do battle. The little scene we took out of the report in "People" of Friday evening's impressive meeting presents us with a picture of a working class bristling with strength, quivering with impatience to enter the fray, and prepared for anything. And as far as funds were concerned, huge waves of contributions were flowing in. The spirit of self-sacrifice of the Belgian working class itself grew tremendously, while in Germany and everywhere else the same phenomenon meant that the Belgian comrades could count on the continuing support of the international proletariat.

What then was the reason for this inexplicable capitulation? The only clue lies in the declaration that was adopted by the Progressive-Liberals at their executive meeting. It says, "The Executive of the Progressive Federation... calls on the working class to answer the provocations of the Government with political wisdom, and, in order not to furnish it with any excuse for new

repressions and massacres, to call off the general strike, whose object has after all been achieved in that it is now apparent to everyone that the working class is prepared to fight determinedly for universal suffrage."

This was a clear case of a change of front by the Belgian party leaders. The masses wanted to go through with it. They were prepared for any sacrifice. The leaders themselves declared that the continuation of the general strike was absolutely necessary; but the bourgeoisie decided "Lay down your arms! And the Socialists halted at the decision of their "allies".

So the Belgian defeat is the work of the Liberals. From the moment the Socialists formed an "alliance" with the Liberals which rested on a compromise they became the latter's dumb instruments. Thanks to this alliance the Belgian Socialists were reduced to playing the part of a mere go-between, so ensuring that in the earth-shaking events of the past few weeks the Liberals could gain the leadership of the working class and lead it... to defeat.

It is a tragic outcome, but even this will not prove quite so tragic if it serves as a lesson and a warning to the Belgian comrades and ourselves!

Leipziger Volkszeitung No. 91 22nd April 1902

NOTES

(1) The Belgian Labour Party, Le Parti Ouvrier Belge, was founded in 1885. It was not the first socialist party to have existed in Belgium. For instance, the Flemish Socialist Party, which Luxemburg does not mention was founded eight years before in 1877. The P.O.B. was the party of the Second International.

Its precedents were as follows: In 1870 Cesar de Paep set up the Belgian section of the International Working Men's Association, whose main struggle was around the question of the ten-hour day until 1873. In 1875 was the setting up of the Chambre du Travail in Brussels with Ghent and Antwerp following the next year. The Socialist Unity Congress at Ghent the year after achieved nothing. Instead of a united movement the Congress split into the Flemish Socialist Party (based in Ghent) and the Brabancon Socialist Party (based in Brussels).

(2) The Congress was held in Brussels on 30th and 31st March 1902. At the Congress it was decided to campaign under the slogan of "One Man One Vote". A decision was also taken to accept a system of proportional representation in Parliament and to drop the demand for women's rights.

The "Socialist" Party was not really the name of the organisation (see above) but Rosa Luxemburg refers to it either as the Workers Party or the Socialist Party or the Social-Democracy.

(3) Although as can be seen from the above note the party was not at this time advocating female suffrage, Rosa Luxemburg uses the term "universal suffrage" very loosely.

(4) The details of the "plural voting" are given in the article "The Third Act" (see later). It led to what Luxemburg called the "Zensusparliament".

(5) She is here referring to the constitution of 1831.

(6) A party leader.

(7) Millerand (1859 - 1943): a French politician who was one of the "leaders" of social-chauvinism and ministerial socialism. He was many times head of the Government in France.

(8) Edward Anseele (1856 - 1938) was not only a founder of the Labour Party, but later became the moving spirit of the closely allied co-operative movement, the "Vorruij". Although his early career in the socialist movement had been most laudable (he had also been a founder of the Flemish Socialist Party) he drifted further and further to the right as time went on. He was, for instance a minister in the 1925 Catholic-Socialist coalition government.

(9) Arnold Ruge was born in Bergen (Ruegen) in 1803. He was a part of the young Hegelian movement and a prominent publicist. In 1838 he published the *Hallische Jahrbuecher*, in 1840 - 3 the *Deutsche Jahrbuecher*, and in Paris with Marx the *Deutsch-Franzoesische Jahrbuecher* in 1844. He was an important publicist thereafter of the First International. Ruge died in Brighton on new year's eve 1880.

(10) Emile Vandervelde was born in Ixelles in 1866. He was a prominent leader of the P.O.B. which he joined in 1889. Like Anseele he was a parliamentary deputy who, to quote the ingeniously honest understatement of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "on the outbreak of World War One ... devoted himself to the problems of national defense for the liberation of his invaded country and in August 1914 was summoned to join the government as minister of state, later becoming a member of the cabinet." - Another social-chauvinist traitor!

(11) Jacques (Jacob) Kats (1804 - 1886) was the son of a Dutch Republican officer who had taken refuge in Brussels after the revolution of 1830. In a very varied life as weaver, then schoolmaster, then tobacconist, Kats had time to make the most wide-ranging contributions to the Belgian, particularly the Flemish, working class. He was one of the first of all Belgian socialists preceding even Colins (Baron Jean Hippolyte de Colins, 1783 - 1859) in his major writings.

(12) Karl Gruen (1813 or 1817 - 1887 - Cole gives both dates) was a young Hegelian-cum-Proudhonist. He was one of Marx's bitterest enemies during the latter's stay in Paris.

(13) At this point the text actually says "Mert-

ens" and not "Marx's", but this is obviously a misprint.

(14) Rosa Luxemburg uses this date as it marks the real establishment of the Kingdom of the Belgians with its own constitution.

(15) Alfred Defuisseaux (1823 - 1901) was the brother of Leon Defuisseaux (chairman of the 1891 P.O.B. Congress) and father of George Defuisseaux another leading light of the party. This Walloon leader wrote the "Catechisme" and was thus probably mainly responsible for sparking off the massive strikes in Charleroi and Liege, the area in which thousands and thousands of the pamphlet had been sold.

(16) The German here is "Zensusparlament". Literally this is a parliament made of deputies voted on the basis of plural voting, where a plurality is given according to whether the voter is the head of a family or according to his income - in this case it was both!

(17) General van der Smissen was in charge of the soldiers sent to crush the strikes mentioned above (15).

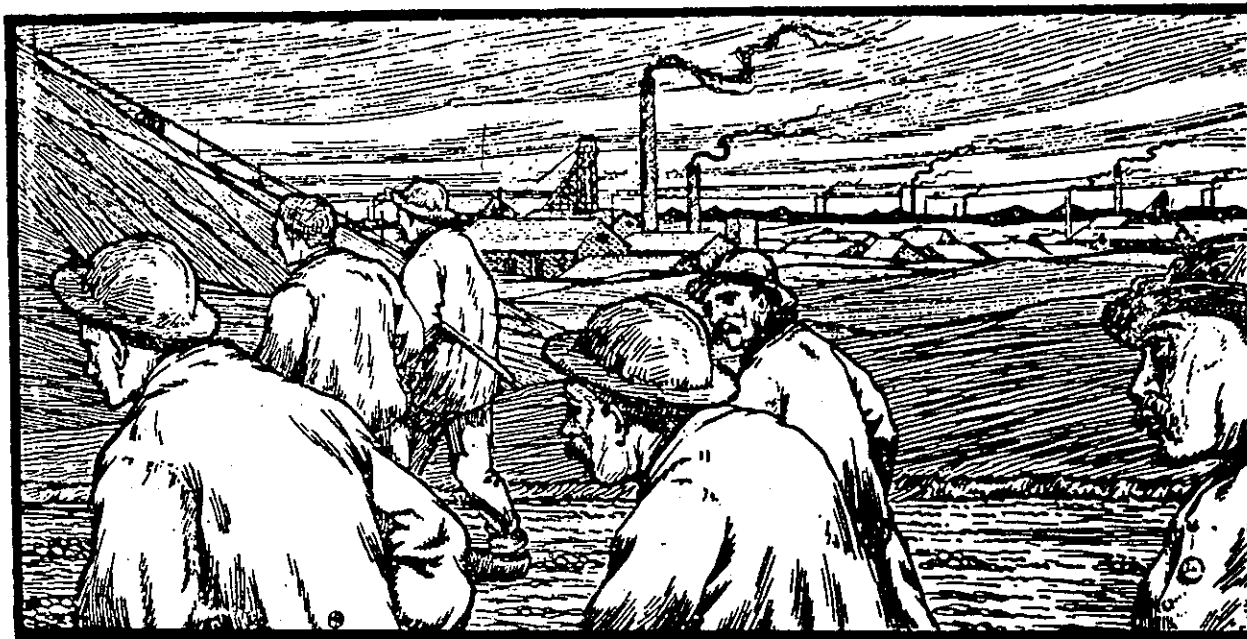
(18) This took place in Liege from 26th - 29th September 1886.

(19) The mass strike began on 14th April 1902 with a participation of 300,000 workers.

(20) Rosa Luxemburg is here referring to the *Freisinnige Volkspartei* under the leadership of Eugen Richter.

(21) Philippi - that is, the big battle, the decisive battle.

(22) "An Hour before the Decision" in *Leipziger Volkszeitung* no. 88, 18th April 1902.



Miners going to work at the end of the century in the Borinage.



THE DIALECTICS OF SECTARIANISM

**'PHILOSOPHY'
AND
MR. SLAUGHTER
BY NEAL SMITH**

Of what use is Marxism to the working class? The working class does not develop control of a portion of the means of production within capitalism, as did the bourgeoisie within feudalism. It must seize hold of the existing means of production. It remains a class of wage slaves up to the point of taking power, and expropriating the capitalists. It must deliberately smash the old state and establish a new type of state, a workers' state, to consolidate its power and its freedom. Its readiness and willingness to act to secure its own emancipation is dependent on its conscious grasp of its own class interests and understanding of the laws of social development. Its struggle, at its highest peak, is a conscious struggle based on science, and this is central to the Marxist theory of the proletarian revolution. (The revolution will only be complete in the degenerated and deformed workers' states when the working class takes full political power.) Therefore it is an absolute prerequisite that the party which aims to lead the working class out of slavery has a scientific outlook. That can only be a materialist outlook, which rigorously pushes aside all obscurantism and all reliance on 'supernatural' activity in place of human activity. Only dialectical materialism can serve the working class to make clear its historical interests. Dialectical materialism is not an optional, but an essential weapon in the struggle of the working class to remake the world. The enemies of dialectical materialism are not only those who reject it, but also those who distort and misrepresent it, and its connection with proletarian politics. In Britain, not the least damage has been done by the attempt of the Socialist Labour League to set up a mummified caricature of dialectical materialism as a magic talisman. In this article Neal Smith shows that Marxism can only be understood as a useful weapon in the class struggle if the complexity and richness of all the different levels of analysis are appreciated, and how, therefore, the SLL's collapsing of Marxism into a mysticised 'epistemology' blocks the rational application of Marxism and even of Marxist epistemology.

ONE OF the things that immediately strikes anyone coming into contact with the Socialist Labour League is their insistent proclamation - under all circumstances, and sometimes even in mass agitation - of the prime necessity of the understanding of dialectical materialism. This insistence appears in many forms, not only, properly though exaggeratedly in their programmes of education for members and sympathisers and in pamphlets, but also in their daily agitation.

Against the 'revisionists' - whose political errors all flow, according to the SLL, from their "rejection of dialectical materialism" - the SLL find a compulsive need to proclaim the belief in dialectical materialism on every conceivable occasion. "Dialectical materialism", for them, becomes a magic wand, automatically leading to correct politics. It becomes a fetish, in fact, it becomes an alibi for an idealism in practice. Aspects of reality are abstracted from their material totality, woven

"... is it better to 'think', without having a critical awareness, in a disjointed and episodic way? In other words, is it better to take part in a conception of the world mechanically imposed by the external environment? ... Or, on the other hand, is it better to work out consciously and critically one's own conception of the world and thus, in connection with the labours of one's own brain, choose one's sphere of activity, take an active part in the creation of the world, be one's own guide, refusing to accept passively and supinely from outside the moulding of one's personality?"

Antonio Gramsci.

into pre-arranged conceptions and dished out as the fruit of pure, undiluted dialectical materialism. Thus, the Wilson devaluation of the £ signalled the cataclysmic, total breakdown of British capitalism, and was made out to be a bigger betrayal than Macdonald's capitulation to the American bankers in 1931. Every problem for British capitalism is seen as the final harbinger of utter collapse of the economy and the consequent revolutionary working class offensive, to be led by the SLL of course.

Their political practice, which is the decisive test of their application of dialectical materialism, is actually based on a methodology which is sub-empiricist. The super-activism of the League is comparable to the man who throws a medley of brilliant punches - shadow-boxing - while the real contestants get on with the fight inside the ring. The struggle against empiricism and pragmatism which does need to be waged is certainly not advanced by the shabby and often dishonest polemics, the out-of-

this-world analyses, and the self-centred, often irrelevant activities of the SLL.

The League's method is as crude as it is false - set up a straw man and then proceed to knock him down. It does not, of course, matter that the straw man they set up often is only a projection of their own preoccupations, mistakes, obsessions and distortions.

"LENIN ON DIALECTICS"

As has been said, the SLL believe that the basis of the "revisionism" of other groups is the rejection of dialectical materialism. A concrete example of the League approach and also of the muddle that they call "philosophy" is to be found in Cliff Slaughter's pamphlet - "Lenin on Dialectics" - and it is worth examining it in some detail, as by so doing it is possible to move from a criticism of its confusion to a better appreciation of dialectical materialism and its real significance for revolutionary activity.

Slaughter begins in typical SLL knock-about fashion by asserting that:

"In recent years, revisionist policies have been pursued by some calling themselves Trotskyists ... and it is becoming clear that behind these policies there lies an abandonment of dialectical materialism, a turn towards empiricism and pragmatism. This pamphlet is part of a defence of dialectics against these basic revisions" (1)

Now this sounds very fine and reasonable - very simple and precise - but it is unfortunate for Slaughter that nowhere in the pamphlet does he show in concrete detail any substantiation for these very serious charges. Nowhere in the pamphlet is there to be found a demonstration of how the political positions of these other groups flow directly from the particular epistemology they are supposed to hold.

MARX AND HEGEL

The first section of the pamphlet is on the connection between the philosophy of Hegel and the Marxism of Lenin (as expressed in his notes on Hegel's "Science of Logic"). It is in this initial section that the confusion which permeates the pamphlet appears. Put simply, it is the inability to distinguish between Marxism and Hegelianism. To understand this it is necessary to go back to some philosophical points of departure - Hegel's critique of Kant.

According to Hegel, the dialectical movement (i. e. movement through contradiction, changes from quantity to quality, the concept of immanence) of thought reflects directly the movement of reality. (2) Thought develops in a dialectical fashion because that is the way in

which the object of thought changes and develops - thought is simply determined by the movement of reality (and a peculiar reality at that).

Hegel elaborated this concept in contradistinction to the philosophy of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant who, at the end of the eighteenth century, had developed a theory of knowledge in which thought was conceived of as never being able to come to grips with the world because of the existence of certain categories of thought, such as space and causality, which existed in thought alone, determined its structure, and placed an irremovable barrier between thought and its object.

According to Kant, it is possible to have some conception of reality, but this conception will always be refracted and distorted by the presence of the categories of thought, and therefore it cannot be possible to finally understand things as they are in themselves. In other words, there exists, if Kant is right, a definite limit on the scope of knowledge - there is a point beyond which we cannot go and beyond that point the world is necessarily unintelligible and un-reachable. Hegel, on the other hand, wished to assert the intelligibility and rationality of the world, and therefore found it necessary to overcome the pitfalls put in the way of this by Kantian epistemology. He did this by the adoption of a radically different perspective from that of Kant - by conceiving of the "unity of thought and being." Thus he dissolved the Kantian formulation by denying the separation of thought and the world, and did this on the grounds of the obvious intelligibility of the world. This sort of approach can be found, expressed from a different perspective, in "Ludwig Feuerbach and the end of classical German philosophy" by Engels when he says about Kantianism....

"The most telling refutation of this (Kantianism, NS) as of all other philosophical crotchets is practice, namely experiment and industry. If we are able to prove the correctness of our conception of a natural process by making it ourselves, bringing it into being out of its conditions, and make it serve our purposes into the bargain, then there is an end to the Kantian ungraspable "thing-in-itself". (3)

If the perspective is altered from the practical, instrumental one of Engels to that of the speculative rationalism of Hegel, there is the essence of Hegel's justification for his rejection of Kant. It is this - if we can understand the world on a rational basis, and we can do this, then there is no reason to suppose thought and the world are separate, for if that were the case, then such a rational understanding as exists would be impossible. Flowing from this reasoning, Hegel drew the conclusion that for thought to grasp the world, it must allow itself to be directly determined by it - dialectical thought is therefore in essence thought which reflects the dialectical nature of the world. He says....

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¹The absolute method ... draws the determinate element directly from the object itself, since it is the object's immanent principle and soul.¹ (my emphasis, NS)

¹The self-identity of the idea is one with the process.¹ (my emphasis) (4)

Surely from this it is clear that for Hegel the movement of thought and of the world were one and the same in essence, and that thought is directly and passively determined by reality. This is brought out in Kojève's book - "An Introduction to the Reading of Hegel" - in which he outlines Hegel's essentially phenomenological approach. That is to say that, for Hegel, it is possible to receive information about the world in a completely passive manner, unencumbered by the distortion or selection of thought processes. The mind is seen as being a potentially blank page on which the world inscribes information by the operation of the senses and reason. Thus the process is entirely one-way, from the world to thought, and the determination is also all one way - thought being simply a receptacle into which the world is poured, although even that image is not quite precise as the receptacle does shape what is received (pouring liquids into different types of containers).

The process of the inscription on the blank page occurs, of course, according to the laws of dialectical development. This sort of approach to an understanding of the world is advocated by Hegel in, for example, the introductory passages to the "Philosophy of Nature".

Briefly then, this is the Hegelian view of the way in which thought must relate to the world in order to grasp its immanent principles. It is one in which thought is passively determined by the processes of the world, and does not interact with them. How is the Marxist theory of knowledge different from this, and how does Slaughter see the difference?

Slaughter is not at all clear in his description of the way thought relates to the world. But it seems that in a confused fashion he accepts the passive nature of this relationship. Although, in places, he does make passing references to the activity of thought, nowhere is the significance of this brought out, and consequently he appears to argue that the only real difference between the epistemology of Hegel and that of Marx and Lenin is that the determinate object of thought is different. Hegel understood the movement and development of thought as being the reflection of the movement of a spiritual, transcendental reality - the Absolute. Thus thought is fundamentally related to this transcendental entity, and its relations to the material world, while existing (instead of simply not being there as is sometimes asserted in crude caricatures of the 'idealism' of Hegel) are a result of this transcendental determination. The relations of thought to the earth are thus determined by the relation of thought to the heavens. However, for Marx, the reverse is the case. Thought is determined in its relationship to the material,

natural and social world. Thought is not the result of a divine process, but of the processes of nature and society. These are its determinants. In pointing out this fundamental and vital difference, Slaughter is quite correct. However, he does not go further than this and the question must be raised as to whether this change from heaven to earth is the only difference between Marx and Hegel.

To quote Slaughter ...

¹A study of these notes clarifies greatly what Marx and Engels meant when they said that in order to arrive at a scientific method they had only "to stand Hegel on his head, or rather, on his feet".¹ (5) (my emphasis)

Apart from the fact, amplified later on, that a study of a theory of knowledge does not automatically imply and produce a scientific method as Slaughter suggests, Marx certainly did not claim that the standing of Hegel 'on his head' was all that he did - the only thing. As Althusser and others have noted, the phrase of Marx about the extraction of the rational kernel from the mystical shell (see the Afterword to the 2nd German edition of Capital) contains within it a whole range of nuances, and indeed, if this is the only thing they needed to do, then Slaughter is forced into the position of saying that the Marxist epistemology is one which is still essentially passive. The determination of thought in a passive sense is not altered by altering its object, and thus Slaughter falls into the trap of attributing to Marx the passive epistemology of Hegel. This is precisely how he sees it. To quote from the pamphlet...

¹Our concepts are a reflection of the objective world of nature.¹ (6)

(It is worth noting that the social determination of thought is omitted here, as in other material of the SLL, and without this essential point there cannot be a satisfactory conception of ideology and 'false consciousness').

Now, a reflection is something which is passive and inactive - it will not change as long as the object it is reflecting does not change. It is an eternal passive copy of the real object - there is no dynamic interaction in which the reflection changes, there is no immanent movement: a reflection can be nothing other than what it is. This image of Slaughter's coincides exactly with a massive, phenomenological epistemology - a simple inverted Hegelianism.

However, this is not a Marxist epistemology. In his 1845 Theses on Feuerbach, Marx had written that ...

¹The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism ... is that the thing is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not subjectively. Hence it happened that the active side, in contradistinction to materialism, was developed by idealism - but only abstractly, since, of course, idealism does not know real, sensuous activity as such.¹ (7)

Unfortunately for Slaughter, It is precisely this defect of all hitherto existing materialism which occurs in his writings: he has not understood the importance of the activity of consciousness as being an essential component of Marxist epistemology. This difference between the epistemology of Marx and that of Hegel - the role of active consciousness - is absolutely vital. Furthermore, it is evident from the pamphlet that Slaughter has not only failed to integrate this conception into his account of the dialectic, but that also he has drastically misunderstood Lenin's writings on this. From a reading of the Notebooks, it can be seen that Lenin was well aware of the significance and consequences of the acceptance of the active role of consciousness: that he realised that thought was not something which could simply reflect the world, but was on the contrary something which was engaged in interaction with the world; something that was dynamic; something that actually effected our perception and understanding of the world. To quote.....

'The coincidence of thought with the object is a process.' (8) (my emphasis)

'Cognition is the external, endless approximation of thought to the object.' (9)

(Incidentally, Slaughter juxtaposes these two quotes from Lenin with the one from Hegel cited earlier. He notes that Lenin is reading Hegel materialistically, but then completely fails to notice that the 'process' referred to in each case is utterly different. For Hegel, the 'process' is the dialectical movement of reality; by contrast, for Lenin, it refers to the process of interaction between thought and the world. The two quotes from Lenin appear together in the Notebooks, and the second one reveals Lenin's position on this unambiguously.)

What then is the dialectic? For Hegel, it is the laws of development of transcendental reality and its determination, in a passive sense, of thought which is attempting to grasp that development. For Marxists, it is the laws of the development of thought and the world, and of the interaction between them. It is something which supercedes both passive materialism and passive idealism, and yet is something which contains elements of both 'materialism' and 'idealism'. It contains the notion of the existence of a material reality with its own structure and laws of development, and the notion of the activity of thought as an agent in the world, something, itself fundamentally a 'process of matter', which is constantly attempting to come to grips with the world and is acting on it. This....

'must be understood not "lifelessly", not "abstractly", not devoid of movement, not without contradictions, but in the eternal process of movement, the arising of contradictions and their resolution.' (10).

This endless struggle of thought to grasp the world, and its dialectical determination by the world, and the development of understanding through the resolution of contradictions arising out of this process is the kernel of the dialectic approach in social theory, and it is to this that the laws of Logic apply. It is not therefore a matter of knowledge being produced in our minds simply by the action of the external world, but rather a conception of the richness of the interaction involved.

A simple passive conception cannot, for example, explain the role and the generation of ideology; it cannot explain the complex interconnections between nature, society, and thought; it cannot see that knowledge is the result of the interaction of these connections; it cannot give rise to a conception of scientific methodology, other than the making of the laws of the dialectic into a magic formula, a ritual, with which one can draw analyses direct from the world. All these faults are displayed by the SLL, for they have only grasped what is materialistic in what they call 'Marxism' - they have not grasped what is dialectical. A few formulas about the laws of the motion of matter, are supposed to lead directly to all the conceptions of Marxism. Thus the SLL conceive of 'matter in motion' automatically imprinting itself on consciousness, and instead of considering the very real problem of how thought is related to the real world in various modes of thought, they make metaphysical assertions about the laws of matter and then extrapolate from these to a consideration of thought - the result is entirely un-Marxist and mystical. The best that can be said of these ideas is that they are an unwitting return to the formulations of Hegel, and as such are pre-Marxist. This presentation of the Marxist epistemology as being a simple inverted Hegelianism is not something which is unique to Slaughter but is something which is in fact endemic to the SLL. For example, Healy has talked of the day arriving when we will 'know everything' - a uniquely Hegelian conception of the realisation of the Absolute. Michael Banda, writing in the 'Workers Press' on November 22nd, 1972 describes.....

'..... the Marxist theory of knowledge, which is cogently expressed by Hegel in his "Doctrine of essence".' (my emphasis)

Only thanks to the unyielding struggle of the SLL in the face of 'revisionism' are we made aware of just how much Marx owed to Hegel!

'PHILOSOPHY' & POLITICS

The SLL has obviously not got the faintest idea as to the real nature of dialectical materialism or the real relationship between epistemology and political practice. One's conscious view of the world and the processes by which one comes to understand it play a role in the formulation of politics - and for working class revolutionaries a crucial role. In general this cannot be denied,

but the concrete reality of the connection which is found in the real world does not easily correspond to neat, glib assertions, nor fit into a vulgar materialist schema.

Let us examine the example used by Slaughter and this will become clearer. In his pamphlet Slaughter attacks Raya Dunayevskaya for asserting that before Lenin read Hegel he did not fully grasp dialectical materialism. Slaughter says...

'She (Dunayevskaya, NS) has to admit that in his political practice Lenin showed a grasp of dialectics, but this appears to have remained "unconscious" while in his thought Lenin remained rigid and mechanical.' (11)

First of all, let us leave aside the question as to the status of Lenin's thought before 1914 to concentrate on the key issue - that of the role of an understanding of dialectics as an 'aid' to thought. Now the argument used by Slaughter and implied in the quotation above - that is, the absurdity of 'unconscious' dialectical thought - rests on a mistaken identity between epistemology and methodology.

'.... a shrewd statement (by Hegel, NS) about Logic: it is a "prejudice" that it "teaches how to think" (just as physiology teaches.... to digest???)'. (12)

Surely Slaughter is guilty of such a "prejudice". An understanding of the laws of the dialectic is not a course in instant problem solving, not like reading de Bono's course in "lateral thinking". For the SLL, though, it plays precisely this function - they have a conception in which it is possible to give somebody a list of the laws of the dialectic to learn and then all he has to do is to apply these to the world in his thought to be a Marxist. In this way, they absolve themselves from the difficulties of performing any serious concrete analysis - instead they are reduced to vague mutterings about the irresolvable contradictions of capitalism. Not that that is wrong: however it is hardly an analysis.

So, although it is necessary to realise that Marxism is concerned to discover what is immanent within a particular conjuncture, merely to say this, as does the SLL, and to parrot about the necessity of penetrating to the innermost interconnections, and so on, is no substitute for a scientific methodology that will enable you to perform that analysis. It is like pointing to the target but having no idea as to how to fire the gun. All the SLL's pronouncements on this are therefore sheer bombast they hysterically denounce other groups for not "penetrating to the essence behind appearances", and yet themselves have no conception of how to do this.

Dialectical materialism is then no substitute for thought: instead a conscious understanding of it frees one from mechanical conceptions of

the world (as Gramsci notes) and lays the basis for a conscious understanding of the role of thought in the world, as represented by science, ideology, and common-sense, and the manner in which these develop and will continue to develop. Furthermore, without such a conscious understanding, the methodology by which one analyses the world will also be derived from unconscious processes which, as Gramsci puts it, will be "mechanically imposed". However, epistemology, methodology, and scientific analysis are not one and the same. It should be really unnecessary to make this point, but the SLL certainly does not see the difference. (13)

Now, returning to the early Lenin, I hope I have made clear that to say that Lenin was not consciously aware of the intricacies of dialectical materialism is not to say that he was not a Marxist and did not provide a Marxist analysis of the situation facing the revolutionary forces and the tasks they had to fulfill. However, I think it is true to say that in much of his pre-war writing on philosophy, Lenin was mechanical and often tended towards crude materialism.

Materialism & Empirio-Criticism has familiar passages about thought passively mirroring the world, and some passages in the Notebooks written before 1914 also show this tendency.

He quotes Feuerbach: "Nor have we any grounds for imagining that if man had more senses or organs he would also cognise more properties or things of nature. There is nothing more in the external world, in inorganic nature, than in organic nature. Man has just as many senses as are necessary for him to conceive the world in its totality, in its entirety"; and comments with evident approval: "If man had more senses, would he discover more things in the world? No." (14)

But if the senses are active, if thought interacts with the world through the senses, then it is not true to say that no more would be discovered if we had more senses. For example, a major role in the development of science has been played by the improvement of instrumentation, by improving those techniques which aid, complement and substitute for our senses. Clearly Lenin - who wrote this in 1909, when his mind was heavily preoccupied with his battle against the ex-Bolshevik faction of "God-builders" who tried to fuse Marxism and a form of religion - was mainly concerned with the question of the objective existence of the material world, regardless of man's senses and level of perception. Nevertheless the "reflection" conception is unmistakable here. If our bodies were equipped with detectors for infra-red radiation, for example, we would have a whole new world open to us. Of course this is already present, but here is an example of that change from quantity into quality. If

Lenin is right, then our knowledge of the world is simply something which is given. This does not square up with his later, more dialectical formulations about "endless approximation of thought" to its object. However, I repeat, to say this does not open the flood gates of attack on all of Lenin's thought before 1914 as non-Marxist. There is a connection between Marxism and politics but it is an implication, logical, not causal as Slaughter asserts.

An epistemology, a conscious theory of knowledge, which has its objective basis in an adequate grasp of the dialectical laws of the motion of matter implies the possibility of its essence being grasped intuitively, and even finding expression in method, without full consciousness of the theoretical, epistemological grounding of the method which is actually being used. Thus Trotsky, in 'In Defence of Marxism', talks of a worker, sensuously working on and interacting with the material world, governed by the laws of dialectics, as being naturally, intuitively, prone to dialectical thinking.

What mystery, therefore, is there in Lenin, with a vast knowledge of Marxist literature, which he read critically, materialistically, and a general knowledge of dialectics, being a Marxist methodologically before he made a deep and thorough study of dialectics?

That there can, in a sense, be a reflective, 'mechanical' relationship between the underlying laws of reality and a method used at least in part intuitively, is generalised by the SLL so as to eliminate Marxist epistemology as a conscious attempt to render the process lucid - and accessible intellectually, deliberately, rationally. Thus the abstract epistemology is mummified, and the actual 'method' is a hit or miss reflection depending on feelings and prejudices - all the 'mechanical impositions' which Gramsci speaks of and which Marxism as a fully integrated conscious system can avoid.

The rest of the pamphlet is really a repetition of these same mistakes of not seeing the significance of the active role of consciousness, and of reducing dialectics to a cipher in the face of reality. Although occasionally something perceptive manages to slip past the barrier of distortion, the pamphlet taken as a whole is a lumpy, inedible mess.

One final point is worth taking up, though - that of "empiricism" and "Pabloism". This is of course, an attack on that favourite mythical monster of the SLL - "Pabloism". Slaughter attacks the United Secretariat of the Fourth International for its "rejection" of dialectical theory and a slavish devotion to "facts", to appearances. The USFI, Slaughter's polemic says, simply observes what is going on at any given moment and then draws generalised conclusions from this without any Marxist analysis. Although it is possible to criticise the USFI for being often too quick and willing to adapt to various political events (like the student upsurge of 1968 which resulted in the absurd theory of "red bases" in the universities) this has on the whole been a healthy tendency when compared with the dogmatic sectar-

ianism of the SLL/OCI forces. The USFI position shows at least an awareness of the problems facing the Trotskyist movement since the War - problems generated by the survival of Stalinism, the colonial revolutions, the deformed workers' states - whereas the SLL simply acknowledges these facts, but flatly refuses to draw any conclusions from them. As a result the SLL is fossilized in its own peculiar characterisation of pre-War Trotskyism. It is this attempt at assessment that the SLL denigrate as "empiricism"; this attempt to understand the changes taking place in the world, they regard as being non-Marxist!

Safe in its shell of formulas, "dialectical" magic tricks instead of analysis, lies, distortions, the SLL does not concern itself with the actuality of the class struggle - preferring at all times the abstract to the concrete, a formula instead of an analysis. The crudity of its arguments about economic catastrophe, the movement towards Bonapartism in Britain, Ireland, and so on are the external manifestations of a barren interior. The neurotic obsession with dialectical materialism and its use as a "magic wand" is an attempt by those whose sectarianism has isolated them from the living class struggle and whose theory offers no guide to concrete activity to justify this situation as "a concern for dialectical materialism and a rejection of empiricism".

It is not what is that matters with the SLL, but what they would like to be. So, in the earlier version of Slaughter's pamphlet we find him attacking Sartre without in fact having read Sartre! (This may seem astonishing, but is in fact true. When someone expressed astonishment at such an attitude to ideas he explained that it was all right because this was in a special category - "Polemical Philosophy"!) We find the SLL during the general strike situation of the jailing of the dockers not on the streets and among the working class, but holding their summer camp! Presumably listening to Healy rambling on about "matter in motion" is more important than the dockers fighting outside Pentonville.....

Like a snail drawing back into its shell when the world becomes too hard and difficult to cope with, the SLL have withdrawn into mysticism, dogmatism, and lies. The walls are so thick with slime that they cannot see out - nor can the world see in. It is this shabby charade that they call "the defence of dialectical materialism".

NOTES

- (1).... C. Slaughter - 'Lenin on Dialectics', Labor Publications, NY. 1971 p.3.
- (2).... G. W. F. Hegel - 'Science of Logic', in Slaughter op. cit. p. 9.
- (3).... F. Engels - 'Ludwig Feuerbach and End of Classical German Philosophy', in selected works, Lawrence & Wishart. 1968. p. 605.

- (4)... ditto p. 10
 (5)... Slaughter op cit. p. 7
 (6)... ditto p. 5
 (7)... K. Marx - 'Theses on Feuerbach' In Selected Works, Lawrence & Wishart, p. 28.
 (8)... V. I. Lenin - 'Philosophical Notebooks', Collected Works, vol. 38, P. 194, Lawrence & Wishart, 1963.
 (9)... ditto p. 195
 (10)... ditto.
 (11)... Slaughter op. cit. p. 14
 (12)... Lenin op. cit. p. 87
 (13) Sometimes neither does the IMG, who confuse levels of analysis with reference to the party. This confusion results in such statements as the following:
 "The centralisation of the revolutionary organisation is an epistemological centralisation" - T. Whelan, 'What is wrong with Workers' Fight', p. 3.
 One can centralise one's knowledge on a methodological basis; but is it really conceivable to talk of a centralisation based on a theory of knowledge? As the IMG notes, the theory of the party involves a realisation of the 'social nature of knowledge' - but to pose this as the sole reason for centralisation is to be guilty of 'essentialism', the collapse of levels of understanding and analysis into one basic level. (Thus a similar mistake is made by those who think that all human behaviour can be explained simply by reference to a physiological level of explanation. The reason this is nonsense does not relate to the incompleteness of physiological knowledge, but to the different levels of analysis that pertain and which possess some autonomy, one from the other.)
 Although the IMG document for the fusion conference with the Spartacus League mentions, and uses in a pernicious fashion as a general analysis, the phrase of Lukacs - "the actuality of the revolution" - one cannot assume that the leaders of the IMG have read the rest of the book in which the phrase appears ('Lenin'), as they would find there an analysis of the party on all levels, political and organisational, an analysis which sees the party as an 'instrument'. There are more things under the sun than are written in works on epistemology...
 (14)... Lenin op. cit. p. 71.

Appendix: Some remarks on the O.C.I.

by MARTIN THOMAS

The recent debate between the SLL and its French former associate, the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste, has been like nothing so much as two alchemists squabbling over rival recipes for making gold.

For the SLL, as Neal Smith argues, the magic recipe is 'dialectical materialism'. For the OCI, it is 'the Transitional Programme'.

"The Marxist method only exists through its content which integrates all the moments in the proletariat's struggle for its emancipation. In this sense, the programme of socialist revolution concentrates Marxism and the defence of Marxist-theory can only be defence of the programme, that is, the struggle to resolve the crisis of leadership.... Theoretical elaboration comes from the programme..." (my emphasis, MT).

"There is no ideological battle in itself, no Marxist theory in itself, but a programme which is the expression, concentrated through the Marxist method, of the totality of the struggles of the proletariat, and upon which an organisation fights". (1)

To claim that "theoretical elaboration comes from the programme" is a totally back-to-front statement. And the "programme" (i. e. for the OCI, all Marxist theory) is not the "expression" of the "totality of struggles". The working-out of theory is not a simple reflection of the class struggle, it is a front in the class struggle itself - the ideological front. (This may not be an ideological battle "in itself", whatever "in itself" is supposed to mean, but it is certainly an ideological battle).

Thus the 'Marxism' of the OCI is a mechanical dualism. They conceive of thought as in another sphere from the class struggle and simply an "expression" of that struggle.

At root the two alchemists have a fundamental similarity of approach. Both rely on a mechanical, "Hegel-turned-upside-down" materialism. The difference is that, while the SLL collapses political methodology into epistemology, the OCI collapses epistemology (and philosophy in general) into political methodology. Thus, for the SLL, Marxist theory is the reflection of 'matter in motion' and the like; for the OCI, Marxist theory is the reflection of the 'historical experience of the class struggle'. (Although, for the OCI, 'historical experience' apparently ended in 1938).

For the OCI, therefore, the development of Marxist theory is an 'organic process' reflecting the general development of the class

struggle. OCI leader Stephane Just writes:

"Considered as a historical and organic process, the formation of the class-consciousness of the proletariat depends on the analysis of the development of the class struggle and ends the metaphysical discussions on whether class consciousness is brought in from the outside or not, and on whether the vanguard is self-appointed or not" (my emphasis, MT).

"... the proletariat builds and develops its consciousness in an organic historical process fed by all its previous history and the relations it maintains with other classes, their contradictions, their antagonisms, the political, social, and ideological struggles developed there." (2)

Having collapsed all the levels of Marxist theory into "the programme", to the point where, for example, they consider the very idea of developing dialectical materialism absurd (3), the OCI end up denouncing the basic Leninist view that scientific class consciousness must be brought to the working class from outside of its own immediate experience.

Their position on the question of the United Front illustrates the same tendency. They elevate the 'united front' into a strategy, into virtually the sum-total of their policy. Thus their agitation centres obsessively round the slogan of a "workers' government" - which means, simply, a Communist Party-Socialist Party coalition government. (On this definition, the 1964-70 Wilson government was a workers' government!) And the OCI, these stalwart defenders of "the programme", actually end up pushing the question of political programme to one side! In the 1969 Presidential elections, they campaigned for a "single candidate of the workers' organisations".

"The CP before putting Duclos forward as candidate demanded 'the elaboration of a common programme' as a condition for a common candidate of 'the left'...."

"But the programme? Wasn't this necessary to the single candidate of workers' organisations? What had become of it? In these precise circumstances, the development of a programme of a government of workers' organisations flowed from this candidacy. The fight for the defeat of the bourgeois candidates gave a class content to the single candidate of the workers' organisations that the revolutionary organisations had a duty to develop" (4)

In other words - never mind about the political programme, it's the CP-SP unity that counts!

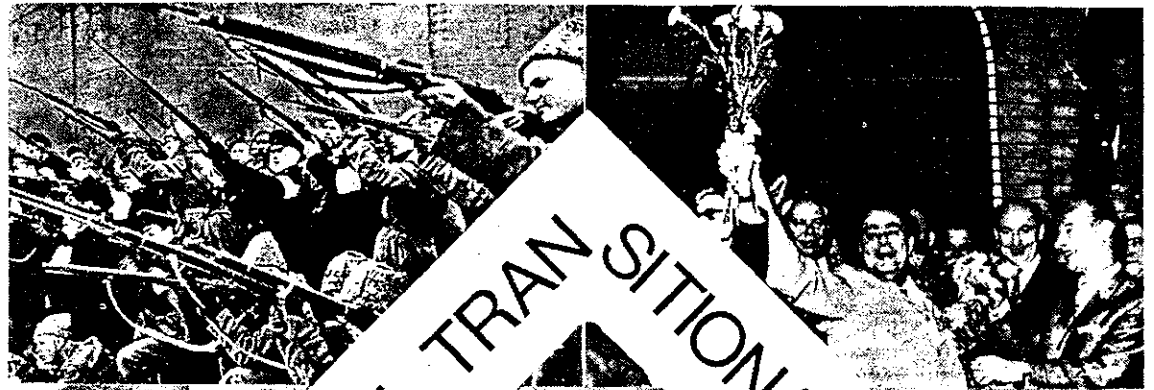
The OCI and the SLL pose as the foremost defenders of the heritage of the Fourth International. In fact, they represent, in their "inverted-Hegel" materialism and their dogmatism, a throwback to the Second International. Both the OCI and the SLL are organically right-opportunist tendencies (5); the SLL from time to time

adds a varnish of screaming ultra-leftism to its opportunism.

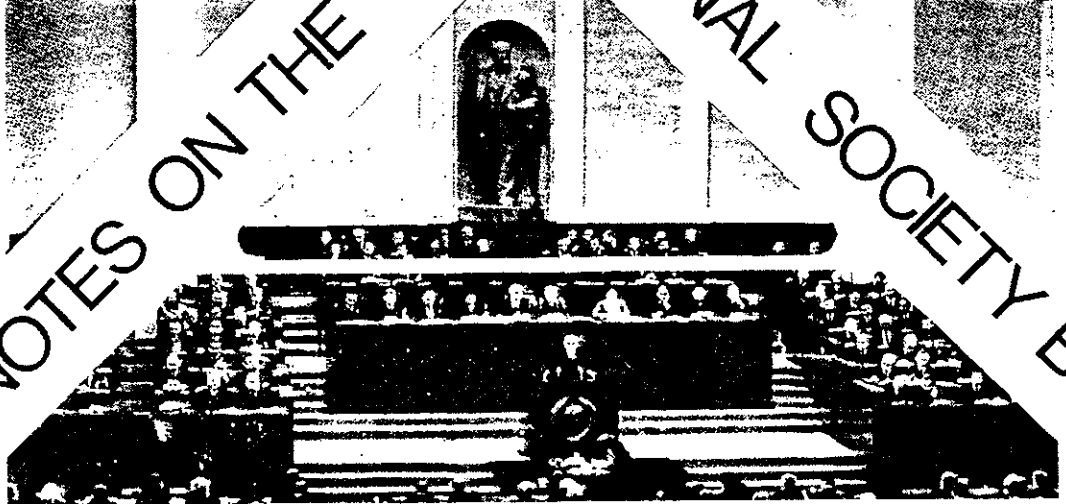
The OCI's (1969) political resolution for the "International Committee" conference illustrates its national-reformist approach strikingly. It centres all its discussion round one event, considered as the most important step in the world class struggle for many years the replacement of de Gaulle by Pompidou after his defeat in a referendum. It is not the 10-million strong general strike of 1968 which commands the focus of the OCI's attention - but the fall of de Gaulle. Such an assessment is possible only from a tendency narrowly tied to a 'national' point of view and severely infected by parliamentary cretinism.

NOTES

1. Declaration of the C. C. of the OCI, printed in the SLL's "Fourth International", vol 7 no 4, p. 177; and the same issue, speech of AJS representative at Essen conference, p. 189. Citations from the SLL's publications would generally not be reliable, but the study of the original texts (in French) of the OCI convinces us that in these particular instances the SLL is not distorting the position of the OCI.
2. S Just, 'Defense du Trotskysme 2'; translated in the SLL's "Fourth International", vol 7 no 4, p. 190 - 191.
3. Declaration of the C. C. of the OCI, "Fourth International", vol 7 no 4, p. 178.
4. *ibid.*, p. 182.
5. The title of E Germain's critique of the positions of the former "International Committee of the F.I.", 'Marxism vs Ultra-leftism', reveals an inadequate understanding of the IC tendencies. (Which is not to say that the great majority of the points of criticism made in his pamphlet are not correct).



NOTES ON THE TRANSITIONAL SOCIETY BY



K. Tarbuck



1

IT IS OVER FIFTY YEARS SINCE THE FIRST successful proletarian revolution took place in Russia in 1917. Since that time there has appeared a whole number of post-capitalist states. Because of this there has now accumulated a large body of evidence of an empirical nature with which it is possible to suggest some tentative ideas towards a theory of transition.

Much of the evidence has, in many ways, been of a negative character because of deformations and distortions that have occurred within these states. (It is not my purpose here to pursue the political consequences or reasons for such deformations). However, such experiences do help us to grapple with the problems of transition.

The most general statement that can be made about the existing transitional economies is that they have begun from a much lower economic and cultural level than existing advanced capitalist societies in Western Europe and North America. (*) Apart from the real material problems posed for the particular states, there has arisen within the Marxist movement a number of erroneous views on the nature and functioning of such transitional societies. Moreover, we must always remember that we have yet to observe the victory of a socialist revolution in an advanced capitalist country. Therefore we must be wary about assuming the general validity of possible hypotheses which we postulate from the existing evidence.

From the period before World War 2 there were those who asserted that such societies were 'State Capitalist' or 'Bureaucratic collectivist'. Latterly there has arrived upon the political scene a new variant of such theories which asserts that the U.S.S.R. has **reverted** back to capitalism since 1945. The protagonists of such views are usually associated with various Maoist tendencies. These latter theorists usually base themselves on a rather low level of subjectivism. Some of them are unrepentant Stalinists or neo-Stalinists. However, it is not the purpose of these notes to examine such theories, rather they present a number of points which the present writer considers to be characteristic of transitional regimes.

2

Transitional regimes must be recognised as being merely **that**, i.e. transitional, neither capitalist nor socialist. Yet at the same time they contain elements of both within them, and like all such

phenomena have the reality and appearance of being contradictory. This aspect confuses many people. Seizing this or that aspect they elevate it to the level of a characterising dominant category for the whole society. Quite correctly, they often grasp the notion that bourgeois revolutions have, historically, been the **consummation** of a process. The process was one of the gradual growth of capitalist relations and modes of production within the womb of the preceding feudal society. Clearly most bourgeois revolutions consummated politically the de facto existing economic and social dominance of the bourgeoisie. Yet even after the political dominance was achieved many pre-capitalist formations and forms continued to exist within and alongside capitalism.

Such situations are usually fairly easily understood in relation to capitalism. The multi-form nature of bourgeois domination is accepted. The survival of the British monarchy, and aristocratic forms, are never used to cast doubt on the overwhelming capitalist nature of British society. Yet when it comes to attempting to apply Marxist categories and analysis to post-capitalist societies there is considerable confusion. It is possible that this arises from a confusion between the **act** of revolution and the revolutionary process, which is a continuous spectrum of events, before and after the revolution.

3

Further, apparent, problems arise because of a linear methodology being applied to proletarian revolutions and transitional societies. It is insufficient to think only in terms of relations of private property v. socialised productive forces. The historical process is dialectical, yet each epoch has its **own** history, and hence its own dialectic. Events which appear as moments in history have their **own** history, contradictions, and antagonisms. Moreover, although we can say that history is a history of class struggle, i.e. inter-class conflicts, we must also recognise that there are **intra-class** conflicts. The political overthrow of the bourgeoisie and its economic expropriation does not resolve all conflicts or contradictions within the resultant society **even when this has happened on a world scale**. The laws of uneven and combined development still continue to operate within a transitional society.

4

If the bourgeoisie had to contend with pre-capitalist formations after its victory, then the proletariat will have to contend with previous economic, social and political forms tenfold. The capitalist class enters upon its patrimony full of vigour and self-confidence because it has gathered the material means for its hegemony beforehand. The

working class is a repressed class, without rights, without means of continued accretions of material power right up to the moment of its victory. In the act of revolution it must seize the material power, the means of production. And therefore its hold on the instruments of power will be more tenuous. Consequently the proletariat needs to be **more** conscious, prepared by struggles, to resist any return to its previous alienated condition. Even the most advanced and educated working class must be conscious of the dangers of bureaucracy, and so develop means to combat it.

5

Let me now turn directly to the economic aspects of the problem. One's appraisal of these aspects will be dependent upon both objective and subjective factors. However, even these aspects cannot be wholly disentangled. A great deal of one's understanding of the nature of a transitional economy depends to a large extent upon how one views what is new and what remains from the previous capitalist economy. One of the crucial factors here is the question of the operation (or disappearance) of the law of value.

Preobrazhensky remarked "the law of value is the law of spontaneous equilibrium of commodity-capitalist society" However, it is necessary to emphasise — as he does — that this law is not an expression of the relationship between things, material objects, but rather a relationship between people. Whilst the law of value determines in the final analysis the relationship of prices for various commodities, it must never be forgotten that behind the various categories — value, price, surplus value etc. — are people whose social relationships are veiled and mystified by the intervention of these categories. In this sense the law of value is both an objective one and at the same time subjective. By this I mean that like all social 'laws' it is neither immutable nor seldom isolated in its purest form. It is the subjective actions of individuals that combine to make objective situations which the individual **seems** helpless to change.

6

The law of value has as its foundation the labour theory of value. Briefly stated, this postulates the exchange value of a commodity is determined by the average amount of socially necessary labour required to produce it. Each commodity has two types of value — use value which is determined by its utility, real or imaginary, this being a precondition for its arrival on the market; and exchange value which expresses the average amount of socially necessary labour. Exchange value, or value, is therefore abstract labour in the sense that all commodities have it, although they have been created by differing specific kinds of

labour

However, we must qualify what we mean by socially necessary labour. Those who assume that socially necessary labour time for the production of commodities is merely contingent upon technology and its application are guilty of a vulgarisation of the Marxist labour theory of value.

It is certainly true that the given state of technology plays some — no small — part in determining the amount of labour necessary to produce a commodity. However, it is contingent on **more** than this. Both the state of **class** forces, and the general character of the society, enter into the determination of what is socially necessary.

Baran and Sweezy showed that in the US automobile industry it has been estimated that the cost of model changes which adds **nothing** to the auto's utility averaged around 25% of the purchase price in the period of 1956-60. Furthermore, they estimated that auto model changes were costing around 2.5% of the Gross National Product of the USA in the same period. (2) The point here is that the labour embodied in such model changes **was** 'socially' necessary from the point of view of monopoly capitalist society. From the point of view of a rationally planned society much labour is totally unproductive, e.g. nuclear submarines equipped with missiles; but not from the point of view of the capitalist who makes a profit out of such products. Nor are they unproductive from the bourgeoisie's collective point of view since they help defend their appropriation of surplus value.

Similarly, the state of demand, i.e. market forces, also comes into play here. Whilst it may take X number of hours to produce an automobile, and with the given state of technology these X number of hours are the average socially necessary number required; if the market is unable to absorb all the autos produced it means that the **total** amount of labour time invested in auto production has been too much, and adjustments will have to be made accordingly. In the case of a competitive market the price of autos will have to be reduced so that they may be sold below their individual value.

Therefore, it is necessary to take into account more than technological factors in examining the working of the law of value. What is socially necessary is itself **socially determined**, and to forget this is to fall into an economist vulgarisation.

7

A transitional economy is both a synthesis and a negation of previous contradictions, because a proletarian state abolishes state-capitalism (i.e. those forms of property which are state owned but subordinated to the needs of monopoly capital) along with the expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

The nationalisations of industry which take place under a capitalist regime are **not** such as to weaken the bourgeoisie's rule, rather they serve to strengthen it. The nationalisations of a proletarian state may only **seem** to push these forms further, but their **content** is of a completely different order, because the nature of the state that undertakes them is a product of the changed class relationships.

In the latter circumstances the bourgeoisie is expropriated. Far from being a further stage in development — centralisation, concentration and socialisation of productive forces, i.e. one that has direct and palpable links with what went before — it represents a **sharp break**, a dialectical leap, not dialectical unity. The synthesis is one of economic, social and political forms that were antagonistic to capitalism; the negation is of capitalist state forms, and appropriation of surplus value by a tiny minority.

8

Value and real material wealth are antagonistic. All other things being equal an increase in productivity will lead to a decline in the value of the commodity produced. This antagonism in a transitional economy also rests upon the fact that so long as there is a struggle between the need to raise productivity (because of the **relative** shortage of material wealth) and the needs of the individual workers, there will have to be some means of **measuring** what each individual contributes to, and receives from, the common pool of social wealth. Only in a society of material abundance will it be unnecessary to ration what each individual takes from the common pool, and also use this rationing as a coercion to motivate work. Work in such a society of material abundance will have ceased to be **labour**.

9

Now, in a transitional society, initially the **individual** workers' position in relation to the means of production is nearer to capitalism than to socialism. This is an expression of the transitional nature of such a society, because there is a divergence between the worker's role as a worker and his role as a member of the class. Under capitalism these two roles converged, his role as a worker and of his class expressed his subordination to capital. Under a transitional regime he remains subordinated and alienated in his labour (the precise degree need not detain us here), but not as a member of the new ruling class.

It has been argued that under a transitional regime a worker does not sell his labour power to the collective and that the worker cannot put his own labour at his own service. But there is still an exchange of commodities, i.e. labour power

for consumption goods, and the exchange is still regulated on the basis of the law of value and labour theory of value, i.e. average socially necessary labour. This is not to say that the value of labour power and its **price** would be equal. Here one has to make the fundamental distinction between price and value. Price **measures** the exchange, whilst value **determines** the ratio of exchange. Under a normal capitalist system price more often than not deviates from value for individual commodities, but in total must reflect it as an average. In the period of transition, this law itself would be modified, and the extent to which it is will be determined by a whole number of variables.

10

To those who argue that in a transitional economy and the dictatorship of the proletariat "politics are in command" and therefore the level of real wages is determined politically, we must put forward a series of propositions that undermine their position.

Firstly we have to distinguish between the collective ownership of the means of production and the private ownership of labour power. Labour power is a unique commodity in this respect: it can **only** be privately owned by an individual, because it cannot be separated from the worker who supplies it. If labour power is no longer a commodity then it is **no longer labour power**. When the power to labour is no longer sold, the work expended in production ceases to be labour mediated and alienated, it becomes work in the full human sense by which means men and women identify themselves and their fellows as **human** beings; it becomes a **spontaneous** activity without coercion. **But** in a transitional society this coercion still exists for the **individual** worker. He must sell his **labour power** as a commodity, not his labour (or specifically work).

Because of the peculiar nature of labour power as a commodity it is precisely in the consumption goods sector (wage goods) that commodities remain in circulation longest after the overthrow of capitalism. And so long as this situation obtains the law of value will continue to operate. This is because of the private ownership of labour power, and because it is impossible for even the most efficient planning authority to plan private consumption to the nth degree. To abolish market relationships in this sphere it would be necessary either to impose an iron, rigid rationing (which in practice would break down) or to achieve abundance.

Now when I say that value would determine distribution in the consumer goods industries this itself pre-supposed the continued existence of commodities as a definite economic category, one

of which is labour power. However, the continued existence of commodities rests ultimately upon the continued relative scarcity of material wealth; and this relative scarcity is contingent upon the given level of the development of the means of production. For if we say, and accept that the level of real wages in a collectivised economy is politically determined, then we can **only** do so if we also accept that this political determination is itself conditional upon the level of the development of the productive forces.

These productive forces are of course more than a mere arithmetical summation of the physical means of production and means of consumption; they also include the level of consciousness of the working class and the tremendous **productive capacity** that is capable of being unleashed once the masses are wholeheartedly and democratically integrated into the running of the economy **and** the state.

But having said that, one must come back to the original point, i.e. is the level of real wages only a politically conditioned one? For me the answer can only be a **qualified** yes. This political decision — i.e. the conscious planning process — has to be taken within the parameters dictated by the given situation. For instance if it was decided in China that every household would have a television set next year, this would obviously be impossible to implement. The **present** level of productive forces are insufficient to carry out such a 'political' decision. I use the hypothetical (and rather absurd) example merely to indicate that one can as easily fall into a voluntaristic trap in economics as in politics, i.e. as Preobrazhensky said "reality proves stronger than consciousness" (3).

11

I believe that from the foregoing it is clear that I consider the law of value to be operative within a transitional economy. But is it the arbiter, as within a competitive capitalist economy? The answer is no. If the law of value had been the arbiter it is certain that the Soviet economy would not have progressed as far as it has done up to now. To suggest that its economy was controlled by the law of value is to imply that the **market** determined the order of priorities and the allocation of resources. There is no market in that economy for the means of production (Dept. I within a capitalist economy), since the state produces, allocates and utilises the goods directly. All this is planned before production, and not adjusted after the event by the market.

If the law of value was the arbiter it would have meant that **capital** would have flowed into the most profitable sectors of the economy which, given the level of productive forces at the beginning of industrialisation, would have been the

consumer goods industries, agriculture and a general dependence on imports for heavy industrial goods.

This is not to say that the law of value can be ignored; it cannot. In a transitional society seeking the optimum growth rate the law of value has to be broken but in a conscious way, by the use of very careful accounting so that the working class is very much aware of the **transfer of value** from one sector of the economy to another. Of course the law of value exerts its pressure in any society that has not yet reached the stage of material abundance and still seeks to raise labour productivity. The most efficient weapons a transitional economy has in the conscious manipulation of the law of value are planning and its monopoly of foreign trade.

We can say, therefore, that there is a **constant** struggle between planning and the law of value. The highest expression of this struggle is the fight to increase the productivity of labour, because in the last analysis **all** economy is the economy of labour time. This struggle is not a static one, since capitalism itself is constantly revolutionising production and raising productivity.

12

Finally let me make one brief comment on the question of the market versus central planning. I do not consider this a correct way of posing the question. Certain Marxists have observed the waste, incompetence etc. associated with **bureaucratic** central planning and have now rushed to the other extreme and advocate the superiority of the "socialist market economy". In this they make an equally erroneous judgement. When we talk about the market, we are talking about **above all** the ability to **pay** as being the determining factor in the allocation of goods. This is anti-egalitarian and unsocialist, and we should be foolish to pretend otherwise. However this does not mean that the "market" should have no role in a transitional society. We are painfully aware of the human cost in Stalin's Russia of trying to eliminate it too rapidly, by fiat. This means that if society is to allow the "market" to operate, it must do so in a situation of **better, more democratic** planning. In the last analysis our fight for socialism is a fight against market relationships. In the transitional period we must harness the market so that it helps make itself superfluous.

* We must note the difference between capital in the Marxist sense, i.e. a quantity of value thrown into circulation to gather **surplus** value for private appropriation and means of production, which in this sense do not constitute capital in a transitional economy.

AS NEW INITIATIVES AND NEW FORMS OF STRUGGLE ARE THROWN UP BY THE WORKING CLASS, THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CLASSES AND THEIR ORGANISATIONS ARE MODIFIED AND NEW PROBLEMS ARE THUS POSED FOR REVOLUTIONARIES. THESE TWO ARTICLES GIVE FIRSTLY A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF SUCH A STRUGGLE AND SECONDLY A CRITIQUE OF THE IDEAS OF THE I.M.G. IN THE LIGHT OF IT.



NEW TACTICS

VERSUS

NEW THINKING

1 MANCHESTER SIT-INS

2 LOW PROFILE MOLE

by **ANDREW HORNUNG** and **JOE WRIGHT**

1 MANCHESTER SIT-INS

1 Background

February 1972 was a month of tremendous excitement for the working class. The victory of the miners had winded an arrogant Tory government obviously surprised at the resources of creativity and strength at the disposal of the working class.

Fundamental to the victory of the miners was the use of the flying picket, and a certain edge of surprise in this regard. The employing class had simply not prepared for such an eventuality.

The engineers were in a very different situation. The Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF) had decided well in advance to dig in its heels and make a real fight over the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) claim. There were certain things on their side, too: the number of unions in the Confed, the high degree of organisation of the right wing in some areas, etc.

Ironically, the left nature of the union also tended to act as a disarming factor when leadership was expected and not given. The left in the union, although used to unofficial action (usually over before it can be declared official) was so closely related to the union leadership that when it was this leadership and not the right wing that was the problem, it found itself unable to break the tie between itself and the union tops.

For all this, however, the chief spur to the employers was not some disadvantage on the union side, but the disadvantage on their own side - the state of their order books.

During the first three months of 1971 there was a 21% fall in overseas engineering orders and a 6% fall in home orders. Overall in 1971 there was an 8½% fall compared with 1970, this being the lowest figure for four years. It is estimated that the industry in general was working at 15 - 20 % below capacity.

In a way Manchester was the obvious place for local action to start, given the inability of the Confed and EEF to find a "satisfactory solution" at the national level. On 15th December the Confed leaders broke off their talks with the EEF after the EEF had made the derisory offer of £1.50 in reply to the Confed's demand for a "substantial increase" with more for women as a step towards equal pay; a 35 - hour week; an extra (fourth) week's paid holiday; etc. It was important for Scanlon that some

localities begin the process of plant bargaining he had proposed (1). As soon as they had done this he was able (at Eastbourne, at Hastings, at Llandudno and at the many Confed area meetings) to use it as a stick to beat the right wing with when they demanded a return to national negotiations and to beat the left wing with when they demanded national action.

The combination of this pressure and the pressure from below at the end of the poor three year agreement reached in 1968 was to determine the whole trajectory of the struggle(2)

MANCHESTER

Why Manchester ? Because Confed District 29, which is more or less Greater Manchester, was overwhelmingly pro-Scanlon. So much so indeed that at the announcement of the pro-Scanlon vote in the election for Carron's successor, the percentage of votes for him was so high that the AEF (as it then was) had an inquiry into the area, as they suspected ballot rigging. Scanlon himself, as well as the second most important of the lefts on the EC of the AUEW, Bob Wright, is from Manchester, and this reinforced faith in his judgment on the part of many militants. It also meant the existence of personal ties between some older leading militants and the union tops - not just between layers of officialdom. (3)

The Manchester area of the Confed is dominated politically by Scanlon in a second most important way. The politically dominant organisation in the AUEW is the Communist Party. Almost all the AUEW and thus leading CSEU officials are CP members, the local AUEW NC representative is a CP member, many of the convenors and stewards are CP members and many of those who are not are CP sympathisers. The sympathisers are, almost to a man, loyal to Scanlon, and the CP members, whatever vestigial traces of criticism of Scanlon they might have, do not openly criticise him.

The first meeting of Confed stewards in Manchester was held at the end of February. The meeting, which accepted the national claim together with a re-negotiation of local machinist and outworking agreements, was dominated by the left, in particular the Communist Party. Not one speaker opposed the resolution to give notice of going on to day work (4). Nevertheless the refusal of the Confed leaders to allow any contributions which were critical of

the union policy was, even at this earliest point, an indication of the inability of the "broad left" and the local leadership in particular to differentiate themselves from the national leadership. They might go it alone for the present - but clearly they were not going to stand up to pressure from the union tops in the future.

If we focus our attention at the end of the struggle for the district claim we will see a perfect example of this relationship. An example which will, moreover, introduce us to the one element not yet dealt with in this description of the trade union set-up in the district: the right wing.

THE RIGHT WING AND THE LEFT

On May 15th the Confed called the first meeting of the area's stewards since the beginning of the sit-in period. Two things stand out about this meeting - a) the attendance of the right wing; and b) the capitulation of the Communist Party AUEW officials.

The two previous Confed stewards' meetings (during the prelude to the sit-in period) were remarkable for the absence of the right wing. At this meeting (for report see WF no. 7 p. 11) there was a delegation of stewards from Trafford Park led by Bert Brennan. As he wrote: "Everybody has known for years that the dominant force in the huge Trafford Park works is the convenor, Brennan. Brennan is a yellow sell-out merchant who is paid by the firm to stay on past retiring age ... because he is so good for 'industrial relations'! More than that. 'Bro' Brennan OBE has actually been decorated by the State for his good services.

The Trafford Park situation is nothing new, it's old hat and was known years before the strike ever got started. In any case, it is a betrayal of the struggle of the militants to impose the 'common denominator' of the weakest sections. After all, the Bredbury men and their kind are the leaders - not stooges like Brennan!"

The attendance of the GEC-AEI-EE Trafford Park stewards (paid for by the firm) just after they had called off their work-to-rule had two sides to it, though: on the one hand it meant a solid block of 60 - 70 voting for the most right wing proposal, but on the other hand it also constituted a real opportunity to polarise the meeting in favour of the left. If one had simply pointed to the GEC stewards, whose disgusting record is well known (and who were responsible for the sacking of some of the other stewards when they were at "Metro's", the main plant), saying in effect that any way these people voted was the wrong way for militants to vote, if, in short, one had had a fight against the right wing, the meeting could have come out with a quite different vote.

But why could this not be done? Precisely because of the relationship between the union's "left" wing nationally (Wright and Scanlon) and the Communist Party.

The main force at the meeting was Scanlon himself in the shape of a circular which in effect said "drop the struggle for shorter hours and accept money-only claims". This monstrous undermining of the struggle even forced a plaintive squeak out of the Morning Star: "They (the strikers) have not been greatly assisted by the circular." But although the Morning Star managed this brilliant litotes, the CP members on the spot did not even manage that.

Reluctantly no doubt, but nevertheless with his blessing, local Confed leader John Tocher (member of the CP Executive) recommended the acceptance of the circular. The recommendation was accepted ... with about a third voting against! In view of the nature of CP discipline and local domination, this third must be seen as expressive of the tremendous opportunities that were not realised, and that from this point on could not be realised.

Simply to underline this last point: within ten days BSC (Openshaw) had settled for a £2 rise and one day's extra holiday ... after nine weeks on strike; and workers at the Bredbury steelworks where the whole sit-in movement had started settled on their £10 plus hours plus holiday claim for £3.50 plus one day's holiday ... after ten weeks of sitting in.

This example gives a cameo picture of the balance of forces in the area. It shows not only the relation between right and left but also the problem of certain large factories (including GEC-AEI-EE Trafford Park, Mather & Platt, Renold Chains, etc) being dominated by the right wing.

2 Chronology

Let us look at this in greater detail. The workers at the Bredbury steel works (Exors of James Mill - GKN) started their occupation on March the 16th, a full fortnight before the scheduled beginning of day work. These workers were full of self-confidence. As Alec Reese, one of the convenors, said "We are very well organised and we are prepared to sit it out to the bitter end." Alan Wells, the other convenor, said "I have never seen such a mood of solidarity among the men. But the reason is not hard to find. They are sick of low wages and a cost of living that's continually going up and up. We have decided to put an end to this."

Now you might say that reporters only make up on stage interviews and that they are bound to look on the bright side of things, but from having been there at the time I can say that this certainly was the mood of the men. Not just of them. As soon as the news got around representatives from Davis and Metcalfe and Nettie Accessories came to Bredbury to pledge their support. The Stockport District Committee brought its sanctions forward a week.

Threats to suspend stewards at Davis and Metcalfe were made on the 18th. Mirrless-Blackstone (part of the Hawker Siddeley group) banned piece-work and went on to day-rate, agreeing to sit-in in the event of a suspension threat on the 20th. Within a week, 5000 of the 15000 engineers in Stockport were at least working to rule.

THE FIRST SETTLEMENT

On the 23rd Davis and Metcalfe occupied and Scraggs settled. There was reason so far for optimism as far as the elemental feelings of the workers were concerned, although a note of caution on the Scraggs deal was, we shall argue, essential.

The Scraggs deal was followed by a number of deals in Stockport, including one at Simon Engineering and Oil Wells Engineering. These firms' deals were outside the context of the claim. At this point, then, settlements, and not very good settlements (though the details were not publicised) were being made which tended to destroy the feeling of cohesion among the workers.

Many suggestions were put forward by individual militants to solve this, but we are still in no position to know which was correct. (5) From this followed a terrible lack of concrete tactical advice from revolutionaries. What was clear, though, was that the fact that settlements were being made without the details being disclosed was having an erosive effect on the solidity of the strike.

The sacking of the workers who occupied the Sharston engineering works by its owner, Mrs Dubost, and her taking out a writ against the workers who sat in, should have been met with a siege-picket, a really massive picket to defend the workers against the writ being served and against eviction should the writs be served.

The next day (the 28th) saw the occupation of English Steel, followed by the Newton-le-Willows works of Ruston Paxman. By the 1st April there were 7000 sitting in, in 11 factories. The weak areas were, as expected, the big factories. At this point John Tocher claimed that 14 settlements had been made. The disillusionment setting in was best represented by the settlement (later re-negotiated) in one Eccles factory for a straight £1.25!

The struggle took a temporary up-turn again when, on the 4th April, GEC-AEI-EE were locked out, although they did not occupy. This Trafford Park lock-out was echoed on the other side of town by a sit-in at GEC-AEI-EE Openshaw. Tocher was now able to announce 20 settlements. The next day saw a sit-in at Francis Shaw of Openshaw, followed two days later by an occupation at Hawker Siddeley, Woodford, by 1200 men. Now the action began to escalate: on 1st April there were 11 occupations; by the 12th April, when Viking Engineering sat-in, there were 23.

On that day Scanlon visited Manchester, and, though his talk to the stewards bolstered up those who attended (many were not informed that the meeting was on), it was probably the occasion for a word in Tocher's ear. Still the sit-ins increased in number, and news was coming in from Sheffield of a sit-in (on the 16th) and from Aberdeen of a decision to emulate Manchester (on the 17th).

A SET-BACK

On Monday 24th the struggle received a really big set-back. Mather and Platt's not only settled for £5.50 with nothing extra, but the stewards made a joint statement with the employers (leaders of the local EEF) that hours, holidays, etc, were matters for national and not local negotiation. The fact that this firm's workers would be weak was also not surprising given the firm's history of a skilful combination of ruthlessness and paternalism.

After Scanlon's visit, the local AUEW leaders must have realised he would not back them in an all-out fight on the hours question (6). The Mather and Platt's defeat, given this realisation, was the central turning point.

Mather and Platt's was immediately followed by a settlement at Simon-Vickers of Warrington for £2 and nothing more. This did not mean an end to the sit-ins, though - the struggle was not that even - for Bason and Sons sat in on the 29th. Still, by 4th May, 38 agreements had been made. Lawrence Scott and Electromotors settled for £3 and 2 days holiday while Hattersley Newman settled for £5.50.

That the tide was turning, though, was clear. Worst of all there were still no details being published, although poor settlements or rumours of them were alive everywhere.

On May 15th, the meeting already described in detail was held. This really marked the end of the strike as an effective offensive, even though it was the first meeting of the strike period, apart for the one called for the stewards to hear Scanlon get himself off the hook over the national negotiations farce.

By 25th May there were only 13 firms sitting in, and those settling were not getting much; the details of the BSC and Bredbury struggles have already been given; Mirrless settled for £2.50 plus 50p productivity bonus plus two days' holiday, while Ferranti's workers got £2 plus certain extra concessions, though nothing substantial.

From this point on the settlements were numerous: Tocher's reports in the AUEW journal show 43 settlements (total) in the June issue, 50 in the July issue, and 300 in the August issue. The last settlement seems to have been that of Basons and Sons, in August.

THE TASKS

Given this situation and the determination

of the employers; what strategy should have been adopted by the leadership of the struggle? Firstly, in relation to the demands: it was vital really to campaign on the non-money elements in the claim. Although shorter hours is not exactly a novel demand, there has often been a tendency to use it as a bargaining pawn rather than as a serious demand. Also the higher than usual rate of inflation meant that money gains would soon be whittled away, while an hours gain would not only not suffer this fate, but would also be a beginning of the counterattack against increasing unemployment.

Secondly, in relation to tactics: it had to be understood that a district claim holds many dangers as well as advantages. Chief among these is the feeling of the action crumbling. It is one thing to be on strike in isolation, but quite a different and qualitatively more demoralising thing to be left isolated after an initially concerted struggle.

Some way had to be found of enabling the whole movement to cohere. The best method of doing this is open to much discussion. A whole number of ideas have been put forward, but to decide on the best would demand a far greater intimate knowledge of the individual factories, their organisation on both sides of the class lines, the level of the order books in each of the factories, the financial stability of the firms, etc. It would of course take months of detailed painstaking research (such as the union could carry out) to make these assessments. The ideas suggested ranged from plant-to-plant bargaining (which is what in effect took place) to district-wide bargaining. While the latter contains the obvious advantage of unity of aim, it also contains the disadvantage of being more demoralising if this unity cracks (as it might well have done given the right-wing nature of certain big factories). In any case some form had to be found which would prove an effective weapon against the employers.

When (in WF no 4) we wrote of the need for "a worked-out strategy of rank-and-file action" and the fact that the local leadership had not furnished the first Confed stewards' meeting with such a strategy, we were referring to the fact that many stewards went away from that February meeting full of fighting spirit, but also with a sneaky unease that they didn't quite know what was going to happen to them. This was particularly true of some of the small factories. (5)

Thirdly, in relation to techniques: it was necessary to elaborate definite techniques of struggle - particularly of the sit-in. The fact is that some of the sit-ins were not occupations in the full sense of that word. Nowhere was a sit-in conducted in the revolutionary manner associated with the famous Flint sit-in of 1936 - 37 (7) At one firm in North Manchester, for example, management was not only allowed in during the occupation, but was allowed complete

freedom of movement. This meant that management men were wandering around and talking to the workers individually, trying to 'noble' them. This had so demoralising an effect on the workers that they asked a local Confed leader if they could stage a conventional strike so that this would not happen.

There are as many examples as there are sit-ins. In short, though, we might say that there could hardly have been a greater disparity between the potential inherent in the form of the struggle and the outcome of the struggle in terms of content. To confirm this one needs only to refer to the settlement details given so far.

Fourthly: three levels of struggle, the local union, the national union, and the national class struggles, had to be related. It was necessary to argue for a national Confed strike in order both more effectively to organise the industrial strength of the engineers and in order to move boldly onto the offensive, destroying all government hopes of establishing norms for wage increases. This had to be done without in any way counterposing the local struggle to the national (and thus opposing the actual struggle in the name of a hoped-for alternative) (1). But it was necessary to demand a national organisation of the struggle which at the time was being developed at local level.

The abrogation of leadership by the union on the national level permits one to explain the nature of the union leadership and launching the call for national action gives a perspective for a struggle against that leadership and a means of measuring the union leadership.

Such a call had to be placed with a perspective of both smashing the current wage policy and the Industrial Relations Act. The railwaymen were at this point being threatened with the Act, and given their union strength and tradition, it was reasonable to suppose that they would be guinea-pigs for the Act. We explained that not only would a stand-up fight with the EEF on a national level be an effective means of fighting them, but, given the miners' victory, would send the government reeling a second time, aiding the weaker railwaymen.

This call could not be made without criticising the union bureaucracy, and no explanation of the situation could be 'rounded' without such criticism.

3 Intervention

We have assessed the forces involved and the course of the struggle. How does the intervention made by revolutionaries - in particular by Workers' Fight and by the International Marxist Group - measure up in the light of that assessment?

Both WF and IMG had tiny resources and no implantation in the industry.

Much of WF's activity had to be, in a sense, "hit and miss" - visiting picket lines to sell papers and talk with militants. The central point was that if a group of WF's size attempted to relate to this mass movement 'directly', we could only end up falling flat on our faces or drifting into political adaptation.

The point is that without a properly programmatic conception which appreciates the political differentiation of the mass (both in its relative stability and particularly its contradictory and changing nature) a direct relationship to this mass becomes either a purely organisational experience devoid of any political content (meeting the masses like Claimants' Union work) or an adaptationist practice. This latter (which may be linked complementarily with the former as in the Manchester example) means adapting to the given (static) consciousness at some hypothetical 'average' level.

This hypothetical 'average' level is, however, at best only an extrapolation from the de facto relationships with the masses. Thus adapting to it inevitably involves adapting to these relationships and thereby the forces dominant within them and the practices which structure and confirm them. These relationships are complex. They include, for instance, the relation of the trade union bureaucracy to the rank and file, the relation of the mass or dominant parties and their leaderships to the rest of the mass, of strike committees to strikers, of stewards to other workers etc. They also include the relations of all these elements with forces external to the struggle under consideration. Thus the contradiction between on the one hand not seeing the mass as dynamic, concrete, and politically differentiated and on the other hand recognising a certain static de facto differentiation, is resolved in an opportunist practice.

Our stress had to be on systematic work with such contacts in the struggle as we could win. Their voices, putting forward our ideas, would be a thousand times more effective than any number of leaflets from us. (Though that's not to say that leafletting wasn't necessary - in fact, one big failure of ours was in not leafletting three of the four Confed stewards' meetings) Winning such contacts on the basis of an intransigent political struggle (which meant that we had to be prepared to take a firm stand ourselves, even at the risk of restricting our audience) we saw as the only way to lay the foundation for long-term political work in the industry.

Our understanding of this point about orientation was inadequate, and that partly explains the patchiness of our intervention and of the coverage in our paper, though purely personal, episodic, and contingent factors were also involved. Our comrades had been trained in the "audio-visual aids economism" of the International Socialists - the orientation defined by circulating sufficient leaflets and papers at a suitable level among the masses, and then collecting together such sympathisers as are fished out of "the masses" through this process in order to "build the revolutionary party". Correspondingly, our comrades were inadequately trained for more rigorous and demanding methods of work.

The other main criticism that needs to be made of our intervention is the fact that we failed to put forward clear ideas on the question of the conduct of the sit-ins. The IMG (in total contradiction to their stated view that "the working class has no need of anyone to . . . (say) . . . adopt this or that form of struggle" - Red Mole, 5 June, p. 5) in fact did better work

than us on this point.

Smaller criticisms of our intervention are made in the footnotes. It must be said, though, that while we wish to learn from our mistakes, and certainly not to push them to one side, that they were mistakes within a fundamentally correct political position. The IMG, we shall argue, while on the technical level (extent and accuracy of information, etc) doing much better than us, made basic political errors, errors, moreover, which derived from a systematic theoretical mistake.

We summed up the IMG's approach as follows in an internal bulletin of that period:

"1. To provide actual help for the struggle by work around the social security issue.

"2. To provide information.

"3. To make political points - by which they mean propaganda a la Red Mole.

"4. Not to criticise the union leadership (i. e. the local leaders).

¶ This is their policy as explained to me by an IMG member, not as I read it from my own observations. On the crudest level this is explained by 'well, you have to get some credibility with the workers with the social security work before you get a hearing for your political points'. For a more sophisticated justification see the Red Mole supplement on 'Building the Fourth International'". (8)

Let us start our assessment of the political validity of the IMG's approach by looking at their overall analysis of the situation and the relation of forces.

4 Perspectives

At the February meeting of the EEF (actually its annual meeting) one of its leaders, Mr D C Bamford, said "If the unions are out to test the fibre of our unity, we should leave them in no doubt as to its durability, . . . The unions will thus not find us unprepared to meet these pressures . . . The prospect that confronts us is a round of costly claims backed up by the threat of industrial action. I am sure I do not need to convince any of you of the importance of standing firm in this situation." Now, this announcement of determination was hardly unexpected given the state of the industry as well as the general problems of the economy. But did it mean that an essentially defensive struggle was to be conducted by the workers? No: not at all. The question of the character of a struggle cannot be read off from the economic data. The implications of so doing, if theoretically systematised, are very far-reaching, as they lead to an entirely vulgar-spontaneist conception of struggle, and a negation of the role of leadership.

The potentiality, the perspective for a workers' struggle, although obviously not unrelated to economic conditions, is essentially determined by the consciousness of the class. Indeed to say otherwise would mean simple defeatism in a period when the bourgeoisie decided to go on the offensive because of extremely adverse economic conditions.

The real determinant being the consciousness of the people in struggle, certain things follow in relation to perspectives. The balance of forces is not a fixed quantity, and it does not rest solely on 'material quantities'. Size of strike fund, situation of the economy, are significant primarily in so far as they determine the consciousness and self-confidence, the organisation and fire-power of classes. Perspectives

are meaningless from a Marxist point of view. If they are conceived as 'cold' assessment and prediction, rather than from the point of view of the possibilities of the conscious activity of the revolutionary forces and of the masses and their vanguard.

Having said this (and thereby certainly not exhausted the subject) we are in a position to look at the sit-in struggles from the point of view of Marxism.

The confidence and level of organisation of the employers attested to by Bamford's speech as well as the statements and level of organisation of the local employers must be seen in the context of what they saw as opposing them. This was a traditionally well organised, geographically coherent unit, politically as homogeneous as is ever likely - and, most important, one which was struggling in the wake of the tremendous and deeply inspiring victory of the miners. The nature and level of the demands, the general opposition to productivity deals as well as the sit-ins, are ample evidence of the fact that the workers saw themselves as going on the offensive after being tied down for over three years by the rotten deal accepted in 1968.

WEAKNESSES.

That there were weaknesses is not denied - we have tried to outline both the organisational ones (GEC, Mather and Platt for instance) and the ideological ones (reliance on Scanlonite leadership) already - the point is for the revolutionary to address himself to these weaknesses. WF tried to do this initially by stating that reliance on the leaders in view of the deals that they had made in the past was not justified. It tried thereafter, at the time of the Scraggs deal (see below) to go further.

If, of course, you think of the balance of forces statically, in more or less fixed quantities, then you do not see the Scraggs settlement in dynamic relation to the potentiality of the struggle. Let us see what the Red Mole said about the Scraggs deal. Nothing! Leastways, the only mention I can find is a passing reference in the Red Mole of 1st May which refers not to the deal but to the fact that Scraggs was booted out of the EEF!

SCRAGGS

In conversation with IMG members at the time, the reason for their silence on the matter was clear. They thought the deal was a victory. How did they argue this position? By reference to the percentage of the claim achieved, that is, by reference to classical trade unionist reformist methods whereby 100% of the claim is "unreasonable" and "never happens". As it happens the treachery of this approach was doubly and trebly evident here because the very urgency with which Scraggs sought to conclude a deal before stringent sanctions were imposed was at least a prima

facie case for holding out a little; after all, rushing to settle means needing to settle, and needing to settle betrays weakness - when the unions are strong and the employers weak, it is simple stupidity to throw away a chance.

For the present, however, we wish to limit ourselves to the observation that the IMG saw the struggle in terms of fixed quantities.

They - implicitly at least - saw the struggle as defensive on the workers' side. The reality was more complex. The offensive struggle of the workers, led in a conservatively traditional way, produced results that began to turn the tide to a situation which allowed the employers to go on the offensive with real confidence. The employers could turn their relative defensiveness (reluctance to go as far as Sharston's Mrs Dubost who took out an injunction against sitters-in whom she had just sacked) (9), into bolder and bolder attack, given the lack of aggressive tactics from the workers. The conflict saw many forward and backward moves in offense and defense, and moreover a very uneven development of each. For instance, the lack of confidence of GEC workers, which is the product of the treachery of the stewards there, was a factor from the outset, while confidence of the workers at Bredbury was live for ten weeks after the outset, even with a whole number of set-backs in surrounding plants.

Was WF right to stress the workers' offensive, when the employers were ready to dig in? Certainly: as revolutionaries we are concerned not only with the flat actuality of the situation (though of course we always strive for factual accuracy) and with the statistically probable outcomes, but also with intervening to strive to realise potentialities. (10)

5 The tests

THE FIRST TEST: SCRAGGS

We have already said that the correct attitude towards the Scraggs deal was a highly important matter politically. At the time WF stated:

"The first to settle was Ernest Scraggs of Macclesfield. The settlement sent a shiver down the employers' spine. But the point is not just to make the bosses tremble, but to defeat them. At Scraggs the workers won £3 on the consolidated rate, 3 days more holidays, and a 38½ hour week, as well as £1 on the women's share of the £3. The settlement was a breach in the employers' defences. But it also weakened the workers' side. The Confed originally called upon its members to accept no less than £4 on the consolidated rate, 5 days' extra holidays, and a 35 hour week. To accept less before the struggle is well under way - or before it has even started - has opened the road to the salami tactic. The 15 settle-

ments are not the "breakthrough" that the Morning Star and the local AUEW officials think they are..."

Let us just add here: If there is a moot point in relation to how to handle this deal it is not whether it was a victory or not. It is the following: as soon as we heard about the deal we smelled a rat because the deal was made so quickly and because the shorter hours should have led to at least a prospective agreement about increase in workforce unless there had been an undisclosed productivity agreement, or agreement by the official, Regan, not to oppose one. When we phoned Regan and asked about these matters in as roundabout a way as possible, he got very angry, said no, and hung up. We decided that a phone call like that was simply not evidence of anything and we had no right to expect anyone to listen to our suspicions on this score without more proof. So we said nothing in print, though we did mention the matter to individual engineers.

Not long after, the truth was clear. The sister plant in Oldham (Bodens) was scheduled for almost immediate closure. Such was the victory at Ernest Scraggs. We still do not know the exact nature of the relationship between the two: did Scraggs intend to increase its workforce, but only from the remnants at Bodens (11)? - did they anticipate a fall in orders whereby a smaller workforce would do, or a workforce on shorter hours, seeing as they were going to save on the wages in Oldham? We don't know. We do know, however, that that was what was debatable and nothing else!

THE SECOND TEST: FREE PRESS

An important part of the IMG's work was distributing leaflets produced with the Free Press (a local 'alternative' paper). The leaflets' contents related to spreading information about the struggle and briefing on social security. Obviously neither of these are irrelevant in a workers' struggle - we do not criticise on those grounds. The trouble was that the leaflets were not at all political and not at all critical. What was the result of issuing these bland though informative leaflets?

To answer this, we must for a moment turn to IS's work in the dispute. IS had several leading engineers in the organisation, and decided to set up a duplicated bulletin - 'Greater Manchester Engineer'. GME was pretty a-political and certainly did not carry the criticisms we made. Nevertheless it did put forward certain correct demands, which, had they been met, would partially have vitiated the feeling of isolation and erosion: they demanded regular stewards' meetings and no secret deals, for example.

Thus, while not sharp politically, it did put forward demands which were clearly critical and would enable criticism of the leadership

to be taken up a little later in a direct form. In a dispute where the workers were starved of information, GME, despite the opposition of the union (CP) leadership and the hard-line CP members, met with quite a favourable response - the more so as the struggle went on.

Fearing the influence of the GME, and faced with open protests about their not informing the members, the officials saved themselves by... distributing the Free Press-IMG leaflet in bulk, free. That is, they used the Free Press and the IMG both as a cover for their inactivity and as a weapon against political criticism.

Now no one is claiming that that is what the IMG wanted. To suggest that would be a slander. But, as revolutionaries are not the only agencies in a struggle, they must think of how their stance interacts with projects of other tendencies and forces. Once again the IMG comrades seem to have seen the struggle in terms of something fairly static. Most fundamentally, they could be used by the trade union officials because the leaflets contained neither direct criticism nor indirect criticism by means of a "call to action".

This last point is discussed in the following article.

THE THIRD TEST - CLAIMANTS UNION

Most of the strike saw the IMG doing work through the Claimants' Union, helping workers with Social Security claims. As a representative of the Claimants' Union, a member of the IMG sat on the Gorton and Openshaw Liaison Committee. Through this position he received a great deal of information - very important, and very useful. There was a risk, though, that he would fall into political adaptation in order to "keep in with" this CP-dominated committee. The Claimants' Union work could not be ruled out in principle. In practice, however, the pressures towards political adaptation did take effect.

The arguments put forward by the IMG on the Scraggs deal were marked by precisely this adaptation to trade-unionist conservatism:

Because such ideas are not what we usually expect of the IMG, it is necessary to look at them a little closer. The IMG has in the past been characterised by ultra-left adventurism - the natural response of politically raw militants with little or no experience of working class struggle. In the past year or so, the organisation, partly under the impact of the sharp rise in mass workers' struggles and falling off of mass struggle in the universities despite the sharp governmental attacks, partly under the impact of the ideas of people whose political training has been in organisations with serious working class orientation (whatever their political errors) (11), has reacted sharply to that adventurism and has inclined in certain fields, of which the one presently dis-

cussed is a good example, to trade-unionist conservatism.

The fact that the attempt to orientate towards the struggles of the working class brought them necessarily into contact with those who operated with these notions further reinforced them. Thus instead of this over-reaction to adventurism, this "bending the stick too far in the other direction", being limited to the struggle of ideas within an organisation of revolutionaries, it became extended to the practical, material struggle of militants outside that organisation. Unfortunately, although the idea may be re-formulated with ease, its material result cannot... We will take this up again below.

These two lines of development, the struggle against adventurism and the increased contact with trade union militants, joined with a third, the elaboration of a systematically sectarian passive theory, to produce a complex of pressures inevitably tending to the adaptation to trade-union fetishism.

We have already shown how the IMG's information leaflet led to a strengthening of the hand of the union leadership at a time when it was taking its first decisively wrong steps. We do not deny, however, that the spreading of information was of vital importance; the most important information was that relating to the numbers out on strike or occupying and the settlement figures.

The local union leadership argued a plausible case: agreements had to be kept secret because if they were not the firms would be thrown out of the EEF would be sufficient for firms not to make a settlement; in this case the question of discretion should not stand between the ability to settle or not to settle; furthermore if the EEF had members who had settled in secret it would not be able to operate, not knowing who were the renegades in their midst. Plausible though this sound, the argument is wrong both in general and in detail.

First of all, if there is real pressure like a successfully operating occupation, a company will give in when it has come to the end of its economic tether-with or without EEF approval. To be sure, in a period when short order books proliferate the sit-in would take longer, but the argument still stands. The EEF would then be faced not with suspicion of its members' steadfastness but a real break-up locally. More likely an impending break-up would force the EEF to forgo sanctions against "renegades" anyway so as to avoid the break-up. On this level alone the secrecy tactic was wrong.

Secondly, the general impact of not knowing what was happening but being daily exposed to local press reports in the bourgeois press had the effect, as we have described, of erod-

ing confidence,

Of course, there can be no question of simply saying "I don't care what the union says, I'm publishing", without taking up a struggle through the union. That is irresponsible. What should determine one's attitude is not the union but the workers and their consciousness and independent class interests. To break the rules you have to be assured a sympathetic response from the members. In a highly bureaucratised union like the GEMWU this might be possible without much preparation. In a comparatively democratic one like the AUEW this could not be done.

The arena for the necessary preparatory struggle was the AUEW district committees, the similar committees of other Confed unions, and the CSEU district committee itself. It was also necessary to fight for it in the factories where one had a base and where through this struggle one could extend it politically. Had there been mass meetings of stewards, that too would have been an ideal forum for such a struggle.

In other words, although there is no principle according to which the instructions of the officials must be obeyed where their effects are prejudicial to the development of a struggle - quite the contrary - without the necessary preliminary struggle such a move would be an adventure. But what if someone else does it? Then it becomes necessary to defend even these 'adventurers' from the attacks of those who demand uncritical and unquestioning obedience to the trade union leaders. Of course, one might observe that in this particular case the action was irresponsible, but the struggle against trade union fetishism would come first. (one might compare this attitude to the attitude of revolutionaries towards a reckless attempt at break-away unionism.

After early indecision IS decided to publish some of the settlements against the wishes of the union officials (and a minority within the IS fraction). But they had not prepared systematically. For instance, after one of their leading engineers in the district had, at the first Confed stewards' meeting, said of the platform "we've got good captains here" - instead of fighting there and then for regular meetings, information of settlements, etc - taking the initiative to publish the settlements meant going out on a limb.

Even so, IS were not isolated after having partially carried out the initiative - which indicates a widening rift between some leading militants and the official leadership. (12)

Imagine then our surprise to find the IMG denouncing IS to its contacts as "splitters"! Imagine our surprise to find IMG members gleeful at the prospect of IS being out on a limb because of this! Imagine what actions this

would have led to if applied to the militants leaving the T & GWU for the 'Blue' union, the NAS&D, in the 'fifties!

The surprise was blunted by the fact that the IMG comrade who said that the CP was right to call such people splitters was the Claimants' Union representative on the Gorton and Openshaw Liaison Committee. And exactly the same was heard from a close contact of the IMG's, an engineer also on this committee.

THE FOURTH TEST: THE J. O. C.

As the struggle developed, then, we see more and more crass examples of the IMG being infected by trade union fetishism carried through their Claimants' Union work. In the case just cited, we do not demand that the IMG agree with IS or even defend its general line in the strike or general approach to the announcing of settlements - what we do have a right to demand of revolutionaries, however, is that they do not adapt to backward ideological currents in the working class - Chauvinism, reformism, trade union fetishism, etc. The IMG's principled stand on the first of these questions stands in stark contrast to its capitulation in the case cited to the last.

On May 10th an ad-hoc Joint Occupations Committee set up by the people round GME (mainly in IS) held a meeting in Manchester's Milton Hall. The purpose of this meeting was to set up a Joint Occupations Committee. The officials had allowed it to be rumoured that there would be a mass meeting of stewards after there had been about 15 occupations. By this time there had been more than that number of settlements and there still remained nearly twice that number of occupations still in effect.

Fundamentally the meeting represented an attempt by IS and one or two others to undermine the authority of the union leaders, who were doing nothing. This would have been tactically wrong if it had involved no-one else but IS, thus putting them and any one else who joined them out on a limb. But this was far from the case. Of the roughly 25 factories still occupying, 15 sent representatives or apologies (11 came, 4 apologised). Perhaps a better measure of the fact that they were not out on a limb was the fact that although the CP officials tried to put the block on people going, they failed to get this approved in Stockport, their strongest area, where a number of leading stewards said plainly that they intended to go along. And these were not just small factories either; factories like Ruston-Paxman and Ferranti (Hollinwood) were represented.

A resolution to set up a J. O. C. was put by a steward from Ruston-Paxman, an IS member. The resolution was opposed particularly by the CPers who had come along (after failing to impose their ban the CP sent one or two along). They claimed that such a resolut-

ion would have to go to the Confed district committee. IS naturally and correctly argued that this was pointless, as it was precisely the Confed district committee that was doing nothing; the committee would just sit on the idea and squash it.

Cde D., an IMG member, sent by the GOLC to observe (so that their attendance would not lend support to the meeting), opposed the resolution. In so doing he put himself quite clearly on the side of the bureaucracy in this matter.

In the event IS lost the vote and therefore had to agree to a letter being sent to the Confed DC. Tocher never replied to the letter. Soon the sit-ins were almost all over, however, and IS did not follow up its line of the J. O. C.

The balance sheet of the Claimants' Union tactic seems to have been: on the positive side the IMG managed to gain information it would otherwise have been very difficult to gather; on the negative side, it appeared as an ally of the CP and trade union bureaucracy, representing nothing but a bunch of fawning dogooders who were easy to take for a ride.

The IMG claimed during a WF-IMG debate in Manchester at about this time that the principal political point they were making was in relation to the state. The struggle for a social security benefit was a struggle against the state, they said. On repeating this explanation to leading IMGers in London, they immediately broke into fits of disbelieving laughter. Let that be sufficient commentary on the matter.

THE FIFTH TEST: 'POLITICAL POINTS'

So far we have tried to show that the IMG's passive conception in relation to the conduct of the struggle led them, particularly through the medium of the Claimants' Union, to absorb certain backward ideas. The IMG may perhaps reply that, irrespective of particular opinions on tactical (secondary) questions, they put forward an independent political line throughout.

If we look at the Red Mole of April 17th we see an exposition by the comrades of Manchester IMG of their tasks in the struggle. Incidentally, if it was important to outline the 'strategy' of the IMG in the Red Mole, the IMG's national organ, then it was doubly important to make any criticisms of the struggle's leadership explicit in that same organ. Criticism passed on by word of mouth may forewarn and forearm those within earshot (13). The whole point of a national paper is to present political criticisms nationally, to all those workers, nation-wide, who need to be armed with those criticisms.

The first task the IMG list is the Free-Press-IMG leaflet already discussed. The sec-

and is the building of Claimants Committees in the factories (14). The third and the only one which appears to be in the name of the IMG as a political organisation is explained in the last paragraph:

"But it is precisely because a struggle whose objects do not go beyond that of wages and conditions is incapable of solving the basic problems of the working class that revolutionaries need to stress the importance of linking that struggle to a general struggle for workers' control and for a government which permits the working class to struggle for workers' control through its organisations. Not 'counterposing', but 'linking', basing one's explanations on the actual living struggle of the working class." End of article.

Well, did they link the actual struggle to this general struggle? The answer, not surprisingly, is: absolutely not! But no doubt the IMG is not even unhappy that this is true, because they have since ditched this quirkily nonsensical line! Who can blame them? Who can say it is not for the best that this reformist view of a workers' government and its relation to the struggle for workers' control has been ditched? Only those who think that the present position in relation to governmental and workers' control slogans is worse. What the "new-think" on the first of these questions is we do not yet know, but if it is true, as we are told, that the "new-think" line on workers' control is that you do not raise it outside a situation of dual power or at least pre-revolutionary upheaval, then the cheering at ditching the line of last April should subside in the light of the equally idiotic line of this January.

But if the first sentence of the quoted paragraph is ridiculous, the second is no better. At first sight it seems to be just saying the obvious. On second glance, however, we see that the 'linking' is posed in terms of 'explanation'. The real weapon for linking the struggles, however, is the use of the political programme - which certainly consists not only of explanation, but also of demands, 'calls to action', etc.

And this is not just another of the IMG's famous "bad formulations". It is a precise and exact expression of their passive-propagandist orientation.

The IMG had started out from a perception of the political error involved in identifying 'agitation' with 'calls to action'. They had reacted by defining both agitation and propaganda as 'explanation' and excluding 'calls to action'. Their anathemas against 'calls to action' did not, however, in the least stop calls to action and forms of struggle being daily issues in the real world. The IMG, in disavowing calls to action and interest in forms of struggle, can only end up separating them from their 'explanation'. They thus fall into

an oscillation between passive-propagandist abstract 'politics' and sub-political and opportunist orientation to 'servicing'.

NOTES

1. Exactly the same problem has recurred in the struggle against the Industrial Relations Act. The AUEW leadership has stood still and given no lead. The right wing of the union is calling for national action. What should revolutionaries do? IS, putting a minus where the right wing puts a plus has simply castigated the national strike call as being a right wingers' solution. The reason why the right wing relates to the national level is of course because a) it always relates to the union tops and not the rank and file, and b) it hopes the prospect is out of reach and therefore will result in workers being resigned to defeat. The point is to relate to both rank and file action and national action. Thus in Manchester one had to argue for full-steam ahead with the local action and for pressure on the leaders to make the action national (with a national levy being posed as an immediate possibility while the union balloted its members on a national strike).
2. The legal complication with the rule book that was experienced in 1968 also confused people in relation to the question of a national strike.
3. Often older militants would agree 100% on a number of criticisms of the union's tactics. But these same people would, as soon as the criticism was linked with Scanlon's name, shrink back from any conclusion and simply say, "You don't know all that goes on at national level, but I don't think Hughfield let us down. He knows what he's doing."
4. The Manchester piecework agreement allows engineers to go onto daywork (as distinct from piecework) and still receive the basic rate of pay. That is, the basic day rate for no work, as all productive work is piecework.
5. In our next edition of "Permanent Revolution" we hope to be able to write fully on the

tactics of a district claim. The employers had grouped themselves into sixteen groups of twenty factories each in order to fight against the claim. One much discussed possibility for fighting for the claim was the grouping of factories along the same lines as the employers or across those lines, and then using these groupings as unbreakable negotiating units, where no factory would return until the whole group was ready to resume work. We are not yet equipped to assess either in general or in relation to Manchester the viability of mass picketing in a claim like this, concentrating on some factories and levying others, negotiating the skeleton on a district level and leaving the individual claims to "drift" later... etc.

6. Either with his authority or by backing disciplinary procedures (withdrawal of credentials)

7. The US Marxist group, "PL", has published an excellent pamphlet on this sit-in. A shortened version has been published in Britain by "Solidarity".

8. We also, during that period, debated the question of intervention in the engineers' struggle in a joint meeting with the IMG in Manchester. So let there be no claims that we are now "inventing differences with the IMG" or "nit-picking" with the benefit of hindsight.

9. From this point of view WF's report in No 5 should be criticised for writing so unclearly that it was possible to draw the conclusion that the EEF didn't want a fight. What the report says is that a tough line was not being taken by the EEF on the sit-ins. This was true (in the main they went on unhampered - because they weren't hampering the bosses too much) and is clear by referring to Sharston's by contrast. By adding the statement that there had been 15 rumoured settlements, however, the risk was run of confusing being "soft" on sit-ins with being "soft" on settlements. This is not what that or any other article says, but it must be admitted that there is an ambiguous statement here.

10. It is from this point of view that the headline in WF No 5, criticised by the IMG in Red Mole 17 April, "200,000 Ready to Occupy", must be seen. They write "It would be simple insanity to delude oneself that 200,000 are ready...". But, if WF 5 is read carefully, it will be seen that it relates the offensive of the workers to the offensive of the employers - no contradiction at all. But, it might be objected by our comrades from the IMG, what about that "over-optimistic" headline? Comrades, I refer you to the Red Mole of 30th March 1972, where we read, "These actions will be the prelude to mass occupations in several hundred firms if the employers carry out their threat of mass

lock-outs when 200,000 engineers ban piece-work...!" We could not agree more! But we are not accustomed to packing all that into a headline (unlike yourselves!) Besides, a headline does have a different function from plain text: if what we wrote is to be condemned, then the IMG's plain text statement is worse! IMGers have pointed out that in that issue of WF it says that both the workers and the employers were on the offensive, and that in general the aspect of the workers' offensive is stressed whereas in an internal bulletin article the workers were seen as being on the defensive. Quite right! Both statements! Both parties were on the offensive; while it was proper to stress the workers' offensive particularly at the beginning, the internal bulletin article written later was commenting after the tide had turned, partially. Now what is so odd about that? Or are the quantities so mathematically fixed that a is either greater than b or less and that's that?

11. Ross (CPBML and IS), Whelan (SLL), Pennington (SLL).

12. A leading IMG'er has argued that because the strike leadership was democratically elected, such an act was impermissible. But what does this mean? The AUEW is, after all, a model of trade union democracy organisationally: it has only elected officials, with right of recall, its highest body after conference is the NC which is a lay body; etc. Does this mean that in any strike where the leadership is a layer (national, divisional, district) of the elected officials, one must stick to their rulings? That the AUEW, in fact, has no bureaucracy, properly speaking?? The fact of the matter, in any case, is that this struggle was under the leadership not of the AUEW but of the CSEU DC, not all of whom are democratically elected. Thus, again, neither in general nor in detail can this argument stand.

13. Though the experience with the IMG's closest AUEW contact, cited above, leads us to doubt whether in fact it did.

14. We do not know of any of these unless a fancy name has been given here to the quite common phenomenon of strike committees having people look after the problems of benefit and hardship (often called hardship committees). Still there can be no doubt of useful work done in helping people with their claims.

2 LOW PROFILE MOLE

OVER THE PAST YEAR, THE I. M. G. HAVE been taking a hard look at their past, in which they include not only their history within the Trotskyist movement, but also the whole theoretical heritage of Trotskyism itself. This, in itself, cannot but be welcomed. There is a pressing need for a critical examination of post war Trotskyism and in particular the analyses made of post-war Stalinist expansion, the loose ends in those analyses, and the subsequent empirical revisions on such questions as the political revolution in China. Such examination inevitably requires that the theories of Trotskyism are brought up for scrutiny against the present reality, for reality is always more complex and more varied than theory and new realities demand that old theories are updated, developed and maybe even rejected.

Moreover, there are no Gods in heaven decreeing dogmas which cannot be violated. But if we want to develop our Marxist understanding of the world, then a critical frame of mind is not of itself sufficient. New theoretical developments are not plucked from trees. If they are to be worthwhile and not mere playthings, they have to be rooted in the body of theory already existing, for this theory represents, at the highest level of consciousness, the accumulated experience of the working class, interpreted and understood in such a way as to provide lessons for the present.

If it were not for theory, acting in this way as the memory of the working class, then the Paris Commune, the betrayal of social democracy in 1914, the Russian revolution, the rise of Hitler and the Spanish Civil War, would count as nothing more than historical episodes of academic interest.

So the existing body of Marxist theory has to be treated with some respect by would be 'developers', for it was not won lightly. And because of this we have some cause for suspicion when we see the 'developers' of the IMG weekly overthrowing established ideas with 'new thinking', in a fairly light-hearted fashion. Experience shows that many such attempts at 'new thinking' all too often turn out to be repetitions of old mistakes.

The purpose of this article is to deal with one such piece of innovation, namely on the question of the role of the revolutionary party. The most explicit summary of the IMG's new ideas can be found in article entitled "The Character of the Epoch ... and the nature of the revolutionary party", which appeared in a supplement to "Red Mole" no 39. This article

is a compressed version of a resolution submitted by the IMG National Committee to the IMG Conference, which later approved it by a large majority.

The practical outcome of the 'new thinking' is illustrated in the first section of this article, covering the engineers' sit-ins in Manchester.

ECONOMISM

Central to the IMG's conception of the party is a rejection of what they call 'economism'. Economism, as they see it, is characterised by making 'calls to action', making demands on reformist politicians and union leaders, and by 'mobilising the masses'. Thus they write that "The Leninist theory of the party completely rejects the administrative formulae of 'mobilising the masses' and 'calls to action'".

In this way the IMG rejects the idea of the revolutionary party having an organisational role within the working class and counterposes the role of the party as "explaining a rounded conception of the situation so that the working class itself can respond to any changes occurring in the situation or produced by its own activity".

Essentially this view is idealist and undialectical, for it fails to see the tasks of revolutionary explanation and revolutionary organisation in their interactions. Neither is it very surprising that the IMG should come up with such a one-sided view of the party, for it was not very long ago that they were exclusively concerned with "mobilising the masses" and "calls to action" to the detriment of independent revolutionary propaganda and agitation. In their eagerness to get away from the old image, the IMG has turned 180 degrees and like a magician has produced "new thinking", which is in fact nothing more than the inversion of all their old mistakes.

First of all, then, to deal with the question of 'economism' and the Economists' incorrect definition of agitation and propaganda Economism cannot be properly defined by "mobilising the masses" or "calls to action". We shall argue that Marxists are also concerned with mobilising the masses and also use "calls to action" to do so.

The point about the economists is that they wanted to restrict their political work amongst the class to that set of politics which springs directly from the trade union struggle. It is only in this context that their false definition of agitation and propaganda can be under-

stood. According to Plekhanov "A propagandist presents many ideas to one or a few persons; an agitator presents only one or a few ideas, but he presents them to a mass of people."

Martynov, a leading economist, wasn't satisfied with this definition and attempted to 'deepen' it: agitation should be defined as "calling upon the masses to undertake definite, concrete actions", whereas propaganda was to consist of revolutionary explanation. Martynov revised Plekhanov's formula because he wanted to restrict the practical work of the party within the class to that part of the working class struggle which was likely to show immediate, palpable results - i.e. the trade union struggle. But he didn't want to forget the rest of Marxism altogether, so he relegated political struggle which does not flow automatically out of the trade union struggle (in particular the struggle against the autocracy) to a category ("propaganda") which, according to him, did not necessitate calling the masses to action.

In "What is to be done" Lenin attacked Martynov's revision, re-emphasising that the difference between agitation and propaganda was one of form and not of content; both flowed from a common theory and both could lead to action. This simple lesson is one which we could be grateful to the IMG for repeating if it were not for the fact, that in doing so, they have completely distorted it. They quote from "What is to be done": "As for calling the masses to action, that will come of itself as soon as energetic political agitation, live and striking exposures come into play.", and from this they conclude that as long as everything is properly explained to the working class, then the correct activity will follow automatically and therefore the 'call to action' is redundant. This amounts to nothing more than the crass idealism of the SPGB, for although it may be true that in logic the correct action, and therefore the correct 'call to action' flow automatically from the revolutionary explanation, it is pure stupidity to think that they do so in real life. If it were otherwise then the revolutionary party would have no organisational tasks within the working class whatsoever. The point is that the working class does not become class conscious through explanation alone, but through the class struggle. And not that for that matter through any old struggle, but through struggles waged with correct slogans, correct strategies and correct leaderships.

For example, the struggle at UCS may through the intervention of revolutionaries, enlighten a few workers as to the nature of the Communist Party, but as far as the mass of workers are concerned the struggle has probably resulted in a deepening of false consciousness. Throughout the CP conducted the struggle, not with the aim of forcing the government to nationalise UCS, but by pleading with the good nature of the capitalists with arguments

that rested entirely within a bourgeois framework. The importance of the demand for nationalisation does not rest on some reformist attachment to state control, but on the interaction of a struggle for nationalisation with revolutionary explanations on such questions as workers' control. On the other hand the CP's strategy of making the yards attractive to capitalist investment, could only be combined with such thoroughly false arguments as "Isn't it terrible for the national economy to allow UCS to close down - we, the CP stewards, are the only ones who are really interested in the national economy".

Thus, for Marxists, and the CP do claim to be Marxists, the outcome of any particular struggle cannot be solely gauged in terms of whether it was a victory or a defeat, but also in terms of what lessons were learnt. And the greatest indictment of the CP is that in the UCS struggle all the wrong lessons were learnt, which is amply demonstrated by the failure of the yards to come out on a one-day strike against the Industrial Relations Act.

CLASS STRUGGLE

So the class becomes politically conscious through the interaction of revolutionary explanation and the class struggle. Are Marxists to concern themselves solely with explanation and forget the mass struggle side of this interaction? Obviously not. Marxists are concerned with organising within the working class; with leading the class struggle and thus necessarily with calls to action. Certainly Lenin was not opposed to "calls to action" as such. The whole point of "What is to be Done" is that fully scientific class consciousness cannot flow directly out of the trade union struggle and therefore Lenin wanted to extend agitation and propaganda (and therefore the "call to action", which "either naturally and inevitably supplements the theoretical treatise, propagandist pamphlet, and agitational speech...") to a far wider range of issues than the economists wanted. Thus the paragraph of "What is to be Done" which follows the one quoted by the IMG, reads:

A word in passing about "calls to action". The only newspaper which prior to the spring events called upon the workers to intervene actively in a manner that certainly did not promise any palpable results whatever for the workers, i.e. the drafting of the students into the army, was Iskra, . . . Iskra, . . . called upon "the workers to go to the aid of the students", called upon the "people" openly to take up the government's arrogant challenge. (Lenin's emphasis throughout)

Lenin could not possibly have been against "calls to action". According to Martynov the social democrats had "for a decade led the economic struggle of the working class" and this was not just true of the economists. Trade union leaders were either police spies, social democrats or leaders thrown up from the

masses by the masses. How could the social democrats lead the struggle of the working class without calling for strikes, demonstrations, occupations and ultimately for the armed overthrow of the government. Through their propagandist, agitational and organisational activities the Bolshevik workers won for themselves the reputation of being uncompromising revolutionary fighters in the class struggle. It is workers who have this sort of reputation who are the life-blood of any revolutionary party. The Bolsheviks recruited thousands of such workers; in this country to-day, only a few such workers are among the ranks of the revolutionaries. Yet the raw material still exists. How often do we talk about spontaneous strikes? And all we mean by the term spontaneous is that we do not know who the leaders of that strike are; we do not know who made the call to action. But the call must be made by somebody, and usually it is by the most audacious, class conscious workers - precisely the workers who should be party members. And if we, like the Bolsheviks, had thousands of such workers as members, would it not be ridiculous now to exclude "calls to action" from the armory of valid and necessary parts of revolutionary intervention?

One of the sectarian aspects of the "no calls to action" position is that calls to action are considered to be purely executive or administrative in function. What is necessary is political explanation, the making of "political points" (For instance if you just look at the front-page of the Red Mole over the period around their conference you will see the marked avoidance of anything that might be thought of as a demand or call to action, and the use instead of blunt propaganda "headlines").

For instance in the Red Mole of June 5th, on page 5, under the heading "programme", in an article titled "LCDTU Basingstoke adopts a fighting programme", we read in point 2 of the preamble:

'The self-activity of the working class. The working class has no need of anyone to make administrative "calls to action" - strike on such and such a day, take this or that action, or, adopt this or that form of struggle. On the contrary it is daily in a struggle against the employers, and is constantly inventing new forms of struggle suitable to obtaining its ends - the NUM's flying pickets, the sit-ins in Manchester etc.'

We finish the quote there not because the rest of the article is objectionable but because this should be enough to prove the point being discussed. Firstly, the fact that this passage was drafted by workers opens up two possibilities: either these workers are out and out anti-political syndicalists of the worst type, or they are revolutionary militants misled by petty-bourgeois elements. Why petty-bourgeois elements? Because the whole notion betrays

that the writer speaks from outside the class. How can a leading militant say that it is not his business to say "strike on such and such a day", how can a self-respecting class conscious worker shrink from saying "take this or that form of struggle"? It is precisely because workers are "daily in a struggle against the employers" that they must do so! And are they "constantly inventing new forms of struggle suitable to obtaining its ends" only to be prohibited from calling on their fellow workers to adopt them?

Only a totally confused tendency could get workers who are class conscious, who do lead struggles, who are militants to propose such a thing to other workers. It is obviously the subjective gut-reaction of petty bourgeois elements sensing their impotence in the face of creative and powerful workers' struggles. But that is not all. This statement relates to the notion mentioned above that calls to action are administrative. Let us consider this.

It assumes that the meaningfulness of a political slogan is dependent on the political preparation it has been given by the party. That is not true. What is true is that it must flow from the theoretical totality held and developed by the party. But it may do that without flowing from any immediately foregoing and propagandistically expressed ideas.

The main mistake - and this is the sense in which this line is fundamentally sectarian - is that it leaves out the dynamic of the class. Thus the class may learn in a week what revolutionaries have been trying to explain for a year, for ten years. The raising of a call to action, like "General Strike to Smash the Act" may take on a meaning in that week which it failed to take on in the previous period. The point is that the preparation of the class is only meaningfully related to the calls to action made in so far as the ideas contained in that preparation have become material factors in the consciousness of the class itself. And - since the development of the class struggle doesn't proceed according to neat, predictable schemas - the fact is that often revolutionaries may have to raise "calls to action" without previous propagandist preparation.

That the party must try to prepare the ground for certain ideas and practises is indisputable. But life is not centred there. The relation between slogans is not provided by the syntax of political argument but the syntax of class struggle.

Look at it from another point of view. Is there no idea contained in the call "For a democratically elected strike committee"? Is it administrative? Clearly there is an important political idea here, firstly, and secondly it may focus a struggle whose dynamic is not purely administrative and which opens up perspectives for raising other ideas and initiating other practices which also are not administrative.

The IMG's view is totally static and propagandistic.

THE BUREAUCRACY

But the fact that revolutionaries do not now lead the struggle of the working class raises another question to which the IMG has applied its "new thinking" and come up with some curious results - namely, the problem of the reformist labour leadership and the fight against its influence within the working class. The IMG's idealist formulation about the purpose of the revolutionary party as being "explaining a rounded conception of the situation" effectively writes off the "crisis of leadership" and instead leads to the conclusion that the fight against the labour aristocracy is simply one of a fight against wrong ideas. Traditionally revolutionaries have sought to fight against the influence of capitalism's lieutenants within the labour movement by putting demands on them. These demands are put on trade union leaders and reformist politicians, but they are directed at the mass of the workers. They are intended to point the way forward and expose the labour fakers. By organising around these demands it is intended to create a leadership which will be able to replace that of the bureaucrats.

Now the crude, mechanical way in which this has been carried out by the SLL and the "Militant" group is that demands seem merely to function in providing headlines. The exposure (?) is purely journalistic and (in the case of the Militant group) there is no attempt to organise around the dry bones of a programme of demands and give them some flesh, while (in the case of the SLL) the flesh comes in the rather anaemic form of the All Trade Union Alliance.

But in justifiably turning away from these mechanical conceptions the IMG have managed to completely throw overboard one of the basic Marxist tenets about capitalism in an imperialist epoch. Thus in the first sentence of the 'extremely theoretical' section of the Red Mole Supplements, we read:

'The fundamental feature which divides revolutionary Marxism from Social Democratic and Stalinist reformism is a conception of the epoch.'

Perhaps the most significant thing here is that Social Democracy and Stalinism, the two most important trends within the labour aristocracy, are defined not socially but in terms of their conceptions. Now, 100 years ago it was quite reasonable for Marx to adopt this sort of attitude. After all, Marx sat on the General Council of the 1st International, together with trade union leaders like Ogden and Cremer, who may have been confused but agents of the ruling class they were not. Thus in his famous polemic with Citizen Weston, Marx begins by saying:

'He (Weston) has not only proposed to you, but has publicly defended, in the interest

of the working class, as he thinks, opinions he knows to be most unpopular with the working class. Such an exhibition of moral courage all of us must highly honour.'

Now Weston's proposition was that strikes did not benefit the working class. And what would be our attitude if Lord Cooper was to come up with a similar thesis today. Do we begin by saying: "Well, Lord Cooper is a very brave fellow to put forward the ideas he honestly believes in, but....". No! We might well decline to take up the debate with him at all and simply declare Lord Cooper is a scab. The difference is of course that while Citizen Weston could be defined in terms of his conceptions Lord Cooper cannot. The latter is a member of a definite social layer within the working class, which arose in the imperialist epoch as capital's agents within the labour movement. Whereas it may have been quite correct for Marx simply to put his 'political points' within the General Council, for us, in relation to Lord Cooper and alike, a totally different approach is required.

Now all this may seem nitpicking - perhaps the error in the first sentence could be just due to slackness of formulation? And if this were so it would indeed be nitpicking, but the fact is that the same idealist line of thought pervades the whole document. And the importance of the question is paramount, for the working class can only fight with the organisations it already has and until it replaces the leaderships of these organisations it has to fight with that leadership still in command of the union structure. What can come out of any struggle both in the way of economic and political gains for the class and in terms of lessons learnt, is crucially dependent upon the nature of the labour bureaucracy. And unless the labour bureaucracy is understood dialectically as a social force, which relies both on the strength of the working class and the continuing subservience of the class to capitalism, one is quite likely to come up with such gross confusions as:

'If mass struggles are launched on the perspective of reforms, then they are based on the premise that the immediate problems of the working class can be solved within the framework of capitalism which is to reject the Marxist conception of the epoch. When the masses struggle for these ends, then what they realise at some point in the struggle is either that the aims of the struggle would not solve their problems even if achieved, or still worse these aims are achieved and do not solve the problems. The result of this realisation is demoralisation, apathy, despair, the seeking of individual solutions to social problems, decline of workers' organisations, etc.'

Now this statement would not be so ludicrous, were it not for the fact that it appeared in print just two months after the miners' strike. Can't you just see those demoralised, despairing miners going back to

work after having won 90% of the reformist aims of the strike!

Here, again, the same idealism creeps in with disastrous results. It is true that the class struggle is far from independent of those who lead it or of the working class itself, but it does have a basic dynamic, which is due to the objective situation of the worker under capitalism and not what goes on in men's heads. The actions of the labour bureaucracy in any particular struggle are not determined by their 'perspectives' (do they have 'perspectives', in this theoretical sense at all?) but by their social position. Sometimes trade union leaders or reformist politicians are forced into struggle by the pressure of the working class below them, with whom they have to keep in step. Sometimes they initiate struggles themselves, with quite a genuine desire to win them, because by so doing they enhance their own position as bargaining agents with the ruling class on behalf of the working class. In any event, whether they are 'left' or 'right', their 'perspectives' and 'conceptions' are determined by their social existence as labour bureaucrats. This social existence also determines their interest in containing the class struggle within the limits of the capitalist system, for the ending of capitalism will just as surely be the ending of the bureaucrats position as capital's lieutenants within the working class. This is, of course, precisely "the real nature of the communist objection to reformism". The objection that "the reformists will actually destroy the militancy and organisation of the working class" is a false one because this is one thing they will not do. The reformists depend on the objective strength of the working class for their very existence - if this strength is smashed and the workers' organisations destroyed then capitalism would have no need for reformists. Some reformists also depend on the militancy of the working class. The 'left' trade union leaders and 'left' labour politicians, would not be in business if it were not for the fact that they lead militant unions, which gives them a lot more importance in the state/trade-union set-up than the likes of Lord Cooper, who has next to nothing to sell in terms of the power of his union.

As for the workers who take up the class struggle; do they do so with any particular perspective? A very few, i.e. the fully class conscious revolutionary workers, do have a perspective, but for the most part workers enter a struggle with an elemental 'gut' class reaction combined with a reformist consciousness. Any reformist leader has to walk the tightrope of using this basic combativity of the class (and possibly even actively encouraging it), while keeping the struggle well within reformist limits.

The tougher the struggle, then the more heavily does the reformist leader have to rely on the self-activity of the class, and the more

dangerous becomes the tightrope. So all class struggle, regardless of who leads it and regardless of what level of consciousness it is conducted at, has this positive effect of fanning the self-reliance, independence, and fighting qualities of the working class. Thus it is not at all given that struggles led by reformists with reformist 'perspectives' will result in 'demoralisation', 'apathy', 'despair', etc (even if they do achieve their reformist aims!)

It is only crushing defeats - defeats without a struggle, as in 1933 in Germany; or defeats as a result of betrayal which make workers believe that defeat was a result of their own incapacity or the incapacity of the organisations which they regard as their own, as in 1926 in Britain - which result in setting the movement back for years. A victory for the reformist aims of the miners' strike was also a victory for the miners and a boost for their level of consciousness.

TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMME

For revolutionaries in such a struggle, the task must be to take the elemental class identity of the workers and render it conscious. The chief weapon for doing this is the demand, and in particular the programme of transitional demands codified by Trotsky in the Transitional Programme.

The purpose of transitional demands is to link in struggle the 'gut' reaction of the class with a conscious recognition of its class position under capitalism. A factory closing down could lead to demands for an occupation; the occupations could lead to demands for a workers' militia; the militia could lead to a demand for a council of militias, an embryonic form of workers' power.

All the time the demand and the struggle to implement it would interact with revolutionary explanations about capitalist property relations and the class nature of the state's repressive forces.

In this way, linking with the felt need of the class to defend itself, the struggle is taken outside the bounds within which the reformist leaders wish to contain it. But the merit of a transitional programme does not lie in the formal wording being such that if it were implemented capitalism would no longer exist. Rather the programme seeks, through struggle around specific demands, to raise the consciousness of workers so that they will themselves destroy capitalism.

Neither is it accurate to say that it is necessary for "a revolutionary organisation (to advance) at all times a transitional programme". This statement seems to betray the same sort of idealist thinking which sees the party as solely concerned with explanation. The transitional programme can only be seen as a series of links in a chain and the point is to know which link to grasp. That particular link may not be a demand which destroys capitalism (Nationalisation, sliding scale of wages, workers' militia). The

other interpretation is to see the programme as unconnected with the organisation and mobilisation of the social forces that will implement it but rather as an explanatory document. And, now, to advance the whole programme of demands "at all times" would simply amount to turning it into the sort of abstract propaganda so tediously churned out by the SLL.

INVERTED ECONOMISM

In their efforts to avert 'economism' the IMG have turned up with an 'inverted economism'. Whereas the economists wanted to put all their emphasis on the mobilisation side of the class struggle, and restricted themselves to trade union politics where they thought that mobilisations were most easily available, the IMG wants to put the whole emphasis of the party on presenting "a rounded conception of the situation". This leads not only to incorrect ideas about the organisational tasks of the party, about the labour bureaucracy and the role of demands in the class struggle, but also to incorrect criteria of centralism within the party itself.

To our mind the theory of the democratic centralist party (1) rests on the need to maintain and develop theoretically and practically the class interest of the proletariat and to ensure its leading role in the face of the hegemony of bourgeois and other reactionary ideas on the one hand, and independent of the ideas programmes, and practices of other classes which comprise the masses on the other.

This aim of raising the consciousness of the class requires first of all a theoretical estimation of the relationship of class forces from which strategic conclusions can be drawn. It requires intervention in the class struggle; the training and education of workers as revolutionary class fighters, and ultimately leading the class in the overthrow of capitalist state power.

But the working class, unlike the capitalist class, does not have at its disposal a high degree of culture, or repressive state machinery, or the safety of legality, the control of meeting places and the press. The capitalist class which dominates society does not need clear theoretical ideas; rather it requires to mystify and hide the true nature of class society. The working class, however, fights from below - precise political formulations, an understanding of the true nature of society and correct strategies do not flow naturally from the everyday appearance of things and often have to fly in the face of everyday appearances. It is out of this that the need for democratic centralism flows, and it is both a political and an organisational-concept, because the organisational hold of the ruling class on society and on the workers' movement is every bit as important as the political and ideological hegemony.

But if the party is only to function as a band of "enlighteners" and not as the political and organisational leaders of the class, then it would appear that the only centralism necessary would be for the administrative purpose of

getting the pamphlets out on time. So what place does democratic centralism have in the IMG's schema?

In point 6 of the article we learn:

'Democratic centralism is a political and not an organisational concept. It signifies the necessity of centralising the experience of the party for the task of theoretically working on this experience for its elaboration as part of the theoretical totality ... The necessity of the party intervening in all social groups and strata of society is therefore not simply a practical one aimed at recruiting and building the organisation. The political role, and the organisational structure, of a revolutionary organisation is determined by its task of developing revolutionary ideas. The revolutionary organisation acts as the centraliser and thereby political analyst of the experience which is the base of the political ideas of Marxism... Therefore the revolutionary organisation must attempt to intervene in all sectors of society. The analysis of Marxism cannot be drawn from the experience of the working class alone, even if it were the case, which it is not, that the theoretical concepts of Marxism were directly visible.'

But the correct statement at the end of this passage (about Marxist theory not being directly visible) contradicts the whole argument. Marxist theory is not "based on" crude and 'direct' experience at all; it is based on reality, and the true reality of things is often far from their outward appearance which can be directly experienced.

It is certainly true that a party which has thousands of members in the oppressed classes has at its hands sensors with which it can estimate aspects of reality (say, the mood of the working class), and this is extremely important for tactical decisions. It is also true that the historical experience of the working class is a tremendously rich source for theoretical and political lessons.

But if theory were strictly limited by direct experience, then Marx would never have written Capital; nor could he have written the 'Civil War in France' without directly participating in the Commune!

The IMG quote Lenin on the importance of the working class observing "every other social class in all the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical and political life". One of the most important social classes for the working class to observe and understand is the bourgeoisie, but according to the "epistemological" ideas of the IMG the only way this can be done is by intervening in bourgeois circles!

Neither is the strategic decision of which social strata to intervene in determined by the need to form a theoretical totality. Rather it is a scientific estimation of the strategic importance of any particular layer in the socialist revolution which determines what intervention there is to be.

For example, Lenin analysed Russian

capitalism, not from 'experience' but mainly through books and statistics, and came to a conclusion about the importance of the peasantry in the coming revolution. On that estimation the Bolsheviks intervened in the struggle of the peasantry. But it certainly did not happen the other way round, neither did he come to his conclusion about the leading role of the working class by living the life of a worker.

In actual fact, given the tiny "groupuscule" size of every Trotskyist group in Britain, and therefore their limited contact with even the working class, such a 'pragmatic' approach is a far stronger argument against any attempt at democratic centralism for such groups than it is an argument or even explanation for it.

CONCLUSION

The IMG is a notoriously difficult organisation to pin down - slipping and sliding, restlessly changing its political emphasis as it does. Nevertheless, whatever its leaders now say about the ideas of their May conference, the Manchester experience, under the direct personal guidance of one of the two main leaders of their "Cultural Revolution" is a decisive test of those ideas in practice. The ideas must be measured rigorously; it is not enough simply to lop off the more absurd conclusions, with the glib explanation "a bad formulation", without rendering a strict account on the central argument.

NOTE.

(1) The question of democratic centralism does not, in any case, comprise the whole of the Leninist theory of the party (as one might suppose from the IMG).

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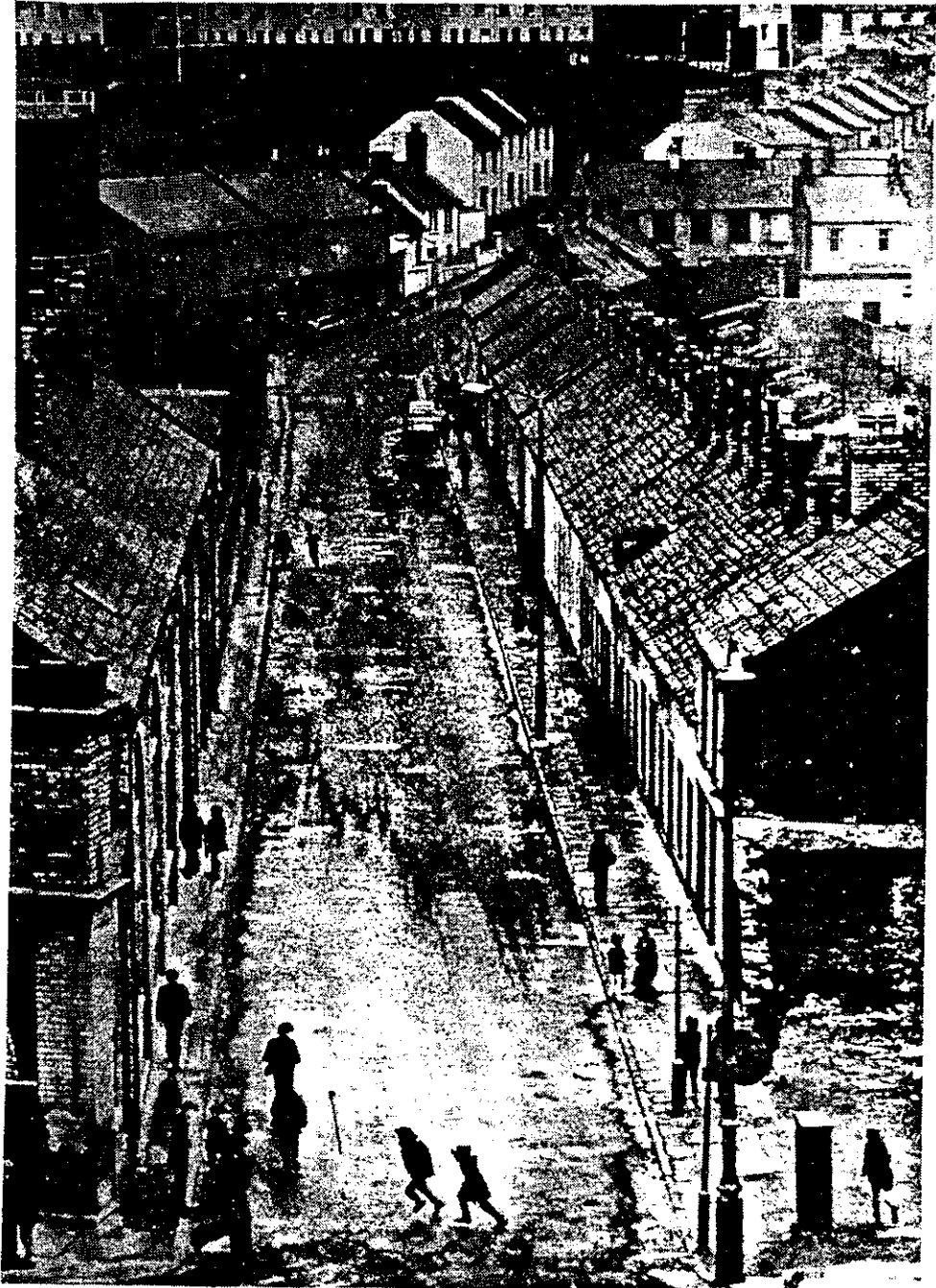
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**THE WORKING CLASS AND THE
LABOUR PARTY by STAN LOMAX**

THE WORKING CLASS AND THE LABOUR PARTY: REVIEW ARTICLE BY STAN LOMAX.

The exodus of members from the Labour Party from 1964 and, after 1967/8, the growth of radicalised circles outside the Labour Party, at the same time as the Wilson government provoked a wave of militant rank and file industrial activity against it and its policies, misled many on the left to the belief that the Labour Party could be written off. If it was natural that the youth, newly drawn into political consciousness in solidarity with the Vietnamese and in the student struggles of that period, should view things like that, was not 'natural' for the old guard of the revolutionary groups to adopt the shallow approach they did. Or it was natural, it was a strong desire to escape the harness of Labour Party entryism, amidst stagnation of the previous decade and a half (1)

Barry Hindess's book, written from a general left standpoint, mirrored the turning away of the working class from the Labour Party wards at that time. At the same time, it tries to provide some explanation or what it takes to be a fundamental change in the nature of the Labour Party, "since the 1964 election", a change which is supposed to be summed up in the notion of the "Decline and Fall of Social Democracy" (p. 170).

Briefly, the thesis can be summed up by the following points:

1. In the 1950s and most especially in the post-1964 period, there has been a progressive decline in working class political activism through the ward parties, and a parallel rise of middle class elements.
2. This has been reflected in:
 - (a) larger memberships in middle class wards than in working class wards;
 - (b) stagnation or decline in membership participation in working class/lower middle class wards, as opposed to slow, steady growth in the middle class wards;
 - (c) a preponderance of professional and managerial elements in both official ward parties and as councillors;
 - (d) Even in the "lower middle/skilled working class" areas, middle class professionals are very over-represented in terms of activists and officials.
3. "The Labour Party now appears to be less of a (working) class party than at any time in its history" (p. 10). And thus - "If Labour does not appear to be a class party, the inter-party dispute cannot be presented in class terms."
4. The Labour and Tory parties have now converged in structure and policies and are both "middle class" parties in the sense that Labour can no longer be seen as "the political arm of some working class movement" and the Tories can't be seen to represent militant capitalism". In fact, according to Hindess, Class has been taken, or rather forced, out of politics. This is clear, for example, in the case of the problem of housing... (p. 148).

Hence, we are given a class characterisation of the Labour Party in terms of whether or not its active members are overwhelmingly working class. Since they are not, we are told that the Labour Party is not working class party. Secondly, since neither Labour nor the Tories appeal to the electorate in direct class terms, they cannot be parties representing definite class interests. This contention is buttressed by one of the Mark Abrams surveys in which, in 1969, 47% of his respondents who had voted

BARRY HINDESS: THE DECLINE OF WORKING CLASS POLITICS.

ed Labour in 1966, said that they didn't intend to do so again - a protest response if ever there was one, but not one that was remotely born out by the constant Labour vote registered in 1970.

CONFUSED TERMS

In fact the whole debate about the "decline of working class politics" has largely been, at root, a matter of confused terms.

What, after all, is "working class politics"? Is it merely those politics (or those organisations) in which large numbers of workers are involved; or is it qualitatively more than that - those politics which express the historical interests of the working class and link those interests with the drive towards self-emancipation which the working class undoubtedly possesses?

The former is nothing but the "sociology of politics" - which in practice substitutes crude sociological data, of a sub-political kind - no more than the prerequisite, in this case, of working class politics as a mass force in history - for real political criteria. The sociology and ideology of working class politics fuse and are co-extensive only on the broad scale of history. Working class politics, scientific socialist theory, can exist apart from the sociological working class, and in fact came into existence entirely separate from its activity, though partly on the basis of the observation of the experience of the working class by members of another class.

Conversely, groups of an overwhelming working class social composition can exist and have existed in total political/ideological subordination to the bourgeoisie. A party is a political party of the workers - or not - irrespective of its sociological base, according to its ideology; its politics; its structure; its relationship to the working class and to the bourgeois state. Lenin expressed it like this:

"... Indeed the concepts 'political organisation of the Trade Union movement' or 'political expression of this movement' are wrong ones. Of course the bulk of the members of the Labour Party are workers; however, whether a party is really a political party of the workers or not, depends not only on whether it consists of workers, but also upon who leads it, upon the content of its activities, and of its political tactics. Only the latter determines whether we have before us really a political party of the proletariat. From this point of view, the only correct one, the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because although it consists of workers it is led by reactionaries, and the worst reactionaries at that, who act fully in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organisation of the bourgeoisie, which exists, in order with the help of the British Noskes and Scheidemanns to systematically deceive the workers."

This quotation is taken from a speech made at the 2nd Congress of the Communist International (1920) in fact, it was part of a speech advocating that the small British Communist Party should affiliate to the Labour Party. Why? The "sociology", of course, is not a mere detail, and the Communists had to find a way to merge the politics which represented the historic interests of the proletariat with the actual working class, on pain of sterility.

THE EVIDENCE

It will be useful to look at the actual decline in working class participation in the Labour Party, the evidence for it, and its significance. It is here that Hindess's explanations appear most plausible.

The first bit of evidence revolves around the

decline in the percentage of MPs with working class backgrounds between 1951 and 1966 - the respective figures being 37% and 30%. Furthermore, although about half the people in Attlee's Cabinet had strongly working class backgrounds, in the 1964 Cabinet the figure was 26%. Following the 1966 election and subsequent cabinet reshuffles, by 1969 there was not one Cabinet minister who had a remotely proletarian background. In addition, the dominance of the middle class elements in positions of office in the wards and on the council in Liverpool (where Hindess's statistical evidence comes from) and (so Hindess seems to assume) elsewhere, further illustrates the demise of Labour as a working class party.

What are we to make of this evidence?

Firstly, why 37%, or 35%, or 32% of the Parliamentary Labour Party being of working class origin gives the Labour Party a working class pedigree, but 30% doesn't, can only be described as mystifying. The decline in formal working class background for Labour MPs has continued almost uninterrupted since 1918, when the figure was nearer 90%. But such "working class backgrounds" have been found predominantly among trade union bureaucrats turned MPs, people whose whole life style and outlook was and is petty bourgeois.

The Labour members of 1906 were all working class in origin, but only two even claimed to be remotely influenced by Marxist literature and ideas, most espousing sermons, the bible as their literary inspiration, and most not even calling themselves socialist. Thus, by themselves, the class origins of its representatives tell one nothing about the base or the politics of a party or movement.

Similarly with the leadership. Wilson's Cabinet reshuffles, kicking out Lord George-Brown and other wonders of socialist achievement such as Ray Gunter, so that formally no members of working class background remained, does not at all reflect a mass decline in working class base or a turn from class to non-class politics.

As far as the class composition of the activists and officials at ward and council level goes, the same phenomenon as recorded by Hindess has been part of Labour Party politics for many years. Blondel, in his book, "Votes, Parties, and Leaders", quotes a random survey of a number of towns which found, in 1959, that about 60% of the Labour councillors were of middle class origin. No-one, least of all Hindess, would have said that the Labour Party was not a party with a sociological base in the working class: i.e. a "working class party" in the only sense in which it ever has been a "working class party".

However, it is true that ward membership did fall off during Labour's term in office (as it did towards the end of 1945-51) and that, as far as can be judged, workers turned away from the Labour Party wards. Hindess attempts to give this a lasting, irreversible significance, tying it in with his notions of non-class party politics via Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy.

This law - based on the German and French Social Democracies of the late 19th century - states that bureaucratism is inevitable in working class organisations. The leaders have superior knowledge of the workings of the political system, greater skill in organising and making speeches. Their control of the means of communication within the party leads to a reinforcement of this situation, given (a) that the masses are supposed to be more or less incompetent, less educated, less sophisticated, with very few attending meetings and participating generally; (b) that

the 'organisational environment' of large scale bureaucratic enterprises and agencies gives rise to a need for enterprise, quick decisions (therefore, supposedly, anti-democratic practices). Thus one gets a layer of leaders, party officials, specialists, academics, etc., who develop interests of their own, opposed to the masses, interests more in common with their supposed adversaries. Hence all is bureaucracy, everything leads to the maintenance of the status quo, with the exclusion of the masses from political participation.

BUREAUCRATISATION

That bureaucratism has been the overwhelming pattern of social democratic and socialist organisations there can be no doubt. But to state the existence of such bureaucratism and even to describe it in specific instances does not explain it, much less make it a universal law. Hindess sees that much.

But his 'explanation' remains just as much a non-explanation. He sees the Labour Party bureaucratism process, like that of other Social-Democratic parties, as coming about "partly in response to environmental pressures (and only because they follow the dominant norms and procedures of that environment)". Thus they "change their power structure through the routinisation and bureaucratism of their decision-making procedures." (pp. 41-42). This is supposed to provide a framework for analysis of the "interdependence of party power structure, the pattern of party membership and support, and party activity" (p. 45).

This explanation is basically circular. Social democratic parties become bureaucratic because they accept bureaucratic ways of conducting their affairs. Adaptation leads to apathy leads to bureaucratism leads to adaptation leads to bureaucratism.

If the Labour Party were purely and simply an organisation based on the wards, then the turn away from it by large numbers of workers during Labour's term in office might have indicated the beginnings of a transformation into a straightforward bourgeois party. But, precisely because the Labour Party grew from the trade unions and still has organic links with them, this turning away from the Labour Party wards is not all there is to it. It has happened on several occasions, and so has renewed working class growth in the wards.

The Labour Party is an attempt to reproduce at the level of the general administration of society what the trade unions represent at the point of production - the betterment of the working class's position within the capitalist framework. Given the trade union base of the Labour Party, anti-capitalist drives are, from time to time, expressed through the Labour Party. The Labour Party represents the parliamentary (i.e. in the definition of the social democratic consciousness dominant in the working class, political) complement to the trade union struggle. The focus of the class's drive tends to shift to and fro from Labour Party to trade union and back.

NEW ANSWERS

But the decline of the direct participation of workers in their party is significant. Significant of what? A decline in active self-help directed at, relying on, the Labour Party. A decline of social participation. Not the slow grind towards polling day to get the needed and looked for improvements; but the quick direct action on the factory floor. The lessening of the proportional value of the social services in the overall budget of the worker leads to an increased stress on the size of wages and stress on industrial

(I)

collective action, with a tendency towards after hours 'individualism'. This can lead, and has led, in that sense, to an apparent decline in working class politics.

Our assessment must depend on what we see as having replaced the old reliance as a means of securing the same end, self-betterment. Clearly the replacement has been direct industrial action. Throughout the 'fifties and 'sixties the trend has been growing. In July 1972 the militant vanguard didn't organise a petition to parliament to free the five. They acted, and set about involving others in action.

That is a step forward, not backward (as long as we understand that the way "forward" to revolutionary, ie genuine working class politics, is not a simple linear succession of steps). It has failed to relate to the general administration of society - except implicitly, through the tendencies towards a general strike. But Labour reformism only relates to it in a muted way; it relates to people, who, it is hoped, will so relate to the interests of the working class - politics by proxy.

The working class has partly retreated out of a cul-de-sac, to consider, and perhaps to find another road.

BUREAUCRACY

The Labour Party has always been bureaucratic. Historically this has arisen with narrow craft, petty-bourgeois ideology within the working class, with its superstitious reverence for 'experts' and 'educated men'; an ideology constantly reproduced by the capitalist class on the basis of their real control of society and the workers' apparent lack of expertise, education, and capacity to rule.

The bureaucracy arises as a definite social stratum, which acts as a broker between workers and bosses. Its life and work situation is quite different from that of the working class. It has no fundamental historical interests of its own, nor any direct, necessary allegiance to working-class interests. Fundamentally it serves the interests of the ruling class. However, within the overall limits of capitalist hegemony, the bureaucracy can and must, from time to time, if it is to preserve its position on the backs of the rank and file, engage in radical rhetoric and even limited action.

Because of the historic link, still alive, between the trade unions and the Labour Party, when trade union channels of advance are blocked workers tend to look to the 'political' arena, and revive the generally stagnant Labour Party. (There are also occasions when both 'channels' are used).

Ebbs and flows in workers' involvement in the wards are nothing new, and it would need further argument to show that the latest ebb means that the Labour Party has become a bourgeois party pure and simple.

END OF LABOUR ?

How can a party like the Labour Party lose its working class character (to the extent that and in the sense that it has ever had a working class character)? This "decline" could take place:

A) Through transcending Labourism politically, organisationally, and ideologically, and going on to a higher plane. We fight for this.

B) Through a cutting of roots, like the German Social Democracy (or the French) The reactionary role of the party in crucial periods, massive working class defeats, fascism led to atrophy. Actually the German Social Democracy is closer to the US Democratic

Party than the British Labour Party now.

In Britain, there was some evidence of a tendency to draw away from the trade unions in the period of "In Place of Strife". The prospect of an organisational split with at least a part of the trade unions certainly seemed to exist - not only a political disagreement but a severing of the organic link between party and trade unions. Through that link the trade unions not only provide the Labour Party with its inflated membership figures - they also have the right to the representation of every trade union branch at every ward and constituency level in the party. Thus there is a connection between trade unions and party which is a valve. The potentiality thus exists of mass influx from the trade unions into the party (and this is the rational kernel of the Labour Party fetishism of many revolutionary groups in the past). This mass influx is likely today only after major industrial defeat.

C) There is another theoretically possible picture for the "decline of Labour" - the conversion of big sections of previously Labourite workers to conscious Syndicalism, self-reliant, committed to direct action, attempting to boycott the 'political structures' of the system, effectively deciding that the extension of trade union bargaining into parliamentary politics has been proved worthless by experience with the Labour Party.

A tendency towards this has always erupted with Labour in power. The full development, however, presupposes the serious atrophy of the Labour Party, so that it cannot respond in opposition by a change of colouration.

INDUSTRIAL

In spite of the out and out "militant capitalist policies" of the present Tory government, the accumulated trade union strength of the class has resulted in the greatest opposition to the bosses on the industrial front for decades, an opposition which has been tending to spill over into a society-wide confrontation with the capitalist class through a general strike. This means that the Labour revival in the wards has been very slow, so far.

WILL LABOUR REVIVE ?

This has not prevented a tremendous hatred building up in the working class for 'the Tories'; an elemental class feeling, powerful even though containing a fatal alloy of illusions in Labourism. The 'left' face offered by the Labour Party is still far from the degree of 'redness' it reached in the 1930s; but remarkable, nonetheless, given its so recent record in office. 'Tory-bashing' helps them of course, as each act of the government becomes a specifically 'Tory' act. Above all, what is helping the Labour Party to 'live down' its period in office, and indicates that the masses of workers will turn towards it again, is that politics (as well as sectional industrial struggle) does exist - objectively and in the minds of millions of workers. And, so long as the working class does not create its own political institutions, politics is defined by ruling class institutions.

The failure of the growing industrial combativity of the working class to link up with an adequate political expression, relating to the general administration of society, is the best survival kit the Labour Party could have. Our duty is to make the link.

If much of the electoralist turn away from the Labour Party was a fatalistic resignation rather than an option for a new method of fighting, at the same time the very 'abrasiveness' of the Tories has made Labour a lesser evil for the working class; it

is more their party than is the Tory Party, because more dependent on their organisations. Revolutionary socialists do not use the measuring rod of 'lesser evils' for the bourgeois Labour Party. But we do relate to our class, and to the militants of our class - their perceptions are a major factor we must take account of. The 'dialectical' relationship of the Labour Party and the working class does continue: the party of the workers, but not a workers' party; a bourgeois party but with a mass working class, trade union base. We must prise the workers from the bourgeois mis-expression of their interests.

The inability of direct industrial action short of general strike to come to grips with the whole of 'Tory'-dominated society imposes the need to consider governmental alternatives on workers. But revolutionaries must be guided by the proviso that such calls for governmental alternatives must never be allowed to cut across the direct action of the working class itself: "... action by the masses, a big strike for instance, is more important than parliamentary activity at all times, and not only during a revolution or revolutionary situation" (Lenin: c.w. vol 31 p 61).

We need to walk on two legs, direct industrial action, and maintaining a relation to society-wide questions. Using two legs clumsily we trip ourselves up; the solution is to learn to walk.

The slogan to kick the Tories out - used with these provisos in mind - can have real meaning for the working class, except where there is a possibility of raising the call for a general strike - implicitly opening out a whole political programme - as the appropriate response to impositions like the Industrial Relations Act. Inevitably, Tories out means Labour in, given the reality of the situation (even though, just at present, Labour has no desire to be in).

How do revolutionaries raise the call 'Tories out' without cutting away at our efforts to explain the bourgeois nature of the Labour Party? The slogan 'Labour to power with socialist policies' is the most crass fantasy mongering. Even for those inside the Labour Party, it is an intolerable miseducation for anyone who takes it seriously, ascribing to a party organically tied to capitalism the task of overthrowing capitalism. It is not possible to raise the demand without totally bowdlerising the meaning of socialism, the self-emancipation of the workers and the smashing of the bourgeois state. It is possible to call for 'Tories out', linking it with specific demands (Smash the Industrial Relations Act; no incomes policy under capitalism; smash the Housing Finance Act) in such a way that it serves to focus the activity of workers, and that the raising of the call becomes a tool in the hands of militants to mobilise workers against the Labour leadership and their habitual relationship to the bourgeois state.

It is premature to order a shroud for the Labour Party as a major - bourgeois - force in the politics of the working class. It will not die away of itself, or by the effect of its recent exposure. It will not atrophy and change its whole character like the German social democracy, unless we have ahead a whole new period of capitalist expansion, and perhaps not even then. The action of revolutionary socialists, striving to link up with the elemental revolt of the working class, which has pounded in wave after wave for the last year against all the established institutions of Britain, including the Labour Party - that activity, when it succeeds in fusing with the drive of our class, will be the death knell of Labour. Any premature tolling of the bell will hinder, not help us, in that work.

NOTE

(1) In fact this was partly a product of the relationship of all the revolutionary groups to the Labour Party for the previous decade and a half. All of them were in the Labour Party, in various degrees of depth of entry, degree of passivity or activity. In fact they had roots in it. Not only were all of them in it, but, beginning with the pioneering entrists of the post-war period, the future Socialist Labour League, they had crass illusions in it, commodated themselves to it, politically; and regarded it as an expression of the British working class, reflecting a given level of consciousness.

This was the common SLL, 'Militant', and proto-IMG view. They differed on what this meant in practice. The SLL went through the phase of crassest reformism, its 'Trotskyist programme' well pressed in the seat of Gerry Healy's pants. The 'Militant' was primarily concerned to put out a somewhat crude but at least phraseologically 'Trotskyist' propaganda presence in the Labour Party - but a blunted, bowdlerised propaganda, consisting of calls to leaders of the party, not for any vulgar half measures such as some other entrists used agitationaly, but for the full programme - Labour to power with socialist policies. In fact, they were a right wing sectarian Trotskyist group who had chosen the Labour Party as their domicile and were willing to pay the price of tolerance. They saw the Labour Party as the vehicle of the organically growing, maturing working class consciousness, and wanted to stay there. The proto-IMG attempted to aid, and even to substitute for, the broad left wing, 'centrist', left reformist current that they saw as the next stage in the maturation of the Labour Party. Thus they denounced the 'Militant' as sectarians who kept some vestige of a Trotskyist programme, instead of pushing the programme of the broad left wing! This identical policy had led the SLL, in frustration, to attempt to rape "the process", unable to desist, hung up on its obsessions; it has since caused the IMG to flip flop over to a purely propagandist invocation of the revolution, abandoning the attempt to aid "the process". The International Socialism group proclaimed that only when the working class was on the streets and the revolution on could there be talk of revolutionaries pulling out of the Labour Party. They justified it by reference to the position of Rosa Luxemburg (in our view mistaken) in not pulling out of the German Social Democracy throughout world war I.

The communist conception of the Labour Party as a machine of the bourgeoisie which dominates the working class in the interests of the bourgeoisie, with the working class composition and the trade union link as a subsidiary part, even though one which allowed the potential of shattering the Labourite hold on the working class, this was not found in the picture of the left groups: the bold and banal description "the workers' party", their normal designation, indeed contradicted it.

We believe that it is a fact that the first tendency to attempt to disinter this conception of the Labour party and some of the implications for Trotskyism was the initial Workers' Fight group, in 1966.

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